

Hello, my name is Irma Matchavariani, originally I am from Georgia but I moved in Iceland twelve years ago. Then there were only two places in Reykjavik which offered Icelandic courses: The University of Iceland and The Municipal Centre of Adult Education in Reykjavik. I went to University and finished a 3 years course of Icelandic for foreigners.

Now there are about 5 or 6 schools in Reykjavik that offer Icelandic for foreigners and different ways to learn it. They offer different teaching styles and methods.

I work in Mimir-lifelong learning centre, as a project manager in the Department of Vocational Education and Training for the labour market. I am also teaching Icelandic for Russian speakers on the first and second level. (general courses).

I think most people can learn some of the target language and maybe it's enough for some of them to be able to express themselves when they go to shops, restaurants or swimming pools, but a problem arises if you want to be a part of society in a new country, want to find a good job or if you already have a job and want to improve your situation in the labour market. Then you have to learn the target language more properly, especially vocabulary related to your profession.

Mimir lifelong learning centre is one of this of schools, where one gets the whole packet. There you can study the language of the natives, adjust to the culture etc. It is important to practice continuous education and job development.

The target market of our department is mainly labourers with little formal education as well as immigrants.

- In our school we offer 5 levels of Icelandic for foreigners. We also have some special courses, Landnemaskóli / Settlers' School (for immigrants). The course of study takes 120 class hours. The emphasis in this course is on spoken language as well as knowledge of the Icelandic society. The companies pay the employee's wages while they attend classes. The subjects we teach are: Icelandic, Sociology, Computer science, the making of a personal portfolio (individuals get an understanding and overview of their competences, increase their possibility of work**

development and seeking work), building up self-confidence and communication.

Also the emphasis is on conversation and projects where students seek information on the web, from the media and from institutions. They also visit for example, theatres, museums, The Intercultural House and various other places. The Ministry of Education has agreed that students can get credit points from The Settlers' School, (equivalent to up to 10 credit points in an upper secondary level). Students need to pay school fees, but they get 75% refund from the trade unions educational fund.

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Individuals, working in the health care sector, becoming social assistants.

This is a credit point-course of study for individuals at the labour market in cooperation with trade unions, Mímir-lifelong learning and a number of companies.

The individuals work in Nursing-homes or assist people with disabilities.

These courses take two years (about 430 class hours and give up 32 credit points in upper secondary schools).

To be admitted to the course one has to fulfil the following requirements:

1. To be at least 22 years old
2. To have 3 years work experience
3. To have taken courses related to one's profession: 2 courses (Fagnámskeið I and II) a total of 200 class hours

Studies that are accepted by the Ministry of Education through a curriculum made by the Education and Training Service centre in cooperation with Mímir - lifelong learning.

Social assistant in a new country

R&D (research and development programme)

(we got a grant from The educational fund of The Vocational Training Council)

A credit point – course for immigrants who work in Nursing homes.

- To be admitted to this course one must fulfil the above-mentioned requirements.

- **Usually this course takes two years for Icelanders.** The duration of courses for immigrants is 2, 5 years, since Icelandic courses related to these courses, are included. **Students have courses once a week plus one weekend during the semester.** This is a day course but companies pay the employees' wages while they are attending classes.

The subjects we teach are: Sociology, Psychology, Family and social service, First aid, Health care **et. cet.**

This group was graduated now in spring 2009. They were very glad and thankful and their employers too.

Project: 2008 *Equal opportunity for internship*

The developmental project ***Equal opportunity to internship*** started 26.02.08 and completed 16.04.08.

The main goal of the project was to support immigrants, who have little formal education and are working in the health care sector, to improve their situation in the Icelandic labour market and encourage seeking more education in the health care sector.

We chose one group of participants of foreign origin, who had attended the course related to one's profession (Fagnámskeið II is precursor for Social assistants' courses). We chose three subjects and the curriculum was adjusted to the learners' needs: Assistance and Tendency, Sociology and Health Care.

The project helped learners to gain knowledge and to improve their professional and personal skills. The goal of the course is also to strengthen their self-confidence and build up communication. Our teachers had adjusted curricula and used different teaching styles in order to meet the needs of foreign learners, because this professional courses (Fagnámskeið 1 and 2) are suitable for Icelanders. The most important

factors were different teaching methods and styles as well as the usage of professional videotapes, visits to Nursing Homes, teamwork, discussions, games, vocational training etc.

Project 2009: Self-confidence and communication; development of curriculum for foreigners

The developmental project *Self-esteem and communication; development of curriculum for foreigners* started 17. February 2009 and completed 15. April 2009.

The main goal of the project was to strengthen self-confidence and capability of immigrants who have little formal education and are working in the health care sector, to improve their situation in the Icelandic labour market and encourage them to seek more education in the health care sector which helps them to adjust in Icelandic society.

We chose two groups of participants of foreign origin, who had attended the course Fagnámskeið 2. We chose one subject and the curriculum was adjusted to the learners' needs: Self-esteem, communication and service.

The project helps learners to gain knowledge and to improve their personal and professional skills. Fagnámskeið 1 and 2 are suitable for Icelanders and our teacher had adjusted curricula and used different teaching styles in order to meet the needs of foreign learners.

The most important factors were different teaching methods and styles as well as the usage of professional videotapes, teamwork, discussion, games, etc.

The main goals of both developmental projects were:

- To create educational opportunities for adult immigrants who have little formal education.
- To improve immigrants' skills and their situation in the labour market.
- To help them learn the language and adjust to Icelandic society.

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