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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

SECONDARY SCHOOL REORGANIZATION IN ICELAND: A POLICY ANALYSIS

by

Fridgeir Borkur Hansen

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled SECONDARY SCHOOL REORGANIZATION IN ICELAND: A POLICY ANALYSIS submitted by Fridgeir Borkur Hansen in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION.

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Date April 3, 1987

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated

to the memory of my father

whom I loved and respected.

Abstract

In Iceland, a bill designed to reorganize the secondary school system along comprehensive lines, was proposed six times in parliament during 1976 to 1983 without passage. Meanwhile, many of the general policy ends put forth in the Bill were implemented. The purpose of this study was to structure a definition of this seeming contradiction in the development of secondary education policies in Iceland with a view towards its resolution.

The phases of problem sensing, problem conceptualization, and problem specification identified by Dunn (1981) to structure policy problems provided the overall framework for the study. Qualitative data was used to describe the substantive problem in the development of secondary education policies in Iceland, mostly collected during September 1985 to January 1986 through interviews of major stakeholder groups, documentary searches, and questionnaires. The data were thematized to conceptualize and describe the policy ends proposed in the Bill and the issues regarding the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill. The elements of education as public policy identified by Kerr (1976) were used to thematize the policy ends proposed in the Bill: (1) resource elements; (2) distribution elements; (3) curriculum elements; and (4) methodological elements. The thematization of the data revealed the following elements as related to the non-acceptance of the Bill: (1) procedural difficulties in parliament; (2) decentralization in governance and funding; (3) coordination of the traditional school types; (4) accountability of student achievement; (5) reconciliation of vocational and academic education; (6) hidden policy.

The formal problem inherent in the development of the Bill was specified and defined in two major ways. First, the undermining of historical elements and cultural traditions in the reorganization proposed in the Bill is considered a major explanation of the resistance to the Bill in parliament. Second, the over emphasis on curriculum format rather than the identification of the aims considered worthwhile in a changing socio-economic context of secondary schooling is considered the main explanation for the 'legitimation problem' of the curriculum philosophy of diversification and early specialization as proposed in the Bill. The study concludes with recommendations for a resolution of the problematic situation.

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A study of this nature could not have been realized without the assistance of a number of people whom I which to acknowledge.

The encouragement and support provided by Dr. D. A. MacKay who served as my thesis advisor is strongly appreciated. I am grateful for his advice and support at the various stages of this study. Special thanks to Dr. W. Worth whose thoughtful reading and constructive comments during the writing of this dissertation greatly enhanced the quality of the final product. The suggestions and feed-back provided by the other committee members Dr. E. Miklos and Dr. H. Hodysh were also of great value. Special thanks are extended to Dr. L. W. Downey who served as the external examiner. I also extend my thanks to Dr. J. Bergen who served as a member on my candidacy committee.

Many thanks to friends and relatives back home in Iceland who provided assistance meanwhile collecting the necessary data. Thanks to all those who particiapted in this study. Without their friendly cooperation this study would not have been possible.

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Chapter I

Introduction

A. Problem Sensing

Education is considered by many a powerful factor in socializing youth and shaping the culture of societies. It institutionalizes people' goals, their horizons and orientations toward life and society in general. Every modern society has a general belief in education as a potent instrument for social change, the view prevailing that education should put an emphasis on people's capacity to think for themselves and to dedicate themselves to 'truth' wherever it is to be found. Holmes (1985:7) observes that education is generally conceived as a "human right" and that "education should develop the all-round intellectual, moral, physical, and aesthetic capabilities of individual children and that education should contribute to the improvement of society economically and, depending on the circumstances, politically and socially." Accordingly, public policies which affect education have always been of concern to scholars, politicians, and laymen alike.

The complexity of contemporary society and the nature of the problems that emerge in that context require more systematic examination of policies and their alternatives than was necessary in earlier times. Today, society is more intricate and less stable, and the consequences ensuing from government policies are greater in scope and severity. Dunn (1981:19-27) points out that over the centuries, particularly since the industrial revolution, the growth of governments has 'demanded' information relevant to both policy making and policy alternatives. Karabel and Halsey (1977:5) comment regarding education policies that "both the supporters and the critics of the status quo... have been anxious to gain access to relevant information and use it in order to offer policy recommendations, whether critical of current policy or offering 'scientific' legitimation for it." The main function of governments, however, is to control and organize society, using policies for these purposes. Public policy can therefore be seen as the manifestation of "what governments choose to do or not to do" (Dye, 1981:1).

Hough (1984:295) points out that "educational policy at [the] secondary school level has, over long periods of time, been dominated by the question of re-organization on comprehensive lines." This has been particularly characteristic of the development in "France, Sweden, the UK and West Germany, ... [and] to some extent in Australia" (Hough, 1984:295). Generally, the reorganization problem centres on the issue of the selective character of schools. The traditional bi or tripartite educational systems are seen as elitist and class bound, with the traditional academic schools serving the upper layer of the social strata, and vocational and technical schools serving the lower layer of the social strata. Thus, reorganization along comprehensive lines has to do with the social and the political arrangements of schooling. Education is to be offered more equally than in a bi or tripartite system which often relies on rigid use of testing as the means of categorizing and differentiating between students. Rather, the emphasis is on meeting individual needs and providing equality of opportunity for 'all' students regardless of factors such as color, sex, ethnic descent, socio-economic background, and cognitive skills. Therefore, comprehensive schools are to be non-selective, flexible and democratic, offering a variety of both academic and vocational programs.

Two or three decades ago economic growth in most western societies was at its height. It was accompanied by a growing population and increased demand for general schooling as well as special training for industry (Psacharopoulos and Loxley, 1985:31-33). Accordingly, reorganizing secondary schools along comprehensive lines was socio-economically feasible and supported by theories on social and individual benefits of increased investment in education, whereas more recently the economic growth has slowed down, resulting in increased unemployment and retrenchment in most sectors. Therefore, inherent in reforms along comprehensive lines are challenges to the traditional class bound character of schooling. On the other hand, the accountability of comprehensive schools to educate and provide a well trained workforce, which will eventually lead to economic growth and full employment is seen by many as severely reduced by the emphasis on the non-selective and non-meritocratic character of comprehensive schools. In the Icelandic context, the question of reorganizing

secondary schools along comprehensive lines may be seen to some extent to be characterized by these general problems and concerns.

Gue (1972:25-6) points out that there are four general criteria for assessing "whether or not a school is comprehensive": (1) "accessibility" where a school is "open to all the youth of a district or locality, regardless of their previous educational history or socioeconomic background"; (2) "variety and depth of courses" which "suit the needs, interests and abilities of students"; (3) "flexibility in programming" "in consultation with guidance personnel"; and (4) a "unified administration" "over academic and vocational programmes." The secondary school reorganization policies in Iceland qualify as being 'comprehensive': (1) the secondary school system is to be organized by using a comprehensive secondary school as a model for the system as a whole where the programs offered would vary between schools; (2) secondary schools are to be open in access for all students; (3) the curriculum is to be organized in a course credit system where vocational and academic education are equally valued; and (4) administration is to be unified over both vocational and academic programs. However, as Husen (1975:117) points out, comprehensive schools have different meanings to different people, although all of these meanings involve schools that are broad in scope and context.

In 1976-1977, the government of Iceland presented a bill designed to reorganize the secondary school system along comprehensive lines: The Bill on Secondary School [redacted]ization. The Bill was not passed that year, nor was it passed despite repeated proposals in 1977-1978, 1978-1979, 1979-1980, 1981-1982, and 1982-1983. In fact the Bill has not yet been passed. The section entitled "main propositions" in the supplementary comments attached to the Bill when proposed in 1976-1977, 1977-1978, 1978-1979 and 1980-1981, state that the "coordinated secondary school level is to be organized as a whole, both regarding the organization of education itself and the organization of educational institutions" (*Althingistidindi* [Parliamentary Publication], 1976-1977:2542). The major policy ends put forth in the Bill are summarized in the main proposition section as follows:

1. Secondary education (age 16 to 20) shall be offered to all students who have completed the comprehensive primary school (age 7 to 15).
2. The secondary school is to be organized as a coordinated whole. It will be

divided into divisions which are composed of the various program routes. The aim of education within each program route is to provide: general education, preparation for further education, or professional training through relevant sets of courses.

3. Education within the secondary sector is to be organized in courses and each course will be valued in credits. Credits are to be transferable between program routes.

4. Curriculum guides are to be published to outline the structure of each program and guide the selection of content.

5. Contextual factors will determine the program routes to be offered within each school. In this respect, the following are the major alternatives: the various program routes within the same institution; the various program routes in different institutions but under control of one administration; individual program routes in specific institutions.

6. Vocational training facilities within schools, businesses and at other institutions may be defined as a part of the system.

7. Both the state and the municipalities will cooperate in the operation of secondary schools.

8. An overall policy (law) will be established to organize and control the coordinated secondary school as well as regulations regarding program routes.

Thus, according to the Bill, the secondary school level is to be planned by using a comprehensive secondary school as a model for the system as a whole. However, divisions and program routes may vary between schools. The traditional school types within the secondary school level, particularly the grammar schools, are to adopt the course credit system and gradually abandon the class group system, thus allowing for increased coordination between secondary schools. Some of the traditional school types may, however, operate as a single division in a comprehensive secondary school, whereas the comprehensive secondary schools are to be composed of one or more divisions. The number of divisions and programs offered will depend on contextual factors such as location, enrollments, and existing schools.

Since 1973, thirteen comprehensive secondary schools have been established, offering a variety of vocational and academic program routes. The first comprehensive secondary school was established in Reykjavik in 1975 on an experimental basis. In 1973 a law, entitled 'A Permit to Establish a Comprehensive Secondary School,' was enacted to regulate this experimental school. This Law also provided the legal basis for the establishment of other comprehensive schools established since 1975. However, this law does not contain any specific

articulated elements describing the purpose, design, and operation of these schools.

In 1974, the 'Bill on Comprehensive Primary Schooling' and the 'Bill on the Organization of the Educational System' were passed in parliament. The enactment of these laws opened access to the secondary school for all students who had completed the comprehensive primary school, and met certain entrance requirements. A consequent pressure then developed for the reorganization of secondary schools. Subsequently, the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' was first introduced in 1976. Acceptance of the Bill would have automatically cancelled the various existing laws and regulations, including the 'Permit to Establish a Comprehensive Secondary School.' It also included relatively detailed elaborations regarding the purpose, design, and operation of secondary schools. Compared to the 'Permit to Establish a Secondary School,' the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' offers a detailed policy. Although never officially accepted, the Bill guided to a large extent the design and the operation of existing and emerging comprehensive secondary schools. As observed by the OECD education committee (Arango Vila-Belda, Faulkes, and Robinson, 1986:21) when reviewing education policy in Iceland:

> It is at this level of education that Iceland has the least defined formal policy. A law meant to establish such policy was introduced into the parliament during the 70s but never enacted. It is, nevertheless, somewhat observed in practice, and therefore the rapid increase in upper secondary school enrolment has largely been in line with the policy contained in this law in schools designated as "comprehensive."

The Bill also facilitated some of the adjustments made in some of the traditional secondary schools providing for cooperation between schools and coordination of the secondary school level as a whole.

B. Statement of Study Purpose

As established above, the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' in Iceland has been proposed six times in parliament during the period from 1976-1977 to 1982-1983 without being passed, but at the same time some of the major policy ends put forth in the Bill have been implemented. Thus, the purpose of this study is to establish a definition of this seeming contradiction in the development of secondary education policies in Iceland by a structuring of

the major policy problems inherent in this process with a view towards its resolution. The emphasis is to identify, describe, and critically discuss the policy ends put forth in the Bill and the issues related to the delay or non-acceptance of the Bill, leading to recommendations of what could or should be done. The following questions guide the study:

1. What are the major elements that constitute comprehensive secondary education, and why has secondary school reorganization been a problem in the countries selected for review in this study?
2. What are the major elements in the development of Icelandic education policies that influenced the reorganization of the secondary school level?
3. What are the major policy ends put forth in the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization'?
4. How do interest groups account for the repeated non-acceptance of the Bill?
5. What are the major policy problems inherent in the development of comprehensive secondary education policies in Iceland?

C. Importance of the Study

This section outlines the practical and the theoretical importance of the study.

Practical Importance

Dunn (1981:44) points out that "[p]olicy analysis uses multiple methods of inquiry to produce information about policy problems, policy alternatives, policy actions, policy outcomes, and policy performance." In this study, the major focus is on 'policy problems'; that is, the "unrealized value, need, or opportunity" (Dunn, 1981:44) which may underly the repeated non-acceptance of the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' in Iceland. In this regard, Dunn (1981:98) comments:

> problem structuring, which is that phase in the process of inquiry where analysts grope toward possible definitions of a problematic situation, is in no doubt the most crucial but least understood aspect of policy analysis.

Policy problems, however, are seldomly well defined, single, independent entities: "they are parts of whole systems of problems best described as messes, that is systems of external conditions that produce dissatisfaction among different segments of the community" (Dunn,

1981:99). Thus, the major practical importance of this study is to gain understanding of the problematic situation in the development of secondary education policies in Iceland and suggest resolutions. The study may provide information for extended discussions amongst the various stakeholder groups within both the educational and the political system. The study may also lead to increased awareness regarding problematic policy ends put forth in the Bill as well as problematic elements in the policy making process. Furthermore, the study may lead to improvements in the overall quality of secondary education policies in Iceland.

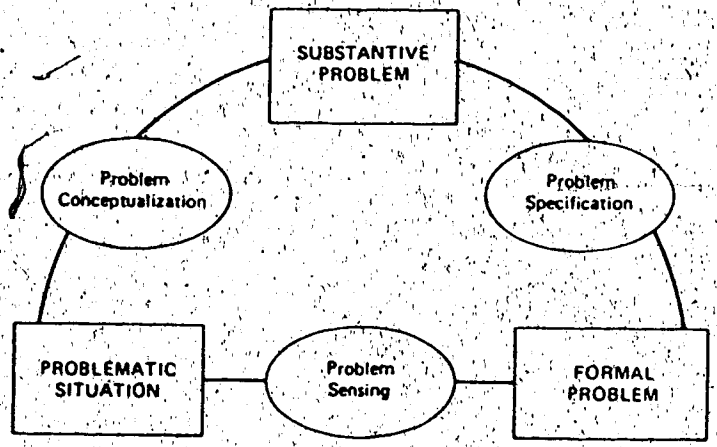
Theoretical Importance

Rittel and Webber (1973:158) observe that during the "industrial age, the idea of planning ... was dominated by the idea of efficiency" which resulted in planning as a "process of designing problem-solutions that might be installed and operated cheaply." They (1973:159) point out that today we "have been learning to ask whether what we are doing is the right thing to do" and that by now "we are all beginning to realize that one of the most intractable problems is that of defining problems ... and of locating problems." Dunn (1981:99) observes that problems "have no existence apart from the individuals and groups who define them, which means that there are no 'natural states' of society which in and of themselves constitute policy problems." Thus, as Rittel and Webber (1973:160) point out, "problems in the natural sciences, which are definable and separable and may have solutions that are findable, the problems of governmental planning - and especially those of social or policy planning - are ill defined; and they rely on elusive political judgement for resolution."

Dunn (1981:98-107) points out that problem structuring, or the process where "analysts grope towards a possible definition of a problematic situation," consists of the basic steps of (1) "problem sensing," (2) "problem conceptualization," and (3) "problem specification." This process is outlined in Figure 1. Dunn (1981:107-109) observes that analysts use "conventional ... language to conceptualize the problem" in order to "define the problem in its most basic and general terms," whereas the specification of the problem usually requires more theoretical and technical language. Dunn (1981:107) also suggests that

Figure 1

The Three Phases of Problem Structuring: Problem Sensing, Problem Conceptualization, and Problem Specification.



Adapted from: Dunn, William N. Public Policy Analysis: An Introduction. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1981.

"[a]lthough the process tructuring policy problems may begin in any of these three phases, a prerequisite of problem structuring is the recognition or 'felt existence' of a problematic situation." The step of conceptualizing the substantive problem and the step of specifying the formal problem are therefore of central importance for this study.

Kelsey and Long (1983:408-424) point out that the field of educational administration has been dominated by the "theory movement" which puts an emphasis on the use of "values as variables" and the "use of theories of general administration which might be applicable to educational contexts." Greenfield (1985:5244) observes that the theory movement "omitted the whole value and normative dimension" that administration must deal with. The theory movement also put an emphasis on the use of operationally defined concepts or theories to guide inquiry, "drawing on methodologies from the physical sciences, in the hope that laws governing people in organizations will reveal themselves just as laws of genetic succession have revealed themselvs to biologists" (Holmes, 1986:43). Dunn (1981:108), however, states that the process of problem structuring can be examined from many perspectives. Thus, instead of using operationally defined concepts or theories to structure policy problems that have no existence apart from the individuals and the groups who define them, a research orientation which outlines ontological and epistemological underpinnings when conceptualizing public policy seems appropriate. It provides for a level of understanding "which is impossible in ordinary behavioral research" (Dryzek, 1982:311).

In addition to developing an interpretive perspective for conceptualizing the subjective nature of policy problems, Foster (1982:14) points out that policy perspectives or theories of educational administration "must look beyond the description and understanding of the present reality" and "engage in a self reflective posture regarding the consequences of theory itself." Similarly, Healy (1986:386) observes that an interpretive policy inquiry must go beyond self understanding and that we "should decide on the appropriate goals for further development." As Foster (1982:6) suggests, all inquiry of social phenomena should include a philosophical critique of the ideological relationships that constitute the observed regularities in order to improve these relationships and create a more just and fair society or education

policies.

Hence, the theoretical significance of this study may be regarded as the interpretive and critical perspective that is developed to provide the research orientation for conceptualizing the subjective nature of policy problems. Instead of defining public policies in an operational fashion, they are defined as manifest cultural or political artifacts experienced by people and the various policy elements are seen as grounded in the history of schooling. Qualitative rather than quantitative data collection methods are used to conceptualize and describe the substantive problem in conventional language. The rationalizations apparent in the substantive problem are not accepted unquestioned, but rather treated as problematic in order to specify the formal problem.

D. Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters. In this first chapter the research was contextualized by describing some background elements central to the purpose and the importance of the study.

The second chapter describes the research orientation adopted for the study which includes an investigation of the ontological and the epistemological underpinnings when education as public policy is conceptualized and policy problems are analyzed.

The research design is described in chapter three. It includes an outline of the overall research strategy; the data collection procedures; discussions about validity and reliability; procedures for analysing and presenting the collected data; some ethical considerations; assumptions; limitations; and delimitations.

In chapter four the review of the literature on comprehensive schooling is presented. The review is delimited to discussions about what constitutes comprehensive secondary education and discussions about the nature of the concept of equality of educational opportunity. A review of the reorganization of secondary schools along comprehensive lines in some selected countries is also included.

To contextualize the policy ends put forth in the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization,' the development of primary and secondary education policies since the turn of the century is described in chapter five. Also, the secondary school reorganization which has taken place is described in this review.

Chapter six describes the substantive problem in the development of secondary education policies in Iceland. It describes the policy ends put forth in the Bill and the issues related to the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill. The major elements put forth in the Bill are presented under these headings: (1) resource elements; (2) distributional elements; (3) curriculum elements; and (4) methodological elements. The issues which are related to the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill are presented under these categories: (1) procedural difficulties; (2) centralization-decentralization; (3) coordination of the traditional school types; (4) accountability; (5) reconciliation of vocational and academic education; and (6) the hidden policy.

In chapter seven, the formal problem in the development of comprehensive secondary education policies in Iceland is specified and defined. The study concludes with recommendation for a resolution of the problematic situation the development of secondary education policies in Iceland. The recommendations aredelimited to the following: (1) recommendations regarding the acceptance of the Bill or a 'frame' policy for the secondary school level as a whole, and (2) to recommendations for further research. Brief reflections on the value of the interpretive and critical perspective developed for the study are outlined at the end of the chapter.

Chapter II

Problem Conceptualization

The purpose of this chapter is to develop a research perspective for the study. It includes an investigation into the ontological and epistemological underpinnings for conceptualizing public policy as well as an investigation into the nature and characteristics of public policy, pointing out some special features of education as public policy.

A. Justification

Regarding the usefulness and the validity of the various research orientations as well as the nature of knowledge, Morgan (1983:380) speculates whether we should "attempt to evaluate assumptions, search for common ground, adopt a criterion of usefulness, engage in dialectics, or decide that anything goes." Acknowledging Feyerabend's (1975) methodological anarchism which includes that 'anything goes,' Morgan (1983:390) concludes that there is no "authoritative point of reference for judging the merits of different approaches." Therefore, there is no one 'best way' to conduct research and generate knowledge. Morgan's (1983:380) solution in avoiding this relativism is to adopt a "conversational method of inquiry" where the various research strategies are evaluated by exploring their potential and limitations. In Morgan's (1983:381-2) words:

> By using conversation to explore the assumptions that guide inquiry, presenting one's own position and listening to others or by presenting what we see as each other's position, we move beyond reproduction of the differences that divide us to an appreciation of why we are divided. In doing so, we arrive at the only powerful means of assessing the nature and limitations of research practice - by acquiring a capacity for knowing what we are doing, why we are doing it, and how we might do it differently if we so choose.

Hence, this reflective method suggests the notion that we as researchers have a choice but we must extensively rationalize the selection of our ultimate choice. "The call for reflective conversation to improve social research, is not a call to produce uniformity so much as to promote improved diversity" (Morgan, 1983:406).

As stated earlier, in this study the qualitative orientation which is interpretive and critical in nature is based on the assumption that policy problems "have no existence apart

from the individuals and groups who define them" (Dunn, 1981:99). However, all official policies have a history; they reflect the political, economic and moral structures of the social world. Thus, the ideologies and social structures in which an actor is embedded reflect his or her perspective and understanding of a given problem or issue. The essence of all research orientations, however, is grounded in some ontological and epistemological assumptions regarding human nature.

B. Epistemology

Positivistic epistemology which has been characteristic of most inquiry in the social sciences has, come under severe criticism in recent years (Taylor, 1977:101). In the area of education, Bogdan and Biklen (1982:xii) point out that "[e]ducational research is changing" and that research in education has been dominated by positivistic methodologies, and alternative approaches often considered irrelevant and without merit. Logical positivism, as originated in Comte and developed in the Vienna Circle, as well as later positivism developed by Popper, both aim at unifying the method of all 'scientific' inquiry, whereas in the interpretive and critical approaches, the difference between the material and the social sciences is emphasized (Benton, 1977).

The difference between traditional positivistic approaches which rely on deductive logic, and the interpretive and critical approaches which rely on both deductive and inductive logic, is perhaps best described in terms of 'methodological' differences. In the traditional approaches, theory construction and testing of hypotheses is regarded as the same procedure in the natural and the social sciences. In the interpretive critical approaches, the emphasis is on describing and explaining social facts or knowledge that is taken for granted in the traditional approaches (Ritzer, 1975:109). On the other hand, these social facts are seen as existing within a particular social context that maintains some ideological purpose and commitment. Thus the relationship between 'fact' and 'value' is seen as an epistomological problem where the "stance of neutrality is itself a value stance" (Popkewitz, 1984:2). Fischer (1980:2) comments regarding this problem:

> The fact-value separation is based on positivism's adherence to the metaethical theory known as "value noncognitivism." According to this theory, value judgements are essentially emotional responses to life conditions. As subjective commitments, they contain no verifiable truth content.

Objective knowledge, therefore, "must be verifiable by formal scientific methods" (Fischer, 1980:2). However, as Fischer (1980:2) points out in the context of policy analysis: "[p]ublic policies are essentially political agreements designed for the practical world of social action where facts and values are inextricably interwoven." Accordingly, it is impossible to separate facts and values in policy analysis without distorting the basic purpose of a given policy. Hodgkinson (1982:104) comments that "the world of fact is given and ... the world of value is made." However, some meaning or value is necessarily tied to facts, because otherwise facts alone are "likely to be trivial or irrelevant" (Greenfield, , 1984:10). As described by Fischer (1980:46) "values are part of the conceptual system (or world view) employed in constructing - and reconstructing - the social world of which they are a part." Thus, the 'value cognitivism' of positivism is seen as deficient and the 'subjective commitments' become the focus of inquiry.

C. Ontological Assumptions

Epistemologies, or the philosophical foundations of all research methodologies, are based on ontological assumptions regarding human nature. The ontological view of a researcher determines his or her viewpoint on social reality and, therefore, the nature of the research he or she conducts.

In the positivist approaches, consciousness is considered as data made of sense perception from the world external to the individual. Reality, as it appears in consciousness, is not an individual creation; rather, the world 'out there' imposes itself on individual consciousness. Reality exists outside of individuals and has existence prior to people's consciousness (Burrell and Morgan, 1979:4). Accordingly, studies within this domain emphasize the production of "generalizable knowledge based on systematic, comparative, replicative observation and measurement" similar to that of investigations in the natural

sciences. (Morgan, 1983:394).

As stated above, the propositions of positivism have been challenged in the academic literature by various qualitative researchers, such as phenomenologists, interpretive philosophers and sociologists, and critical theorists. In particular, the ontological premise of positivism has been attacked on the grounds that social facts are taken for granted and that the process should be reversed: experience of facts as they appear in consciousness should be the focus of investigation (Ritzer, 1975:2). In other words, the advocates of interpretive approaches examine reality as it appears in the consciousness in the form of ideas. These ideas are "regarded as artificial creations whose utility is based upon their convenience as tools for describing, making sense of and negotiating the external world" (Burrell and Morgan 1979:4). Consequently, reality is seen as a product of the individual consciousness, having no meaningful existence outside one's consciousness. However, to avoid this solipsist view, in the more critical domain of the interpretive approaches "[c]onsciousness is [seen as] internally generated but influenced by the forms which it assumes through the process of objectivication and the dialectic between subjective and objective worlds" (Burrell and Morgan, 1979:298). As Heydebrand (1983:308) observes, social reality is a "concrete process of historical emergence in which practical human activity continuously produces and reproduces the material, social, and cultural world in which we live." Thus, human beings may be seen as "makers of meaning" where symbolic cultural orders are inhabited through history (Jennings, 1983:27).

Public schooling policies, therefore, can be seen as manifest ideas or cultural or political artifacts as experienced by people where the various policy elements are grounded in the history of schooling. These mainifest artifacts, however, are created by politicians to achieve some desired ends. Consequently, as pointed out by Bates (1984:75), the purpose of the interpretive and critical approaches is to "explicate and penetrate" and treat as problematic "the rationalizations and justifications ... which sustain the apparent regularities of social life."

D. The Nature of Public Policy

The main task of governments is often described as being to control and organize society, using policies for these purposes. Therefore, generally, public policy can be seen as "what governments choose to do or not to do" (Dye 1981:1). Many other definitions of public policy are provided in the policy literature. Easton (1953) sees policy as "authoritative allocation of values for the whole society" (quoted in Dye 1981:1). This definition refers more to the character of a policy, rather than actually describing what it is. The definition provided by Lasswell and Kaplan (1970), who see policy as "a projected program of goals, values and practices," by comparison to the definitions above, describes more what policy is rather than what it does (quoted in Dye 1981:2). However, from an interpretive and critical point of view, public policies can be seen as official manifestations of ideas, or cultural or political artifacts that politicians create and agree on as guidelines for controlling and organizing society. The policy ends put forth in public policies, therefore, reflect the social, the political and the economic context of policy makers; they are best described as human constructs or artifacts, created by politicians, grounded in their experience and vision of the world. Greenfield's (1979:98) terminology in this context is appropriate: public policies are manifestations of public acts, where politicians "accept sets of ideas as fit and proper guides for their own behaviour and that of others."

E. Characteristics of Public Policy

Mitchell (1984:138) states that the "essential meaning of the term 'policy' arises from its role in resolving the two fundamental human conditions of scarcity and conflict." Accordingly, additional characteristics to that of allocating values have been identified by authors in the area, characteristics such as whether policies are regulative, distributive or redistributive in nature (Yeakey 1983:257).

The regulatory characteristic is perhaps the most visible and common to most policies. Most governmental policies that are put forth in the form of laws and regulations are

regulatory in the sense that they give official guidelines of interaction, either between people or between people and institutions. Distributive policies, on the other hand, "grant goods and services to specific segments of the population" (Frohock 1979:13). Health and welfare policies are an example of policies that are distributive in nature. Educational policies that are distributive in nature are, for example, policies regarding disabled students who receive special treatment or services based on equity considerations. Frohock (1979:13) describes redistributive policies as "aim[ing] at rearranging one or more of the basic schedules of social and economic rewards." In other words, redistributive policies involve an equalizing function of some goods or services. Typical examples are tax laws which are progressive in nature. Publicly funded educational systems that do not charge tuition fees are an example of redistributive policies in the area of education. Policies that advocate egalitarianism can also be seen as redistributive in nature.

Public policy can furthermore be characterized by whether it is active or passive. Active policies "may involve overt governmental action to affect a particular problem; passively it may involve a decision by government officials not to take action" (Yeakey 1983:257). Excluded from these characteristics, however, is the uniqueness of education as public policy.

Kerr (1976:47) observes that "in order to be engaged in education one must be trying to develop at least some belief, attitude, skill, disposition, value, understanding, or taste." In other words, education is a normative undertaking designed to achieve some desired ends. Thus, by identifying some presuppositions of this general definition of education as public policy, Kerr (1976:53) points out:

> [T]he policies that are necessary to the systematic conduct of education are content or curricular policies, methodological policies, resource policies, and distributional policies.

'Curriculum policy' is the policy "that guides the selection of content;" 'methodological policies' are the policies that guide or regulate "the manner in which one attempts to develop the selected content;" 'resource policies' refer to the "institutional arrangements that provide the immediate context for the conduct of education;" and 'distributional policies' are the

policies "that regulate the distribution of educational benefits" (Kerr, 1976:48-52). The resource and distributional policies identified by Kerr (1976) can be seen as an integral part of the general features of public policy, whether it be educational or not. On the other hand, the methodological or pedagogical policies and the curriculum or content policies can be seen as distinctive to education. These normative features or characteristics are psychological and philosophical in nature. The content is selected and justified with regard to the policy ends to be achieved and the methodological or pedagogical are the ways the content is structured and expressed. Although all these features are political in nature, the pedagogical and curriculum features are in most cases less politically sensitive than the other features. Because of ideological reasons and because of scarcity of resources, the distributive, redistributive or resource policy features are more politically sensitive and likely to create more political dispute. The problem of reorganizing secondary schools along comprehensive lines, can therefore be seen more as a political problem rather than an educational problem. However, the general description of policy by Allison (1983:1) provides a summary of the characteristics of public policy:

> Policy is a primary organizational imperative. It defines the fundamental purpose, direction and values of an organization. It places limits on the decisions and actions of members. Administrators, then, are intimately concerned with policy.

This description is closely connected with Dye's general definition of public policy. Excluded from these definitions, however, is the nature of policy itself. A definition including the nature and characteristics of public policy might be: public policies are political and historical artifacts which include some elements of patterns of action to achieve some desired ends.

F. Policy Analysis

Dror (1971:63-73) contributes two important concepts to the area of policy analysis: megapolicies and metapolicies. These two concepts provide a basis for conceptualizing what 'aspect' of policy analysis is under discussion. "Megapolicies involve determination of the postures, assumptions and main guidelines to be followed by specific policies" (Dror 1971:63), and metapolicies are "studies on the making of policies on how to make policies"

(Dror 1975:14). Policy analysis can thus be seen as twofold. In the first place, the policies themselves and their context are under examination, and secondly there is the emphasis on 'effectiveness' or improving the policy making process through the investigation of the decision-makers involved in the making of policies. In this study, the focus is on both these aspects of policy analysis.

This wide range of inquiry makes the 'discipline' of policy analysis difficult to define, but Dunn (1981:35) provides a general but useful definition:

> Policy analysis is an applied social science discipline which uses multiple methods of inquiry and argument to produce and transform policy-relevant information that may be utilized in political settings to resolve policy problems.

When emphasizing the use of policy sciences for solving policy problems, an important element in such a task is the understanding and conceptualization of the policy problem. Dye (1981:14) informs us that "policy analysis deals with very 'subjective' topics and must rely on interpretation of results." In other words, policy analysis is not a value-free undertaking, and as described by Dye (1981:15-16):

> Understanding public policy is both an "art" and a "craft." It is art because it requires insight, creativity, and imagination in identifying societal problems and describing them, in devising public policies which might alleviate them, and then, in finding out whether these policies end up making things better or worse. It is a craft because these tasks usually require some knowledge of economics, political science, public administration, sociology, law, and statistics. Policy analysis is really a subfield of all these traditional academic disciplines.

Bardes and Dubnick (1980:103) agree with Dye's position. They (1980:103) say that "the task of public policy analysis goes beyond merely 'knowing the facts' about government statement or action," and "understanding ... involves the processing of known facts." Similarly, Mitchell (1984:138) observes that to know "that policy has its origins in scarcity and conflict does not help much until mechanisms for limiting the effects of these conditions are known" and he also states that "it is necessary to have a sociopolitical theory that specifies methods for their amelioration." Hence, the critical orientation in this study emphasizes reflection when 'processing' these historical 'facts' or perspectives regarding the problematic situation. As described by Dallmayr and McCarthy (1977:290): "[I]n critical reflection we can reject as well as accept the validity claims of tradition." To reflect on the

'tradition' and historical development of secondary schools in Iceland as well as the reorganization along comprehensive lines, thus, may reveal some taken for granted assumptions which may underly the problematic situation.

G. Perspective

Human beings do not exist in a social or a historical vacuum; they exist among other human beings in an established institutional context. Thus, their vision of the world, their 'lifeworld,' is both historically and socially 'determined.' Every person constructs his or her own world, schemes or perspectives, grounded in the history and experiences of others.

From an interpretive point of view, Wagner (1970:16) comments that the world is "prestructured for the individual":

> The individual takes the social world around him as much for granted as the existence and use or avoidance of natural objects or animals found in his natural environment. This world, then, is given to him. Given to him, with it, are the interpretations of the manifold phenomena, relationships, and so forth, of the social world, as developed by the cultural 'in-group'. ... This world view contains not only the broad interpretation of the place of the community among other human communities and in the realms of nature, cosmos, and the supernatural, but also the many customs and norms regulating human conduct, plus the many recipes for practical behavior in social as well as technical matters.

This description of one's life-world as socially constructed is conceptualized through the term 'intersubjectivity': one's life-world or fundamental reality is socially constructed, that is "we, the actors on the social scene, experience the world we live in as a world both of nature and of culture, not as a private one, but as an intersubjective one, ... as a world common to all of us" (Schutz, 1977:220). Wagner (1970:319) describes intersubjectivity as follows:

> Intersubjectivity [is a] category which, in general, refers to what is (especially cognitively) common to various individuals. In daily life, a person takes the existence of others for granted. He reasons and acts on the self-understood assumption that these others are basically persons like himself, endowed with consciousness and will, desires and emotions. The bulk of one's ongoing life experiences confirms and reinforces the conviction that, in principle and under 'normal' circumstances, persons in contact with one another 'understand' each other at least to the degree to which they are able to deal successfully with one another.

In other words, common knowledge involves that we as human beings learn and remember concepts and ideas that constitute our life-world and through interaction with other people we

share our understandings of similar or the same phenomena; my life-world has many similarities to other people's life-worlds, particularly if our biographical histories and experiences are similar. The interpretive schemes of a person's life-world are derived from his or her own understanding of a given reality and also from others with whom he or she interacts. Bernstein, (1976:145) describes the conceptualizations of this process as the "reciprocal relation between the ways I interpret my own action and the action of others." Schutz (in Schutz and Luckmann, 1973:243) when discussing the subjective stock of knowledge as socially conditioned says:

> The fact that everyday life world is not a private, but rather an intersubjective and thereby a social reality, has a series of extremely important consequences for the constitution and structure of the subjective stock of knowledge. Because an individual is born into a historical social world, his biographical situation is, from the beginning, socially delimited and determined by social givens that find specific expressions.

From a more critical stance, however, an actor's subjective stock of knowledge or socially situated perspective is treated as problematic; the descriptions of one's experience of society are put in a socio-political context. As pointed out by Sharp and Green (1975:30) "[i]ntersubjectivity and the surface structure of meaning" are discussed in relation to the more macro structures which underly the surface structures. However, as Sharp and Green (1975:30) assert:

> This should not imply that we should only produce theories of 'objective' reality, but that we should see the 'objective' worlds 'out there' as on the one hand mediated by consciousness and, on the other hand setting limits to the boundaries of objective possibility.

Thus, historical and ideological factors are ontologically prior to one's understanding of a given phenomenon. However, our understanding and the historical factors are interrelated: "individuals and groups create their own world and history under conditions produced in their historical past" (Heydebrand, 1983:308). Benson (1983:332) comments in this context:

> The process through which people create a social world involves enactment of practices within the context and under the constraint of previously constructed practices. The constructions are shaped by social locations, interests, and constraints or limits. Practices are not merely objective phenomena (as in a set of externally observable routines), but are enactments involving subjectively and intersubjectively shared meanings, purposes, and assumptions.

Therefore, the development and organization of educational systems is not an accidental

occurrence. The development is based on political and socio-economical realities which shape the system and the general policy ends to be achieved. Similarly, the policy ends, purposes, and assumptions may change as a result of changes in the socio-economic environment and the pedagogy of schooling.

Thus, examining the development of secondary schools historically contextualizes these purposes and assumptions. An investigation of this type, by thematizing the significant issues when secondary schools are reorganized along comprehensive lines, also reveals some underlying ideological patterns and assumptions. Furthermore, reflecting on some of these patterns and assumptions may lead to a structuring of the inherent policy problem(s) in the reorganization of secondary schools and provide a basis for recommendations related to the acceptance of the Bill.

H. Summary and Synthesis

The purpose of this chapter was to establish a framework for the conceptualization of public policies from an interpretive and critical point of view. It included an investigation into the epistemological and ontological underpinnings when conceptualizing public policy, resulting in discussions of the nature and characteristics of public policy, pointing out some special features of education as public policy. The 'subjective' nature of policy analysis was discussed with regard to the interpretive and critical orientation adapted for the study. It was argued that public policies can be seen as political artifacts grounded in the political, economic, and moral structures of the social world. It was also argued that the institutional context of schooling is historically and socially determined, and people's ideas and understandings were seen as intersubjective typifications grounded in history and experiences of others. The desired ends in education, which are practical in nature, were seen as involving some normative guidelines regarding the relationships between individuals and society. These ends were regarded as involving a development of certain skills, tastes, beliefs, or attitudes; on the one hand, good for the individual, and on the other hand good for society as a whole. It was also pointed out that these ends or policy characteristics, purposes, and assumptions may

change in accordance with changes in the socio-economic environment and the pedagogy of schooling.

The discussion of the interpretive and critical views adopted for the study involves two implicit methodological procedures for examining public policies. Firstly, it involves a case study approach, where qualitative data are collected regarding a policy problem or issue. Public policies as well as their context, are under examination; conflicting understandings and assumptions regarding the problem or issue are examined and synthesized. Secondly, it involves an emphasis on the normative nature of public policies. Facts and values are seen as interwoven and treated as problematic. Thus, the assumptions and understandings are put in a socio-political context, where surfaced and synthesized validity claims are reflected upon critically, leading to a 'convincing' structuring of the problem at hand.

Chapter III

The Nature of This Study

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodological procedures developed for the study. It includes a description of the overall research approach, validity and reliability, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations.

A. Case Study Approach

Greenfield (1975:85) says that within the qualitative domain, "theory and methodology must be closely associated." In other words, when conducting qualitative research a theory which is 'grounded' in the data develops (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and brings sense and clarification to the data. As pointed out by Greenfield (1975:85), "the case study and comparative and historical methods become the preferred means of analysis." Bogdan and Biklen (1982:58) describe a case study as a "detailed examination of one setting, or single subject, or one single depository of documents, or one particular event." Furthermore, Bogdan and Biklen(1982:58) point out that there are numerous case studies which vary in their complexity, such as: "Historical Organizational Case Studies," "Observational Case Studies," "Life History, "and "Multi-Site Studies." The case study approach characteristic for this study is likely best described as a combination of the historical case study and the multi-site study approach. Bogdan and Biklen (1982:59) describe the historical case study approach in the following:

> These studies concentrate on a particular organization over time, tracing the organization's development. ... You will rely on data sources such as interviews with people who have been associated with the organization, observations of the present (organization), and existing written records.

The multi-site study elements which characterize this study, are the sampling techniques and the analytic induction approach where "some specific problem, question, or issue becomes the focus of research" (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982:66). The 'snowball sampling technique' (to ask the first person identified and interviewed to recommend others) and the 'purposeful

sampling' technique (to choose particular subjects because of their expert knowledge) were employed to select the members of the 'interest groups' to be interviewed. Bogdan and Biklen (1982:66-7) comment regarding the snowball sampling technique that when the first respondents have been identified and interviewed and a 'theme' or a theory begins to develop, it is important to "provide examples of negative cases" which bring new additional aspects to the evolving theory which is grounded in the data. Regarding purposeful sampling, Bailey (1982:99) comments that "the researcher uses his or her own judgement about which respondents to choose, and picks only those who best meet the purposes of the study."

B. General Strategy

As stated earlier, the 'Bill on Secondary School Reoganization' in Iceland has been proposed six times during the period from 1976-1977 to 1982-1983 without passage and at the same time some of the major policy ends put forth in the Bill have been implemented. Thus, the purpose of this study is to establish a definition of this 'problematic situation' by a structuring of the major policy problems inherent in this process. The emphasis is to identify, describe, and critically discuss the policy ends put forth in the Bill and the issues related to the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill, leading to recommendations of what could or should be done. Two major questions were designed to guide the inquiry: "What major policy ends are put forth in the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' in Iceland?" and "In what fashion do interest groups account for the repeated non-acceptance of the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' in Iceland?"

The inquiry or formulation of questions is shaped by the horizon of the inquirer. Some understanding in a given area is necessary in order to formulate and ask questions regarding that area: "to understand a question means to ask it" (Gadamer, 1984:338). Accordingly, following the review of the literature on comprehensive secondary schooling, a brief examination of the historical development of the educational system in Iceland is provided. The review of the literature was guided by the question: "What are the major elements that constitute comprehensive secondary education and why has secondary school

reorganization along comprehensive lines been a problem in the countries selected for review in this study?" The examination of the historical development was guided by the question: "What are the major elements in the development of Icelandic education policies that influenced the reorganization of the secondary school level?" This literature review guided the interviews of the selected interest group members and the examination of the historical development contextualized the policy ends put forth in the Bill and some of the major issues at stake. The data collected for the overall study came from three general sources: official documents, interviews and questionnaires. The identification of the policy ends put forth in the Bill and the issues related to the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill were guided by the following questions.

Question One.

> What major policy ends are put forth in the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' in Iceland?

The analysis and presentation of the major policy ends put forth in the Bill is guided by the presuppositions of education as public policy as identified by Kerr (1976:53) who argues that policy elements "necessary to the conduct of education are content or curriculum policies, methodological policies, resource policies, and distributional policies." Thus, in this part, the major data source is the most recent version of the Bill; however, supplemented with older versions of the Bill and parliamentary documents.

Question Two.

> In what fashion do interest groups account for the repeated non-acceptance of the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' in Iceland?

The insights gained from the inquiry in question one along with the review of the literature on secondary schooling guided the interviews of the selected interest group members as well as the collection and the analysis of the relevant documents and parliamentary discussions. The members of the selected interest groups included politicians who have shown special interest in the issue; department heads within the Ministry of Education; principals from selected

grammar and secondary schools; and a few other relevant individuals.

The reason for including the politicians and some of the department heads within the Ministry was their involvement in the policy making process, whereas the principals, who in most cases are also teachers, are the stakeholders of the policy. The other relevant individuals were either stakeholders or connected with the policy making process.

In addition to the interviews of the selected interest group members, two questionnaires were administered. First, a questionnaire was sent to those principals of grammar schools and comprehensive secondary schools who were not interviewed. This questionnaire contained some open-ended questions which were primarily designed to test the theories that developed from the interview and the document data. Similarly, a questionnaire was sent to a sample of grammar and comprehensive secondary school students. The primary purpose of this questionnaire was to test insights gained from the data and inquire about the status of the two school types from the students' viewpoint.

All the data collected are analysed to search for themes or patterns. First, the policy ends put forth in the Bill are thematized, guided by the presuppositions of education as public policy, identified by Kerr (1976). Second, the data are analyzed to search for themes or patterns that describe the substantive problem in the reorganization of secondary schools. Finally, the question "What are the major policy problems inherent in the development of comprehensive secondary education policies in Iceland?" is used as a guide in the problem structuring process where the significant policy ends and issues at stake are reflected upon in relation to current and future socio-economic context of secondary schooling in order to specify the formal problem. More precisely, some of the significant policy ends to be achieved, along with some educational and administrative issues related to the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill are reflected upon by critically discussing these issues in relation to more administrative or socio-economic structures which may underly these issues.

C. Validity, Reliability

In the social sciences, validity as a descriptive construct is generally seen as referring to whether an inquiry or a measurement captures or successfuly measures the phenomena under investigation.

Validity. LeCompte and Goetz (1982:32) point out that "validity is concerned with the accuracy of scientific findings." Accordingly, the underlying conception of validity can be captured in the question 'How do you know?' or, as Lincoln and Guba (1985:290) put it: "[h]ow can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences ... that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?"

Analytically, validity has been categorized as 'internal' or 'external': distorting effects on an inquiry or a measurement from some internal factors is referred to as internal validity, whereas external validity refers to the generalizability of findings of a study to other settings (Baily, 1982:72). Generally, in the conventional behavioural approaches the internal/external validity problem is mostly dealt with in the research design.

In the qualitative approaches, which in most cases rely on case study procedures for data collection, the major emphasis is on as little distortion as possible of the phenomena under investigation. The emphasis is not on operationalizing some key concepts to examine the problem at hand, rather the emphasis is on describing the problem and to develop a theory which is grounded in the data in order to explain it. Thus, within the qualitative domain of inquiry, a 'thick' description of the phenomena under study is seen as more appropriate than applying a preconceived model which can result in a distortion of the phenomena or perhaps not dealing with it at all. However, the problem of internal/external validity in the qualitative approaches has been reconceptualized by Lincoln and Guba (1985:290-331) as the problem of credibility and transferability.

Viewing reality as socially constructed, an investigation into a given phenomena involves describing and generating a grounded theory where the interpretations and the presentations of the findings are regarded as credible and presenting a fair and acceptable picture of the phenomena or problem at hand. LeCompte and Goetz (1982:31) comment in

this context that "[r]egardless of the discipline or other methods used for data collection and analysis, all scientific ways of knowing strive for authentic results." Thus, to demonstrate the 'truth value' of qualitative data, the thematization and the presentation of the data must represent and be "credible to the constructors of the original multiple realities" from which the data was generated or to persons with some genuine knowledge in the area (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:296; Psathas, 1973:12).

To transfer and apply insights or findings which are based on qualitative data from one situation to another is described by Lincoln and Guba (1985:297) as depending "on the degree of similarity between sending and receiving contexts." They (1985:298) go on to say:

> The best advice to give to anyone seeking to make a transfer is to accumulate empirical evidence about contextual similarity; the responsibility of the original investigator ends in providing sufficient descriptive data to make such similarity judgements possible.

Thus, in contexts which are demonstrably similar - the social realities and historical past are similar in the 'sending and the receiving context' - insights and understanding of the phenomena or problem at hand can be utilized from one setting to another.

Reliability. Stability of a measure or a finding constitutes what is meant by reliability in the social sciences: "the reliability of a measure is simply its consistency" (Bailey, 1982:79). In the conventional behavioural approaches the problem of relaiability is usually dealt with by designing the measuring instruments or devices in such a way that they measure the same phenomena at least twice. Statistical tests indicate the reliability of the instrument by correlating the same separate measures. Thus, similar to the validation procedures, the reliability problem is dealt with in the very design of the instrument or the measuring device.

In the qualitative approaches, the researcher is the 'instrument,' not some preconstructed, 'objective' measuring device as in the traditional approaches. The focus is on examining the phenomenon or problem at hand by describing and generating themes, or grounding theories in the data itself. In this regard, LeCompte and Goetz (1982:32) categorize the problem of reliability as 'external' and 'internal':

> External reliability addresses the issue of whether independent researchers would

> discover the same phenomena or generate the same constructs in the same or similar settings. Internal reliability refers to the degree to which other researchers, given a set of previously generated constructs, would match them with data in the same way as did the original researcher.

Thus, within the qualitative domain of inquiry, the reliability notion is regarded as increasingly problematic. Traditionally, the reliability problem has centered around the notion of internal reliability, and the external reliability notion has not been considered epistemologically problematic. The focus has been on method, and the understanding and the conception of the problem at hand has been taken for granted.

In the qualitative approaches, reality is seen as socially constructed; people's vision of the world is seen as socially and historically determined and typified. The world is seen as intersubjective; our understandings are shared of similar or the same phenomena, particularly if our histories and social contexts are similar. Thus, whether my conception, interpretation or grounded theory will be similar to someone else's in the same or similar settings, or whether somone else would reanalyze my data and reach similar conclusions, can be seen as a part of the validity/credibility notion: "there can be no validity without reliability" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:316). If the 'truth value' of the data is credible, then the conception and understandings of the investigator and the independent examiner must be similar. Similarly, researchers with similar backgrounds in similar contexts focusing on a particular research problem, would likely generate similar findings, although the findings would not be exactly the same. However, the general validity and reliability of knowledge generated by qualitative methods can be determined by how credible it is. Instead of relying on method as the determinant of credibility as in the 'hard' sciences and the behavioural sciences, the criterion is rather how convincing and acceptable the results are.

Validity and Reliability in this Study. As stated above, the major purpose of this study is to establish a definition of the 'problematic situation' in the development of secondary schools in Iceland. To ensure a credible and convincing structuring of the inherent policy problem(s) in this problematic situation, more than one method was used to collect and generate the 'necessary' empirical data. Lincoln and Guba (1985:290-301) suggest that there

are four criteria for judging trustworthiness or the validity and reliability of qualitative inquiry: (1) "credibility" which addresses the question of truth value of the inquiry, (2) "transferability" which addresses the question of applicability, (3) "dependability" which addresses the question of consistency, and (4) "confirmability" which addresses the question of neutrality. Lincoln and Guba (1985:301-331) suggest the use of a variety of techniques to meet these criteria, but because the same techniques can be used for many of the above criteria and that there "can be no validity without reliability," the focus in this study is on credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985:301-305) suggest three major techniques to increase and ensure credibility of qualitative research findings: "prolonged engagement," "persistent observation," and "triangulation."

1. 'Prolonged engagement' involves "the investment of sufficient time to achieve certain purposes," and be involved "sufficiently long to detect and take account of distortions that might otherwise creep into the data" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:301-2). In this study, some of the official documents and parliamentary discussions were gathered during the summer of 1984. These data were briefly examined during the fall of 1984 in addition to the comparative literature on secondary school reorganization along comprehensive lines. The interviews of selected interest parties/groups were conducted during the period of early September 1985 to the beginning of January 1986. The additional data relevant to the study were also collected during this period.
2. 'Persistent observation' along with prolonged engagement "is to identify those characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the problem or issue being pursued and focusing on them in detail" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:304). Along with the process of note taking and the writing extensive memos, some 'member check' procedures were sought. Firstly, the understanding, interpretations, and tentative 'theories' generated in one interview (document analysis) were tested in the next interview. The questionnaires served the same purpose. Secondly, 'peers' were consulted to get feedback on tentative emerging theories. Thirdly, two selected 'members' or respondents were asked to read over and comment on the credibility of the descriptive

chapters: the Department Head of Secondary and Further Education within the Ministry of Education who was a key person in the writing of the Bill, and the recently retired Deputy Minister of Education. Their comments included, for instance, "I think you describe well and accurately the overall development of of this issue, perhaps, sometimes in too great detail. Nowhere have I seen such a good synthesis of the development and discussions of the Bill on Secondary School Reorganization." "It seems that you describe well and accurately the factual elements in this development." "I think you draw a good picture of the tempestuous development of the Bill; whether it be due to either political storms or the lack of wind." Although not formally interviewed regarding the secondary schooling issue, a professor of sociology at the University of Iceland with experience in researching the Icelandic educational system was also asked to comment on the credibility of the findings. To this date (April 1987), no answer has been forthcoming.

3. 'Triangulation' is a method or rule which implies that multiple methods should be used to reveal as many features as possible of the empirical reality necessary for the development of theories grounded in the data. Denzin (1978:295) points out that "[n]ot only may observers triangulate by methodology; they may triangulate by data sources." In this study, triangulation of methodology was achieved through the employment of interviews, documents and questionnaires as different methods to generate data. Data triangulation in this study, which involves "explicitly searching for as many data sources as possible," is the search for the various types of documents as well as the purposeful and the snowball sampling procedures (Denzin, 1978:295).

These general techniques of prolonged engagement, persistent observation and triangulation are utilized to ensure the credibility of the findings and a convincing structuring of the policy problem in the development of secondary education policies in Iceland. The emphasis, however, is on the credibility of the results rather than the techniques employed.

D. Data Collection, Finding Respondents, Gaining Access

In line with a credible and convincing problem structuring, the data or the materials collected and generated for this study are mainly threefold: (1) official documents; (2) interviews; and (3) a questionnaire.

Documents

All official documents are historical in nature and as Borg and Gall (1979:373) point out; what distinquishes historical research from other types of educational research is that the researcher discovers and uses already existing data instead of creating it. Thus, all documents searched for, such as regulations, official records, laws, newspaper clippings and other existing information which are related to the question or research problem at stake are historical. In this study, the documents collected are of three general types: parliamentary documents, newspaper clippings, and documents from miscellaneous sources.

1. Parliamentary documents. The parliamentary documents collected were found in the parliamentary publication *Althingistidindi* which publishes documents like bills, supplementary documents that go along with billssuch as committee reports, and transcripts of parliamentary discussions.

   Each time the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' has been presented, information related to the Bill has been included in appendices to the Bill. Of particular importance to this study are the supplementary comments regarding the various sections or clauses (articles) of the Bill. The supplementary comments outline the rationale or provide additional information regarding the policy ends put forth in a given clause or section. Of importance are also the responses to the Bill before it was presented in Parliament in 1976-1977 from the various school people: superintendents, principals, and others. These responses are included in the appendices of the 1976-1977, 1977-1978, and 1978-1979 versions of the Bill. Most of these documents were collected from the Parliament Library during the summer of 1984 and the fall of 1985. However, letters were written in spring 1985 to the Government Press Secretary and the Parliamentary

Administrative Officer to request access to education committee minutes and other significant documents available since only the committee reports are available in the parliamentary publication *Althingistidindi*. The Administrative Officer forwarded the letter to one of the head librarians who indicated in his response that committee minutes only consisted of attendance lists and the time and place of the meetings. He also indicated that all parliamentary documents are published in *Althingistidindi*.

2. Newspaper clippings. Borg and Gall (1979:163) describe education as a "topic of wide general interest" and thus written about in "popular magazines and newspapers." Of special interest for this study are newspaper articles, news releases and editorials to be found in some of the four major newspapers in Iceland. Each major political party publishes and distributes a newspaper and the fifth major newspaper, the evening newspaper, is 'sometimes' classified as without any specific political affiliations, although often the editors have been members of the Conservative party. Old newspapers are available in most major libraries in Iceland for public use. A letter was written in spring 1985 to the Teachers' College Library to inquire whether the library collected newspaper articles concerning education. The response from the head librarian indicated that such a collection was available. However, a complete collection of newspaper clippings on education was only available from 1982 through newspaper clippings services. Before 1982 clippings had not been systematically collected by the Library itself. Despite this, the collection from 1976 to 1982 was relatively comprehensive, and during the fall of 1985 relevant clippings from both collections were photocopied.

3. Documents from miscellaneous sources. The documents classified as miscellaneous are neither parliamentary documents nor newspaper clippings. Documents from Reykjavik Central Office were identified and collected by examining the Reykjavik School Board minutes. Reports from the Ministry were identified and collected by examining summary reports of Ministry publications. Department heads contacted within the Reykjavik Central Office and the Ministry also provided useful suggestions regarding available documents. Similarly, relevant and available documents from respondents were collected

during the interviews. These include speech manuscripts, memos, proposals, curriculum guides, yearbooks, and so forth. Some statistical information was obtained from the Statistical Bureau of Iceland and from administrative officers within the Ministry. Conference reports were collected from the Federation of University Trained Personnel, the Association of Secondary School Principals, and the People's Alliance Conference on Secondary Schooling.

Interviews

An essential part of data collection in most qualitative approaches is interviewing members of interest groups in the form of a dialogue between researcher and respondent. Bogdan and Biklen (1982:135) describe an interview as "a purposeful conversation, usually between two people ... that is directed by one in order to get information." In other words, the purpose of an interview is to gather descriptive data regarding the issue or the research problem at stake. Accordingly, the questions asked can range from open-ended unstructured, to semi-structured or structured questions. Similarly, Spradley (1979:60) points out some additional features: (1) "[i]nterview questions" enable "a person to collect an ongoing sample of informant's language;" (2) "[s]tructured questions" enable the researcher "to discover information about domains, the basic units in an informant's cultural knowledge;" (3) "[c]ontrast questions" enable the researcher to "find out what the informant means by the various terms" he or she uses.

In this study, an attempt was made to apply all of these general features of interviewing. However, since interviewing was used in conjunction with other data collection techniques, the interviews ranged from being semi-structured to structured, rather than open-ended, depending upon the context. As discussed earlier, the theoretical sampling procedures for identifying the potentially significant respondents are the 'purposeful' and the 'snowball' sampling techniques.

Gorden (1980:71) points out that successful interviewing depends on "who asks who what questions, when, where, and why." Gorden (1980:71-72) suggests that the relationship

between interviewer, respondent, and question can be manipulated by the interviewer's behavior to a limited extent after the interview has begun" and much of this "relationship is determined before" the interview. He (1980:72) states:

> These "predetermined" relationships include such things as the time and place of the interview, the sponsoring organization, the combination of interviewer and respondent, the potential threat of failure to preserve the respondent's anonymity, or the respondents ability to understand the potential value of the study for which the interview is being done.

In overcoming some of these elements, Gorden (1980:720 suggests selecting respondents who are the most "able and willing" to give relevant information. An examination of the parliamentary discussions in *Althingistidindi* which were collected during summer 1984 revealed which politicians had shown special interest in the issue. The names of the administrators/department heads within the Ministry of Education who were involved or responsible for the writing of the Bill were identified in documents included in appendices of every version of the Bill.

In order to gain access and establish relationships, letters were written during the winter and spring of 1985 to the significant politicians (current or previous members of parliament) and department heads within the Ministry, indicating the research interests and asking whether they would be willing to cooperate and be interviewed regarding the secondary schooling issue. Ten out of thirteen politicians and department heads responded and indicated willingness to cooperate in the study. The ones who did not respond were contacted by telephone during the fall of 1985. All three agreed to participate in the study. However, out of the thirteen contacted, interview sessions were only conducted with ten due to incompatible time schedules. Two out of these three are politicians and one is a department head within the Ministry of Education.

A coalition government of Conservatives and Progressives has been in power since 1983, with the Conservatives controlling the Ministry of Education. During the fall of 1985, most of the conservative ministers were transferred between ministries, including the Minister of Education. This Minister, which was one of the three excluded from the sample, could not attend the prearranged interview session because of other commitments, but sent her assistant

as a replacement. The new Minister of Education, shortly after taking over the Education Ministry, announced interest in the secondary schooling issue. This Minister was interviewed in late December. Similarly, a department head within the Ministry recently appointed by the newly transferred Minister of Education, was interviewed.

In most cases these interviews with the politicians took place in their offices or in conference rooms within the main building of Parliament. The interviews consisted of relatively structured questions and note taking. However, three sessions were tape recorded. The list of the persons interviewed is presented in Appendix A.

Similarly, during the fall of 1985 principals of some selected grammar and comprehensive secondary schools were contacted and interviewed. Generally, these principals were from the greater Reykjavik area. A few of the principals were contacted by mail, but in most cases the principals were contacted by telephone. Only one of the principals contacted could not be included in the sample due to incompatible time schedules. However, this principal, who is the principal of the first comprehensive secondary school established, mailed several manuscripts of convocation speeches and radio speeches. All of the interviews with the principals were tape recorded with the exception of one.

Within the last few years, a number of the original comprehensive secondary school principals outside greater Reykjavik have taken new jobs in the Reykjavik area and were thus readily accessible for interviewing. These principals are regarded as particularly important for the study because of their involvement in the establishment of the comprehensive secondary schools and the implementation of the comprehensive secondary schooling philosophy. As shown in Appendix A, a total of eleven secondary school principals were interviewed: six previous or present comprehensive secondary school principals, four grammar schools principals, and the principal of the Reykavik Trade School who is the president of the Association of Secondary School Principals and was a grammar school teacher for many years.

Questionnaire

Although there are some similarities between interviews and questionnaires, the major difference is perhaps "that the information one obtains [in a questionnaire] is limited to prearranged written responses of subjects to prearranged questions" (Selltiz, et al, 1959:238). Bailey (1982:156-7), however, points out some advantages of mailed questionnaires relevant for this study: "considerable savings of money;" "time savings;" "securing information" which "allows the respondent to consult his or her records;" and "accessibility."

From a triangulation point of view, the use of a questionnaire revealed and reinforced the features necessary for a convincing and credible description and theory grounded in the data. To distort these features or phenomena as little as possible, the use of a questionnaire for this study is regarded as supplementary to the other data collection methods used, rather than as a major data collection technique. At the end of the tentative analysis of most of the documents and interviews, two questionnaires were designed with some open-ended and semi-structured questions to further examine these insights or theories. First, a questionnaire was sent to those grammar and comprehensive secondary school principals not interviewed. Second, a questionnaire was sent to presidents of student councils in all of the grammar and comprehensive secondary schools. The inclusion of students allowed further inquiry about student related issues that grew out of the interview and the documentary data. The decision to delimit the sample of students to presidents of student councils was regarded as practical procedure based on the assumption that students who participate in school politics are more politically aware than other students.

In late November, questionnaires were sent to thirteen secondary school principals: four grammar school principals and nine comprehensive secondary school principals. To date, and despite a follow up letter in late December, only responses from two grammar school principals and four comprehensive secondary school principals have been received. On the other hand, nine out of nineteen questionnaires sent to presidents of student councils have been received; two from grammar school student council presidents and seven from comprehensive student council presidents.

The use of the questionnaire was only intended to supplement the interview and document data. The purpose of the questionnaire was also to gather information from principals outside the Reykjavik area.

E. Data Analysis and Presentation of Findings

Bogdan and Biklen (1982:145) comment that "[a]nalysis involves working with data, organizing it, breaking it into managable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others." This process, however, is not a distinct stage in the research, it is rather an ongoing process.

Thematizing the Data

In this study, human behaviour is seen as influenced by the social and the historical contexts in which it occurs. Focusing on the discovery of socially situated meanings regarding the secondary schooling issue in Iceland, the respondents' accounts will guide the thematization of the data, that is the way in which respondents describe and explain their understanding of the issue. Expressions are seen as 'indexical;' words, concepts, or ideas have meaning which relates to the particular situation in which it is being used, but this meaning is not explicit in the expression itself (Garfinkel, 1967:11). Attwell (1974:185) observes: "[a]ny piece of talk stands for or indexes more than it actually says." Thus, the thematization of the data involves clustering, synthesizing and interpreting the respondents' accounts according to indexicality: the surface or the underlying meta rules or ideas they have in common. As Taylor (1977:101) asserts, interpretation which is an essential part of thematization "aims to bring a light to an underlying coherence or sense." These procedures, however, are ongoing throughout the whole research process: "as we build knowledge structures to understand small pieces of data, we will eventually be able to link them up to show their relationships" (Agar, 1983:608). This approach which involves a constant comparison between the empirical and the conceptual is described by Glaser (1969:226) as follows:

> The constant comparative method raises the probability of achieving a complex theory which corresponds closely to the data, since the constant comparisons force considerations of much diversity in the data. By diversity, I mean that each incident is compared to other incidents or to properties of a category by as many of its similar and diverse aspects as possible.

Thus, a "theme is some concept or theory that emerges from .. [the] data" that can be "formulated at different levels of abstraction" (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982:173). This process which is both empirical and conceptual, requires a dialectical relationship between the two, however, ending at the conceptual.

As described earlier, the general strategy employed in this study is to examine and structure the problematic situation in secondary schooling in Iceland in three major phases: during phase one the 'nature' of the Bill is examined and contextualized with regard to the comparative and sociological literature; during phase two the interest groups' accounts regarding this problematic situation are analyzed and thematized; and during phase three the significant themes and issues at stake are critically discussed by the process of surfacing, challenging, and synthesyzing the policy ends put forth in the Bill and the issues related to the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill. Thus, a coding system to organize the data was developed when searching for patterns and regularities in the data. When the data collection was completed, this tentative categorization and thematization was improved and the data reexamined, resulting in a 'thick' description of the developed themes or theories. As Geertz (1973:28) observes: "[t]he aim is to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts; to support broad assertions ... by engaging them exactly with complex specifics."

Presentation of the Data

Spradley (1979:206) observes that "in all social sciences, the concern with the particular is incidental to an understanding of the general." Similarly, Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:213) note that without "detailed cultural descriptions and narratives, the substantive formal and theoretical statements would be empty." Thus, the developed themes in this study are described as 'thickly' as possible. An attempt is made to refer to as many

data sources as possible, selecting the 'best' for a convincing and credible description. Relevant contextual literature is included in the descriptions of some of the themes or theories to supplement the analysis.

The descriptions/accounts quotated from the data are presented in two major ways. First, short quotations from the data are included in the analysis forming a flowing paragraph with quotations incorporated into a sentence or paragraph. Second, longer examples are quoted from the data in support of the statements and the themes argued, thus separating data from analysis.

Defining the Problematic Situation

The organization and structure of educational systems reflect which ideologies are dominant in society since in "formal education ... there are built-in tendencies to propagate ideas which serve the existing society" (Allen, 1975:24). As Husen (1979:181) asserts, "education does not operate in a social vacuum" and the examination of the historical development of secondary schools reveals whose interests are being served at each given time. Thus, the analysis continues with regard to the socio-political literature. The 'validity claims of tradition,' as described in the thematic presentation of the policy ends put forth in the Bill and the major issues related to the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill are challenged and synthesized, resulting in a structuring of the 'problematic situation,' and leading to recommendations for future development of secondary schools.

Ethical Considerations

Emerson (1983:255) observes that "[i]n carrying out any field study researchers inevitably run up against a variety of confusing ethical dilemmas and thorny political issues." Denzin (1978:325) argues that "all sociological activity occurs within a context of shifting political pressures" and goes on to say regarding the ethical stance of sociological researchers:

> It is impossible not to take ethical and value stances in the process of research. When analysts choose to enter one social setting and not another, they have made an implicit value decision that one setting is better than the other for their purposes... Values and ethics are with sociologists at all times.

Thus, ethical problems are inherent in all research, and to be ethical "is to conform to accepted professional practices" (Bailey, 1982:427). 'Accepted professional practices,' however, are based on arguments which are grounded in philosophically justified moral principles such as 'equity' and 'respect for others' (Peters, 1969). For the social scientist, however, the general implications of these considerations are questions of "accountability" and "implications of findings" (Denzin, 1978:326). Accountability refers to the relationship between investigator and respondent: "[i]t is generally agreed that it is unethical for researchers to harm anyone in the course of research, especially if it is without the person's knowledge and permission" (Bailey, 1982:428). Similarly, accountability can involve unethical activities such as "presenting facts out of context, falsifying findings, or offering a misleading presentation of the findings" (Bailey, 1982:428). However, when structuring a study, the implications of the validity and reliability questions involve methodological considerations where ethical issues are accounted for as much as possible.

The ethical considerations regarding findings center around the question 'What is the stance of the researcher regarding implications of his findings?' or as Denzin (1978:326) comments from a sociological point of view:

> Are sociologists obligated to move into the outside world and actively promote social change? Or is their role more restricted, primarily involving their pursuit of knowledge?

Although there is no one 'right' answer to these questions, they seem interdependent; pursuing knowledge which is essential to all academic research results in some practical or theoretical implications. Hence, the question is rather what the researcher's role should be in promoting social change. Should it be active, moderate or passive? The answers to these questions are context bound; some findings are more crucial than others for the well being of people. Generally, however, all actions should involve as little harm as possible to the subjects at stake.

The data collected and generated for this study comes from three major sources: (1) official documents; (2) interviews; and (3) questionnaires. The interviews and the questionnaire were conducted on a voluntary basis. Prior to participation in the study, all

respondents were informed of the study purpose. Before each interview, handouts were given to the respondents, the first stating the study purpose and the second stating some ethical considerations. The covering letters sent along with the questionnaires also contained information about the study purpose and notes on potential ethical concerns. Furthermore, each respondent was asked whether or not he or she required anonymity and, if so, they were informed of the potential problems regarding anonymity and possible identification in the future. This can be a particular problem with persons who hold positions which make them easily identifiable, and to identify the positions is of significance for the study. However, none of the interviewed requested anonymity whereas two principals answering the questionnaire requested anonymity. Nevertheless, all these responses are treated with confidentiality and special emphasis is put on presenting all findings in context. Instead of using people's names, reference is made to generic titles like, a grammar school principal, department head within the Ministry, and so forth.

An opportunity was given to interviewees to make corrections or further elaborate on the transcribed interviews. Only three interviewees used this opportunity and only one returned a copy of the transcript with corrections for improvement. In addition to this, the problems of presenting 'facts' out of context, on falsifying findings, whether it be interview data or other data, is accounted for, by having two of the respondents and a university professor familiar with the subject read over and comment on the credibility of the findings. Furthermore, a log book was kept containing the 'raw' data sources enabling backup checks.

Regarding the findings of this study, which are assumed to be important for the development of secondary schooling in Iceland, the plan is to develop a report extracted from the thesis to be sent to some of the respondents: the politicians, administrators and principals. The report will contain the most significant findings along with some recommendations. Special emphasis will be on presenting the findings in such a way that as 'little harm' as possible will be done to respondents.

F. Assumptions

Qualititative research methodologies are based on several meta-theoretical assumptions about reality. Some of these assumptions have already been discussed in previous chapters. A few, however, require special attention:

1. An analysis of the policy on secondary school reorganization in Iceland is assumed to be important for the future development of secondary schools in Iceland.
2. The available data sources are assumed to be adequate to pursue the research in the manner outlined.
3. The qualitative research orientation is considered adequate for the conceptualization of the study process and to fulfill the study purpose.
4. The relationship between subjects and the researcher was assumed to be voluntary during interviews of members of the selected interest groups.

G. Limitations

The main limitations of the study are as follows:

1. The competence of the researcher to interview respondents, analyze the transcribed interviews, and translate relevant information from Icelandic to English. However, to overcome these limiting factors, a preliminary study was conducted where two selected persons, a fellow student and a professor of educational administation with experience regarding comprehensive secondary schoools, were interviewed and the interviews transcribed and analyzed. Regarding translation problems, consultants were sought.
2. The willingness of persons in the identified interest groups to be interviewed and their ability to recall events of significance.
3. The amount of information significant for the study available from documents. To the extent possible, to overcome this limiting factor, interview data were used to identify and provide the missing information.

H. Delimitations

The following considerations were used to delimit the scope of the study:

1. The historical and political development of the policy on secondary school reorganization in Iceland is only documented in general terms.
2. The time spent collecting data, both official documents and interviews of interest groups, is delimited to a four month period: the beginning of September 1985 to the early January 1986.
3. Only major participants and stakeholders were identified and interviewed.

I. Summary and Synthesis

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the methodological procedures developed for the study. The study was defined as a case study with some of the characteristics of historical and multi-site case study aproaches. The sampling procedures were described as a combination of the snowball sampling technique and the purposeful sampling technique. In order to ensure trustworthiness of the findings, research credibility was addressed by the use of the techniques of prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation.

Most of the data were collected during the period of September 1985 to January 1986 by the means of interviews, document analysis, and a questionnaire. Nine selected politicians, eleven grammar and comprehensive secondary school principals, and nine relevant others were interviewed. Most of the documents were in the form of parliamentary documents, ministry reports, conference reports, and newspaper clippings. The quesationnaire was sent to a few principals who were not interviewed and representatives of student unions, to double-check the theories and the themes that developed from the interview and the document data.

Chapter IV

The Comprehensive Movement

The purpose of this chapter is to review the nature of some of the major elements that constitute comprehensive secondary schooling and to inquire into why secondary school reorganization has been a problem in some countries.

A. Background Information

In the Random House Dictionary (1980:188) the word 'comprehensive' is defined as something "wide in scope or content." Husen (1975:117) points out that comprehensive schools signify different meaning to different people, although most of these variations of meaning involve schools that are wide in scope and content:

> We lack an international terminology in education, at least one that lends itself to a description of educational structures. To an Englishman, "comprehensive school" means a school offering the major secondary school programs under one roof. To an American, it denotes a secondary high school catering to all children drawn from a certain district and providing all kinds of programs. To a Swede, it signifies the basic, organizationally undifferentiated nine-year school. The term thus refers both to the elementary and secondary stage and is conceived by and large in the same way as was the *ecole unique* in France or the *Einheitsschule* in Germany in the educational debate after World War I.

The lack of international terminology is undeniable, yet Halsall (1973:2) suggests that if we go back in history the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution are watersheds in the social and educational history of the Western World. With the industrial revolution, the major changes in the function of the family were economic; the family changed from a self perpetuating economic unit, which served as a training ground, to a unit where these functions were minimal and mostly learned outside the family. Thus, development resulted in education which was 'societally' oriented rather than taken care of by individual households. Families, as such, lost their economic and welfare functions; the poor, the ill, the handicapped and education later, became community responsibilities.

Coleman (1974:4) points out that the "emergence of public, tax-supported education was not solely a function of the stage of industrial development": "[i]t was also a function of the class structure in society." The differences between the development in North America

and Europe were considerable in this respect; Europe had a strong traditional class structure but North America did not. Thus, the development of publicly supported schools designed for all classes became widespread and occured without major resistance in North-America, whereas in most of the European countries state support was not common until later.

The social changes following the industrial revolution put an increased emphasis on individual rights and duties which made it "[i]mprudent to use status by birth as an index of capacity for a function" as was characteristic in most European countries which had a strong traditional class structure (Halsall, 1973:2). Therefore, the publicly supported secondary school which was established as a result of these economic and social changes, was designed to educate and meet the needs of the working classes in a technologically developing world.

The traditional secondary school, *scola grammatica* - 'grammar schools' in Britain, or 'gymnasium' in most other European countries - was on the other hand founded during the Middle Ages. These schools were designed with academic emphasis for the upper layers of the social strata. Coleman (1974:4) points out that the growth of the schools which were privately run, "grew with the expansion of the mercantile class" which later became an integral part of the upper social strata:

> This class had both the need and resources to have its children educated outside the home, either for professional occupations or for occupations in the developing world of commerce. But the idea of general educational opportunity for all children arose only in the nineteenth century.

Halsall (1973:2-3) observes that these two movements, the traditional secondary school and the new secondary school, dominated secondary education in the nineteenth century and their "existence underlined the fact that there were two separate and parallel systems of education for different social classes." Halsall (1973:3) comments on the reasons for this development:

> An industrialized civilization could not manage without literate workers, including some of quite considerable knowledge, but the prejudice against the kind of knowledge required by the working class and the vast gulf that separated the social classes at the time ensured that the middle and the working classes would be educated in different school systems all over Europe.

To retain a separate school system of this nature is difficult in a growing industrial society which has to be mobile and demands a well educated workforce which is not found in

the upper layers of the social strata alone. Accordingly, this development resulted in the emergence of the idea of equality of educational opportunity where "arrangements began to be made for training the intellectually gifted children of the lower middle and working classes" (Halsall, 1973:3). As Shaw (1983:26) puts it, in the early years of the twentieth century selective schooling was justified by the 'principle' of equality of educational opportunity: "open competition for scarce opportunities."

In Britain, Rubinstein and Simon (1973:41) describe the implications of this development within the educational system:

> A system of 'objective' examinations determined who would gain these places, and, although the nature of this examination, or system of selection, varied from authority to authority, in general it comprised tests in intelligence, English and arithmetic so that ... those with the ability to profit from a grammar school education received one, while those shown to be without this ability received an education better adapted to their needs in a secondary modern school.

Therefore, in the nineteenth century the selection issue was at first characterized by social elitism. Along with social and economic changes at the turn of the century, the social elitism was replaced by intellectual elitism where students were selected or streamed into different educational directions based on test scores.

Despite the satisfaction with the increased in equality of educational opportunity that came along with open competition for scarce education opportunities, gradually this intellectual elitist system came to be regarded as inequitable. To stream students into the various school types on the grounds of their estimated level of intellectual ability was seen as unfair and intellectually elitist. As Shaw (1983:22-25) observes, this reactionary movement "was part of an attack upon selection ... and a part and parcel of an outlook described as the comprehensive philosophy or principle" where "opportunity [is] offered fairly and equally to all."

B. Equality of Educational Opportunity

When the meaning of equality of educational opportunity is reviewed, both the terms 'opportunity' and 'equality' need brief clarification. Lucas (1975:45) points out that to have

an opportunity to do something "is not to be able to do it, but to be able to try, though without any certainty of success." Equality of oportunity, on the other hand, involves a comparison. Are the rules the same or different when one is to be able to do something? Acknowledging Aristotle's analysis of equity, MacMahon (1982:16) states that equity is composed of the elements of "equal treatment of equals" and "unequal treatement of unequals." Burbulus, Lord, and Sherman (1982:171) observe that the inherent problem in this regard is the problem of categorization:

> A principle of treating equals equally, or unequals unequally, lacks significance until one has made clear in what respect the persons under consideration are equal or unequal and why such sameness or difference should be taken into account; treating unequals unequally is fair only under certain circumstances.

Hence, as Lucas (1975:45) points out "equality of opportunity tends to be applicable only in the context of a competition where a number of people are competing for the same good in accordance with rules which can be assessed as being equal or unequal."

When selection criteria like scores on examinations or performance on IQ tests are used as the basis or the rules for differentiating between students, the "interpretation of the notion of educational opportunity is to treat all those children of the same measured ability in the same way, irrespective of environmental factors" (Evetts, 1973:62). Husen (1979:78) describes this view as "conservative" and "meritocratic," where the "conception of the issue is that human abilities are almost entirely inherited and that differences in educational attainment and life concerns are largely accounted for by differences in cognitive abilities." Also, as Entwistle (1978:7) points out, this notion of equality of opportunity is closely connected with the idea of social mobility where the 'clever' students from the lower levels of the social strata have the opportunity for an enhanced social status and entry to the middle class "with its consequent social and economic reward." More egalitarian visions, however, involve an emphasis of the influence of environmental factors, pointing out the inequities of this meritocratic view.

The egalitarian view is often described as emphasizing equality of results rather than equality of input. As an example, it involves an emphasis on positive discrimination in favour of educationally underprivileged students; not on selection based on achievement or

merit. It is assumed that intelligence is randomly distributed and the task of the school is to equalize student differences which are due to environmental factors. As MacBeath (1976:11) observes, it was "implied that the educational race would no longer give a handicap start to the least privileged, and not even an equal start for all, but a head start to those whose inadequacies normally ensured that they ran perpetually in arrears." Hence, 'culturally deprived' students in the broadest sense are to be 'specially treated' to enhance their status and to provide increased equity within the educational system.

Evetts (1973:68) points out that the "contemporary ethos seems to hold little promise for those who seek .... egalitarian education structure." She (1973:68) asserts that "[e]qualizing educational opportunities must not involve equalizing end-products, for excellence and intellectual ability should always be positively valued." Similarily, Husen (1979:89) observes that the basic dilemma in achieving equality in education "is the fact that the educational system is there to impart competencies and therefore almost by necessity creates differences. Based on these concerns, Evetts (1973:68) points out, the rules for defining equality of educational oportunity have "now shifted towards efficiency as the main criterion."

Evetts (1973:69) observes that the efficiency notion involves making the most of the "supply of talent" or "pool of ability" in the current demands for equality of educational opportunity. She (1973:69) points out that the underlying idea is that talent or ability is genetically determined and normally distributed in the population as a whole, as well as within sub-groups of the population. Thus, if the working classes are having larger numbers of children but are not producing their quota of 'bright' children in comparison to the upper classes, it means that environmental factors are intervening. As Evetts (1973:69) states, "the extent to which equal opportunity is achieved is the extent to which these groups do achieve proportionally equal success rates."

C. Towards a Comprehensive Principle

Daunt (1975:10) comments when discussing the underpinnings of the comprehensive philosophy that what he calls the second view of comprehensive education is to "see all members of society equally valued." He (1975:16) states that "the guiding principle of comprehensive education is that the education of all children is held to be intrinsically of equal value." Thus, Daunt (1975:18) concludes that the equal value principle "can be put forward as a purely educational principle" that does not necessarily need to be justified by any "extrinsic theory about the nature of society" or "about the way in which that society needs to be organized for the common good."

When contrasting the equal value principle with common conceptions of equality of opportunity, Daunt (1975:19) argues that the limitations of the principle of equality of opportunity need to be defined. He (1975:19) states that the principle "is all right as far as it goes, but we must be acutely aware of its limitations and dangers" because "independent of the equal value principle it can easily become malignant." Firstly, Daunt (1975:19-20) observes that the meaning of opportunity involves a limitation in time which creates the problem of defining "when the period of opportunity begins or ends." Secondly, he (1975:23) states that when it can be argued that equality of opportunity is at some time provided for everyone, then it can become an "excuse justifying all manner of inequity in what follows." Thirdly, Daunt (1975:23) observes that the aspiration of equality opportunity is in itself unsatisfactory because it purports to offer more than it can supply": equality of opportunity for the "blind or the limbless" is impossible. Thus, according to Daunt (1975:23) the principle of equal value involves using an ideal family as a model for the school:

> Families know that talents must be developed, deficiencies compensated for, mediocrities tolerated or acted on as the occasion suggests, that in this complex and diverse process resources ... must be deployed with subtlety and skill, above all with sensitivity and a never-diminishing flexibility of policy, and that the principle that gives form and unity and purpose to all this diversity of practical, sometimes apparently trivial, decisions is a principle of equal value, cannnot be anything else.

Daunt (1975:26-27) asserts that the essence of the operation of a comprehensive school should be to operate on the equal value principle where flexibility and individual needs are emphasized, and it is "a false assumption" that selective systems are better suited and able to meet the different needs of children:

> Only a comprehensive school can oversee the whole diversity of needs, strive to search for and understand the individual without loosing him totally through prejudice, predetermined assessment and allocation to groups, learn to deploy the totality of resources available self-critically and flexibly in imitation of the familial model, which is the only exemplar by which the equal-value principle can be understood or made to work.

Thus, equating the practice of an ideal family with the practice of schooling can be seen as a solution to the problem of selecting acceptable rules for treating 'unequals unequally.' However, as Shaw (1983:32) points out, the equal value principle can both be used to justify selective schooling and non-selective schooling. Daunt (1975:26), on the other hand, argues that a "selective system necessarily ensures an unequal value principle in relation to children since it assigns children to institutions that are and can only be unequally valued because of the very definitions of which they are founded." Thus, in addition to using socio-psychological concerns for justifying definitions of the equality of opportunity concept or to treat equals equally or unequals unequally, the equal value principle suggests using additional elements such as tolerance, understanding, and good will as an integral part of the equality of opportunity concept.

Hence, whatever justifications are used to justify comprehensive schooling, the structural ramifications mean schools which do not differentiate between children because of ability, gender, social class, or any other grounds, whether it be in the school itself or between schools. Similarly, individual needs and demands are to be met in a flexible internal structure of comprehensive secondary schools; and academic and vocational programs are combined.

D. Reorganization of Secondary Education

As noted above, there is a considerable difference between secondary school development in North America and that of many European contries. In this section, some of

these differences are investigated by reviewing secondary school development in North America, Britain, West Germany, France, and Sweden.

The American Development

Acknowledging Conant (1959), Tanner (1979:92) states that the comprehensive ideal is an American invention rather than a European invention. Within American education, the importance of education was recognized relatively early as the means to support, enlarge and strengthen democratic ideals. Mursell (1959:3) comments that "this is an obviously reasonable proposition" because if "the schools of a democratic society do not exist for and work for the support and extension of democracy, then they are either socially useless or socially dangerous." This position, however, is a twentieth century phenomenon.

Crittenden (1973:138) examines the development of secondary schools in the nineteenth century, both in America and Europe, when most countries began to establish a unitary system which was maintained at public expense, under state control. This system, Crittenden (1973:138) points out "reflected the nineteenth century conflict of church and state, and the more general struggle between religious and secular beliefs in being secular or at least non sectarian." Crittenden (1973:138) observes that this state involvement "was a necessary practical arrangement for avoiding the problem of religious differences," and the organization of the educational system was characterized by ideals of "liberalism and nationalism." In the American context, Vallance (1973/74:14) comments that "public schooling evolved as a response to the declining role of the family and the local community" and that nationalistic ideologies provided the main rationale for socially supported schools which were to provide education for all Americans.

Gutek (1970:76) observes that the social economic changes at the end of the nineteenth century "had transformed the United States from basically a rural agrarian nation to an urban industrial one." Whether in the U.S. or elsewhere, urbanization in a fast growing industrial society required trained people with specialized vocational and technical education to meet the demands of the industries. Tanner (1972:41) points out that the growth of

secondary education can be seen as a response to these changes as well as to the fast growing population of immigrants that had to be socialized and given a "rewarding place in society." Also, as Gutek (1970:76) suggests, basic literacy, as provided for in the basic elementary school, "was no longer adequate preparation for their intelligent participation in an industrial society." As summarized by Vallance (1973/74:17):

> Reasons for the rise of the high school in this period [end of the nineteenth century] are varied. One was that sheer increase in urban population as a function of rural migration. Another was the growth of technology and its demand for more advanced occupational skills. The inability of the elementary schools to fully equip students for assimilation into the urban situation was clear; and its consequent disinclination to acknowledge individual needs and interests by differentiating its programmes, provided the necessary impetus for the growth of secondary education.

Hence, changes in economic and social conditions at the turn of the century increasingly emphasized that the public school's duty was to prepare students from different backrounds and with different interests for occupational positions which were rapidly changing. Furthermore, the wealth that increased in proportion to the increasing industrialization and mass production "created surplus wealth, making possible a larger base of taxation for spending on education" (Gutek, 1970:77).

The reorganization of the American high school along comprehensive lines took place in the 1920s as a response to the selective character of the existing high schools. As Tanner (1979:93) points out:

> The emergence of the comprehensive high school in the US. early in this century was not a historical accident. It came about as a conscious rejection of the dual and tripartite European educational tradition, with its attendant bias in favor of the privileged classes and the academic elite, and as a deliberate attempt to develop a unitary system contiguous with the democratic ideal of optimizing educational opportunity and social intercourse among youth from all segments of society.

Along the same lines, Mursell (1955:184) describes the democratic elements of the comprehensive high school as an institutional pattern where:

> ... *all* children, *all* young people are brought together in a single institution, irrespective of differences in wealth, social position, race, creed, color, vocational institutions - and with some few but necessary exceptions, irrespective of mentality - and are educated together in that institution. [1]

Similarly, Crittenden (1973:140) observes that education is to "a large extent the practical

[1] Italics his.

condition of economic, social, and political power, [and] democratic ideals require that everyone in the society should have an equal opportunity to be educated." Thus; the early development of the secondary school was to search for identity and purpose and in 1918 the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education enunciated the Seven Cardinal Principles of Education.

Wynn et al. (1977:157) points out that the seven cardinal principles were concerned with: (1) "health;" (2) "command of fundamental processes;" (3) "worthy home membership;" (4) "vocational efficiency;" (5) "civic participation;" (6) "worthy of leisure time; and (7) "ethical character." Tanner (1979:93) suggests that these principles were "a kind of declaration of independence of American secondary education" with a strong emphasis on national identity and equality of opportunities. The emphasis on vocational education also reflected the changing socio-economic conditions in society and was an attempt keep in touch with the realities of the working world. Similarly, there was a strong opposition to the inherent inequities of the European bi or tripartite system.

Tanner (1979:93) points out that the spirit of the reorganization of secondary schools along comprehensive lines was in accordance with the influence of John Dewey's theorizing on democracy and education. Tanner (1979:93) acknowledges Dewey for pointing out the dangers of a divided secondary school system and that "comprehensive schools would provide an opportunity for the academic and vocational studies to receive constant reciprocal stimulation and permeation." Tanner (1979:93) comments that Dewey had warned that under the dual system "vocational education would be reduced to narrow training to produce a source of manpower for exploitation in the interests of an industrial efficiency," and that the "segregated elite academic school" would continue its operation with the "academic curriculum instead of readapting the curriculum to meet changing social conditions."

This early development of the American comprehensive secondary school was in some ways similar to the later development of comprehensive secondary schools in some European countries, although the organization of secondary schools on comprehensive lines in the U.S. never became as controversial as in most of the Western European countries.

Britain

Shipman (1984:183) points out that the 1944 Education Act in Britain provided the legal basis for educational services. Rubinstein and Simon (1973:31) describe the changes which followed:

> The 1944 Education Act made great changes in the structure of English education. Secondary education for all children was established, as an integral part of an educational system which was seen as a 'continous process' ranging from the primary school to further higher education.

During the years of 1945-1952, a tripartite system of secondary education developed - the traditional grammar schools, secondary modern and technical schools - and at the age of eleven students were selected for the different school types according to their IQ scores and performance on English and mathematics tests. Since the abolition of fees in the traditional grammar school, one of the implications of this tripartite system was that all students had equal opportunity to obtain a place in grammar schools. Completing the grammar school opened access to post secondary education. The secondary modern school, on the other hand, was not intended to give certificates for access to further education: "they were to give a general education with a practical, but not a vocational bias" (Rubinstein and Simon, 1973:42). These secondary modern schools, however, never "gained the 'parity of esteem'" and the "pressure for entry to the grammar schools constantly grew" (Rubinstein and Simon, 1973:43). This divided system, however, was criticized more and more on the grounds that it was elitist and the examinations at the age of eleven (The eleven-plus) were criticized both for being imperfect as predictors of academic success, as well as using tests that had been shown to be class bound and therefore not worth using (Rubinstein and Simon, 1973:63-65).

During the period of 1953-1964 a number of comprehensive secondary schools were established as a result of these concerns. In the fall of 1964 a Labour government was elected to office and in July 1965 the 'promised' Circular 10/65 was issued to local authorities. Rubinstein and Simon (1973:94) state that this "declared the government's intention to end selection at eleven plus and to eliminate separatism in secondary education." Shipman (1984:191) points out that the population growth in the sixties and the seventies demanded more schools and when implementing the policy of Circular 10/65 the government restricted

the funding to "secondary school building that was not for comprehensive reorganization." Shipman (1984:191) observes that although the reorganization of secondary schools along comprehensive lines was slow, by the end of the seventies "there were over 3,000 comprehensive schools and only 253 grammar schools."

The contemporary situation in Britain is that most of the secondary schools have been reorganized on comprehensive lines. The attitude of local education authorities implementing the reorganization policies has, however, been varied. As Shipman (1984:192) points out, while "Labour governments pressed hard for reorganization from 1965. Conservative governments, while not actively discouraging, allowed LEAs [Local Education Authorities] to move slowly." The present conservative government has, however, put pressure on local education authorities to rexamine the curriculum and emphasize academic achievement. As Shipman (1984:193) observes:

> The most sustained pressure from central goverment came as a flow of publications, surveys, assessments and policy statements on the curriculum and standards of attainment. These tended to be critical of mixed ability grouping, integration across subjects, nonspecialist teachers and the introduction of the social sciences into schools. The government pressed for a national consensus on the curriculum in the national interest. It also pressed for more attention to be paid to the relation between school and work.

Thus, the previous autonomy of teachers and the emphasis on decentralization since the 1944 Act is being altered in favour of increased centralization and government control. This emphasis on centralization reflects the "political will" since the mid-1970s and is reinforced by financial restraint: "the moves to ensure central government influence over educational policies [which] sprang from the same economic crisis that lead to the cut in resources to the public sector" (Shipman, 1984:207). However, as James (1980:114) and Shipman (1984:208) observe, these trends have resulted in increased parent involvement both from the right and the left: (1) parent groups were fighting to preserve individual grammar schools; (2) parents were campaining for comprehensive organization; and (3) parents were campaining for academic standards.

Accordingly, the contemporary situation in Britain can be described as being somewhat critical. Forces supporting selective or non-selective schools are engaging in a

battle for supremacy. Nevertheless, most of the contemporary secondary schools are organized along comprehensive lines.

West Germany

In West-Germany, Bessoth and Hopes (1979:140) point out that prior to 1966 the only concern for educational reform was "devoted to a restoration of an educational system which had emerged during the nineteenth century." Generally, the West-German secondary school system is divided into three routes, the Gymnasium, the Realschule, and the Hauptschule. Bessoth and Hopes (1979:129) describe the system as follows:

> The *Gymnasium* is for the academically gifted children with a curriculum oriented towards an unrestricted general university entrance qualification, the *Abitur*. The *Realschule* curriculum tends to be more oriented towards administrative and technical qualifications. The *Hauptschule* is for the reminder who do not qualify for the other school types and provides a general education program.... [2]

However, in the early sixties the selective character of the educational system was criticized on the grounds that "it followed the societal status norms very strongly" as "children of parents with higher socio-economic status were given better opportunites in the middle class oriented school system" (Besoth and Hopes, 1979:140). As a result of these concerns, Bessoth and Hopes (1979:141) state that "the procedures for pupil selection were changed", but "the tripartite school system of the FRG [Federal Republic of Germany] remained on the whole unchanged and the challenge of the sixties did not lead to a new organizational structure."

Friesen (1975:95) points out that secondary school reform on comprehensive lines in West-Germany was more extensive in the district of Hessen than elsewhere in Germany. Friesen (1975:95) notes that the comprehensive schools established in Hessen from the others in their emphasis on integration: "some of [the schools] are fairly well integrated; others have simply brought the three streams of students under one roof." Similarly, Cerych et al. (1981:10;55) report that the major problems with the comprehensive school policy in Germany were their "ambitious goals" which resulted in severe implementation problems or even in "non-implementation." Bessoth and Hopes (1979:142) observe when describing the

[2] italics his.

resistance to the reorganization of the secondary school in Germany:

> In short, since the social and professional divisions found in German society are reflected in the school system and in the teaching profession, they are a constraint on real integration and lead to difficulties in coordination.

Accordingly, the supporters of reorganization along comprehensive lines argue that "the divided system hinders a general basic education for all" because of biases in favor of certain groups, whereas the opponents of comprehensive education argue that "a modernized traditional system already achieves the ... aims of the comprehensive school" (Bessoth and Hopes, 1979:143). Therefore, the debate is characterized by 'egalitarian' and 'efficiency' arguments and, on the other hand, by more 'meritocratic' arguments.

France

The *Lycee*, the secondary school in France equivalent to the English grammar school, was originally established by Napoleon Bonaparte around 1800 (Harrington, 1980:9). The *lycee* was academically orientated, providing access to university education. Harrington (1980:9) describes:

> The basic organization of French public education, established during the Revolutionary Napoleonic years, reflected the assumptions of those years. It attempted to provide open access to careers, but 'careers open to talent' implied more a rejection of aristocratic notions that birth should determine social position than a desire to promote social mobility. The retention of tuition assured that secondary education would be available only to those Frenchmen who could afford it.

The reforms that took place in France in the sixties under the de Gaulle administration included free compulsory secondary schooling for all children. Secondary education was divided into two phases, junior secondary (11-16 years) and higher secondary (16-20 years), and the entrance examinations to the *lycee* were abolished. Auba (1979:152) describes the uniqueness of the junior secondary system as "the process of continual observation to which pupils are subjected throughout the four years." Regarding the junior secondary school, Hough (1984:82) observes:

> This was essentially a comprehensive school but with a fairly rigid system of three separate streams or 'tracks,' respectively for the academic high achievers who would formerly have gone to the *lycee*, for those children somewhat less gifted but still deemed to require an essentially academic curriculum, and for these, some 25 per cent of the total, who had fallen behind and for whom a more practical education

was s[illegible]as appropriate.

The results of this observation phase within the junior secondary system determined the move to the higher seconday school which later was divided into two routes: the 'long,' emphasizing academic orientation in the reconstructed *lycees*, and the 'short' route, emphasizing general or technical orientation.

In 1974-1975 a new education law included reforms where all tracking or streaming in the junior secondary phase were to be eliminated and only after the age of fifteen was differentiation to take place. The term *lycee* was to be used as an umbrella term for the higher secondary school and it was divided into five different routes, either leading to a *Baccalaureat* degree in the long route or to a *Professionel* degree (both equivalent to high school diplomas) in the short route.

The ethos in France was, however, not favourable towards the reconstruction of the secondary school system. As an example, the issue of mixed ability teaching was strongly criticized by teacher unions and some of the "reform never really happened" (Hough, 1984:86). On the other hand, the socialist government in power in the early eighties strongly criticized the selective elitist secondary school system. As summarized by Hough (1984:89):

> Inequality in society was seen as stemming from and rooted in the country's educational system with its perceived emphases on the most able, concentration of resources on the most favoured pupils, alienation of many pupils from less privileged backgrounds, discrimination against girls and imparting of patriotic, nationalistic and right-wing attitudes.

Hough (1984:90) observes that the reforms proposed by this socialist government were directed towards decreasing the centralization of power. Universities were asked to propose how "access to higher education could be democratised" and increased participation of parents and local authorities was facilitated (Hough, 1984:90). Since most of these proposals were at a developmental stage when the socialist government was recently replaced by a conservative government, and, judging by the success of the reforms in the mid-seventies, radical changes within the French secondary schooling system are unlikely to occur.

Sweden

Before 1950 the educational system in Sweden was in general similar to the educational systems in most other European countries. Marklund (1984:136) describes the middle of the twentieth century as the turning-point in Sweden:

> The year 1950 is here a critical turning-point. From that year Sweden introduced an educational policy of a type which gradually, although in a decisive way broke new ground. From that time it is hardly possible to talk of separate policies for primary, secondary and tertiary education, nor even for academic, vocational and general education. A policy of 'comprehensivisation' was started and developed all through the system of schools and higher institutions, which in spite of its different implications at different levels had a common denominator, the democratisation of education.

The reforms in 1950 resulted in reorganization of the compulsory school along comprehensive lines, covering the age groups of seven to sixteen. The period of 1950-1962 is described by Marklund (1984:137) as the "experimental phase" and the period of 1962-1972 as the "implementation phase." The conservative party, supported by secondary academic teachers, wanted the old *Realskola* (lower secondary school) run parallel to the new comprehensive school. This resulted in a compromise on the part of the social democrats in power "saying that there should be a ten-year period of experiments all over the country to ascertain whether it was 'suitable' to have the 'parallel school system' or to introduce a unified school" (Marklund, 1984:141). Evaluation of student performance in these two systems resulted in the decision that the parallel system should be gradually replaced by comprehensive schools during the period of 1962-1972.

During the implementation period corresponding changes were made for upper secondary schools. Previously, the upper secondary school level had been composed of the academically oriented *gymnasium*, technical, commercial and vocational schools, and in 1971 reforms were under way for coordinating these schools into a new type of school which Marklund (1984:145) labels "the 'integrated' upper secondary school." This school was designed to follow the nine year comprehensive school and is described by Marklund (1979:287) as follows:

> Unlike the comprehensive school the upper secondary school is strictly divided into "lines" with partly different study goals and different vocational thrusts. Preparation for advanced study dominates some lines, notably the three-year and

> four-year lines and the two-year theoretical lines, while preparation for careers dominates in other lines, mainly the two-year vocationally-oriented lines.

This upper secondary school is run by local authorities and the different courses of study are offered under one roof. Since 1968 all graduates from the comprehensive school can move automatically from the lower secondary stage to the higher secondary stage. Tests are used within both the primary and the secondary systems, but transfer between grades is automatic at both levels without any reference to performance on these tests.

During the experimental period the question of selection or tracking was nevertheless a difficult policy issue. However, it resulted in a total abolition of differentiation between students at both the primary and the secondary level. Marklund (1984:144) points out that the problem of differentiation has "fluctuated ever since 1950, sometimes lively and sometimes subdued, but it has never died out completely." Marklund (1984:144) observes that the discussions have mostly centered around whether the existing system "is capable of benefiting and helping the so-called gifted students."

Marklund (1984:140) asserts that the underlying concern for the reforms in the 1950s was guided by equality of opportunity notions, to allow all students to have equal access to education and to raise the "general standard of education." Students and their parents were to be free to choose which kind of education was best suited for their interests, which were to lead to increased achievements by all students regardless of their economic background. In the early years of the reform, the comprehensive philosophy stated equality of educational opportunities for all students, regardless of "social class, geographical origins or sex," whereas later "special provisions and compensatory measures for the disadvantaged" replaced and changed the underpinnings of the comprehensive philosophy (Marklund, 1984:153). Marklund (1984:153) observes regarding the emphasis on positive discrimination in favor of the underprivileged;

> Only in one respect does social equality aim at 'sameness' among individuals: it tries to provide everyone with the same general, fundamental civic skills, the ability to function as active, contributing members of society, a basic competence in communication, speaking, reading, writing and mathematics, a basic orientation in natural and social sciences and - above all - a belief and confidence in their own worth and their own opportunities to continue a life-long learning process.

The implications of these reforms in Sweden are described by Marklund (1984:176) as resulting in a lower mean achievement. If compared to totally selective systems, the performance of Swedish students and students from countries with broad recruitment, the general results were lower. However, he (1984:176) states that "the 'best 1 per cent,' the 'best 5 per cent,' or even the 'best 9 per cent' of the entire cohort were at least as high in countries with broad recruitment as in countries with a restricted selection." Furthermore, Marklund (1984:176) asserts that the IEA (The Surveys of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) studies indicate that in regard to student achievement "the poorer seem to be as poor in a 'comprehensive' education structure as in a selective one."

Compared to the reorganization processes in the other countries reviewed, with the exception of the U.S., educational reforms in Sweden seem to have provoked relatively little dispute. As observed by Marklund (1984:140):

> It has sometimes been claimed that reforms in Sweden, including educational reforms, have been possible or in any event easier because Sweden is a homogeneous country; no real conflicts due to differences in race, religion and language have been thought to exist here.

Thus, the reorganization on comprehensive lines in Sweden can be regarded as successful and the comprehensive philosophy is guided by the 'efficiency' argument of equality of educational opportunity.

E. Summary and Synthesis

This review was delimited to discussions about problems in the development of comprehensive secondary schooling in various countries and discussions about the nature of the concept of equality of educational opportunity. Despite ambiguity in the meaning of comprehensive secondary schooling, most definitions state that comprehensive secondary schools are schools that are non selective and offer a combination of vocational and academic programs in a flexible curriculum organization system in order to meet the various student needs and abilities.

Primarily, reorganization along comprehensive lines was a reaction to the selective character of the bi or tripartite educational structure of most European education systems, based on the argument that in a middle class oriented school system the children of parents with high socio-economic status were given better opportunities than children of lower socio-economic status. Generally, within the selective schooling systems standardized tests were administered to differentiate between students and it was rationalized that all students had equal opportunities to compete on these tests. The reorganization along comprehensive lines was a reaction to this definition of the concept of equality of educational opportunity, based on the rationale that this definition included the same treatment of all students, irrespective of environmental factors. It was argued that the task of schooling was to equalize student differences where 'culturally deprived' students in the widest sense should be 'specially treated' to enhance their status and opportunities. It was also argued that cultural deprivation should be accounted for but to equalize educational opportunities should not include the equalization of outcomes, rather the most should be made of the 'supply of talent' or 'ability.'

Thus, within most non selective education systems today, the importance of deprivation factors is strongly recognized. Excellence and intellectual ability are valued positively. In line with the Aristotelian definition of equity, the emphasis is on both treating equal students equally and unequal students unequally.

Chapter V

The Icelandic Scene

The purpose of this chapter is to identify and describe the major elements that influenced the reorganization of the secondary school level in Iceland. The chapter includes a description of the changes in both primary and secondary school laws that influenced the reorganization as well as a description of the secondary school reorganization which has taken place.

A. Educational Organization

Since 1974, the educational system in Iceland has been organized into three major levels: comprehensive primary education (ages 7-15); secondary education (ages 16-19); post secondary education (ages 19 and older). The system is under governmental control and education is tuition free in all schools. Proppe (1983:195) describes the major official elements of the Icelandic educational system as follows:

> The basic official principle in Icelandic education is that everyone should have equal opportunities to acquire the education best suited to the aptitude and ability of the individual. All schools in the country are coeducational, and, according to official statements, with no discrimination whatsoever.

The secondary school level is divided into a variety of educational routes. These routes can be synthesized into two educational types: university preparatory education (grammar schools), and occupational training education (vocational and technical schools). In addition, the comprehensive secondary schools, which have been established since 1973, offer both these educational types.

Before the enactment of the 'Law on Comprehensive Primary Schooling' in 1974, the structuring of the educational system was similar to the other European educational systems reviewed earlier where access to grammar schools was based on performance on external examinations. With the enactment of the 'Law on Comprehensive Primary Schooling,' these access criteria were changed and 'all' students who completed the comprehensive primary school could enter the grammar schools provided they met some minimal requirements. Thus,

the present system can be described as non-selective and egalitarian in nature.

Before describing the secondary school level in any detail, the reorganization of the primary school system will be briefly examined. In the remaining chapters, for the purpose of clarity, all cited documents, and interview transcripts, will be presented in a footnote form and in a separate bibliography.

B. Reoganization of the Primary School System

To contextualize the secondary school reorganization policies, a description of the primary school level is of importance. Structural changes in the primary school system promote changes in the secondary school system and vice versa. The comprehensive schooling philosophy was also first put forth in the '1974 Education Laws.' First, however, a general overview of the educational system prior to 1974 is provided.

Historical Context

Primary schooling policies in Iceland in this century may generally be divided into three major periods; 1907-1946; 1946-1974; and 1974 onwards. Each period is associated with some major educational policy changes. Two of these periods, 1907-1946 and 1974 to the present, are mostly restricted to the development of policies controlling the primary school level, whereas the 1946-1974 period includes both primary, lower secondary, and some secondary education policies.

Because of structural differences between present and previous systems, the term lower secondary will be used when referring to the school level between elementary and secondary school. Thus, it is equivalent to the junior high school level in most North American educational systems and to the last years of the comprehensive primary school within the present system in Iceland.

The 'Education Law' enacted in 1907 may be regarded as a cornerstone in Icelandic educational history. The major policy ends put forth in this law were that elementary education be compulsory for all children from the age of ten to fourteen and that each

household ensure that the children knew how to read and write before entering elementary school. These general policy ends were modified in 1926 and 1936 when education became compulsory at the age of seven.[3]

During this period, there were three general school types within the lower secondary sector: (1) *althyduskolar* or lower secondary schools originated in the folk high schools; (2) *heradsskolar* or lower secondary district schools, usually located in rural areas around hot springs and operated as boarding schools; and (3) the *gagnfraedaskolar* or 'regular' lower secondary schools which were either operated as special schools or as divisions connected with the two grammar schools. These functioned as preparation schools for the grammar school entrance exams. The operation of these school types, however, was not coordinated and specifically placed within the educational system until in 1929 and 1930 when laws regarding the *heradsskolar* (including the *althyduskolar*) and *gagnfraedaskolar* were enacted. The supplementary comments attached to the #22/1946 'Law on Lower Secondary Education' state that "the enactment of the laws in 1929 and 1930 may be regarded as having provided for great progress" in attempting to "create two types of schooling: one serving the rural areas and one serving the urban areas."[4] Shortly after World War II, however, the educational system was further reorganized.

The 1946 Laws

In 1946, both the primary and the secondary school system were reorganized by restructuring and coordinating the system as a whole. These laws, however, usually refered to as the '1946 Education Laws' were composed of five distinct laws: (1) #22/1946 'Law on Compulsory Education and the Structure of the Educational System'; (2) #34/1946 'Law on Elementary Education'; (3) #48/1956 'Law on Lower Secondary Education'; (4) #58/1946 'Law on Grammar Schools'; and (5) #49/1946 'Law on Home Economics (Domestic)

[3] #34/1946, supplemetary comments, reprinted in Magnuss, G.M. *Um Menntamal a Islandi 1944-1946 [Education in Iceland During 1944-1946], Menntamalaraduneytid, 1946, p.58.*
[4] ibid, p.89.

Education.' Of importance in this context, is the 'Law on Compulsory Education and the Structure of the Educational System.'

The rationale for these laws was on coordination. As an example, the supplementary comments attached to the 'Law on Compulsory Education and the Structure of the Educational System' say that the "committee who prepared this law concluded after examining the various laws and regulations regarding the different schools and school types, that no attempt had been made to coordinate the overall educational system." [5] In the supplement it also says that "because of this, education has not been continual and cumulative" and has thus "wasted a lot of intellectual energy." [6]

The 'Law on Compulsory Education and the Structure of the Educational System' states that the educational system is to be organized into four major levels: "(1) the elementary school level; (2) the lower secondary school level; (3) the grammar and special school level; (4) the university level." [7] The "elementary school level is designed for the age group of seven to thirteen" and "is completed with *barnaprof*" or an elementary school diploma. [8] The four year lower secondary school is to proceed from the elementary level and may be "subdivided into academic (theoretical) and vocational (practical) routes." [9] The lower secondary level is also further divided: (1) the intermediate school level; (2) the middle school level; and (3) the 'regular' lower secondary school level. "The intermediate level comprises the first two years" and "is completed with *unglingaprof*" or an intermediate diploma. [10] In going the regular secondary school route, students transfer after completing the intermediate diploma to grade three, and then grade four, which "finishes with *gagnfraedaprof*" or lower secondary school diploma "which allows for access to special schools." [11] Furthermore, the law says that "lower secondary schools in urban areas will be four year schools, whereas in rural areas only the first two years (the intermediate level) of

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[5] ibid, p.31.
[6] ibid, p.31.
[7] #22/1946; clause 2.
[8] #22/1946; clause 3.
[9] #22/1946; clause 4.
[10] #22/1946; clause 4.
[11] #22/1946; clause 4.

the lower secondary school will be offered." [12] However, a provision is made stating that "superintendents may change this restriction based on contextual factors." [13]

The middle school, on the other hand, is designed to take three years with the intermediate level overlapping the first two years. Grade three in the 'regular' lower secondary route and in the middle school are parallel to each other. However, grade three is the penultimate grade in the former but the final grade in the latter route. The middle school finishes with external examinations, "the middle school exams, *landsprof*" and the performance on these tests "determines whether students gain access to grammar schools or other special schools." [14]

Regarding secondary schools, the Law states that "the four year grammar schools may be departmentalized depending on contextual factors" and "the *studentsprof*" or matriculation certificate "gives access to the university level." [15] The Law also states that the operation and design of "special schools is determined in laws and regulations for each school or school type." [16]

According to the above, these structural arrangements state that the system was to be contingent and coordinated. The elementary level is made one year shorter than before and the intermediate level is compulsory for all children. The four years of the lower secondary school were offered in urban areas, whereas the intermediate level which comprised the first two years, was offered in rural areas. The supplementary comments say that "in rural areas with relatively few students, only the first two years of the lower secondary school would be provided for," and "students from these areas interested in further lower secondary schooling would have to attend some of the regional lower secondary schools." [17]

Regarding the middle school innovation, the supplementary comments say that "it was concluded that lower secondary schools should be entirely separated from grammar schools,"

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[12] #22/1946; clause 4.
[13] #22/1946; clause 4.
[14] #22/1946; clause 4.
[15] #22/1946; clause 5-6.
[16] #22/1946; clause 5.
[17] Reprinted in Magnuss, 1946, p.34.

[18] The major arguments for this separation are: (1) "after completing the elementary school, it is too early for children and their parents to decide upon whether or not the child is to transfer to a grammar school;" (2) "student maturity is very variable at this age;" and (3) "a six year grammar school would be too costly." [19] Accordingly, it was concluded that "it is very important that children, parents, and teachers decide upon what is best for the child meanwhile in the lower secondary school level." [20]

The middle school was also intended to provide for increased equality of educational opportunity for students. Previously, students interested in entering grammar schools had to undergo entrance examinations. At this time, however, there were only two grammar schools in the country; one is in the capital Reykjavik and one is in Akureyri, the largest town in northern Iceland. Within the special school category, or schools other than grammar schools, the School of Commerce also offered programs leading to matriculation, thus functioning as a grammar school. The supplementary comments regarding these entrance exams note that it is becoming increasingly obvious that the "grammar schools are elite schools" restricted to "sons and daughters of affluent parents who can afford support courses for their children." [21] Furthermore, the supplement states that this is the main reason for concluding that the "entrance requirements to grammar schools and some special schools would be restricted to the middle schools exams and that "these exams are to be administered simultaneously all over the country" at most lower secondary schools. [22] Thus, the middle school exams provided for increased equality of educational opportunity; all students took the same exams and it became feasible for students at most lower secondary schools to compete in these exams and enter grammar schools.

[18] ibid., p.34.
[19] ibid, p.35-36.
[20] ibid, p.35-36.
[21] ibid, p.35.
[22] ibid, p.35.

A Time of Change

With a fast growing population and increased demands for schooling, the laws from 1946 gradually became obsolete. Particularly, however, some of the premises for the reorganization in 1946 were increasingly criticized: (1) the criticism stated that coordination and continuity within the educational system was insufficient; (2) the inequity between urban and rural areas; and (3) the selective character of the middle school exams.

In the 1946 laws, the lower secondary school diploma was considered to be a valuable degree. It was seen as practical in nature, providing good general education and preparation for students interested in entering special schools, mostly trade and technical schools. Gradually, however, the completion of the lower secondary school was seen as a 'dead end.' It was not accepted as a prerequisite for entering grammar schools and at the same time, accompanied by population growth and higher living standards, the demands for education increased.

The demands may be seen as both social and economic in nature. The total population of the country grew from approximately 144 thousand in 1950 to approximately 205 thousand in 1970, and the age group of children 0-14 years old almost doubled in size between 1940 and 1960. [23] At the same time fast growing industries accompanied by economic growth required an increasingly educated workforce. The university, which had been a rather static institution only offering programs in the traditional areas such as law, medicine, theology, and liberal arts, also grew and expanded offering a variety of programs, thus making post-secondary education increasingly feasible and economically appealing.

In 1969, an attempt was made to solve the problem of discontinuity within the educational system. The 'Law on Lower Secondary Schooling' #48/1946 was amended to provide for centralization of some of the lower secondary school exams in the last grade, and the establishment of *framhaldsdeildir* or continuing divisions at some of the lower secondary schools. Although these exams were not the same as the middle school exams, students with good average standing had the opportunity to enter the grammar schools. The continuing

[23] Yearbook of Nordic Statistics, 1984, p.16.

divisions established at many of the lower secondary schools were one or two year programs functioning as the first one or two years of grammar schools. Similarly, students with good average standing had the opportunity to transfer to some of the grammar schools or special schools leading to matriculation. As will be discussed later, the establishment of the continuing divisions may be seen as the first official step in the development of reorganizing secondary schools along comprehensive lines.

As previously established, there was a variation between between rural and urban areas in terms of school levels offered. In general, only the first two years of the lower secondary school were offerd in rural areas but all the four years in urban areas. In 1946, this was seen as providing for increased equality of educational opportunity. Later, however, this was regarded as increasingly inequitable as the supplementary comments to the 'Bill on the Structure of the Educational System' indicated when it was proposed during the period 1970 to 1974. When proposed in 1970, the supplementary comments say "that there is great discontent in rural areas because of unequal educational opportunities" and "the cost of sending children to boarding schools is more than many of the rural households can afford." [24] As a result of this, more than 90 percent of children in urban areas continued on after finishing compulsory schooling compared to approximately 70 percent in rural areas. [25]

In the 1946 laws, the lower secondary school level was organized into two basic routes: the academic (theoretical) and vocational (practical). The intermediate level, however, overlapped the first two years of the middle school route and the 'regular' lower secondary school route. Depending on student population, students were usually streamed when in the intermediate level. The more academically gifted students were streamed into the academic route to prepare for the middle school examinations, whereas the others went the vocational route. However, each year a number of students failed the exams. The ones who failed and continued either repeated the third year or transferred to the last year of the lower secondary school. Proppe (1983:289) calculated from Ministry reports the relative number of those who passed the middle school exams and the number of those who failed of the ones

[24] *Althingistidindi*, 1970, p.1090.
[25] *Althingistidindi*, 1972-1973, Parliamentary Discussions, p.2114.

who tried. His findings are presented in Table 1. As the table shows, the number of those who passed the middle school exams out of each age group increased and the number of those who failed decreased. Despite this, the popularity of the middle school exams gradually decreased. Arnlaugsson (1983) says in this context that "the criticism of the middle school exams," the "most unpopular exams in Icelandic education history," "came mostly from three directions:"

> Firstly, it was an annual event that newspapers published articles indicating how ridiculous it was to have a few percentage points regarding average marks determining who could or could not continue. The articles usually came from parents or guardians who had students who failed the exams, and sometimes the articles contained descriptions of family discontent because of this.
>
> Secondly, the criticism came from school teachers who prepared students for the exams. They claimed that the exams restricted their teaching and reinforced sterile education. Many enthusiasts regarding educational affairs shared this view and supported their arguments by referring to examples from the exams, particularly examples of questions of little significance.
>
> Thirdly, the exams were criticized by grammar school teachers who found they were becoming increasingly easier and less interesting.[26]

The criticism of the exams, along with unequal educational opportunities, reinforced the reorganization of the school system which took place in 1974. The 1946 definition of the concept of equality of educational opportunity was seen as obsolete, and the redefinition was influenced by rapidly changing societal conditions and progressive schooling ideas. Thus, the major theme in the reorganization of the educational system in 1974 was to provide for increased equality of educational opportunity where individual needs and aptitudes are accounted for.

The 1974 Education Laws

In 1969, the minister then in charge of education established a committee to review the 'Law on Compulsory Schooling and the Structure of the Educational System' #22/1946, the 'Law on Elementary Education' #34/1946 and the 'Law on Lower Secondary Education'

[26]Arnlaugsson, G. *Radstefna um Undirbuning Haskolanams og Adgang ad Haskola* [A Conference on Student Preparation and University Entrance Requirements], Bandalag Haskolamanna, 26 november, 1983 p.25-26.

Table 1

The Relative Number of Students of Each Age Group Who Passed the Middle School Examinations With High Enough Grades to Enter Grammar School, and the Average Failure Rate for Each Five Years.

YEARS	%WHO PASSED OF EACH AGE GROUP	%WHO FAILED OF THOSE WHO TRIED
1946-1950	7	43
1951-1955	13	30
1956-1960	13	29
1961-1965	17	30
1966-1970	24	30
1971-1975	25	29

Adapted from: Proppe, Olafur J. "A Dialectical Perspective on Education: A Critical View of Assessment in Icelandic Schools." An Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1983.

#48/1946.[27] The committee suggested a restructuring of the educational system as put forth in the 'Law on the Structure of the Educational System' #55/1974 and the 'Law on Comprehensive Primary Education' #63/1974.

The 'Law on the Structure of the Educational System' #55/1974. This Law describes the reorganization of the educational system into three major levels: "(1) the compulsory education level, (2) the secondary education level, (3) the university level."[28] "The *grunnskoli* (comprehensive primary schools) comprises the compulsory level;" "*fjolbrautaskoli* (comprehensive secondary schools), *menntaskolar* (grammar schools), and special schools comprise the secondary education level;" and "a university and similar institutions comprise the university level."[29] Although intended in the restructuring of the educational system, grade nine did not become compulsory until in 1985. Despite this, the drop-out rate between grade eight, the last compulsory grade, and grade nine has only been around three percent (Proppe, 1983:222).

In comparison to the structure in 1946, the elementary and lower secondary level have been merged into a nine year comprehensive primary school. The grammar and special school level is now called the secondary school level and includes the new school type; the comprehensive secondary school. The university level is defined similarly as before, except for the provision of 'similar institutions.'

Along with these structural arrangements, the Law also states that the "state and the municipalities have the obligation to provide for equality of educational opportunity in all parts of the country."[30] "The comprehensive primary school is for all children from the age of 7 to 16" and "it provides for general education and preparation for secondary schooling."[31] "Secondary schools are 2 to 4 year schools and, if necessary, divided into program routes"

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[27] *Althingistidindi*, 1973, p.209.
[28] #55/1974, clause 2.
[29] #55/1974, clause 2.
[30] #55/1974, clause 8.
[31] #55/1974, clause 3.

and "secondary school matriculation gives access to the university level."[32] Thus, after completing the comprehensive primary school with and some minimal standards, all students may transfer the secondary school level.

Inherent in the reorganization of the school levels is the cancellation of the last grade in the lower secondary school. This shortening, however, is to be accommodated, as it says in the supplementary comments, by "a slight increase in the length and efficiency of the school year." [33] The supplement says that the last grade of the lower secondary school "has served a small and ambiguous role in the educational system" and this is "mainly because of the secondary school entrance requirements." [34] Thus, "it was concluded that with a coordinated curriculum and pedagogical changes, the comprehensive primary school would prepare students better for entering secondary schools in comparison to the completion of grade three within the present system." [35]

In addition to the obligatory role of the state and the municipalities in providing equality of educational opportunity, "education is tuition free in all public schools" and it is explicitly stated that "males and females shall have equal rights, both teachers and students." [36] The supplementary comments say that "a democratic society which emphasizes equal rights, public institutions such as the state and the municipalities, has the responsibility to ensure that geographical location and variable economic status, of neither students nor their parents or guardians, affect students' equality of educational opportunity." [37] Also, the "curriculum shall provide equality for boys and girls" where, for example, "boys should have the opportunity to learn how to cook and girls how to do woodworking." [38] Previously, these activities had been gender bound. Thus, the equality of educational opportunity concept is becoming increasingly detailed and progressive in nature.

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[32] #55/1974; clause 4.
[33] *Althingistidindi*, 1973, p.210.
[34] Ibid, p.210.
[35] Ibid, p.210.
[36] #55/1974; clause 6;7.
[37] Ibid, p.211.
[38] Ibid, p.211.

In comparison to the '1946 Education Laws,' equality of educational opportunity has been somewhat redefined. The inequity between urban and rural areas is accounted for, equality of gender is emphasized, and coordination and continuity is further emphasized. The equality of educational opportunity concept is also not restricted to the primary school level as in the '1946 Education Laws.' The other school levels are included and equality is accounted for by financial grants which are based on accessibility to secondary or post secondary schools in a given juristiction. [39]. Thus, in general, this 'Law on the Structure of the Educational System' may be seen as expanding the definitions of the equality of opportunity concept put forth in the 1946 education laws. However, the 'Law on Comprehensive Primary Education' contains further ramifications.

The 'Law on Comprehensive Primary Education' #53/1974. In comparison to the 'Law on the Structure of the Educational System,' this Law is very comprehensive and detailed. It is composed of fifteen sections and eighty-eight regulatory clauses, compared to the 'Law on the Structure of the Educational System' which is composed of one section and eleven clauses. In this context, however, only the major points of significance will be presented.

The Law describes the major purpose of the comprehensive primary school in the following:

> In cooperation with each household, the role of the comprehensive primary school is to prepare students to participate in a constantly changing democratic society. Thus, school life shall be guided by tolerance, Christian values, and democratic cooperation. The school is to broaden students' horizon, and reinforce their understanding of human conditions and environment, their understanding of Icelandic society, its history and social characteristics, as well as their responsibility to society.
>
> The comprehensive primary school must operate in accord with students' nature and needs, reinforcing the students' education, health, and overall development.
>
> The comprehensive school must give students the opportunity to gain knowledge and develop skills and excellence, which encourage continuing education and personal growth. Thus, the school must reinforce independent thinking as well as cooperation with others. [40]

[39] ibid, p. 211.
[40] #63/1974, section I, clause 2.

The supplementary comments say that similar to the development in other societies, "the Icelandic society has changed considerably since 1946" and that "it is no longer possible to prepare once and forever for future work and employment." [41] Thus, "the school must prepare students to respond to changing environmental conditions and emphasize students' ability to acquire new knowledge." [42] The procedural guidelines for implementing this task, however, are presented in curriculum guides: the main curriculum guide and subject specific curriculum guides.

The Law states that "the Ministry of Education is to provide primary schools with a main curriculum guide stating the general curriculum policy, pedagogy, and classroom organization." [43] The Law also states that "in the writing of the curriculum guides, equality of opportunity is to be the guiding criterion where the school has to accept and accomodate to differences in students' personalities, maturity, abilities, and interests." [44] Social and psychological counseling services are to be established in every school region, as well as a library in every school. [45] Furthermore, depending on contextual factors, bus services will be established in rural areas, along with transportation subsidies where bus services are available. [46] Thus, compared to the '1946 Education Laws,' the equality of opportunity concept is not restricted to geographical factors; instead both geographical and individual elements are included.

The *Adalnamsskra Grunnskola* or the main curriculum guide, first published in 1976, states that the educational system must respond to the changing societal conditions, emphasizing the increasing custodial and pedagogical function of the school. [47] In the implementation of this task, and in accord with the purpose of the comprehensive secondary school, an emphasis must be put on meeting the various student needs and demands. [48]

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[41] *Althingistidindi*, 1973, p.243.
[42] Ibid, p.243.
[43] #63/1974; clause 41.
[44] #63/1974; clause 42.
[45] #63/1974; clause 66;72.
[46] #63/1974; clause 4;79.
[47] *Adalnamsskra Grunnskola*, [The Main Curriculum Guide], Menntamalaraduneytid, 1976, p.6.
[48] Ibid, p.7.

Accordingly, the main curiculum guide outlines the comprehensive educational philosophy by synthesizing some contemporary physical, cognitive, moral, personality, and social psyschological theories on child development and the pedagogical implications of these theories. The review and the implications, however, are strongly influenced by Piagetian and Brunerian theorizing, heavily emphasizing individual differences and discovery or procedural learning. [49]

As a general rule, teachers in all their endeavours are to recognize that students may be at various developmental stages, thus requiring variable teaching methods. Instead of focusing on content, the emphasis is more on activating the student in procedural learning, where students develop methods to acquire knowledge, rather than the teacher being the knowledge distributor. [50] Group work is emphasized as being important in the implementation of this task, the various subjects integrated, and educational assessment is to change from summative to formative. Instead of focusing on the mastering of content, assessment is to become more progressive in nature with the intention of providing a basis for student growth, and the improvement of educational practices, rather than providing a basis for student or school comparison. [51] Thus, the practice of streaming students based on achievement is forbidden, individual differences are paramount, and method rather than content emphasized in all teaching endeavours. [52]

Similar to the main curriculum guide, the Law states that "the main purpose of educational assessment is to diagnose, stimulate, and assist in the improvement of student learning practices." [53] The Law also states that educational assessment will be twofold: a within school assessment, and external examinations administered by the Ministry. The "Ministry is to administer centralized tests in at least Icelandic and mathematics," but in practice, the tests have been administered in Icelandic, mathematics, science, English, and

[49] ibid, p.7-15.
[50] ibid, p.18.
[51] ibid, p.29.
[52] ibid, p.40.
[53] #63/1974, clause 56.

Danish.[54] During some years, however, the tests were administered in a few additional subjects as options. The supplementary comments say that the main purpose of these tests is to "make it easier for schools, i.e., principals and teachers, to evaluate their teaching practices."[55]

The external examinations were norm-referenced until 1985, when replaced with absolute scaling procedures. One of the major arguments for abandoning the norm-referencing of the tests was that students should by judged by their own merit; the fixed percentage number of students not meeting the requirements was regarded as inequitable. However, the entrance criteria to secondary schools are both based on marks in the external exams and the regular school marks. In practice, students who do not meet the entrance requirements and want to transfer to secondary schools leading to matriculation, can enroll in upgrading courses at most of the comprehensive secondary schools. Thus, the transition from the primary school level to the secondary school level may be judged as being fair and flexible.

The progressive educational ideas as described above were not restricted to pedagogical matters. Administrative progressivism, such as an emphasis on decentralization, is the guiding principle in the control and organization of the educational system: (1) educational costs are to be shared by the state and the municipalities; the country is divided into regions; (2) each region has a board of education; each school is controlled by a district school board; and (3) cooperation within the system as a whole is strongly emphasized.

In short, the 'Law on Comprehensive Primary Schooling' states that the country is divided into eight school regions "with a regional office [central office] and a regional school board in each region."[56] "The regional school board is composed of 5-7 members" whose major task is to control, plan, and organize educational matters in each region.[57] A regional superintendent, appointed by the Ministry in conjunction with the regional school board, is in

[54] #63/1974; clause 58, and *Skyrslur Profanefndar* [National Examination Council Reports].
[55] *Althingistidindi*, 1973, p. 272.
[56] #63/1974; clause 10.
[57] #63/1974; clause 11;12.

charge of the central office and his major task is to administer and "supervise the implementation of existing educational policies." [58] Each school region is further decentralized into "school districts" with "district school boards" "appointed by municipal authorities." [59] The major task of these district school boards is to "observe whether or not children in a given district receive education services as legally stated" and "to ensure school resources and adequacy of physical facilities in each school district." [60] Decentralization is also emphasized in the financing aspect of comprehensive primary schools. In general, building costs are equally divided between the state and the municipalities. Salary expenses are paid for by the state and maintenance costs by municipalities. [61] Thus, as the supplementary comments say, "decentralization is the main idea" in the administration of the educational system. [62] Furthermore, they say that in recent years, several municipalities as well as the association of municipalities, have requested a delegation of decision making powers. The committee responsible for the writing of the bill on comprehensive primary education concluded in a similar vein; this view "is supported by the committee on comprehensive primary education." [63]

As already outlined, the reorganization of the primary school system is generally based on redefining the concept of equality of educational opportunity. In the 1946 education laws, equality of opportunity centered around structural arrangements of the educational system, and the grade levels offered in rural and urban areas. The 1974 policies involved a reorganization of these arragements where merging of the elementary and the lower secondary school levels provided increased coordination and continuity, and inequity between rural and urban areas was accommodated. The selective middle school exams were cancelled, giving 'all' students an opportunity to enter secondary schools. Furthermore, the equality of opportunity concept was extended to new areas. In all teaching endeavours, along with social

[58] #63/1974; clause 14.
[59] #63/1974; clause 17.
[60] #63/1974; clause 19.
[61] #63/1974; clause 76-86.
[62] *Althingistidindi*, 1973, p.245.
[63] ibid, p.245.

and psychological counselling services, individual needs and demands are to be taken into account. Procedural learning is emphasized, the curriculum is to become more integrated and child oriented, and assessment changed from summative to formative. All administrative arrangements are also characterized by cooperation and decentralization of decision making powers. Thus, the implementation of the comprehensive primary schooling philosophy involves somewhat greater formalization and bureaucratization of the educational system which is, however, intentionally designed to make it increasingly democratic, equitable, and egalitarian.

C. Secondary Education

The contextualization of the policy ends of the primary school system and the reorganization of the structure of the educational system emphasized the need for a reorganization of the secondary school level. Access to secondary schools had been changed, provisions in secondary school laws and regulations had to be revised and updated, and for reasons of equality of opportunity, increased coordination was nessessary within the secondary school level. However, before describing the responses to these changing conditions, a brief review of the grammar school movement and a brief review of vocational education is provided. In this context, schools leading to matriculation are included in the grammar schools category, whereas remaining secondary schools are included in the vocational or special school category.

Grammar Schools

In the beginning of the twentieth century there was only one grammar school in Iceland, located in the capital Reykjavik. Before 1904 this school was called *Laerdi-Skoli* or The Learned's School, and the curriculum emphasis was on the classics and theology (Armannsson et al., 1975:34-70). With a regulation change in 1904 this school became more general in nature: the curriculum was expanded, the school was divided into departments and the name was changed to *Almenni Menntaskolinn* or the General Grammar School

(Armannson et al., 1975:70). As an example, Armannsson et al (1975:70) describe the situation as follows:

> With these changes, the school was to become "general" instead of "learned", i.e. to provide for general education. This is in accord with the new name of these schools in the scandinavian countries, for example, in Denmark where they are called *de hojere almenskoler*. [64] The critics of the new arrangements considered the name of the school ambiguous, but the advocates pointed out that "basic education" was also the goal of these schools in the regulation from 1877.

A shift in emphasis in the development of this school took place in 1922 when a division of mathematics and science was established. Arnlaugsson (1983) states that "these changes created less controversy than the changes in 1904" but in the beginning "students in the liberal arts department looked down on students in this new department and considered them second class." [65] However, with the development of the *Almenni Menntaskoli*, the changes in both 1904 and 1922 may be seen as a response to societal changes at large. During these years, Iceland was changing from a static farming community to an urbanized industrial society. The fast growing fishing industry, which resulted in economic growth and higher living standards, put an emphasis on science and technology as an integral part of the curriculum. This trend, however, continued and in 1937 with a new regulation the *Almenni Menntaskoli* was further departmentalized and the name was shortened to *Menntaskolinn* or The Grammar School (Armannsson et al., 1975:86). Today, this school is usually referred to as the Reykjavik Grammar School.

In 1930 another grammar school was established in Akureyri, the largest town in the northern part of Iceland. Arnlaugsson (1983) points out that the establishment of this school became a hot political issue, particularly because of "resistance from the south" and the main arguments were "that there was no need for more than one grammar school in the country." [66] Nevertheless, the movement for the grammar schools grew and expanded and in 1953 a grammar school was established at Laugarvatn in the rural south of Iceland. This school was designed to operate as a boarding school. In 1945 *Verslunarskolinn*, or The School of

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[64] Emphasis added.
[65] Arnlaugsson, G. *Radstefna um Undirbuning Haskolanams og Adgang ad Haskola* [A conference on Student Preparation and University Entrance Requiremnts], Bandalag Haskolamanna, 26 november, 1983, p.22.
[66] ibid, p.22.

Commerce, graduated students with *studentsprof* or matriculation, thus functioning as a grammar school. This school is located in the capital Reykjavik and is run as a private school; it is, however, strongly subsidized by the state. *Kennaraskolinn*, or The Professional School for Teachers also provided programs leading to matriculation, but in 1971 this school was changed into a Teachers College awarding B.Ed. degrees, thus demanding matriculation as the entrance requirement. [67] The matriculation programs at the Professional School for Teachers were designed as one or two year programs following the completion of the teaching certificate.

A few other grammar schools have been established since 1953, one in the west-peninsula town of Isafjordur, two in the capital Reykjavik, one in Kopavogur, a town of 13,000 bordering on Reykjavik, and one in Egilsstadir in the rural east. Recently, a school run by the Cooperative Movement, which is a private school but heavily subsidized by the state, started offering programs leading to matriculation. The grammar school in Kopavogur, however, was turned into a comprehensive secondary school in 1982. Thus, today there are seven grammar schools, a few special schools, and the comprehensive secondary schools which offer programmes leading to matriculation.

Law on Grammar Schooling. A description of the scope and function of this Law which was enacted in 1970 provides a relatively detailed picture of the function and operation of grammar schools; however, some specifics are controlled by regulations. The Law is divided into 10 sections and 27 clauses. In section one, the purpose and organization of grammar schools are described; entrance requirements in section two; curriculum in section three; examinations in section four; personnel in section five; housing in section six; administration in section seven; health services in section eight; regulations in section nine; and the enactment of this law in section ten.

The law states that "the aim of grammar schools is to reinforce the maturity of students, provide them with basic education and prepare them for university studies and a

[67] #38/1971; clause 4.

general participation in society." [68] The Law says that "grammar schools shall be four year schools" and that "in the organization of these schools, the aim is to provide curriculum and teaching practices in accordance with student needs and demands, particularly needs regarding further university education." [69] Also, according to this law, "these schools are for both males and females." [70] Thus, the overall aim of grammar schools is to provide academic education and take individual needs and demands into account in the education process.

Furthermore, the Law states that "the school year may be divided into terms" and the "curriculum organized in credits;" "one credit equals one 45 minute class a week for one school year," and "the total number of credits required for matriculation is around 144." [71] Also, "all costs regarding the establishment and operation of grammar schools are covered by the state," "as determined in each year's state budget." [72]

The curriculum is divided into three categories: (1) "core subjects;" (2) "specialization subjects;" and (3) "electives." [73] The "core subjects are compulsory to all students despite specialization areas," and "the purpose of the core subjects is to provide broad basic education." [74] "The specialization subjects are the basis for the departmentalization of grammar schools," and the purpose of the specialization area subjects "is to ensure depth in the given subject area." [75] The electives may be used to supplement and reinforce one's knowledge, either in the core subjects or the specialization areas. [76] Despite some differences between grammar schools in this respect, the specialization areas or 'departments' are of three general types: (1) language arts; (2) general sciences; and (3) biological sciences. A social science department is to be found in some of these schools, and in most cases these departments are further sub-departmentalized.

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[68] #12/1970; clause 2.
[69] #12/1970; clause 3.
[70] #12/1970; clause 4.
[71] #12/1970; clause 9.
[72] #12/1970; clause 12.
[73] #12/1970; clause 9.
[74] #12/1970; clause 9.
[75] #12/1970; clause 9.
[76] #12/1970; clause 9.

At the end of each term or school year, tests are administered where student competencies are judged to assess whether they may continue or not. [77] When instruction in a subject area is completed, cumulated over one, two, three, or four years of study, "a final examination in the subject shall be administered." [78] Upon completion of all examinations leading to matriculation, students may transfer to the university level.

Regarding grammar school entrance requirements, the Law states that "grammar schools proceed from the academic middle schools" and "the standards required are decided upon in a regulation." [79] Although the term 'middle school' has not yet been substituted with 'comprehensive primary school,' the procedures are the same; the entrance requirements are put forth in a regulation stating the required marks on both the external and the school examinations.

Although the above description is delimited to the design and operation of grammar schools, it gives a general outline of how individual student needs are to be met in a relatively flexible and departmentalized structure restricted, however, to academic (theoretical) subjects in a class group system. Despite the regulatory elements described above, the Law also states that "experimental grammar schools may be established and excluded from the control of this Law, provided the matriculation requirements be met." [80] Although minor innovations at some of the grammar schools are of interest, the innovations at the *Hamrahlid* grammar school are of greatest significance in this context.

Innovations. Of significance in the development of secondary schooling in Iceland is the establishment of the experimental Hamrahlid grammar school located in Reykjavik. This school was founded in 1966 and in 1972 the design of this school was changed from the traditional class group system into a course credit system. An evening course adult education program, *oldungadeild*, was also established in this school.

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[77] #12/1970; clause 10.
[78] #12/1970; clause 10.
[79] #12/1970; clause 7.
[80] #12/1970; clause 5.

In general, in the course credit system the school year is divided into two or more terms and at the end of each term students complete the courses in which they registered. Within the boundaries of some predefined rules regarding the sets of courses, total number, and sequence of both basic and optional courses, students can essentially structure their own programs. The number of courses in which a student registers for each term, however, depends on the courses available and the number of courses the student thinks he or she can successfully complete. Thus, the matriculation may be completed in approximately four years, compared to the fixed four years in the class group system. Also, if a course is not successfully completed, the student can repeat the course, instead of the entire year in the class group system, and instead of undergoing comprehensive testing in the last grade, matriculation is replaced with cumulative credits and marks.

The *oldungadeild* or adult education program, which literally means the department for the older people, was designed as an evening school leading to matriculation. The only admission requirement is to be nineteen years of age or more. In general, the structure of this system is similar to the structure of the regular day school system, with the exception that the number and concentration of courses is slightly different from the day school. This adult education program became extremely popular and became the model for similar programs at other grammar and comprehensive schools.

Despite the changes in the structure of grammar schools, at each given time, their operation may be regarded as having been successful in providing general education and preparation for entering the university level. These schools are among the oldest institutions within the educational system, and matriculation has always been highly regarded with the Icelandic society. Through the years, the various laws and regulations on grammar schooling have been updated several times in response to changing societal conditions. In general, these changes have resulted in increased flexibility and departmentalization of the curriculum, thus providing increased opportunities and flexibility within the boundaries of academic subject areas. However, the recent *Hamrahlid* grammar school innovations have had relatively little impact on the design and operation of the other grammar schools, but strongly influenced the

organization of the comprehensive secondary schools and some of the trade and technical schools. Before examining these influences in any detail, a brief overview of the vocational education category is provided.

Vocational Education

The vocational education category within the secondary sector is composed of a variety of schools and school types. Often, schools within this category are referred to by the synonym 'special schools,' although more commonly these schools are referred to by distinctive names. However, the School of Commerce and the School of the Cooperative Movement which offer business training programs and certificates, are not included in this category because their programs lead to matriculation. Likewise, the comprehensive secondary schools established since 1975 are excluded.

Analytically, these 'other special schools' can be classified in some of the following categories: (1) agricultural schools; (2) health service schools; (3) home economics schools; (4) art and craft schools; (5) trade schools; (6) technical schools; (7) schools for the fisheries; and (8) music schools. This catergorization, however, is not to be seen as complete and none of these school types will be elaborated upon. Of significance in this context is the category of trade schools because these schools constitute the largest segment of the vocational divisions in most of the comprehensive secondary schools that offer vocational programs. These trade schools, however, will not be examined in any detail, only the major points of significance in relation to them in the Trade Education Law and its rationale.

Josepsson (1968:635) asserts that "trade and technical education has been the fastest expanding category of vocational training during the last two decades." As an example, in 1964 there were twenty trade schools located in the various towns all over the country.[11] The largest of these trade schools is the Reykjavik Trade School and as Josepsson (1968:635) notes, this school "has lead in this development, as can be noted in the expanding number of programs and in the rapidly increasing student population." Still, the above description fits

[11] *Althingistidindi*, 1964, Book A, 1965, p.1215.

the Reykjavik Trade School which has an enrollment of approximately 1200 students and offers a variety of trade programs. Today, however, many of the trade schools have been incorporated into the comprehensive secondary schools.

The Trade Education Law. In 1966, a new 'Trade Education Law' was enacted. As the supplementary comments indicate, this Law is based on the Norwegian model and was planned in cooperation with Norwegian experts, sponsored by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD. [12] The Law emphasizes a coordination of the trade school administrative body, but before 1966 the administration of trade schools belonged to two ministries: The Ministry of Culture and Education and The Ministry of Industrial Affairs. [13] The major structural changes put forth in this Law are that within the trade education system "programs would not only be offered in legally accepted trades, but also in other areas for the industries"; "trade schools will be established in all regions of the country"; and "that a coordinated administration regarding the operation of trade education would be established." [14]

Josepsson (1968:642) summarizes the types of trade education programs provided by this law: "trade schools are to be of four kinds, i.e., (1) practical trade schools, (2) general trade schools, (3) schools for specialized trades and (4) schools for master tradesmen." [15] Josepsson (1968:642) proceeds and describes the major changes as follows:

> Practical trade schools are introduced by this act for the first time, but to date no such school has been established. The introduction of these schools would permit students to enter trade education, offered by the school for one year, without entering into an apprenticeship. Practical training which would be provided in the school, is comparable to two years of apprenticeship and trade school education. Following the study in the practical trade school, the student would enter into apprenticeship and continue his education in the trade school under the supervision of the master tradesman. The main advantage of the establishment of the practical trade shool is that students would be assured of a firm introductory training in the respective trades and access to all necessary tools and machinery which a number of tradesmen do not possess.

The supplementary comments note, judging from experience in neighbouring countries, that

[12] *Althingistidindi*, 1964, Book A, 1965, p.1212.
[13] *Althingistidindi*, 1964, Book A, 1965, p.1213.
[14] *Althingistidindi*, 1964, Book A, 1965, p.1990.
[15] Emphasis his.

the benefits from moving the practical training into the schools are "unquestionable." [86] The main arguments are the following: (1) it is better to train students in the necessary areas before they start working with their trademasters in the field; (2)there can be great variation between the training students receive depending on trade masters; and (3) the growth of technology which results in increased automatization, reduces the instructional value of the working places as training grounds. [87] In general, trade education is operated in such a way that a contract is made between a student and a tradesman and the tradesman becomes responsible for the practical training in the given trade. The academic part is provided in the school itself, and previously trade schools were organized as evening schools. The law states, however, that "trade schools are to be day schools but provisions may be made when necessary." [88] Today, most trades are organized as a four year program where 30 percent of the curriculum is devoted to academic subjects and 70 percent to practical training. [89]

Regarding the governance of trade education, similar to the previous law this law states that a trade education council is to be established but under one control, the Ministry of Culture and Education. However, the number of council members was increased to nine to represent the various interest associations and unions. [90] The major function of the trade council is to organize and coordinate the system as a whole, facilitate curriculum development, and administer the assessment of final exam pieces as well as to certify students. [91] Trade schools are also financed jointly by the state and the individual municipalities. As with the comprehensive primary schools, the state covers half the cost of construction, as well as necessary teaching equipment and all salary expenses, but the municipalities cover the other half of the cost of construction, as well as maintenance costs. [92]

Entrance requirements were also to be strengthened by the enactment of this Law. The supplementary comments say that "the existing entrance requirements have not been

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[86] *Althingistidindi*, 1964, Book A, 1965, p.1218.
[87] *Althingistidindi*, 1965, Book A, 1965, p.1218.
[88] #68/1966, clause 15.
[89] Regulation on Trade Education, 1981.
[90] #68/1966; clause 3;5.
[91] #68/1966; clause 6;9.
[92] #68/1966; clause 44.

followed in any detail" and the implications of this development have resulted in the lowering of standards; "the unqualified group became the norm" and thus "too much time is spent on upgrading students and less time devoted to the technical and special courses." [11] However, the implications of these concerns were that the entrance requirements were not to be altered in any substantial way, rather the implementation procedures were to be strengthened.

The major policy ends put forth in the 'Trade Education Law' are to bring more of the practical training into the schools, make trade schools full time secondary schools, and to simplify the governance of these schools. Similar to the 'Law on Grammar Schooling,' an emphasis is placed on offering a variety of program routes, thus responding both to individual needs and the needs of industry. The raising of standards is also strongly emphasized, an issue of enduring concern. Thus, these and other elements reinforced the rise of comprehensive secondary schools which combined academic and vocational programs and strongly emphasized the status and scope of vocational education.

A Period of Transition

Before the reorganization of the educational system in 1974, an attempt was made in 1969 to solve the problem of increased enrollments, discontinuity, and the lack of opportunities by the establishment of the continuing divisions at some of the lower secondary schools. On July 4th in 1969, the Minister of Education established a committee to propose solutions to these problems. The following excerpt from the appointment letter highlights some of the issues at stake:

> As is commonly known, students who successfully complete the middle school may continue in i.e., grammar schools, the Professional School for Teachers, and the last grade in the lower secondary school. The students who have successfully completed the lower secondary school may continue at the Professional School for Teachers which can lead to a teaching certificate and matriculation.
> In recent years, the lower secondary school population has been gradually increasing. Among other things, this has resulted in increasing student enrollments in the grammar schools and the Professional School for Teachers. This coming fall, there will be great numbers of students applying for admission, thus making it preferable to establish new program routes in addition to the program routes now available. At the present there are more teacher education students than will be needed. Accordingly, the Ministry of Education has appointed this committee, the task of

[11] *Althingistidindi*, 1964, Book A, 1965, p.1217-1218.

> which is to propose new program routes for middle and lower secondary schools graduates that can be implemented this coming fall. ... "

Within the given time limits, the committee consulted several principals, superintendents, school board members, and others, and released the report on 'The Increase of Program Routes Available to Middle and Lower Secondary School Graduates' in August 1969 outlining the purpose and possible design of continuing divisions to be established.

According to the report, the continuing divisions were to be organized as one or two-year programs and to be financed in a fashion similar to the elementary and secondary schools. Based on correspondence with relevant authorities across the country, the committee concluded that the feasibility and interest in the establishment of continuing divisions was great. Eventually, continuing divisions were established in most of the larger towns and cities in the fall of 1969 and 1970. "

In addition to the above, the report states that the main educational purpose of the continuing divisions is to: (1) "increase student knowledge and competencies for continuing academic secondary education and education in special schools;" (2) "prepare for the various jobs in the industries;" and (3) "offer basic [general] education." " The curriculum is organized into three categories: (1) "the core;" (2) "specialization areas;" and (3) "courses to be determined by each school." " The core constitutes approximately two thirds of the curriculum and students are given the opportunity to specialize in education, health sciences, science and technology, and commerce. " The entrance requirements are somewhat similar to the grammar school entrance requirements. Overall, the requirements call for a successful completion of the external middle school examinations or the external lower secondary school examinations. Deviations, however, may be made from this rule because of contextual factors. Depending on the specialization area, the completion of either the first or the second

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"*Fjolgun Namsbrauta fyrir Gagnfraedinga og Landsprofsmenn* [The Increase of Program Routes Available to Middle and Lower Secondary School Graduates], Menntamalaraduneytid, Skolarannsoknardeild, 1969.
"ibid, p.20-21.
"ibid, p.6.
"ibid, p.7.
"ibid, p.7.

year of the continuing divisions allows students to transfer to grammar schools or some special schools. [99] As a general rule, either the programs in the continuing divisions are to substitute for one or two years in the grammar schools or some of the special schools. In practice many of the special schools have also been raising their entrance requirements, granting higher priority to those who have completed one or more years in the continuing divisions. [100]

Thus, similar to the grammar schools, the emphasis was strong on academic core subjects. However, the specialization areas were not the same as in the grammar schools, but were more similar to the areas offered a few years later in the comprehensive secondary schools. The implementation of this policy also allowed for increased horizontal tranferability and, in part, an acceptance of subject areas leading to matriculation other than the traditional grammar school subject areas.

Following the establishment of several continuing divisions at lower secondary schools in larger towns all over the country and the release of the report on the 'Increase of Program Routes Available to Middle and Lower Secondary School Graduates,' another committee was established by the Ministry of Education to review the curriculum and programs offered in the continuing divisions. In March 1971 the committee released its report, 'New and Changed Specialization Areas in the Lower Secondary School Continuing Divisions.' [101] The report states that "the committee's main suggestion is to establish vocational specialization areas during the fall of 1971," however, delimited to "food sciences" and "fishing." [102] The committee also suggested some slight changes in the existing programs. Generally, however, these new programs were never implemented.

Thus, the establishment of the continuing divisions solved to some extent the problem of increased demands for secondary schooling. Despite a stronger emphasis on academic

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[99]ibid, p.11.
[100]ibid, p.11.
[101]*Ny og Breytt Kjorsvid Framhaldsdeilda Gagnfraedaskola* [New and Changed Specialization Areas in the Lower Secondary School Continuing Divisions], Menntamalaraduneytid, Skolarannsoknardeild, mars 1971.
[102]ibid, p.3-4.

program routes than on vocational program routes, the intention was to provide good basic education and preparation for future work and employment. Also, with the establishment of the continuing divisions, equality of educational opportunity for middle and lower secondary school graduates was increased considerably: (1) more than just middle school graduates were now allowed to transfer to grammar schools or some of the special schools; (2) secondary education became increasingly accessible; and (3) the number of programs offered was slightly increased.

The Reykjavik scene. During this period of the rise and growth of the continuing divisions, Central Office in the capital Reykjavik was working on a slightly different plan regarding their problem of increased enrollments and demands for secondary education. Their plan was to establish a comprehensive secondary school in one of the fast growing suburban areas in the city of Reykjavik. Although suburban expansion was limited to Reykjavik alone, the study on 'Student Enrollments and Need for Schools,' conducted by Wolfgang Edelstein in collaboration with the Reykjavik Central Office, likely influenced their approach as a longer term solution. [103] In addition to forecasting student enrollments, the report emphasizes the necessity of long term planning and increased investment in education as a basis for economic growth and welfare. [104] Nonetheless, of central importance is the influence of Kristjan Gunnarsson. Gunnarsson was at that time a lower secondary school principal and a member at large of the Reykjavik Board of Education, representing the Conservatives. He is considered by many the initiator of the comprehensive secondary schooling concept in Iceland.

Gunnarsson was a strong advocate for increased status and scope of vocational education within the educational system, emphasizing the necessity of making the educational system more responsive to changing industrial and economical conditions. [105] In 1967 Gunnarsson went to the U.S. on an exchange program to study the organization and

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[103] *Alitsgerd um Nemendafjolda og Skolathorf* [Student Enrollments and Need for Schools], Fraedsluskrifstofa Reykjavikur, 1965.
[104] ibid, p.5.
[105] *Rotary og Mennatmal* [Rotary and Education], 19 Thing Islenska Rotaryumdaemisins, 25-26 juni 1966; newspaper articels.

operation of secondary schools. His observations were based on both short and longer term visists to the various high schools in the New England area. [106] Among other things, his report outlines the structure and operation of the schools he visisted, including a description of the various programs offered. As a strong advocate of vocational education and the ideology of meeting individual needs and demands, Gunnarsson became a strong supporter of the comprehensive secondary schooling idea. [107]

During these years, Gunnarsson was a leading figure within the Conservative Party on educational affairs and represented the party in City Council for some time, but the Conservative Party has governed the City Council for an extended period in time. A few years later Gunnarsson became the chairman of the Reykjavik Board of Education and eventually its superintendent. He was thus in a key position to influence the rise and growth of comprehensive secondary schooling in the city of Reykjavik.

On January 15th 1970, City Council proposed that an experimental secondary school in the city of Reykjavik be established. After consulting the Reykjavik Board of Education, City Council concluded on February 19 that both "population growth," and "the increased complexity of the industries and the occupational structure" put an emphasis on the need to "restructure the lower secondary schools." [108] Accordingly, City Council delegated the task to the Reykjavik Board of Education to "propose a plan for secondary schools where students could select from various program orientations such as a grammar school route, trade and technical education route, and home economics route." [109] To fulfill this task, the Reykjavik Education Board hired the prominent grammar school principal Johann S. Hannesson, who had experience with the American educational system and had implemented some internal structural changes at the *Laugarvatn* grammar school where he was principal.

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[106] *Skolamal i Bandarikjunum* [Education in the U.S.], Skyrsla um namssfor til Bandarikjanna 1967-68.
[107] Interview, December 1985.
[108] In, *Sameinadur Framhaldsskoli*, [Coordinated Secondary School], Fraedlsuskrifstofa Reykjavikur, 1971, p.1.
[109] Ibid, p.i.

The report prepared by Hannesson was released in 1971 outlining the possible organization of an experimental comprehensive secondary school in Reykjavik. [110] The report is a relatively extensive document outlining the structure of the school and rationalizing the comprehensive design. The report states that "no single model was used when designing this school" and that the "ideas behind this form of schooling have been widely held in our neighbour countries." [111] Accordingly, the conclusion is that "in a society moving from poverty to welfare, it is necessary to reorganize outdated education policies to provide increased equity and respect for individuals." [112] Excerpts from the main propositions point out that this experimental school is to "combine all general secondary education program routes in one institution" where both "preparation for further education and preparation for the industries is provided." [113] "All teaching endeavours will be flexible," thus resulting in "increased choices and student responsibilities." [114] The curriculum will be organized in a "course credit system" and the school will be "departmentalized," offering a variety of both academic and vocational programs. [115] "The school year will be divided into terms" where cumulation of credits, after one term, two terms, three terms, etc., may result in some kind of certification. [116] "This experimental school will be located in Breidholt," the largest and the fastest growing suburb of Reykjavik. [117]

The supplementary comments to these propositions emphasize that this new school is not "just designed for maximizing efficiency"; equity and democracy are rather the guiding principles, allowing individual needs and demands to be met. [118] Thus, as the following summary shows, these policy ends will be achieved by the design of this school:

1. Not being able to transfer between program routes comes to an end.

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[110] *Sameinadur Framahaldsskoli*, [The Coordinated Secondary School], Fraedsluskrifstofa Reykjavikur, 1971.
[111] ibid, p.7.
[112] ibid, p.7.
[113] ibid, p.1.
[114] ibid, p.1.
[115] ibid, p.2.
[116] ibid, p.3.
[117] ibid, p.2.
[118] ibid, p.12.

2. Students are given the opportunity to delay their final program selection, depending on their motivation and abilities.

3. The various program routes will be equally treated, whereas previously the various program routes in seperate school types, usually resulted in unequal treatment and respect.

4. By offering quality programs in all areas, distribution of intelligent students will be equal over all areas.

5. General understanding of and respect for the various subject areas will be strenghtened by having as many basic courses as possible for all students from all programs.

6. If this school only becomes a gathering of the various school types under one roof, its aim will not be fulfilled. [119]

Furthermore, the supplementary comments say that this school form is "a logical extension of the development that started with the continuing divisions and the extended departmentalization of the grammar schools." [120] The difference is, however, that in a comprehensive school which combines the various programs and allows for horizontal transferability between program routes, "a course credit system must be adopted to implement this task." [121]

A Permit to Establish a Comprehensive Secondary School. At the same time as the city of Reykjavik was planning the comprehensive secondary school at *Breidholt*, the Ministry of Education conducted an extensive survey on vocational and technical education. [122] The task of the committee conducting the research was to "examine the status of technical education within the educational system and its place and relationship with the other school levels, leading to recommendations for improvement." [123] In short, the recommendations emphasize a coordination of the secondary school level, an enhancement of the status of vocational education, and adoption of a course credit system where different sets of courses

[119]ibid, p.12-13.
[120]ibid, p.19.
[121]ibid, p.24.
[122]*Um Nyskipan Verk og Taeknimenntunar a Islandi* [Reorganization of Vocational and Technical Education in Iceland], Menntamalaraduneytid, 1971.
[123]ibid, p.1.

are the basis for the various program routes.[124] Thus, it can be concluded that both the city of Reykjavik and the Ministry of Education had similar ideas on how to reorganize the secondary school level and, in 1971 the 'Bill on the Coordinated Secondary School' was proposed in parliament; it was, however, only intended to control the new experimental secondary school at *Breidholt*. The reorganization of the secondary school system as a whole was not proposed in parliament until in 1976, two years after the enactment of the 'Law on the Structure of the Educational System' and the 'Law on Comprehensive Primary Schooling.'

The 'Bill on the Coordinated Secondary School,' which was slightly updated and renamed 'A Permit to Establish a Comprehensive Secondary School,' was enacted in 1973. Initially, this Law was only designed as a contract between the state and the city of Reykjavik, but later the Law was amended allowing other municipalities to make similar contracts. Generally, the Law only describes the governance of comprehensive secondary schools stating that the ultimate authority lies within the Ministry of Education and that 60 percent of construction costs, 50 percent of maintenance costs, and all salary expenses will be covered by the state, but the remanining costs by municipalities. [125] As an example of the scope of this Law, the initial five clauses have been somewhat amended and updated bringing the number of clauses to the total of eight. However, other laws and regulations control aspects of the school, such as the law and regulation on trade education and the 'Regulation on the Comprehensive Secondary School at Flensborg' which was implemented in 1976.

In 1975 the Ministry of Education released two reports on secondary schooling: the report on 'The Continuing Divisions,' and the report on the 'Development of Vocational Education within the Secondary Sector.' [126] The task of the committee examining the continuing divisions was to update the regulation governing the continuing divisions. The committee concluded that "the continuing divisions would continue to be a part of the

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[124]ibid, p.2.
[125]#14/1973; clause 2;4.
[126]*Framldsdeildir Gagnfraedaskola* [Continuing Divisions], Menntamalaraduneytid, Skolarannsoknardeild, mai, 1975; *Um Throun Verkmenntunar a Framhaldsskolastigi* [Development of Vocational Education within the Secondary Sector], Idnfraedslulaganefnd, desember, 1975.

secondary school system but eventually merge into a comprehensive secondary school system." [127] The committee also concluded that the internal structure of the continuing divisions had to be updated because too much emphasis had been given to academic areas like in the grammar schools, however, without keeping up the same standards. [128] Similarly, the committee on the development of vocational education assumed that secondary education would be reorganized along comprehensive lines and asserted that the "existing program routes within the secondary sector had been developed without coordination" and that "the vocational routes had been severely neglected." [129] Accordingly, the committee concluded that vocational education within the secondary school level had to be emphasized, "giving vocational and academic education equal standards." [130]

All these elements, as described above, resulted in a strong move on the behalf of municipal authorities to establish comprehensive secondary schools. It was seen as an efficient solution providing young people with increased education opportunities in or close to their home towns. The Ministry of Education was also receptive to this school form, and as discussed below, plans were being made to reorganize the secondary school level by using a comprehensive secondary school as a model for the system as a whole.

Following the enactment of the 'Permit to Establish a Comprehensive Secondary School' and before the writing of the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization,' two reorganization proposals were introduced in parliament by members of the People's Alliance Party representing rural constituencies. Both the proposals represent regional interests: one outlines a possible organization of a comprehensive secondary school in the north-west region and the other puts an emphasis on enactment of a law to regulate the secondary school level as a whole. The supplementary comments to the former proposal reflect the authors' regional interests when they state that "secondary education should be transferred as much as possible to to the regions." [131] The supplements further state:

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[127] Continuing Divisions, p.1.
[128] ibid, p.2.
[129] ibid, p.16.
[130] ibid, p.17.
[131] *Althingistidindi*, 1974-1975, p.1183.

> From a regional development point of view, it is very important to try to keep the young people in their home districts for as long as possible. Experience shows that the younger the students are when they leave their home towns [districts] to undertake studies in some other parts of the country, it increases the likelihood that they will adjust to their new environment and loose contact with their home town environment. [132]

Similarly, in the latter proposal which was designed to put pressure on the enactment of a law to regulate the overall secondary school level it says:

> This proposal suggests that a bill should be prepared to regulate and organize secondary education with regard to division of labor between schools...
>
> Because of regional interests, it is important to strenghten secondary education in the parts of the country outside the greater Reykjavik area in order to reduce the difference between these areas with regard to quality and numbers of programs offered. This difference is becoming increasingly greater. [133]

Thus, the emphasis on regional development and equality of educational opportunity was strongly emphasized and as described below, comprehensive secondary schools and continuing divisions were being established all over the country.

Thirteen comprehensive secondary schools have been established since 1975, regulated by the 'Permit to Establish a Comprehensive Secondary School.'. All of these schools are [redacted]ed in urban areas, and in some cases two or more municipalities have cooperated in the establishment and operation of these schools. Most of the schools are located in the south west part of Iceland, since approximately half of the population lives in the greater Reykjavik area and approximately two-thirds of the population lives in the south-west part of the country. At present, the total population of Iceland is around 240,000 people.

In 1973 the *Breidholt* comprehensive secondary school was formally established, although it dit not begin its operation until in 1975. This school has always been the largest of the comprehensive secondary schools with an enrollment of 1400 students in 1982-1983, offering a variety of academic and vocational programs. [134] Two other comprehensive secondary schools have been established in Reykjavik since the *Breidholt* school: *Armulaskoli* in 1981, and *Kvennaskolinn* in 1982. These schools offer only academic programs. Thus,

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[132]ibid, p.1183.
[133]ibid, p.1179.
[134]*Um Framahldsskola: Nefndaralit*, [A Report on Secondary Schools], Menntamalaraduneytid, agust 1984, p.15.

they function to a large extent as grammar schools in cooperation with the *Breidholt* school.

Three comprehensive secondary schools were established during 1975 to 1977. *Flensborg* comprehensive secondary is located in the town of Hafnarfjordur, situated in the greater Reykjavik area. *Sudurnes* comprehensive secondary school is located in the town of Keflavik, 50 km south-west of Reykjavik and operated jointly by five neighbouring municipalities, and the *Akranes* comprehensive secondary school is located in the town of Akranes, 50 km north-west of Reykjavik. These schools are all similar in size, each with an enrollment of 500-600 students and are often referred to as 'the triad' because of their cooperation in curriculum planning and their joint curriculum guide. Most other comprehensive secondary schools and continuing divisions later became a part of this cooperation. *Flensborg*, however, offers only academic programs but cooperates with special schools in Hafnarfjordur in the vocational area. On the other hand, the *Sudurnes* and the *Akranes* schools offer a variety of academic and vocational programs. In both cases they grew out of the merging of continuing divisions, trade, and technical schools.

In 1977 the *Vestmannaeyjar* comprehensive secondary school and the *Saudarkrokur* comprehensive secondary school were established. Similar to the *Sudurnes* and the *Akranes* schools, these schools grew out of the merging of continuing divisions, trade schools, and some other special schools. The *Saudarkrokur* school is operated jointly by several municipalities in the north-west region with an enrollment of approximately 200 students in 1982-1983. [135] The *Vestmannaeyjar* school is located in the Westman Islands with an enrollment of approximaely 150 students in 1982-83. [136]

As noted earlier, the *Kopavogur* grammar school was reorganized into a comprehensive secondary school in 1982 with an enrollment of approximately 450 students in 1985. [137] The name, however, was not changed and at the present it only offers academic programs, although the establishment of vocational programs is being planned. Also, the *Egilsstadir* grammar school which was established in 1980 in the rural east of Iceland cooperates with the

[135]ibid, p.17.
[136]ibid, p.18.
[137]Memo from the principal.

Neskaupstadur comprehensive secondary school which was established at the same time. The *Egilsstadir* grammar school is regulated by the 'Law on Grammar Schooling' but the *Neskaupstadur* school by the 'Permit To Establish a Comprehensive Secondary School.' Due to the small population in the eastern part of the country, the enrollments were approximately 160 students at *Egilsstadir* grammar school and 70 students at *Neskaupstadur* comprehensive secondary school in 1982-83. [138] Because of the cooperation between these schools the Neskaupstadur comprehensive secondary school specializes in vocational programs, whereas the Egilsstadir school offers academic programs and has adapted a course credit system.

In 1981 and 1982 contracts were made to establish three additional comprehensive secondary schools; the *Akureyri* comprehensive secondary school, the *Sudurland* comprehensive secondary school, and the *Gardabaer* comprehensive secondary school. The *Akureyri* school is located in the town of Akureyri which is the largest town and the institutional center of northern Iceland. The *Akureyri* school specalizes in vocational programs, but the second oldest grammar school in the country is also located at Akureyri, thus allowing this division of tasks. The *Sudurland* school is located approximately 50 km south-east of Reykjavik and is operated jointly by several neighbouring municipalities, offering both academic and vocational programs. On the other hand, the *Gardabaer* school is located in a relatively new and fast growing area in greater Reykjavik. It only offers academic programs, relying on services in neighbouring schools for vocational programs.

In addition to the establishment of the comprehensive secondary schools, 'new' continuing divisions have also been established at some of the comprehensive primary schools. Generally, these continuing divisions offer academic programs in selected areas and are often run in association with neighbourhood comprehensive secondary schools. A few special and grammar schools also cooperate with some of the comprehensive secondary schools in the organization of their curriculum.

As described above, the *Flensborg*, the *Sudurnes*, and the *Akranes* comprehensive secondary schools cooperated in the publication of a joint curriculum guide. Later most

[138] *Um Framahldsskola: Nefndaralit* [A Report on Secondary Schools], Menntamalaraduneytid, august 1984, p.17.

secondary schools in the south-west region, the southern region, the eastern region, and the western region became a part of this cooperation. The curriculum guide was first printed in 1978, and then updated and reprinted in 1980 and 1983. The guide also reveals that some of the programs are planned and coordinated with some of the special schools, like the Icelandic School of Navigation, the Engineering School of Iceland, the Technical College of Iceland, and the School for Fish Processing and Management. [139]

In 1980 all secondary schools in the northern region and the north-western region created a curriculum guide of their own which is largely in line with the other widely published curriculum guide. Similarly, considerable coordination has taken place between secondary schools in the western-pensinula but the coordination between secondary schools in the Reykjavik region has not been as extensive as in the other regions. Although all this coordination and cooperation has been implemented in association with the Ministry, a number of elements have required further standardization.

In 1981 the Minister of Education established a committee to deal with some of these matters. In August 1984 the committee released its report which includes a global description of the organization of most comprehensive secondary schools. The report states that some schools have coordinated their curriculum more than others and concludes that the Ministry should publish a standardized curriculum guide to minimize these differences. [140]

During the spring of 1986 the Ministry released this standardized curriculum guide which is directed at secondary schools which organize their curriculum in a course credit system. In accordance with the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' the secondary school level is divided into eight divisions which are composed of the various academic and vocational program routes. The guide describes the overall types and number of courses for the divisions and the program routes. The introduction states that this guide is to serve as a master curriculum guide for the various secondary schools, which may publish their own

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[139] *Namsvisir Fjolbrautaskola* [Curriculum Guide for Comprehensive Secondary Schools"], Idnskolautgafan, 1983.

[140] *Um Framhaldsskola: Nefndaralit* [A Committee Report Regarding Secondary School], agust 1984.

guides based on this master guide and that this guide will become effective in 1987.[141]

As outlined above, thirteen comprehensive secondary schools have been established since 1975. Most of these schools offer both academic and vocational programs, although a few only offer academic programs. Generally, in such cases, these schools cooperate with some special schools close by. A number of continuing divisions have also been establsihed at some of the comprehensive primary schools and considerable coordination has take place between the comprehensive secondary schools, the continuing divisions, and some of the grammar and special schools.

The Law 'A Permit to Establish a Comprehensive Secondary School' has provided the legal basis for these schools but since 1976 and in accord with this overall development a more comprehensive 'frame' or structure policy has been proposed in parliament to regulate the overall secondary school level. The Bill has not yet been passed despite repeated proposals.

The Bill on Secondary School Reorganization

Two years after the restructuring of the educational system and the reorganization of the primary school system, the government of Iceland proposed a bill on the reorganization of the secondary school level along comprehensive lines: 'The Bill on Secondary School Reorganization.' The Bill was not passed when proposed in 1966-1967, nor was it passed despite repeated proposals in 1977-1978, 1978-1979, 1979-1980, 1981-1982, and 1982-1983; in fact the Bill has not yet been passed.

Before the presentation of procedures of the Bill in parliament, a brief description of the governmental organization and the party system is necessary. However, in this context the procedures of the Bill are only presented in general terms because of more detailed descriptions in subsequent chapters.

1. Governmental organization. The Icelandic legislature, the *Althingi*, is composed of sixty members. These sixty members are elected in national elections every four years. On

[141] *Namsskrá Handa Framhaldsskolum: Namsbrautir og Áfangalýsingar* [Curriculum Guide for Secondary Schools: Courses and Program Descriptions], Menntamalaraduneytid, Framhaldsskoladeild, apríl 1986.

occasions when governments do not stay in power the full term, elections are held before the four years are up.

Generally, in a multi-party system, as in Iceland, no single party obtains a majority. The result is the establishment of coalition governments. In most cases the number of ministers is approximately eight, representing the number of ministries.

The parliament is divided into two major departments, the upper department and the lower department. Each department has the right to propose bills and establish research committees. When a bill is presented it is discussed as often as is necessary; three times in each department, however, is the minimum. When a bill is passed, it must be accepted by the majority in both departments. On some issues, the parliament is not divided into departments. To pass a bill in the combined departments requires a majority of votes, exactly as it does in the separate departments.

2. The party system. The political party system is composed of competitive political parties that developed historically around issues appealing to different interest groups. Presently, this multi-party system is composed of four major parties, and a few smaller parties, which will not be discussed in this context. The major parties are four: The Independence Party, The Progressive Party, The Social Democratic Party, and The People's Alliance Party. The summary by Grimsson (1971:195), provides an outline of their characteristics:

> The Independence Party was established in 1929 when the Liberal and the Conservative Parties merged. The Independence Party, commonly referred to as the Conservative Party, has been the largest party in Iceland since the coalition. Its policies are characterized by right-wing ideologies, similar to its counterparts in the other Scandinavian countries.
>
> The Progressive party was founded in 1916 by leaders of the agricultural force and leaders of the Cooperative Movement. The size of the Progressive Party has ranged from it being the second largest, to being one of the smallest parties within the political system in Iceland. These fluctuations can likely be explained in terms of its centered position on a scale of left to right wing ideologies.
>
> The Social Democratic Party was established in 1916. Originally, the party's policies were characterized by socialistic orientation, but during the last decades its policies have reflected more right-wing ideologies.
>
> The People's Alliance Party was founded in 1956 when the United Socialist Party and a splinter group from the Social Democratic Party merged. Since 1956 The People's

Alliance Party has been the most radical left-wing major party in Icelandic politics.

Procedures. The 'Law on the Structure of the Educational System' enacted in 1974 states that coordination of the secondary school system was needed to ensure a continuing flow of students through both of these systems. Once this Law and the 'Law on Comprehensive Primary Schooling' were accepted, the Minister of Education in power at the time appointed a committee of four department heads from his Ministry to prepare and present suggestions on how to coordinate the secondary school system. The committee presented their recommendations to the Minister in 1976, and in 1977 the Bill was proposed in parliament.

In the spring of 1976-1977, the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' was introduced in parliament by a coalition government of Conservatives and Progressives. In this coalition, the minister of education was from the Progressives. The purpose of this introduction was to stimulate discussion and secure feed-back from the various interest groups: (1) members of parliament; (2) schools and school boards; (3) educational associations; (4) university officials; and (4) others. The following year, in the spring of 1977-1978, the same coalition government proposed the Bill again with an appendix containing the reactions received from the various interest groups. Without having received any formal discussions the Bill was proposed again in the spring of 1978-1979 and in the fall of 1979 by a new coalition government of Progressives, Social Democrats and the People's Allianee. This coalition government was only in power for a year, and a new coalition was formed in 1980 by The People's Alliance Party, the Progressives and a few Conservatives who broke away from the Conservative Party. This government proposed the Bill in 1981-1982 and 1982-1983. Because of disagreement regarding financial issues, the Minister of Education from the Progressives proposed the Bill in 1981-1982 without a finance section and in 1982-1983 he proposed the Bill along with another bill on the financing of education for the system as a whole.

A coalition government of Conservatives and Progressives has been in power since the spring of 1983 and the Bill has not been proposed agair. Two Ministers of Education from

the Conservatives have been in power in this coalition, the first stating no interest in presenting the Bill but the second displaying active interest. The 'shuffling' of ministers in this cabinet took place in the fall of 1985, thus leaving the present minister little time for action. However, shortly after taking over the Ministry of Education he established a committee to propose plans regarding the financing of secondary schools - the most controversial issue regarding the acceptance of the Bill.

D. Summary and Synthesis

The purpose of this chapter was to contextualize the secondary school reorganization policies, as they are put forth in the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization.' Both primary education policies and secondary education policies were examined with a focus on the system as it was before and after 1974 when the 'Law on Comprehensive Primary Schooling' and the 'Law on the Structure of the Educational System' were enacted. Although the development of this century's education policies in Iceland may be divided into three major phases, 1907-1946; 1946-1974; and 1974 onwards, the examination was mostly delimited to the last two phases.

Some definition of the concept of equality of educational opportunity is the underlying principle for organization and structure of the educational system in each one of these periods. Although initially regarded as being sound and equitable, the existing policies were seen as increasingly unjust and outdated towards the end of each of these two earlier periods.

In the period of 1946-1974, the structure of the educational system was relatively complicated in comparison to the structure put forth in the 'Law on the Structure of the Educational System' which was enacted in 1974. The 'Law on Compulsory Education and the Structure of the Educational System,' enacted in 1946, outlined the structure of the educational system which was organized into four major levels: (1) the elementary school level; (2) the lower secondary school level; (3) the grammar and special school level; (4) the university level. The elementary school level was designed for the age group of seven to

thirteen. The immediately proceeding lower secondary school level which was divided into the intermediate school level, the middle school level, and the regular lower secondary school level, was designed for the age group of thirteen to sixteen. Selective examinations were administered at the end of the academic middle school and, when successfully completed, students could transfer to grammar or special schools. On the other hand, a successful completion of the 'regular' lower secondary school, which was practical in nature, gave access to most of the special schools but not to the grammar schools and, thus did not give access to post secondary education. This system was seen as being outdated, failing to provide for equality in educational opportunity in 1974. In 1946 it did, however, replace a system of entrance examinations which were only offered at the two grammar schools where affluent parents were the only ones who could afford the necessary support courses for their children before taking the entrance examinations. After 1946 'all' students took the same exams and it became possible for students at most lower secondary schools to compete in these exams and enter secondary schools.

Despite the increased equality of educational opportunity with the enactment of the 1946 education laws, the system gradually became viewed as outdated. Primarlily, the 1946 education laws were seen as failing to provide for equity between urban and rural areas. Furthermore, the coordination and continuity within the system was seen as inadequate, and the selective middle school exams were seen as increasingly unjust and discriminatory. Along with rapid population growth and higher living standards, demands for education increased and the 'regular' lower secondary school came to be seen as a 'dead end.' This led to the establishment of continuing divisions in 1969, where, at the end of the lower secondary school, students could transfer to continuing divisions which offered one or two year secondary school programs in academic areas. Providing a successful completion of the continuing divisions, students could transfer to grammar schools, the School of Commerce, and the Professional School for Teachers with transfer credits and complete the remaining two years in their matriculation programs. Despite this increase in equality of educational opportunity, secondary schools offering programs leading to matriculation were relatively few

and thus reinforced the establishment of comprehensive secondary schools offering both academic and vocational programs leading to matriculation.

With the enactment of the 1974 education laws, the educational system was simplified and organized into three major levels: (1) the comprehensive primary school level; (2) the secondary school level; (3) the university level. The selective middle school exams were abandoned and 'all' students were given the opportunity to transfer to the secondary school level, providing some minimal entrance requirements. During these same years, several comprehensive secondary schools were being established in the various parts of the country to meet the increased demands that resulted from these changes and to provide increased equality in access and educational opportunities. The law 'Permit to Establish a Comprehensive Secondary School' provided the legal basis for the establishment of the comprehensive secondary schools but it did not contain any details describing the purpose, design, and operation of these schools. Hence, the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' was proposed in parliament in 1976 in order to provide a more detailed policy for these schools and to coordinate other secondary schools with these schools, as well as the overall secondary school system, thus providing increased equality in educational opportunity.

Despite repeated proposals, the Bill has not yet been passed in parliament. But because of the relatively detailed policy put forth in the Bill and the expectation that it would become the 'frame' policy for the secondary school level, it has to a large extent served as a guide in the organization of the established comprehensive secondary schools and the coordination between secondary schools which has taken place since the Bill was first proposed.

Chapter VI

Description of the Substantive Problem

The description of the general policy ends and the issues related to the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill is presented in this chapter. The data collected are analyzed and presented in a thematic fashion in order to describe the substantive problem in the development of the Bill. First, the character of the reorganization policy is described by presenting the general policy ends put forth in the Bill. The general elements of education as public policy as identified by Kerr (1976) are used as guidelines for the thematic presentation of the policy ends put forth in the Bill. Second, the issues which are related to the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill are presented in a thematic fasion.

The issues related to the delay or non-acceptance of the Bill are mostly retrospective in nature describing both policy formation and implementation elements. Some of these issues have also somewhat changed since first presented and the description is thus not to be seen as exhaustive; only the major points of significance are highlighted.

A. The Policy Ends put Forth in the Bill on Secondary School Reorganization

The purpose of the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' was to establish a 'frame' or a global structure policy for the overall secondary system. Accordingly, many of the regulatory elements put forth in the Bill are rather general in nature and many of the details are to be decided upon later in regulations.

Since the Bill was somewhat changed during the years covered, reference is made to all versions of the Bill when the policy ends put forth in the Bill are described. However, in cases where little or no changes have been made, reference is made to the most recent version of the Bill which was proposed in 1982-1983. The description is supplemented with references to explanatory statements attached to each version of the Bill as supplementary comments regarding each clause or string of clauses. Reference is also made to additional supplements in the form of appendices which were attached to the first four versions of the Bill. The development of the Bill and the changes throughout the years are not presented in any detail;

only the major points of significance are highlighted. Generally, some of these changes are described more thoroughly in the section on the issues related to the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill.

Using Kerr (1976) as the model, the elements of the major policy ends put forth in the Bill are presented and discussed within the following categories: (1) resource elements; (2) distributional elements; (3) curriculum elements; and (4) methodological elements. These categories are not to be seen as definitive, rather as heuristic for the thematization and the presentation of the major policy ends put forth in the Bill. Although some of these elements are more critical than others regarding the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill, they are all included in order to contextualize the overall policy put forth in the Bill. However, before the general policy ends that the Bill puts forth are described, an outline of the overall composition of the Bill is provided. Although the number and the organization of sections in the Bill have been somewhat changed during the years in-question, this outline is delimited to the 1982-1983 version of the Bill.

The Composition of the Bill

The 1982-1983 version of the Bill is divided into ten major sections which are composed of one or more clauses or articles. The regulatory function of the elements presented in each section may be classified as consisting of three general types: (1) elements which are to be regulated by some already existing laws or regulations; (2) elements regulated by laws or regulations which will be created later; and (3) elements which are presented and elaborated upon in the Bill itself. Generally, the sections which contain the elements central to the Bill, are composed of a larger number of clauses than other sections.

Section one decribes the effective range of the Bill; section two the aims of secondary schooling; section three the entrance requirements; section four the organization of program routes; section five adult education; section six the organization of schools; section seven administration; section eight personnel; section nine finance; and section ten implementation procedures. These regulatory elements are thematized by adopting Kerr's (1976)

categorization of education as public policy: (1) resource elements; (2) distributional elements; (3) curriculum elements; and (4) methodological elements.

Resource Elements

As stated previously, the resource elements refer to the institutional arrangements that provide the immediate context for the conduct of education. The policy ends categorized as belonging to this theme of resource elements are presented under these headings; (1) structural arrangements; (2) governance and administration; and (3) finance. In addition to these resource elements, a description of the general policy statement is included in this section.

The general policy statement. According to the 'Law on the Structure of the Educational System' enacted in 1974, the secondary school level was to be coordinated to ensure a continuing flow of students through both systems. The Bill states the general role of secondary schools as follows:

> The role of secondary schools, *framhaldsskolar*, is to provide education which at each given time is a purposeful preparation for work or continuing education. The aim is also to provide for the development of students as individuals as well as participants in a democratic society.[142]

Regarding this section, the supplementary comments say that an "attempt was made to express in as few words as possible the general aim of secondary schools."[143] Nevertheless, the central focus is to emphasize the dual nature of secondary schools, and the supplementary comments further state that "the well being of the individual and society as a whole are interrelated."[144]

Structural arrangements. All structural arrangements put forth in the Bill emphasize a coordinated unitary secondary school system. The first versions of the Bill state its range of

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[142] *Althingistidindi*, 1982-83; [Publication of Parliamentary Documents], section II, clause 3, p.2973.
[143] ibid, p.2984.
[144] ibid, p.2984.

effect in the following: "secondary education which is publicly funded will be coordinated and planned according to this law. *Framhaldsskolar* [secondary schools] is the umbrella term of the schools affected by this law."[145] The supplementary comments in the 1976-1977 version of the Bill state that the use of the generic term secondary school "does not mean that individual schools may not carry distinctive names, for example, with relation to school location."[146] The supplementary comments to the 1977-1978 version of the Bill add that "tradition or school role" may also determine school names.[147] In the last two versions of the Bill, all these supplementary comments were included in the Bill itself, describing its range of effects as follows:

> Secondary education which is publicly funded will be coordinated and planned according to this law. *Framhaldsskolar* [secondary schools] is the umbrella term of the schools affected by this law, but individual schools may have distinctive names, for example connected with location, tradition, or some distinctive roles.[148]

Regarding the infrastructure of schools, the Bill states that they are to be organized into "program routes" which are to be composed of both "basic and optional courses," and one or more related program routes make up "divisions."[149] The number of "division types," however, may vary according to some "contextual factors."[150] The Bill also states that when necessary, "institutions" or "corporations" may be "contracted" to administer some aspects of the vocational programs.[151]

Secondary schools composed of two or more divisions or a number of vocational and/or academic routes are commonly referred to as *fjolbrautaskolar* or comprehensive secondary schools. Literally, the term *fjolbrautaskoli* means a school which offers several program routes. This term, however, does not appear in any of the ten regulatory sections of the Bill; the generic term *framhaldsskolar* or secondary schools is used instead. The supplementary comments say that the term *framhaldsskolar* was chosen to to avoid

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[145] *Althingistidindi*, 1976-1977; section I, clause 2, p.2531.
[146] ibid, 2553.
[147] *Althingistidindi*, 1977-1978, p.2973.
[148] *Althingistidindi*, 1982-1983; section I, clause 2, p.2973.
[149] ibid; section IV, clause 8, p.2973.
[150] ibid; section VI, clause 17, p.2875.
[151] ibid; section VI, clause 20, p.2976.

"ambiguity" and "possible misunderstandings" and is furthermore in line with the term *framhaldsskolastig* which refers to the secondary school level.[152]

Regarding the section on the organization of program routes, the supplementary comments state that "to limit by law the divisions and the program routes to be offered was considered unwise," since a division type is "primarily a planning concept" and "to specify and limit the program routes by law would be inconvenient" and impossible except on a short term basis.[153]

In the 1976-1977, 1977-1978, and 1978-1979 versions of the Bill, a detailed description and discussion of potential divisions and program routes is attached to each version of the Bill in an appendix form. These elaborations are presented in three appendices following the supplementary comments regarding the clauses. The appendices are the same in all three versions of the Bill. Without detailed elaborations, a chart of the "coordinated secondary school system" is presented in Figure 2.[154] The figure shows, that the overall secondary level has been divided into eight divisions which are composed of various program routes. The supplements state that the intention was only to show "how the coordinated secondary school might possibly be divided into divisions and program routes" and that it "makes the comparison easier with the present system."[155]

Furthermore, the supplements state that the purpose of this chart is "not to point out connections" with "any specific" already existing "educational institutions" and although the chart shows that some of the divisions are larger than others, it has no "resemblance to the actual value and scope of the divisions."[156] Nevertheless, elsewhere in the supplements to these first versions of the Bill, a description of the possible organization within most of the regions is provided where some schools would be merged into one institution and other new or existing schools would be coordinated with that institution.[157]

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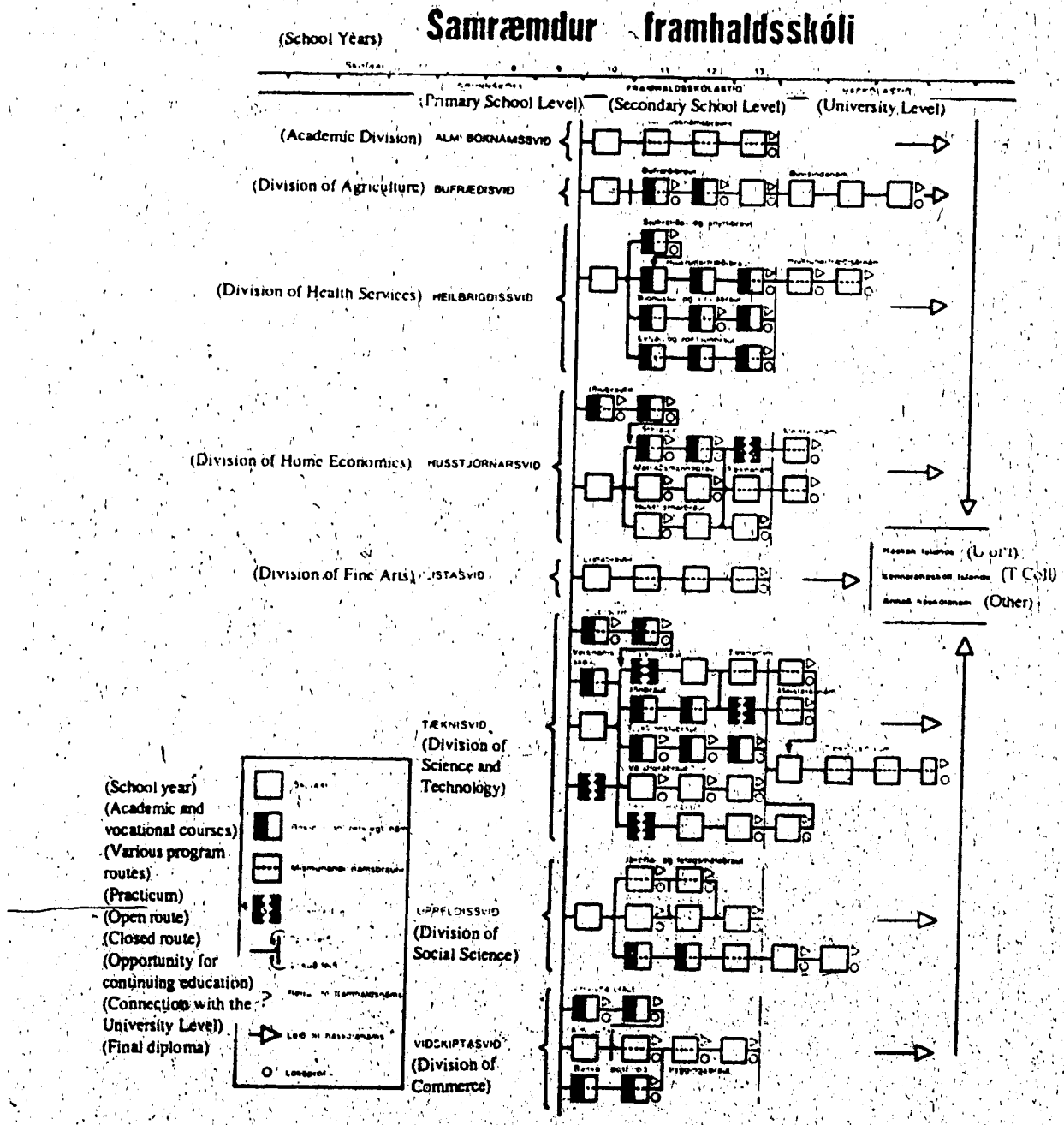
[152]ibid, p.2984.
[153]ibid, p.2985.
[154]*Althingistidindi*, 1978-1979, p.1011.
[155]ibid, p.1010.
[156]ibid, p.1010.
[157]*Althingistidindi*,1976-1977, p.2598; ibid, 1977-1978, p.3019-3028; ibid, 1978-1979, p.987-996; ibid, 1979-1980, p.431-439.

Figure 2

(THE COORDINATED SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL)



Adapted from: Althingistidindi, 1978-1979. Parliamentary Publication, Reykjavik, 1979.

Governance and administration. What generally is meant by governance and administration is the action of ruling by right and authority. The general political aspects which are inherent in any such a system are defined by Dahl (1976:3) as "any persistent pattern of human relationships that involves, to a significant extent, control, influence, power or authority." Not surprisingly, the section in the Bill on governance has undergone considerable changes.

The 1976-1977 version of the Bill states that a "committee on secondary schooling, *framahldsskolarad*, was to be established to assist the Ministry in the development and coordination of matters pertaining to secondary schools."[158] This committee was to consist of representatives from "division committees" and representatives from the "primary schools system" and the "university " or other post secondary institutions.[159] Representatives from the various corporate organizations outside the educational system were also to participate in the committee on secondary schooling.[160] A "representative" from the Ministry was to chair the committee and the committee was to be "renewed every four years."[161] The supplementary comments regarding this clause say that "the coordinated secondary school will be composed of program routes which are connected with most spheres in society" and the "role of the committee on secondary schooling is to facilitate policy development and implementation within the secondary sector."[162] Furthermore, the supplements state that this would aggregate views from the various representatives: (1) from adjoining school levels; (2) the various divisions within secondary schools; (3) representatives from the world of work; and (4) that this committee would only function as a consulting mechanism to the Ministry.[163]

In the 1977-1978 version of the Bill, representatives from a few additional organizations were to be included in this committee on secondary schooling. Otherwise, this section was not substantially changed with the exception that "program route committees were

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[158] *Althingistidindi*, 1976-1977; section VI, clause 16, p.2533.
[159] ibid; section VI, clause 16, p.2533.
[160] ibid; section VI, clause 16, p.2533.
[161] ibid; section VI, clause 16, p.2533.
[162] ibid, p.2556.
[163] ibid, p.2556.

to be established for each program route."[164] The intention, with the establishment of these program route committees, was to facilitate progress and development within each route. A selected number of representatives from these program route committees were also to participate in the division committees which have representatives in the committee on secondary schooling.[165]

In the 1978-1979 and 1979-1980 versions of the Bill, the section on governance is the same as in 1977-1978, but it was altered quite considerably in the 1981-1982 version which reappears with little changes as the 1982-1983 version of the Bill. The committee system which was elaborated upon in the earlier versions is excluded and instead only cooperation between all stakeholders is emphasized. The 1982-1983 version of the Bill says that "regional school boards" which deal with matters pertaining to comprehensive primary schools are also to "cover as much as possible of the secondary school level."[166]

The primary school system is divided into eight school regions and in each region there is an elected board of education and a regional superintendent who is appointed by the Ministry. The superintendent is responsible for administration in all primary schools in the region, as well as social and psychologial services in these schools.[167] The "changing function of regional school boards," however, was to be "decided upon later in a regulation."[168]

In addition to this changing function of regional school boards, the 1982-1983 version of the Bill states that in secondary schools which are "operated jointly by the state and the municipalities," "school boards are to be established by the municipality or municipalities" in case there is more than one municipality which runs the school.[169] These school boards are to "control and supervise the operation of secondary schools on behalf of the concerned municipality or municipalities" but the "specific functions" of municipal school boards was to

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[164] *Althigistidindi*, 1977-1978; section VI, clause 18, p.2951.
[165] ibid., p.2951-2.
[166] *Althingistidindi*, 1982-1983; section VII, clause 22, p.2976.
[167] *Grunnskolalog* [The Law on Comprehensive Primary Schooling]; section II, clause 11;14, p.5-10.
[168] *Althingistidindi*, 1982-1983; section VII, clause 22, p.2976.
[169] ibid; section VII, clause 23, p.2976.

be "decided upon later in a regulation."[170]

Regarding the internal operation of secondary schools, the Bill states that principals are to "administer the daily operation of secondary schools," and that "their primary responsibility is to ensure that the operation is in accord with existing laws, regulations and curriculum policies or other guidelines."[171] A "faculty council [staff meetings] chaired by the principal is to be established in each school,"[172] In addition to the principal, the faculty council is to be composed of "representatives from teachers and students," and if there is a "vice-principal" in a given school, he or she is also to be a "member of the faculty council."[173] The "general function of faculty councils" is to be "decided upon later in a regulation."[174]

Finance. The financial aspects of schooling are both economic and political in nature. The economic aspects centre around the issue of allocation of scarce resources, whereas the political aspects centre around the issue of distribution and delegation of decision making powers (Benson, 1978:5;135). During the years presented, the section on finance in the Bill changes quite considerably.

In general, in the 1976-1977 and 1977-1978 versions of the Bill, the state was to cover salary expenses of both teachers and administrators, but other expenses such as maintenance and operational costs were to be equally divided between the state and the municipality or municipalities involved. On the other hand, construction costs were to be paid 70 percent by the state and 30 percent by the municipalities.[175]

The 1978-1979 and 1979-1980 versions of the Bill state that the first two years of a secondary school program will be financed jointly by the state and the municipalities in a way similar to the comprehensive primary schools. However, the remaining two years were to be

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[170]ibid; section VII, clause 23, p.2976.
[171]ibid; section VII, clause 24, p.2976
[172]ibid; section VII, clause 24, p.2977.
[173]ibid; section VII, clause 24, p.2977.
[174]ibid; section VII, clause 24, p.2977.
[175]*Althingistidindi* 1976-1977, p.2552; ibid, 1977-1978, p.2972.

financed entirely by the state.[176] Generally, within the comprehensive primary school system, the salaries of teachers and administrators are covered by the state, but maintenance costs are covered by the municipalities.[177]

When the Bill was proposed in 1981-1982 and in 1982-1983, the section on finance was reduced to one clause. This clause states that "until a new regulation is established, the financial aspects of each school type or individual schools will be regulated by existing laws and regulations."[178] Grammar schools and most of the special schools are entirely funded by the state, but trade schools are funded jointly by the state and the municipalities. The existing comprehensive secondary schools are also funded jointly by the state and the municipalities. Construction costs are funded 60 percent by the state and 40 percent by the municipalities. Operational and maintenance costs are funded equally by the state and the municipalities. The state covers all salary expenses.

Implementation. In all versions of the Bill its range of effect is described in the first clause where it says: "The secondary school level which continues from the compulsory primary school level according to the 'Law on the Structure of the Educational System' #55/1974 clause 2, is regulated by this law." In the last section of all versions of the Bill it says that implementation procedures will be specified later in regulations. In the last section of the Bill a listing is also provided of the seventeen or eighteen laws that will become obsolete with the enactment of the Bill. The following laws are listed in the 1982-1983 version of the Bill: (1) the 'Law on Fish Processing and Management' #55/1971; (2) the 'Permit to Establish a Comprehensive Secondary School' #14/1973; (3) the 'Law on the Nursery School of Iceland' #10/1973; (4) the 'Law on the Nursing School of Iceland' #35/1962; (5) the 'Permit to Operate a Nursing School in Association with the Reykjavik Hospital' #81/1972; (6) the 'Law on the Hotel and Catering School of Iceland' #6/1971; (7) the 'Law on Home

[176] *Althingistidindi*, 1978-1979, p.970; ibid, 1979-1980, p.413.
[177] *Grunnskolalog*, [The Law on Comprehensive Primary Schooling]; section XIV, p.49-57.
[178] *Althingistidindi*, 1981-1982; section IX, clause 29, p.1660; ibid, 1982-1983; section IX, clause 29, p.2978.

Economics Education' #49/1946; (8) the 'Law on Home Economics Schools' #53/1975; (9) the 'Law on Trade Education' #68/1966, #18/1971, #68/1972; (10) the 'Law on the Icelandic School for Midwives' #35/1964; (11) the 'Law on Grammar Schooling' #12/1970; (12) the 'Law on Fish Processing' #33/1975; (13) the 'Law on the Reykjavik School of Navigation' #22/1972; (14) the 'Law on the Vestmannaeyjar School of Navigation' #1/1973; (15) the 'Law on Engineering Education' #67/1966, #21/1973, #56/1974; (16) the 'Law on Secondary School Business Education' #51/1976; (17) the 'Law on Institutions for the Mentally Retarded' #53/1967, #12/1977.[179]

The supplementary comments state that a few special school laws are exluded from this listing due to the unique nature of the services provided in these schools. Furthermore, the Bill says that this policy will become effective within a five year period from its acceptance in parliament.

In the first two versions of the Bill it states that regulations may be written "to regulate the overall secondary school level, specific divisions or program routes."[180] In the 1978-1979 version "school types" and "specific schools" were added to this section. Representatives of teachers, students, and the various areas of employment and industries were to participate in the writing of these regulations. Furthermore, in 1978-1979 it was added that existing laws would be effective until new regulations had been written.[181]

Synthesis. According to the resource elements presented above, the essential feature inherent in the institutional arrangements of secondary schools is the emphasis on flexibility and coordination in order to facilitate increased equality of educational opportunity. The programs within secondary schools are to be flexible in their structure, composed of core courses and optional courses which are selected according to program orientation and students' interests. Academic and vocational programs are to be equally valued, thus allowing for horizontal transferability between program routes and all programs leading directly or

[179] *Althingistidindi*, 1982-1983; section X, clause 31.
[180] *Althingistidindi*, 1976-1977, p.2536; ibid, 1977-1978, p.2955.
[181] *Althingistidindi*, 1978-1979; section X, clause 37, p.953.

indirectly to matriculation.

In addition to these structural arrangements decision making powers are to be somewhat decentralized, although the ultimate power lies within the Ministry. Input from localities is intended to come through both regional school boards and municipal school boards and the emphasis is on joint financing by the state and the involved municipalities.

The term secondary schools is to be used as an umbrella term for all schools within the secondary school level although some secondary schools may carry distinctive names based on tradition, role or location. The overall secondary school level is to be regulated by the frame or global structure policy put forth in the Bill and regulations are to be written to replace some of the existing laws and regulations, to regulate the divisions, the programs routes, the school types or some specific schools.

Distributional Elements

Kerr (1976:52) states that distributional policies refer to the question of "who is to receive the educational benefits of our conduct of education." Thus, the general comprehensive philosophy may be seen as 'distributional' in nature where the different 'needs' of 'all' students are met by a variety of flexible programs and courses and they can proceed through the programs at a speed which suits their needs intellectually, socially or both. In the Bill and other secondary education policies the general ramifications of these concerns centre around the issue of accessibility. Accordingly, the thematization of the distributional elements put forth in the Bill revealed the following sub-categories: (1) equality of educational opportunity; (2) entrance requirements; and (3) adult education.

Equality of educational opportunity. In the section on organization of schools the Bill says that "as much variety of program routes as possible shall be offered in each part of the country."[112] Furthermore, the Bill states:

> The following might be the possible arrangements of the program routes or divisions: various routes within the same institution, connected and coordinated routes in

[112] *Althingistidindi*, 1982-1983, section VI, clause 17, p.2975.

> separate institutions, or distinctive routes in special institutions. Where enrollment and other contextual factors are advantageous, an attempt shall be made to combine the various routes and divisions in one institution, otherwise the arrangements depend on the circumstances. For example, in view of the role of existing traditional institutions.[183]

Furthermore, the Bill states that the ramifications of this general policy, both regarding the programs offered and decisions in regard to the location of schools, "will be decided upon by the Ministry in cooperation with regional school boards and municipal councils."[184] The Ministry, however, has the "ultimate authority" in the administration of this law although "cooperation between all concerned is to be emphasized" in the implementation of this law.[185]

The essence of the comprehensive philosophy is the issue of flexibility where student 'needs' are to be met as fairly as possible and educational opportunities are to be offered fairly and equally to all students where no programs should lead to dead ends. In line with the 'Law on the Structure of the Educational System' #55/1974, the Bill says that "all students who have completed the comprehensive primary school or have equivalent education have the right to enter secondary schools."[186] Regarding progression within schools, the Bill states that "some minimal standards may be required for entering certain courses."[187] However, the supplements state that "it is of central importance to compose each program route of a number of short courses" both to meet the various "student interests" and to give students the opportunity to complete their program in a "sequential fashion."[188] Furthermore, the supplements say "that it should be guaranteed that no program routes lead to a dead end" and that direct or indirect access to post secondary institutions "should be provided for in all the program routes."[189]

Students who are "physically handicapped" or "students who can not be taught in a regular way have the right to teaching services which suit their needs."[190] The services

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[183]ibid; section VI, clause 17, p.2975.
[184]ibid; section VI, clause 18, p.2975.
[185]ibid; section VII, clause 21, p.2976.
[186]ibid, section III, clause 4, p.2973.
[187]ibid, section III, clause 4, p.2973.
[188]ibid, p.2985.
[189]ibid; section IV, clause 7, p.2974.
[190]ibid; section IV, clause 11, p.2974.

regarding these students can take place "within secondary schools, correspondence schools, or at other special institutions," but "the specifics" of these services "will be decided upon later in a regulation."[191] The supplementary comments state that "preferably these services would be administered within the secondary schools themselves," or in "cooperation between secondary schools and some other special institutions."[192] Furthermore the supplementary comments state that "it is not necessary to elaborate on the justification of these services," all students have the right "to be provided the opportunity to achieve the educational goals they desire."[193]

In the Bill, the section on personnel asserts that the supervision of students is mainly twofold: (1) "educational and vocational counselling; (2) "social and psychological counselling."[194] The supplements to the versions of the Bill presented before 1981-1982 which contain more elaborations than the 1981-1982 and 1982-1983 versions, say that "supervision of students should be a central focus in the operation of secondary schools."[195] Furthermore, the supplements state that this is to be achieved by "general counselling, information regarding program routes both to students and parents [guardians], and special counselling regarding program selection or learning problems."[196]

Entrance requirements. The section on entrance reqirements in the Bill states that "all students who have graduated from comprehensive primary schools, or students with equivalent education have the right to enter secondary schools."[197] This general policy is somewhat qualified when it says in the Bill that there is a "permit to create a regulation which indicates minimal entrance requirements for certain courses."[198] These requirements, however, should be based on a "reasonable assessment within each field of study."[199] Also, "in the

[191]ibid; section IV, clause 11, p.2974.
[192]ibid, p.2986.
[193]ibid, p.2986.
[194]ibid; section VIII, clause 27, p.2977.
[195]*Althingistidindi*, 1979-1980, p.409.
[196]ibid, p.409.
[197]*Althingistidindi*, 1982-1983; section III, clause 4, p.2973.
[198]ibid; section III, clause 4, p.2973.
[199]ibid; section III, clause 4, p.2973.

years students turn nineteen, they can enter secondary schools without the required qualifications except in cases where certain field experience is required."[200] The supplementary comments state that students who are nineteen years old or older are excluded from the regular entrance requirements "because of increased maturity and experience in some vocational areas."[201]

Adult education. When the Bill was first introduced, it did not contain any elements on adult education or education for persons older than the regular age group. However, later versions of the Bill include a section on adult education.

The 1982-1983 version of the Bill says that "the goal is to facilitate adult education services in the programs offered."[202] The ramifications of this general policy are stated in the following: (1) "to offer nineteen years old or older an opportunity to participate in some selected courses with regular students;" (2) "to offer special courses, for example evening courses, to meet the wishes and needs of adult students who cannot attend classes at regular hours."[203] Further details regarding the operation of these services are to be "decided upon later in a regulation."[204] The supplementary comments say that by these "adult education services people have the opportunity to be employed and enroll in courses at the same time."[205]

Regarding continuing or inservice education elements, the Bill says that "the goal is to use secondary school facilities for other educational services than the ones mentioned above, for example, retraining in the various vocational areas."[206] Providing that the Ministry and the school boards grant permission, services of this nature can be arranged by secondary schools, but they are not to be a part of the regular activities of secondary schools.[207]

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[200]ibid; section III, clause 4, p.2973.
[201]ibid, p.2985.
[202]ibid; section V, clause 15, p.2975.
[203]ibid; section V, clause 15, p.2975.
[204]ibid; section V, clause 15, p.2975.
[205]ibid, p.2987.
[206]ibid; section V, clause 16, p.2975.
[207]ibid; section V, clause 16, p.2975.

Synthesis. Equality of educational opportunity is emphasized in the overall distributional policy of secondary schools, as well as in the internal structures and procedures of going through the secondary school. Increased equality of educational opportunity among regions is to be achieved and transfers between secondary schools are to be without constraints. Horizontal transfers between program routes are also made increasingly efficient and students may proceed through the programs at their preferred speed. Students from all program routes have the opportunity to matriculate and enter the university level. Students with special needs are to be treated as fairly as possible, preferably within the schools themselves or in special institutions. People who are older than the regular age group have the opportunity to enroll on a part-time or full-time basis, either during regular class hours or in evening courses.

Curriculum Elements

Kerr (1976:48) defines curriculum policy as the policy that guides the selection of content. Analytically, however, content may be controlled and guided in two major ways. On the one hand, by some general or specific aims that are to be achieved and, on the other hand, by guidelines which regulate the composition of the content units, or courses in a given program or field of study. Using this distinction as a guide, the thematization of the curriculum elements put forth in the Bill revealed the following sub-categories: structure; and philosophy.

Structure. The Bill states that educational "content is to be organized in courses" and each course "will be valued in credits" where the number of credits depend on the purpose and the scope of the given course.[208] Each course is also to be organized in such a way that it "may be used as a part of as many program routes as possible."[209]

The various program routes make up divisions and each program route is organized by a purposeful selection of courses. The Bill states that in every division some basic courses will

[208] *Althingistidindi*, 1982-1983; section IV, clause 8, p.2974.
[209] ibid; section IV, clause 8, p.2974.

be a part of all the program routes, and the "divisions will be connected with some basic core courses."[210] Furthermore, the Bill states that details regarding the "divisions and the program routes" will be decided upon later in a regulation.[211]

Regarding the scope and focus of the courses offered, the Bill states that "curriculum guides will be written by the Ministry of Education."[212] A description of the "content," the "goals," and the "credit value" of the courses is to be included in these curriculum guides, as will the number and the sets of courses constituting the various program routes. However, in the writing of these curriculum guides, both student and teacher associations are to be consulted.[213] Furthermore the Bill says that where practical training is a part of a program, it is to be valued in "course credits" as in the regular courses.[214]

Philosophy. According to the overall educational aims put forth in the Bill, vocational and academic education are to be equally valued. Within each program route, general basic education courses are to be emphasized, as are the special or distinctive courses for each program route. The Bill states that "special emphasis is to be put on the reconciliation of vocational and academic elements in the programs offered."[215] Explicit elaborations are not included in the Bill or the supplements. Nevertheless, the supplementary comments indicate that "students' education will be based on both these elements depending on contextual factors" and "in the teaching process they are to supplement each other."[216]

Synthesis. In line with the overall reorganization policy put forth in the Bill, the divided system is to be reorganized into a comprehensive system where vocational and academic programs are to be equally valued and reconciled. Details regarding curricular elements are excluded from the Bill and are to be decided upon later in regulations or

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[210]ibid; section IV, clause 8, p.2974.
[211]ibid; section IV, clause 8, p.2974.
[212]ibid; section IV, clause 9, p.2974.
[213]ibid; section IV, clause 9, p.2976.
[214]ibid; section IV, clause 9, p.2976.
[215]ibid; section IV, clause 6, p.2974.
[216]ibib, p.2985.

curriculum guides. The significance of curriculum elements, however, is emphasized in the supplementary comments where it says that "if the reorganization of the secondary school level is to be more than in name only, curriculum organization and curriculum making must be its major premise."[217]

Methodological Elements

Kerr (1976:48) describes the policies "that guide or regulate the manner in which one attempts to develop the selected content." In other words, the development and presentation of the selected content is always done in some systematic fashion, depending on the theories adopted and the individuals involved.

The examination of the Bill revealed that none of the policy ends put forth in the Bill contain any specific elements which are methodological in nature. However, the Bill says that the "Ministry of Education will make the initiative regarding research and experimental work in schools" and for the improvement of teaching.[218] Accordingly, these elements are to be decided upon later in a regulation.

Summary

The description of the general policy ends put forth in the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' was presented in this section. The general elements of education as public policy as identified by Kerr (1976) guided the thematization of the policy ends put forth in the Bill into: (1) resource elements; (2) distributional elements; (3) curriculum elements; and (4) methodological elements.

The resource elements put forth in the Bill refer to the institutional arrangements that provide the immediate context for education. The structural arrangements stated a flexible organization and structure of secondary schools where a comprehensive secondary school was to be used as a model for the system as a whole. The system was to be organized into

[217] ibid, p.2985.
[218] *Althingistidindi*; 1982-1983; section IV, clause 12, p.2974.

coordinated program routes and divisions where all programs would lead directly to matriculation and access to the university level. The number of divisions and program routes within schools were to depend on contextual factors where existing schools could function as one or more program routes. A course credit system was to be adopted in all secondary schools, although some secondary schools could organize their teaching practices in a class group system. Decision making powers were to be somewhat decentralized, with local input coming through regional and local school boards. Cooperative financing between the state and the municipalities was strongly emphasized. The Bill was to become the global 'frame' policy for the overall secondary school level and regulations were to be written later to regulate several aspects of the arrangements in the organization of secondary schools.

Distributional elements refer to the question of who is to receive the educational benefits of the conduct of education or schooling. As much variety of programs as possible is to be offered in all parts of the country although the programs to be offered are dependent upon situational factors. All students who have successfully completed the comprehensive primary school, or with comparable education, have the right to enter secondary schools. People nineteen years old or older have the right to enter secondary schools without having to fulfill the requirement of successful completion of the comprehensive primary school. Adult education courses are emphasized in the form of evening courses or a combination of day and evening courses and the school facilities may be used for other extra curricular activities. Transfers between secondary schools, or between program routes within schools, are to be efficient and without constraints; no programs should be terminal and preclude access to the university level. Students' needs are to be met as fairly as possible, the students being allowed to proceed at their own preferred speed levels through their programs, which are composed of fixed and optional courses. Students who have some special educational needs have a right to educational services which meet their needs.

A curriculum policy is the policy which guides the selection of content. Analytically, the selection of content can be guided by an overall curriculum philosophy or by the structural arrangements established to guide the selection of which sets of courses constitute the various

programs. The general curriculum philosophy put forth in the Bill puts an emphasis on the reconciliation of academic and vocational education, but the Bill does not contain any explicit elaboration regarding this issue. Basic education in a common core for all students of all program routes is to be emphasized although each program route is to maintain its distinctiveness.

Methodological elements which guide the manner in which content is developed is a necessary part of all education policies. However, the Bill did not contain any specific elements which are methodological in nature. Nevertheless, regarding this and the other elements, flexibility and the desire to meet students' needs as fairly as possible may be seen as the overall pedagogy put forth in the Bill.

B. Issues Related to the Delay or the Non-Acceptance of the Bill

The issues related to the delay or non-acceptance of the Bill have somewhat changed since the Bill was first presented in 1976-1977. Thus, the description of these issues which emerged from the collected data and which are presented thematically is primarily retrospective in nature describing both policy formation and implementation elements. For example, the issues may be a part of the decision making process; they may be a part of a disagreement with some of the policy ends put forth in the Bill; they may be a part of the implementation of the general policy ends put forth in the Bill.

The thematization of the collected data is presented under the following headings: (1) procedural difficulties; (2) centralization - decentralization; (3) coordination and the future of the traditional school types; (4) accountability; (5) reconciliation of vocational and academic education; and (6) the hidden policy. The description of the issues related to the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill is not to be seen as exhaustive; only the major points of significance are highlighted. Although some of these issues are presented under different themes, they may overlap.

Procedural Difficulties

The making of a formal public policy is generally the result of decision making by consensus by some democratic means. The procedures in the Icelandic parliament generally mean that a bill has to be discussed and accepted in both parliamentary departments in order to be passed as formal public policy. First, however, most bills have to be discussed at least three times in the 'lower department' in order to be accepted and passed for an equivalent number of discussion periods in the 'upper department.' The collected data revealed that procedural difficulties explain to some extent the delay or the non-acceptance of the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' in parliament. Before describing these procedural difficulties, a brief description of the situation before the writing of the Bill is presented.

Context. When asked what led to the writing of the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization,' one of the Department Heads who participated in the writing of the Bill made the comment that before the enactment of the 'Law on the Structure of the Educational System' in the spring of 1974:

> ...we were four Department Heads with this Ministry who wanted to clarify our understanding of the Ministry's educational policies. We started this process on our own initiative, to discuss our ideas regarding educational policy making ...[within the secondary sector], and what we had in mind was to develop a policy to enable the Ministry and its staff to use as a guideline rergarding secondary school development.[219]

With the establishment of a new coalition government of Progressives and Conservatives during the fall of 1974, the Minister of Education who was from the Progressives continued with this process of reorganizing the educational system as was suggested in the 'Law on the Structure of the Educational System' and the 'Law on Comprehensive Primary Schooling.' This Minister observed in an interview that despite what was suggested in these Laws, the pressure from the Ministry to reorganize the secondary school level was strong and that it was the primary factor in putting pressure on the writing of a bill or a policy to regulate the secondary school level.[220] One of the Department Heads

[219]Interview, October 16, 1985.
[220]Interview, November 11, 1985.

who participated in the writing of the Bill described this process as follows:

> ...we introduced our ideas regarding a secondary school policy to the new Minister, and when he had studied our ideas he requested very strongly that we should use this as a basis for a bill to reorganize the secondary school level.[221]

Initially, thus, the pressure to coordinate the secondary school level came from Department Heads within the Ministry. They later participated in the writing of the Bill. However, the reorganization in 1974 and the suggestions put forth in the various reports on secondary schools put an increased emphasis on the need for coordinating the secondary school level which led to the writing of the Bill.

1976-1977. The Bill was first proposed in parliament in the spring of 1976-1977 by a coalition of Conservatives and Progressives, with the Minister of Education from the Progressives. The Bill was introduced in late spring, shortly before the parliamentary recess period. This time around, the purpose was to introduce the Bill and secure feed-back from the various interest groups rather than to engage in formal parliamentary discussions. The comments from the various interest groups were examined in the Ministry and led to some slight changes in the Bill when it was proposed again the following year. Thus, the first time around there was no pressure to have the Bill accepted, rather the purpose was to introduce the Bill and establish a political climate for its eventual acceptance.

1977-1978. This year the Bill was proposed by the same coalition as in 1976-1977. Again, it was proposed in late spring shortly before the recess period. Thus, it did not receive any extended discussions with the exception of the Education Minister's presentation speech. The reason given for the Bill being proposed so late was that the necessary changes took longer than expected. In the parliamentary discussions, the Minister of Education commented to an inquiry about the status of the Bill shortly before it was presented:

> ...it is quite reasonable that people inquire about the status of the Bill, but now the Ministry people are updating the Bill because of the feed-back from the various interest groups. Some of the feed-back came later than was planned for ... and this winter the Ministry people have also been engaged in meetings with representatives

[221]Interview, October 16, 1985.

from the various educational associations, municipal associations, and representatives from the industries.[222]

In this context, it was stated in one of the major newspapers "that the 'Law on the Structure of the Educational System' had been enacted three years ago and if properly planned, a bill regarding the reorganization of the secondary school level should have been presented immediately thereafter."[223] This newspaper also stated that because of this delay, "students suffered unnecessary inconvenience and even harm by this carelessness," but "to present the Bill late was better than not presenting it at all."[224]

1978-1979. When the Bill was proposed in 1978-1979, the coalition government of Conservatives and Progressives which had presented the Bill in 1976-1977 and 1977-1978 had been replaced with a new coalition of Progressives, People's Alliance, and Social Democrats. In this coalition the Minister of Education was from the People's Alliance. This time around, the Bill received relatively thorough discussions despite being proposed relatively late in the parliamentary year. Again, the Bill had been updated, particularly the section on finance, based on feed-back from the various interest groups.

In most cases the parliament is divided into two departments and every bill has to be discussed at least three times in each department. Discussions begin in the lower department where each bill has to be accepted before it is passed on for discussions in the upper department. One of the politicians remarked that if a bill is passed in the lower department, the general expectations are that most of the critical issues have already been dealt with, thus making the discussions in the upper department more confirmatory than critical.[225]

The first period of discussions in the lower department took place during the last week of January and the beginning of February, resulting in a general agreement on passing the Bill to the education committee and the second period of discussions. Because the comittee was divided in its support, during the second week of May the committe released two reports. Of

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[222] *Althingistidindi*, 1977-1978, Parliamentary Discussions, p.2614.
[223] *Thjodviljinn* [national newspaper, published in connection with the People's Alliance Party], May 5, 1977.
[224] ibid, May 5, 1977.
[225] Interview, December 4, 1985.

the coalition parties in power, the Progressives and the People's Alliance supported the Bill, but the Social Democrats hesitated in their support. On the other hand, the Conservatives who were in opposition strongly rejected the Bill although they had been a part of the coalition proposing the Bill in 1976-1977 and 1977-1978. In this context, the newspaper *Thjodviljinn* which is published in connection with the People's Alliance Party said:

> Are the Social Democrats going to stop the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization'?
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> Educators all over the country are becoming increasingly concerned that the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' may not be passed this year.... The Minister of Education has strongly suggested that the Bill should be passed before the recess period since some of the policy ends put forth in the Bill are already being implemented without any guidance by subsequent laws. The People's Alliance and the Progressives want to have the Bill passed this year but at the present the future of the Bill is not clear: it is stuck in the lower department's education committee. The reason for the opposition of the Social Democrats is not clear but it seems as if the future of the grammar schools is their major concern....[226]

According to the parliamentary discussions, the major rationale for the hesitation of the Social Democrats was based on concern with financial issues, accountability questions, and uncertainity about the future of the traditional school types, particularly the grammar schools. Despite the hesitation of the Social Democrats and the opposition of the Conservatives, the Bill was passed for the third discussion period. The newspaper *Thjodviljinn* reported:

> Yesterday, at the end of the second discussion period in the lower department, the Bill on Secondary School Reorganization was accepted clause by clause. As usual, it is not until at the end of the third discussion period when a bill is judged as a whole. All the amendments suggested by the majority of the education committee were passed ... but there was a lack of participation in the voting and thus it had to be repeated several times. A few Social Democrats abstained a few times but eventually participated during the second or the third time around ... All the Conservatives abstained from voting which likely was a party [caucus] decision because it is known that some of the Conservatives were in favor of the general content of the Bill.[227]

Thus, with partial support from the Social Democrats, all the clauses of the Bill were accepted at the end of round two of the discussions but the third discussion period was never finalized in the lower department. The Conservatives insisted that they did not want the Bill passed that year and the final voting for passing the Bill for discussions in the upper

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[226] *Thjodviljinn*, May 5, 1979.
[227] *Thjodviljinn*, May 15, 1979.

department never took place. Again the newspaper *Thjodviljinn* reported in this context:

> Stalling tactics are one of the methods members of parliament sometime use to stop bills when they think there is a parliamentary majority for the bill. This year, stalling tactics were not frequently used with the exception of the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' which was not passed this year. The Bill was never passed from the lower department because at the beginning of the third discussion period [a few days away from the recession], five Conservatives signed up on the list of speakers [not allowing room for the completion of the discussion process].[228]

In an interview, one of the Conservatives made the comment that this line-up was a reaction to a "an untrue" statement made by the Minister of Education when he said that municipal authorities supported the acceptance of the Bill.[229] Indeed, two months earlier, the Federation of Municipalities had released a statement indicating that they supported the making of a policy for the overall secondary school level but that they could not accept the financing policy put forth in the Bill.[230] Despite these difficulties, the Bill was proposed again for the fourth time the following parliamentary year.

1979-1980. This year, during the fall of 1979, the Bill was proposed by the same coalition of Progressives, People's Alliance, and Social Democrats as the preceding year. During the summer, the Minister had established a committee to update the finance section of the Bill. In an interview, the Minister said that once the new finance plan was ready, it was presented to representatives of all the parties in power, all of whom were generally in favour of the updated version of the finance section.[231] However, before the Bill received any formal discussions, this coalition broke up. The Minister said that this time around the Bill had more support than ever and if the coalition had not broken up the Bill would have been accepted.[232] It was not until two years later that the Bill was proposed again by a coalition of Progressives, People's Alliance, and a splinter group of a few Conservatives.

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[228]*Thjodviljinn*, May 30, 1979.
[229]Interview, December 3, 1985.
[230]*Timinn* [newspaper published in connection with the Progressive Party], March 31, 1979.
[231]Interview, December 4, 1985.
[232]Interview, December 4, 1985.

1981-1982. The Minister of Education in this coalition, which was in power from February 1980 until May 1983 proposed the Bill twice. In a speech delivered at a conference with municipal authorities in the northern part of the country and reprinted in the newspaper *Timinn* in the fall of 1980 this Minister observed:

> ...I am not very interested in presenting the Bill, not being certain about its acceptance, as was the case with my predecessors.
>
> ...I would like to say to you people with municipal powers, I want you to work on and facilitate an agreement regarding the finance section of the Bill.... I am afraid that a continuation of the disagreement regarding the division of costs between the state and the municipalities will jeopardise the acceptance of the Bill in parliament.[233]

Two years later, in the spring of 1982, the Minister presented the Bill. This time around the finance section of the Bill had been omitted, except that the Bill stated that each school type would be financed in the same way as before until a new separate law on school finance could be enacted.[234] Because of disagreement within the cabinet, the Minister of Education had to present the Bill as a private matter rather than as cabinet policy. The Bill was only discussed during one discussion period; thus did not come close to being accepted. In an interview, the Minister explained:

> This Bill was never accepted by the cabinet; most cabinet members could agree on the general policy but some were strongly against the cancellation of the finance section....[235]

Similarly, another member of parliament who was a member of the cabinet during this period said:

> There was a lack of agreement in the cabinet; previously the Conservatives had been critical of this policy and people were not interested in the Bill without a finance section.[236]

Thus, this year (1981-1982) the Bill was discussed only once in the lower department but the following year it was presented again by the same Minister of Education.

1982-1983. During the spring of 1983 the Minister presented the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' again along with a 'Bill on School Finance.' Similar to the year

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[233] *Timinn*, September 16, 1980.
[234] *Althingistidindi*, 1981-1982; section IX, clause 29, p.1660.
[235] Interview, October 22, 1985.
[236] Interview, December 4, 1985.

before, the Minister presented the Bills as a private matter but the Bills never received any formal discussion in parliament. The coalition was beginning to disintegrate and gradually became dysfunctional before it broke up. Hence, the Bill was presented twice during this period when the Progressives, the People's Alliance, and a splinter group from the Conservatives were in power, yet it was neither discussed in any detail nor did it come close to being accepted. The Bill has not been presented since 1982-1983, but the present Minister of Education has shown interest in presenting the Bill.

In the coalition of Conservatives and Progressives which has been in power since 1983, there have been two Ministers of Education, both from the Conservatives. The first Minister explicitly stated a dislike of the comprehensive philosophy and was not interested in presenting the Bill. On the other hand, the current Minister of Education, who came into power during the fall of 1985, stated in an interview that he was interested in the secondary schooling issue and would present the Bill providing some changes, particularly of the finance section were made.[237] Accordingly, shortly after taking power this Minister established a committee to update the the finance section of the Bill; but the committee has not yet released its report and this Minister has not presented the Bill in parliament.

Synthesis. As outlined above, out of the six times that the Bill has been presented, it has only received formal parliamentary discussion three times. The only relatively thorough discussion was in 1978-1979 when the Bill was discussed three times around in the lower department but without the third discussion period being completed so the Bill could be passed for discussions in the upper department. Because of time involved for making changes and updating the Bill, in most cases it was presented rather late, which led to considerable constraints in the time needed for discussing the Bill. The frequent changes and the relative instability within the coalitions which presented the Bill also somewhat explain the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill. In this context, one of the Department Heads said that the Ministry people made a tactical error by not introducing the Bill more systematically to the

[237]Interview, December 30, 1985.

general public in order to increase the political pressure towards the acceptance of the Bill, similar to what was done when the 'Bill on Comprehensive Primary Schooling' was being discussed in parliament.[238]

Centralization - Decentralization

A part of the reorganization policy put forth in the Bill was to emphasize increased local input in the financing and the control of the secondary educational system. Similar to the 'Law on Comprehensive Primary Schooling,' joint financing between the state and the municipalities is emphasized in all versions of the Bill. Regarding governance and administration, all versions of the Bill also emphasize cooperation between the state and the municipalities. Decision making powers are to be somewhat decentralized through regional and municipal school boards although the ultimate power lies within the Ministry of Education.

As pointed out in the description of the general policy ends put forth in the Bill and the section on procedural difficulties, the collected data revealed that controversy regarding financing of secondary schools is generally regarded as the major element in explaining the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill.

Finance. The emphasis on decentralized financing of secondary schools was clearly stated in the first version of the Bill in 1976-1977. The supplements state that "it is bound to create problems if one administrative body makes decisions and another is responsible for implementing the decisions."[239] Furthermore, the supplements state that although centralized decision making and funding powers are easier to organize and administer, schools are intended to provide services to all people all over the country and thus it is reasonable to have them participate in and be responsible for some of these services.[240] Accordingly, it was concluded that cooperative financing by the state and the municipalities, similar to the

[238]Interview, October 25, 1985.
[239]*Althingistidindi*, 1976-1977, p.2551.
[240]ibid, 1976-1977, p.2551.

comprehensive primary school, would be the most viable alternative.

The ramifications of this general philosophy are outlined in all versions of the Bill, except in 1981-1982 when it was presented without a finance section and in 1982-1983 when a separate bill on school finance was presented along with the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization.' Although no two finance sections of the Bill are identical, the 1976-1977 and 1977-1978 versions are similar and the 1978-1979 and 1979-1980 are similar. The 1982-1983 finance section in the 'Bill on School Finance' is also somewhat similar to the section in the 1979-1980 version of the Bill.

The first two versions of the Bill required a compulsory participation of the municipalities where 70 percent of capital costs are to be covered by the state and the remaining 30 percent by the municipalities. Salaries were to be entirely covered by the state and maintenance costs were to be divided between the state and the municipalities.

Shortly thereafter, the Bill was first introduced and the various interest and stakeholder groups were invited to provide feed-back on the Bill. The feed-back from the Federation of Municipalities which is enclosed in the supplements to the 1977-1978 version of the Bill along with comments from a variety of other associations, schools, school boards, superintendents and others, describes the municipal viewpoint which to a large extent created the strong resistance to the the Bill:

> The Federation of Municipalities concludes that to legislate municipal participation in the funding of secondary schools is against the Federation's policy regarding division of responsibilities between the state and the municipalities. The Federation concludes that secondary schools should be entirely funded by the state because:
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> 1. Considerable equality of educational opportunity can be achieved between the municipalities in the organization of the secondary educational system. It is concluded that it is the task of the state to provide this equalizing function.
>
> 2. It is evident that program routes will vary between schools because of geographical and population factors. In some instances, a program route may only be offered at one school. Because of these matters, we also conclude that secondary education should be a state responsibility.
>
> 3. It should be easier and more efficient to keep matters regarding the secondary school in one hand instead of in the hands of 224 municipalities which do not have strong administrative connections, not even within each region.
>
> 4. Regarding municipal involvement, administrative matters in this Bill are not clear and in some cases unrealistic.

5. Municipal participation in the financing of secondary schools must lead to the establishment of additional financial revenues to enable the municipalities to meet unforseen costs. This participation would also lead to an altogether unnecessary increased bureaucracy. [241]

Due to this resistance, the finance section was updated when the Bill was presented in 1978-1979. The general changes indicated that the first two years of secondary schooling would be divided between the state and the municipalities, similar to the financing of comprehensive primary schools, and that the last two years would be entirely covered by the state. This version of the Bill also stated that municipal participation in the operation of secondary schools would be voluntary and for equity purposes tuition fees would be charged when students attended the first or the second year of a secondary school outside the schools their home municipalities participated in operating.[242]

The parliamentary discussions in 1978-1979 reveal that the Conservatives in opposition did not support the Bill because of reasons similar to those put forth by the Federation of Municipalities the year before.[243] Primarily, the financial cooperation between the state and the municipalities was criticized: (1) the financial procedures were criticized for being too complicated and in opposition to the division of responsibilities between the state and the municipalities; (2) many financial details were seen as being too loose; and (3) the Bill did not contain any adequate information regarding implementation costs.[244] During these discussions, the Minister of Education emphasized that this version of the Bill did not lead to additional costs for the municipalities because costs would even out; regarding some schools municipal costs would increase, regarding others, decrease.[245] One of the Conservatives, who was in opposition, commented:

> The honorable Minister of Education said that the division of responsibilities problem between the state and the municipalities would not be solved this time around; it could wait and be discussed later. The honorable Minister said that the important thing was that no burdens of additional cost would be laid on the municipalities in this version of the Bill. Perhaps we will not solve the problem of division of responsibilities during these discussions, but there is no need to make it more

[241] *Althingistidindi*, 1977-1978, p.3051.
[242] *Althingistidindi*; 1978-1979; section IV, clause 29; p.951.
[243] ibid, 1978-1979, Parliamentary Discussions, p.2176.
[244] ibid, 1978-1979, Parliamentary Discussions, p.2175-2176;4804-4806.
[245] ibid, 1978-1979, Parliamentary Discussions, p.2178.

complicated than is necessary.[246]

A few days before the beginning of the third discussion period, the Federation of Municipalities released a statement to emphasize their dissatisfaction with the Bill, particularly the finance section.[247] Based on their own calculations, the report stated that the financing policy put forth in the Bill would lead to large increases in costs for the municipalities and that it would be extremely difficult to implement.[248] Furthermore, the report stated that it had to be decided upon which special schools would be entirely funded by the state and that the tuition fee option would be difficult to implement.[249] In an interview, one of the respondents said that to implement tuition fees was regarded very critically by most people because it would hinder students' mobility, limit their educational possibilities to what their home area alone had to offer.[250] Primarily, however, because of the resistance from the Federation of Municipalities the Bill was not passed this year but the following year it was presented again by the same coalition.

In the year 1979-1980 the finance section of the Bill had been modified, taking into account some of the criticism from the previous year. Generally, the changes included a simplification of the relationship between the state and the municiaplities regarding the financing process. Municipal participation was again made compulsory thus not making the tuition fees necessary. A municipal fund was to be established for secondary schools in cases where more than one municipality participated in the operation of a secondary school.[251] The supplementary comments stated that, within the present system, costs per student covered by the state greatly varied between regions because of the differing division of costs between the state and the municipalities regarding the funding of the different school types and that these differences were greatly reduced in this version of the Bill.[252] In an interview, the member of parliament who was Minister of Education in 1979 and presented the Bill that year said that

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[246]ibid, 1978-1979, Parliamentray Discussions, p.4806.
[247]ibid, 1978-1979, Parliamentary Discusions, p.5063.
[248]ibid, 1978-1979, Parliamentary Discussions, p.5063-5064.
[249]ibid, 1978-1979, Parliamentary Discussions, p.5064.
[250]Interview, October 25, 1985.
[251]*Althingistidindi*, 1979-1980, section IX, clause 29-36, p.394-396.
[252]ibid, 1979-1980, p.447.

all the parties in power had accepted this updated funding policy and that the Bill would have been accepted if the coalition had not broken up before the Bill could be discussed.[253]

As described above, when the Bill was proposed in 1981-1982 it did not contain any finance section. In an interview, the Minister of Education who presented the Bill said that he was interested in dealing with both primary and secondary school finance in one separate law.[254] Furthermore, the Minister said that in 1981-1982 the finance bill was being prepared and discussed with municipal authorities and thus not ready to be proposed in parliament.[255] The Minister also said that because of disagreement within the cabinet, he had to present the Bill as a private matter rather than as cabinet policy.[256]

In this context, a previous Minister of Education made the comment that it did not make sense to accept the Bill without a finance section because that was one of the key issues in this policy.[257] Similarly, one of the Department Heads said that to accept the Bill without a finance section was the same as to issue a "blank check."[258]

The following year, 1982-1983, this same Minister proposed the Bill again along with a 'Bill on School Finance' which included both primary and secondary schools. In general, this 'Bill on School Finance' did not include any major changes regarding the primary school. The secondary school was to be financed similarly as was oulined in the 1979-1980 version of the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization.' Again, the Minister presented the Bills as a private matter because of disagreement within the cabinet.

In 1981 the Federation of Municipalities had changed their policies towards the issue of secondary school financing.[259] Now the Federation emphasized cooperative financing rather than putting the emphasis on secondary schools being entirely funded by the state. Despite this change regarding the support of the Bill, the Bill was never discussed in parliament. In

[253]Interview, December 4, 1985.
[254]Interview, October 22, 1985.
[255]Interview, October 22, 1985.
[256]Interview, October 22, 1985.
[257]Interview, December 4, 1985.
[258]Interview, October 25, 1985.
[259]Supplements in, *Frumvarp til Laga um Skolakostnad i Framhaldsskolum* [A Bill on Secondary School Finance], September 1985.

an interview the Minister explained:

> In 1981-1982; when I presented the Bill, I had not reached a firm agreement with municipal authorities. On the other hand, in 1982-1983 I felt I had reached a relatively strong agreement regarding the cooperation [division of costs] between the state and the municipalities, both in relation to the primary and the secondary school. Unfortunately, the Bills were not ready early enough - the coalition was beginning to disintegrate. [260]

A member of the cabinet in this coalition further explains:

> When the Minister of Education presented the Bill along with the 'Bill on School Finance,' there were so many additional things incorporated into the Bills that it needed a whole new discussion. There was also disagreement within the cabinet regarding this policy - as it was laid out it included incredible additional costs for the state.[261]

Because of the delay or non-acceptance of the Bill, the issue of cooperative funding between the state and the municipalities has not yet been solved; each school type is funded according to previous laws. However, the issue of variable costs per student between the municipalities is still an issue of concern.

During the summer of 1985 most municipalities which participate in the funding of secondary schools organized workshops in three different parts of the country in order to discuss and propose a solution to the issue of inequity in secondary school financing. These discussions resulted in the writing of a proposal or a bill on secondary school finance which was sent on September 14 to the Minister of Education, the Federation of Municipalities, and the chairmen of all the party caucuses. The covering letter states that "the 1974 education laws requested a reorganization of the secondary school level" and that "controversy regarding division of costs between the state and the municipalities stopped the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' which had been presented several times since 1976."[262] The supplementary comments to this proposal state that the inequity between municipal costs per student has to be corrected and the powers of the Ministry regarding financial matters reduced.[263]

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[260]Interview, October 22, 1985.
[261]Interview, December 4, 1985.
[262]*Frumvarp til Laga um Skolakostnad i Framhaldsskolum* [A Bill on Secondary School Finance], September, 1985.
[263]ibid, p.5.

Similar to the financial elements put forth in all versions of the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization,' this proposal states that most secondary schools are to be financed jointly by the state and the municipalities. However, in comparison with all the versions of the Bill, this proposal has stronger decentralization elements such as giving more fiscal powers to school boards and principals. Furthermore, the proposal states that the relationship between the state and the municipalities has to be clarified and explicitly stated in regulations.

Municipal support is not unanimous on this issue, although the initative in the writing of this proposal and the arrangement of these workshops or meetings with the relevant educators and municipal representatives came from the various municipal authorities themselves. The supplements attached to the proposal indicate that the hesitation came primarily from municipalities which have grammar schools within their territority; but grammar schools are entirely funded by the state and a change in the funding structure would lead to additional costs for these municipalities.[264] One of the Principals involved in the writing of this proposal commented:

> I think the people in the rural areas generally support this proposal and the acceptance of the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization.' People in the capital area are either against this policy or are indifferent to it.... For example, the resistance from the city of Reykjavik is based on the notion that the acceptance of this policy would lead to additional costs for the city but that has never been calculated properly. [From an educational opportunity point of view], it is also of benefit to the people in Reykjavik to have most of the special schools located in Rekjavik.[265]

Along similar lines, another secondary school Principal commented:

> I don't believe this proposal is going to be accepted because of resistance from the city of Reykjavik. However, it is great progress to see all these municipalities agree on a position regarding this problem and it is of course ridiculous to allow different funding procedures for different secondary schools [or school types]. It is of more importance that the procedures are the same for all schools rather than exactly which procedures are chosen. Keeping the the funding procedures the way they are is an incredibly extreme case of inequity.[266]

When describing the responses to the proposal, a Principal who was involved in the writing of it commented:

The previous [recently transferred] Minister of Education did not do anything about

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[264]Ibid, p.13.
[265]Interview, October 29, 1985.
[266]Interview, October 4, 1985.

> it. Either this Minister was against the proposal or as I think is a more likely explanation, this Minster did not want the proposal discussed because the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' would have followed and this Minister has expressed a dislike of the reorganization policy. The 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' was never accepted because of controversy regarding school finance and therefore pushing the finance issue would have put an emphasis on accepting the Bill. On the other hand, the present Minister of Education is interested in the issue; this Minister represents a rural constituency, whereas the former Minister represented the Reykjavik constituency.[267]

In an interview the incumbent Minister of Education expressed his interest in this issue, stating that the inequity between the municipalities had to be resolved.[268] Furthermore, he said that he was in the process of establishing a committee which would have the specific task of investigating this problem and proposing solutions. He said that he was not interested in having separate laws for each school type, as was the interest of his predecessor.[269] Thus, although the Bill or a frame policy for the secondary school level has not been proposed recently, these two Ministers of Education from the Conservatives already have different views on the reorganization of the secondary school level. Their differences of opinion in this regard supports what one of the Principals said: "the support or the non-support of the Bill is not so much a matter of party politics; rather it should be typified as urban versus rural politics."[270]

Decision making powers. As outlined in the section on the governance and administration of the policy ends put forth in the Bill, a committee on secondary schooling was to be established to assist the Ministry in matters regarding the secondary school. This committee was to consist of representatives from the various stakeholder groups. In the parliamentary discussions in 1978-1979 the Minister of Education said in his opening speech that he was aware of dissatisfaction with this "heavy administrative body" but he did not think that it should be omitted.[271] Nevertheless, because of criticism in the parliamentary discussions in 1978-1979, the section on administration had been changed in the 1981-1982

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[267]Interview, October 29, 1985.
[268]Interview, December 30, 1985.
[269]Interview, December 30, 1985.
[270]Interview, October 1, 1985.
[271]*Althingistidindi*, 1978-1979, p.2169.

version of the Bill, including a cancellation of the secondary schooling committee. The alternative option suggested in the Bill was for the Ministry to establish various ad hoc committees.[272] In his opening speech in 1981-1982 the Minister of Education commented:

> In order to simplify, the section on administration has been changed in this version of the Bill. Thus, the big secondary schooling committee, which many people thought would not work very effectively, is abandoned and instead the Ministry has the obligation to contact and cooperate with the various interest groups affected by this policy. As outlined in the supplementary comments to the Bill, this is to allow for initiative and coordination on the part of the people in the field, along the lines of what has been happening during the last few years.[273]

Although this philosophy seems to be generally agreed upon and in line with the development which has taken place within the secondary sector, the last two versions of the Bill state that regional school boards which deal with matters regarding comprehensive primary schools are to include the secondary school. The supplements to the proposal 'A Bill on Secondary School Finance,' written by representatives of most of the municipalities which participate in the operation of secondary schools, state that it is not desirable to have regional school boards dealing with matters pertaining to secondary schools.[274] As one of the grammar school Principals put it: "principals and teachers do not want their hands tied down; they want their schools to develop without too much involvement from above."[275]

Synthesis. Disagreement on secondary school financing is considered the primary element in explaining the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill. The decision making process outlined in the earlier versions of the Bill was also criticized for being too centralized. In 1978-1979 when the Bill received the most thorough discussions, the primary pressure for the non-acceptance of the Bill came from the Federation of Municipalities. Later, the Federation changed its position in favour of joint financing of secondary schools. However, this still being a problematic issue, the core of the problem centers around the inequity between municipalities regarding student costs where joint financing may lead to additional

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[272] *Althingistidindi*, 1981-1982; section VII, clause 21-23, p.1658.
[273] *Althingistidindi*, 1981-1982, Parliamentary Discussions, p.2697.
[274] *Frumvarp til Laga um Skolakostnad i Framhaldsskolum* [A Bill on Secondary School Finance], September, 1985.
[275] Interview, September 24, 1985.

expenses for some municipalities, particularly the municipalities which host grammar schools and some of the special schools which now are entirely funded by the state.

Coordination and Future of the Traditional School Types

As the description of the general policy ends put forth in the Bill indicates, the general idea of the Bill was to coordinate the overall secondary school level in order to create equality of educational opportunity for 'all' students where no programs would lead to 'dead ends.' The collected data revealed that some elements of the reorganization became critical issues in the parliamentary discussions of the Bill, particularly with regard to decisions about the future of some of the existing schools and school types.

The transition. In relation to the nature of the reorganization of the secondary school level as put forth in the Bill, one of the Department Heads made the comment that "it was in line with the development in many Western European countries," and when describing the Icelandic situation he said:

> During these years, education policies were being reviewed in a number of countries and in the Icelandic context no changes had been made during a stagnation period of thirty years. This period [in the history of the selection process for entering secondary schools] is characterized by the middle school exams - this tight and closed system which was being increasingly criticized. These so called middle school exams had the effect that only a small selection of students had access to higher education and these exams were primarily based on factual knowledge. This was what we were thinking, whether there was not an alternative system to be found which better suited contemporary standards.[276]

Similarly, another Department Head who participated in the writing of the Bill said that "the coordination of the secondary school level had been suggested in the various reports" and "what we wanted to emphasize by presenting the Bill was to correct the disjunctions and the procedural obstacles within the system."[277] This Department Head also noted that if someone, for example, started their secondary education in a trade or technical school, "it was difficult for them to gain access to the university level and the main idea put forth in the Bill was to

[276]Interview, October 16,1985.
[277]Interview, October 23, 1985.

pave the way within the system."[278] Furthermore, when this Department Head was asked whether the policy put forth in the Bill was no more than the realization of educational opportunity within the secondary school sector, he commented:

> ...of course one of the purposes in writing this Bill was to emphasize that students could aquire secondary education in as many places as possible all over the country - equal secondary education - and that way students would have increased equality of educational opportunities. Also, by strengthening the different program routes in such a way that students in vocational areas had similar educational opportunities as students in academic areas.[279]

Increased demands for secondary education during the early seventies led to the establishment of the continuing divisions at most of the larger lower secondary schools, or since 1974 at some of the comprehensive primary schools. One of the Principals stated that "this expansion called for increased coordination" and "that many schools in rural areas were not adequately equipped to provide quality education."[280] This Principal concluded that because of this it was very desirable to have a "frame policy" or some global structural guidelines as put forth in the Bill "so students would not undertake studies leading to dead ends."[281] However, ramifications of the reorganization where terminal programs would not exist became a controversial issue in the parliamentary discussions, particularly in regard to the future of the traditional school types.

The future of special schools. The purpose with the Bill was to create a policy for the secondary school level as a whole by coordinating new and existing schools into divisions and program routes. The supplementary comments to the first versions of the Bill stated that the name "secondary schools" would be used for all types of secondary schools although specific schools or school types could carry distinct names based on location or tradition. The supplements also stated that it would be impossible to implement the policy put forth in the Bill without changes in the role and operation of many of the existing secondary schools. Based on probable enrollment estimates, the supplements suggested that a possible

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[278]Interview, October 23, 1985.
[279]Interview, October 23, 1985.
[280]Interview, September 24, 1985.
[281]Interview, September 24, 1985.

reorganization of schools within most of the regions could be that some of the existing schools would be merged into one institution and other new or existing schools would be coordinated with that institution.[212]

Despite this outline of the possible reorganization of schools within some of the regions the Bill also stated that matters regarding individual schools were outside the range of the Bill and to be decided upon later by regional and municipal school boards in cooperation with the Ministry.[213] Because of these inexplicit and somewhat contradictory statements in the first versions of the Bill regarding the future of some of the existing schools and school types many people interpreted the Bill as including a merging of all schools into comprehensive secondary schools.

In 1978-1979, the Minister of Education from the People's Alliance when presenting the Bill outlined the future design of the system, emphasizing that this was a frame policy for the overall system which required an adoption of a course credit system to make the necessary coordination possible. During the first period of discussions, a member of parliament from the Conservatives made the following comment:

> The only thing I would like to say in this context is that I would regret seeing many of these [special] schools disappear ... and I am not so sure that the cancellation of these special schools is beneficial for the involved subject areas and the students studying these subject areas. I think it is of central importance in the making of a new law for the secondary school level that the various special schools will remain as independent program routes, or whatever it is called, although the subject areas offered in those special schools will certainly also be offered in some other schools depending on the context.[214]

With the enactment of the Bill, the various existing special school laws and regulations would be annulled and new regulations written to govern some of these schools or program routes. During the second period of discussions in 1978-1979, the majority of the parliamentary education committee suggested an amendment requiring that before the writing of these regulations the subject matter would be discussed in parliament in order to provide a guiding policy for the writing of the regulations. The Conservatives who were in opposition,

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[212] *Althingistidindi*, 1976-1977, p.2598-2607; ibid, 1977-1978, p.3019-3028; ibid, 1978-1979, p.987-996; ibid, 1979-1980, p.431-439.
[213] *Althingistidindi*, 1982-1983; section VI, clause 18, p.2975.
[214] *Althingistidindi*, 1978-1979, Parliamentary Discussions, p.2173.

and constituted the minority of the education committee, strongly criticized this amendment claiming that "the Bill did not deal with the future of special schools" and that "to accept a policy which allows for a delay in dealing with this problem did not seem wise."[215] One of the Conservatives said:

> There has been a disagreement regarding the future of special schools. According to the Bill and the amendment [that each regulation will be discussed in parliament before being enacted] does not resolve this disagreement. It is crucial for the acceptance of the Bill that a clear position is stated regarding the future of special schools.[216]

Furthermore, he said that various people saw it as highly critical that the special school laws were abandoned, and that a delay in dealing with the future of special schools seemed irreconcilable with an acceptance of a policy for the secondary school level as a whole.[217] In 1978-1979 the Minister of Education responded to the criticism of the delay in dealing with the future of special schools:

> The motive behind this criticism of ... the honorable member of parliament is to make this policy appear suspect by stating that all difficulties have been delayed by not deciding upon the future of special schools. This is very misleading because the intention ... has never been to decide upon the future of special schools and accept the Bill at the same time.[218]

Furthermore, the Minister said:

> I think there are many unclear issues in regard to the future of special schools. I do not think that people have yet had the chance to assess, for example, the best way to organize engineering education, nursery school education, or nursing education. This has to be discussed during the next months and semesters. However, although the future of special schools has not yet been decided upon, this frame policy [the Bill] can be accepted and we can start developing the secondary education system.[219]

Although not explicitly stated in the parliamentary discussions, the concern of the non-supporters of the Bill was to which extent special schools or the school types would continue to exist as independent entities or become program routes within the larger comprehensive system. As one of the respondents put it, the question was whether "all secondary schools would be organized into the same mould;" that is into comprehensive secondary schools or whether some of the traditional schools or schools types would maintain

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[215] ibid, 1978-1979, Parliamentary Discussions, p.4624;4626.
[216] ibid, 1978-1979, Parliamentary Discussions, p.4623.
[217] ibid, 1978-1979, Parliamentary Discussions, p.4626.
[218] ibid, 1978-1979, Parliamentary Discussions, p.4630.
[219] ibid, 1978-1979, Parliamentary Discussions, p.4631.

some of their autonomy and distinctiveness.[290]

The concern was also that the future of special schools and the school types would largely depend on the writing of regulations. In an interview, one principal commented that people were concerned about too much power allotted to the Ministry, particularly certain individuals within the Ministry. In his opinion most of these powers should rather have been allotted to the schools.[291] These same or similar concerns are presented in a newspaper article in *Dagbladid-Visir* in 1982:

> When the 'Law on Comprehensive Primary Education' was enacted it was against the will of people who believe in a free educational system with minimal control from the Ministry.... The 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' ... is a continuation of this centralization policy.
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> It [the Bill] only states that there shall be schools in the country, not what kind of schools; that is to be decided upon in regulations to be written by the Ministry.... In short, this means that principals, who previously could rely on laws when in some kind of a conflict with the Ministry, are now totally controlled by the regulating powers of the Ministry....
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> Preceding their enactment, the regulations to be written are to be presented and discussed in parliament. This means that things have been reversed. According to the constitution the task of parliament is to make laws and the Ministers are to execute these laws, not the other way around...
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> ...that only a few people [within the Ministry] have all authority regarding the country's eduational matters can never be successful.[292]

In 1981-1982 the Minister of Education, who was from the Progressives, announced when presenting the Bill that "a completely coordinated secondary school was neither possible nor desirable."[293] The Minister outlined some of the changes he had made in response to previous criticism and ambiguity in the Bill. When discussing the future of the various school types within the secondary school level the Minister asserted:

> ...now it is clearly stated in clause two - previously it was stated in the supplementary comments - that despite the name 'secondary schools' some schools may have distinct names based on location, tradition or the role of the school. It has to be reinforced that the intention with the Bill was not to cancel or necessarily merge schools as was suggested in earlier discussions. Of course the Bill proposes an overall coordination of the secondary school level, but coordination and the merging of school types are two different things.[294]

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[290]Interview, September 19, 1985.
[291]Interview, November 13, 1985.
[292]*Dagbladid-Visir*, [An independent newspaper], March 31, 1982.
[293]*Althingistidindi*, 1981-1982, Parliamentary Discussions, p.2698.
[294]*Althingistidindi*, 1981-1982, Parliamentary Discussions, p.2697.

The Minister added:

> To avoid all possible misunderstanding, I would like to emphasize that the Bill does certainly not state that all secondary schools will be organized as comprehensive secondary schools. Comprehensive secondary schools are and will be one type of secondary school. The same applies for the various types of special schools. What is of importance is that all schools can function in harmony in a coordinated system of secondary schools. [295]

The Minister also observed that some of the special schools belonged to the university level rather than the secondary school level.[296]

In the first versions of the Bill, schools like the Icelandic School for Midwives, the Icelandic School of Arts and Craft, the Dramatic Academy of Iceland, and the Reykjavik School of Music, were to be an integral part of the secondary school system, organized as program routes. Although the placement of these and some other schools was somewhat discussed in 1978-1979, in 1981-1982 the Minister asserted that some of these schools might develop into 'academic institutions' and were thus to be excluded from the Bill. However, he added that "this was just his opinion" and "that this had to be carefully examined before any decisions were made in this respect." [297]

One of the Department Heads noted in this context that since the Bill was first introduced some of the special schools had been gradually increasing their entrance requirements and that it was becoming quite common amongst some of these schools for matriculation to be an entrance requirement:

> ...we can say that the development has been in such a way that most professions now require that people have higher education standards - matriculation has replaced the lower secondary school diploma. Both regarding employment opportunities and acceptance into special schools, people with matriculation have gained priorities although matriculation is not a prerequisite.... Things have moved in the direction that matriculation is the key to good jobs as well as access to schools.[298]

This Department Head added that the trend "seemed to be to move many of these specialized secondary schools to a university level" and that "this development is being reinforced by the various professional groups who are trying to strengthen their collective bargaining

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[295]Ibid, 1981-1982, Parliamentary Discussions, p.2698.
[296]Ibid, 1981-1982, Parliamentary Discussions, p.2707.
[297]Ibid, 1981-1982, Parliamentary Discussions, p.2707-2708.
[298]Interview, October 23, 1985.

positions."[299] In a similar vein, one of the Principals concluded:

> What has affected the acceptance of the Bill is that politics within the various professional areas have come into play. This is mostly twofold. On the one hand, people like, for example, nurses and nursery school teachers have been strongly demanding that their education belongs to a university level and the idea behind this has to do with collective bargaining - this way they can increase their status and salaries. On the other hand, pressure groups like lawyers and medical doctors try to influence a reduction in the number of students entering secondary school and thereby the university level in order to secure their jobs....[300]

Another dimension of this issue of deciding upon the future of special schools is the issue of the future of grammar schools.

The future of grammar schools. During the parliamentary discussions in 1978-1979 an amendment was proposed by a Social Democrat and a Progressive both of whom belonged to the parties in power stating that grammar schools in urban areas could operate in their traditional manner. The rationale for this amendment states that the "reorganization policy put forth in the Bill is not generally agreed upon by school people" and "many of them are afraid that too much coordination will result in sameness."[301] The supplements to the amendment also state that "the Reykjavik grammar school is an institution with a history that can be traced many centuries back in time and is a significant part of the country's history."[302] A member of parliament from the People's Alliance who strongly supported the Bill responded to this amendment:

> If this amendment and the Bill will be accepted, it will result in a bipartite educational system: on the one hand, coordinated secondary schools, on the other hand, isolated grammar schools designed in the traditional way, not cooperating with the other secondary schools in the country. And both these schools are designed to offer programs leading to matriculation allowing students to enter a University level. You all must see that we cannot afford a bipartite system of this nature.[303]

The Conservatives who were in opposition in 1978-1979 were also concerned about the future of grammar schools and stated that "experienced school people doubted that it would be beneficial to change the grammar schools from their traditional form into coordinated or

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[299]Interview, October 23, 1985.
[300]Interview, October 1, 1985.
[301]*Althingistidindi*, 1978-1979, Parliamentary Discussions, p.4804.
[302]ibid, 1978-1979, Parliamentary Discussions, p.4804.
[303]ibid, 1978-1979, Parliamentary Discussions, p.4820.

comprehensive secondary schools."[304] A grammar school Principal who has been outspoken on the negative aspects of the Bill described it in this context:

> There were certainly many obstacles that affected the acceptance of the Bill. I would like to thank myself for some of the resistance.... What I requested was the assurance that the traditional grammar school would not be eliminated in its traditional form. I am against that all shools are being organized into the same mould. I think it is healthy, both for people and society as a whole, to be able to choose and even be persuaded to choose. [305]

Another grammar school Principal said that "when the Bill was first introduced many people interpreted the reorganization policy as including a cancellation of the class group system as it was in the traditional grammar schools."[306] This Principal also said:

> Rightly or wrongly, it was a common understanding amongst both supporters or non-supporters of the Bill that it would mean the cancellation of the traditional grammar schools - and the supporters saw it as a matter of rights that the class group system should be abandoned and that marks be given in letters. [307]

In the words of one of the Department Heads: (1) "people did not want to abandon the old school types;" (2) "they did not want all schools organized into the same mould;" (3) "they did not want a blueprint of the same nature as in the comprehensive primary schools."[308]

Based on similar concerns, the Conservative Minister of Education, who recently was transferred to another ministry in a parliamentary shuffle, stated no interest in presenting the Bill. The newspaper *Thjodviljinn* in 1984 reported that the Minister in a response to an inquiry in parliament, about the status of the Bill or a frame policy for the secondary school level, evidenced no interest in presenting the Bill. The primary reason given was that too much secondary school coordination would lead to fewer options for students when choosing secondary schools and that too much coordination will result in "all students being poured into the same mould."[309] Similarly, as reflected in many editorials and newspaper articles in 1985, free schools with as little control from the Ministry as possible are seen increasingly favorably. As one of the principals concluded in an interview: "with this increased

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[304]ibid, 1978-1979, Parliamentary Discussions, p.5059.
[305]Interview, October 31, 1985.
[306]Interview, September 24, 1985.
[307]Interview, September 24, 1985.
[308]Interview, September 19, 1985.
[309]*Thjodviljinn*, October 27, 1984.

conservatism which is now progressing in the Icelandic society it is unlikely that there is a political will for presenting the the Bill."[310]

In an interview regarding the resistance to the Bill a former Minister of Education concluded:

> [The authors of the Bill] believed that they were inventing a system that would solve all our problems. Perhaps they did, but there was room for too many interpretations ... and it was a mistake to present these ideas as revolutionary. It automatically results in resistance, both among educators and politicians. For example, leaders within the educational system may regard this [policy] as a threat to their territories, their institutions, and they become defensive as happened regarding the *Reykjavik* grammar school.... All of this strongly influenced members of parliament.[311]

Synthesis. As outlined in the description of the policy ends put forth in the Bill, the primary idea behind the policy is that of reorganizing the system in order to achieve greater equality of opportunity. In general, the reorganization policy stated an adoption of a course credit system or a mixture of a course credit sytem and a class group system. This was to enable the necessary coordination in fitting existing schools or school types into the blueprint/pattern of a coordinated comprehensive school for the system as a whole. Hence, within the system, no programs would be terminal.

In 1978-1979, when the Bill received the most thorough discussions, it was criticized for not dealing with the future of special schools. There were strong supporters for having the grammar schools remaining in their traditional form. Many suspected and interpreted that the Bill would erase the distinctiveness of individual schools or school types, as evidenced in the expression that people did not want all schools 'organized into the same mould.' The last two versions of the Bill are more explicit in their recognition of the distinctiveness of existing schools and school types than the earlier versions. Nevertheless, the criticism that too much regulatory power is being granted to the Ministry and that too much coordination will result in sameness are still of concern and to some extent explain the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill.

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[310]Interview, September 24, 1985.
[311]Interview, October 22, 1985.

Accountability

As described earlier, the number of students who matriculated has increased substantially since the abandonment of the selective middle school examinations, by the enactment of the 1974 education laws and the establishment of the comprehensive secondary schools. Before, programs leading to matriculation were only offered in the grammar schools, the School of Commerce, and the Professional School for Teachers before it was changed into a university.

The collected data revealed that this increase in number of students matriculating, along with questions of quality, is a part of the resistance to the Bill or the reorganization of the secondary school level. This resistance may also be regarded as an additional dimension of the problem of deciding upon the 'future of the school types or 'all schools being organized into the same mould.'

Lowering of standards. The establishment of the comprehensive secondary schools as has resulted in a substantial increase in the number of students who matriculate. Moreover, with the enactment of the 1974 education laws, 'all' students can enter the secondary school level providing they have the minimal entrance requirements. Using figures from the Statistical Bureau of Iceland, the newspaper *Thjodviljinn* reported in 1983 that in 1963 there were 263 students that matriculated, 774 students in 1973, and 1500 students in 1982;[312]

In 1978-1979, when the Bill received the most thorough discussions in parliament, a member of the opposition from the Conservatives said that many educators questioned the value of the reorganization policy put forth in the Bill.[313] Although not explicitly stated in the discussions, these concerns had to do with the abandonment of the selective middle school exams and, on the other hand, the merging of the school types and the future of the traditional grammar schools. This Conservative member of parliament further commented:

> Despite problems regarding divisions of costs between the state and the municipalities, I am sceptical of the educational politics put forth in the Bill. We, [members of the opposition in the education committee] found it interesting to listen

[312] *Thjodviljinn*, September 7, 1983.
[313] *Althingistidindi*, 1978-1979, Parliamentary Discussions, p.4626.

> to...[a grammar school Principal] who attended one of our meetings. I rememer him saying that in his mind the worst thing about this reorganization policy was how it leveled everything out.... [314]

Similarly, and as decribed before, the Social Democrats which were a part of the coalition presenting the Bill in 1978-1979, hesitated in their support because of similar concerns. One of the Social Democrats said that many people thought that the "wave of students now entering secondary schools was undoubtedly high in numbers but not necessarily of high quality."[315] Futhermore this Social Democrat elaborated by saying that the 1974 education laws resulted in large numbers of poorly prepared students entering secondary schools and it was only a question of a few years when the University had to implement entrance examinations in order to maintain some acceptable standards.[316]

In an interview, another Social Democrat reiterated some of the concerns that surfaced in the parliamentary discussions in 1978-1979:

> Perhaps this whole thing has centered too much around students matriculating.... To matriculate today is the same thing as to graduate with the lower secondary school diploma forty years ago.... [In the future], for those who matriculate, lowering of standards is going to result in entrance examinations at the University, and I do not see anything wrong with that. [317]

Along similar lines, regarding the effects of the selective middle school examinations, a grammar school Principal commented:

> I think many people would like to see selective examinations administered again, although they are not outspoken about it. I think it is absolutely clear ... that the lowering of standards that people are afraid will occur in secondary schools has already taken place in the comprehensive primary schools. The standards required in the primary schools are becoming relatively low ... and students are exposed to an ideology of mediocracy where rising above the crowd is not regarded favorably.[318]

When this Principal was asked whether the reasons for the lowering of standards at the secondary level had to do with implications of adopting a course credit system he said:

> Yes, there are two things. I want the class group system to be maintained because of psychological reasons. I think there is such a large fraction of people that prefer communicating with the same group more or less rather than changing environment all the time - changing people you sit beside and so forth... It is not just this, I am totally against this so called course credit system -- primarily because I think it is

[314]ibid, Parliamentary Discussions, p.4626.
[315]ibid, Parliamentary Discussions, p.4810.
[316]ibid, Parliamentary Discussions, p.4810.
[317]Interview, October 9, 1985.
[318]Interview, October 31, 1985.

> absolutely necessary to test students in more than the content of one course at the end of each term - to inquire about how much knowledge students have really aquired. It is difficult to obtain information about that except by testing students in all the content covered [during the four years] in each subject area. You may say that this is conservative but this what I strongly believe.[319]

Furthermore, this Principal said that although students could possibly matriculate a little earlier in the course credit system than the class group system, he did not see that as being of great benefit for students compared to the overall maturity they gained by staying the full four years in the traditional grammar schools. Another grammar school Principal showed similar concerns and said that in his mind the only major disadvantage of the class group system was that if students failed in one subject area at the end of a academic year and wanted to continue, they had to repeat the whole year in all the subject areas.[320]

A Principal in one of the comprehensive secondary schools said in this context that a big misunderstanding among many people was to consider traditional grammar school education as being something special.[321] This Principal said that in his mind the grammar schools in their traditional form were very ineffective institutions primarily because of outdated teaching practices.[322] When contrasting these two systems, this Principal observed:

> [In schools with a course credit system] students work on their own. In these schools they do not use the method of assigning readings or assignments and the next day test or probe into whether students have finished the readings or the required assignments. Students see the school as a working place and they themselves are responsible for their learning. In these schools educational responsibilities are put on students' shoulders relatively soon in their programs and that is what is of importance.[323]

Furthermore, regarding selection into secondary schools, this Principal said:

> Schools with a course credit system can admit students from very diverse backgrounds without any big problems. The role of schools should be to serve students, not to select them. The selective system has not been all that successful anyway. For example, the School of Commerce [which is run as a private school] selects its students from all over the country when first admitted and then out of that group students are selected again into the matriculation route. Then, when entering the University their performance is only average.[324]

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[319]Interview, October 31, 1985.
[320]Interview, November 13, 1985.
[321]Interview, October 30, 1985.
[322]Interview, October 30, 1985.
[323]Interview, October 30, 1985.
[324]Interview, October 30, 1985.

Thus, in general, the lowering of standards seems to center on the lack of comprehensive testing in schools with a course credit system. In the following section on the university-secondary schools relations, comprehensive testing will be discussed further.

University-secondary school relations. The notion of student success and school quality reached its peak in 1980 and 1981 when University officials conducted a survey on attainment levels of students from the various secondary schools during their first year at the University. A statement released in the newspaper *Morgunbladid* in December 1980 revealed that graduates from the older traditional schools received higher attainment levels than students from the new comprehensive secondary schools.[325] Because of strong criticism of the methodology and the statistical procedures employed, another report entitled "It is out of the question that the new school form will replace traditional schools" was released in February 1981 in *Morgunbladid*.[326] Generally, this revised report showed results similar to the previous one; it also stated that the reason for conducting a survey of this nature was the increasing complaints from university professors about student preparation.[327] In an interview, one of the comprehensive secondary school Principals said:

> ...when carefully examined, the difference between students' average scores was not all that great and all the schools were pretty close to each other.... There are certain things that are obvious, for example, that in the faculty of science and technology graduates from some of the grammar schools do extremely well during the first year because at some of these grammar schools there are special mathematics [science] departments where a big part of what is taught during the last year is the same as during the first year in the faculty of science and technology at the University. On the other hand, I think these school quality discussions have to a large extent influenced a very negative attitude towards the comprehensive secondary schools.[328]

Along similar lines, one of the Department Heads observed that it was still a common belief that the comprehensive secondary schools were second class schools.[329] This Department Head also said that all talk about lowering of standards was unfair. The large numbers of students

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[325] *Morgunbaldid*, [Newspaper published in connection with the Conservative Party], December 21, 1980.
[326] ibid, February 15, 1981.
[327] ibid, February 15, 1981.
[328] Interview, October 4, 1985.
[329] Interview, September 19, 1985.

now matriculating certainly led to lower average scores but the group equivalent to the previous "selected elite" was still a part of the secondary school population, and did equally well.[330] Furthermore, as pointed out by one of the sample respondents, "if there is a great difference between attainment levels of students from the various school types it may have to do with 'hidden' selection into the schools where low academic achievers might choose schools with a course credit system because of its flexibility."[331]

In addition to this survey on student attainment levels, the Federation of University Trained Personnel organized two relatively large conferences on the issue of university-secondary school relations; the first in 1977 and the second in 1983. In the opening speech the 1977 conference the president of the Federation noted that the focus of this conference was on discussing the newly proposed 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' and how it affected students' preparation for university studies.[332] The speeches and the workshop reports indicate that in order to maintain standards and provide guidelines for secondary school students, who now come from diverse backgrounds, the University has to prescribe some desired preparation for entering the various University faculties.[333] The Bill was also criticized for not containing any explicit curriculum philosophy; but because of how recently the Bill had been introduced, the discussions were rather exploratory in nature. The discussions at the 1983 conference, which were more critical in nature, focused on student preparation and university entrance requirements.

The Minister of Education from the Conservatives, who was one of the guest speakers at the 1983 conference, said that the emerging problem facing University authorities was to decide upon where to stop the expansion of the University. This seemed to be a problem arising from of what was being done at the secondary school level rather than at the university level:

> I think the reason for this problem is primarily dependent on what is done at the secondary school level.... At the secondary level the emphasis has been on students

[330]Interview, September 19, 1985.
[331]Interview, November 15, 1985.
[332]*Radstefna um Menntamal a Framahldsskolastigi* [A Conference on Secondary School Education], Bandalag Haskolamanna, 21-22 october, 1977, p.3.
[333]Ibid, p.81-82.

> matriculating at the expense of keeping the necessary standards. Of course the emphasis should be on making students graduate, but not without relevant standards of knowledge; not without ensuring that at the end of someone's studies it is proven that the person in question has the knowlege and skills to undertake successful university studies. If this is secured, then the entrance to the University will not be a problem.[334]

Along similar lines, another speaker, a grammar school Principal, expressed several concerns regarding lowering of standards both at the primary and the secondary level. In line with the comments above, he said:

> These days the meaning of the word matriculation is becoming increasingly loose. In earlier times it meant that students had been tested in two or four years' content in the various subjects.... The word matriculation is also used when we are talking about a certificate or students' final reports who have never taken any real matriculation examinations in the traditional way. Rather, these students are tested for an hour or an hour and a half in each subject at the end of each term and then one day, after an accumulation of 144 credits they realize that they have matriculated.... It is obvious that these two types of matriculation are different, particularly the testing methods. They do not give the same information.... [I] am not going to discuss this further, but I just wanted to point out that these two types of matriculation have perhaps nothing in common but the name....[335]

Another former grammar school Principal commented that the primary purpose with the course credit system was to meet individual differences and regarding the nature of the matriculation examinations:

> I used to believe that the traditional matriculation examination form was enriching and a necessary experience for students.... I must admit that I doubt the advantages of this traditional examination system, the value of studying one subject extremely hard during a relatively short period and undergoing the exam and then try to forget everything as quickly as possible before studying for the next exam in another subject area.[336]

This Principal also made the comment that instead of administering selective examinations for entering secondary schools it would be more beneficial and socially acceptable to have secondary schools "open to entrance" but "tight to exit."[337] He elaborated by saying that unfortunately it is too common that students enter secondary schools without any goals other than having an easy time.[338] Furthermore, he proposed a similar solution to the one proposed

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[334] *Radstefna um Undirbuning Haskolanams og Adgang ad Haskola* [A conference on Student Preparation and University Entrance Requirements], Bandalag Haskolamanna, 26 november, 1983, p.10.
[335] ibid, p.16.
[336] ibid, p.28-29.
[337] ibid, p.32.
[338] ibid, p.34.

at the 1977 conference. That is that each faculty would prescribe which types and number of secondary school courses students should have before entering their programs.[339]

Another conference in 1983 was organized by the Federation of University Trained Personnel to discuss the goals and organization of university education. In one of the opening speeches, a grammar school Principal stated that one of the drawbacks in the organization of secondary schools with a course credit system was that it allowed for the possibility of students selecting their elective courses in order to get, with minimal efforts, through their programs, whereas others choose the course of greater resistance.[340] Accordingly, the preparation of these two groups of students is totally different and as the Principal concluded: "I am sure that those who utilize their electives to go through their programs with minimal efforts are much worse prepared for undertaking university studies than low achievers in the old [class group] system."[341] Similarly, in an interview, another grammar school Principal observed that the sequence of courses and the use of electives had to be more controlled in secondary schools with a core credit system, because in his mind it was not pedagogically sound to be able to finish, for example, in two years of study all courses in one subject area and almost none in the other areas.[342]

Along the lines proposed at the conferences dealing with secondary school education and secondary school-university relations, a university official said in an interview that the University was in the process of implementing an entrance policy where each faculty specified some necessary background courses:

> ...in this context, what we can justify doing is to define the necessary foundations on which we then build. By doing that, we have given some guidelines or standards for secondary schools, both teachers and students, so they know what is expected - not just which course titles and credits but which content areas and problems students are supposed to be able account for or solve.[343]

This University official also said that an action of this nature was becoming increasingly

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[339]ibid, p.34.
[340]*Radstefna um Markmid og Skipulag Haskolanams* [A Conference on University Goals and University Organization], Bandalag Haskolamanna, 15-16 april, 1983, p.10.
[341]ibid, p.10.
[342]Interview, November 13, 1985.
[343]Interview, November 12, 1985.

important because of the variety of schools and programs leading to matriculation; it replaced the necessity for implementing entrance examinations. Furthermore, this University official said that he was in support of having the various school types offering programs leading to matriculation because then students could choose schools either with a course credit system or a class group system depending which would suit them better. This notion was further reinforced by most respondents who also rationalized that this allowed for greater equity and effectiveness because of competition between schools with the two different systems. As one of the interviewees responded when asked about the value of having the two systems in operation:

> I do not disagree with having the two systems in operation. As the present system works, it is relatively easy to transfer between schools and I think it is good that students can go to a system they think will suit them better.[344]

Similarly, when asked about the status of the Bill, the assistant to the recently transferred Minister of Education from the Conservatives said in a newspaper interview: "We think it is not right to organize all schools into the same mould" and "to the best of my knowledge students can move between programs with transfer credits, thus allowing for enough flexibility within the present secondary school system."[345]

Synthesis. As outlined above, with the enactment of the 1974 Education Laws and the establishment of the comprehensive secondary schools, the number of students matriculating has increased substantially and concerns regarding school quality and student preparation have become increasingly apparent. The relationship between the primary and the secondary school level, and the secondary and the university level are seen as somewhat critical, although in this context the general concern seems to center around the downgrading of the matriculation examinations. Primarily, however, questions in relation to quality of education seem to focus on the advantages and the disadvantages of organizing curriculum in a course credit system or the class group system; the potential for irresponsible use of electives; and whether or not comprehensive testing is being administered. Despite these concerns, today there seems to be

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[344]Interview, November 15, 1985.
[345]*Thjodviljinn*, February 24, 1985.

a general acceptance of the two different systems and the relationship between secondary schools and the University will be to a large extent solved by the implementation of admission guides for the various faculties. These concerns somewhat influenced the resistance to the Bill and may be regarded as an additional dimension of the problem of deciding upon the future of the school types or 'all schools being organized into the same mould.'

Reconciliation of Vocational and Academic Education

In comparison to the law 'A Permit to Establish a Comprehensive Secondary School' the relatively detailed policy put forth in the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' and the expectation that it would become the overall secondary schooling policy has to a large extent served as a guide for curriculum development in most of the the comprehensive secondary schools and the continuing divisions which offer one or two year secondary school programs in selected areas. The collected data revealed that ramifications of the general curriculum policy, which emphasized equal status and reconciliation of vocational and academic education, became a problematic issue in the implementation process and to some extent still remains a problematic issue. Although discussions regarding this broad issue do not surface in parliamentary discussions, it does, however, affect the delay or non-acceptance of the Bill. Hence, a description of some of these elements is necessary to contextualize the present situation.

The transition. When commenting on the early development of the comprehensive secondary schools, a comprehensive secondary school Principal noted that the comprehensive philosophy which was first put forth in the 1974 education laws stated that both primary and secondary education was for 'all' students and thus the only way to organize the curriculum was in a course credit system to enable the necessary coordination.[346] In agreement with the lines put forth in the Bill, this Principal concluded "that by not adopting some kind of a course credit system, the necessary coordination of vocational and academic education would

[346]Interview, October 4, 1985.

have been difficult and the programs offered would have been more limited than was necessary."[347] Similarly, the Minister of Education, when presenting the Bill in 1978-1979, stated that one of the major reasons for the Bill was that the existing system was outdated, with many schools and programs leading to 'dead ends' and with a clear disctinction between academic and vocational education; the latter commonly seen as second class.[348] However, because of the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill, this overall development has not been as controlled as might have been the case if the Bill had been accepted.

In the creation and organization of the comprehensive secondary schools established since 1973, the Principals, in cooperation with the involved municipalities and the Ministry, have had considerable authority regarding the design and the types and numbers of the programs offered in their schools. One of the Principals commented:

> By establishing [comprehensive secondary] schools all over the country, which really are not based on any specific law, but are rather based on a Bill which was to be accepted in parliament, the powers held by the Principals became much greater in determining ramifications of the overall policy than would have been the case if the Bill had been passed in parliament. That is why in practice we have got two separate systems. One the one hand, we have got the comprehensive secondary school at *Breidholt* which is designed more or less in accord with the Bill.... On the other hand, we have all the other comprehensive secondary schools which are based on the Bill but have gone further in the coordination of their programs. [349]

When describing the beginning of this development, a Principal of one of the comprehensive secondary schools established shortly after the *Breidholt* school, said that the continuing divisions that were established at his school when it was a lower secondary school were organized in a mixture of a class group system and a course credit system, and when his school was officially turned into a comprehensive secondary school he and his teachers started improving and updating the mixed course credit system.[350] He also noted that the other comprehensive secondary schools which were established a little later immediately cooperated in this project, primarily because of the suitability of this course credit system for relatively small schools.[351] Another Principal made the comment that when he was hired as Principal at

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[347]Interview, October 4, 1985.
[348]*Althingistidindi*, 1978-1979, Parliamentary Discussions, p.2166.
[349]Interview, October 29, 1985.
[350]Interview, October 4, 1985.
[351]Intreview, October 4, 1985.

one of these newly established comprehensive secondary schools he did not receive any restricting guidelines from the Minister of Education or the Department Heads within the Ministry regarding the organization of his school.[352] Accordingly, this Principal said that when he faced the task of organizing his school he could either copy the course credit system and the programs at the *Breidholt* school or create a new system in cooperation with the Principals at the other newly established comprehensive seondary schools. When explaining these options this Principal said:

> Before I was hired, the municipality had established a committee to plan the organization of the school and this committee had more or less copied and adjusted the *Breidholt* design.... After examining this plan and one of the reasons we rejected it was that we realized that this was a plan of many schools under one roof, where students could not easily transfer between program routes. My idea was that a comprehensive secondary school was a school where students saw themselves as a collective body of students in the school rather than students in a particular program route.... Thus we established a course credit system where students enroll in certain basic courses and can easily select courses from other program routes as electives. That is the main principle. It also simplifies the administration of the system.[353]

When describing the development of these two different course credit sytems, one of the Principals said that during the first years both the Ministry and the Principals involved were interested in standardizing these course credit systems as much as possible.[354] In this respect, he noted that some workshops were administered including teachers and principals from all of the comprehensive secondary schools, the *Hamrahlid* grammar school, and a few other secondary schools, but then suddenly administrators at the *Breidholt* school decided to withdraw from these discussions and decided to continue with their own system.[355] This conflict led to a newspaper article debate which began when the *Breidholt* Principal in his graduation speech in 1979 criticized the organization of the other comprehensive secondary schools. In the speech which was printed in one of the newspapers, the Principal comments:

> The *Breidholt* comprehensive secondary school [traditional] attempts to meet the expectations put forth in its name. It is a school which offers students a choice of seven divisions and [for students] the important thing is to understand what is special about each division. With an element of truth, one can say that each division is somewhat similar to some of the special schools. The comprehensive secondary schools [integrated] which do not emphasize the importance of the divisions are

[352]Interview, October 30, 1985.
[353]Interview, October 30, 1985.
[354]Interview, October 4, 1985.
[355]Interview, October 4, 1985.

> suspicious because they ... really are only schools of one division, i.e., the old traditional grammar schools that offer some additional courses which are second class....
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> We, [the administrators at the *Breidholt* comprehensive secondary school] caution against the use of the term comprehensive secondary school if it does not include any real reorganization, differentiation, and minimal enrollments to make this multiform system possible. A comprehensive school must enroll 200-300 new students every year thus making the minimal total enrollments around 600-800 students. The newspapers have been describing that some of the comprehensive secondary schools enroll 20-40 new students a year. In those cases, both students and parents have been cheated. This becomes obvious when these students are divided into 4-8 program routes. These program routes are no more than a meaningless name.[356]

In a response article, a Principal of one of the integrated comprehensive secondary schools describes the general features of the system in most of these schools and the advantages of using the terms divisions and program routes more as planning terms than as absolutes:

> All these schools operate by a course credit system where the basic unit is the course. A program route is defined by an accumulation of certain courses and credits. Program routes that have many courses in common make up divisions. But the terms program routes and divisions are first and foremost necessary planning concepts. They are not concrete and objective like classes or departments in a traditional school [or divisions in the *Breidholt* school]...
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> This system enables cooperation and division of labor between schools if they all use the same curriculum guide. Naturally, students take most of the basic courses that overlap most of the program routes early in their programs and the specialization courses later. This means that the first years can be administered in relatively many places, but to graduate, particularly in the more specialized program routes, has to be restricted to a few larger schools....
>
> [This system] makes it possible to offer a variety of secondary education programs in rural areas, more than would be the case if these programs were offered in special schools or large comprehensive schools which are not coordinated with the overall system.[357]

Thus, the primary difference between these systems is that the one puts its emphasis on a common core for all students from all the program routes with the divisions and the program routes relatively differentiated. The other, puts its emphasis on having no officially defined core, but as much overlap between the programs as possible.

Grammar school standards. As described earlier, most of the comprehensive secondary schools and the continuing divisions have adopted the 'flexible' program structuring

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[356] *Timinn*, January 5, 1980.
[357] *Timinn*, February 23, 1980.

system and participate in the publication of the joint curriculum guide *Namsvisir*, whereas the Breidholt comprehensive secondary school publishes its own curriculum guide. Primarily, the flexible program structuring system grew out of different needs of relatively small schools, whereas the *Breidholt* comprehensive secondary school is the largest comprehensive secondary school in the country. In addition to the element of school size the basic difference between these two systems regarding the philosophy of reconciling vocational and academic education may be described as the extent to which grammar schools have set the standards in the vocational areas. In the system emphasizing as much overlap between program routes as possible, the grammar school influence may be seen as somewhat greater than in the system where differentiation is emphasized.

Leaving aside the difference between these two systems and focusing on the grammar school influence as a whole in the vocational areas, one of the comprehensive secondary school Principals said that in the early development of the vocational areas, e.g. in the trades, "we had to translate into secondary school content many of the general timelines to be spent in a given area as put forth by the Trade Education Council."[358] This Principal observed that this had to be done because in the old trade education courses the content was poorly outlined and in most cases belonged to the elementary school level rather than the secondary school level.[359] This Principal further elaborated:

> ...for example, we moved the level of courses in Icelandic, mathematics, and the languages to secondary school standards and then people said: this cannot work. Students in trade education are ... slow learners, and this will be a big mistake. Nevertheless, my observations indicated that the drop-out rate was the same as before and, accordingly, the ones who continued were much better educated than would have been the case before these changes.[360]

Expressing a similar point of view, and in line with the development in in most of the comprehensive schools, another Principal of a comprehensive secondary school commented:

> This emphasis on vocational education was not entirely correct; I agree that vocational education had to be enhanced, but that can be done in various ways. Right from the beginning, people had different understandings of this issue. On the one hand, the old and the traditional understanding that vocational education was the same as manual training.... On the other hand, and in line with what I think is

[358]Interview, October 30, 1985.
[359]Interview, October 30, 1985.
[360]Interview, October 30, 1985.

> necessary, to reconcile vocational and academic education has to include that students in vocational education receive increased basic education. We can put it this way, students in the vocational areas who are only exposed to manual training are not well prepared to follow and be up-to-date on technological changes. These days, for example, most equipment and tools are being computerized. Also, to be able to read manuals, go to conferences, and be up-to-date in the literature, these students must be relatively good in foreign languages. [361]

One of the Department Heads commented in this context:

> ...when the school has been divided into a number of program routes or divisions, the groups are so small that the basis for an efficient operation is lost. Thus, the only solution to this problem is to combine most of these programs [particularly during the first years] ... The problem with this system is that students in vocational areas cannot cope with ... the academic courses which are to a large extent determined by grammar school standards. Thus, in practice, the coordination has gone too far in most of the comprehensive secondary schools.
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> ...when we are talking about equality of educational opportunity, we are giving students an opportunity to undertake studies according to their interests and abilities. We know that a large group of these young people who graduate from the comprehensive primary school every year have had enough of academic subjects and it does not make sense to persuade these students to take difficult academic subjects. This has to be corrected and I think the system has to be more differentiated. When we are talking about a coordinated secondary school system we are talking about a system where program routes do not lead to dead ends.[362]

Along similar lines, one of the comprehensive secondary school principals noted that the biggest problem in the comprehensive secondary schools today was the influence of the academic grammar school standards. Standards which primarily result from the educational background of secondary school teachers who are mostly grammar school graduates.[363] The Principal observed that most of these teachers, both implicitly and explicitly, were preparing their students for university entrance and this "attitude" was also apparent in the curriculum guides.[364] He also stated that there were now serious moves amongst comprehensive secondary school principals to combine the first two years in as many programs as possible; to emphasize the practical aspects of these two year programs which may lead to a diploma or certificate in some specialization areas and then increase the academic emphasis during the last two years.[365] Furthermore, this Principal believed that this system would meet the needs of students who were not academically oriented and did not know what they wanted when they entered the

[361]Interview, October 29, 1985.
[362]Interview, September 19, 1985.
[363]Interview, September 19, 1985.
[364]Interview, January 3, 1986.
[365]Interview, January 3, 1986.

secondary school.[366]

Another comprehensive secondary school Principal said that the strong emphasis on facilitating interest in vocational programs had not been a success and more and more students enrolled in academic programs leading to matriculation.[367] When explaining this trend, the Principal said that in line with increased conservatism academic business programs were now in fashion and most of the vocational areas were seen as hard and dirty and not the key to a successful career.[368] The Principal also suggested that students were uncertain about the future of trade and technical areas because of technological advancements.[369] One of the students oberved that likely this trend was the result of the old traditional status associated with matriculation and the attitude that "a person without a university degree hardly counted as a person at all.[370]

In an article in an education journal one of the secondary school Principals stated that the major drawback in this overall curriculum development was that the foundations underlying secondary education had never been fully explored and discussed and the curriculum development during the last few years had been primarily based on the old curriculum in the traditional schools.[371] The article states "that for a successful secondary education policy we need to ask and define what constitutes good basic education, good vocational education, and what the relationship between the two should be within the educational system."[372]. In agreement with this view, another Principal observed that "many educators are increasingly beginning to question the specialization emphasis in secondary schools and that in many ways it seemed more beneficial to increase basic education elements to enable secondary school graduates to adjust to a constantly changing employment environment."[373] Along similar lines, one of the Department Heads said that he was becoming

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[366]Interview, January 3, 1986.
[367]Interview, October 29, 1985.
[368]Interview, October 29, 1985.
[369]Interview, October 29, 1985.
[370]Questionnaire, Grammar School Student, 1985.
[371]Education Journal, 1985.
[372]Education Journal, 1985
[373]Interview, October 4, 1985.

convinced that to emphasize specialization within the educational system was too expensive. Because of the conservative nature of the educational system all changes were extremely slow and it would be more beneficial to have the specialization take place in the industries but in cooperation with the Ministry.[374] This Department Head also commented that it was necessary to offer a large variety of short programs which would also change the emphasis that all students should take the academic routes leading to matriculation.[375]

Synthesis. The general curriculum philosophy put forth in the Bill emphasized the reconciliation and equal value of vocational and academic education. Because of the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill, the implementation of this general policy has almost entirely been facilitated by comprehensive secondary school Principals with minimal involvement from the Ministry and has led to the development of two curriculum structuring systems. Grammar school standards have largely guided the organization of the curriculum in many of the vocational areas, or as one of the grammar school Principals put it: "rightly or wrongly, academic education has always been much appreciated in Iceland and because of this tradition it sets the standards.[376]

Despite some diffference between the two curriculum structuring systems or the difference in the level of reconciliation of vocational and academic education, both these systems equally value vocational and academic education because no program within either system would be terminal. However, the coordination of secondary schools and the influence of grammar schools has been somewhat greater in schools other than the *Breidholt* school. This is seen as somewhat critical because of students who cannot cope with the academic elements and because shorter program routes have not been widely established. Some people are also beginning to question the existing goals of basic and vocational education and the specialization emphasis within the present system is seen as becoming increasingly problematic.

[374]Interview, september 19, 1985.
[375]Interview, September 19, 1985.
[376]Interview, September 24, 1985.

The Hidden Policy

As described above, several comprehensive secondary schools and continuing divisions have been established and considerable coordination between the school types has taken place. Comprehensive secondary schools, grammar schools, and special schools have cooperated in the publication of joint curriculum guides and during the summer of 1986 a master curriculum guide was released by the Ministry. Some grammar and special schools, however, have not participated directly in these coordination efforts. Nevertheless, horizontal transferability between schools and school types is a relatively simple process, although some transfers may be more efficient than others. Thus, the overall aim of the reorganization which was to emphasize a reconciliation of academic and vocational education and to ensure that no programs would lead to 'dead ends' has to a large extent been implemented.

The collected data revealed that to a certain extent 'lack of commitment' explains this seeming contradiction: the general policy put forth in the Bill is being implemented without ever being accepted in parliament.

Lack of commitment. The 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' has been proposed six times in parliament by the various coalitions without being passed and all the major parties have at some time been a part of the coalitions presenting the Bill. In most cases the Bill was presented relatively late in the parliamentary year, a factor which did not allow for extended discussions and flexibility in the discussion procedures. However, in 1978-1979 when the Bill was proposed by the coalition of Progressives, the People's Alliance, and the Social Democrats, it received the most thorough discussion, even though the Social Democrats hesitated in their support. Generally, the Social Democrats stated that there was no urgent need for acceptance of the Bill this time around and that it could wait until the coming fall, after there had been extended discussions with school people during the summer months.[377] Along the same lines, the Conservatives who were in opposition in 1978-1979, but were a part of the coalition which presented the Bill in 1976-1977 and 1977-1978, said that

[377] *Althingistidindi*, 1978-1979, p.4636;4808.

they agreed with the necessity to legislate a 'frame policy' for the secondary school level but not necessarily along the lines put forth in the Bill. As an example, during the first round of discussions in 1978-1979 after criticizing several aspects of the Bill, on of the Conservatives commented:

> I am not engaging in this criticism in order to demonstrate my non support of this Bill. It is absolutely clear to me that it is necessary to enact a new policy for secondary education and to coordinate as much as possible and I support the attempts put forth in this Bill in that respect.[377]

During round two of the discussions in 1978-1979 the political polarization regarding the Bill became greater. The People's Alliance strongly pushed the acceptance of the Bill but the Conservatives strongly rejected the Bill. After discussing the report from the minority of the education committee, one of the Conservatives stated:

> As I have said, the representatives of the Conservatives in the education committee were not prepared to accept this Bill. I would like to emphasize that there are many positive things put forth in this Bill and there is a great need to legislate a new policy for secondary schools so they do not continue to develop uncontrolled as has been the case until now but there are so many drawbacks with this Bill that it is out of the question to accept it.[379]

Similarly, during the third discussion period it was further emphasized that a frame policy for the overall secondary school level had to be legislated and the Conservatives further commented that although the general ideas put forth in the Bill were agreable it did not mean that a new and a better bill could not be written.[380] Again, when the Bill was proposed in 1981-1982 by a coalition of Progressives, the People's Alliance, and a splinter group from the Conservatives, a member of the opposition from the Conservatives noted that although he was in support of legislating a frame policy for the secondary school level he questioned whether now all of a sudden was the right time for accepting the Bill:

> The question is: Have we suddenly reached the destination? Of course we must be getting close and I hope we are moving in the right direction and I would like to say that this version of the Bill is much better than the one presented the last time.[381]

The Minister who presented the Bill in 1981-1982 and 1982-1983 had to present the Bill as a private matter because of disagreement within the cabinet regarding its financial aspects. This

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[377]ibid, Parliamentary Discussions, p.2176.
[379]ibid, Parliamentary Discussions, p.4626.
[380]ibid, Parliamentary Discussions, 5064.
[381]*Althingistidindi*, 1981-1982, Parliamentary Discussions, p.2700.

previous Minister explained in an interview:

> ...all the parties kept stating that a frame policy for the seondary school level had to be enacted.... Nevertheless, ever since the Bill was first introduced most cabinets delayed the Bill because of various reasons. In the coalition contract ... [of the Progresives, the People's Alliance, and the splinter group from the Conservatives] it was explicitly stated that such laws should be enacted. However, when it came to presenting the Bill there was disagreement within the cabinet ... and I had to present the Bill as a private matter. [312]

When explaining this development, one of the grammar school Principals said:

> I understand that the primary reason for the delay of the Bill is that no cabinet was willing to commit itself to provide the necessary financial resources for the enactment of this policy.... I think people [politicians] were afraid of committing themselves financially to this Bill - it includes that certain expenses become necessary and it is difficult to predict exactly what those expenses will be - this is what scares people.... [In this respect, the politicians] do not know too much what they are talking about but enough to resist it [the Bill]. It is another story when they do not know anything about what they are talking about, then they do not dare to resist it.... This is like the Parkinson's Law which states that discussion length is in the reverse proportion of the size and the scope of the subject matter...[313]

A previous Minister of Education commented that although the Bill had not been accepted in parliament it had been accepted in practice:

> Despite the lack of a frame policy for the secondary school level, educators have been active in implementing new ideas regarding the organization and the coordination of the secondary school level. The law 'Permit to Establish a Comprehensive Secondary School,' the general will of Education Ministers, municipal authorities and educators during the last ten to fifteen years had made this development possible.[314]

Furthermore, this former Minister of Education said that in accordance with the 'Permit to Establish a Comprehensive Secondary School,' negotiations and contracts between the state and the municipalities is the key in explaining and legalizing this development but an acceptance of the Bill would have been the appropriate way to go particularly because of the financial inequity between the school types which still exists.[315] One of the grammar school principals observed that in his mind the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill cannot be attributed to dissatisfaction with the overall reorganization policy put forth in the Bill, but rather to of some technical reasons, and that it would have led to increased expenses for the

[312]Interview, October 22, 1985.
[313]Interview, September 24, 1985.
[314]Interview, October 22, 1985.
[315]Interview, October 22, 1985.

state."[316] One of the Department Heads concluded that this whole development which had to a large extent been along the lines put forth in the Bill and supported by municipal authorities, but never accepted by parliament, was quite deceitful and an indicator of a strong lack of interest by members of parliament regarding educational affairs."[317]

Synthesis. As outlined above, most interest and stakeholder groups have shown interest in legislating a 'frame' policy for the overall secondary school level and all of the four major polictical parties have been a part of the coalitions presenting the Bill. However, except when the Bill was proposed in 1978-1979, the pressure to have the Bill accepted has not been very strong. In most cases the Bill was presented rather late in the parliamentary year, not giving room for flexibility and extended discussions. The coalition parties that presented the Bill were also neither unanimous nor totally committed in their support towards the Bill. Moreover, since it was possible to start implementing some of the general policy ends which are based on the 'Permit to Establish a Comprehensive Secondary School,' the pressure to pass the the Bill in parliament was somewhat reduced. The general attitude was to 'allow things to stabilize' and to obtain experience from the changes being made before putting pressure on the acceptance of the Bill. Thus, by not passing the Bill in parliament, several politically sensitive policy issues could be delayed and to some extent negotiated in practice. Several of these issues, however, still remain problematic and need to be resolved.

C. Summary and Synthesis

The driving force behind the writing of the Bill was to ensure equality of educational opportunity within the secondary school system as a whole, where no programs would be terminal and preclude access to the university level. By proposing a model of a comprehensive secondary school for the system as a whole, existing schools and school types were to be coordinated by the adoption of a course credit system which would facilititate the

[316]Interview, September 24, 1985.
[317]Interview, September 19, 1985.

coordination and ensure that no programs would be terminal and preclude access to the university level.

In general, it can be concluded that the fundamental distributional policy element put forth in the Bill has been achieved. Considerable coordination has occurred within and between schools; secondary schools are open to access by 'all' students and no programs are terminal. In order to facilitate this development, various elements from the Bill had to be utilized: (1) resource elements like the general organization and structuring of schools; (2) curriculum elements like the adoption of a course credit system or a mixture of a course credit system and a class group system; and (3) the reconciliation of academic and vocational eduation have to a large extent been implemented. Similarly, although no concrete methodological elements were specified in the Bill, it can be concluded, that in line with the egalitarian nature of the Bill, a pedagogy of respect for individual needs and demands has been paramount in the implementation which has taken place. However, the reorganization as put forth in the Bill has not been completed and several issues that affected the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill are still unresolved. In accordance with the purpose of this chapter, which was to describe the main issues related to the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill, analytically, the issues may be seen as a part of the policy ends put forth in the Bill or as a part of the policy making process.

The primary issue of controversy regarding the acceptance of the Bill was the division of costs between the state and the municipalities. The core of the problem centers on the inequity between municipalities regarding student costs. Joint financing may lead to additional expenses for some municipalities, particularly the municipalities which host grammar schools or some of the special schools which now are entirely funded by the state. The governance system as put forth in the Bill was also regarded critically. In the earlier versions of the Bill the committee on secondary schooling, which was to represent aggregated views from educators and the vocational sector and assist the Ministry in decision making regarding secondary school matters, was omitted from the Bill because it was seen as difficult to administer and being too centralized. Furthermore, educators who put emphasis on the

decentralization and autonomy of secondary schools were critical of the idea proposed in the later versions of the Bill; that primary and secondary schools were to have the same governance system.

The future of the school types was another critical issue for the acceptance of the Bill. Rightly or wrongly, the Bill was interpreted as an attempt to organize all schools into the same mould; that all secondary schools would organize their curriculum into a course credit system or a combination of a course credit system and a class group system and that the school types would lose their autonomy and disctinctiveness. Although the distinctiveness of the school types is more strongly recognized in the later versions of the Bill, the Bill was heavily criticized for not dealing with the status and future of special schools. The powers of the Ministry in the writing of regulations were also seen critically.

In addition to regulating and providing the structure for the secondary school level as a whole, the Bill also outlined the internal structure of secondary schools. Because of the inadequate guidelines put forth in the law 'Permit to Establish a Comprehensive Secondary School,' to a large extent the Bill served as a guide in the structure and organization of the comprehensive schools that were established. Thus, the negative attitude towards the Bill seems to have arisen from the notion that 'all schools would be organized into the same mould'; a notion reinforced by estimates indicating that graduates from the comprehensive secondary schools were possibly performing at a lower level of quality at the University than graduates from the traditional secondary school types. On the other hand, the increased number of students matriculating, the natural result of the establishment of all the comprehensive secondary schools, was seen as a sign of lower standards. Student autonomy, the use of electives and the abandoning of comprehensive testing which ensued from the adoption of a course credit system were seen as the primary critical elements. Today, however, there seems to be a general acceptance that the class group system and the course credit system complement each other and thus meet different student needs. The issues of grammar school standards in the reconciliation of academic and vocational education and the lack of short program routes are, nevertheless, seen as somewhat critical. Despite the critical

nature of these elements in regard to the acceptance of a 'frame' policy for the overall secondary school level, the policy making elements classified as 'procedural difficulties' and 'lack of commitment' are the key factors in explaining the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill in parliament.

Out of the six times the Bill was presented in parliament, it received formal parliamentary discussions only three times. In most cases it was presented rather late in the parliamentary year thus not giving room for flexibility and extended discussions. Although all the four major parties have been a part of the coalitions presenting the bill, the lack of commitment and the relative instability within the coalitions to some extent also explains the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill. The Conservatives who were a part of the coalition first presenting the Bill worked against its acceptance when in opposition. Later coalitions presenting the Bill were not unanimous on the issue. In 1978-1979 when the Bill received the most thorough discussions the Social Democrats hesitated in their support. The Minister who presented the Bill in 1981-1982 and 1982-1983 had to propose the Bill as a private matter rather than as cabinet policy. Furthermore, the good will of Education Ministers, municipal authorities, and educators made it possible to implement many of the general ideas put forth in the Bill. Legally, these ideas could be regarded as grounded in the law 'Permit to Establish a Comprehensive Secondary School' and the contracts made between the state and the municipalities; but at the same time their implementation decreased the pressure to pass the Bill in parliament.

Chapter VII

Towards a Specification of the Formal Problem and a Resolution of the Problematic Situation

The purpose of this chapter is to specify and define the major policy problems inherent in the development of secondary education policies in Iceland. The problematic situation is specified by critically analyzing and synthesizing the conflicting assumptions about the problematic situation, leading to recommendations of what could or should be done. First, however, an overview of the study and a summary of the major findings is provided.

A. Purpose and Plan of the Study

This overview is presented under the headings: (1) problem sensing; (2) purpose of the study; (3) research orientation; (4) methodology; and (5) related literature.

Problem Sensing

In Iceland a 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' was proposed six times in parliament during the period of 1976 to 1983 without being passed. Yet, meanwhile, many of the general policy ends put forth in the Bill were implemented. Since 1973, thirteen comprehensive secondary schools have been established, offering a variety of vocational and academic program routes. The first comprehensive secondary school was established in 1973 on an experimental basis. A law from 1973, 'A Permit to Establish a Comprehensive Secondary School,' was enacted to regulate this experimental school and it also provided the legal basis for the establishment of the other comprehensive secondary schools. This Law did not contain any details describing the purpose, design, and operation of these schools. However, because of the relatively detailed policy put forth in the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' and the anticipation that it would be accepted in parliament, the Bill, to a large extent, guided the design and operation of the comprehensive secondary schools that were established. The Bill also facilitated some of the adjustments in a number of the traditional secondary schools, to provide cooperation between these schools and the secondary school level as a whole. The aim was that no program would be terminal and preclude access

to the university level.

Purpose of the Study

The 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' was proposed six times in parliament during the period of 1976 to 1983 without being passed and at the same time some the major policy ends put forth in the Bill were implemented. The purpose of this study was to establish a definition of this seeming contradiction in the development of secondary education policies in Iceland by a structuring of the major policy problems inherent in this process with a view towards its resolution. The emphasis was to identify, describe, and reflect upon the policy ends put forth in the Bill, along with the issues related to the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill, leading to recommendations of what could or should be done.

Research Orientation

Policy analysis as an interdiciplinary approach has been defined as an "applied social science discipline which uses multiple methods of inquiry and argument to produce and transform policy-relevant information that may be utilized in political settings to resolve policy problems" (Dunn, 1981:35). To guide the study, an interpretive and critical policy analysis perspective was adopted. It included an investigation into the ontological and the epistemological underpinnings when conceptualizing education as public policy and analyzing policy problems. Instead of viewing reality as made of sense perception from the world external to the individual as in the positivist approaches, or as the product of individual consciousness having no meaningful existence outside one's consciousness as in the interpretive approaches, the position adopted in this study was to view consciousness as internally generated but influenced, by the forms which it assumes through the process of objectivication and the dialectic between the subjective and the objective worlds. In addition to viewing reality as historically and socially determined, people's life-world or perspective was seen as intersubjective, where we as actors of the social world learn, understand, and remember things that are historically grounded through interaction with other people. Hence,

public schooling policies which are created by politicians to achieve some desired ends were seen as common manifest ideas or cultural artifacts, as experienced by people where the various policy elements are grounded in the history and ideological nature of schooling.

In line with the study purpose, as pointed out by Bates (1984:75), the emphasis of the interpretive critical approach is to "explicate and penetrate" and to treat as problematic "the rationality actions and justifications ... which sustain the apparent regularities of social life." This perspective revealed the two methodological approaches for conducting the study of describing and specifying the major policy problems inherent in the problematic development of secondary education policies in Iceland. First, a case study approach was adopted for the collection of the necessary qualitative data and the thematization of the major policy ends put forth in the Bill and the major issues related to the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill. The second approach was to critically examinine these elements by the process of surfacing, challenging, and synthesizing the conflicting assumptions which underly the 'problematic situation.'

Methodology

The case study approach adopted for the study is best described as a combination of a historical case study and a multi-site case study approach. Bogdan and Biklen (1982:59) define the historical case study as one that "concentrate[s] on a particular organization over time." The review of most primary and secondary education policies since the turn of the century contextualized the reorganization policy put forth in the Bill and the implementation which has taken place. The major data sources used for both the analysis of the policy ends put forth in the Bill and the contextualization of the the reorganization put forth in the Bill were in the form of parliamentary documents, ministry reports, conference reports, and newspaper clippings.

The multi-site elements characteristic of this study were the sampling techniques for identifying the relevant stakeholders to be interviewed and the analytic induction approach when analyzing the collected data. A combination of the 'snowball sampling technique' (to

ask the first person identified and interviewed to recommend others) and the 'purposeful sampling technique' (to choose particular subjects because of their expert knowledge) was employed to select the relevant stakeholders: (1) politicians (ministers of education and members of parliament) that have shown special interest in the issue (N=8); (2) department heads within the Ministry of Education (N=5); (3) principals from selected grammar and comprehensive secondary schools (N=10); and (4) some other relevant individuals (N=6). In addition to the interviewing of the selected grammar and comprehensive secondary school principals, a questionnaire was sent to the ones not interviewed and to representatives of student unions in all the grammar and the comprehensive secondary schools, to double-check the theories that emerged from the interview and the document data.

The collected data were examined, thematized, and critically reviewed in order to describe and structure the 'problematic situation' in the development of secondary schooling policies in Iceland. Special emphasis was put on presenting all findings in context and in such a way that as 'little harm' as possible was done to the respondents.

Related Literature

The review of the related literature was delimited to discussions about the meaning and development of comprehensive secondary schooling and discussions about the nature of the concept of equality of educational opportunity. Despite ambiguity in defining the meaning of comprehensive secondary schooling, most definitions state that comprehensive secondary schools are schools that are non-selective and offer a combination of vocational and academic programs in a flexible curriculum organization system in order to meet the various student needs and abilities.

Primarily, reorganization along comprehensive lines was a reaction to the selective character of the bi or tripartite educational structure of most European education systems, based on the argument that children of parents with high socio-economic status were given better opportunities than children of lower socio-economic status in a middle class oriented school system. Generally, within the selective schooling systems standardized tests were

administered to differentiate between students and it was rationalized that all students had equal opportunities to compete on these tests. The reorganization along comprehensive lines was a reaction to this definition of the concept of equality of educational opportunity, based on the rationale that this definition included the same treatment of all students irrespective of environmental factors. It was argued that the task of schooling was to equalize student differences where 'culturally deprived' students in the widest sense should be 'specially treated' to enhance their status and opportunities. On the other hand, it was argued that cultural deprivation should be accounted for, but to equalize educational opportunities should not include the equalization of outcomes, rather the most should be made of the 'supply of talent' or 'ability.'

Thus, within most non selective education systems today, the importance of deprivation factors is strongly recognized, whereas excellence and intellectualability are positively valued. In line with the Aristotelian definition of equity; the emphasis is both on treating equal students equally and unequal students unequally.

B. Major Elements Related to the Delay or the Non-Acceptance of the Bill

This overview is presented under these headings: (1) historical context; (2) policy ends put forth in the Bill; and (3)issues related to the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill.

Historical Context

In order to contextualize the policy ends put forth in the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization,' both primary and secondary education policies were reviewed. The focus rested on the structure of the educational system as it was before 1974 when the 'Law on the Structuring of the Educational System' and the 'Law on Comprehensive Primary Schooling' were enacted. Although the development of educational policies in Iceland since the turn of the century may be divided into three major phases, 1907-1946, 1946-1974, and 1974 onwards, the examination in this context was mostly delimited to the last two phases with the focus on definitions of equality of educational opportunity which underly the organization and

structure of the educational system in each one of these periods.

1. Selective schooling. In the period of 1946-1974, the structure of the educational system was relatively complicated in comparison to the structure put forth in the 'Law on the Structure of the Educational System' which was enacted in 1974. The 'Law on Compulsory Education and the Structure of the Educational System,' enacted in 1946, outlined the structure of the educational system which was organized into four major levels: (1) the elementary school level; (2) the lower secondary school level; (3) the grammar and special school level; (4) the university level. The elementary school level was designed for the age group of seven to thirteen. The lower secondary school level, which was divided into the intermediate school level, the middle school level, and the regular lower secondary school level, was designed for the age group of thirteen to sixteen. Selective examinations were administered at the end of the academic middle school. Once successfully completed, students could transfer to grammar or special schools. Successful completion of the 'regular' lower secondary school, which was practical in nature, gave access to most of the special schools but not to the grammar schools and thus did not give access to post secondary education. In 1946, this system was thought to provide for increased equality of educational opportunity and was regarded as a considerable improvement from the system of entrance examinations which were only offered at the two grammar schools. Affluent parents were the only ones who could afford the necessary support courses for their children before taking these entrance examinations. After the change, students at most lower secondary schools were able to compete in the same exams and enter secondary schools.

2. A time of change. Despite the increased equality of educational opportunity with the enactment of the 1946 education laws, the system gradually became regarded as outdated. Primarily, the 1946 education laws were seen as failing to provide for equity between urban and rural areas. Furthermore, the coordination and continuity within the system

was viewed as inadequate, and the selective middle school exams were regarded as increasingly unjust and discriminatory. Along with rapid population growth and higher living standards, demands for education increased and the 'regular' lower secondary school came to be seen as a 'dead end.' In 1979, this led to the establishment of continuing divisions, to which students could transfer at the end of the lower secondary school. The continuing divisions offered one or two year secondary school programs in academic areas. Providing a successful completion of the continuing divisions, students could transfer to grammar schools, the School of Commerce, or the Professional School for Teachers with transfer credits and complete the remaining two years in their matriculation programs. Despite this increase in equality of educational opportunity, secondary schools offering programs leading to matriculation were relatively few, which thus reinforced the need to establish comprehensive secondary schools offering both academic and vocational programs leading to matriculation.

3. A period of transition. With the enactment of the 1974 education laws, the educational system was simplified and organized into three major levels: (1) the comprehensive primary school level; (2) the secondary school level; and (3) the university level. The selective middle school exams were abandoned and all students were given the opportunity to transfer to the secondary school level, providing they met the minimal entrance requirements. During these same years, several comprehensive secondary schools were established in the various parts of the country to meet the increased demands for education that resulted from these changes and provided increased equality in access and educational opportunities. The law entitled 'A Permit to Establish a Comprehensive Secondary School' was enacted in 1973 to provide the legal basis for the establishment of the comprehensive secondary schools. This Law, however, did not contain any details describing the purpose, design, and operation of these schools. Hence, the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' was proposed in parliament in 1976 in order to provide a more detailed policy for the established comprehensive secondary schools and to

reorganize and coordinate other secondary schools into one unitary secondary school system. The fundamental idea was to ensure greater equality of educational opportunity where no programs would be terminal and preclude access to the university level.

4. The 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization.' Despite repeated proposals, the Bill was not passed in parliament. But because of the relatively detailed policy put forth in the Bill and the expectation that it would become the 'frame' policy for the secondary school level as a whole, it largely served as the guide for organizing the established comprehensive secondary schools and the coordination between secondary schools which has taken place since the Bill was first proposed. In line with the Bill, the several curriculum guides that have been written have become increasingly standardized and many grammar and special schools have developed their curriculum in accordance with these guides. All the comprehensive secondary schools and many grammar and special schools have adopted a course credit system, or a mixture of a course credit and a class group system, in order to facilitate curriculum coordination and efficient student transfers between schools. Most of the grammar and the comprehensive secondary schools offer evening adult education programs and all secondary schools are open to access.

Policy Ends put Forth in the Bill

Kerr's (1976) analysis of education as public policy guided the thematization of the policy ends put forth in the Bill into the following: (1) resource elements; (2) distributional elements; (3) curriculum elements; and (4) methodological elements.

1. Resource elements. The resource elements identified in the Bill refer to the institutional arrangements that provide the structure, governance, and financial arrangements for secondary schools. The structural arrangements provided a flexible organization of secondary schools where the comprehensive secondary school was to be used as a model for the system as a whole. The system was to be organized into coordinated program

routes and divisions where all programs would lead directly to matriculation and access to the university level. The number of divisions and program routes within schools were to depend on situational factors such as location, enrollments, industry, and existing secondary schools. Where appropriate, existing secondary schools could function as one or more program route coordinated with a nearby comprehensive secondary school. A course credit system was to be adopted in all secondary schools, although some secondary schools could organize their teaching practices in a class group system. Decision making powers were to be somewhat decentralized, with local input through regional and local school boards. Cooperative financing between the state and the municipalities was also strongly emphasized. The Bill was to become the global 'frame' policy for the secondary school level and regulations were to be written later to regulate several aspects of the arrangements in the organization of secondary schools.

2. Distributional elements. The distributional elements identified refer to those who were to receive the educational benefits from the conduct of education or schooling. As much variety of programs as possible was to be offered in all parts of the country, although the programs to be offered were dependent upon local conditions. The Bill stated that all students who had successfully completed the comprehensive primary school, or equivalent education, had the right to enter secondary schools. People nineteen years old or above also had the right to enter secondary schools without having to fulfill the requirement of successful completion of the comprehensive primary school. Adult education courses were emphasized in the form of evening courses or a combination of day and evening courses. School facilities were also to be used for other extra curricular activities. Transfers between secondary schools or between program routes within schools were to be efficient and without constraints; upon successful completion, all programs were to provide university entrance. Students' needs were to be met as fairly as possible, by allowing students to proceed at their preferred rates through programs that were composed of both fixed and optional courses. The Bill also stated that students with

special educational needs had a right to receive educational services which would meet their needs.

3. Curriculum elements. The general curriculum philosophy put forth in the Bill emphasized the reconciliation of academic and vocational education but the Bill did not contain any explicit elaborations regarding this issue. The only guidelines given were that vocational and academic education should be equally valued. Basic education in a core of common learnings for all students of all divisions and program routes was to be emphasized although each division was to maintain its distinctiveness by divisional common courses. Thus, each program route consisted of a core of common learnings, divisional core courses, and electives specific to the program route.

4. Methodological elements. The Bill did not contain any specific elements that outlined the the manner or pedagogy in which the curriculum content was to be developed. Nevertheless, the overall pedagogy put forth in the Bill may be said to be that in order to meet individual needs, a variety was offered of both long and short progams that were composed of both electives and common courses where students could proceed at their preferred speed rates.

Issues Related to the Delay or the Non-Acceptance of the Bill

The findings related to the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill were described under these categories: (1) procedural difficulties; (2) centralization-decentralization; (3) coordination and the future of the traditional school types; (4) accountability; (5) reconciliation of vocational and academic education; and (6) the hidden policy.

5. Procedural difficulties. During the period of 1976-1983 the Bill was presented six times in parliament but it only received formal parliamentary attention three times. The major consideration occured in 1978-1979 when the Bill was discussed three times in the lower

department but the third discussion period was not completed. Accordingly, the Bill could not be passed for final discussions and passage in the upper department. Because of the time involved for making changes and updating the Bill, in most cases it was presented rather late, which lead to considerable constraints in the time needed for discussing the Bill. Also, the frequent changes and the relative instability within the coalitions which presented the Bill to some extent explain its delay or non-accepatance.

6. Centralization-decentralization. Disagreement regarding joint financing between the state and the municipalities was considered the primary element in accounting for the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill. Also, the decision making process outlined in the earlier versions of the Bill was criticized for being too centralized. In 1978-1979 when the Bill received the most thorough discussions, the primary pressure for the non-acceptance of the Bill came from the Federation of Municipalities. Later, the Federation changed its position in favour of joint financing of secondary schools. However, this still is a problematic issue, the core of the problem centering on the inequity regarding student costs between municipalities. The comprehensive secondary schools and some special schools are funded jointly by the the state and the involved municipalities, whereas grammar schools and most special schools are entirely funded by the state. A joint financing policy may thus lead to additional expenses for the municipalities which host grammar schools and some of the special schools which now are entirely funded by the state.

7. Coordination and the future of the traditional school types. The fundamental idea behind the policy put forth in the Bill was to reorganize the secondary school level in order to achieve greater equality of educational opportunity. In general, the reorganization proposed an adoption of a course credit system or a mixture of a course credit system and a class group system. This was to facilitate the inclusion of existing schools or school types into the blueprint or pattern of a coordinated comprehensive

school for the system as a whole. Hence, within the system, no programs would be terminal; all students would have the opportunity to matriculate and enter the university level.

In parliament, the Bill was criticized for not dealing with the future of special schools. However, there was strong support for leaving the grammar schools in their traditional form with a class group system and comprehensive testing procedures. Many suspected that the Bill would erode the distinctiveness of individual schools or school types; they did not want all schools 'organized into the same mould.' The last two versions of the Bill were more explicit in their recognition of the distinctiveness and retention of existing schools and school types than the earlier versions. Nevertheless, the concern still exists that the Ministry may be granted too much regulatory power and that excessive uniformity may result from too much coordination. These concerns also help to explain the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill.

8. Accountability. With the enactment of the 1974 Education Laws and the establishment of the comprehensive secondary schools, the number of students matriculating has increased substantially and concerns regarding school quality and preparation for university studies have become increasingly apparent. Questions in relation to the quality of education seem to focus on: (1) the advantages and the disadvantages of organizing curriculum in a course credit system or a class group system; (2) the potential for irresponsible use of electives; and (3) the advantages and disadvantages of comprehensive testing. Despite these concerns, the discussions seem to be moving away from uniformity to variability, leading to a general acceptance of having different types of schools with the curriculum organized in a course credit system or a class group system as well as different testing procedures. Nevertheless, the relationship between secondary schools and the University will be to a large extent solved by the implementation of admission guides for the various faculties. These concerns somewhat influenced the resistance to the Bill and may be regarded as an additional dimension of the problem of deciding upon

the future of the school types or the problem of 'all schools being organized into the same mould.'

9. Reconciliation of vocational and academic education. The general curriculum policy put forth in the Bill was to emphasize the reconciliation of vocational and academic education by valuing both equally. Because of the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill, this general policy was implemented almost in its entirety by comprehensive secondary school principals with minimal involvement from the Ministry. Grammar school standards largely guided the organization of the curriculum in many of the vocational areas. Despite some difference between the two curriculum structuring systems and the difference in the level of reconciliation of vocational and academic education, both these systems may be regarded as equally valuing vocational and academic education because within either one of these systems students can change programs with transfer credits. However, the coordination and the influence of grammar schools may be regarded as greater in schools other than the *Breidholt* school. This was seen as critical because of students who cannot cope with the academic elements and because shorter program routes have not been widely established. Furthermore, some people were beginning to question the existing goals of basic and vocational education. In addition, the specialization emphasis within the present system is seen as becoming increasingly problematic in regard to the preparation students receive for higher education or employment in the industries.

10. The hidden policy. Most interest and stakeholder groups have shownthemselves in favor of legislating a 'frame' policy for the overall secondary school level and all of the four major political parties have been a part of the coalitions presenting the Bill. Except when the Bill was proposed in 1978-1979, the pressure to have the Bill accepted has not been very strong. In most cases the Bill was presented rather late in the parliamentary year, not giving room for extended discussions. Also, the coalition parties that presented the Bill were neither unanimous nor totally committed in their support towards the Bill. The

pressure to pass the Bill in parliament was somewhat reduced since it was possible to start implementing those general policy ends put forth in the Bill which are based on the 'Permit to Establish a Comprehensive Secondary School.' The general attitude was to 'allow things to stabilize' and to learn from the changes being made before seeking acceptance of the Bill. Thus, by not passing the Bill in parliament, several politically sensitive policy issues could be delayed and to some extent negotiated in practice. Several of these issues still remain problematic and need to be resolved.

C. Towards a Specification of the Formal Problem

The process of specifying and defining the 'problematic situation' where the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' has been proposed several times in parliament without passage and at the same time many of the general policy ends put forth in the Bill have been implemented is guided by this question: "What are the major policy problems inherent in the development of comprehensive secondary education policies in Iceland?" This process is presented under these headings: (1) problem structuring; (2) administrative elements; (3) educational elements; and (4) a summary and a synthesis.

Problem Structuring

Gustafsson (1983:269) points out that in most "democratic welfare states" which are characterized by uncertainity and complexity there is a considerable "increase in symbolic and pseudo policy ingredients," and "that many policies are either not intended to be fully implemented or are characterized by unsatisfactory usage of 'available' knowledge regarding preconditions for implementation." He (1983:269) also notes that "[p]oliticians often have to make decisions even when they are unsure of what to do and pressured by lack of economic resources, time or relevant knowledge." However, the process in the development of secondary education policies in Iceland does not appear to accord with this view, since many of the general policy ends put forth in the Bill have been implemented without the Bill being accepted in parliament.

The description in the chapter on the policy ends put forth in the Bill and the issues related to the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill revealed that the problematic situation is 'messy,' or not a well defined, single and independent entity. Dunn (1981:99) observes that "[i]n reality policy problems are not independent entities; they are parts of whole systems of problems best described as messes, that is, systems of external conditions that produce dissatisfaction among different segments of the community." Similarly, Rittel and Webber (1973:160) comment that within the social sciences "[p]lanning problems are inherently wicked" and of a different nature than problems in the natural sciences. They (1973:160-162) point out that the "problems that scientists and engineers have usually focused upon are mostly 'tame' or 'benign' ones," whereas "[w]icked problems ... have neither of these clarifying traits" and "[s]olutions to wicked problems are not true-or-false, but good or bad."

Dunn (1981:119) points out that messy problems can be structured in a variety of ways. The ultimate aim is to obtain creative solutions with an emphasis on formulating and specifying the formal problem that may underly a problematic situation. Viewing the first-order descriptions and analysis of the policy ends and the issues related to the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill as step one in the indentification of the formal problem, second-order descriptions and analysis where some dominant assumptions are surfaced and challenged may lead to a synthesis and specification of the formal problem.

Kilmann (1983:3) observes that an "assumption is defined as any related 'element' to the conclusion which must be true in order to logically derive (deduce) the validity of the conclusion." He (1983:3) comments:

> Essentially, an assumption is all the things one has to 'take for granted' and consider as true about people, their environments, and the interactions between the two - so that one can argue most strongly that the conclusion as stated is correct, desirable, most appropriate, and the best thing to do.

Furthermore, Kilmann (1983:4) points out that "not all assumptions are of equal importance and thus do not have equal bearing on a conclusion" and that "we should surface and examine the most critical assumptions in any scientific pursuit ... since the assumptions get at the heart of whether one's theories (tentative) conclusions are reasonable and valid for the

time being."

Two generic and somewhat related assumptions were identified as underlying the problematic situation in the development of secondary education policies in Iceland. The first generic assumption is the belief that a rationally planned policy or blueprint is the means for achieving the end of increased equality of educational opportunity; and the second generic assumption is the belief that a diversified secondary education system which emphasizes early specialization and the meeting of individual needs provides quality education in preparation for further education or the 'world of work.' For the discussion and analysis of each assumption, a critical perspective is developed by a review of the literature. Both the perspectives are a critique of policy making as a rational practice that undermines cultural traditions in favor of technical solutions to administrative problems.

Administrative Elements

Benveniste (1977:9) points out that "[p]lans are specifications of future events that are set ahead of time" and that the planning process usually requires "a considerable level of effort in policy analysis, evaluation, and programming." Acknowledging Habermas's critical theory of communications, Forester (1980:278) states that in viewing planning as a practical communicative practice the implicit rules underlying common sense communication must involve the generic norms of "speaking comprehensibly," "sincerely," "legitimately," or to "speak the truth." As Forester (1980:278) states, if we did not presuppose these norms, communication would be difficult or impossible: (1) if we did not presuppose the norm of speaking comprehensively we would "expect babble and never listen"; (2) if we did not presuppose the norm of speaking sincerely we would "never trust anyone"; (3) if we did not presuppose the norm of speaking legitimately we would speak out of context and create an erosion in the prevailing normative structures or belief systems; (4) if we did not presuppose the norm of speaking the truth we would never believe anything we heard. Thus, assuming that the planning and the reorganization policy put forth in the Bill is comprehensive, true, and sincere, violations of the norm of speaking legitimately seem to characterize the

problematic situation in the development of secondary education policies in Iceland. In the words of Habermas (1979:183), the legitimation of government policies puts an emphasis on showing "how and why existing (or recommended) institutions are fit to employ political power in such a way that the values constitutive for the identity of the society will be realized."

Fischer (1980:2) points out that "[p]ublic policies are essentially political agreements designed for the practical world of social action where facts and values are inextricably interwoven." Relying on the works of Habermas, Bates (1982:4) comments that "modern states face three interrelated crises in the areas of rationality, legitimacy and motivation" where the crisis in rationality is "rooted in the positivistic separation of fact from value" and determines the other two crises. Fischer (1980:3) observes that under "positivism and its modern day variants, values tend to emerge as external to or detached from specific social or material conditions rather than as inherently tied to the particular life understanding that gives rise to them." Bates (1982:4) states that because of the separation of "fact from value," "means" are also separated from "ends" and "politics" are separated from "administration" and the "only criterion available for the evaluation of governmental/administrative actions is their ability to provide technical, rational, scientific solutions to administrative problems." Furthermore, Bates (1982:4) describes:

> The second crisis, that of legitimacy, flows from the crisis of rationality. The creation of a rational/scientific technology of administration, at the same time as it increases efficiency and steering capacity, decreases the possibility of establishing effective normative structures that might guide action. The very development of administrative rationality undermines cultural traditions that bind individuals together and legitimate the processes of government. Moreover, scientific administrative systems are incapable of generating the alternative cultural norms necessary for the legitimation of goverment. The absence of such cultural norms leads to a crisis in legitimacy.

The motivation crisis, which arises from the other two crises leads to "alienation" and lack of "commitment" and the practical solution to these crises "lies in the development of an expanded rationality which involves practical discourse over norms and values as well as over means and facts" in the planning or the policy making process.

Wildavsky (1973:128) observes that planning is often defined as "applied rationality for future control," where the "reasonable man" "tries to obtain a more desirable future by working toward it in the present." He (1973:130) comments:

> Planning is often used (though this is definition is rarely made explicit) as if it were equivalent to rationality. Once norms associated with rational action are identified - efficiency, consistency, coordination - any process of decision may be appraised according to the degree to which it confronts them. The assumption is that following these norms leads to better decisions. Defining planning as applied rationality focuses attention on adherence to universal norms rather than to the consequences of acting one way instead of another. Attention is directed to the internal qualities of the decision and not to their external effects,

In line with the classical Weberian analysis of rationality, Cohen (1976:133-134) states that conduct is rational "if it involves the choice of means to achieve an end," whereas non rational conduct is more habitual or traditional in nature. Sharkansky (1982:212-213) comments that policy makers like to be as rational as possible where ideally they would: (1) "identify the problem;" (2) "clarify goals, and rank them according to their importance;" (3) "list all the possible means or policies for achieving each goal;" (4) "assess all the costs and benefits that would seem to accrue from each alternative policy;" (5) "select the package of goals and associated policies that would bring the greatest relative benefits and the least relative disadvantages." Despite the potential usefulness of this rational model, Sharkansky (1982:240-241) further comments that there are "many factors that stand in the way," such as: (1) "the numerous goals and policies that are potentially feasible;" (2) "the high cost of information;" (3) "the personal, ideological, and professional interests of policy-makers;" (4) "structural disharmonies that generate conflict among policy-makers;" and (5) "deviant (sometimes buraupathic) behaviors that occur in administrative units." Accordingly, policy making practices which undermine cultural traditions and rely strongly on the rational model are not likely to be successful.

Rational planning and equality of opportunity. As described before, one of the key issues which led to the initial preparation of the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' was the perceived inequity within the secondary school system, arising from the fact that most programs did not lead to matriculation and give access to post secondary institutions. To achieve grater equality in opportunity, the Bill proposed that the secondary school system be

rationally planned, using the comprehensive school as a model for the overall secondary school system. The curriculum was to be organized into a course credit system to facilitate horizontal student transfers. No program would be terminal. The course credit system was intended to be the managerial device for steering and coordination, so that specific courses might be a part of two or more programs and coordination and duplication of services could be controlled. The decision making processes within the secondary school system were also rationally planned and educators and representatives from the various industries were to participate in curriculum development as well as in the governance of secondary schools. However, in parliamentary discussions all these elements became problematic: (1) to abandon the class group system of the traditional school types and adopt a course credit system was not generally agreed upon; and (2) to include educators and representatives from the industries in committees on governance and curriculum development was strongly criticized as being ineffective and too centralized. As will be discussed later, some of these concerns led to changes in the Bill, whereas other elements were negotiated in practice.

A thrust towards expert knowledge which emphasizes technical and scientific solutions to administrative problems is an integral part of the rational policy making model (Bates:1982:4). In the writing of the Bill, Department Heads within the Ministry were the key people. To some extent stakeholders outside the Ministry were consulted but stakeholder feed-back came primarily at a conference organized to introduce the Bill shortly after it was first presented and a little later through feed-back from stakeholders who were invited to comment on the Bill in writing. Despite this involvement of stakeholders and interest groups affected by the Bill, further introductions and provisions for feed-back were minimal, making the policy making process relatively centralized with a strong reliance on technical expert knowledge.

Bates (1982:4) states that administration which emphasizes rational and technical solutions to practical problems "decreases the possibility of establishing effective normative structures that might guide action." The lack of commitment and the non-acceptance of the Bill may be seen as resulting from the absence of normative structures for the passing of the

Bill. The Bill was designed by experts within the Ministry and they emphasized technical solutions in the coordination of secondary schools. The Bill was not systematically introduced in all parts of the country and provisions for stakeholder involvement was minimal. School types were to be abandoned and a course credit system was to be used as the managerial device for enabling the necessary coordination. Thus, characteristic to the policy making process is a strong reliance on expert knowledge and scietific solutions rather than an emphasis on establishing political support for the acceptance of the Bill.

Grammar schools and some special schools are amongst the oldest institutions in the Icelandic society and individual principals have had considerable autonomy in the operation of their schools. These are characterized by a class group system with a highly structured curriculum, some form of comprehensive testing, and graduation from them has been a status symbol in Icelandic society. Rightly or wrongly, some people thought the reorganization policy put forth in the Bill would jeopardize some of these traditions, particularly their distinctive and elitist nature. Along with gradual changes and clarification of some of the elements put forth in the Bill, implementation of most of the policy ends was taking place at the same time as coordination and cooperation between schools and school types was being negotiated. Therefore, the need to pass the Bill in parliament was somewhat decreased.

During the implementation, the traditional distinction between the school types was [redacted]nized and not all secondary schools adopted a course credit system, nor did they utilize the curriculum guides published by individual schools or jointly by a number of schools. However, minimum admission requirements are the same for all secondary schools and students have the opportunity to transfer credits between schools or programs within schools. Although the efficiency and the effectiveness of the transfer credit policy varies, depending upon which schools or school types are involved, it can be concluded that the primary idea behind the reorganization policy put forth in the Bill has been carried out: the intent to facilitate increased equality of educational opportunity with no terminal programs that would preclude access to the university level.

In addition to the implementation of the primary idea put forth in the Bill; of equality of educational opportunity and no programs being terminal, there are further signs that indicate the importance of equity as a central goal. Rather than having all schools using the same system, it may be regarded as more equitable to have secondary schools which offer alternatives by organizing their curriculum in a class group system, a combination of a class group system and a course credit system, or a course credit system. MacMahon (1982:16) states that the concept of equity is composed of both "equal treatement of equals" and "unequal treatement of unequals." Thus, instead of delimiting the definition of equity to equal treatent of equals by having all secondary schools adopt the same course credit system, to give students a choice by having some schools with a class group system and others with a course credit system allows for a broader definition of the equity concept, where both equals are treated equally and unequals unequally. For example, some students may prefer a class group system with a very stable and controlled environment, whereas others may prefer a system allowing more flexibility where students have more autonomy and control in their schooling process.

Rational planning and governance. Because of the Bill's delay or non-acceptance, most of its policy elements have not been formalized in an official policy for the entire secondary school level and some issues inherent in the Bill are still unresolved, consequently awaiting negotiation and decision. For example, the issue in regard to which school level some special schools should belong needs to be resolved. Similarly, the future form of secondary school governance requires attention. At present, governance of comprehensive secondary schools is decentralized to school boards, whereas the governance of most of the other secondary schools is centralized and without school boards. The relationship between the governance of secondary schools and the governance of comprehensive primary schools also has to be decided upon. Judging from the rapid rise and growth of the comprehensive secondary schools, a governance structure with considerable municipal involvement may be regarded as effective and desirable. Accordingly, it is suggested that some form of decentralized governance structure be negotiated in the grammar and the special schools,

although traditionally most of these schools have been governed by a highly centralized structure. Related to goverance is the element of finance which was a major obstacle for the acceptance of the Bill.

Attempts to negotiate equal funding between the state and the municipalities have not yet been successful. The core of the problem centers on cooperation regarding funding procedures between the state and the municipalities. At present, the state meets seventy percent of costs per student matriculating from comprehensive secondary schools but it meets all costs per student matriculating from the grammar schools. Consequently, municipalities which host grammar schools and some of the special schools entirely funded by the state are not in favor of joint funding because it may lead to additional expenses for these municipalities. On the other hand, municipalities which host comprehensive secondary schools and some of the special schools which are jointly financed by the state and the municipalities are emphasizing the inequity in these funding arrangements. For example, the state only meets seventy percent of costs per student matriculating from comprehensive secondary schools but it meets all costs per student matriculating from the grammar schools. Thus, within the present system, municipalities hosting grammar and special schools that are entirely funded by the state may be seen as carrying a lesser tax burden than municipalities hosting comprehensive secondary schools and special schools that are funded jointly by the state and the municilapities. Because of this inequity, it is necessary that the rules for municipal expenditure on secondary education be the same.

Benson (1978:142-143) points out that successful and equitable education policies should be composed of both centralized and decentralized administrative and funding elements. He (1978:142-143) suggests that such a guiding principle will result in the preservation of democratic ideals and secure increased equity since it serves both national and local interests. Subsequently, joint financing of secondary schools between the state and the municipalities appears to be an appropriate guiding principle. However, this issue being the major obstacle for the acceptance of the Bill where joint financing would have resulted in additional expences for municipalities hosting secondary schools that are entirely funded by

the state; perhaps the only politically feasible alternative for gaining equity in secondary school funding is for the state to cover all secondary education costs. This alternative may be seen as increasingly feasible, considering that operation costs covered by the municipalities are only twenty percent. Nevertheless, to ensure that this alternative does not result in too great centralization and the undermining of local interests, perhaps a decentralized school based budgeting system is the best compromise to ensure the preservation of both national and local interests.

Caldwell (1977:7) points out that decentralized schools based budgeting is the systematic and consistent delegation of authority to make decisions concerning school budgets. He (1977:7) describes a "school budget as a fiscal plan for implementing school objectives, policies, and programs for a fiscal year, enbodying (1) descriptions of school activities and services required to attain goals; (2) estimates of expenditures and other allocations; and (3) forecasts of fiscal resources available to support the plan." Furthermore, Caldwell (1977:71) states that the primary benefit of school based budgeting is that it is sensitive to local needs and that it allows for accountability and equity in resource allocations.

By establishing some form of school based budgeting system for secondarry schools in Iceland, where fiscal resources would be provided by the state, equity could be attained in the funding of secondary schools and local authorities would have considerable authority and responsibility in the utilization of the fiscal resources. Local input and decision making would be considerably greater in secondary schools that at presentare entirely funded by the state. The problematic issue of mandatory participation in the funding of secondary schools in order to ensure equity between the municipalities would be irrelevant and tuition fees for students attending jointly financed secondary schools outside their home districts would be unnecessary. Thus, in an educational system that traditionally has been highly centralized and where joint financing became the major obstacle for the acceptance of the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization,' it can be concluded that some form of a decentralized school based budgeting system is a feasible alternative for ensuring equity in secondary school funding. The state would provide all the fiscal resources, yet local input and responsibilities would be

considerable.

Synthesis. A rational planning model which undermines 'cultural traditions' is not likely to be effective and 'legitimate the process of government.' As Wise (1977:45) observes, the "hyperrational approach to schooling is best seen in the continual invention of rational educational management systems." In the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' it is assumed that efficiency and increased equality of eduational opportunity for all secondary school students will be reached through rational planning at the secondary school level, by using the comprehensive secondary school as a model for the system as a whole and by adopting a course credit system as the basis for the necessary coordination. The establishment of the comprehensive secondary schools, the continuing divisions at some comprehensive primary schools, and the coordination which has taken place have led to considerable equality in access and opportunity: horizontal transferability between schools or programs routes is relatively efficient in a system with no terminal programs. Although this rational policy, as put forth in the Bill, has not been fully implemented, the general goal of increased equality in educational opportunity has been achieved. The school types maintain some distinctiveness, and traditional elements, such as comprehensive testing and a class group system, are maintained in most of the grammar schools. Thus, the inequity in educational opportunity which was the driving force behind the writing of the Bill has been accounted for by negotiating and compromising the 'one best system' with some elements which stress freedom of choice. Consequently, given equitable solutions to administrative issues like governance and finance, it can be concluded that the normative structures which are necessary for the acceptance of the Bill are becoming increasingly prevalent. The compromise in the reorganization of secondary schools which has taken place and is somewhat emphasized in the later versions of the Bill seems generally acceptable, as it provides considerable equality of educational opportunity in all parts of the country, while some distinctiveness based on history and tradition is maintained between schools and school types.

Educational Elements

As discussed in chapter four, socio-economic changes following the Industrial Revolution gave the primary impetus for the growth and expansion of secondary education in the Western world. Technological advancements, along with urbanization, led to cultural changes and an increasingly institutionalized occupational structure, where literacy and technological knowledge became a necessity for entering the labor market. Accordingly, secondary education which previously had been almost entirely academic in nature became more vocational in orientation with greater emphasis on curriculum diversification and early specialization.

Psacharopoulos and Loxley (1985:3) point out that as a strategy for revising the instructional context of secondary schools, curriculum diversification, or academic education which is to some degree wedded to vocational education, has been regarded as the "best way to balance the labor market needs with more equal access to education." Furthermore, they (1985:3-4) observe that curriculum diversification is "based on a number of assumptions concerning the value of conventional secondary education" where in particular it is "assumed that there exists a fundamental mismatch between the type of education and training offered in traditional academic schools and the skills and other characteristics required of graduates entering the labor market." Although this perspective is seen as increasingly problematic in the Western world, most secondary education systems are based on this work-education relationship which has been further reinforced by human capital theory arguments (Schultz, 1982) and social and psychological theories of learning.

When discussing the various conceptions of schooling and development, Fagerlind and Saha (1985:17) comment that instead of focusing on individual values and attitudes from a sociological or psychological point of view, economists were focusing "upon the productive capability of human manpower in the development process and in so doing treated the improvement of the human workforce as a form of capital investment." Furthermore, they (1985:18) note that the "human capital theory provided a basic justification for large public expenditure on education" and that "the theory was consistent with the ideologies of

democracy and liberal progressivism found in most Western societies." Similarly, Husen (1979:48) states that education "since the beginning of the 1960s has been conceived of as a major contributor to economic growth" and that investment in human capital came to be "regarded as a necessary prerequisite to sustaining the high level of technology of our present day society." Bellaby (1977:32) states that reorganization of secondary schools along comprehensive lines was "not only a step towards equality, but also utilitarian" since "schooling responds to the demands of the economy for trained manpower."

Several authors have identified dysfunctions of the human capital theory perspective. Authors like Bates (1982), Bowles and Gintis (1976), Bourdieu and Passaron (1977), Apple (1982), Wexler (1982) and others emphasize that schools primarily serve the interest of the ruling class to reproduce the social conditions and inequities which are necessary for efficient capitalist-production (whether private as in the West, or statist as in the East) or the various other social and individual purposes of secondary schooling. Because this criticism does not take into account any conceptions of equality of opportunity, social mobility, or individual interests, the following discussions are based on the assumption that schools are necessary to facilitate individual growth and respond to the demands for trained manpower. As Holmes (1985:7) points out, "in most widely conceived terms, education is regarded as a universal human right" where "education should develop the all-round intellectual, moral, physical and aestheic capabilities of individual children and that education should contribute to the improvement of society economically and, depending on the circumstances, politically and socially."

Bell (1971), Masuda (1981), Toffler (1970), Naisbitt (1982) and various others have claimed that the impact of computer technology will lead to considerable economic and social changes where society will move from an industrial economic basis to a post-industrial economic basis which relies on information as the major commodity. Bates (1984:59) observes that because of these changes, the relatively stable and legitimate state of most western societies has been replaced by "chronic instability, continual inflation, overproduction, and large-scale transformations of employment structures." Similarly, Best

and Stern (1977:8) point out that these changes have led to increased integration of retraining in people's life patterns where the linear life pattern model, based on the process of obtaining some formal education before entering the world of work, is replaced with the cyclic life pattern model where education and work become more integrated. Thus, in responding to these changes or 'crises' in order to maintain an effective work-education relationship for economic growth and welfare, some changes in secondary schooling are commonly regarded as necessary.

Going back in history, Eisner (1985:74) states that "the classic case of using schools to meet social needs was the response made by Americans to Sputnick I" in 1957 when schools where criticized "for failing to provide rigorous programs in mathematics and science." A more recent example is the 'Nation at Risk' study in the U.S. which implies that the quality of American education is declining. Beyer (1985:37) observes that the impetus for this study, conducted by the 'The National Commission on Excellence in Education,' arose from concerns regarding the "continuing decline in standardized test scores, the need to retrain high school graduates upon entering the world of work, the growing alarm about America's failure to compete successfully with the Japanese and others for technological innovations, [and] a concern about the position of the United States in world affairs." Beyer (1985:39-43) observes that the recommended solution to "nurture the Nation's intellectual capital" more effectively, is to be accomplished "by refocusing curricular content on math, science, and foreign languages within a system emphasizing competition, standardized testing, and tougher discipline; by lengthening the time students spend in schools and accentuating a differentiated curriculum, with a system of academic and behavioral tracking; and by reemphasizing the importance of individual achievement." Thus, as a means to facilitate new legitimation procedures and stability, increased competition, some curriculum changes, and tougher evaluation procedures seem to be the main solutions in response to this 'crisis' or changes in the socio-economic environment. However, in line with the notion of "separation of fact from value" and the separation of "administrative issues from educational issues" (Bates, 1982:4), the fundamental orientation when responding to changes of this nature in the

socio-economic environment is to facilitate discussions about normative issues and reconstruct the curriculum or the content of what is to be learned rather than increase competition and toughen evaluation procedures.

Eisner (1985:49) points out that education is a "normative enterprise" which is "concerned with the realization of aims that are considered worthwhile." Similarly, Bates (1981:9) states that "[c]urriculum defines what is to legitimately count as knowledge." Emphasizing the importance of curriculum changes which meet the demands of the socio-economic environment, Brown (1984:10) comments that there is a growing movement that recognizes that the future of economic growth and welfare depends upon the degree to which "students are well educated" and that this "movement is based on the premise that the teaching of thinking skills should be the major educational trend of the next twenty years." He (1984:26) further states that the "more technological the world becomes the more necessary a strong academic education is for everyone" and that we have been "guilty of aiming too low, of not asking enough, and of offering a flood of meaningless electives." Thus, instead of emphasizing diversification and early specialization in the various secondary school areas, the focus is shifting towards a more common academic curriculum in order to produce a more adaptable and a better educated population for the world of work or further education. As Brown (1984:11) observes, the "pursuit of social equality through the schools has distracted educators from their fundamental purpose of enhancing the educational experience for all students." Similarily, in the Icelandic context, in the implementation of the reorganization policy as put forth in the Bill, the administrative issues have been somewhat separated from the educational issues. The primary focus has been on ensuring equality in educational opportunity and that no programs be terminal rather than on identifying which 'aims are considered worthwhile' and should 'legitimately count as knowledge' in the various areas.

Diversification and specialization. As previously noted, the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' was intended to become the 'frame' or global regulating policy for the seondary school level; details were to be decided upon in later regulations. Subsequently,

detailed curriculum elements were not included in the Bill. However, clearly stated both in the role and in the organization of secondary schools is the belief in a diversified secondary education system which facilitates early specialization and the meeting of individual needs in order to effectively prepare students for further education and the world of work.

The Bill stated that vocational and academic subjects were to supplement each other and that the system was to be divided into the various program routes which were intended to correspond to the occupational structure of society and post secondary education opportunities. Also, the Bill emphasized that students in all program routes were to take the same core of basic courses; some basic division courses would be a part of all the programs in the given division; specific courses and electives would be offered for each program route. In practice, however, this design was somewhat altered. Some thought that the extent of the academic requirements in the comprehensive secondary schools made them into a copy of the older grammar schools and that they, thereby, failed to reconcile vocational and academic education in an acceptable fashion. Somewhat later, early specialization also came to be viewed critically.

The comprehensive secondary school at *Breidholt*, which is the largest and the oldest comprehensive secondary school in the country, has to a large extent followed the internal organizational design put forth in the Bill. However, because of the criticism that the *Breidholt* school was no more than many schools under one roof, the other comprehensive secondary schools adopted a more flexible infrastructure with no officially defined basic core for all students but more overlap between the program routes than in the *Breidholt* school. This design was also a response to external conditions such as low enrollments. The only feasible solution to the problem of offering a variety of program routes in these schools was to make the overlap between the program routes as great as possible. Thus, although these schools do not specify any specific core of basic courses, in practice the core may be seen as being similar if not more extensive than in the *Breidholt* school or as mandated in the Bill. Similarly, the diversification and early specialization elements may be seen as somewhat greater in the *Breidholt* school and in the Bill than they are in the other comprehensive

secondary schools.

During the early years of comprehensive secondary schooling the difference between these two designs became a problematic issue. The *Breidholt* school was criticized for being many schools under the one roof with little overlap between program routes and thus showing less grammar school (academic) influence than the other comprehensive secondary schools. These schools, in turn, were criticized for being schools of one division only offering a few optional courses in some of the specialization areas. Although the design of the schools other than the *Breidholt* school may be seen as primarily a reaction to the problem of offering a variety of programs in schools with relatively low enrollments, the rationale was also that relatively high academic standards were the most relevant approach to a reconciliation of vocational and academic education in a changing employment environment. Accordingly, the development of these two curriculum designs may be seen as an attempt to negotiate and establish meaningful curriculum policies. The primary focus, however, was on the coordination and the ensurence of a variety of program offerings as well as on equality in opportunities, where no programs are terminal and preclude access to the university level.

Curriculum format and content. Leaving aside the difference between these two curriculum designs, today educators (secondary school principals) are discussing the alternative of combining as many program routes as possible. During the first two years vocational and practical elements would be emphasized leading to a diploma or a certificate, whereas academic elements and specialization would be emphasized during the last two years which would lead to matriculation. This design appears to be a possible solution to the concerns regarding the increased number of students who matriculate rather than specialize in some vocational areas, as well as being a solution to the lack of short program routes. In light of the observations of Brown (1984:10-26) when he states that the "teaching of thinking skills should be the major educational trend of the next twenty years" and that the more "technological the world becomes the more necessary a strong academic education is for everyone," this alternative should also include a relatively strong academic emphasis. However, the emphasis on equality of educational opportunity should not be confused with

equality in outcomes achieved by lowering academic standards in order to minimize drop-out rate and to meet the needs of students who are not academically oriented. What should be paramount and, indeed, seems to be emerging, are discussions about normative education elements, such as what constitutes quality vocational education and what constitutes quality academic education with regard to the larger socio-economic environment and further education. Instead of delimiting the focus to format or some structural arrangements of the curriculum, the focus should shift towards an emphasis on the identification and the 'realization of aims that are considered worthwhile' or 'what is to legitimately count as knowledge.'

The use of electives and the request for comprehensive testing may be seen as additional dimensions of the problem of legitimating meaningful curriculum policies. A part of the diversification and early specialization elements put forth in the Bill was an emphasis that each program be composed of both compulsory and elective courses. In practice, the use of electives and the lack of comprehensive testing has become a somewhat problematic issue in the secondary schools which organize their curriculum in a course credit system. Particularly, it was argued that too much flexibility in the use of electives has resulted in students matriculating without adequate preparation for undertaking university studies and that comprehensive testing was necessary to maintain academic standards. Leaving aside the advantages and the disadvantages of comprehensive testing, the essence of the concerns regarding the use of electives centers on the extent to which students have control over their curriculum. Because of the absence of curriculum policies in the form of 'aims that are considered worthwhile,' this flexibility, which may be seen as ideal, becomes disfunctional. Consequently, the more prescribed and controlled approach, as in the traditional grammar schools, is seen in an increasingly favorable light.

Although the overall emphasis has been on format rather than content, the University of Iceland has demanded that each faculty prescribe some necessary background competencies as entrance requirements; thereby to some extent identifying the aims that are considered worthwhile. This is a step in the right direction: identification of worthwhile aims lessens the

importance of universal comprehensive testing, entrance examinations, and increased standardization in the structure of the curriculum. Aims that are considered worthwhile have not, however, been explicitly identified in the vocational areas. Consequently, in order to facilitate legitimation and stabilization and provide for increased equality in educational opportunity with no treminal programs, some necessary competencies in both vocational and academic areas need to be prescribed for both long and short programs. Ideally, these prescriptions should be included in curriculum guides and be reviewed on a systematic basis, whereas today curriculum guides are primarily composed of course descriptions.

Synthesis. The general curriculum policy put forth in the Bill is based on a belief in a diversified secondary education system which emphasizes early specialization and the meeting of individual needs in order to provide quality education for further education or the world of work. Because of the lack of detailed curriculum policies put forth in the Bill, several issues regarding this overall assumption have become problematic issues in the implementation. Particularly in the reorganization of vocational and academic education, some respondents emphasized the need for strong academic influence, while others pointed out the need for practical elements. Concerns with standards, comprehensive testing, and the use of electives have become critical areas in this development. However, the primary emphasis in this overall development has been on curriculum format rather content: the implementation of a course credit system to ensure efficient student transfers and that no programs be terminal and preclude access to the university level has been of central concern rather than the identification of 'worthwhile activities' in the various areas. Consequently, in light of the changing socio-economic context of secondary education in Iceland, as elsewhere in the Western world, and the development which is already in progress regarding University and secondary school relations, the identification of aims that are considered worthwhile in both vocational and academic areas is necessary for further refinement and legitimation of what is to count as knowledge for further education and the world of work.

Summary and Synthesis

The purpose of this study was to define the problematic situation in the development of secondary education policies in Iceland. A bill on the reorganization of the secondary school level along comprehensive lines, the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization,' has been proposed several times in parliament without being accepted, yet many of the general policy ends put forth in the Bill have been implemented.

As indicated by the description of the policy ends put forth in the Bill and the issues related to the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill, the problematic situation is 'messy,' or not a well defined, single and idependent entity. Accordingly, in order to explain and provide a definition of the problematic situation which can lead to recommendations of what could or should be done to resolve it, some of the major policy ends put forth in the Bill and the issues related to the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill were critically examined and discussed. The two generic and somewhat related assumptions identified as underlying the problematic situation may be seen as rooted in the positivistic separation of fact from value, educational issues from administrative issues, and means from ends.

The first generic assumption identified as underlying the problematic situation is the belief that a rationally planned policy is the means of achieving the end of increased equality in educational opportunity. The Bill is based on the belief that equality in educational opportunity will be accomplished by using the model of a comprehensive secondary school for the entire secondary school level. In this model all schools adopt a course credit system or a mixture of a course credit and a class group system to enable the necessary coordination; there are no terminal programs, and students are able to transfer relatively efficiently between schools or between program routes within schools. The Bill also stresses a decentralization policy of joint financing between the state and the municipalities. In practice, however, the goal of increased equality in educational opportunity has been achieved by negotiating politically sensitive issues, such as the adoption of a course credit system and the future of the traditional school types, issues which are historical and traditional in nature. On the other hand, the issue of joint financing, which is nested in larger issues regarding governance and

the relations between the state and the municipalities, has not yet been successfully solved. However, a more feasible alternative to the problematic issue of joint financing may be the decentralization policy of school based budgeting. Thus, a major obstacle to the acceptance of the Bill may be overcome.

The second generic assumption identified as underlying the 'problematic situation' is the belief in a diversified secondary education system which emphasizes early specialization and the meeting of individual needs in order to provide quality education for further education or the world of work. However, in practice, because of the lack of explicit curriculum policies put forth in the Bill, on the one hand, and because of changes in the socio-economic context of secondary schooling, on the other, issues regarding this overall assumption have become somewhat problematic. In the reconciliation of vocational and academic education, the extent of academic influence in the vocational areas, or the degree of differentiation and specialization, became somewhat problematic. Improper use of electives and lack of comprehensive testing were seen as leading to a lowering of standards. Consequently, with the exception of the recent attempts by the University to prescribe prerequisite learnings as requirement for entering the various faculties, the primary focus in the overall development of curriculum policies has been on curriculum format rather than content and on ensuring equality in educational opportunity instead of engaging in discussions and negotiations about what is to be considered 'worthwhile knowledge' in the various areas for further education and the world of work.

Thus, the 'problematic situation' in the development of secondary education policies in Iceland can be defined in two important and interrelated ways: both can be seen as resulting from the separation of fact from value, means from ends, and administrative issues from educational issues. The undermining of historical elements and cultural traditions in the proposed reorganization to a large extent explains the resistance to the Bill in parliament. These elements, however, are somewhat accomodated in the later versions of the Bill. On the other hand, the over emphasis on curriculum format rather than the identification of aims that are considered worthwhile in a changing socio economic-context of secondary schooling

to a large extent explain the problems of legitimazing the curriculum philosophy of diversification and early specialization proposed in the Bill.

D. Towards a Resolution of the Problematic Situation

Dunn (1981:220) defines the process of recommendation as involving the "transformation of information about policy alternatives into information about policy actions that will result in valued outcomes." He (1981:220) also states that a policy recommendation will answer the question "What should be done?" and that any "answer to this question requires an approach that is normative, rather than one which is merely empirical or merely evaluative, since the question is one of right action." However, as pointed out by Wildavsky (1979:3), a solution to a problem is a part of defining the problem. Thus, the recommendations regarding the Bill have to some extent already been discussed. They are summarized in the next section and followed by some suggestions for further research.

Recommendations Regarding the Acceptance of the Bill

The 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization' was to replace the various existing secondary school laws. The global 'frame' policy put forth in the Bill was to be supplemented with regulations regarding the various details of the Bill. Because it was anticipated that the Bill would eventually be accepted in parliament, it guided to a large extent the organization of the established secondary schools and the coordination between the traditional school types which has taken place. However, because of the relatively rigid nature of the reorganization as put forth in the first versions of the Bill and because of uncertainty and dissatisfaction with a number of issues proposed in later versions, it was never accepted in parliament even though all the major political parties stated that it was necessary to enact a frame policy for the overall secondary level. Some of these problematic issues have already been clarified and resolved in the last two versions of the Bill but other issues remain unsolved.

Policy. In order to ensure equity and future development it is recommended that rather than updating the various existing secondary school laws a frame policy for the entire secondary school level be enacted. Although some problematic issues have been accounted for in the last two versions of the Bill, or resolved through negotiation during implementation, the reorganization as outlined in the Bill needs to be updated and systematically introduced and discussed in all parts of the country.

The issue of maintaining some distinctiveness and autonomy in particular school types should be resolved in any further version of the Bill. Although provisions were made for other school types in the last two versions of the Bill, the emphasis on the mandatory adoption of a course credit curriculum system needs to be changed. Instead of basing the reorganization solely on the use of a standardized course credit system the emphasis should shift towards the clarification and incorporation of worthwhile aims to be achieved in both vocational and academic areas.

Process. The definition of the problematic situation revealed that the rational approach to policy making is characteristic to the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization.' The policy ends put forth in the Bill were characterized as technical solutions to the problem of reorganizing the secondary school level and little emphasis was given to historical cultural elements such as the distinctiveness and autonomy of the traditional school types. Instead of emphasizing the educational aims to be achieved, the emphasis was on curriculum format and structure in order to facilitate efficient student transfers between schools and program routes, as well as to make certain that no programs would be terminal and preclude access to the university level. Furthermore, the Bill was designed by 'experts' within the Ministry with relatively little involvement of the major interest groups.

Accordingly, for a successful resolution of the problematic situation an updated bill needs to be systematically introduced in all parts of the country. Both politicians and educators in the field should be actively included in the study and the debates. The emphasis should be on creating effective normative structures for the acceptance of the bill through the

process of negotiating cultural traditions and the desired ends put forth in the Bill.

In addition to the establishment of effective normative structures, solutions to the following administrative and educational elements need to be included in an updated version of a bill for reorganizing the secondary school level: (1) solutions to the problematic issues of joint financing between the state and the municipalities; (2) solutions to the variable governance structure of secondary schools; (3) solutions to the level some special schools should belong to; and (4) an identification of an explicit curriculum philosophy.

1. Finance. All versions of the Bill proposed that secondary schools should be financed jointly by the state and the municipalities. However, since some secondary schools are entirely funded by the state while others are funded jointly by the state and the municipalities, the expences per student vary between municipalities. The proposed solutions in the Bill to this inequity in secondary school funding have not been successful, primarily because joint financing of secondary schools would lead to additional expences for municipalities which now host or use the services of secondary schools that are entirely funded by the state. This being the major obstacle for the acceptance of the Bill, perhaps the only politically feasible alternative for gaining equity in secondary school funding is that the state provide all fiscal resources for secondary schools. This alternative may be seen as increasingly feasible since operation costs covered in the funding of secondary schools that are jointly financed by the state and the municipalities is only twenty percent. To ensure that this alternative does not result in too great centralization and the undermining of local interests, perhaps some form of a decentralized school based budgeting system could also be established. Schools and school boards would be responsible for implementing the fund allocations provided by the state and would thus to some degree preserve local interents.

2. Governance. In light of the interrelated nature of finance and governance and in order to maintain a relatively strong decentralization policy, so that both local and national

interestsmay be served, the establishment of school boards for all individual secondary schools, as put forth in the last versions of the Bill, may be regarded as an ideal policy. Similarly, to maintain an effective primary and secondary school relationship and because of the relatively small size of both the primary and the secondary system within each region, regional school boards which deal with matters pertaining to primary schools could also govern the secondary school level. Instead of adding secondary school responsibilities to the existing duties of primary school regional superintendents (which was seen as somewhat problematic by secondary school principals), a separate superintendent for the secondary school level could be appointed in each region. Forthe sake of efficiency, each regional office (central office) could be divided into two departments headed by each superintendent, rather than establishing a new separate secondary school regional office. Given a relatively decentralized governance structure of this nature, a school based budgeting system could be implemented without an expansion of the bureaucratic structure. Many of the functions which now are a part of the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Finance would be transferred to the regional superintendents, regional school boards, or school boards for individual schools.

3. The school level appropriate for some secondary schools. In the first versions of the Bill, most of the traditional secondary schools were to be an integral part of the coordinated secondary school system and treated as program routes. During parliamentary discussions, some members of parliament suggested that certain special schools such as The Icelandic School for Midwives, The Icelandic School for Navigation, The Reykjavik School of Music, The Icelandic School of Arts and Craft, and The Dramatic Academy of Iceland should develop into academic institutions at the university level and thus be excluded from the Bill. In practice, some of these special schools have been increasing their entrance requirements, in some cases requiring matriculation or one or two years of academic secondary schooling for admission. Due to the delay or the non-acceptance of the Bill, decisions about the placement of such special schools within the education

system have been delayed. In the interest of further development and control their future role needs to be clarified. Considering that those associated with the schools in question have a personal interest in having them elevated to the level of post secondary institutions, it would be wise avoid conflict of interest by establishing one or more external task forces to make recommendations regarding the future status of each of these schools.

4. Curriculum philosophy. The general curriculum philosophy put forth in the Bill called for the reconciliation of vocational and academic education but the Bill did not contain any explicit elaborations upon how this were to be achieved. In practice, the implementation of this philosophy centered on the adoption of a course credit system to organize the curriculum and facilitate coordination, as well as to ensure efficient student transfers between school or program routes, rather than on the identification of worthwhile aims to be achieved in the various vocational and academic areas. Hence, because of this emphasis on curriculum format and to ensure efficient student transfers, it is recommended that the Bill should outline worthwhile curriculum elements to be achieved in the various vocational and academic areas. In order to allow for some variety and give students a choice when selecting secondary schools, it can be left up to individual schoolswhether each wants to organize its curriculum in a course credit or a class group system. For example, some students may prefer schools with a relatively structured curriculum whereas others may prefer more flexibility in designing their programs.

Suggestions for Further Research

In accord with the major findings of this study, research in the following areas would be valuable for decisions regarding an updated policy for the secondary school level.

1. In the comprehensive secondary schools, two types of curriculum systems have emerged.

Each one of these systems specifies the relationship between basic and specialized education. One system puts and emphasis on a common core of courses for students of all divisions and program routes but otherwise stresses autonomy and differentiation of the divisions and the program routes. The other system places its emphasis on having no officially defined core, but as much overlap between the programs as possible. Research needs to be conducted on each of the two systems in order to evaluate which system facilitates a more desirable relationship between basic and specialized education.

2. Research needs to be conducted on what specialization emphasis would be the most desirable for secondary schools in the various parts of the country. This could be based on industrial conditions, existing facilities, equality of opportunity, and educational concerns.

3. Contrary to the initial expectations, the number of students graduating from vocational programs has rapidly decreased during the last few years. Research needs to be conducted on the reasons for this decline in enrollments in order to adjust programs to environmental changes and to maintain a stable balance between vocational and academcic enrollments.

4. In rural areas, one or two year programs in connection with a local (regional) comprehensive secondary school are offered at some of the larger comprehensive primary schools. Generally, the courses offered in these one or two year programs are taught by comprehensive primary school teachers who in most cases do not have the same mandated educational qualifications as fully qualified secondary school teachers. The quality of these programs should be evaluated in order to maintain equality in opportunity for students who transfer from these programs to other secondary schools.

5. Considerable controvercy seems to exist about the quality of the different schools that

offer programs leading to matriculation. Some people view the program organization in the traditional grammar schools as being of superior quality, whereas others regard the program organization in the comprehensive secondary schools and some of the special schools as superior to the grammar school programs. Some years ago, a few surveys were conducted where student success from the different secondary schools at the University was used as an indicator of the quality of these schools. The findings of these surveys were not reliable beause of problems with the research design. In order to maintain some 'healthy' competition between secondary schools and to evaluate on a long term basis the quality of their programs, systematic evaluations of graduates from the various secondary schools needs to be conducted both with regard to success at the University as well as success in relation to some other criteria.

6. An additional dimension of the question about the quality of different secondary schools is the use of comprehensive testing. Generally, the traditional grammar schools use comprehensive testing procedures, whereas the comprehensive secondary schools and some special schools that offer programs leading to matriculation only administer tests at the end of each course. An evaluation of the advantages and the disadvantages of these two different testing procedures needs to be conducted in order to maintain accountability.

E. Reflections

In line with the definition of policy analysis as an "applied social science which uses multiple methods of inquiry and argument to produce and transform policy-relevant information that may be utlized in political settings to resolve policy problems" (Dunn, 1981:35), the intention in this section is to briefly reflect upon the value of the interpretive and critical research orientation adopted for this study. First, the value of the critical interpretive policy perspective is reflected upon with regard to the practice and the study of educational administration. Second, the value of the critical interpretive perspective is reflected upon with regard to its usefulness for this study.

Perspective on Educational Administration

Kelsey and Long (1983:407) observe that "it is by no means easy to see very precisely in what ways the practice of educational administration has been improved by its study." They (1983:407) point out that "there has recently emerged a substantial and controversial debate about the nature of that study" which is characterized by the 'theory movement' on the one hand, and the reactionary 'interpretive movement' on the other.

Without detailed elaborations, the emphasis within the theory movement is on operational definitions and on the use of models, theories, or hypothesis testing to investigate and explain functional relationships. As Kelsey and Long (1983:419) observe, the emphasis has primarily been on "theories of general administration which might be applicable to educational contexts rather than to the focus on the construction of specific theories of educational administration" and the theory movement has "sought to make the study of educational administration value-free by avoiding moral judgements in theory construction and by treating values as variables." The interpretive movement, on the the other hand, places an emphasis on the moral dimension of educational administration, emphasizing the subjective nature of social reality with a focus on intention, value, meaning, culture, and the relationship between educational and administrative elements. As Bates (1982:5) observes, many authors in the field are now arguing "the necessity of constructing a cultural analysis of educational administration as an alternative to the inherently sterile pursuit of a deterministic behavioural science."

By viewing decision making at both the macro and the micro level as the essence of all administrative practices, educational administration has its central focus on both the making and the implementing of education as public policy. According to the emphasis within the theory movement on seeking to make the study of educational administration value-free, the focus has primarily been on the study of organizational, structural and behavioural elements. The underlying ideology is that by rearranging some of these elements greater efficiency or effectiveness can be achieved.

Within the interpretive movement this process in somewhat reversed so that value elements become the focal point, both regarding the process of policy making and policy implementation. However, within the critical domain of the interpretive movement, the relationship between educational and administrative issues is highlighted by treating policy elements such as curriculum, equity, pedagogy, and evaluation as problematic. Bates (1982:3) suggests that this orientation puts a primary focus on: (1) "the development of an epistemology that takes account of the social bases of understanding;" (2) "a systematic analysis of relationships between social, cultural, epistemological and educational domination;" (3) "the ways in which such structures of domination control the practices of teachers;" (4) and "the improvement of practice through the processes of critical reflection on the relation and the potential for human emancipation." Thus, a perspective which includes both technical means and moral ends as part of the study and the practice of educational administration may be regarded as a more wholistic approach than a pure 'theory' or 'interpretive' perspective. As Foster (1982:23) suggests, this "requires abandoning a 'natural' science of administration and formulating a new cultural science" where "such concepts as human justice, equality and freedom" are integrated "into the totality of our academic reflections."

Value of Perspective Established for this Study

The phases of problem sensing, problem conceptualization, and problem specification identified by Dunn (1981:107) to structure "messy" policy problems are considered useful and applied well to this case study. These phases helped to organize the overall study process in describing and specifying the substantive and the formal problem in the development of secondary education policies in Iceland.

The interpretive and critical research perspective developed to conceptualize the subjective and the ideological nature of policy problems in order to analyze and describe the substantive problem and specify the formal problem is considered useful. This perspective put an emphasis on examining the problematic nature of the concept of equality of

educational opportunity which is one of the fundamental principles underlying education policies. Also, this perspective stressed the use of qualitative data collection methods for describing the subjective elements of the substantive problem. A variety of data sources were used to spplement each other and instead of using some operationlly defined concepts to guide the study, the grounded theories and insights that emerged and explained the data were thematized in order to describe the substantive problem. Lastly, this perspective placed the emphasis on treating the descriptions and rationalizations of the substantive problem as problematic in order to specify the formal problem.

The findings of this study are considered relevant for creating extended discussions amongst stakeholder groups. The study identified some major issues and problems that need to be resolved. By sending relevant stakeholders copies of the major findings, the hope is that increased political awareness will lead to extended discussions about secondary education and improvement in secondary education policies in Iceland.

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Appendix A

Interviews: Conducted during the period of September to January 1986.

Department Heads within the Ministry of Culture and Education:

Hordur Larusson	(Participated in the writing of the Bill)
Arni Gunnarsson	(Participated in the writing of the Bill)
Stefan Olafur Jonsson	(Participated in the writing of the Bill)
Solrun Jenssdottir	
Birgir Thorlacius	(Retired Deputy Minister)

Principals:

Jon Bodvarsson	(Previous Principal, Sudurnes Comp. Sec. School)
Hjalmar Arnason	(Principal, Sudurnes Comp. Sec. School)
Ingvar Asmundsson	(Principal, The Trade School of Reykjavik)
Olafur Asgeirsson	(Previous Principal, Akranes Comp. Sec. School)
Gudni Gudmundsson	(Principal, Reykjavik Grammar School)
Sigurdur Ragnarsson	(Vice principal, The Sund Grammar School)
Gerdur Oskarsdottir	(Previous Principal, Austurland Comp. Sec. School)
Ornolfur Thorlacius	(Principal, Hamrahlid Grammar School)
Kristjan Bersi Olafsson	(Principal, Flensborg Comp. Sec. School)
Ingolfur Thorkelsson	(Principal, Kopavour Grammar School)
Heimir Palsson	(Previous Principal, Sudurland Comp. Sec. School)

Politicians:

Olafur G. Einarsson	(Conservative, M.P.)
Ingvar Gislason	(Progressive, previous Minister of Education, M.P.)
Vilhjalmur Hjalmarsson	(Progressive, previous Minister of Education, Retired)
Eidur Gudnason	(Social Democrat, M.P.)
Magnus Torfi Olafsson	(Union of Liberals and Leftists, previous Minister of Education, Parliament's Press Secretary)
Sverrir Hermannson	(Conservative, Minister of Education, M.P.)
Ragnar Arnalds	(People's Alliance, previous Minister of Education, M.P.)
Sighvatur Bjorgvinsson	(Social Democrat, M.P.)
Inga Jona Thordardottir	(Assistant to the recently transferred Conservative Minister of Education)

Others:

Kristjan Gunnarsson	(Recently retired Superintendent, Reykjavik)
Magnus Gudjonsson	(Manager of the Association of Municipalities)
Kristjan Thorlacius	(Teacher, President of the Sec. Sch. Tea. Ass.)
Sigmundur Gudbjarnarson	(President of the University of Iceland)

Validators:

Hordur Larusson	(See above)
Birgir Thorlacius	(See above)
Thorolfur Thorlindsson	(Professor of Sociology at the University of Iceland)

Note:

In addition to these 29 formal interviews, various others where consulted and interviewed informally.

Appendix B

Interview Guide: These are some of the generic questions that guided in the interviewing of the stakeholder groups. Many of these questions were also a part of the questionnaires.

1. What are the major reasons for the writing of the 'Bill on Secondary School Reorganization'?

2. Why has the Bill not been passed in parliament since many of its policy ends have been implemented?

3. Is the resistance to the Bill characterized by party politics or urban-rural politics?

4. How can the financial inequity between municipalities regarding secondary school costs be solved?

5. Is it necessary to enact a 'frame' policy for the overall secondary school level?

6. Why are students more interested in academic programs rather than vocational programs?

7. Is it good or bad to have different school types that offer programs leading to matriculation and are competing with each other?

8. Is it justifiable not to accept the Bill in parliament and give all this power for implementing the general policy put forth in the Bill to a few school administrators?

9. Is the coordination as put forth in the Bill desirable?

10. Has the coordination as implemented in many of the comprehensive secondary schools been carried to the extreme?

11. Should curriculum elements such as the identification of worthwhile aims to be achieved be included in a 'frame' policy for the secondary school level as a whole?

12. Do the entrance requirements into secondary schools need to be strengthened?

13. Should secondary schools be open in access but with demanding exit requirements?

14. Is a course credit system a better system than a class group system?