

**ICELANDIC CRAFT TEACHERS' CURRICULUM IDENTITY  
AS REFLECTED IN LIFE HISTORIES**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This is a study of the curriculum identity of Icelandic craft teachers. The study is based on life history interviews with 42 teachers born between 1913 and 1960. The interviews traced a life long relationship with the subject they chose to teach. Particular attention was paid to how the teachers define their subject and how they identify with it. The information gathered was analyzed with reference to the development of crafts as school subjects in Iceland.

The study describes in context the relationship that teachers have with their subjects and attempts to explain it in terms of gender and class. The curriculum identity of the teacher of these subjects is crucial as the subjects are not defined by external means such as a prescriptive formal curriculum or centralized assessment. Each teacher is therefore able to construct a personal curriculum.

The curriculum identity of craft teachers is defined by gender and class. The Icelandic school system includes two craft subjects; textiles formerly known as girls' craft, and wood and metalwork, formerly known as boys' craft. In the late seventies the gender segregation was abolished by a policy of equal access to education. Still the subjects retain a gendered definition. This study details the strength of gendered traditions and the complex effects of gender equity policies.

Class refers here to the hierarchy of academic and vocational, or intellectual/manual pursuits. Western school systems operate on a dichotomy between mind and matter, where association with matter and the manual is less prestigious. The life histories of craft teachers manifest the effects, as the teachers perceive themselves as a low status group within the school system.

The composite life histories of this group of craft teachers outline the history of the school subjects in Iceland, a history that has not been documented. The main contribution of the study is to the definition of curriculum identity, the way in which teachers define themselves and are defined by the subjects they teach. The evidence given by these teachers suggests that teachers tend to see their curriculum identity as deeply rooted in their personal history, even in their family history.

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This general trend has implications for the gender organization of the community. Craft teachers perceive childhood experience with the subject they later chose to teach as contributing to their curriculum identity. Their childhood experiences with the other craft subject are not presented as having such significance. Women are perceived to lack experience in wood and metalwork, which undermines the curricular identity of female wood and metalwork teachers and their membership in the curriculum community of.....	328
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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Personal Background

The craft subjects are of personal interest as I trained as an elementary school teacher with wood and metalwork as my specialization. What attracted me to this school subject was that it is part of art education in a broad sense and it is concerned with making objects and images. In the formal curriculum for Icelandic elementary schools (Aðalnámskrá grunnskóla: Mynd- og handmennt, 1977), it is defined as part of the integrated area of art and craft together with art and textiles. In practice however, the three subjects have remained distinct and their relationship uneasy (Guðrún Helgadóttir 1995).<sup>1</sup>

My first lesson in carpentry for prospective wood and metalwork teachers for Icelandic elementary schools contained some premonitions of what my relationship with my chosen field would be. The first task was to take the plane apart and sharpen its blade. My instructor ensured my accomplishment by demonstrating the steps involved and having me repeat them under his supervision. All went beautifully: I took the plane apart, set the blade to the grinding stone and sharpened it on two grades of sharpening stones lathered in kerosene. Then he said that to get the last roughness out of the edge I should flip it across my palm a couple of times. In the moment of reflection that followed his advice we gazed into the soft pink palm of my left hand. What fortunes we read there were never discussed. But in my mind this is where the shadow of a doubt that hung over my future as a wood and metalwork teacher became discernible.

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with cultural convention Icelanders are referred to by first name first, both in text and reference lists.

I had questions that sounded like doubts to my colleagues. I asked what is the rationale for wood and metalwork in the curriculum? Why do we teach it? I was answered with a question: You think we shouldn't teach it? Although I never mastered the conventions of my chosen subject I did graduate, became active in the professional organization of art and craft teachers and president of the wood and metalwork teachers association. But there was always this doubt. Sometimes I doubted myself, sometimes I doubted my colleagues, sometimes I doubted the school subject wood and metalwork. The subject is compulsory for all students from age 9-14, but is it really serving all students? If it didn't fit me or vice versa, what about my students? In other words, this study grew out of a curricular identity crisis.

There were times when I glimpsed "the problem" but I wanted a better look. That is what graduate school should be for, to take a hard look at the problems encountered in practice. My interest in the rationales for the school subjects art and crafts led to my masters thesis, which was based on a survey of Icelandic art and craft teachers' attitudes toward curriculum rationales (Guðrún Helgadóttir, 1989). That study left more questions than answers so I enrolled in a Ph.D. programme to continue my research. Through the research for my masters thesis I became aware of the limitations of thinking of a school subject in terms of curriculum as in a course of study. I became interested in the community that makes up a school subject, particularly the historical dimension of school subjects and in interviewing as a methodology.

This is a critical study: to paraphrase Apple (1993) slightly, I want to understand the sets of historically contingent circumstances and contradictory power relationships that create the conditions in which we live (p. 5). I am of the generation of women who wanted to enter fields of work and study that had been male dominated, and for whom it was possible, even

accessible. But it is one thing to enter, another thing to stay. That is where the concept of curriculum identity, the intricate pattern of identification with gender, class and curriculum that shapes the life of a teacher, is illuminating.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The broad question that gave rise to this study is: How do the social structures of gender and class combine and interact with curriculum to develop the curriculum identity of Icelandic craft teachers? The literature on teachers and their work pays too little attention to the teacher's curriculum identity. Eggleston (1977) casually threw out this interesting concept, meaning the teacher's identification with the curriculum. Teachers are seen and see themselves as teachers of certain subjects, student populations or school levels. What you teach, where and to whom shapes your professional identity. The school subject is an important factor here, one that needs further investigation (Goodson, 1987; Goodson and Ball, 1984; Gray and MacGregor, 1991). My research aims at defining the curriculum identity of a group of subject matter specialists in crafts. This is an important contribution to curriculum studies, as the generic category 'teacher' glosses over important distinctions that exist within the profession.

This inquiry has relevance for the community engaged in educational practice as it illustrates the development, composition and values of a subject community. This relevance does not suggest direct applicability to practice. The relationship between educational practice and curriculum theory is more complex than that. Just as the study of practice does not automatically yield theory, theory does not automatically inform practice. Each must be interpreted to the other and even with understanding may not come acceptance. The

incongruence between curriculum theory and educational practice are as important as the correspondences, for as Pinar & Grumet (1988) remind us, these add depth and significance to the question of what to do Monday morning.

In my case as a female in a male dominated subject (wood and metalwork), which is a subset of a female dominated profession (teaching), gender was central to the doubts and questions that I initially experienced. The term gender signifies the social organization of the relationship between the sexes, the culturally and socially produced understanding of, and meaning attributed to, sexual differences. The study is not simply about the experience of the sexes in a certain profession but looks at these experiences in relation to each other. It is an attempt to address the theoretical question of how difference has been constructed through the particular historical form that this difference takes in craft education. Gender is certainly important in the analysis of how these subjects developed first overtly, and later covertly gendered.

Where there is a distinction a hierarchy is generally implied. Gendered distinctions are subject to the inequitable power relations between the sexes, where men are dominant in the public sphere and women submissive. Sexism has a long history and the struggle for gender equality or equity a long history (Anna G. Jónasdóttir, 1991; Elshstain, 1981; Engels, 1972; Kelly, 1977). In this thesis I use the term equality when referring to policies and practices premised on the notion of sameness between the sexes as the rationale for abolishing discrimination. Equity on the other hand refers to policies and practices which are based on the ideal of equality while honouring difference.

Gender cannot be viewed as a social structure separate from other social structures such as class. The concept of social class has been central to analyses of social relations. In this study the focus is on how the worker defines and is defined by the work. Social class is thus more an identity factor here than it is an economic factor (Scott, 1988). Class is an important structure for the way in which the subjects are construed economically and vocationally. This study addresses the relations of gender, class and curriculum identity as manifested in the life work of individuals. Gender and class are structures that are so integrated here that viewing one is impossible without including the other in the field of vision (Cockburn, 1983).

The question of the development of crafts as school subjects is informed by an understanding of what constitutes a school subject and what shapes that constitution. These understandings will be articulated further in chapter II. Here it will suffice to say, school subject is understood both as text and as community. Text refers to written curricula, education acts and decrees, as well as articles and monographs: that is, the printed remains of educational discourse regarding the subjects. Community refers to individuals and groups who share a curriculum identity, those who were and are involved in the subject as students, teachers and promoters. In this study teachers were chosen as a focus for inquiry as they form a core of the school subject community. The study is based on life history material elicited through interviews with Icelandic teachers with a life long commitment to the subjects textiles, weaving and wood and metalwork. Curriculum as text, described above, forms the other main source of evidence in this study.

This research poses curriculum studies as stories of people who embodied educational ideals, rather than a story of disembodied educational discourses. In answering the question

curricula and community are framed within fundamental social constructs such as gender and class. The inquiry shows how the curriculum identities of subject communities are gendered and classed, as well as the subjects as texts are gender and class based.

### **Significance of the Study**

The quest for the general law blinds us to the complexity and often paradoxical nature of human action. The field of curriculum studies has suffered this blinding effect in that there is a strong tradition of sorting and classifying curricular phenomena by a variety of criteria (Eisner, 1984; Tyler, 1949). The field has variously been criticized for fleeing itself in search of external frames of reference (Schwab, 1969) and of insularity and lack of for instance, historical and philosophical consciousness (Giroux & Simon, 1989; Pinar, 1988). Reference to the humanities and social sciences in general has value in orienting groups of people to where they are and where they came from. Tosh (1984) claims that "One of the most valuable 'lessons' which history teaches, then, is the sense of what is durable and what is transient or contingent in our present condition" (p. 15). It may be argued that this value is not unique to history, but inherent in, for instance, anthropology. Over the last decade it has become increasingly evident that historical and anthropological methods are compatible in the quest for the durable and the transient in the field of education. Curriculum studies have moved from reliance on the written word to include the kinds of evidence gathered by sociologists and anthropologists, mainly the interview. The field of curriculum studies has long since recognized the inadequacy of conceiving of curriculum exclusively as text (Kliebard, 1992).

The other dimensions of curriculum have been variously labeled as hidden, informal, experienced and lived -- that is, there has been a realization on the part of curriculum scholars

that curriculum as written, as enacted or implemented, and as experienced are all equally important but not equal manifestations of the acts of teaching and learning (Eisner, 1984; Goodlad et al., 1979; Zais, 1976). With a focus away from the school subject as planned curriculum to the subject as experienced curriculum, the inquiring gaze rests on the people rather than the texts that make up the subject. The subject changes form and becomes the community engaged with a body of knowledge, skills and attitudes, rather than that body in itself (Pinar, 1988; Pinar & Reynolds, 1992).

The lack of historical consciousness in the field of education, particularly curriculum and instruction, is a perennial lament (Kliebard, 1992; Pinar, 1988; Smith, 1985). The problem is not that there is not enough historical research in education, but rather that educational history and the field of curriculum and instruction have had little perception of relevance for each other. Educational history has been dismissed as a "flight" from the field of curriculum inquiry, a retreat from the problem of articulating a theory of the practical (Schwab, 1969). The field of curriculum and instruction has been preoccupied with the practicalities of here and now. While generating theory, the two main trends of educational history, intellectual and social history, have not struck practitioners as relevant to contemporary issues. Neither approach is adequate to offer a narrative with explanatory power in practice.

The study of curriculum as text, as documented ideas and discourses, is but a partial study of curriculum. Curriculum and instruction refers only to a limited extent to that which is planned, believed and hoped for. It refers to a great extent to that which people do, to that which happens when ideas are translated into human action. This translation takes place in communities of learning among students and teachers. This does not mean that curriculum

and instruction are entirely a social phenomenon. They do indeed have an ideological dimension, but are embedded in the social through practice. Apple (1993) describes the implications for researchers as a dual focus, on theoretical debates as well as "actual and potential political and educational practices and tendencies" (p. 5). A study of school subjects that is relevant to practice must have its focal point beyond the curriculum text which occupies the foreground of curriculum studies. Kliebard (1992) declares that the potency of curriculum history is its ability to identify the interest groups that influence curriculum in a society and how and in what circumstances their influence is manifested.

The field of curriculum studies has been preoccupied with the course of study as intended or planned. This is particularly evident in the study of school subjects, which has hitherto been written as intellectual history of the printed educational discourse. Historians of art, design and/or craft education have relied nearly exclusively on written documentation, paying little attention to curricula as lived (Ashwin, 1981; Bennett, 1937; Bolin, 1985; Efland, 1990; Kern, 1985; MacDonald, 1970; Soucy, 1990). There are honourable exceptions, where analysis is based on imagery as well as text, and attempts are made to gain insight into the life world of those engaged with particular curricula or courses of study (Berge, 1990; Lind, Hasselberg & Kuhlhorn, 1992; Korzenik, 1985). An inquiry into craft education as a community rather than a course of study is long overdue. Such an inquiry relies primarily on methods of oral history and ethnography - analysis of written documents becomes of secondary importance.

The study of art, design and crafts school subjects is of particular significance for curriculum theory. What sets them collectively apart from other school subjects is their affiliation with

material culture. They are concerned with images and objects rather than text. Western education systems reflect a culture which accords text absolute primacy over other means of communication. Therefore the arts of language are central in the curriculum, whereas the arts of image and object are marginal. This marginality is keenly felt by art, design and craft teachers (Berge, 1990; Gray & MacGregor, 1991; Guðrún Helgadóttir, 1989).

The relationship that the communities of core subjects have with the curriculum and education system differs radically from that of the marginalized subject communities. It is useful to consider them as having a different standpoint. These marginal communities share with other marginal groups an absence from the grand narrative in which their existence is implied. Smith (1987) describes the implications for research from the standpoint of those who were absent -- such as women in the grand narrative of sociology, as directing inquiry to "an 'embodied' subject located in a particular local historical setting" (p. 108). Further, the standpoint of those on the receiving end of the relations of ruling is potentially subversive in that it "indicates lines of stress and disjuncture" (Smith, 1987, p. 204) that are hidden from other standpoints by the foreshortening of those relations (Connell, 1989). This is particularly true of the craft subjects. They are marginal in the curriculum due to their close affiliation with manual labour of the lower classes and, in the case of textiles and weaving, to the work of women. Furthermore, this research suggests that the craft subjects are affiliated with the domestic or private sphere rather than the public sphere of society (Guðrún Helgadóttir 1995b).

### **Overview of the thesis**

The first chapter is a general introduction to the research problem, which is articulated further in an overview of theoretical frameworks for interpretation and analysis in the second chapter. The second chapter outlines the use of the concepts curriculum, community and identity in the study.

The third chapter explains the research methodology and describes the research. Qualitative research methods are discussed in general, specifically ethnography and life histories as well as oral history. The discussion is centered on the relationship between researcher and researched and the issue of validity or truthfulness of research.

Chapters four and five are the main chapters based on the interview data and in them the curriculum communities of wood and metalwork and textiles respectively, are described. These chapters are based on the evidence given in the interviews of where the teachers see themselves in the larger context of Icelandic culture and society. The economic aspects of being a teacher are explored as well as the social status of the school subject versus other school subjects and society at large. The rationale for the subject is an important consideration in these chapters.

Chapter six deals in more depth with the most significant social structure evident in the study, gender. Chapter seven concludes the thesis with a summary of main themes.

## CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The work presented here may be identified with postmodernism as it offers an account and interpretation of the discourse or systems of meaning specific to a curriculum community, based on the premise that discourses are constructed, historically specific and political in nature (Harker, 1993). People as social beings and historical actors live in multiple discourses which circumscribe their identity and outlook (Newton, 1990). The interplay between agency and structure, between informal networks of individuals and formal and official structures of social life are at the heart of those discourses.

Acker (1989) points out that research on teachers' careers has fallen into two camps; emphasis on individual agency or the structural approach favouring systems over individuals as the focus of inquiry. A synthesis of the two approaches from a feminist standpoint is attempted here (Scott, 1987). The teachers' life histories are accounts of their everyday worlds from which questions arise relating these to social phenomena, such as the curriculum, the school and the subject (Acker, 1989; Millman & Kanter, 1987; Theobald, 1991).

In this chapter the use of key concepts such as curriculum, crafts, gender, class and curriculum identity is articulated. The contemporaneous relationships are viewed as they are manifested in the symbolic, material and human environment (Apple, 1993). Collectively those could be termed a curriculum Umwelt (Smith-Shank, 1995). The social structures of gender, and to a lesser extent class, shape the conception of the environment or Umwelt of the curriculum community of crafts. The development of the curriculum community over time is viewed as stages or rites of passage of the school subjects as institutional categories,

taking into account the conditions that are required at each stage (Goodson, 1987; Meyer & Rowan, 1983; Reid, 1984).

### **Curriculum as Text and/or as Community**

From a structuralist point of view in educational sociology concerned with cultural capital, the curriculum is of immense interest. Eggleston (1977) claims that at the heart of the matter the curriculum is one of the instruments through which the prevailing features of the cultural system are carried "wherein its knowledge is transmitted and evaluated" (p. 6). In other words it is one of the features of the 'relations of ruling', a concept that involves power, organization, direction and regulation, but is more pervasively structured than other labels of the power discourse allow (Smith, 1987). These relations of ruling and cultural transmission are not disembodied, they are carried by historical actors, and hence "The fundamental conflicts are over the identity and legitimacy of the rival contenders for membership of the groups who define, evaluate and distribute knowledge and the power these confer" (Eggleston, 1977, p. 43).

If there was such a thing as 'the curriculum' the aforesaid would be rather straightforward, but on the way from curriculum as an ideology or political agenda, to curriculum as implemented or lived, there is much scope for subversion. The term "curriculum" refers to an array of conceptions, which makes it necessary to differentiate between applications of the term. Various distinctions have been made to identify a logical sequence of curriculum steps from plan to implementation, the values underlying differing curriculum rationales, and the relationship of curriculum as ideology or theory to curriculum as experience or practice (Tyler, 1949; Eisner & Vallance, 1974; Schwab, 1969; Goodlad et al., 1979).

Connell (1989) attempts to account for the complexity of the issue by drawing on one hand on the sociology of education and on educational ethnography on the other, in arguing that "a curriculum -- meaning by that the ideas (content), the method by which they are appropriated and put to use (form of learning), the social practices in which those ideas and methods are materialized, and, above all, those three things in combination - as *necessarily* intersecting with the processes that constitute social interests, embodying relations of social power. A curriculum as an ongoing social organization and distribution of knowledge helps to *constitute* social interests and arbitrate the relations among them" (p. 122-123).

While the sociology of education has been applied to investigate the question of cultural capital in the context of large social structures such as gender and class, it should also inform the study of smaller structures such as a curriculum community. Reid (1984) identified four conditions that determine the cultural capital value of a curricular topic or subject. A subject is *central* if it is regarded as a core or foundation subject and accorded time and resources as such. Mathematics and language arts would be examples of central subjects. *Universal* subjects are deemed important for all students and are mandatory, but they need not be central, such as physical education, art and music. *Status relevance* stems from association with occupations or fields of prestige. Subjects that are associated with, or lead to high status occupations and courses of study have a corresponding high status within the elementary curriculum. A subject has *sequential significance* if it is a prerequisite for further progress within the education system, for example a university requirement or a graduation requirement from elementary school. The more of these characteristics a subject has the higher its status is in the curricular hierarchy.

While there is a budding recognition of the multilayered nature of curricula, what is still missing from the literature is a focus on the development of a collective identity of the curriculum community and how the curriculum is embodied in the people that as a community are committed to the content that the curriculum represents. This community can be described as having a curriculum identity (Eggleston, 1977), for it identifies with the body of knowledge, values and skills inherent in that particular curricular phenomenon. The school subject is "the strongest bastion of identity throughout the school system" (Eggleston, 1977, p. 75).

The perceived curriculum of the teacher is the link, the interface between curriculum as text and experienced forms of curriculum. "The final arbiter of what it is that gets taught, is the classroom teacher" (Berliner, 1984, p. 53). Gray and MacGregor (1987) posit from their research on art teachers, that to hire a teacher is to hire a curriculum, and that teaching is a highly idiosyncratic activity. In other words, teachers are individually oriented to curricula based on their personal philosophy and life history. The claim can be understood in two complementary ways. First as outlined above, it is the teacher's perceived curriculum that defines the subject. This is supported by the notion of teaching as idiosyncratic activity. Yet, while the curriculum as text may gather dust on the shelf, there is consensus; a tacit agreement among teachers of a subject about what is considered important to teach (Gray & MacGregor, 1987).

Apple (1993) conceives of curriculum as a process, as lived, rather than a document or "thing". Process in his words does not equal a course of study or a syllabus, but goes beyond that to be "a symbolic, material and human environment that is ongoingly reconstructed" (p. 144). King (1986) states this more eloquently: "Curriculum is a situated event. ... to which all

the elements of the physical environment and the social context contribute" (p. 36-37). The social context or environment includes a historical dimension making it appropriate to place the curriculum community in question in terms of the contemporaneous as well as historical location (Goodson & Walker, 1988; Kliebard, 1992; Pinar, 1988; Pinar & Reynolds, 1992).

#### A way to view the development of school subjects in their symbolic environment

Educational policy as text is set in contexts outside the classroom where it is implemented. In western democracies curriculum, as other educational policies, are debated in the political sphere. These debates revolve not merely around the question "what knowledge is of most worth?" but "whose knowledge is of most worth?" (Apple, 1993). These questions combined raise the issue of access not only to knowledge acquisition but to knowledge construction and legitimation. The question of whose knowledge presumes that knowledge can be identified with individuals, groups and institutions, that there are stakeholders in curriculum (Connelly, Irvine & Enns 1980).

The relative importance attached to school subjects is thus rooted in social traditions, historical, rather than contemporary conditions. To illustrate the historical development of the school subjects art and crafts I use a model based on the work of Goodson (1987), Reid (1984) and Meyer and Rowan (1983). The development of school subjects is seen as having four stages:

**I. Invention** is when innovators introduce a topic or an issue into their curriculum. This is a local event, but can happen in several places simultaneously. Art and crafts in various forms were introduced into the emerging school systems of North America and Western Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. While there was a certain exchange of ideas,

innovation also had local characteristics. In Prussia, drawing and handicrafts were introduced and these programs influenced Russian and French vocational education on one hand, and on the other, to some extent inspired the Nordic craft education. Sweden became a veritable craft education empire, exporting its conception of the subject all over the world. The industrial drawing program of the South Kensington institute in England was widely disseminated throughout the British Empire (Ashwin, 1981b; Chalmers, 1990; Efland, 1990; Lind et.al. 1992; Ryegard, 1982; Thorbjörnsson, 1989).

It is a matter of definition which reference to manual work or crafts in the context of education or upbringing should be counted as the onset of the phase of Invention (see chapter 2). The value of manual work in education was propounded as early as in the mid-1700's, but actual movement towards the establishment of public schools did not gain momentum until the late 1900's when towns started growing, albeit slowly. In 1890 only 12% of the population of Iceland lived in towns. This development falls within colonial times in Iceland, for the country was a colony of Denmark and did not gain sovereignty until 1944. Icelandic society was a farming society well into the twentieth century. Social organization was based on the farming household wherein a land-owning farmer was the master. The household consisted of the farmer's family and a number of male and female farmhands as well as paupers (Bragi Guðmundsson & Gunnar Karlsson, 1986; Jón R. Hjálmarsson, 1996).

The general education of children consisted of basic reading skills, the rudiments of Christianity and learning to work by participating in the household and farming tasks as their strength and maturity allowed (Tilskipun um húsagann á Íslandi, 1746; Bragi Guðmundsson & Gunnar Karlsson, 1986). The organization of wool production as a home craft rather than

industry meant that every hand on the farm was needed, hence children had their tasks as well as the adults. The oldest teachers interviewed for this study recollected wool production as it had been known for centuries (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916; Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913; Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918).

The rise of capitalism, industrialization and ensuing demographic changes created new pedagogical needs. Throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth there was little provision of secondary education other than the Grammar School. This was the education for prospective colonial administrators. For them the road to university education in Copenhagen was open. Only a handful of exceptionally bright pupils from lower class background were fortunate to receive sponsorship to seek such education (Heimir Þorleifsson, 1972). The first attempts at public schooling were made with reference to and resources from Denmark, and sporadic attempts to establish schools were made from the mid-eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth century. These schools offered mainly what was considered the basic instruction: reading, writing and religion as well as some arithmetic (Bragi Guðmundsson & Gunnar Karlsson, 1986; Heimir Þorleifsson, 1972; Lýður Björnsson, 1981). From the 1880's to the passing of the first Elementary Education Act in 1907, several bills on education were proposed to Alþing and debated at length. Several educational establishments for children came and went, but actual diversification and increased access to education did not start until around 1870 (Bragi Guðmundsson & Gunnar Karlsson, 1986; Ingólfur Á. Jóhannesson, 1983; Lýður Björnsson, 1981).

The late nineteenth century was a time of political change as ideals of national and individual liberty gained currency. The status of women became a focus of attention and women's

education an agenda. In 1874 the Kvennaskólinn (The Ladies Academy) was founded in Reykjavík, and subsequently schools for young women opened around the country. There were two distinct policies in women's education here as elsewhere, and these policies were often manifested in the name of the school. On one hand, there were schools simply titled Kvennaskóli or 'Women's School'. Those were related to the Ladies Academies of Europe and America and were in effect the female equivalent of a Grammar School (Ragnheiður Jónsdóttir, 1944). On the other hand, there were schools titled 'Húsmæðraskóli' literally 'School of Housewifery' hereafter referred to as Women's Domestic Schools. These schools were based on similar ideals as domestic education elsewhere in the Western world at the time, the notion that a progressive education in home economics as vocational education for women was imperative in the new society. (Guðrún Helgadóttir, 1991; Iðnsaga Ísland, 1943; Gunnar Karlsson, 1988;).

Some of the most influential Icelandic politicians related their ideas of public education to economic growth and sovereignty and argued for vocational education, and/or educational crafts (Jón Sigurðsson, 1842; Jón Þórarinnsson, 1891). In the late nineteenth century Icelandic tradesmen started to organize and work toward improvement of their training and education as well as supporting initiative in trades and manufacture. In 1873 the Tradesmen's Guild in Reykjavík started a Sunday school, where various subjects, mainly drawing, were taught (Gísli Jónsson, 1967). The first legislation on tradesmen's training, passed in 1893, was modelled after Danish law and an Icelandic law on the matter was not passed until 1927 (Iðnsaga Íslands, 1943). In accordance with the importance of farming there was a stronger movement to establish schools of agriculture, and three such schools were founded in the period 1880-1889 (Bragi Guðmundsson & Gunnar Karlsson, 1986).

The debates on the division of responsibility for education between home and school relate to the struggle over urbanization. The landowning farmers were the strongest opponents of public schools, which must be viewed in the context of their struggle to maintain control over the labour force for a very labour intensive farming operation. This control was threatened by new opportunities for landless people in the budding towns (Gísli Ágúst Gunnlaugsson 1988, Ingólfur Á Jóhannesson 1983). It was the changed life style, the separation of work and home, and particularly the increased personal autonomy of the landless that preoccupied those who concerned themselves with public policy. There was a fear of urban vice, particularly the vice of idleness among the young, who did not have their place in production as did their rural counterparts. There was a particularly strong reluctance to establish schools in rural areas, where the homes were generally seen to be in a position to educate their young, especially in crafts. These debates resounded in the Alþing throughout the closing decades of the nineteenth century (Alþingistiðindi 1887, 1895; Bjarni Daníelsson, Guðrún Helgadóttir, Skúlína Kjartansdóttir, 1982).

The example of Prussian schools was often cited in the discussion of public education, so too were references to the Scandinavian countries, where manual education such as drawing and slöjd 2) was often cited as a remarkable instance of practical education (Eiríkur Sigurðsson, 1928; Halldóra Bjarnadóttir, 1911; Jón Þórarinnsson, 1891; Ólafur Þ. Kristjánsson, 1946; Steingrímur Arason, 1919). Specific skills such as drawing, drafting and woodworking, as well as general work habits of neatness, precision and diligence, were prized and had to be taught in school as the home lacked the means to educate for work in the new social order (Aðalsteinn Sigurðsson, 1936; Ashwin 1981b; Jón Sigurðsson, 1842;). Johansson (1989)

points out that the development of crafts, or more specifically slöjd, as school subjects are a pivotal issue in regard to the transfer of responsibility from home to school.

The arguments that Jón Þórarinnsson (1891) presented for these subjects are worth repeating here as they are echoed in the interviews conducted for the study. Speaking of slöjd in particular Jón argues that its significance as a school subject lies in its broad benefits to the development of the individual rather than in acquisition of specific skills. The latter is in his mind just a bonus to the overall effect of training pupil's perception, appreciation of precision, regular work habits, strengthening resolve, health and physical strength. Jón draws a distinction between school crafts -- which he advocates - and home crafts. He relates the two in his second argument for school crafts; that they could save the public from the idleness and consumption that could ensue from the decline of home crafts (Jón Þórarinnsson, 1891). These arguments are essentially the same as those put forward in the interviews a century later (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959; Elínbjört Jónsdóttir, b. 1947).

Those were the arguments of advocates for public education and for manual subjects, but a contemporaneous source complained that the public considered anything beyond basic instruction useless and directly harmful for girls (Ögmundur Sigurðsson, 1888).

Nevertheless, there were examples of schools where drawing and crafts, most often textile crafts for girls, were taught. The workschool ideology found its way to Iceland and one recorded attempt at offering such a program is the operation 1791-1812 of a pauper school. There children worked for their upkeep while receiving instruction in basic vocational skills, literacy and numeracy (Bjarni Daníelsson, Guðrún Helgadóttir, Skúlína Kjartansdóttir, 1982).

After almost a decade of deliberation, Alþing got serious about public education and commissioned Guðmundur Finnbogason to do a survey of educational provision for children in Iceland and to make recommendations for it. Guðmundur was highly educated, he held a Ph. D. in psychology from the University of Copenhagen, and later became one of the first professors of the University of Iceland. Guðmundur published his report in 1905 and was subsequently asked to draft a bill on public education, which was put to Alþing that same year. The bill was hotly debated, and finally in 1907 Alþing passed an education act making educational provision for 10-14 year old children compulsory. Although advocates of the subjects, fought hard for their inclusion, Alþing rejected such expensive frills as part of the formal curriculum.

II. Promotion is the phase in which the innovators and other promoters of the topic seek acceptance for it as legitimate and later central in the curriculum. This is in a sense where the human environment develops a certain curriculum community, which seeks a place for the subject in the symbolic environment of formal curricula. In Iceland, Halldóra Bjarnadóttir's promotion of textiles as a school subject offers a view of how the promoter mobilized support for the subject through social movements of her time (Guðrún Helgadóttir, 1991). The Swedish example of Otto Salomon and his promotion of craft education shows another strategy aimed at administrators and teachers, where the innovation was marketed as educational materials complete with a sequential curriculum, equipment and teacher manuals (Thorbjörnsson, 1989, 1990).

The 1907 education act stipulated that communities should establish permanent schools, but as a temporary measure, communities could employ itinerant teachers. The majority of Icelandic children in 1907 lived in rural areas where itinerant teaching prevailed as the

communities were unable or unwilling to meet the cost of building a permanent school.

Itinerant teachers rarely taught handicrafts and drawing, consequently such instruction was only available to a minority (Guðmundur Finnbogason, 1905). Nevertheless, the 1908 time allotment recommendations proposed 2 hours a week for handicraft instruction, which was an important step in the process from promotion to legislation of the school subjects. Over the next couple of decades, until the oldest participants in this study started elementary school, the situation did not change substantially. Handicraft instruction was suggested as a school subject, but only offered in the few places where the facilities or the enthusiasm of the teacher allowed. The pragmatic arguments for crafts and/or drawing as a vocational component in education were not as persuasive in the resource based Icelandic economy as they were in industrialized societies of mainland Europe and North-America where skilled labour in design and manufacture was needed (Efland, 1990; Ashwin, 1981a).

The promotion process of craft education was accelerated by a new voice in the educational discourse, that of an emerging profession of teachers who often were promoters of the pedagogic tradition. Around the turn of the century the first professionally trained elementary teachers began to take their posts in the newly founded schools. Among them were some insistent and articulate spokespeople for drawing and handicraft, such as Halldóra Bjarnadóttir, Laufey Vilhjálmisdóttir, Ögmundur Sigurðsson and Eiríkur Sigurðsson.

The promoters of craft education derived their ideas to a large extent from the workschool tradition of mainland Europe. Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Fröbel were an inspiration to many Scandinavians, who in turn were a direct influence on Icelandic promoters of education. For example the Finnish scholar Uno Cygnæus is cited by Jón Þórarinnsson (1891) and Cygnæus

came in contact with the writings of Prussian and French educationists such as Pestalozzi, as a tutor in Petersburg (Lönnbeck, 1910). As their colleagues throughout the world, Icelandic teachers and school promoters followed the work of Otto Salomon, director of the Naas seminarium and author of numerous publications on educational handicrafts. Salomon, in turn, counts Cygnæus among his strongest influences (Thorbjörnsson, 1990). The ties with Denmark were of course strong, as Iceland was a Danish colony and many Icelanders trained as teachers in Denmark or sought further education there, such as craft courses at the Askov seminarium or Handarbejdets Fremme textile teacher training school in Copenhagen (Ólafur Kristjánsson, 1958).

When education was made universal, the material resources to provide for all pupils were really not in place in Iceland. First of all, there were only enough school buildings to house about half of the pupil population in regular schools. The rest were provided for by itinerant teachers who would teach at several locations in turn. A regular school was defined as a school operating 5-6 months per annum, whereas an itinerant school was to provide each pupil with the minimum of 2 months instruction per annum (Lög um fræðslu barna 59/1907). In most cases the itinerant school was housed on a local farm where there was some space available. Later it became common to have a school house even if the school was not regular. Given these conditions it was difficult to accommodate any instruction that required materials or equipment of any sort. The difference between the provision in regular and itinerant schools is evident in school records. In 1915-'16 craft instruction was offered to 41% of pupils in regular schools compared to 4% of pupils in itinerant schools (Hagskýrslur 34, 1923).

Itinerant schools operated well into the twentieth century and quite a few of the teachers interviewed in this study had attended such schools (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913; Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916; Axel Jóhannesson, 1918; Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919) and one, Ingimundur Ólafsson (b. 1913), taught as an itinerant teacher in the early 1930's. Although official records show that drawing and craft was taught to a lesser extent in the itinerant schools, three of the teachers recall some instruction in the subject. Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) and Sigurður Úlfarsson (b. 1919) recall decorative textile work such as embroidery but Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir (b. 1916) knitting slippers. Ingimundur Ólafsson (b. 1913) remembers that it was very difficult to offer any craft instruction as an itinerant teacher. The crafts he had been introduced to in teacher training had limited application in the rural situation.

Crafts were more likely to be on the curriculum of the larger schools in towns. In 1911 three schools, Reykjavík Elementary, Landakot Catholic School and Akureyri Elementary, showed craft objects made by pupils. A description of the exhibition suggests that textiles and wood and metalwork at Reykjavík and Akureyri elementary was inspired by curricula in the other Scandinavian countries such as the sequential slöjd programme at Naas in Sweden or the Askov programme in Denmark. Landakot Catholic School displayed more in the way of fine embroidery or artistic crafts (Skólablaðið 5, 1911). Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) was a pupil at Landakot Catholic School in 1930. There textiles started early for girls, but drawing was reserved for the upper grades. The projects she made were not the standard projects introduced in the public school system

III. Legislation is the inclusion of the topic in the symbolic environment of a formal or official curriculum, for example as a compulsory school subject at given grade levels. This

happened within the first 30 years of the Icelandic elementary school system, drawing was made compulsory in 1926 and the craft subjects in 1936 (Bjarni Daníelsson, Guðrún Helgadóttir & Skúlína Kjartansdóttir, 1982). With this stage comes the requisition of a place for the subject in the material environment of schools.

Around 1930 a movement for secondary education was emerging. In the rural areas new schools, the Rural Secondary Schools were founded. These schools were to provide young people with a basic and vocational education preparing them for life and work in the rural community. Manual subjects such as wood and metalwork, textiles and weaving had an important place in the curriculum. Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918), Ingimundur Ólafsson (b. 1913) and Jakobína Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1925) all received their secondary education in such schools. In all cases the craft subjects were represented in the curriculum, but it depended on the facilities and instructors exactly what craft was offered.

In 1933 a committee was struck by Alþing to revise the existing elementary education act. Among the recommendations contained in an elementary education bill presented as a result of the committee's work was to include crafts among the compulsory subjects. The main argument put forward was that crafts were commonly taught in the regular schools and, as the intention was to make all schools regular, the subjects might as well be made compulsory (Alþingistiðindi A, 1934, p. 540). The education act of 1936 made schooling compulsory for 7-14 year olds, thereby clearly signalling the end of the era where education at home supervised by the clergy and itinerant schools were acceptable provisions for elementary education. It further stipulated that crafts be compulsory subjects. The act does not specifically mention textiles and wood and metalwork, nor does it suggest gender segregation

in crafts. It simply states that at the completion of compulsory schooling a child should have received some instruction in handicrafts (Lög um barnafræðslu, 1936).

The implementation of the act was further specified in curriculum documents where the crafts were defined in terms modelled after the slöjd tradition of school crafts then common in other Nordic countries. A sequential curriculum in textiles for girls and woodwork for boys was put forward. However this seems not to have been the intention of the working committee struck by parliament in 1920 to prepare a new education act (Guðmundur Finnbogason and Sigurður P. Sívertsen, 1921). Some of the most influential promoters of the subjects such as Otto Salomon, the author of the Naas slöjd curriculum well known world wide at the time, and Icelandic advocates such as Halldóra Bjarnadóttir and Jón Þórarinnsson argued for the value of the subjects for both sexes. But responses to the questionnaire that Guðmundur Finnbogason and Sigurður P. Sívertsen (1921) based their report on suggest that the traditional view was that education should be gender specific, particularly in practical or manual subjects such as crafts.

Despite the fact that crafts had been made compulsory, it was in many cases impossible to offer instruction in these subjects. The situation in itinerant schools did not improve rapidly from the state it was in when the curriculum committee of 1933 penned this description: "The teacher has to shift from one place to the next with books and equipment -- or rather with next to nothing in the way of books and equipment, lacking in all respects" (Alþingistíðindi A 1934, p. 544-545). Over a decade later a principal wrote to lament the fact that craft education is still in a sorry state. He maintained that this was not due to lack of interest by

teachers but simply because "most schools do not have the facilities to do justice to the subject" (Stefán Sigurðsson, 1945, p. 59).

Published papers on the subject of craft education in the 1920's and 1930's introduce the concept of creativity into the educational discourse. The earlier argument of training the hand and mind in a broad sense is focussed more narrowly; developmental significance in training hand and eye coordination -- which also becomes a stable reference in advocacy. The older rationales of self sufficiency and practicality remain, and the connection with economic and cultural sovereignty is also used, but such arguments are also dismissed more often than not by the advocates of personal expression and originality in children. This latest group speaks of letting the child enjoy its creativity and of allowing for spontaneous expression (Eiríkur Sigurðsson, 1928; Aðalsteinn Sigmundsson, 1936).

In the late 1930's and early 1940's, Lúðvíg Guðmundsson started writing on practical subjects. His views are important to this story, for he was to have a lasting influence on art and craft education, not the least as the founder of the first teacher education programs for specialists in the subjects. His ideas were perhaps most clearly expounded in his 1942 publication 'Teach the children to work'. There he discussed the pedagogy of Pestalozzi and the development of a work ethic as the core of education. Lúðvíg claimed that the work ethic consisted of objectivity, love of truth, the acceptance of responsibility and love of one's fellow. He further argued that crafts were uniquely suited to inculcate in children a work ethic for the product and the process of craft clearly signal to the child the value of their work.

There was increased demand for instruction in crafts and in drawing both to fulfil the demands of the elementary curriculum and to meet the needs of the growing domestic schools and secondary level programs including crafts, such as the rural secondary schools. The result was a shortage of suitably trained teachers. The demand for trained craft teachers increased even more over the next decade. First with a new legislation on rural secondary schools in 1940, which stipulated at least 12 hours of instruction in practical subjects per week. Young men should be prepared for construction work and craft production as part of the farming operation, and young women prepared for all common household chores in a rural home (Helgi Elíasson, 1945). The domestic schools offered a program which consisted two thirds of textile crafts, which called for a great number of teachers as well.

In 1939 Lúðvíg Guðmundsson, formerly principal of the Ísafjörður secondary school, announced the foundation of the College of Crafts. In the announcement of his new school Lúðvíg Guðmundsson stated three goals. First, it was to provide prospective and serving teachers with the opportunity for a solid education to specialize in various branches of craft education. Second, it was to offer the public with the opportunity to study various crafts. Third, it was to provide instruction in practical subjects for unemployed youth. Lúðvíg had recruited Kurt Zier from Germany to be the head teacher of this new school. Kurt Zier, as the head teacher and later principal of the school, also had enormous influence on the development of art and craft education in Iceland. The first courses offered at the College of Crafts were a course for prospective wood and metalwork specialists, a course in wood and metalwork for farmers, and a course for unemployed youth (Björn Th. Björnsson, 1979). In the early years, the students worked side by side in the workshop without much distinction

between those who were farmers and those who were prospective teachers (Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918).

The school was Lúðvíg's private enterprise for the first three years. After it was made an independent institution and a department of art was added. The school had applied for government funding and had been awarded some funds from Alþing, but the financial situation of the school for the first years was quite difficult, calling not only for dedication, but a healthy dose of optimism from everyone involved (Þórir Sigurðsson, b. 1927). Kurt Zier, who was trained and experienced as a graphic artist, was the main instructor of drawing and also gave lessons on art and craft pedagogy, a subject which Lúðvíg Guðmundsson also lectured on (Björn Th. Björnsson, 1979). In addition to the wood and metalwork teacher training and the art department, which trained those who wanted to be artists and art teachers side by side, the school always had a substantial number of courses for the public. Several of the teachers interviewed attended drawing courses there in the early years of the school (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Egill Strange, b. 1927; Þórunn Árnadóttir, b. 1929).

The need for a comprehensive revision of the education system was keenly felt in the tremendous social and economic upheaval of the war years. During the war, with occupation by the Allied Forces, Iceland was virtually thrown into industrialization on a previously unknown scale. The war and immediate post-war period saw considerable economic growth, and the need to sustain this with an education system for an industrialized nation was recognized (Ingólfur Á. Jóhannesson, 1983). Several educational options had developed. However, there was little coordination between schools and the distinction between levels of education and the resulting qualifications and their relative merit remained rather unclear

(Gunnar M. Magnúss, 1946). In 1941 Alþing appointed several educationists to review the education system and make recommendations. This committee presented seven bills to Alþing in 1945, which were eventually passed as law in 1946. These were acts on the Organization of the School System and Educational Provision, Elementary Education, Secondary Education, Teacher Education, A Model School and on Domestic Schools.

With this body of legislation the school system was divided into four levels: Elementary Education for children up to the age of 13; Secondary Education for pupils aged 13-16; Grammar and Training Schools; and University. Compulsory education was for children 7 to 14 years of age. The elementary level was defined as having two levels, primary and intermediate. Crafts were compulsory at both levels but drawing only at intermediate level. The teacher pupil ratio at elementary level was 40:1, except in crafts and swimming where it was half of that in other classes. Despite this legislation the problem of itinerant schools was still in evidence. The committee report contains the familiar refrains about the problems of providing anything but the bare essentials as instruction in schools that had no permanent facilities or staff: "The belongings of the school are subject to damage and disrepair due to constant shifting and often it is not even possible to apply existing teaching aids given the facilities" (Alþingistiðindi A, 1945, 138). Crafts, drawing and singing were singled out as subjects in which instruction was often impossible, both due to the facilities and to the teachers' lack of preparation. Itinerant specialists were suggested as an option (Alþingistiðindi A, 1945, 153).

The secondary level of education spanned four years. The first two of which were compulsory and at the end of which pupils sat the Youth Certificate or Completion Exam. A

three year program leading to the National Middle School Exam qualified pupils for entrance to grammar schools and training schools. A four year program led to Secondary School Certificate, which qualified for entrance to some training schools and a number of government sector jobs. These programs were offered through a variety of schools, and the so called Youth School encompassed the first two years of secondary school. Middle School offered the three year program as well, and a complete secondary school would offer the four year program as well. The four year program included two options; the academic and the vocational department (Lög um skólakerfi, 1946).

IV. Mythologization is the process of entrenching the subject in a central position in the curriculum, promoting it to such an extent that its importance is taken for granted (Goodson, 1987). Reid (1984) argues that this process takes place through interaction between the promoters and publics -- that is consumers of the curricular topic. In order for a curricular invention to survive in the long run it needs to have significance for an external public. Meyer and Rowan (1983) suggest that this significance lies in the value that the subject has on the social identity market. Conversely, it may be argued that some subjects become entrenched in a marginal position in the curriculum. Their lack of importance becomes taken for granted. There is a pervasive sense among art, craft and design teachers in the western world that their subjects do not enjoy central status in the curriculum. For instance the early legislation of the subjects in Iceland has not led to central status.

The vocational departments and their fate is of particular importance in this story. While the academic department of the secondary school was a direct continuation of an existing tradition the vocational departments were not. The three year option leading to the National Exam was a sort of a fast track toward grammar school and university, while the secondary

school certificate from an academic option led to some job qualifications and entrance to some training schools. The nature of the vocational departments was outlined in the legislation: "In a vocational department up to half of the instruction time should be devoted to practical subjects. Practical subjects include different kinds of crafts, cooking, household chores, drawing, handwriting, typewriting, sports and more... The rest of the instruction time shall be devoted to academic subjects" (Gunnar M. Magnúss, 1946, p. 83).

The curriculum committee stated that the intent is to provide a more varied secondary education in response to the needs and abilities of each student. At the same time the comment was made that the vocational option should in no respect be considered inferior or less prestigious than the academic. The committee voiced the hope that it would lead to a wider variety of qualifications (Alþingistiðindi A, 1945). However, in order for this to happen, the legislation on training schools would have had to take the vocational secondary school certificate more into account. In the long run the training schools preferred their entrants to possess either the academic secondary school certificate or matriculation exam from grammar school, the Teachers' College being a case in point.

Members of Alþing questioned not only the feasibility of a secondary level segregated into academic and vocational departments, they questioned the social and cultural implications of such a policy. Reservations were immediately voiced about whether the legislation would serve to enhance the status of practical knowledge in a society that had sorely neglected practical subjects and placed far more prestige on academic studies. It was warned that the separation into academic and vocational options would in practice mean a hierarchy where the vocational option would be devalued as the public would deem the academic option more

prestigious and advantageous for their children. The critics argued that it would be counterproductive to separate education for the hand and the mind at such an early stage and pointed to the rural school legislation of 1939, where practical subjects were made compulsory for every student, as a more feasible option to enhance practical knowledge in Icelandic society. The proposed division of the secondary level into academic and practical subjects would in their words "devalue and tarnish the reputation of the productive labour" (Alþingistiðindi A, 1945, 297).

The dire predictions and warnings about the fate of vocational departments in a two tiered secondary system that were issued by critics of the 1946 legislation came true. The development of vocational departments at senior secondary schools never became a priority, either with the schools or the public. Adding a vocational department entailed considerable cost for a school and did nothing to enhance its prestige. The public wasn't exactly clamouring for vocational education either. Many of the teachers interviewed recall that the public perception, and even that of teachers and principals, was that the vocational option was for the less able student (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933; Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948; Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir, b. 1953; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959).

The only institution solely devoted to vocational education; the Vocational Secondary School in Reykjavík, was founded in 1951. It was in part based on the model of comprehensive secondary schools in North-America. The program consisted of a core of academic subjects compulsory for all pupils and then a specialization consisting of a core of courses as well as several elective courses. The academic core comprised about half of the total curriculum and

students could select one of five specializations or departments. These were two textile departments; one devoted to weaving, sewing and embroidery, the other more focussed on dress and garment making and machine stitching. There was an industrial department with a wood work and a metal work option, there was a department of home economics and one of fisheries. Courses in home economics were included in all departments but the industrial. Drawing or drafting and design was taught in the textile and industrial departments. An elective course in art was also available.

Outside Reykjavík there was little done to develop the vocational secondary school option. Magnús Jónsson, quoted in Bjarni Daníelsson et. al. (1982), blamed this on complete lack of facilities for the instruction as well as a shortage of qualified teachers. Many school boards were also reluctant to assume the costs associated with a vocational department, which is understandable considering that in many cases it was a struggle to provide classrooms for the entire compulsory school population. There were of course exceptions. Schools where the vocational option was held in regard was allocated resources, particularly at the rural secondary schools where practical subjects had been important from the outset. Magnús Jónsson mentioned in particular the Laugar Rural Secondary School for its facilities and offering of programmes (Bjarni Daníelsson et al, 1982). Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) was a pupil there in 1934-36 and already then the school had a well developed and supported program in wood work.

The struggle to develop the vocational secondary option was compounded by the half hearted implementation policy adopted by Alþing and the Ministry of Education. Not only were the qualifications resulting from Secondary School Certificate from a vocational department

unclear, but an official curriculum for vocational studies was never published. Teachers therefore had high autonomy in developing their programs, and yet nothing official to refer to in their efforts to establish the programs (Bjarni Daníelsson et al., 1982; Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932). Through negotiation and cooperation with the College of Trades, the School of Mechanics and the Technical College the Vocational School in Reykjavík tried to establish itself and ensure that their pupils earned qualifications for further study. For instance, completing the wood work department program at the school gave the graduate transfer credits toward the journeyman's training at the College of Trades, reducing the time that the training took (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b.1919; Magnús Jónsson quoted in Bjarni Daníelsson et al. 1982).

The social class association of the craft subjects is of significance in understanding their marginal position in the curriculum. They represent aspects of material culture -- the design and making of objects and images is their subject matter. There they are akin to art and this relation is often acknowledged in formal curricula by grouping them together in formal curricula. Despite the relation there are important differences in the socially constructed understanding of these subjects. In terms of social class, the crafts are associated with manual labour of the lower classes, rather than intellectual labour more readily associated with high class status. Art is associated with Fine Art, its disciplinary origins traced to the conception of art and artists of the Renaissance period in Western Europe. Crafts on the other hand are associated with the Minor Arts and industry (Lucie-Smith, 1981; Pye, 1964; 1968). Collectively crafts are not a gendered phenomenon, but as with other aspects in the world of work there is a tradition of gendered division of labour. The invention and promotion of crafts as school subjects did not challenge the age old tradition in Icelandic society, where

men worked outside and women inside the home, a literal distinction in the farming environment (Sigríður Dúna Kristmundsdóttir, 1989). Interestingly Jón Þórarinnsson (1891) did issue one such challenge though, compared to the arguments for equal access to education put forward in the 1960's. Jón believed that the pedagogical benefits of woodwork as a school subject accrued to girls as well as boys, if not more so. "In regards to the objection that woodwork is not women's work, the slöjd<sup>2</sup> is an excellent tool to uproot the stupid notion that women should not know but a few things in life. When men and women stand side by side at school doing the same things, then the distinction between men's and women's work will be obliterated. Then women will really start to have faith that they are not specifically created for knitting and sewing, but in reality are capable of much more" (Jón Þórarinnsson, 1891, p. 18).

Such ideals were central to the drive for gender equality in education, particularly the demand for equal access to education which was prominent in Iceland during the 1970's. During this period women sought fields of work and study that were male-dominated and out of traditional feminine pursuits (Guðrún Helgadóttir, 1995b). The concomitant devaluation of traditional women's work is an instance of what hooks (1984) describes as sexism among women. This was a blow to the traditional arts and crafts that women pursued and the hiddenstream became even more hidden (Chicago, 1980; Collins & Sandell, 1984). The possibility of combining feminism and traditional women's work was not conceivable at that point, not until a new generation of feminism sought to restore women's traditions

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<sup>2</sup> Slöjd or sloyd, as the term has been spelled in English, is the collective noun for the school subjects textiles and wood and metalwork as they are known in the Scandinavian school systems. Otto Salomon is credited with choosing the term, which stems from Old Norse and means craft. It includes the same ambiguity as the English term, referring both to skill and alluding to sorcery. Incidentally, the collective noun in Icelandic is not root related to slöjd. The Icelandic term is handavinna, which literally translates as manual work.

(Ahopelto, 1988; Guðrún Helgadóttir, 1995b; Parker, 1986; Sigríður Dúna Kristmundsdóttir, 1989).

In crafts people tend to honour tradition by following conventions rather than breaking them. The emergence of a "grey zone" of art created by using crafts materials and techniques, elevated craft to art status after the fact. Crafts such as quilts hung on gallery walls, or created on fine art premises, has not challenged the distinction between art and craft (Becker, 1982). Feminist art historians and art educators suggest that there is a mainstream art which is professional or belonging to the productive sphere, and a hiddenstream art which is domestic or of the reproductive sphere. There is an overlap between the categories of craft and hiddenstream as well as art and mainstream art. Women are over represented among hiddenstream artists but under represented among mainstream artists, which suggests a gendered relationship to work (Ahopelto, 1988; Chicago 1980; Collins & Sandell 1984; Parker 1986; Parker & Pollock; 1987).

A distinction can also be made in the craftworld between objects that are made for sale and objects for personal use. The craftsperson who works out of a studio producing objects for sale has a different orientation to work than the craftsperson who makes objects on the dining room table or the kitchen floor. The school subjects art, textiles, weaving and wood and metalwork bear the imprint of these distinctions as well as the commonality. It is important to keep both in mind, but here the focus will remain on the craft subjects.

#### Traditions of Art and Craft Curricula as Text

Apple's (1993) symbolic environment does loosely parallel curriculum as text. Curriculum as text encompasses the ideal curricula of educational discourse and the official or formal

curricula. The formal curricula result from the political process of curriculum development and adoption as educational policy. Formal curriculum has a physical manifestation as a document -- there is a "thing" called the curriculum. The printed remnants of educational discourses are evidence of the public claims made by stakeholders. A favoured method of sorting and classifying art education curricula is to analyze the rationales or goals of ideal and formal curricula (Day, 1972; Efland, 1979; 1990; Eisner, 1979; Gibson-Garvey, 1985; Hamblen, 1984; Hobbs, 1984; Kern, 1985; Lanier, 1977; Thelen, 1971). Another method, preferred by researchers interested in social and historical aspects of curriculum, is to trace ideal and formal curricula to social structures such as gender, ethnicity and class (Amburgy, 1990; Berge, 1992; Chalmers, 1990; Efland, 1985; Freedman, 1987; Freedman & Popkewitz, 1988; Korzenik, 1985; Lemerise & Sherman, 1990; Stankiewicz, 1982; Zimmerman, 1991).

The symbolic environment of craft education was imported to Iceland in the late 19th to early 20th centuries. Therefore the traditions that developed in neighbouring countries are of importance here, particularly the traditions in the Nordic countries. Analysis of art and craft education rationales as they appear in the written remnants of educational discourses suggests two main traditions in this field; the *vocational* and the *pedagogical*. Of those the the vocational has been researched and named by art educators with reference to industrial drawing and industrial education (Soucy & Stankiewicz, 1990; MacDonald, 1970). The pedagogical tradition has not been as thoroughly explored by English speaking art and craft researchers, but enjoyed more attention on mainland Europe (Ashwin, 1981a; Johansson, 1989; Petterson & Asen, 1989; Ryegard, 1982; Thorbjornsson, 1990; Trotzig, 1989).

## **The Vocational Tradition**

The Protestant work ethic was the morality propounded by 19th century school promoters. Honest labour was a virtue and source of spiritual fulfillment. In the industries where labour was increasingly divorced from intellect, it was soon apparent to many that this morality of work was at odds with the alienating experience of work (Kliebard, 1992). The perception of social crisis increased the emphasis on morality, its decline and resurrection in the late 19th and early 20th centuries parallels important social changes in Western Europe and North America. The late 19th century and early 20th century was an era of demographic mobility, women's growing presence in the public sphere, urbanization and immigration/emigration. These factors profoundly shook the social fabric of stratified by class, ethnicity and gender (Curtis, 1988; Efland, 1990; Florin, 1988; Guðrún Helgadóttir, 1991; Katz, 1976; Prentice, 1989).

Public education systems for the labouring classes were founded as an avenue of improvement. By the early 20th century the public school system in most western societies had been established. Lower class children were in school and the time was ripe for reflection on what they should be schooled in and how. One approach was to infuse their education with some aesthetic and ethical values of liberal education. This was premised on the hope of transfer, that society could be improved through improving the individual. Economic values were as bound up in education as moral values. These surfaced in the form of vocational education (Drost, 1977; Jón Sigurðsson, 1842).

The shift to mass production for market in a workshop or factory led to a redefinition of the work of artists and crafts people. Mass production meant a breakdown of the artisan role.

Whereas the artisan conceived and carried out a project, the new relations of production separated concept and execution. On one hand there were work components carried out by unskilled labour, and on the other, a design component carried out by skilled workers.

Design referred both to the conceptual work of planning a product and to the enhancement of products by ornament. This latter design component provided a new context for ancient arts such as embroidery and carving (Efland, 1985; Korzenik, 1985; Lucie-Smith, 1981).

Specific art and craft skills such as drawing, drafting and woodworking, as well as general work habits of neatness, precision and diligence, were identified as beneficial if not necessary for the industrial worker. Neither conventional training of artists nor the training of journeymen in the crafts and trades provided this kind of education. The demand for workers in this field called for a new kind of education in art and crafts. Under these conditions art and craft/design training became popular in the late 19th century (Ashwin, 1981a, Chalmers, 1990; Freedman, 1987; Korzenik, 1985; Petterson & Asen, 1989).

While the vocation of artist and the trades were for the most part male prerogatives, women gained vocational opportunities in the design component of industry. Middle class women who needed waged work welcomed these opportunities. Design had connotations of accomplishments rather than of industrial work and was therefore socially acceptable for women of this class. In this new art education the aesthetic tradition of art and craft education merged with the vocational (Anscombe, 1984; Ashwin, 1981b; Bennett, 1937; Callen, 1979; Freedman, 1987; Korzenik, 1985; Petterson & Asen, 1989; Zimmerman, 1991).

Industrialization was slow in Iceland, which did not become an industrial society until the mid 20th century. The need for a skilled workforce for manufacturing industries didn't exist

until late in the 20th century, and even at that point the manufacturing industries were but a fraction of the labour force. The educational needs of the emerging industrial societies of the late 19th century were therefore not present in Iceland, although the educational rhetoric concomitant with those needs was evoked (Guðmundur Finnbogason, 1903; Ingólfur Á. Jóhannesson, 1983; Jón Sigurðsson, 1842; Jón Þórarinnsson, 1891; Magnús Guðmundsson, 1988; Sumarliði Ísleifsson, 1987).

### **The Pedagogical Tradition**

A different tradition arose as the pedagogues concerned with mass education faced the task of devising not only curricula but instructional methods for large groups of lower class children. Until the mid 20th century the Nordic school tradition of art and craft [sloyd/slöjd] education owed most to early conceptions of mass schooling. In the pedagogical tradition, drawing and crafts, had little to do with art and craft as practiced in society. Rather they were conceived as contributing to the overall development of children as citizens by instilling in them the love, respect and aptitude for work (Ryegard, 1982; Salomon, 1891; Thorbjörnsson, 1989).

Curricula were planned as systems of projects by which these goals would be attained. The systems were designed according to the logic of the task and were sequential and suitable for mass instruction by teachers less than proficient in the craft. The tradition can be traced back to the pedagogical ideals of men such as Pestalozzi, Froebel and Cygneaeus. A basic premise was that children know nothing and need to be taught and drilled to achieve skill and the proper attitude (Ashwin, 1981a; 1981b; Lönnbeck, 1910; Thorbjörnsson, 1990).

Arts and crafts thus underwent a certain transformation from common or community knowledge to school knowledge. The pedagogues transformed commonly held knowledge

into a body of knowledge that was legitimate and manageable in the school context. The management and transfer of school knowledge became the prerogative of the teachers and school administrators, a new and growing segment of the middle class. In the Icelandic case school knowledge was further more "foreign" in that it was imported by educators who studied abroad (Guðrún Helgadóttir, 1991; Lýður Björnsson, 1981; Ingólfur Á. Jóhannesson, 1983, 1991; Þorsteinn Gunnarsson, 1990).

The invention of public schooling, the invention of art and crafts as school subjects, the second birth moment of education, signals the ascendancy and triumph of the pedagogical tradition. The invention, promotion and later legislation of art and crafts is however strongly affected by the earlier traditions with their class and gender connotations. Although the early proponents of the pedagogical tradition did not necessarily condone and, in some instances, criticized traditional gendered divisions of work, by and large such divisions were honoured (Ashwin, 1981b; Barter, 1902; Berge, 1992; Jón Þórarinnsson, 1891; Petterson & Asen, 1989; Ryegard, 1982).

Few of those who trace art and craft education history and trends have paid attention to the effects of institutional factors of schooling in shaping the school subjects (Ashwin 1981a, Berge 1992, Guðrún Helgadóttir, 1991; Petterson & Asen 1989, Ryegard 1982). The ascendancy of the pedagogical tradition is part and parcel of the professionalization of teaching and of the legitimation of school as opposed to common knowledge. A school subject is a manifestation of such school knowledge, not only as a symbolic environment of ideas, but also as a human and material environment.

### **Human Environment: Curriculum as a Community**

The political process of curriculum development and adoption ranges from statement of educational ideals to the negotiations and compromises of the various stakeholders in the curriculum. This process is of constant import in education and the lives of those who engage in it (Apple, 1993; Connelly, Irvine & Enns, 1980). "The means and ends involved in educational policy and practice are the results of struggles by powerful groups and social movements to make their knowledge legitimate, to defend or increase their patterns of social mobility, and to increase their power in the larger social arena" (Apple, 1993, p. 10).

While some stakeholders have more clout than others and the groups that are dominant economically and culturally can be seen to wield a wide influence, it would be simplistic to assume that they have absolute power to impose their will on education. As stated before, curricula, as other educational policies in Western democracies, are arrived at through consensus based on compromises and political accords. Dominant groups are, however, in a position to weight the compromises in their favour. This is as true for a decentralized education system such as the U.S.A. or Canada as it is of a centralized education system, such as Iceland. The whole society are stakeholders in curriculum, but only a few claim their stake by officially entering educational discourse. In the Icelandic case this group is comprised of politicians and political activists and educationists as well as professional journalists (Apple, 1990,1993; Ingólfur Á. Jóhannesson, 1991; Þorsteinn Gunnarsson, 1990).

In the discussion above, little attention has been paid to the role of teachers in shaping the curriculum. Their staked claim may not be as large as that of powerful social groups, but it is vital as their livelihood depends on it (Guðrún Helgadóttir, 1996). Consequently, teachers

and other school personnel such as administrators devote much energy to advocacy efforts aiming at shaping the curriculum (Irwin, 1988; 1993; Boyer 1995). Professional organizations, such as organizations formed around school subjects as a formal part of the curriculum community, are a force in this process. While these organizations may not have much political clout, they are a motivated, informed and active force on the interface between formal curricula and lived curricula, and are well placed to wield their influence.

In the previous section it was established that art and crafts as school subjects can be traced to different traditions. In the vocational tradition, which predates schools as we know them, artists and craftsmen had apprentices. Folk art and crafts were passed on through the work in which children participated from an early age. A rival emerged in the pedagogical tradition. These traditions have important implications for the community or human environment of the subjects. In the earlier traditions, practicing artists or craftspersons also taught their art or craft. The pedagogical tradition explicitly rejected the legitimacy of artists or crafts people as teachers. At the core of this tradition is the belief that only the practitioner of education, a teacher, is qualified to teach the school subjects. However, the older tradition lives on in the definition of the curriculum community and identity.

### Class

The term class is not used here in the specific sense used for social stratification studies, but rather in reference to the basic dichotomy of mind vs matter, which characterizes Western cultures. Mind, or intellectual and spiritual pursuits are accorded higher status, more respect, than matter, or manual and physical work. Crafts are strongly identified with manual labour and the physical properties of matter and the skills inherent in handling matter. Manual

labour has since ancient times been the lot of lower classes, whereas intellectual and spiritual pursuits have been the domain of upper classes.

As discussed in the sections on the vocational and pedagogical traditions the craft subjects came into the formal curricula in western school systems as part of the education of the masses; that is the lower classes (Ashwin, 1981a; 1981b; Chalmers, 1990; Efland, 1990; Ryegard, 1982). In the history of mass schooling a strong tension is evident between the will of the ruling classes, as evidenced in educational policies such as formal curricula and the will of the masses, to whom these policies were to apply. The 'masses' did not necessarily subject themselves to the ideal of social adaptation through education, but adapted educational options to individual and family strategies, often in the hope of using education to social and economic advantage (Barman, 1988; Callen, 1979; Korzenik, 1985). Manual subjects such as crafts were therefore not unquestionably accepted as a desirable education for children of the classes that earned their living through manual labour.

In the case of craft teachers, the "master craftsperson" is both a strong ideal and a reality. Berge (1992) found in her research on Swedish craft teachers in training that wood and metalwork teachers often entered teacher training programs after working in the trades. Reasons for the shift were often identified as a desire to work with people rather than objects, and, in some cases, health hazards or disabilities incurred on the shop floor that were not seen as disabling in the classroom context. These conditions indicate a potential tension between the vocational tradition on one hand and the pedagogical on the other. The former --pre-dating the social upheaval of the late 19th century -- shapes the subject communities into conformity with traditional gender and class affiliations. The pedagogical tradition shifted the subjects from their traditional societal context into the institutional context of schooling.

Thereby it became possible, although not generally accepted as plausible, to see the subjects out of the traditional gender and class context.

Berge (1992) utilizes an expanded notion of class that reveals more about gender than conventional definitions. Her notion incorporates the changes in educational and vocational status that individuals experience over their working lives. In terms of parents' education and occupation Berge (1992) found that Swedish textile teachers have a higher social class background than wood and metalwork teachers. Further, women frequently changed their class affiliation through further education or a new line of waged work. The higher class background of textile teachers reported by Berge (1992) matches the findings of Florin (1988) and Rinne (1988) that historically female teachers in Scandinavia tended to come from higher class background than male teachers. Berge (1992) also found that wood and metalwork teachers often had a working class or farming family and/or personal background. Their formal teacher training often represented the highest level of education in their family. Rinne (1988) found that the difference in class background between male and female teachers in Finland has decreased since 1968. A survey of Icelandic teachers indicates that they come from a lower middle class background, the number of tradesmen being notable among parents (Þórólfur Þórlindsson, 1988).

Possessing and appreciating fine art was a privilege, and an education in this privilege an accomplishment. Making fine or artistic crafts such as embroidery or tapestry were traditional female accomplishments of the upper classes. The formal education of upper class women in western societies often included extensive training in fine arts and crafts. In contrast there were strict regulations regarding textiles as a school subject for lower class

girls; for instance, in British and Swedish curricula. These were to safeguard against "fancy work" or artistic pursuits in textiles that were considered above the station of a lower class female (Berge, 1992; Parker, 1986). The male upper class generally did not engage in artistic or craft pursuits, they were patrons of the arts and the crafts (Ashwin, 1981; Parker, 1986; Theobald, 1984; 1988; Zimmerman, 1991). There is a tradition of approval of upper class women's interest in and pursuit of art and craft within the private sphere, as recreation or as domestic work. Theobald (1988) describes this as the accomplishment tradition in the 19th century UK. and its colonies. Class can thus be a less tangible concept than indicated by formal status, as in the class connotations of certain occupations or pursuits.

### Gender

In western cultures the notion of separate but complementary spheres of male and female activity is a powerful ideology with roots in the ancient Greek philosophy of the oikos and the polis, the private and the public. The public sphere was reserved for men and the private sphere was women's domain. Gender ideology accords different attributes to the genders. Women are attributed qualities such as gentleness, softness, weakness, virtue and morality and roughness, strength and aggression is attributed to men. These distinctions are significant for this study as they overlay the roles construed for workers dependent on the perceived nature of their work. Skill is a sociopolitical construct or an ideological category which is imposed upon work by virtue of the worker's status and gender (Anscombe, 1984; Callen, 1979; Cockburn, 1983; 1985; Elshtain, 1981; Grumet, 1988; Guðný Guðbjörnsdóttir, 1990; Maynard, 1989; Rosenberg, 1982).

Cockburn's (1985) research on the gendering of jobs and people indicates that the choice of materials to work with and the relationship with tools and equipment/machinery is strongly gendered. Hard materials, physical force and control of machinery is associated with manliness. Soft materials, physical weakness and operation -- as opposed to control -- of machines is associated with femininity (Cockburn, 1985; Maynard, 1989). In this study the perceived relationship of technological competence and male gender is of particular importance for the concept of craftsmanship. It is revealing that the concept is masculine in itself; there is no corresponding 'craftswomanship' to describe the skill and competence of craft as a vocation (Chicago, 1980; Cockburn, 1985). The manhood associated with craftsmanship relates to a preindustrial male gender role which is now an exalted idea of craftsmanship where the worker is autonomous, skilled and respected (Lucie-Smith, 1981; Maynard, 1989; Pye, 1968).

The all male job or profession becomes culturally suffused with masculinity: "Masculinity is bound up with the labour process, the notion of skill, and the experience of work" (Maynard, 1989, p. 159). Power associated with workmanship in the use of tools and machinery is repeatedly brought up in the writings of women who have entered male dominated trades and crafts. They commonly report that the technical know-how is preserved as a male domain and that men actively prevent women from acquiring it by strategies ranging from withholding knowledge to overt hostility and intimidation. The women reported doubts about ever becoming fully accepted members of their crafts or trades, and a constant need to prove themselves when facing their colleagues' reluctance to accept women's competence and professional authority (Cockburn, 1983, 1985; Kvinder i "mandejobs", 1987; Elinor et al, 1987; Schroedel, 1985).

There is a sharp contrast between these accounts and the accounts that women involved in traditional female crafts give of their involvement. They generally exude confidence in the skills and competence of the craft worker; the theme of solidarity, of belonging to a network of craft workers, is prevalent. Skills and knowledge are passed on freely by female kin or by friends and the apprentice's acquisition of these skills is rarely questioned. It is assumed that the girl will become proficient (Elinor et al 1987; Chicago, 1980).

While it may seem obvious that sexism is a major problem for women in male dominated fields, it has effects in female dominated fields as well, although they may not seem as evident (Collins, 1995). The manifestation of sexism in relations between women is of great importance in studying a female dominated profession such as teaching. It has been suggested that sexism among women is expressed by suspicion, competition and an unduly defensive stance. Part and parcel of this distrust and devaluation is the tendency among women who embrace feminist values to feel contemptuous and superior of those women who do not (hooks, 1984). This notion is useful in exploring two themes in this study. On one hand there were rigorous demands and strict regulation that evolved within the textile curriculum community; on the other the erosion of that community when second wave feminism took the stage with a concomitant rejection of past movements such as the maternal feminism (Sigríður Dúna Kristmundsdóttir, 1989).

Although the male/female division of labour may be similar through most of Europe it is questionable whether the form that it took in the Greco-Roman tradition should be taken to apply to all European societies and social groups. Regional, ethnic and social class factors that have important effects on the relations of gender and work. A gendered distinction prevailed in the crafts. Women tended to work in what might be termed the 'soft' crafts such as textiles,

whereas men worked with hard materials such as wood and metals. In the textile production in the Icelandic farming household, where all available hands were needed, the work was broken down into gendered components. Men, for instance shaved sheepskins, carded wool and knitted but they did not spin or sew (Magnús Guðmundsson, 1988; Elsa Guðjónsson, 1986; Halldóra Bjarnadóttir, 1966).

The notion of separate spheres has been useful to highlight differences in male and female experience. It has elucidated how historical and sociological inquiry has been misguided when based on the assumption that men and women experience the same social reality. Feminist researchers have shown how male and female experience of the same physical and temporal location differs radically, to the point where it must be questioned whether these constitute the same reality (Kelly, 1977; Millman & Kanter, 1987). The dichotomy of separate spheres is however limited as an explanatory framework. It has been argued that to view women's history as synonymous with the history of private life, as confined to home and family is to deny women's contributions to the public sphere, their participation in public life (Smith, 1987). Studies of productive work or waged labour tend to neglect the reproductive work that is inevitably carried out by or for the worker in order to sustain herself/himself. Among others, Scott (1988) warns that attempts to borrow paradigms from distinct theoretical frameworks such as Marxism may limit our understanding of work in that it offers a clear view only of the productive sphere.

The attention has moved from the existence of the two spheres to the interplay between them (Kelly, 1984; Lewis, 1986; Scott, 1987). This interplay is manifest in work, which should be defined as the locus of interaction between the public/private (Morgan & Taylorson, 1983). The concept of work should be used to inquire about the social relation between men and

women and the social organization of gender. Studies such as Cockburn (1985) and Pollert (1983), which clarify how workers' perception and experience of gender as constructed in the family is represented in the workplace, offer important insights.

These studies offer the basis for a critique of a conventional approach to the disproportionate representation of the sexes in various vocations. In the conventional approach the choices made by individuals rather than the context in which those choices are made are seen as problematic. Women's tendency to opt for traditional women's work is seen as a problem indicative of false consciousness. By focussing on the context as the location of the problem it is possible to conceive of traditional choices as rational and feasible from women's point of view.

At this point it is important to reflect on the historical development of choices in relation to work as rational responses to certain situations. The dual responsibility of family and waged work which women assume constitutes not only a workload, but also a certain orientation to, or understanding of, work. Concepts that have been formed to name the work men do, such as career, labour and leisure, cannot be unqualified descriptors of women's work (Lackey 1995). In a case study of two women scholars, Prentice (1989) portrayed the dynamic relationship between pursuit of a profession and loyalty to family responsibilities. Neither aspect of their life work seems to have terminated the other, they co-existed albeit in tension. Applying the labels of career and domestic work to analyze the work of these women would be reductive and obscure their achievements and the ways in which they were achieved and understood (Elgquist-Saltzman, 1985; Smith, 1987).

The conventional interpretation of women's career choices negates the rationality and legitimacy of individual choices (Acker, 1992; Anna G. Jónasdóttir, 1988; Gaskell, 1987; Prentice, 1989). Kathleen Gerson (1985) named her study of women's work "Hard Choices: How Women decide about Work, Career and Motherhood". In many ways this title reflects a paradox inherent in women's work. In the first instance the concept 'work' is placed alongside as equal to two fields of work; career and motherhood. The career is work in the public sphere and motherhood is work in the private sphere: women do not decide about work -- the decision is how to balance the workload in both spheres. By posing the problem this way it becomes a question of hard choices. For the concept of choice is not as relevant as that of obligation and compromise. Women do not choose a path as much as negotiate a passage through life where motherhood, marriage, job or career are not options to choose from but obligations to fulfil (Acker, 1989; Elquist-Saltzman, 1985; Gaskell, 1987; Lackey, 1995; Nias & Aspinwall, 1992; Smith, 1987).

Elquist-Saltzman (1985) suggests on the basis of her research on women's life histories that different rationales or ways of thinking apply in paid and unpaid work, or public and private sphere work. Decisions about education, career and the foundation of a family result from a complex interaction of social relations of daughter, mother and wife in a certain family of a certain socio-economic status in a particular environment (Berge, 1992; Elquist-Saltzman, 1985; Guðrún Helgadóttir, 1991; Prentice, 1988; Weiner, 1994). It may certainly be argued that compromise is the way of life for most people, regardless of gender. However, the acceptance of compromise is gender related, for women it is expected and an acceptable way for their gendered role conforms to the interdependence of the oikos. For men it is less so for

their gendered role conforms to notions of exerting authority and sovereignty as the acceptable way of the polis.

In exploring female teachers ideas of career and conception of their own career Nias & Aspinwall (1992) found that the women were ambivalent about promotion. Rising in the ranks was not part of the plan. If that had happened, the women offered explanation or justification. On the basis of their interviews with women teachers, they concluded that: "By mid-career considerable number have redefined the term, to mean the extension of personal interest, learning and development, rather than vertical mobility" (p. 1). Fitting personal goals to career goals was not in the picture, but threading a career path through personal goals was common.

Gender is an important part of the construction of the human environment that the craft curriculum communities are. Teaching, particularly of young students, is a female dominated vocation. The role of the school teacher, as most professions, was a public role originally conceived for men and thus shaped by the experience and interests of men. Grumet (1988) suggests that female teachers seek to repress their sexuality in order to conform to the role of teacher. If it is true for teaching in general that women suffer the effects of sexism, the problem is compounded in teaching subjects that are particularly male defined. These problems have a history as long as the history of schooling itself, and hence have historically contingent manifestations.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries the entrance of women into teacher training and teaching was reluctantly accepted in many countries. The effort that went into enforcing segregation of the sexes by restricting the behaviour of females suggests that female sexuality posed a grave

problem for many educational authorities of the early public school systems (Prentice, 1988). It was perceived as a threat to the moral integrity of the school. In many western societies, women teachers were obliged to be celibate, to repress their sexuality. Active female sexuality was considered incompatible with the teacher's role and marriage bans and other strict regulations concerning relations with men, were widely adopted (Oram, 1989). In the face of this perceived threat, female teachers and students were subjected to strict control by male authorities such as headmasters, school boards and school inspectors. Exertion of this control was integral to the work of teachers and their superiors, women taught under men's supervision (Curtis, 1988; Houston & Prentice, 1988; Prentice, 1988; Theobald, 1989).

While women's entrance into public school teaching was accepted as a necessary evil in many cases, there were school promoters who welcomed women into the profession. This seems to have been the case in Iceland, where women taught and served in administrative roles in public schools early on (Ólafur Þ. Kristjánsson, 1958). In the 19th century, the notion of the sexes as complimentary was prevalent and some of the attributes of the female were considered of particular benefit in teaching. The rhetoric of female aptness for teaching was based on the premise that the virtuous woman is morally superior to man, naturally fond of children, gentle and good. Thus the woman was seen as able to govern children by affect and moral suasion.

The feminization of teaching may have been facilitated less by ideals than by pragmatic reasons. Women were supposedly submissive to authority and entitled to, as well as accepting, of lower salaries than men (Preston, 1989). The match between rhetoric and reality was, however, less than perfect. Biographical evidence from early women teachers reflect the

need and desire for an independent lifestyle, and the need to support oneself and family as well as a desire for learning (Guðrún Helgadóttir, 1991; Preston, 1989; Theobald; 1988).

The combination of earning power and the official policies enforcing celibacy rendered female teachers relatively independent of men. It was soon noted by male colleagues that the spinster teacher, who had only herself to support, was economically and socially better off than a teacher's wife. This fuelled further hostility by male teachers toward their female colleagues and a perceived conflict of interest over wages, benefits and job security (Florin, 1988; Oram, 1989). This stance was not as prevalent in Iceland, where for one thing the marriage ban was not strictly enforced. The family wage concept dependent on one man was not compatible with a family economy where all members contribute to some extent, as was the norm for lower and lower middle classes. Only the upper class could conceivably sustain families based on the income generated by the male head of the household. According to the Directory of Teachers, a large proportion of male teachers have always had another occupation which contributed to their upkeep (Ólafur Þ. Kristjánsson, 1958; 1965 Ólafur Þ. Kristjánsson og Sigrún Harðardóttir, 1985; 1987; 1988).

In 1960-61 male teachers were 54.5% of elementary school teachers in Iceland. Five years later the proportions reversed so that 52.8% of elementary school teachers were female. In 1986 only about 20% of the graduates from the University College of Education were male, and at that point the student body was 88% female (Arndís Björnsdóttir, 1987). The feminization of wood- and metalwork teaching is a different issue. A trend is evident in teacher training where the number of women has been rising since 1980. From 1974, when the first cohort with a B.Ed. degree graduated, until 1980, no women graduated from the wood and metalwork program. From 1980 to 1986, 24 women and 37 men have graduated

from the wood and metalwork program while 159 women went through the textile program (Arndís Björnsdóttir, 1987).

The feminization of teaching is a concern in Iceland where two main arguments are cited as negative effects. One is the absence of male role models for boys in the primary and elementary school sector (Hafsteinn Karlsson, 1995). The other is the perceived relationship between the proportion of women in the profession and the declining salaries. Low salaries are often counted as the main reason why so few men choose to train as teachers, and the family wage concept is evoked here -- that the male head of a household is expected to provide the main income (Arndís Björnsdóttir, 1987; Hafsteinn Karlsson, 1995). Teaching as an extension of women's productive and reproductive labour in the home and gendered behaviour such as 'learned helplessness' and deference to male authority cloud the female teacher's vision of herself as a decision maker, change agent and authority figure -- attributes more readily envisioned in the school master (Grumet, 1988; May, 1989).

A third argument, which has not been touted publicly to the same extent, is that the many part-time female teachers are not as committed professionally as the full-time teacher. This relates to the status loss of professions and jobs that change from male to female dominance, whereby the job loses the association with manly power and authority (Maynard, 1989). The status loss relates strongly to the difficulty women have in assuming authority based on skill, particularly in male dominated fields (Cockburn, 1983; 1985).

Gender is thus a social relation which shapes the curriculum community and its identity in several ways. First, it has a decisive influence upon the conception of work, both in regard to what counts as work and to the authority of the worker. Second, occupations and tasks are

traditionally gender specific so that one craft subject is defined as male dominated, and the other one female dominated. Third, the relations of ruling are such that male dominated fields are more prestigious, putting a traditionally feminine pursuit such as textiles at a disadvantage.

### **Material Environment: Curriculum as a Site**

The physical environment in which learning and teaching takes place is part of the perceived, operational and experienced curriculum. In the case of craft teachers, this is of double importance. First, it is due to the focus on the material world that is implicit in the symbolic environment of their subjects. They are about objects and images, and these in turn have a physical, material manifestation. Second, the physical space and material resource allocation and maintenance within the institution school reflects the place and relative importance attached to school subjects (Gray & MacGregor, 1987; Guðrún Helgadóttir, 1989; May, 1989).

For those whose work is limited to language the physical production of their text is immaterial and invisible. For those whose work involves the physical manipulation of matter, the manipulation of thought into a physical manifestation as object is visible. For the art/craft/design practitioner text is not merely the product of an author. It is produced in a certain typescript, on paper of a certain weight and grade, laid out in particular proportions and printed with inks of particular substance -- all of which are repositories of meaning as much as the written words.

Similarly the physical environment in which the text is spoken or enacted is a repository of meaning. The architecture of school buildings is a lasting statement of educational policy, if

not of educational philosophy. What facilities the building has represents a curriculum cast in concrete matter. The presence or absence, style and location of designated spaces for instruction in particular subjects, is a reflection of their status or stage of their development.

### **Conclusion**

In the preceding discussion it was noted that art, design and/or craft education had vocational relevance in the late 19th and early 20th century manufacturing industries. As Korzenik (1985) illustrates with a family history, art education was linked to hopes and dreams for careers and prosperity in the field of design. Many authors have discussed the pervasive dream of educational and vocational opportunities through art education, especially for women (Efland, 1985; Zimmerman, 1991). These dreams related to the intellectual labour in the field, the design rather than execution of design and grappling with concepts rather than material.

The craft subjects focus on the material world. They are concerned with the making and understanding of objects, the execution of design rather than the intellectual labour of designing. Furthermore, the crafts are distinguished from trade and manufacture by their ties to domestic production and reproduction. As school subjects they relate to manual work and intellectual work closely tied to industrial and domestic production, to the labouring lower and middle classes, rather than the leisured upper classes. The development of industrial capitalism has been such that direct involvement in manufacturing has not been the road to prestige and power. Consequently these subjects have a rather low value on the social identity market, because for most people they do not contribute to a rise in social status. In Reid's (1984) terms, they do not have status relevance.

While it is recognized that there are multiple modes of knowing or multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1993; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberg & Tarule, 1986) western education systems operate on a narrow conception of knowledge. This conception favours the written word as the legitimate repository of knowledge and marginalizes images and objects as carriers of meaning. This is reflected in the centrality of reading and writing in the curriculum. The supremacy of text has become hegemonic to the extent that it is conceivable that reality is construed in and controlled by text (Theobald, 1991; Smith, 1987). This understanding is possible only from a standpoint which foreshortens the material relations of mind to matter, of thought to the object text.

The saliency of material meaning is central to the work of artists and craftspeople. It is also recognized in our society by the business world vying for consumers, by political actors seeking to sway public opinion, and by individuals expressing their image. The western world is a designed, image saturated world. Considering this, it is curious how marginal the material arts are in the curriculum at this point. This might best be explained by the fact that present actors are constrained by the institutional and ideological traditions they have inherited (Apple, 1990; Popkewitz, 1987). Goodson (1984) suggests that "Academism may be the cultural consequence of previous domination rather than a guarantee of future domination" (p. 195).

This suggests that there is a curriculum identity that is not idiosyncratic but collectively construed. While the entire society has a stake in the curriculum, there is in all cases a core community devoted to the various curricular topics or phenomena. This core, or curriculum community, encompasses those directly involved in the study, teaching and promotion of the

phenomenon, such as a school subject (Irwin 1993; Boyer 1995). A community does not spring into existence, it develops. Therefore it is necessary to place conceptual frameworks in historical context as well. This thesis is delimited to the development of three school subjects in a particular location of time and space.

Drawing upon the aforementioned distinctions I view curriculum on the one hand as text and on the other as community. It is more appropriate to narrow the concept of identification with knowledge to the curriculum identity assumed by the subject community (Eggleston, 1977).

This is a study of school subjects as a curriculum community; a *human environment* of interacting individuals, groups and institutions, engaged with a body of knowledge and skills stated in curriculum as text that could be termed a *symbolic environment*, in a *material environment* of physical space, materials and resources (Apple, 1993; King, 1986).

Furthermore, this study takes into account the development of that community and its identity over time (Goodson, 1984, 1987; Kliebard, 1992; Meyer & Rowan, 1983; Reid, 1984).

### CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study draws on various fields of research for its methodology and framework for interpretation. On the one hand it is an ethnography of a group of teachers, wherein their life histories are used to create a composite view of the identity of the group. On the other hand, it is a curriculum study. Those teachers represent the curriculum community of certain school subjects and therefore their life histories reflect the development of the school subjects. Ethnographic and historical method, specifically oral history, overlap here. This study has an historical dimension in that chronology and historical context -- the development of the school subjects and the individuals over time -- is a feature of the work. The claim that historical method is 'simply participant observation with data fragments, a kind of less adequate ethnography' seems valid in this context (Smith, 1984). Ethnography is however not without its limitations either, and one persistent criticism is that it is ahistorical (Giroux, Penna & Pinar, 1981; Goodson & Walker, 1988). Using life histories has been hailed as an avenue where the benefits of both ethnographic and historical method might be used, whereby triangulation may be achieved (Goodson & Walker, 1988; Smith, 1984).

An important dimension of this study is the analysis of the interviews as text, reflection on the gendered and classed meaning of what was and wasn't said, as well as how it was said. This latter dimension refers to the transformation of a social exchange, the interview, into a text to be analyzed. In short, these dimensions might be referred to as the text, or accounts of the teacher's life. And the subtext is an analysis and interpretation that is based on, but goes beyond, that account.

In this chapter I describe the research process and reflect on that experience. The opening section is a discussion of methodological and ethical issues in qualitative research drawing on ethnography, written and history and oral history. In the second section I try to account for my background and how this research came about -- what context my questions grew out of. The third section is a seemingly straight forward account of the process leading up to this text, from the early proposal stages through to the analysis and writing. The purpose of the latter two sections is disclosure: they represent my attempt at making my tracks in the text visible enough for the readers to take their bearings.

### **Life Histories Elicited Through Interviews**

There is a substantial and growing body of research on teachers' careers, where various research methods have been employed (see for example Acker 1989; 1992; Ball & Goodson, 1985; Berge, 1992; Elgquist-Saltzman, Gray & MacGregor, 1991; 1985; Sikes, Measor & Woods, 1985, Þórólfur Þórlindsson, 1988). Whereas the term career implies an emphasis on relationships with employers, fellow workers and workplace hierarchies, this study deals with the personal relationship that an individual has to the work she/he does. I want to know what it meant to be a craft teacher, what it meant to work in wood, textiles or metal, and what it meant to pass on to others the knowledge and skills associated with this work. In other words, I wanted to understand the curriculum identity of craft teachers in order to understand their work, their subject and the curriculum better.

I chose a qualitative method of inquiry. The study is based on oral evidence as is most often the case with lifehistories of 'ordinary people' (Hay, 1986; Lummis, 1988; Reimer,

1984). This does not only result from the scarcity of written record but from a particular interest in how people interpret the events of their professional life and how they explain themselves (Bertaux, 1981; Bourdieu, 1996; Chanfrault-Duchet, 1991; Faraday & Plummer, 1979; Kohli, 1981; Nias & Aspinwall, 1992). In-depth or long interviews were used to elicit the life history (McCracken, 1988; Bertaux-Wiame, 1981). The life histories or narratives from the interviews were subsequently connected with secondary and primary printed sources on contemporary social and educational history of Iceland.

In this respect the study draws on the methodology of oral history. Hodysh & McIntosh have defined oral history as the description and explanation of the recent past by life histories or recollections told by participants. The term oral history refers both to the means of collecting data and to the body of knowledge existing only in the memories of individuals. Oral evidence and documentary sources supplement each other in oral history. This study has some of the characteristics of an oral history project, but ultimately it is a contribution to curriculum studies and as such not meant to be 'a history'.

As outlined in chapter 2 the interest here is in the collective identity that a community develops and the manifestation of that identity in the life stories of individuals. Using the life history approach is an attempt at seeing the whole issue by locating the individual first in his/her relationship with the craft subject as part of an overall life experience; and second to place the individual and community in a larger socio-historical framework (Faraday & Plummer, 1979). There are two methodological issues that receive most attention in this study: the relationship between interviewer and participant; and the management of the researcher's subjectivity.

The transformation of the interview to text is compounded in this case by the fact that the interviews took place in one language, but are interpreted in another. We spoke Icelandic and the transcripts are in Icelandic, but I analyzed and wrote this text in English. This does not set the work apart in any way. The process of translation and interpretation is inherent in research whether the language of 'data' or 'evidence' is statistics, written documentation or the spoken word. As for the interview, common sense and experience suggest that language is always rendered problematic in the search for meaning in and around the actual words used. The process of translation should be more obvious in this case, but in reality it is not. It becomes a given as the english speaking reader does not have access to the original text. Therefore the negotiation of meaning has to an unusually large extent taken place a priori. I have translated the comments and quotes and asked the participants to verify what they said. But the reader has to rely heavily on common sense to assess how truthful the translation is. This is always the case with research, only here it is more obvious.

#### The Relationship Between Interviewer and Participant

Bourdieu (1996) argues for the necessity of acknowledging the nature of research as a social interaction, with respect and attention to the infinitely subtle strategies that social agents deploy in the ordinary conduct of their existence: "If the research interview relationship is different from most of the exchanges of ordinary existence due to its objective of pure knowledge, it is, in all cases, a *social relation*" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 18). In order to pursue knowledge through the interview the researcher must monitor the effects of "that kind of always slightly arbitrary *intrusion* which is inherent in this special

kind of social exchange" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 18). It is essential to be aware of the convergence and divergence between oneself as interviewer and the respondent. Understanding the interests, motives and presentation of both parties, is a vital part of the research process (Ball, 1990; Warren, 1988).

Bourdieu (1996) goes as far as to claim the interview as a spiritual exercise, where the interviewer welcomes the respondent into a unique relationship, based on unconditional intellectual love that is a readiness to meet and be devoted to the respondent as she is.<sup>3</sup> The interview is a unique situation in which the respondent is offered the opportunity to explain herself, to construct the world from her point of view, to fully delineate her vantage point within the world and become comprehensible and justified. For themselves most importantly: "It is a rare experience, outside some forms of analysis, for adults to spend a considerable amount of uninterrupted time talking about themselves to an interested other" (Nias & Aspinwall, 1992). This is where the interview becomes an event in which the respondent experiences the joy of expression which can lead to expressive intensity in the interview. But the unconditional love of the interviewer must not be blind, the interviewer is always watching.

In ethnographic and sociological research a respondent's self-consciousness and ensuing self-censure is inherent in the construction of meaning which takes place when the participant takes up the offer to explain herself (Bourdieu, 1996). Contradictions, selective memory, and modification are parts of this construction process, and are

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<sup>3</sup> As the interviewer and the majority of participants in this study are female, 'she' will be used in contexts where 'he' or 'she' might apply.

therefore as important as the events that gave rise to the meaning. As Hay (1986) put it: "... people live by what they believe to have happened rather than what actually happened" (p. 5). This is not to say that life history is just the participant's subjective account of her life. The life history should be conceived as having two aspects -- the evaluative and the referential (Kohli, 1981). Evaluative refers to the subjective restructuring of self image by the participant. Referential refers to the researcher's association of the life story with the historical events and conditions evidenced in sources other than the participant's account. Thompson (1978) argues that in this respect oral history does not significantly differ from other forms of history. Evidence should be evaluated for its internal consistency, correspondence with other sources and possible bias and its sources. On the other hand, Faraday & Plummer (1979) argue that part of the conditions mentioned above represent a major misunderstanding prevalent in the social sciences. The quest for generalizability imposes order and rationality upon experiences and worlds that are in reality ambiguous, problematic and chaotic. "Researchers seek for consistency in subjects' responses when subjects' lives are often inconsistent" (p. 777).

Rapport has been considered an essential factor in the successful collection of interview data. What this means, beyond the researcher's and participant's mutual consent to the interview, is debatable (Warren, 1988). Bourdieu (1996) argues that there is a social violence inherent in an interview situation where there is substantial difference between the cultural capital of the participant and interviewer. Hence the interviewer must either be of the same background as the participant, or be able to assure her of the ability and will to empathize. Similar concerns have been raised regarding the effect of race, gender

and ethnicity in the research situation. The argument is that research conducted by people in a privileged position of a less privileged group is inherently violent (Scanlon, 1993).

While I would not go as far as to categorically deny the value of such research, I believe that a researcher has a more solid foundation of knowledge and attitudes to build on when researching her own culture.

It would be an oversimplification, though, to take these considerations to mean that interviews are only successful if the relationship is harmonious (Borland, 1991).

However, as Bourdieu (1996) suggests, it is less threatening to discuss sensitive issues with a person of the same background than with someone who is perceived to be of a different social standing. Questions that would be aggressive coming from the outside are merely honest coming from the inside. There are instances where tension between researcher and participant bring forward information that would be submerged in a harmonious relationship -- especially when the two share a background -- and it is entirely possible that vital information would be so taken for granted that it never surfaces in the account. A perceived difference of opinion may lead the participant to elaborate or justify an issue that might have gone without saying if the researcher was assumed to be in agreement (Bourdieu, 1996; Hay, 1986; Warren, 1988).

Various researchers have discussed the effects of relative social standing in terms of gender, age and race, between researcher/interviewer and participant. These discussions range from concluding that the interviewer should be a chameleon, a lure, a mirror, a saviour or just plain herself -- whatever that means. None of these positions is generalizable. The role of the interviewer and the relationship between participant and

interviewer depends on the nature of the research project (Ball, 1990). The researcher and participant are individuals, each with attributes, attitudes and personal histories that will affect the interview. The degree to which they can establish rapport will vary, and may also change over the course of their collaboration. This should not be dismissed as a liability but seen as information in itself. Peshkin (1984) for instance, adds depth to a study of his by tracing how he adapted to the research environment and took on its colouring, thereby camouflaging what he normally perceived to be his identity. In ethnographic research this is perceived as a dilemma, whereas some survey research openly depends on choosing interviewers who will fit the research agenda (Bourdieu, 1996; Ball, 1990).

Lummis (1987) states that the interviewer should not volunteer her own opinions, experiences or values or in any way impose these upon the participant. This statement poses some practical difficulties in the actual interview situation. Bourdieu (1996) explains the interview as a social situation of give and take where the participant seeks the subjectivity of the researcher and seeks to know her as well as to be known by her. This is a natural process in establishing an equitable relation. By refusing to reveal herself or to reciprocate in the interview by keeping a distance, the researcher may be seen as negating the equal partnership that the participant could expect, especially if their social standing is close (Ball, 1990, Borland, 1991). It would simply be inconsiderate and disrespectful to hide behind the mask of 'interviewer'. And in some cases, particularly with sensitive issues, the participant will not engage with those unless the interviewer has

indicated a positive or non-judgmental position and/or experience with the issue as well (Faraday & Plummer, 1979).

The assumption that the interview can be free of the interviewer's opinions, values and experiences is a pipe dream. as the participant will form an opinion and make educated guesses about the interviewer's outlook anyway. Those conjectures will inevitably shape the interview, but the effects will be harder to trace if they are not acknowledged.

Bourdieu (1996) suggests that rapport should be modelled on everyday interaction, for it can't be acted but must result from a true and naturally expressed interest in the respondent and his story. The respondent struggles against objectification, and the interviewer must temper the tendency to reduce the respondent through the defence mechanism of creating distance of shutting down her emotion and empathy.

The participants in this study came from a very small population. This situation is in sharp contrast with sociological and life historical research conducted on large populations. In such cases participants can be assured of their anonymity. In this study it is possible to identify an individual based on the year of graduation from teacher education, specialization and gender, and further life historical information contained in the text. It was therefore obvious from the outset that anonymity could not be a condition of participation in this study. Participants therefore speak in their own name rather than as anonymous member of a conglomerate of voices. While this approach is necessary because of the size of the population of Iceland (260.000) and the even smaller size of the population of Icelandic art and craft teachers, it is favoured for a more fundamental reason.

The method of inquiry is biographical, wherein the individual not only retains his or her identity, but this identity becomes the focus of inquiry, resulting in what Kohli (1981) terms structured self-images. While the participant is the active partner in constructing the self-image presented, that construction is to a degree controlled by the structure provided by me, as the researcher. Structure in the interview situation can range from completely scripted interviews or surveys where the interviewer is completely in control, to a free dialogue on a topic (Bourdieu, 1996; Jones, 1985). The problem with the survey approach is inherent in the participant's role as a respondent. Because the researcher has defined and tightly controls the parameters of the discussion, it is limited by his/her grasp of the topic rather than by the respondent's insights. Absence of structure is a problem for the opposite reason, for if the researcher does not provide any structure, the interview may not yield the information that is sought. Or, the useful information may be submerged in a flood of information that is of limited interest to the researcher. Structure in the interview can also aid recall (Thompson, 1981; McCracken, 1988; Hay, 1986).

Although I, as researcher and author, assume the right and responsibility for the final document, the participants are partners in the venture. Their names as well as mine are at stake in telling the story. Consequently, both I as researcher and the participants strictly observe social conventions, especially in any reference to a third party. That is, care is taken to present the relevant issues and opinions with due respect toward individuals, associations or institutions. It is my hope that the work succeeds in bringing out issues that are difficult for the curriculum community or crafts, without undue offense.

### The Management of the Researcher's Subjectivity

"The positivist dream of an epistemological state of perfect innocence has the consequence of masking the fact that the crucial difference is not between a science that effects a construction and one which does not, but between a science which does so without knowing it and one which, being aware of this, attempts to discover and master as completely as possible the nature of its inevitable acts of construction and the equally inevitable effects which they produce" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 18). The social interaction of researcher and participant is but one aspect of the research. It is the aspect where each can keep the other's subjectivity somewhat in check. For most of the research process, however, the researcher must be self-monitoring.

The subjectivity of the researcher is an unavoidable aspect of research whether it is rendering the past as history or the present as sociology. We cannot know the past except as filtered through the memory, selection, preservation and interpretations of people with their particular subjectivities. The basis of a researcher's distinctive contribution is her subjectivity. The joining of personal qualities and data collected is in each case a unique configuration (Ball, 1990; Peshkin, 1988). This has a familiar ring to art educators for similar statements have been made about the artist. A history carries the mark of the historian, a sociology the mark of the sociologist, just as distinctively as the painting the painter's brush stroke or the sweater the knitters stitch, loose or tense, coarse or fine.

While revered in the world of art and crafts, subjectivity has been reviled in the world of research where it has traditionally been posed as the negative opposite to objectivity, or as bias and contamination distorting the true account. Even authors who argue for the

acknowledgement of subjectivity have found it hard to break with this negative understanding. In a paper on doing life histories Faraday & Plummer (1979) listed as the fourth major methodological issue: "The personal problems -- effectively ignored questions which recognize that the researcher is not merely an automaton processing data but a human being who absorbs the very research process into her or his daily experience" (p. 775). Chalmers (1994) quotes a nineteenth century historian who claims that a real historian must divest himself (sic) of subjectivity, or as he put it, individual sympathies and antipathies. The objectivity revered in this position is an illusion. Subjectivity is not like a garment that can be cast off to facilitate unadulterated experience, it is the skin we live in. Researchers should direct their energies away from the futile attempt to rid themselves of their sympathies and antipathies. On the contrary, these must be acknowledged to the reader as the sense we make of the world, and as such, central to the construction of the histories we write.

Much of the discourse on this position comes from the field of anthropology and ethnography: "By monitoring myself, I can create an illuminating, empowering, personal statement that attunes me to where self and subject are intertwined. I do not thereby exorcise my subjectivity. I do, rather, enable myself to manage it" (Peshkin, 1988, 20). The preceding quote is from a paper appropriately titled: "In search of subjectivity -- one's own". This position should not be taken to the extreme of legitimating bias. Just as an awareness of the weight of our responsibilities in other aspects of our lives does not legitimate the rejection of those responsibilities, we must strive to manage our subjectivity rather than simply reject it (Bourdieu, 1996).

At the INSEA convention research conference in Montreal in August 1993, Suzanne Lemerise and Leah Sherman made a joint presentation on their biographical research. At one point during the presentation, Lemerise referred to Sherman by the name of the person whose biography Sherman was writing. It was a happy accident, for identifying with our subjects is at the heart of historical writing. The response of the audience was that of pleasant recognition, as if the slip had brought forward some significant but seldom acknowledged aspect of the crafting of history. However, this identification can be dangerous. Bourdieu (1996) points out that while familiarity and social closeness are desirable between interviewer and participant in research there is the inherent danger that "the induced and accompanied self-analysis" (p. 24) of the participant turns into a narcissist exercise by the interviewer.

Although my readings in methodology and my research experience alerted me to the issue of identification on a theoretical level, the unparalleled power of the novel moved me to appreciate it. In the novel *Possession* by A.S. Byatt, the boundaries between the lives of historical figures and their biographers become increasingly blurred as the events and emotions of the biographers lives mirror those of their historical subjects -- or is it the other way around? In this passage Roland, who has been researching the life and work of Randolph Henry Ash, articulates this ambiguous identification:

Over his desk the little print of the photograph of Randolph Ash's death mask was ambiguous. You could read it either way; as though you were looking into a hollow mould, as though the planes of the cheeks and forehead, the blank eyes and the broad brow were sculpted and looking

out. You were inside -- behind those closed eyes like an actor, masked:

you were outside, looking at closure, if not finality (Byatt, 1990, p. 513).

The metaphor of the subject's death mask is particularly apt. If the researcher looks at the subject from the outside, the mask is merely an object for contemplation. Turning the mask around, one is tempted to try it on, to look through it rather than at it. The mask becomes a tool to enact and envision from the subject's point of view. The idea of identification with the subject is a necessity rather than romance. In my research using oral history methods, the participants are my peers, and their history is also mine in a literal sense. This has led me to be acutely aware of the dangers not just of *going native* but of *being native* -- of being so immersed in the situation as to be unable to render it as research. Or, to draw upon Byatt's metaphor, to have my vision restricted by the view from inside the mask.

Korzenik (1990) warns us that we shouldn't be surprised to find that the histories we write reflect our contemporary concerns as much as the period they are concerned with. Upon reflection I realize that I draw out themes that echo my own concerns. What captured my attention in doing a biography was my subject's ability to generate in others the ability and enthusiasm to organize around a common cause -- laudable qualities in the eyes of someone interested and active in professional organizations. As a seasoned advocate, but immature historian, I romanticized her role as an advocate of her chosen school subject, textiles. But it is inexplicable from my habitual vantage point why she wanted gardening to be a school subject as well (Guðrún Helgadóttir, 1991, 1995). In the biography I remain out of the picture, where as in this study I put myself in the frame. Here gender

becomes a major concern, for my experience as a female trained as a wood and metalwork teacher suggests this. Another researcher might not have made gender as central to his/her study, but it could never have been overlooked.

To detect my bias I had to engage in some introspection to locate what Peshkin (1988) calls the hot and cool spots; that is where self and subject are joined. The hot spots would be in this case the topics and actions in the life histories that I identified with, and the cold spots those experiences that I had difficulty engaging with. To make an honest attempt at recovering the significance of each emphasis I have to conjure up some subjectivity outside of myself and to use my imagination to enter into a role play of sorts, posing as someone else in relation to my subject. From my habitual vantage point it was impossible to see beyond the negative image I had of Womens' Domestic Schools in order to perceive the contribution these schools had made to the life and career of many of the women that I interviewed. I was only successful when I allowed myself to be caught up in the flow of memories and become a little smitten by the nostalgia in their accounts.

In my use of oral history the management of subjectivity is immediate, for my subjects are alive and interested in how I enter them into history. The participants in my oral history project can accept or refuse my offer of participation and they have a certain amount of power over what I can use of the interview material generated. These are the terms of my agreement with them, which takes the form of a signed statement approved by the ethical review committee of my university. But such a formal statement is but a shadow of their pervasive influence, which is felt at every stage of the research. In

formulating my research I felt aware of what would be possible, feasible and difficult for me to ask my peers. These possibilities centered on not only the topics of discussion, but also on myself and my relationship with the people I planned to interview.

The curriculum community of crafts in the Icelandic school system has virtually no written historical record, and its origins are still in living memory. Hence, the most suitable research method to gain perspective on the curriculum identity it carries must draw on oral history and ethnography. While the dead subjects of conventional history have had their say through their choices about the tracks they left in collections, archives etc., they are regrettably relegated to a passive role as the historian reconstructs their lives. The living subjects of oral histories and ethnographies are actively engaged with the researcher in shaping the reconstruction of their lives. It requires an exploration of one's subjectivity to figure out not only who the researcher thinks she is in relation to the subject, but also who she is to them.

That latter point is uniquely impressed upon oral historians and ethnographers. For the living subject is a person who brings a certain agenda to the social event of the interview. In my case I was known to all of the people I interviewed either personally or by hearsay. There was more at stake in the interviews than a give and take of information, as they were about the construction of the identity of the curriculum community. My subjects used the interviews to their own ends: First to examine my current relationship with the field; and second, to participate in what they see as the relevant research project. Last, but perhaps most important, the interviews offered a chance for them to reflect on their life's work. The curriculum community has certain expectations. What they want is a voice in

the academic world. What I want is to speak in my own voice, for I neither can nor should, speak for the community of art and craft teachers. My account will echo their voices, but it must also go beyond what they actually said. It is my responsibility to speak of what I feel they left unsaid as well as to interpret their actual words. Ultimately it is the researcher who tells the story, but for a complete reading of the story, the reader must be able to distinguish my voice from those of my subjects. Managed subjectivity means a self-consciousness on behalf of the researcher, thereby allowing for a more balanced account.

The researcher who neglects the management of subjectivity may have the jarring experience of Peshkin (1988) who stumbled on his subjectivity: "I had indeed discovered my subjectivity at work, caught red-handed with my values at the very end of my pen" (p. 18). Compared to the prospect of your subjectivity wandering off into posterity in print, this is not all that bad. Consider Korzenik's (1990) emotional language when she speaks of missed opportunities in her 1985 history of the Cross family. She talks of having to discipline herself to subjectively wonder, to bring her own experiences to light as possible inspirations for understanding. Korzenik (1990) concludes that she should have wondered more, and in my opinion, suppressed her subjectivity less, in order to identify the gaps and discontinuities in this history.

Wondering and imagining is what allows us to write an analysis rather than description. It is, however, a deceptive device. For filling in the gaps and discontinuities with the transitions and linkages that we perceive, we become most vulnerable to mismanaging our subjectivity. Korzenik (1990) provides an apt analogy when she compares this to

restoration of artifacts. The amendments that seem perfectly legitimate today look conspicuous tomorrow, if not outright eyesores. In her case, she returned to the Cross family history and found that she had perpetuated the bias against women inherent in her sources, biases her own female experience could have challenged.

Part of the respect due to our subjects is being clear about the context -- about theirs and ours and how we are implicated in the story. The responsibility of the researcher is to recognize one's own subjectivity in the research process. McCracken (1988) suggests that in order to clarify one's own cultural assumptions the researcher must manufacture distance, look at herself from the outside by reviewing the cultural categories pertinent to the research: That is, conduct an inventory of personal assumptions and practices in these categories. Warren (1988) concludes her text Gender Issues in Field Research with this remark: "It is not 'any researcher' who produces a particular ethnography, it is you" (p. 65). Although this study is not an ethnography, but rather a collection of life histories, this remark is applicable here. I have written and thought about my life history with crafts in preparing for this study, and while I am convinced of the necessity to account for myself, I take seriously Bourdieu's (1996) caution against the narcissist indulgence that sometimes passes for disclosure in qualitative research. Reading Weiner's (1995) introductory chapter of personal history and the work of Ball (1990) I felt a fellow sufferer of acute self consciousness. Is there a harder question than: What can I ask of myself that I didn't know beforehand?

### **My Relationship with Art and Craft**

My relationship with the field of art and craft education in Iceland forms the backdrop of this study; it informs my questions as well as the participants' responses to my inquiry. I do not approach the research from the outside, and yet I am no longer an insider. I trained and worked briefly as a wood and metalwork teacher, and as a woman I was part of a minority within this professional group. I shifted fields, moving from craft education into art education, first in my teaching positions, and later in further studies. In opting for graduate studies and focussing on curriculum and instruction rather than training further in art and craft, I became an academic rather than either a teacher or a craftswoman. Although I left the classrooms, shops and studios of Icelandic elementary schools, my research interests remain with the teachers who work and have worked there (Guðrún Helgadóttir, 1989, 1991, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1996).

The fundamental difference between my account and those presented to me in the interviews, is not in the events and conditions described, but is that of a standpoint. My account is written in the first person -- a fragment of an autobiography. I am also the researcher, the interviewer, the biographer and the author, which means that my experience affects the whole project from inception to its final presentation as text. The reader should be able to see and identify my presence in the text in order to navigate it independently and come to conclusions, not simply in agreement or disagreement with mine, but as a result of taking a train of thought that I couldn't possibly have caught. It is a way of opening the question of where I have lost sight of my subjectivity to such a degree that the account becomes untrustworthy. While I hope to present a trustworthy

account, I also hope to offer the reader a view broad enough to find alternate accounts in the material presented.

It seems necessary to account for my relationship to the subjects -- and perhaps my worldview -- but rather than risk a narcissist exercise by including a lengthy description, I will relate a few anecdotes which illustrate the subject. I was born in Reykjavík on March 9th 1959, by nine years the youngest of my mother's five children and the only child in her second marriage. My parents, Helgi Jónsson and Þórunn Magnúsdóttir had met through the Socialist Party, which they remained loyal to during my childhood. Growing up in a family of communists in a western democracy during the Cold War shapes my outlook in that I can't shake the belief that the margins are wider and ultimately more important than the mainstream.

My father was a blacksmith back then, and my mother ran the household. He plied his trade until I was four or five, but I have no memories of his workshop. I only remember how I would run to meet him when he returned from work, and he would put his hands behind his back to avoid black smudges on my clothes, before bending down to give me a kiss. Design and crafts were always held in esteem at home -- I don't recall exactly when my parents first explained to me that form should follow function -- but when I got over wishing I was a princess I desperately wished I had been a Mitarbeiter at Bauhaus. My father is an amateur artist and mother has always had an interest in the visual arts and crafts. We had a collection of art books that I was welcome to, provided I had washed my hands properly. I didn't touch my father's art materials but had my own felts, crayons, paints and plasticene. A typical summer's day family outing doubled as a sketching trip

for my father. We would find a sheltered spot for a picnic and he would disappear with his watercolours and sketchpad. By late afternoon it might have clouded over, our patience might have worn out and then my brother would be dispatched to retrieve the errant family man from the lures of the landscape.

I remember posing while father drew my portrait, most often in pencil, sometimes in chalk or charcoal. I recall it not as a chore but as a privilege. It seemed worthwhile to me to sit stock still for however long it took to have my picture completed. I liked the sound of the pencil rushing across the pad and felt important, special to have been party to the creative process. Once in my sixth summer I tried to draw my father's profile from observation. I was furious with the result, it didn't look like him at all! No amount of reasoning from my model could reconcile me to the gap between our abilities in portraiture. I dismissed his arguments in favour of my effort by pointing out to him that he simply wasn't *that* ugly.

When I was little, Mother made my clothes, and I remember myself as a five year old arguing with her on how the seat of my pants should be cut. Seeing the pattern cut from the reverse I didn't think it did justice to my rear end. I was more impressed with the sweaters she knitted for me and the steady stream of mittens and socks required as they inevitably went missing by and by. Hats were a bit of an issue. A beautifully knit turquoise hat with an oversize pompom was a mixed blessing in grade five, even if it was highly fashionable in adult eyes. As my own daughter grows up I realize how much work and resourcefulness my mother must have put into celebrating my appearance, particularly as the family finances always remained tight.

In my seventh year I was enrolled in children's art classes for the first time. The adult classes in painting and sculpture were housed in the same building and people whom we kids knew to be important or aspiring artists were around. The art world was mysterious and sacred to me, but I doubted whether I would be worthy of inclusion. There were conditions that I could easily meet: I could sit still to be a model, wash my hands before touching the art books and behave myself at art galleries. But what about talent?

Although I loved art it wasn't what I was best at. One of my art teachers said: "Guðrún, you talk too much. You've always put everything into words before you can make a picture of it". The hierarchies of artistic merit were clear and as I approached adolescence it seemed less and less likely to me that I would achieve much artistically, so I quit art.

My mother taught me to read before I entered elementary school and my proficiency as a reader earned me the right to skip second grade. My physical maturity -- or rather lack thereof -- was not considered, for although I was small for my age and very poorly coordinated I was put into the third grade. Physical education, swimming, handwriting and textiles were subjects where this disadvantage put me at the bottom of the class, but nevertheless I was considered a bright pupil.

My first lessons in textiles were in grade three with a very patient textile teacher who finally took the gingham apron I had been working on all year home with her and finished it. I had managed to embroider about 1/3 of a border of simple contour stitch in three colours and my initials in cross stitch. She also sent me home in the spring with a ball of cotton and a crocheting needle, in the hope my mother would teach me over the summer holidays. Mother refused to do what she considered my textile teacher's job. I never made

much progress in textiles and was always one of those who couldn't even finish the compulsory projects. It wasn't that I didn't like textiles -- when I finally mastered the art of knitting I liked to design and knit sweaters.

When I went through elementary school from 1966-1974, wood and metalwork was not a compulsory subject for girls and the discussion of making it so was only starting. I did not have any interest in the subject -- what little I saw of it were glimpses of dusty workshops in school basements where some man in overalls kept the boys busy. Upon passing the National Exams in 1974 I couldn't even do a somersault, still thought it entirely likely that I would drown if I ever ventured to the deep end of a swimming pool, and of course had not done crafts for a year. This didn't affect my good standing in the class, for as I pointed out to the examiner of physical education, these subjects did not count toward the grade point average.

I went straight to Grammar School where I completed the four year program in modern languages and passed my Matriculation Exams in 1978, thereby earning the right of admission to university. At the time, I was very conscious of and angered by social inequity, particularly the lack of regard for manual labour and snobbery for academic fields of study. So studying my strongest subjects, languages or humanities at university, did not appeal to me. I remember that my mother asked whether I would consider the University College of Education and I categorically refused the prospect of becoming a teacher. A couple of weeks later I applied for admission and became consumed with the vocation to teach.

At that point in my life I ruled out training as an art teacher, for that would have meant going through the dreaded entrance exams of the Icelandic College of Art and Crafts as well as two years of foundation study in fine art before teacher training. It was too close for comfort to choosing to become an artist. Nevertheless, I was interested in teaching art or an art related subject such as crafts, because I saw them as an important counterpoint to the academic subjects. I saw them as creative and therefore of special importance to young learners.

When I picked up the application forms from the office of the University College of Education in May 1979 I asked how many were enrolled in textiles and wood and metalwork respectively. Thirty students had applied for textiles and four for wood and metalwork. A student passing by heard my question and casually commented that I would probably be happier in wood and metalwork, for it was quite homey. Realizing my weakness in both areas I thought that at least I would get more instruction in a group of five than of thirty and opted for wood and metalwork. In this era of second wave feminism, it also seemed important to get more female wood and metalwork teachers out into the schools to be role models for the girls in this compulsory subject.

I entered teacher training in the fall of 1979 and within the first few weeks I realized that wood and metalwork teacher training was not all that I had hoped for. It was farther from art and design than I expected. The only drawing instruction consisted of exercises in industrial drawing. The workshop training was mainly basic cabinet making, which I couldn't see as relevant to teaching school children. A humbler person would have assumed that she was in the wrong place, but I assumed that the place was all wrong, and

set about to change it with a self righteousness that only the young and reckless are blessed with. The time was ripe for changes which, unbeknownst to me, generations of students had asked for.

I became fascinated by curriculum rationales and one day I asked during the morning coffee break: "Why should we teach wood and metalwork to children?" My instructor shot back "You think we shouldn't?!" and coffee break was over. My cohort became very active in the discussion of college policy, mainly because we were concerned that the pedagogical content of the program was neglected in relation to the major subjects. We got some insight into practice in schools through connections with the Ministry of Education and the professional organizations. The staff of the Ministry and the Association of Wood and Metalwork Teachers were supportive and welcomed our initiative. The association invited us as members in our last year of training, and we participated with them in a conference on teacher education that year.

While our concerns were in many cases justified and resonated with practicing teachers and many teacher educators, we must have been hard to contend with as students. The main argument for the inordinate amount of craft training in the program was of course that we had entered the subject without any background. In my case, this was most serious in wood work for I never got over the fear of wood working machines, which intensified when my best friend had a serious accident in class. My small scale projects took a long time and I wasn't particularly impressed with the designs or techniques suggested by my instructors. It must have been galling to be faced with a student who not only didn't have a hope of meeting the highest standards of the profession as it had been

known, but added insult to injury by publicly renouncing these standards. However it must have been clear to all and sundry that what I lacked in craftsmanship I made up for in my commitment to the subject and its place in elementary education. Just before graduation one of my instructors wanted to reassure himself though, and asked me candidly in front of the whole class: "Guðrún, do you really think you can teach wood and metalwork?" I put on my bravest face, swallowed my doubt and said that although I realized I still had a lot to learn I intended to serve as a generalist teacher teaching wood and metalwork in the primary grades and for that I felt qualified.

Gender was an issue ever-present but never mentioned. The majority of wood and metalwork teachers were -- and still are -- male, although in our small class the women were a majority. Given the chance, our male classmates would work together in a separate room or at least somewhat out of the fray. The women in the classes ahead of us in the program seemed to fall into two main groups; masculine women and women who needed and accepted a lot of help from our male instructors and fellow students. Nobody voiced reservations about our presence directly, but it was a grave concern for the profession that so many people with no background were entering and women were usually mentioned in this regard. Nevertheless male colleagues often commented on how happy they were to have the women around, but somehow this was not reassuring, and not conducive to a feeling of collegiality.

There was an intangible ethos of masculinity in the subject, the dress code of carpenter's overalls or coat, the ubiquitous below the belt humour, and the virtual absence of women wood and metalwork teachers actually teaching in the schools. A strong friendship with

another female student was a life saver for me. Even so, I never felt comfortable in the program and the fact that I graduated as a wood and metalwork teacher was a result of stubbornly believing that there must be another way in the subject, more than a sense of having found my way.

In the fall of 1983 I was hired as a primary teacher to Grundaskoli, Akranes. I was the second wood and metalwork teacher hired to the school. A man who had graduated a couple of years before me was hired for most of the wood and metalwork teaching and I accepted assignment to the younger grades. I was also a generalist on a team of three kindergarten teachers. On the first day of school one of the boys actually asked me what I was; a carpenter, a wood and metalwork teacher, or 'just a woman teacher teaching wood and metalwork'. I was very self-conscious as the first female wood and metalwork teacher in a town with a sizeable, male dominated, building and woodworking industry.

Wood and metalwork was immensely popular and the children literally fought to get into the shop. There was little patience for teacher talk, or for the design process. They wanted to get their hands on the tools and materials and make something. As a consequence I fell into the traditional routine of very brief introductions of material and technique and the parameters of the project before giving way to the work frenzy. I was needed everywhere at once and literally ran back and forth among the joiner's benches, usually with an entourage of impatient pupils trailing from the back of my overalls. I hated having to use the combination woodworking machine and never got over the fear of hurting myself or others. In those early years of my teaching career I had opportunities to teach art, wood

and metalwork and leatherwork in different settings, which allowed me to treat the subjects as closely related.

I remained interested in policy and advocacy and was involved in the professional organizations as the president of the Association of Wood and Metalwork Teachers. I decided to enter graduate studies and use the opportunity broaden my background by moving into art education. The aim was to do graduate studies in art education with a focus on art and crafts. In 1986 I enrolled at the University of Victoria, B.C., for one year of study in art education to qualify for a master's program in the subject. This program was mainly studio oriented, preparing teachers for secondary schools. In the meantime I had set my eyes on and been encouraged to transfer to University of British Columbia for a more research oriented graduate program. I started my M.A. in art education there in January 1988.

For me graduate school was a chance to reflect on the school subjects art and craft, how they had come to be what they were and from there begin tentative movement toward a solid pedagogy of the subjects. It never occurred to me to do my research anywhere but in Iceland. I always felt that my background enabled me to do more meaningful research there than elsewhere. I became quite interested in work on teachers' relation to curriculum. My master's thesis was based on a survey of art and craft teachers' attitudes toward curriculum rationales. It was completed in August 1989 and, because it definitely left more questions than answers, I enrolled immediately in a doctoral program in Curriculum and Instruction.

Over the years I have been involved in this research, I have enjoyed support and encouragement from art and craft teachers in Iceland. They have responded enthusiastically to calls for participation and shown interest in the results. I have come to understand that from their perspective this research, particularly the doctoral work which is the only Ph. D. thesis in progress in the field, represents both a chance to reflect on their profession and a foot in the door of the academic world where art and craft have been marginal subjects. The Ministry of Education, the University College of Education and research funding agencies have also shown their support for the research over the years.

It has taken a while to complete this thesis. It has weighed on my mind and my luggage across oceans and continents. Sometimes we were purposefully travelling together, such as on the trips to Iceland to conduct interviews and discussions with participants, giving papers on the contents of the thesis here and there. Then there were detours, less productive in this regard but part of the life that sustains the project. The daily trudge to and from daycare, the teaching load, a year in New Zealand, the Halldóra papers -- 'other things' as I vaguely termed them when my committee asked. Collectively 'the thesis thing' and the other things, have been a solid preparation for the work that I'm doing now: teacher education, research, graduate student supervision, inservice education, curriculum development and administration. I have come a curious full circle, or a spiral turn at least, to be the assistant director of The Icelandic College of Art and Crafts, the one I stayed away from in the past. It feels remarkably like coming home.

## **The Research Process and the Document**

### The Formulation of a Research Problem and Methodology

This study developed from the research for my master's thesis, which was a survey of Icelandic art and craft teachers' attitudes toward curriculum and instruction in their subject area (Guðrún Helgadóttir 1989). The initial interest stemmed from questions and concerns that remained after the master's thesis. During the early stages of the proposal process I summarized those as follows:

- \* The survey method does not allow the respondents to speak from their own experience but rather to the researcher's formulation of the problem.
- \* The findings suggested a difference in attitudes based on age and teaching experience, which leads to an interest in how the art and craft teacher and his/her profession develops over time.
- \* My study surveyed respondents on attitudes but not on their actions and I felt a need to look at what these teachers have been doing in their professional lives.

These concerns, of course, mirror larger concerns about quantitative methods, preceding my work by decades. As others before me, I have turned my attention to qualitative methods to find a way to address those concerns.

What remained constant between the two studies was the focus on teachers as the core of the curriculum community. In the initial indication of my field of interest for the doctoral program I identified three categories which I wanted to pursue: Curriculum: The

identification and development of school subjects with a focus on art and crafts; Gender and education: The effects of tradition and change in gender roles on curriculum, with a focus on art and crafts; Research methods: Research paradigms, methods and political implications with a focus on ethnographic and historical research.

One issue stood out in my mind as not having been successfully addressed in my master's thesis, that of gender in art and craft education. Although the responses to my survey did not bear this out, gender was in my experience a central issue. So at the outset of the program I wanted to look exclusively at this issue and originally thought of the study as dealing with women's experience in the field of art and craft. This would have focussed on differences in experience within male and female dominated occupations. This approach did not prove satisfying as I started thinking more about gender as a social construct. Female and male gender seemed equally as important in the construction and definition of art and craft as school subjects. Therefore it made more sense to include both men and women.

I wanted to ask people what they actually do, which led me to think of the concept of work. Again, feminist theory helped me to see this concept broadly, including not only paid work or work done in the public sphere, but also the unpaid work done in the home or family. Out of this grew an interest in the everyday world or lifeworld of the art and craft teacher, and at this point the study threatened to become an all encompassing account of these teachers' existence. I came to my senses and remembered that my initial interest and task was to investigate their experience as teachers of certain school subjects, and thereby to shed light on the development of these school subjects as curricular

constructs. In the end I proposed a study that chronicles teacher's identification with a school subject throughout their lives. The question is: what did this mean to them ? My thesis is that the teacher has a lifelong relationship with the subject and that this relationship and its meaning is affected by gender, life stage and the historical time or generation of the teacher. And, that there is a curriculum identity which is shared by members of a certain curriculum community.

At the outset I envisioned a study of all four subjects within the subject area of art and craft in Icelandic schools: art, textiles, weaving and wood and metalwork. This view prevailed through to the stage of analysis and writing, where it became increasingly clear that it would be misleading to keep this configuration or treat the four subjects as equal partners in a group of subjects. The school subject art has a history and philosophical foundation sufficiently different from that of the other three to distinguish itself as a separate entity. I have accounted for this distinction elsewhere (Guðrún Helgadóttir 1995) and would like to refer to that publication here. Art and craft teachers have developed different curriculum identities and this difference cannot be readily related to the traditions discernible in the formal curricula. I have suggested that the dichotomy between public and private spheres prevalent in Western culture offers a way to view this distinction. Whether we pose the dichotomy as between the polis and the oikos, or adopt the Marxist notion of productive and reproductive spheres (Engels, 1972) does not matter here. And of course, it is inevitable with such grand generalizations that this dichotomy is wanting in many ways (Elshstain, 1981). Despite this it is illuminating.

Art and craft teachers, according to my interview evidence, profess a strong need to create, to make objects. The context of production does, however, differ. Art teachers identify strongly with the public world of art, the world of artists and exhibitions, the art market. Gratification is derived from the acknowledgement of an external public such as gallery personnel, art critics and art collectors. Craft teachers, on the other hand, identify themselves with the handiperson, the person who can fix and make things about the house. Art teachers both male and female focus on a role in public life, whereas craft teachers, women and men, focus on the private or domestic life (Guðrún Helgadóttir, 1995).

This was not clear to me when I started the study as a former wood and metalwork teacher, as it is now that I am an art teacher and art education lecturer. In hindsight it seemed to me that the research problem that I had formulated addressed the craft subjects more so than it reflected the art education community. It is also a major finding in curriculum studies of art and craft in Iceland, but one that warrants treatment outside the confines of this study.

Throughout the research process, this study has been torn between a sociological and historical focus. The interest in the dimension of time both in the life of individuals and that of the profession has prevailed in the end, so this study is an oral history based on biographical and life history evidence. I hope that the title sums this up: Icelandic Craft teachers' curriculum identity as reflected in life histories.

### The Interviews

As referred to earlier, there is much debate within ethnography, anthropology and oral history on the amount of structure in the interview. Approaches to eliciting information through an interview range from open ended invitations to narrate, to survey type questionnaires conducted face to face. As I began to envision the interview situation, I began to appreciate the value of structure. In this case, the participants could reasonably expect me to have enough insight into the topic to have specific concerns and an agenda. To ask them to 'tell their story' would have obscured my intent. I was not interested in their entire life story -- I wanted the story of their life with the subject they chose to teach. The purpose of the interviews was to document teachers' lifelong relationship with their chosen subject.

I decided to organize myself with a questionnaire outline, which served two purposes. First, it helped me phrase and think through how to present certain issues and concerns in the interview. Second, it kept me oriented and served as a checklist of the issues covered in the interview. Last but not least, this outline helped to identify the themes that were part of my premise about the curriculum identity of art and craft teachers. I enlisted a fellow graduate student to go through a trial interview with me to see if the structure worked, and to discover how certain issues were best approached. She also made helpful suggestions on issues that needed more fleshing out, such as the physical environment and facilities for instruction. In the actual interview situation, I did not refer much to this checklist, for I was devoted to the notion of giving the participants enough scope to give their account in their own words and narratives.

The last point about narrative is very important. Many oral historians claim that the true value of oral history lies in the participant's narrative. By reducing the interview to responses to the researcher's questions, the participant does not have a chance to construct a narrative. By collecting narratives rather than responses to questions, the analysis becomes textual, and therefore there is more opportunity to probe, and to find, meaning that the researcher was not conscious of at the outset of the process.

To organize the interview so that the respondent's account or narrative would flow naturally I opened the interview with an invitation to tell me how they first came to know their subject, and to carry on from there to the present day. I had identified four life stages, Childhood, Youth, Adulthood and Retirement, and grouped certain issues accordingly. While the respondent spoke of Childhood, I made sure that information about both home and school were provided. The Youth stage refers to the period of career choice, and the reasons for choosing this subject as a vocation as well as a discussion of the teacher training program. The stage of Adulthood referred to the period from the first teaching post to retirement, and I tried to elicit information about the rationale for the subject, its importance to pupils, the material and human environment of the school, teaching methods, as well as information on the place of the subject in adult life in general. The final stage of Retirement referred to the period after retiring from teaching within the school system, and what role the subject played in the later years.

Recruitment of participants in the study was conducted through the professional organizations, which supported the project by mailing a letter of introduction and invitation to participate in the study. Furthermore, an advertisement was placed in the

newsletters of the organizations. The Institute for Educational Research and Development provided office space and telephone service, and was promptly flooded with calls from art and craft teachers who volunteered for the study. Due to the response I was able to ensure participation from all subject specializations and different generations of teachers, men and women. I conducted interviews with 42 teachers of art, textiles, weaving and wood and metalwork. This text is based on the 30 interviews with textile, weaving and wood and metalwork teachers, that is, interviews with 12 textile teachers, 5 weaving instructors and 13 wood and metalwork teachers, four of whom are women. Weaving instructors are by far the smallest group, but several textile teachers initially trained as weaving instructors. The oldest participant was born in 1913 and the youngest in 1960.

I selected participants who had been engaged in teaching the subjects long-term, either continuously or recurrently employed as teachers. Teachers may be committed professionals despite discontinuous employment, for example, women may have taken leaves of absence or resigned from their positions to care for their young children. Study leaves or temporary employment in a different field do not necessarily constitute a breach with the profession. It was important to me to try to ensure participation by both men and women, younger and older teachers and to make sure that not only those who were in some way prominent within their profession would participate. Those who were prominent held positions of authority or leadership such as in professional organizations, teacher education or curriculum development. The story of development of the subjects and of the curriculum identity of the teachers is also contained in the experience of those who have worked relatively unnoticed by their peers. To my surprise the volunteers came

mainly from this latter category, teachers who had worked on the ground, called immediately and were keen on participating.

Those who had achieved prominence generally did not pick up the phone to volunteer, but they might indicate interest if we met. This was a concern until I realized that due to their past or present prominence they rightly assumed that I would be particularly interested in their participation and therefore expected me to contact them. I therefore contacted those who had been involved in teacher training in the long term and invited them to participate. Two out of eleven could not or would not participate, but the rest were happy to take part. I also contacted the three teachers who had served with the Ministry of Education and they agreed to participate. Beforehand I had estimated that the number of participants needed would be between 30 and 50 to allow for what Glaser & Strauss (1967) referred to as saturation.

The interviews generally took place in the respondent's home, although four of the wood and metalwork teachers and one art teacher preferred to be interviewed at work as they felt there would be less interruption than at home. Only in one case was a third person present during part of the interview. The interviews ranged from an hour to five hours conducted over two days. As my time frame for conducting the interviews was limited, I was tempted at first to conduct more than one interview per day. It soon became apparent that this reduced the quality of the interviews, both because it was tiring and did not allow for reflection on each interview as such. I found that it was better to focus on one interview at a time, prepare for it, conduct it and make notes before moving on to the next one. Of course, the interviews affected each other in that information elicited in one

interview might lead to a question in the next one, as well as experience with the flow of the narrative, increased familiarity with my performance and the way I related to the respondents. Over the interviews the main themes and issues remained constant.

In preparing for each interview I looked the respondent up in the Directory of Icelandic Teachers and made a life history line to familiarize myself further with the respondent. I also reviewed my previous acquaintance with the person, tried to make sense of how this related to the project at hand. Most of the interviews were quite a pleasant social occasion, an afternoon of intense conversation over coffee and cake, sometimes there were shared memories, laughter, and even tension, but always a sense that we had accomplished something through the interview. It was obvious that the respondents were proud of the fact that research was conducted in their field, and happy to participate. Of course, those who did not feel that way didn't volunteer. Most seemed to enjoy the opportunity to elaborate on an aspect of their personal life history. In many cases they commented on the opportunity for reflection that the interview afforded them. In a few instances however, I felt that the respondent had already constructed the story, whereas in many cases, especially with the younger participants, it felt as if it all came together on the spot.

During the time I was interviewing, my notes reveal struggles to keep the course. At one point early on the notes reflect dissatisfaction with the structure of the interview. I was concerned that I seemed to be asking too many questions out of fear of forgetting some of the issues I wanted raised. The next week I was wondering whether I have become too passive in the interview, whether the respondents would be insecure because my motives

would not be clear enough. I wondered about how far I could go in being a critical listener -- that is whether and to what extent I should challenge the story as it was presented to me. I decided to work with the story as it was told to me, while acknowledging that naturally the respondents would not tell all. Nevertheless, it seems that most participants took this as a chance to reflect on the relationship they had built with their subject. While they guarded the negative aspects better than the positive, the main elements of this relationship were exposed. In the instances where I felt some questioning or contention was needed, I either posed as an outsider by suggesting that the participant explain the issue to me as if I was totally unfamiliar with it, or by going the other way of making a reference to my past involvement and experience and responding from that vantage point rather than that of the interviewer. The third strategy was to not respond immediately but to return to the issue for clarification later in the interview, thereby placing it in a different context.

### The Analysis and Writing

At the outset I had imagined myself transcribing all the interviews, but in reality this proved unfeasible so I hired help for part of the transcription. I reviewed and edited the transcripts by listening to the taped interviews and made an inventory of the contents of each tape as I listened. Each interview went through four kinds of 'listenings': The first, as soon as possible after the interview to monitor the process and whether predetermined issues had been dealt with or new issues arising. The second listening was to itemize the content of the interview and the third one was to listen specifically for the emotional tenor of the interview. This third listening was often done by going back to the interview

to double check whether my recall of the situation was correct. The fourth and last listening was to confirm the quotations and references used in the text.

As pointed out before, the interviews took place in Icelandic and were transcribed in that language. I only translated a quote or a comment after I had selected it as an expression of an idea discussed in the final text. I chose to do the translation myself for the professional jargon and the emphases and articulation of the curriculum community was more clearly understood by me, than by an outsider to this community. Furthermore, I was the interviewer, so I had the memory of gestures and tone to aid in translating the text of the transcript.

The predetermined themes that I had envisioned as contributing to curriculum identity were gender and class, as well as curriculum both as text and as community. That is the curriculum Umwelt, or symbolic, material and human environment of the curriculum (Apple, 1993; Smith-Shank, 1995). Each of these themes was broken down into smaller subcategories such as gender, the gendered division of craft work in the childhood home, the gendered curriculum in elementary school, Women's Domestic Schools, gender differences among pupils, the effects of co-education in crafts and the culture of tools and equipment to name a few.

Of the emerging themes of the symbolic environment, one proved most important for the development of the study -- the distinction between art and crafts. In the analysis I realized that this distinction was greater than I had understood before the study, and that discussion of the curriculum community and identity of art and crafts in one document,

was misleading. They are more adequately represented as distinct communities with separate identities, where the relationship between the craft subjects is closer than with art. I decided to leave the interviews with art teachers out of the thesis, as it seemed impossible to do justice to all three communities within the document.

In writing the document I began by making an inventory of the themes in the transcripts and then using that inventory to further investigate each category. Upon closer inspection some of the categories I had identified needed merging, others to be split up. There are instances where translation becomes difficult for a particular discursive practice or convention of speech carries connotations which do not translate well (Bassnett-McGuire, 1991; Hatim & Mason, 1990). For instance, the term 'project' in the craft curriculum community refers to a thing, an object which the pupil will produce according to the teacher's prescription. It does not refer to the design or process as much as the thing, the physical manifestation of the process.

In the first versions I used many direct quotations and only rewrote them into the text after closely reviewing it to make sure that vital information was not lost or subverted in the process. As the work progressed and I started thinking more about translation as a process, the more doubts I had about including direct quotations. The quotations are not 'direct' because they are translated, and therefore it seemed like a falsehood to include them in double quotation marks. Nevertheless, I tried to find the middle ground by using translated quotes and comments as appropriately as possible, and in the end they were used to convey the affective aspect of what was said more than to provide description or facts.

These concerns while justifiable, pale in comparison to the general question of whether it is fact possible to translate the spoken word into written text without losing its meaning. Stock (1990) reviews the speculation on this problem: "Through writing, discourse is fixed, inscribed, and given permanent form in a vehicle external to the human voice" (p. 102). The conditions, then, of what took place as verbal communication are irrevocably altered. I have tried to account for the context of the interview. I am the listener, but the participants as speakers appear only through their accounts as I retell them. With reference to the literature on educational ethnography, I consequently assumed that they would take an active interest in my representation of their words. This was not the case.

My attempts at getting participants to comment on my use of the interviews have not been very successful. The participants seem to have been quite content to grant the interview but reluctant to spend any time on reviewing the results. This may be logical given the conditions discussed above, that the event of the interview which they granted will never be adequately represented in text. Furthermore, each participant knew that her/his interview was one of many and that the representation would be collective rather than individual.

I have only received one letter with definite comments on the use of the interview text, three letters which were more greetings and two letters contained further information. Over the years I have met the participants in various contexts relating to art and craft education, but their questions and comments about my work have generally revolved around the policy implications of the work, rather than their personal part in this study. In a sense I have been accorded the role of writer by a community not particularly concerned

with writing, one that defines itself by objects rather than text. -- If not as a community in actual opposition to the textual.

The experience from this research leads me to believe that the concerns expressed in the literature about the inequitable power relation between researcher and researched are more relevant when there is a major difference between the two parties in terms of race, ethnicity, gender and social standing. In a case such as this, these concerns may signify a rather overblown sense of the researcher's importance in relation to the subject. The gap in social standing between a researcher and a teacher when both come from the same background is negligible in this study. If anything, my financial and social standing has suffered by a lengthy period of study compared to remaining in the classroom as a teacher. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that despite my lofty proclamations to the contrary, from my immersion in a research environment, the participants see themselves as doing me a favour more so than me serving them. They were helping me by participating, and they accept that by enabling me to do research they are offering me an opportunity to speak with some authority about curriculum issues. But most importantly, the research allowed them to be reflective practitioners, a luxury seldom available in action (Schon, 1983).

To assist the reader in relating the comments and quotes from participants to historical context and chronology of events, the participants' year of birth is included in the reference to interview material. An attempt is also made to organize material within each subheading in roughly chronological order. Although there is bound to be some overlap as comments made in the interviews may relate to more than one theme as well as

represent a life stage or era, this overlap is kept to a minimum. These concerns are, however, secondary to the purpose of gaining insight into the lived experience of the curriculum community. What they believed to have happened and why is more important than exactly what happened and when.

## **CHAPTER 4: THE CURRICULUM IDENTITY OF WOOD AND METALWORK**

This chapter is based on the interviews with wood and metalwork teachers and is aimed at articulating their curriculum identity. This is done by relating their stories to three aspects of the environment; the human environment, the symbolic environment and the material environment (Apple, 1993).

The first section of the chapter deals with the human environment, more precisely the curriculum community of wood and metalwork as reflected in the life histories of the teachers. The social background of the teachers is described and their lifelong relationship with the subject discussed.

The second section refers to the symbolic environment, or the curriculum both formal and experienced (Goodlad et. al. 1979). Here the content of the subject, the rationale for the subject and teaching methods are described. The relationship with other curriculum communities and content areas is articulated as well as the perceived relationship with the world outside school. That is wood and metalwork as a life skill, as a vocational skill and general economic asset.

The third section deals with the material environment. There are two main aspects of this issue. On one hand the facilities and resources for wood and metalwork instruction. On the other hand the material nature of the subject, the materials and tools used and the meaning and importance that the teachers attribute to this materiality.

The last section of the chapter is a summary and discussion where the curriculum community and its identity are described and an attempt made to locate them in the development of a school subject.

## **The Curriculum Community or Human Environment of Wood and Metalwork**

### Childhood and Youth

The socioeconomic background that the wood and metalwork teachers come from is fairly similar. Five of the fourteen teachers interviewed are children of farmers. There is one son of a farmer/tradesman and three are children of tradesmen. Two are sons of labourers, and only one is the son of a teacher. Another the daughter of a civil servant and two daughters of university educated fathers. Seven teachers grew up in town, but only two in Reykjavík, and the rest in smaller towns. Six grew up in a rural household. Only one man is a single child, and his mother brought him up on her own. Most of the families included several children and in several cases grand parents living with or in close proximity to the childhood home. By Icelandic standards these families would be classified as low to middle income and class.

All the male wood and metalwork teachers recall involvement in the subject as part of their childhood. Adult men were engaged in construction, maintenance and repair of buildings, tools and equipment, either in their homes or as tradesmen. As boys, the wood and metalwork teachers helped out and had chores relating to these tasks (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913; Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918; Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Egill Strange, b. 1927; Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946). Their childhood games reflected the work they saw around them. They made toys such as boats and cars, and built

houses and boxes, even furniture (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913; Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Egill Strange, b. 1927; Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933; Vignir B. Árnason, b. 1934; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946; Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957).

Although female wood and metalwork teachers come from a very similar background as the men, they did not speak of relating to the subject in childhood. The girls seem to have watched the trades and wood and metalwork in the home from a distance (Þórunn Árnadóttir, b. 1929; Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir, b. 1953; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960; Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960). Even in cases where they were directly involved they do not speak of their involvement as an important part of their childhood experience (Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960; Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960).

### **In School**

The men of older generation, attended elementary school before the crafts became mandatory in 1936, and did not encounter wood and metalwork as a school subject in elementary school. They might have taken the subject in the rural secondary schools or attended evening classes or short courses after leaving school. Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918), Ingimundur Ólafsson (b. 1913) and Sigurður Úlfarsson (b. 1919) all attended small rural schools served by itinerant teachers and although they did not have wood and metalwork as a subject, some crafts -- mainly textiles and papercrafts -- were included. Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) first encountered wood and metalwork as a school subject when he attended Laugar rural secondary school 1934-'36. Every boy had to take some wood and metalwork, but pupils were allowed to choose whether they pursued an academic or vocationally oriented program, in which the crafts, wood and metalwork for boys and textiles for girls, were central.

Ingimundur Ólafsson (b. 1913) attended another rural secondary school where he took a course in bookbinding.

Egill Strange (b. 1927) was 11-12 years old when the boys at his school were offered a wood working class. Vignir B. Árnason (b. 1934) on the other hand does not recall any wood and metalwork from his elementary school in a village. This was a one room school with two groups of children, each group comprised of 2-3 cohorts. In such a situation it was difficult to introduce wood and metalwork. If the schoolteacher was unable to teach the subject it meant hiring a person from the community, which was often not a feasible option for a small school. Further, the one room schools did not have physical space suitable for woodwork. Even as late as when Ingólfur G. Ingólfsson (b. 1941) went to school, wood and metalwork was not offered in the smaller schools. He went to a rural school where girls got some textile instruction, but boys did not have instruction in the crafts.

Þórir Sigurðsson (b. 1927) and Svavar Jóhannesson (b. 1933) were brought up in Akureyri and fortunate to attend an elementary school with an established crafts and drawing program. The school had a woodworking studio equipped with "woodwork benches and all handtools, planes, saws, chisels and carving tools" (Þórir Sigurðsson, b. 1927; p. 25). The projects and techniques were fairly varied, included woodcarving and "shipcarving" as well as basic cabinetmaking. Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b. 1946) attended elementary school in a small town and he started wood and metalwork in grade 4 when he was 10 years old. The driver of the school bus who taught the subject in very primitive facilities. When the school hired a teacher who was qualified as a wood and metalwork teacher. The instruction was moved to new premises and the equipment upgraded. More importantly, for Júlíus as a pupil, the new

teacher had a different instructional style. "It changed the subject dramatically for me at least. Not just because we were older but because of his instruction. One got to design and decide to some extent on the projects one made" (Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946, p. 2). Guðvarður B. Halldórsson (b. 1957) attended school in Kópavogur, a suburb of Reykjavík, where wood and metalwork was taught in a special studio, which he found very impressive at the time as he had attended a small rural primary school with no such facilities. In addition to woodwork, which has traditionally been the mainstay of the curriculum, he was introduced to leatherwork, metalwork involving tin and soldered projects and using horn.

Projects made in wood and metalwork fell into two main categories, household objects or ornaments and toys. For example Egill Strange (b. 1927) made a small jewellery box for his mother in the woodwork class in 1938-'39. Þórir Sigurðsson (b. 1927) went through a more extensive program in 1937-1941 and made a wooden sled with metal runners, a car, a boat and small furniture such as a shelf with a towel rack. Þórir remembers using these toys in his games, the sled was for instance an asset in a town renowned for winter sports and games on ice and snow. Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b. 1946) and Guðvarður Halldórsson (b. 1957) remember similar projects in the '50's and '60's, such as cars and boats as well as household items like wooden serving boards and a planter.

The wood and metalwork projects were carried out in the wood and metalwork studio at school and not taken home until completely finished. There was no homework required as the curriculum was based on using tools and equipment which was not necessarily available to boys outside school. Although the projects were common household items it was no longer common to make them at home by the time the subject became compulsory in 1936. If boys

were exposed to wood and metalwork at home it was either through acquaintance with a tradesman or as a result of a relative's leisure pursuit.

None of the women interviewed had wood and metalwork as a compulsory subject in school.

The younger generation recalls making requests to that effect in their upper elementary grades, but none had got more than a few hours' introduction (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960; Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960).

### **The Decision to Become a Wood and Metalwork Teacher**

Educational opportunities were limited by the social and economic situation of the family, particularly for rural youth of the older generation in the study. Those individuals were deciding upon a career during the promotion stage of the subject. Ingimundur Ólafsson (b. 1913), Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) and Sigurður Úlfarsson (b. 1919) received elementary education from itinerant teachers. Ingimundur and Axel attended rural secondary schools for two years, which was considered an advanced education: "I remember how eagerly I waited for the letter from the principal, saying I had been admitted to the school in '28. I still have it" (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913, p. 2). The rural secondary schools were then, around 1930, a new option. The grammar schools offered the traditional secondary education of an academic program leading to university entrance. Such an education was a privilege beyond the means and social standing of most people.

Sigurður Úlfarsson (b. 1919) went straight to the College of Trades to train as a carpenter upon finishing elementary school. This choice was a more feasible option for his family than an academic secondary education, for he could support himself as an apprentice and soon

earn the wages of a tradesman. He said that he wouldn't have preferred to learn this subject rather than another but an apprenticeship was not available in other trades. And there were no resources to enter more expensive programs of education: "*Were you thinking of an academic program then?* Yes, no less, even more. Yes, but the finances were not in place, so..."

(Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919, p. 1). Sigurður would have preferred to study architecture or engineering.

Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) prepared himself for farming by attending Hólar Agricultural College, graduating in 1941 as an agriculturist. Axel selected the vocational option at his secondary school and at agricultural college he took blacksmithing and saddle and harness making. The winter 1943-44 he attended the Farmers' Department of the College of Crafts in Reykjavík, which was designed to improve the wood and metalwork skills of farmers, thus enabling them to design and construct better buildings and implements on their farms. In between these intermittent periods of secondary schooling Axel worked on his parents' farm, or 'helped out' as he put it. Being the eldest of 8 siblings, he was expected to take over.

During Axel's youth and especially during the war years, Icelandic society changed dramatically. The nation moved from the country to town and relatively small and isolated farms such as that of Axel's family became less tenable. In this context Axel's future as a farmer was uncertain and when another vocational opportunity was presented to him, it proved more feasible. Although Axel was graduating from the Farmer's Department rather than teacher training in the spring of 1944, Lúðvíg Guðmundsson, the principal of the college, recommended him for a temporary teaching position at a rural secondary school. "I was totally available, there was nothing -- I didn't have much to do at home, the farm didn't

provide an income to speak of, you see. I thought it over and then gave it a go" (Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918, p. 9).

Egill Strange (b. 1927) started secondary school in 1940 in one of the larger secondary schools in Reykjavík. There was no wood and metalwork instruction but there was drawing, which he enjoyed. Egill lost interest and quit school after a year. During the next five years he attended evening school and various classes at the College of Crafts and Art before entering apprenticeship in Modelmaking in 1945. His story suggests that even in the city where secondary schooling was more readily available it could be difficult for the young person with a strong inclination for art and craft to find a way through the system. Like his rural colleague Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918), Egill pieced together an education from whatever was available in his field of interest.

Wood and metalwork teachers commonly chose this vocation because of a particular interest in the subject rather than teaching as a calling. Some turned to teaching after training and working in the woodworking trades. This is particularly true of those who were in or about to enter the trades in the 1960's when Iceland joined the European Free Trade Agreement. The woodworking trades, particularly furniture manufacture, changed dramatically as cabinetmakers had to compete with imported mass production. This meant a radical redefinition of the vocation as the craftsmanship that had been the tradesman's pride and joy was no longer at the core of the production process. Teaching woodwork was one avenue whereby they could practice and pass on their cherished skills. In this period many teaching positions were available (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Egill Strange, b. 1927; Vignir B. Árnason, b. 1934). Vignir B. Árnason (b. 1934) was just starting out as a cabinet maker

during this time of change, becoming a master cabinet maker in 1958: "Cabinet making as I had learned the trade was dying. It was becoming factory work. And it wasn't appealing, really, to be hired into a workshop and stationed at some machine to be left standing there for the next 2-3 years" (p. 4).

There was unemployment among cabinetmakers as the new technology was less labour intensive and many masters could not manage upgrading equipment and production processes in their workshops and had to close down. (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933; Vignir B. Árnason, b. 1934). When Svavar Jóhannesson (b. 1933) tried to enter the trade around 1960 there was such a recession in the trade that it was impossible to get an apprenticeship. A chance remark by one of his teachers that gave Svavar the idea to train as a wood and metalwork teacher: "I always wanted to do woodwork. It had nothing to do with teaching. That was just out of necessity" (Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933, p. 5).

There are instances of wood and metalwork teachers entering their profession because of a particular interest in teaching. Egill Strange (b. 1927) turned to teaching after 14 years of plying his trade. In his mind it was not disaffection with his trade but a desire to teach that led to his decision. Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b. 1946) had already at the age of thirteen decided to become a teacher and the choice to specialize in wood and metalwork came later. Júlíus trained as a carpenter alongside teacher training and intended to finish his apprenticeship upon graduation, but there was such demand for trained teachers of the subject in his home county that he went into teaching.

Ingimundur Ólafsson (b. 1918) trained initially as a generalist elementary school teacher and added wood and metalwork teacher training because of a particular interest and faith in the pedagogical value of the subject. Guðvarður Halldórsson (b. 1957) did not pursue the subject at the secondary level, because he chose the academic stream which excluded further study of wood and metalwork. A friend who had recently graduated from the program recommended it.

The female wood and metalwork teachers also describe their choice as serendipitous. Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir (b. 1953) wanted to become a carpenter, but this proved impossible as she couldn't get an apprenticeship. "Well, at least I didn't plan to become a teacher, that was for sure. Let alone a wood and metalwork teacher. It wasn't a calling. You see, when I chose this I was thinking of whether to take this or to go ahead and take up carpentry at the College of Trades. But then I think environmental influence made the difference that I went to The University College of Education" (Ólöf Kristín Einarssdóttir, b. 1960, p. 2). Hera

Sigurðardóttir (b. 1960) said of her decision to become a teacher: "It was I think very much by coincidence. I finished grammar school and went as exchange student for a year and then I hung around the University for a year and then it was more by chance that I decided to enter the The University College of Education. Not out of a particular calling I think" (Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960, p. 1). Hera initially trained as a textile teacher but she came to prefer wood and metalwork as she got to know the subject through friends.

### **Teacher Training in Wood and Metalwork**

The teacher training program in wood and metalwork was one of three programs offered by the College of Crafts from 1939. There were two options in the program: one year led to

certification for elementary schools, two years to qualify as a wood and metalwork teacher at the secondary level (Björn Th. Björnsson, 1979). Then there was the Farmer's Department. But students in those departments spent most of their day side by side, in the shop, doing cabinet making, wood carving, metalwork, drafting and drawing. The prospective teachers also had classes in psychology and lectures on pedagogical issues such as the role of crafts in education. Gunnar Klængsson's influence is substantial for the majority of wood and metalwork teachers in the country were his students. During his tenure of about 40 years as the main instructor, the relationship of teacher and students was similar to that of a good master to his apprentices (Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946; Guðvarður B. Halldórsson, b. 1957).

Ingimundur Ólafsson (b. 1913) recalls the main subjects in 1944-45 as light cabinetmaking, carving and metalwork such as blacksmithing and tinsmithing. Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b. 1946) and Ingimundur Ólafsson (b. 1913) described the drawing instruction: the student did the initial sketching for a project and the instructor developed the sketch into a draft or blueprint. Most of the students' time was spent in the shop and "as Gunnar taught most subjects there were no clear divisions in the timetable" (Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946, p. 9). Students were asked to do initial sketches or drafting at home. Gunnar then went through these ideas with the individual, modifying and guiding the student along. Several teachers referred to Gunnar Klængsson as an exceptional draftsman, and generally it seems that the instructors exerted a strong stylistic influence on their students (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913, Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918; Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946; Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957).

Svavar Jóhannesson (b. 1933) did the two year qualifying course as a wood and metalwork teacher for secondary schools. The teacher training programs in wood and metalwork and textiles had just been moved from the College of Crafts and were now offered under the auspices of the Teachers' College. The programs were housed in a separate location from the main campus and there was little or no day to day interaction between the two campuses. Svavar described the program as mainly cabinet making and school projects "where you had to design and make a project, a boat or something for the elementary school " (p. 2). Svavar recalls that the scale and complexity of the projects was generally well above the capability of elementary students.

Instruction in teaching methods seems to have been a minor aspect of the program throughout its history. This is indicated by the fact that information about instruction in teaching methods or curriculum issues in wood and metalwork never emerged in the interviews without prompting. Realizing that I would have to ask specifically about instruction in teaching methods, I decided to use the same question in every interview: 'What was said of children and instruction in the program?'

Ingimundur Ólafsson (b. 1913) described the program of the College of Crafts saying that the rationale for the subject, the importance of craft education for the individual and for society was often discussed. But there was little in the way of "actual methods of instruction" (p.3). Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) said of the teaching methods "I don't recall, I think that was what was missing to an extent" (p. 13). Svavar Jóhannesson (b. 1933) said that there was no time set aside to discuss teaching methods specifically. He felt he knew next to nothing about teaching upon graduation, but that most students graduated as pretty good craftsmen. What

was presented in the way of teaching methods in the program were suggestions on what techniques and projects were suitable for each age group (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933; Vignir B. Árnason, b. 1934). Any further discussion of implementation or instructional methods was missing (Vignir B. Árnason, b. 1934; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946; Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960; Ólöf Kristín Einarisdóttir, b. 1960).

Most of the teachers who graduated prior to the establishment of the The University College of Education recalled that they had to take a teaching test, a demonstration lesson with pupils in the presence of their instructor and an external examiner. Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) took the test with Gunnar Klængsson as his instructor and Ingimundur Ólafsson (b. 1913) as the examiner. There was no particular preparation for the test, nor was it a source of anxiety or concern (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946). In some cases teachers even described the teaching test but referred to it as a teaching practice rather than as a test (Egill Strange, b. 1927; Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933, Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946): "One morning we got pupils from the Model School and we were to teach them. We sat around in a circle and there was a joiner's bench in the middle of the room. And the pupils waited in the hallway and were called in pairs for us. And we were then to teach these two pupils an assigned task or maybe there was a draw for the task. *Was this the teaching test then?* Yes" (Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946, p. 12). There was neither a grade awarded or comment made about the performance, nor a record of the test on his certificate of grades.

Those who were experienced and teaching at the time were not always required to take the teaching test or practicum. Vignir B. Árnason (b. 1934) was teaching for the Reykjavík School Board as the junior colleague of an experienced elementary wood and metalwork teacher and was not required to take the test. Sigurður Úlfarsson (b. 1919) was already teaching at the vocational secondary school, which provided sufficient teaching experience and perhaps it was taken into account that he was an experienced master of his trade who had not only trained apprentices but had been an examiner for a number of years. Although he took the teaching test, he did not do a practicum.

Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b. 1946) and Vignir B. Árnason (b. 1934) were in the last group that went through the two year teacher training in wood and metalwork at the Teachers' College. After that, and until the foundation of the The University College of Education the program involved an academic preparation course before the training in the subject started. In 1971 the Teachers' College became the University College of Education, and the matriculation exam became the entrance requirement (Lög um Kennaraháskóla Íslands 1971). As wood and metalwork was generally not available in the academic programs leading to the matriculation exam, this meant that it was virtually impossible for prospective wood and metalwork teachers to pursue their subject during the grammar school years. Consequently they entered teacher training with less background in their subject, than their older peers, despite a higher educational qualification.

Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir (b. 1953) who graduated in 1980 and Guðvarður Halldórsson (b. 1957) in 1981 are the first of the teachers interviewed for this study to go through the B.Ed. program. Their recollections of the wood and metalwork teacher training does not differ

much from that of older colleagues. "Some people were of course into furnishing their living rooms. I practically lived in a box at the time and wasn't thinking of furniture much. But I made kitchen stools and a chest of drawers from solid pine and then a veneered telephone table. These were the bigger items. Much of the work was done on the machines" (Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957, p. 5). Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir (b. 1953) has similar memories of making furniture using the combination woodwork machines. Hera Sigurðardóttir (b. 1960) felt that the main emphasis in the program was "To work in wood, to produce, really. Even major items, difficult techniques like dovetailing which is very beautiful, but of no use in the elementary school I think. And there was a myopic focus on the more difficult and yes, larger projects, beds, cabinets" (Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960, p. 2). To her the goal seemed to be to make students into good craftspeople.

Beginning teachers needed to modify their approach for the projects in the program were well above the ability of their pupils. For some it was a shock to realize how little children could do, compared with their expectations upon graduation (Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946; Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957). Joining methods were mentioned by several teachers as the example of a mismatch between the emphasis in the teacher training program and the classroom situation. The perception of the younger teachers was that the techniques taught were not suited to the ability level of elementary school children (Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir, 1953; Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960; Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960). While critical of this emphasis, they recognize the rationale for it: "The point is that we were trying to preserve traditional methods" (Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957, p. 13-14).

Guðvarður Halldórsson (b. 1957) jokingly referred to his struggle as a beginning teacher to develop projects suitable for elementary pupils. Joining methods which were taught in grades 7-9 were a particular headache. "You see, one thought in the beginning that one could teach them dovetailing and such simple things as one learned at the The University College of Education! It didn't last. Yes, the joining methods have been a somewhat rocky road for me and my pupils. Of course one proposed way too complex joining methods at the outset" (Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957, p. 13-14). With experience Guðvarður has settled for one compulsory project where the wood is joined the traditional way, without nails or screws. This is a good exercise to illustrate the importance of accurate measurements and cutting in the joining process.

The feeling conveyed in the replies to the question "what was said about children?" is captured by a rather sarcastic remark "Well, that is it you see. It was probably a taboo of sorts, children! No I'm kidding. But there was very little mention of children or pupils, really" (Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957, p. 6-7). And the issue is summarized here: "Pedagogically, I didn't feel there was much thought" (Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir, b. 1953, p. 3). "I can almost claim that there was nothing. Some pupil project was expected. But I need to think back,... I'm trying to recall what -- if we did a cutting board, a serving board. I think there was this one project as a pupil project. *Was it discussed then?* Yes, I think so, we did a short report, how we planned the project, for what age group and such. We were supposed to discuss it in class but it came to little somehow" (Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960, p. 4). Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir (b. 1953) recalls making some pupil projects and so does Guðvarður Halldórsson (b. 1957). "I remember one occasion where we made a project and

included some objectives that we wanted the children to obtain, but then the instructor said 'well, this doesn't matter'" (Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960, p. 2).

Despite disillusionment with the lack of attention to teaching methods in the wood and metalwork teacher training program, Guðvarður Halldórsson (b. 1957) spoke for many when he argued that there was little choice in the matter: "You have to take into account that we entered the program with elementary school preparation in the subject, some of us, others had no background in the subject. Some of the girls had never done any wood and metalwork before. It is hard, given the time constraints in the program to teach both the subject, wood and metalwork and to reach teaching methods as well" (Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957, p. 7). The women who trained as wood and metalwork teachers agreed with this view (Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir, b. 1953; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960; Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960). When I asked Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir (b. 1953), who graduated in 1980, to describe the wood and metalwork teacher training program her first comment was: "Yes, it was necessary of course to begin by teaching us girls the very basics because we hadn't, I for one had never touched a plane before " (Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir, b. 1953, p. 3).

Those of the teachers who have been involved in teacher education all expressed concern over the lack of foundation in the subject which means that student teachers cannot reach the levels of proficiency that their older colleagues knew (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913; Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Egill Strange, b. 1927; Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946; Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir, b. 1953). Ingólfur G. Ingólfsson (b. 1941), lecturer of wood and metalwork at The University College of Education, was blunt about the prospects of his graduates when he said: "That the people graduating, the average

student he doesn't stand a chance of survival in his vocation! If he isn't an exceptionally strong character he will simply have to retreat" (p. 9).

### Adulthood: Being a Wood and Metalwork Teacher

#### **Entering the Profession**

The teachers started teaching at different points in their lives, with different backgrounds and motives. Many started as uncertified instructors, a couple had trained as teachers of other subjects first and others entered from the trades. Some colleagues went straight into teacher training in the subject and subsequently took up teaching in their subject. The pattern among those interviewed is that the younger generation acquired their certification before going into teaching and that training first in another subject area has been uncommon for practicing wood and metalwork teachers.

Ingimundur Ólafsson (b. 1913) graduated from Teachers' College in 1934 and served as itinerant teacher for six years during which he had little opportunity to offer craft education. When he got a position in a town: "I started for real, taught a little wood and metalwork, had acquired some Swedish books about craft education and it went quite well I thought" (p. 2). Ingimundur got his wood and metalwork teacher certification from the College of Crafts in 1945. As positions were scarce in Reykjavík at the time, he taught at several schools concurrently. In wood and metalwork he served as the junior alongside a more senior teacher of the subject, before securing a permanent full time position in 1952 at Langholtsskóli as a classroom teacher and specialist in wood and metalwork.

Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) entered teaching as an uncertified instructor at a rural secondary school where he taught for seven years. During that time he was the only wood and metalwork teacher at the school. As it was a rural school there was little chance of collegial relations with other wood and metalwork teachers. So Axel had to be fairly independent in developing his curriculum and teaching methods. In 1951 he re-entered the College of Crafts, to get certification as a wood and metalwork teacher. He was then hired at one of the largest elementary school in Reykjavík -- Laugarnes school, as one of a group of 3-4 craft teachers led by a younger colleague. Upon graduation from the wood and metalwork teacher training program in 1954 Svavar Jóhannesson (b. 1933) got a position in Hafnarfjörður, a suburb of Reykjavík, and considers himself fortunate as there were many applicants for this position.

Sigurður Úlfarsson (b. 1919) represents the third route into wood and metalwork teaching, entering after a career in the trades. He entered teacher training when he was hired as a secondary school teacher "Yes I had to go to Teachers' College and didn't mind it at all, on the contrary. Because I didn't have the qualifications to teach at elementary or secondary school although I was qualified to take on apprentices in my trade. That was the law, one had to have a teaching certificate" (p. 9-10). Sigurður took the training course alongside teaching, which was not uncommon. Vignir B. Árnason (b. 1934) enrolled in the wood and metalwork teacher training program at the Teachers' College in 1963 and started teaching for the Reykjavík School Board at the same time.

In 1964, when he was in the second year of the teacher training program, Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson's (b. 1946) instructor recommended him as wood and metalwork teacher to

Landakot Catholic School in Reykjavík, teaching about six hours per week. Upon graduation Júlíus accepted a position at Vestmannaeyjar Elementary, where he was the only wood and metalwork teacher and taught a full time position of over 30 hours per week. Júlíus is the last of the older generation of wood and metalwork teachers represented in this study, entering the profession with a high level of proficiency in the subject gained through work and study in the woodworking trades.

Guðvarður B. Halldórsson (b. 1957) graduated from The University College of Education College in 1981 and was hired at a new elementary school in Reykjavík as one of two wood and metalwork teachers. The other teacher was more experienced and they have worked closely together. Guðvarður recalled himself as a beginning teacher: "One was hardly competent to handle the machines after the program, not even that. It was a great help to me that the school was under construction so there were carpenters about. I was given lessons by the carpenters, they taught me to tune the band saw and things like that" (p. 7).

In regards to the preparation for teaching and need for support and mentorship, a definite change has occurred over the period described in the interviews. The earlier generations of wood and metalwork teachers were proficient in the craft while perhaps not well versed in classroom management or child development issues. For the younger graduates in this study - those with a B.Ed. -- lack of skills and confidence in the craft, coupled with lack of training in teaching methods specific to the subject has been a serious problem. The younger generation is qualified as classroom teachers and therefore can, and often do, opt out of the shop. It is difficult to trace what the effect has been, for the earlier generations only possessed a teaching certificate in crafts and therefore didn't have the option of shifting within the

teaching profession as many of their younger colleagues have done. The older teachers are also more likely to have entered wood and metalwork teaching with substantial previous experience and therefore a stronger commitment to the subject.

### **Supporting a Family, Maintaining a Home**

The teachers interviewed here pursue their subject as perhaps the single most important thread in their life's work. All the men interviewed have families, they are breadwinners and to fulfill that obligation they commonly take on an extra job to augment their teacher's salary, which has generally been lower than in the trades. The financial merit in teaching has been the job security compared with trades. There is also a bulk of work, waged and unwaged, that is done for pleasure or fulfillment rather than for money. The boundaries are fortunately blurred, there is little said here of toil without the redeeming quality of enjoyment or importance.

In many interviews reference is made to how the role of breadwinner has shaped the path of possibilities. Sigurður Úlfarsson (b. 1919) had wanted to educate himself further abroad after getting his journey man's papers in 1941. "Well it was also the plan to study further. One was always hoping that the war would end but no, it went on till 1945 and by then my situation had changed of course. I had a home and children by then and such, no money to speak of and restrictions on foreign currency and everything in a sorry state so to speak. So everything had to recover first and then it never came to that" (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919, p. 5-6).

While having a family did not prevent men from further education, it imposed certain limits. The length of time which the family could afford to be without or reduce the main income was a factor mentioned both by Egill Strange (b. 1927) and Guðvarður Halldórsson (b. 1957).

Egill sought special permission to take the two year teacher training program in one year because "I had four children and didn't want to borrow money" (p. 3). Guðvarður Halldórsson (b. 1957) made a similar comment, he felt it wasn't feasible for a family man to accumulate debt by embarking upon a lengthy program of study. On the other hand Hera Sigurðardóttir (b. 1960) postponed her first year of teaching in favour of an extra year of study as it was easier to care for her newborn second child as a student teacher than as a beginning teacher.

Egill Strange (b. 1927) recalled that when he graduated as a wood and metalwork teacher in 1960 that "I couldn't afford to teach for a year! I was so broke that I just couldn't afford to take up teaching and maybe I should never have done that, I've never lost as much financially as by going into teaching" (Egill Strange, b. 1927, p. 3). "In those years when I left the trade to go into teaching I did better financially than by cabinet making, because I could work those three summer months. That made all the difference, although the salary wasn't much during the school year it wasn't that much less than what you earned in cabinet making those years" (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919, p. 23). Svavar Jóhannesson (b. 1933), who started teaching in 1954, worked during the school holidays "Right from when you left off in the spring until the fall. That was what saved it, the salary of course wouldn't have stretched, it was impossible" (p. 7). In addition to working on his own home, Guðvarður B. Halldórsson (b. 1957) has worked for wages on renovations of older buildings, laying floors and furnishings.

Building or buying a house was a major undertaking, and most families have tried to be as self sufficient as possible in this regard. Wood and metalwork teachers were in a good position to use their professional skills and did so (Svavar Jóhannesson, b.1933; Vignir B.

Árnason, b. 1934; Ingólfur G. Ingólfsson, b. 1946; Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir, b. 1953; Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957; Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960). Sigurður Úlfarsson (b. 1919) could be speaking for generations of Icelanders when he said "I built this house on weekends and at night, and all that it contains. My wife helped me build it. The two of us dug the foundations by hand in September forty years ago, yes she was in this with me" (p. 24). The house, furnishings and furniture were all his work as well.

As their guest during the interview I witnessed the pride and pleasure teachers take in the accomplishment of furnishing their home (Axel Jóhannsson, b. 1918; Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Egill Strange, b. 1927). For instance, during the interview with Sigurður Úlfarsson (b. 1919) he pointed out "The chair you are sitting in for example, I designed it and made hundreds of it. It is a fairly successful design. Isn't it comfortable? *Yes. Yes, I know!*" (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919, p. 6). Egill Strange (b. 1927) not only built and furnished his home but made most ornaments as well.

The women wood and metalwork teachers interviewed had not taken on extra waged work, but they had used or planned to use their skills outside of teaching. Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir (b. 1953) furnished her apartment, and makes repairs around the house and such. She has also worked in the construction industry and for theater and television in stage construction and props. Hera Sigurðardóttir (b. 1960) does not take on extra work for she has two young children, but she felt that wood and metalwork might be a useful subject for her to be able to make and mend things about the house. Her plans at the time of the interview were to set up a workshop with a woman friend to make toys and smaller wooden objects for sale.

Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir (b. 1960) built a house with her husband, but has not used her skills vocationally outside of teaching.

The different conclusions that teachers come to regarding the financial merit of going from the trades into teaching may relate to their different trades and their levels of seniority within the trade. Svavar Jóhannesson (b. 1933) was still interested in pursuing a career in the woodworking trades when graduating from Teachers' College in 1954, but as a family man he could not afford to live off the wages of an apprentice. While Svavar couldn't afford to be exploited as a lowly paid apprentice, Egill Strange (b. 1927) was relatively well paid as a master working for a company. Sigurður Úlfarsson (b. 1919) was one of the owners of his workshop and his income was therefore tied to the profit rather than the wages of a qualified tradesman. Cabinet making was also especially hard hit in this period and job security a thing of the past. What they all agreed on was that a teacher's salary was not sufficient to support their families and they even joked about having to 'work' meaning to earn, or to afford teaching (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1918; Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Egill Strange, b. 1927; Guðvarður B. Halldórsson, b. 1957). The only exceptions from the rule of working more than full-time during the school year and taking on work during holidays were Hera Sigurðardóttir (b. 1960) and Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir (b. 1960) who had foregone such waged work to take care of young children.

### **Working for Fulfillment**

Egill Strange (b. 1927) makes the comment that there is extra work where "I write my bill and pay my tax and all, but then there is the other stuff, helping one's friends and such. And they help me out in turn " (Egill Strange, b. 1927, p. 13). Many of the other teachers

comment on using their skills by helping their friends out (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946; Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957). This section does not deal with working for wages as much as working for pleasure on the one hand and working out of commitment on the other. Some of it is waged; some of it is not, but the reason why the teachers take it on is that they enjoy it and it seems to them that it needs doing. It is working for fulfillment, work as integral to the good life.

Working in wood or metal is both leisure and work which may require a demarcation of boundaries as the demand for the teacher's craft skills may exceed the appetite for doing the work. Slowing down and retiring may not be a simple thing for people with particular, even rare skills. "I have a small workshop here and have made a lot of things for my acquaintances but I don't want to be tied down to it" (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919, p. 23). Sigurður deliberately keeps these commitments in check as the demand for his expertise is greater than he could cope with -- he feels he would be swamped with requests if it was known he was available for work. Spending time in the workshop at home is a form of recreation, a pleasure that should not be spoiled by taking on projects that are not personally satisfying.

Egill Strange (b. 1927) feels most at home in the workshop of his basement. There he works on his own projects or 'nonsenses' as he called them, as well as the occasional commission and even student projects he has taken home to fix. There is no clear distinction between paid work and leisure in Egil's mind. Throughout the interview Egill made references to his love of teaching motivated students and the good times where time flies in the constructive community. Vignir B. Árnason (b. 1934) also describes a blurred distinction where recreation spills over into teaching. He is involved in the craft of tying tackle for fly fishing, a very

delicate craft that has gained popularity along with fly fishing in Iceland. The school where Vignir teaches has a recreation center where he has taught courses in his hobby since 1978: "One could say this is something one has allowed oneself to play at on the side. It can be related to wood and metalwork and is, has been. It is a craft of course and many, there have been great individuals involved who have made works of art in this craft" (Vignir B. Árnason, b. 1934, p. 16-17).

Ingimundur Ólafsson (b. 1913) was involved in establishing and directing recreational programs for children and youth. As a young man he participated in the Icelandic Youth Association, a national association of local chapters organizing sports and other recreational activities around the country. He was also involved in the children's temperance movement and later among those organizing local chapters of the Icelandic Rescue Squads. These activities were unwaged, but like most teachers, Ingimundur had summer jobs. From 1947 to 1957 he was the head teacher of the Reykjavík School Gardens, a recreational and educational program for school children. Another teacher who became involved in organizing recreation programs for youth is Ingólfur G. Ingólfsson (b. 1941) who was active with the sports club of his growing town in the 1960's. The sports club pioneered recreational programs for young people in town: "We didn't quite realize that there wouldn't just be people wanting to practice the high jump or something like that, but that sometimes 80-100 children and youth would show up. And we were swamped. So I had to organize games and such systems and start a recreational program of sorts. We couldn't manage with just one coach so I had to be there all the time, it was in the evenings and was great fun" (Ingólfur G. Ingólfsson, b. 1941, p. 4-5).

In some cases the wood and metalwork teachers have a second or parallel career teaching specific courses within the subject in adult and/or higher education as well as in recreational settings. Wood carving and bookbinding are common examples. Ingimundur Ólafsson (b. 1913) learned bookbinding at secondary school and trained further in the subject at the College of Crafts. The first course Ingimundur offered was for his fellow teachers at the elementary school where he taught, but later he taught the subject at the The University College of Education. The bulk of the instruction has been in a recreational program for senior citizens to which Ingimundur was recruited in 1979. People become eligible for the programs at the age of 67, Ingimundur has therefore been a senior citizen himself for most of his career in recreational programs for seniors.

### **The Symbolic Environment**

#### The Rationale for Teaching Wood and Metalwork

There was occasional comment about the lack of discussion or thought of rationales within the curriculum community (Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933; Vignir B. Árnason, b. 1934; Ingólfur G. Ingólfsson, b. 1941; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960). Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir (b. 1953) spoke of the experience of having to account for the rationale in the interview. "One gets it all of a sudden now as one is speaking, it is interesting. That, you see, perhaps one didn't understand clearly enough while in training precisely why we are doing this. This is just something that has been and is in the schools and everybody is used to it, that Icelanders know how to manage for themselves in this field" (p. 5). Hera Sigurðardóttir (b. 1960) commented "It is so self evident to me that it is strange to have to provide an argument for it" (p. 8).

Wood and metalwork has double importance for the teacher of the subject. On the one hand there is the importance it has for him or her personally and the satisfaction it brings to the person who also happens to be a teacher. Distinct, but perhaps not distinguished from the former, is the perceived importance of the subject for pupils and for society. The perception or definition of this latter kind is of course often derived from the former. The teachers tend to attribute the qualities the subject brings out in them to others.

"They get so much out of making something they can see the use for", Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) said of his pupils (p. 16). This comment reflects two basic assumptions guiding much of what wood and metalwork teachers have been doing with their students over the years. One, that the learner must enjoy the process; and second, that utility, making something functional, is an important part of getting something out of the subject. Perhaps this is the bottom line in regards to the rationale; the student must feel that he or she 'got something out of' wood and metalwork. That 'something' does, however, refer to many things.

Ingimundur Ólafsson (b. 1913) saw the crafts having a role in a holistic curriculum where academic and manual subjects were equal. His definition of the content of the subject is stated in three goals: the ability to handle tools and equipment; knowledge of materials and understanding of form and function. Ingimundur's description of teaching wood turning reflects this: "The first exercise was of course just to make a cylinder, make the piece of wood cylindrical and learn the concept. Then you could have a disk or a sphere, but a long piece of wood would make a cylinder. That was one thing, the concepts we tried to make clear, length and width and thickness. And the material, the wood grain and such. The material they were working, these were things that we emphasized" (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b.

1913, p. 9). Ingimundur sees theoretical and practical knowledge as complimentary, and the subject wood and metalwork as involving both. In the example above, geometrical concepts and the practical skill in achieving their physical form are equally important: "I would like to have the manual subjects in such a way that the kids or people understand that you are interpreting things so that you have to study both by the book and by the hand" (Egill Strange, b. 1927, p. 15).

Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) made less of the conceptual side of the subject, in his responses the academic and the manual were contesting rather than complimentary subjects: "It is of course all part of maturing. No less than for instance solving a math problem, to use a plane or a saw to make an object. It is an experience and all experience leads to maturity" (Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918, p. 22). The need to be respectful of the pupil's wishes despite the power to direct those wishes according to the teacher's vision of the pupils needs was an important issue for him. On the particular contribution of crafts in education he said: "Maybe this is the big issue, that there is some place where you can make people happy with themselves, make the individual happy with what he is doing, then it serves us to some extent" (Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918, p. 22).

Sigurður Úlfarsson (b. 1919) draws a line between the role of the subject in general education and vocational education at the secondary level. "At the secondary level students are preparing or nearing a real vocation. But as we know the elementary level teaching involves this and that and isn't directly planned as entry into a specific discipline" (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919, p. 12). While keen to explore the rationale of the subject for the individual, Egill Strange (b. 1927) also brought up the importance of the subject for society, as "we must take

care not to run out of crafts people" (p. 13). Ingólfur G. Ingólfsson (b. 1941) also voiced concern over the future of trades. He feels an understanding and appreciation of design is lacking in the training of many trades people in the wood industry. Such neglect of design education is in his view not only culturally but economically impoverishing.

The place for wood and metalwork as a general subject at the secondary level, in addition to catering to students who are preparing for a vocation in the field, was acknowledged in terms of life skills, to be better able to manage in life. The rationale or value for the individual goes further than this practical side: "I think it has great value, it develops the pupil and expands their horizon to experience this subject which involves so much. It makes them more independent in many cases, not to mention the fulfillment, the enrichment of their life because they enjoy it" (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919, p. 26). Sigurður emphasized that this does not only refer to wood and metalwork.

*"What is the rationale for teaching wood and metalwork?* There are few answers to such big questions! Well, I feel that I'm introducing them to the materials and the equipment, and of course to draw their attention to quality; that is, well crafted work. And then one goes on into the artistic, one points that out so the kids recognize whether things are well made or badly. Perhaps, it is possible of course to make it sound more lofty, but I'm not into making lofty proclamations about these things" (Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1934, p. 14). Despite the reservation the answer is clear: the subject is there to introduce pupils to a particular aspect of the material world and how to handle it and appreciate its handling. Although Svavar limits his rationale to wood and metalwork, he refers to more general goals such as training pupils to use their hands and to concentrate and persevere in a task.

Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir (b. 1953) refers to the practicality of the subject as offering skills for a productive and independent lifestyle. Guðvarður Halldórsson (b. 1957) makes a related comment: "The most important goal is that the pupils acquire confidence and that they see themselves as people who can take up tools and make something" (p. 14-15). "*What is the value of the subject for kids?* Generally? I find it absolutely necessary to teach them to handle the most basic tools so that they can manage with things you need to do around the house and such. And it is also just to make something by hand, not just sit and gawk at the TV or sit and read and write in school" (Ólög Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960, p. 7). The point about physically active learning and particularly the importance of training the hand came up in many interviews. Vignir B. Árnason (b. 1934) made a comment on the difficulty some adolescents have finding relevance in their school work: "Do something. Work at something. They don't see it. If for nothing but to train the fine motor skills of the hand" (p. 9). On the one hand there is a life skill rationale, and on the other, the rationale of using the body and mind to counteract the tendency toward physically passive modes of learning.

Vignir B. Árnason (b. 1935) values the life skill rationale, but it is in his mind not the most important: "Rather that which is generally stated in the curriculum documents; to enhance the perception and appreciation of form and the creative outlet, to make them think independently if possible" (p. 9). Vignir also noted that if the subject is valuable for the individual then it has value for society as well: "It is well put in the curriculum documents, I hear the phrase as I speak: 'To make children environmentally literate'. But I fear we don't work systematically toward that" (Vignir B. Árnason, b. 1934, p. 21). Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir (b. 1953) explained that the educational value of art and craft is that the

students look at the environment in a different, more analytic way and thus comes to a deeper understanding of what is before the eyes.

Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b. 1946) is one of the authors of the curriculum documents that Vignir B. Árnason (b. 1934) referred to above. He said this of the rationale for the craft subjects:

"One often feels that it is an old and empty slogan this talk about developing, training and coordinating mind and hand. I think this is a very appropriate way, these subjects, if you handle them properly, just to develop the individual in general. Really, the senses overall. It is no less a question of touch and sensitivity to material and perception of form, and yes, this coordination too. Not just of mind and hand but it is a necessary factor in simply understanding existence as it appears. Yes, just dealing with, well, oneself and existence, perhaps for instance as a consumer, knowing right from wrong in choosing the things one needs" (Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946, p. 17). Here the rationale encompasses individual development and growth, and tentatively reaches out to touch upon the notion of world view and settles down in the life skill mode.

"To unite aesthetics and craft" (Ingólfur G. Ingólfsson, b. 1941, p. 7) is another statement of a possible philosophy for wood and metalwork as a subject. This relates the subject to art and moves it toward design rather than crafts or trades. Ingólfur put much stock in design -- it should be a component in the general education of each individual. Design education for Ingólfur related to what Vignir B. Árnason (b. 1934) referred to as environmental literacy. "It helps the individual in orienting, in grasping the environment, understanding the environment in abstract and concrete terms. To develop an understanding of the backdrop of human environment" (Ingólfur G. Ingólfsson, b. 1941, p. 13). Wood and metalwork in this definition

is not only a manual subject, but also no less intellectual and social. Taking wood as an example Ingólfur points out how a person uses the senses to experience the material.

Children do experience this, but he argues that this material sense becomes valuable only by relation to thought and knowledge which results in an understanding of the qualities, characteristics and essence of the material.

Many of the teachers referred to learning about design, but Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir (b. 1953) emphasized experience of the design process in explaining why design was important. "You sketch and work further and then it is time for decision making, you have a lot but you have to choose and say O.K. this is good. It is often hard, but the thing is that if you don't choose you can't proceed, you can't take the next step which is another circle " (Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir, b. 1953, p. 12). Hera Sigurðardóttir (b. 1960) also values the design process and emphasizes that pupils have to sketch or draw the object, even if the end result will not be like the drawing: "I often feel that if they start drawing it triggers a certain work process so they begin to think the object through" (Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960, p. 4). "It is also to get to know another material, pushing yourself, having to think and create, construct something of one's own and develop it. I think that is an education that transfers into general development" (Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960, p. 8). It is interesting to note here that the rationale is intrinsic, referring to the subject as a valuable experience in its own right rather than the means to an end of becoming a more skilled person.

### **The Formal and Perceived Curricula**

The content of the curriculum and the sequence and manner in which this content is delivered is pretty constant for most of the teachers interviewed. This suggests that the subject has

settled into a tradition unchallenged over the last 30-40 years. "What went on here and still goes on here with us is this joiner's bench bondage, nothing but joiner's bench bondage" (Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918, p. 20). 'Joiner's bench bondage' would be the shop equivalent of a classroom situation where each child remains at his or her desk for all tasks. Usually each pupil makes his or her individual project. This tradition has become so strong that teachers feel bound by the expectation of pupil production of useful objects (Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918; Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960).

The wood and metalwork teachers have more or less followed the suggestions of the formal curricula in terms of what techniques to introduce and when. The youngest pupils are usually nine years old, -- in some instances eight (Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960; Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957) -- started off with simple fretwork in thin plywood, and learning to drive nails and use sandpaper. They progressed the next year to work in solid wood, and learned to saw to measure and at right angles using measuring tape and a square and/or mitre box, as well as using a rasp for forming wood. In the third year of the program, when pupils were 11 years old they were taught to use the plane and make a board right angled and even in its thickness. They were also instructed in how to adjust the plane and to care for it. At age 12 or older, they were introduced to a wider variety of materials. If the emphasis on woodworking was continued, they would tackle bigger and more complex projects and be introduced to machinery. At this point teachers introduced the chisel and gouges for carving wood. Projects and materials requiring sustained effort such as horn and bone, or potentially dangerous processes such as soldering metal and turning wood on a lathe, are reserved for 13 to 16 year old pupils. (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913; Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918; Svavar

Jóhannesson, b. 1933; Vignir B. Árnason, b.1934; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946; Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957; Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960).

The younger elementary school pupils often make toys such as cars and planes, jig saw puzzles or shadow puppets. Small household objects such as boxes, signs, boot jacks and small shelves are also common projects for young elementary pupils (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913; Vignir B. Árnason, b. 1934; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946; Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960; Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960). Older pupils were often involved in making furniture in a wood work oriented program. Their choice of projects reflects their needs, students in a comprehensive senior secondary school (age 16 to 20 approximately) make double beds and even cradle. The older elementary school child (13 to 16 year old) may make a chair, a bookshelf or a computer desk (Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918; Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Egill Strange, b. 1927; Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933).

Commonly the teacher defines the project, introduces the tools and materials to be used and may demonstrate the techniques. These introductions tend to be short as the students are eager to start working and demonstrate lack of patience with teacher talk (Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1934; Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960; Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960). Only one teacher mentioned having a particular space and time set aside for group discussion and as having taught a project that did not involve any construction (Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960). Most of the instruction is individual. The teacher goes around and shows each student the right technique. Many recruit pupils to assist each other with safe processes (Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1913; Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Egill

Strange, b. 1927; Vignir B. Árnason, b. 1934; Guðvarður B. Halldórsson, b. 1957, Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960).

Many teachers have a collection of pictures of projects to show possible choices of projects.

Another way to introduce projects would be to show examples or prototypes, which many teachers have done (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913; Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946; Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957; Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960).

Hera Sigurðardóttir (b. 1960) voices reservations about this practice: "It often makes me feel that if their piece is not as well made as the teacher's then they get this major inferiority complex. That they compare their work too much with the example" (p. 4). She nevertheless acknowledges the usefulness of the examples or prototypes as pupils often have difficulty understanding the design and construction of an object without concrete examples.

Using compulsory projects was a common way of ensuring that the curriculum objectives were met (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913; Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946). Choice is constrained by the pupil's ability, the facilities and the curriculum by which the teacher delimits the choice by deciding which materials, tools and techniques are to be used in the project. A teacher would let all the pupils begin with some compulsory project to start everything off as quickly as possible and to see what each pupil was capable of. What they would go on to do was based on this (Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918): "I think it is hopeless to teach systematically without compulsory projects. I have always tried to keep the compulsory projects on a small scale so they wouldn't dominate the program" (Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933, p. 11). Despite compulsory

projects, the teachers maintained that they were open to pupil choice of projects (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913; Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946).

The compulsory project allows the teacher to systematically introduce tools and techniques and reduces the complexity of managing a class in the workshop (Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918; Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957; Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960). "But I think we must not let them do compulsory projects the whole time. There are many teachers who prefer that, it is much easier to teach that way. You can plan ahead more, yes it won't evolve into organized chaos. It is twice as difficult when they are not all working on the same thing, so help me God -- I won't compare it. But I just think we must" (Egill Strange, b.1927, p. 18).

Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b. 1946) started teaching in 1964, and for him as a beginning teacher anything but setting compulsory projects was inconceivable. Within ten years of entering the profession, Júlíus became involved in the comprehensive curriculum redevelopment initiated by the ministry of education in the 1970's. He became a proponent of increased pupil initiative and choice within wood and metalwork. Looking back over his wrestling with the issue of pupil choice Júlíus compares his initial years of teaching with what followed: "Back then one was, in the beginning of the school year at least, completely a compulsory project kind of a guy. One knew nothing else. One didn't have more initiative or foresight at the time than this" (Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946, p. 14-15). Later Júlíus allowed a certain choice in projects, in the latter half of the school year when pupils had been taught some basic skills.

Pupil choice of projects is no simple proposition. Vignir B. Árnason (b. 1934), who started teaching in 1963, described his struggle to find the balance between choice and compulsion in pupil projects: "I've tried everything in this matter. According to the theory as I understood

it in the early years it was to develop freely. The children were to find their own projects and one was struggling to try this but I came to the conclusion early on that they had neither maturity nor experience to select suitable projects for themselves" (Vignir B. Árnason, b. 1934, p. 8). "Well, they had complete freedom to suggest projects. I recall one nine year old chap who got it into his head that he needed to make himself a desk and a bed. Then one stood like a fool faced with the dilemma of trying to chat him out of this" (Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946, p. 15). The constraints of maturity, previous experience, ability on the pupil's part and the constraints posed by the school situation in terms of time allotment, equipment, facilities and materials have led teachers to prefer a more directed curriculum.

Lack of understanding by pupils and their families of what would be possible or feasible for a child to accomplish at school could be a problem. "If the pupil took this freedom home and brought it up at home to get guidance it could result in Dad drawing up something fabulous and the kid would come back with stars in his eyes and the parents didn't have a clue what their kids were allowed or able to do" (Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946, p. 15). Júlíus responded to the problems by defining the parameters of choice and by making these known to pupils and parents: "I didn't set the projects, I set the techniques, a framework of techniques that they had stick to" (Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946, p. 15). Svavar Jóhannesson (b. 1933) counts on the family to help pupils decide what projects would be useful for them to make. In his case, having taught in the same community for a long time he can assume that the wood and metalwork school tradition is known to parents.

When a compulsory project is used for a while it could reach a certain saturation point in the community. Guðvarður Halldórsson (b. 1957) said "of course we can't use the same project

for years or it will be sitting in rows in the windowsill of homes with many children" (p. 12). A good project can become a bit of a drag -- even for the teacher -- if used too long. Egill Strange (b. 1927) had been using a bootjack for a compulsory project and was 'dog tired of it' although it is a form that is good for them as they are learning to use the plane. So Egill had redesigned the bootjack into a wall mounted candleholder, which is essentially the same project with the addition of a metalwork component where they must cut and form a copper dish to hold the candle. "My dear, they walked on air when they left. They thought it was just swell to be able to change the bootjack around and make it into a candleholder" (Egill Strange, b. 1927, p. 17).

The use of compulsory projects has changed along the lines described by Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b. 1946). They are used more as a safeguard that certain methods are covered than an obligation to make a particular object (Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957; Ólöf Kristín Einarisdóttir, b. 1960). Hera Sigurðardóttir (b. 1960) said on the issue of compulsory projects or free choice: "I use both. Sometimes they can choose between two to three projects but sometimes I introduce one project that they can develop in different ways" (p. 4). The pupils have to design or sketch their project but are mainly directed by the choice of technique, tools and materials, which are determined by Hera. She recalled one instance where she had posed a particular project when she felt that a particular cohort had not gotten enough instruction in this technique. When her pupils have finished their project and if there is time left they can move on to free choice within the parameters set by the techniques they know and the materials available.

Building confidence and understanding so that pupils can transfer what they learned through a compulsory or teacher directed project into working independently, is central concern for those who believe techniques should only be the means to the end of being able to create.

Guðvarður Halldórsson (b. 1957) teaches eight and nine year old pupils to use the rasp, a project which requires working in solid wood. But the pupils are too young to be able to cut a shape out of solid material themselves, so the teachers cut out something for the pupils on the bandsaw and then emphasize that they are to change the cut-out into something that looks totally different. Using a pre-cut shape is not ideal in Guðvarður's opinion, and in a project for 10 year olds using similar materials and techniques, he tries to 'erase' the effects of this. The technique of forming with a rasp learned the previous year is reinforced. The project now also involves designing and cutting out the shape from which the form is then derived. The pupils design their own object -- such as picture frame -- and are taught to use mirroring to achieve symmetry. This design strategy is then referred to in later projects that they design. When pupils come to the point of making an object they have personally designed, the teachers make much of it so that they will appreciate that they were able to see it through for themselves. "And we try to evoke joy in having accomplished this, to see something through from start to finish" (Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957, p. 12).

The reduction in instruction time per pupil in the subject that occurred in the late seventies forced teachers to accept that they are no longer able to take their pupils to the level of proficiency they once expected (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913; Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933). Guðvarður Halldórsson's (b. 1957) comments about reasonable demand for craftsmanship today show that times have changed. This is not surprising given that the time allotment in the subject has decreased by half since the older

generation were school boys. Over the years Guðvarður has come to prefer simpler projects and methods that will allow students to handle basic tools successfully.

Much of the commentary about life in the wood and metalwork studio refers to the community that develops with a teacher and a class, and students that stood out in some way as well as incidents that illustrate the way things were. The teachers took pride in the perception that their classes were a constructive community where students were respected and cared for. Sometimes the teacher felt that he or she was meeting a need that did not have much to do with the subject itself, allowing the children time to talk, to enjoy being in a different setting from the rest of the school day (Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918; Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Egill Strange, b. 1927; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960).

Student motivation has not been a major concern for wood and metalwork teachers and they have not had to go to any lengths to involve their students. In response to the suggestion that some pupils may not have been motivated in wood and metalwork, Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1913) replied definitely: "That was rare. That people weren't interested" (p. 22). In general wood and metalwork has been a popular subject and the teachers enjoy this (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913; Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Egill Strange, b. 1927; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946; Guðvarður B. Halldórsson, b. 1960; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960; Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960). "I am aware that this is a position of certain prestige from the pupils' point of view, to be a wood and metalwork teacher. They clearly think it is something quite impressive according to what the other teachers tell me. Because the wood and metalwork is, as I say it is without exception that most pupils enjoy themselves in wood and metalwork" (Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960, p. 5). Even classes with discipline problems seem able to settle

down in wood and metalwork: "It went really well, they were absolute angels as soon as they came here and got something manual to work with" (Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960, p. 5).

There is even demand for more instruction and pressure on the teachers from pupils who wanted additional lessons. One did of course grant extra hours as far as one could but often there were so many pupils in each class it wasn't always possible, but one tried as one could" (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913, p. 9). Vignir B. Árnason (b. 1934) has had the opportunity to meet this need with an open workshop once a week where any pupil can come and work on wood and metalwork. Many students use this opportunity, both to press on with projects they are doing in wood and metalwork class and also to stay involved during the term they are not enrolled in wood and metalwork class. Vignir's school also organizes what they call 'open days', where the regular curriculum is broken up into workshops running for three consecutive days.

Then there are those who excel in the subject, "sometimes one gets absolute geniuses" (Egill Strange, b. 1927, p. 18). Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) uses the same terms to describe outstanding students: "Then we had great geniuses, once in a while one got a pure genius. You had to let them shine... You mustn't bore them to death with stuff they were thoroughly familiar with" (p. 21). Those students who are extraordinarily motivated or skilled can also inspire their classmates. "I admit that I try to get as much out of the kids as possible in class. If you are lucky with one, two, or even three good students in the class you can use them to spur the others on. You see, you let them make other things, other projects which gets the rest of them excited, spurs them on with what they are doing until you can pull them into these other projects too" (Egill Strange, b. 1927, p. 4).

"And the kids have helped me over the years, supported me in some things and not as much in other. You get your feedback from them to see if you are heading in the right direction" (Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960, p. 10). Some of the teachers said that they had learned most about teaching from the children. Their ideas and solutions to design problems and the difficulties they have are the most important indicators of how to develop and modify their approach (Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946; Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960).

The relationship with the children emerges as the most important in the interviews. These were among the descriptions and comments that had a definite emotional tone, sometimes there was frustration over the opportunities lost, but more often warmth and joy of having been part of the constructive community where pupil and teacher grow together: "What I enjoy most of all is to see the things materialize in their hands. The creation, that there is a purpose, some meaning derived from what I've said to them. To see things created and come into being, I think that is it. Just as the teacher of reading becomes aware by and by that children are reading" (Egill Strange, b. 1927, p. 15).

When I asked Guðvarður Halldórsson (b. 1957) what was enjoyable in his work the answer was prefaced by an understatement. "Many things, I can even recall entire days that were good ones. It is of course very enjoyable when you see children happy and you feel their confidence growing. Yes it is very rewarding to deliver such things" (Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957, p. 19). "Most of them are good kids and a joy to work with, they are positive and you just always forget the bad stuff and remember only the good and also when you get what they are working on and what they do in class. You see, you can't tell exactly

what they know but you can just see how happy they are, having finished a project that they are happy with and proud of " (Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960, p. 11).

### Relationship with the Curriculum in General

In Icelandic education, there is a constant struggle for resources and prestige between what can be loosely termed academic and manual subjects. The relation between academic and manual subjects is marked by the persistent perception of academic as more prestigious subjects. References to this notion came up in various contexts.

Time allotment is one of the bones of contention as efforts to secure and expand the position of art and crafts in the curriculum have not been successful in the long run. One of the most expansive proposals was the establishment of a vocational secondary stream with the education act of 1946. As Ingimundur Ólafsson (b. 1913) put it: "It was a remarkable event in legislation. But there was no implementation and moreover it wasn't long before the implementation was such that there were less vocational studies in the schools" (p. 15).

Practices such as offering low achieving pupils more wood and metalwork courses, thereby streaming high achievers away from the subject, were part of the school experience of wood and metalwork teachers. Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) said "they still love me, those who were hopeless in the academics" (p. 22). If they met with the attitude Axel expresses, this is no wonder "One mustn't band together with the teachers in the academic subjects to sit on those pupils and make them feel small. You must acknowledge the individual for his due at least... Often it was a new experience for them not to be the worst at some subject. Some of them could learn it to some degree" (Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918, p. 22). Before the days of

mainstreaming, pupils were grouped according to academic ability and it was common to assume that the low achievers would benefit more than others from manual subjects (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1934). Ingimundur Ólafsson (b. 1913) mentioned that at one of the schools where he taught in 1945-1951, classes of low academic ability were given extra hours in wood and metalwork. "Pupils who had difficulty in academic subjects got considerably more time in crafts than those who were able in academic subjects" (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913, p.11).

While comments were made to this effect, questions alluding to the relative prestige of academic and manual subjects were, however, treated as hostile by the teachers interviewed. Take for instance this excerpt from my interview with Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) where he describes the curriculum of his rural secondary school -- more precisely the electives or the choices pupils had depending on "where the interest lay and what the ability allowed. *Do you think, as you mention ability, was the view apparent that those with little aptitude for learning should perhaps pursue manual rather than academic subjects?* (pause) I wouldn't venture a comment on that, I would not. *Maybe it wasn't apparent there?* I believe that it wasn't, not to speak of at least" (Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918, p. 3). The tone of voice changed after I posed the question and the words become measured and careful. On the one hand Axel was not ready to completely dispel the existence of this view, but on the other hand he was loath to admit to it.

Regardless of what the actual requirements and standards were, the perception of the vocational stream as a soft option suitable for the less able student was prevalent. This is not only reflected in what the teachers said, but how they said it. Their comments were delivered

in a combat stance. The tone ranged from wary and guarded to defiant and indignant -- even angry or sarcastic. The frustration of constant devaluation has created a very sore point.

The National Examination results for each school were public and reflected on the reputation of the schools, so principals were anxious for their academic stream to score high on the national exam. While acknowledging that some principals sought to 'dump' their less academically able or inclined students into the vocational stream, Sigurður Úlfarsson (b. 1919) doesn't agree that this marked the Vocational Secondary School. His point was that many of those who were directed there because of their poor performance in academic subjects became more motivated to learn in the new setting with a balance between academic and manual subjects. This motivation in turn improved their performance across the curriculum. "Those who came without an interest came because they'd been convinced that it would be easier, but that was not at all the case, they found out that the requirements in academics were the same and that the manual subjects weren't any easier than the academic when you got right down to it. It was just as difficult as anything else!" (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919, p. 13-14).

The need to articulate that the subject is just as rigorous or difficult as the academic subjects was also evident in the description of the entrance requirements for Trade School when Sigurður entered: "You passed your elementary school exam and entered secondary institutions such as the College of Trades. Although you did have to sit an entrance exam, one had to pass that and there were entrance exams for the grammar schools as well, for those who went that route" (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919, p. 2). The comparison is ever present.

Svavar Jóhannesson (b. 1933) was still indignant about the way his choice of secondary education was greeted: "I recall that I went into what was called the vocational department. Much to everyone's grief, teachers and parents wanted me to go through the academic stream. Because then students of manual subjects were in effect looked down upon. That there were only second class students there, those who really couldn't learn anything else, or by the book that is. I felt that attitude from many people" (Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933, p. 4). Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir (b. 1953) faced the same decision twenty years later, but opted for the academic stream and went to grammar school after passing the national exams from secondary school: "If I'd taken the vocational stream I would have learned a lot of sewing which would have come in handy, today I wish I knew more. But because I was good, an achiever in academic subjects one was directed onto this track. Then you were, as a good girl, supposed to go to some grammar school or the School of Commerce and set your sights on the University thank you very much" (Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir, b. 1953, p. 2).

There are indications that wood and metalwork teachers respond to this by posing themselves in an alternate position -- they see themselves in opposition to the hegemony of text. Egill Strange (b. 1927) explained the stance of the academically oriented school administrator, who is the ubiquitous opponent of the wood and metalwork teacher: "If you can't read it, it is not" (p. 6), which means that the disregard for forms of knowledge other than the text is so complete that in this pedantic view, manual subjects do not qualify as learning. Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) made several comments about the welfare of students in an education system where book learning is the hegemonic form. He was concerned that this would be counterproductive for many students and that their self esteem as learners would be enhanced by acknowledging more than one way of learning. Ingimundur Ólafsson's (b. 1913) elderly

students often express regret at not having had the opportunity to pursue certain subjects.

"When they tell me stories of their lives they often say that they always wanted, all their days they wanted to learn this or that subject. And many feel in effect oppressed by what one man described to me as being forced to read school subjects that were of no use or relevance" (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913, p. 14).

Egill Strange (b. 1927) summed up the views of many of his peers when he voiced the opinion that despite a few notable exceptions, manual subjects did not receive due consideration in the school system: "*Where do you think the problem lies then?* It is often with the principals themselves. Too bookish you see, and they don't understand that if we didn't have manual education we'd still be living in caves" (Egill Strange, b. 1927, p. 6).

Understanding the worth of subjects doesn't mean understanding their qualities: "I recall a friend of mine from The University College of Education who graduated in an academic subject. There was always talk about why we needed all this time for learning the crafts. And she, who is otherwise a very intelligent woman, said: 'Can't you just read about it?' Only people who are not engaged in crafts can talk like that, they don't understand that craft isn't something that comes about just by looking at it. It just comes about through this work" (Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir, b. 1953, p. 3-4). Or as Egill Strange (b. 1927) put it "Some people don't make any gains by merely thinking, there's nothing to show for it" (p. 6). What they are referring to is that the subject is concrete and physical. It requires physical exertion in real time which results in a product which can't be conjured up from thought or text alone but has to be made from material. This fundamental distinction is hard to grasp in the hegemony of text.

### **This Side of Art, the Other Side of Trades**

Wood and metalwork sits somewhere on the landscape between trade and art -- it is a craft.

The landscape is nebulous though, and even the inhabitants have difficulty getting their bearings. Over time these relationships have changed, for the oldest teachers did not grow up with a sense of trades as a separate vocation. Craft was practiced for utilitarian reasons in their home environment. Art was remote. Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) pointed out how these relations have changed in his life time and how the subject wood and metalwork is differently placed as a result. "It was so much closer to daily labour then than now. To the vocations of farming and fishing" (Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918, p. 3).

The relationship of the craft subjects and art is in many ways closer than with other subjects in the school curriculum. But it is not without its tensions. It is useful to separate drawing from other art forms here, for drawing has a particular function in the design process. Wood and metalwork teachers need certain skills in rendering shape and form two dimensionally. They need to master drafting as well as sketching, skills in which many of them were trained. In most cases, opportunities for art education of any kind have been appreciated. Many downplay their ability to draw, which nevertheless is a subject they have all had some foundation in and constantly utilize in their work. This lack of confidence can sometimes be traced throughout their upbringing and education because they have not had adequate opportunity to cultivate the ability (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Egill Strange, b. 1927; Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933; Ingólfur G. Ingólfsson, b. 1941; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946; Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir, b. 1953).

I asked Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) whether he had drawn as a child and he replied: "No, that is something that has always been an obstacle for me. I've always been a rather poor draftsman. It was a serious shortcoming for me later, in my work, not to have some foundation in it" (p. 2). Axel didn't remember paper and pencils as common place in the hands of children when he was growing up. He received drawing instruction in the rural secondary school from his wood and metalwork teacher who also taught free hand drawing from observation where form was rendered with shading and perspective. Sigurður Úlfarsson (b. 1919) also recalls drawing instruction, as part of the elementary school program.

Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) was a student in the Farmers' Department at the College of Crafts in 1943-44: "Of course we always had access to see, if one popped downstairs to the drawing department, they were all downstairs " (Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918, p. 8-9). Egill Strange (b. 1927) had a strong interest in art as well as craft as a young man. After leaving formal schooling he enrolled at the College of Crafts and Art for evening classes that he fondly remembers both for the quality of the instruction and the company of the likeminded: "I did drawing, water colour painting, bookbinding and wood carving. One was busy. Yes, yes, I enjoyed it. It gave me a lot and proved very useful later on. ... One felt funny though, we were walking down town, the lads, and they'd take the right turn toward the Old Movie Theater and I'd take the left turn to the College of Crafts and Arts. Sometimes one was tempted to turn right, but didn't indulge" (Egill Strange, b. 1927, p. 2).

Although wood and metalwork teachers may feel closer to art than the trades, in the modern configuration, there is a definite distinction made: "I'm not an artist, I'm not claiming to be, you mustn't think that. It wouldn't cross my mind to claim that. I am a craftsman" (Egill

Strange, b. 1927, p. 11). When I asked him how he distinguished between artist and craftsman he said: "Well, you see, even if I can make a variety of things nobody is considered an artist except those who are, well, different from others. And I think that I'm just an average man. I enjoy the work. I'm never as happy as when I'm working, particularly for myself or like making various things, models and carving. Interpreting something in carving... I'm a funny bird. As you may have noticed" (p. 11). It seemed to me that he had described himself in terms he might reconcile with the notion of artist, so I asked again: "*But you don't see your work as...* I don't consider myself an artist at all. My friends and acquaintances they all say that I'm a great artist, but, ah -- I just want to be allowed to be myself in peace and quiet. They want to mount an exhibition of all the junk I've made. I say that I'll take no part in that damned do" (p. 11).

He went on to describe a favourite project which is to make what I can best describe as narrative sculptures to mark the 60th birthdays of a group of friends. He concluded that this was popular art. "*There you have yet another definition of art?* Yes, there are so many. There are namely so many. You see, many of these men do not want to be called artists. No. Particularly men who are into this kind of interpretation. I am, that is we don't want anything, we're just ourselves... I do this mostly for my own pleasure. I enjoy especially making things that I intend as presents for my friends. It is pure bliss, wonderful. It is really wonderful to be able to interpret something" (Egill Strange, b. 1927, p. 12). Interpretation is a term that Egill Strange (b. 1927) used often in his definitions of art and craft work. The term expression would be commonly used as synonymous with his usage of 'interpretation', but it conjures up a different image of art. Egill is more interested in the narrative aspect or literal interpretation.

What wasn't stated directly was the issue of recognition. When Egill said that he doesn't want anything, he is referring to public recognition of the art establishment. His comments about publicly funded art endeavours reflect a certain disdain of this establishment. The criteria for good art has to do on the one hand with workmanship, and what he calls interpretation on the other. Taking as an example an exhibition of modern sculpture in his home town of Hafnarfjörður, where machine parts and scrap metal was used to create abstract and conceptual works, he said: "It has often more to do with how it is made. I could just as well scrounge some old fuel tanks and let them rust and weather, drop them on the lawn and claim that they constitute a work of art. I could also take some bent metal sheet and twist it and prop it up for display. There is no interpretation behind it in my opinion" (Egill Strange, b. 1927, p.11).

The proximity to the woodworking trades is considerable, not the least because so many of the wood and metalwork teachers are tradesmen by training. Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b. 1946) did have a connection with the woodworking trades. He worked for a carpenter during the summer holidays and the master offered him the opportunity to do an apprenticeship. He did not go into the trade -- even though he achieved his certificate as a carpenter in 1968 -- teaching has been his primary vocation. In this respect his career path is similar to that of the younger colleagues (Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir, b. 1953; Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960 and Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960). These individuals all went through teacher training first and relate to the school subject wood and metalwork, rather than to the woodworking trades. They make a clear distinction between the subject wood and metalwork and vocational training for the trades and are not about to turn out 'little carpenters' (Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946; Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957).

Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir (b. 1953) started out with an interest in the woodworking trades. She then worked in various crafts as a teacher and a craftswoman before finding herself as a textile artist and designer. Her search for a place in the landscape of art, crafts and trades illustrates the relationship between these and where the subject wood and metalwork fits. Growing up in a small town didn't afford her much contact with art, but crafts and trades were practiced. As a girl she took textiles and art in school, but the experience wasn't encouraging. The need to create was easy to acknowledge, but the lack of confidence was hard to shake. It took many years and much searching to make the decision to become an artist/designer by vocation. Reflecting on the teacher training she felt that the design component had been missing.

"You know, I always thought of something practical, I could never, wasn't confident enough at the outset that I might be able to do something as a fine crafts person myself. Not back then" (Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir, b. 1953, p. 9). Even though Helga Pálína had worked as an independent craftswoman, costume and set designer as well as training as a wood and metalwork teacher and enrolled in an art school, it was an effort to assume the title of artist. When I asked what goals she had in mind when she entered art school she answered: "I was just thinking of myself and maybe I didn't think, in fact I didn't think very far ahead. I've always been scared of the term artist because it seemed so grand to me and I thought I could somehow never assume it as a title or live up to the title of an artist/designer" (Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir, b. 1953, p. 10).

Another example of an early and continuing interest in art and design and a career in trades was offered by Ingólfur G. Ingólfsson (b. 1941). Drawing was one of the highlights of

elementary school. "I was definitely in my element there" (Ingólfur G. Ingólfsson, b. 1941, p. 1). As a young man Ingólfur did not pursue art but went into the wood working trades and then sought further education in design. He explained his stance as seeking to close the gap between art and trade where aesthetics is cut off or loses contact with the trade: "I think this was the major disaster which has meant that these trades have not developed and grown into fine craft and artistic design which we had technically really competent people for. The danger is now, in my opinion, that this high quality craftsmanship will be lost to the nation because the individual looks at the project from an isolated technical perspective and then the product is of little worth " (Ingólfur G. Ingólfsson, b. 1941, p. 2). Looking back on his trades training, Vignir B. Árnason (b. 1934) felt that the drawing instruction was inferior.

Retraining as a wood and metalwork teacher afforded new insights and experience, especially in drawing and art history which included "the historical development of furniture styles.

There I was, a master cabinetmaker and knew nothing or next to nothing" (p. 4).

On the other hand Svavar Jóhannesson (b. 1933) argues that teachers need to be able to design projects and direct pupils so that the basic furniture made in wood and metalwork programs functions properly. Therefore they need an insight into the trade of cabinet making. Ingólfur G. Ingólfsson (b. 1941) who has trained in the trades and technology as well as design spoke of attitudes prevalent in trades and technology that he feels are inappropriate for the teacher: "But in such fields men are taught to be effective. It is in itself a good thing and necessary and perhaps lacking in teacher training. But men become too hardened in their understanding of certain things. Like I said it was the downfall of tradesmen how certain they are in their belief that they are doing the right thing when they are on the wrong track. That is

they lack aesthetic thought. But they are always dead sure that they are doing it right, that they are so skilled" (Ingólfur G. Ingólfsson, b. 1941, p. 12).

While the school subject is related both to trades and art, and design might be a uniting principle, these relationships are tense. It seems that the curriculum community has a slight identity crisis in that it hasn't reached a consensus on to what extent the subject is technical and to what extent is is aesthetic in nature.

### Relationship With the Larger Curriculum Community

#### **Working With Other Teachers**

There are two main relationships of importance here, the relationship with other wood and metalwork teachers and the relations in the staffroom of each school. While these are very much a matter of personality, several extrinsic factors came up in the interviews that are important in facilitating or hindering collegial relations. The perceived status of the subject and the administrative style of the school affect the staffroom relations. So does the physical setting, such as the location and quality of the workshop facilities. Relations with other wood and metalwork teachers depend on the proximity, the initiative of a professional organization and gender, an issue explored further in chapter 6. Both relations are affected by the workload that the wood and metalwork teacher typically takes on.

The organization of most schools is not conducive to collaboration across subjects. "The school is quite divided. For example those who teach, the generalists in the primary grades from 6-12 year old, all those classroom teachers are women. They have specific meetings for each cohort, I don't come anywhere near that" (Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933, p. 21). The

specialist wood and metalwork teacher would have to work with the several cohort groups in the primary section to be fully included in the planning process at that level. The incentive is even less in the upper grade levels, where each teacher is a specialist and adheres to a subject oriented curriculum. Collaboration across the curriculum would involve curriculum development which takes time and possible timetable adjustments, which can be difficult to accommodate, especially if the school administration does not see this as a priority.

Despite such logistic problems, teachers have tried to initiate collaborative projects, particularly among the art and craft subjects, as well as with generalist classroom teachers at the primary level. Svavar Jóhannesson (b. 1933) described a project involving both textiles and wood and metalwork which he designed. This was a footstool with an embroidered cushion. The stool itself would be made in wood work but the cushion designed and made in textiles. It had a flaw, due to lack of mutual understanding of the technical implications of the design in each subject. Lack of time and incentive for the teachers to meet and put their expertise to the test in solving the design problem was compounded by the dynamic of each particular group of teachers which plays a significant part in the success or failure of collaboration.

Here the gender relation between wood and metalwork and textile teachers was inhibiting. The wood and metalwork teacher is male and the textile teachers are female, so the question of the respective value of initiative and subject matter expertise in each subject becomes confounded with the question of gendered authority. In this case, the wood and metalwork teacher initiated and designed the project but there were limits to how far he wanted or could lead the women: "I didn't want to completely direct the whole process down to each detail, to

give them orders about what they should do. Of course I had certain ideas about how it could be solved if they'd asked me or wanted to discuss it, but they thought they were capable of solving it although it didn't turn out to be the case" (Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933, p. 22).

*"Have you had any cooperation with other teachers here?* No. That isn't common. It is very complicated in a school this big to organize cooperation. Both because of the timetable and other things. It is extra work, it is purely additional work. There isn't much interest in that, you know" (Guðvarður Halldórsson, b.1957, p. 10). Vignir B. Árnason (b. 1934) agreed that collaboration with other teachers in the staffroom is not a given for a wood and metalwork teacher. The only case he experienced before moving to his present post, was with textiles as part of a nation wide effort to commemorate 1100 years of settlement in Iceland. The anniversary was celebrated in 1974 and art and craft teachers got quite involved with projects which reflected the Icelandic cultural heritage. Notions of integration within the subject area were then ascending and this opportunity for new initiatives was used by many to experiment with integrated approaches.

At the secondary school where Vignir B. Árnason (b. 1934) teaches now there is a positive attitude toward collaboration, although the structural obstacles identified by Svavar Jóhannesson (b. 1933) are present. Several attempts have been made to offer more or less integrated projects, mainly with textiles but also with mathematics. Individual students have also been able to draw on subject matter expertise from different teachers in completing their chosen projects: "And the first obstacle we have encountered when we've talked about it, it has been suggested many times here to get cooperation going -- is time. Lack of time. Lack of teacher time, lack of time or conflicting timetables" (Vignir B. Árnason, b. 1934, p. 10).

Vignir attributes the positive attitude toward cooperation to the school ethos where the attitude toward the subject and its teachers is positive: "I feel that the art and craft teachers are on a more equal footing with the others, if I can take that aspect, than I knew before. There is understanding -- we attend staff meetings here just as any other teacher would" (Vignir B. Árnason, b. 1934, p. 11). In his current position, Vignir is part of the department of art and crafts which meets regularly. He attends staff meetings and is the supervisory teacher of a class and therefore part of a cohort group. At the formal level he has as much input into planning as any other teacher of the school. On the informal level, some of his colleagues drop by the workshop just out of interest, especially when their students are there.

Hera Sigurðardóttir (b. 1960) teaches at the elementary level, where teacher collaboration on thematic approaches is quite common. Her school has a philosophy supporting such approaches, but she encounters the same structural difficulties as Svavar and Vignir described: "But at least there is the will to do this here at the school so if one takes the initiative then there is always a positive attitude. Always readiness. So wood and metalwork is not left out nor any of the specialist subjects. We always meet once a week all the specialist teachers, music, art, wood and metalwork and textiles, we meet. One has heard that in other schools they are a bit outside the general system, but not here" (Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960, p. 3).

Lack of cooperation may indicate a lack of status within the staffroom community -- but not necessarily. Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b. 1946) said of his second teaching post that there had been no formal cooperation between teachers of different subjects: "But on the other hand I had the feeling that everyone was equal in the staffroom. Whether it was a physical education

teacher, home economics teacher, textile teacher or wood and metalwork teacher, everyone was always included and there was no exclusiveness or cliques or anything like that. It was all under one roof and therefore everyone always got together during recess. I have probably been quite lucky that way" (Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946, p. 14).

The fact that Júlíus and Hera count only specialist teachers of non-academic subjects to prove their point, shows the awareness of the norm from which this was the exception. The question of cooperation with other teachers was answered rather straight forwardly by Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918): "It depended on where you were" (p. 24). The cooperation was confined to the instance where there were several wood and metalwork teachers in a school, who then coordinated their projects and approach. In the latter case it was more a question of having good collegial relations in the staffroom rather than cooperation in the classrooms.

## **The Material Environment**

### Facilities and Resources

The facilities in which the teaching takes place and the acquisition and quality of materials and equipment are important aspects of the school subject. The struggle to improve the material conditions for teaching and learning is an ongoing and deep concern for craft teachers. The issue of facilities has also taken on a symbolic meaning; when craft teachers use phrases like 'in a shack on the grounds' or 'in the attic and the basement' to describe their workshops, they are metaphorically referring to the situation or status of the subject within the school. The marginal status of the subject and devaluation compared to academic subjects

is one of the issues where their comments and the manner in which they were delivered registered deep frustration.

Teaching wood and metalwork is physically demanding. The wood and metalwork studio is a noisy place. In addition to the chatter of children, there are the various sounds of tools, equipment and materials, the grating of plane on wood, the hammering of nails and the din of drills and saws, occasionally the shrill notes of the band saw or the loud noise of the combination wood work machine. Hopefully the ventilation system hums in the background. The place is dusty-- sawdust settles everywhere. And in addition, there is the need to be everywhere at once. The pupils projects are stationary at the workbenches, therefore the teacher has to move around constantly to offer assistance and monitor progress. In most cases there is an entourage of impatient pupils seeking help (Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960; Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919).

When asked about the negative aspects of wood and metalwork teaching the answer was basically that this is a physically and psychologically demanding job: "So it is hard work, the noise is completely constant and you are running ragged up and down" (Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960, p. 11). The noise from the use of equipment and materials as well as the pupils moving around and their cheerful chatter can be overwhelming at the end of the day. The work is physically hard, and the teacher has to move heavy materials in large quantities first to store, then to divide and lastly to distribute them to pupils (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960; Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960). One of the most stressful aspects of the classroom situation is the danger of accidents (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933; Vignir B. Árnason, b. 1934; Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960).

"It is, well for the first thing it is hard because the children are more lively and mobile in this than other subjects. Each individual needs a lot of attention, so it means constantly running from one person to the other. And as I said it is dangerous in regards to accidents" (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919, p. 20).

The demands are not only psychological. One teacher needs to relate to hundreds of pupils who always come in groups of 12-15. The demands are also physical: attending to each individual means being constantly on the move, with an ear cocked to the individual and the group at the same time, keeping the whole group in one's peripheral vision while trying to focus on one individual and his/her work (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Egill Strange, b. 1927; Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1934; Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1953; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960). While Sigurður Úlfarsson (b. 1919) tactfully described the situation in the wood and metalwork workshop as demanding, involving lively and mobile pupils, the situation can easily become one where the teacher recalls that "there was just noise and naughtiness" and the pupils like "some hungry wolves" constantly needing the teacher's attention (Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir, b. 1953, p. 5 and 13).

The limited opportunity to relate to each student ranked high among the frustrations of being a wood and metalwork teacher (Egill Strange, b. 1927; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960). The ideal is to have plenty of time to check their projects and plan the next step accordingly. "You're always getting new kids, you don't get to know them at all. I find it to be a bit of a conveyor belt approach really" (Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960, p. 8). "It is mainly that I have the feeling that I do not attend enough to each individual. One often feels that one needed to chat more with so and so. Also because a lot is going on, they

are very eager to finish their projects and really demanding the teacher's attention" (Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960, p. 11). Given the importance that the teachers place on their relationship with the children as described earlier, this frustration is quite serious.

When the poor quality of the working environment, particularly in terms of ventilation and noise is taken into account, it is hardly surprising that the teachers use words like 'exhausted', 'drained' and 'done for' to describe what it might feel like at the end of the day. Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir (b. 1960) taught in a large school where the crowded and poorly ventilated facilities were booked until late afternoon: "I remember one class, they were horrible. But it was because I had them from 4 to 6 in the afternoon and they were tired and I was so tired. It was really terrible for all of us, not just the teacher" (p. 7). This aspect of the work was brought up by several teachers to explain why many colleagues have left the profession (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Ingólfur G. Ingólfsson, b. 1941; Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir, b. 1953; Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960). Taking a sabbatical provided one teacher with a chance to reflect on her working situation. "There is of course a certain stress, there is a tremendous noise in the wood and metalwork studio. I found after those five years that I was a tad tired of the noise" (Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960, p. 6).

When Ingimundur Ólafsson (b. 1913) moved to Reykjavík in 1945 to teach wood and metalwork, he found that the facilities were of a higher standard than he had known in rural settings. The subject had separate workshops, spacious and fully equipped with hand tools and even some power tools. They were far superior working conditions to what he had known before. For most of his working life Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) has been situated in locations away from the main buildings of the schools he has served at. He shares this

situation with many colleagues and at the last school he taught at, Réttarholt upper elementary, which he joined in 1966, this was also the case: "We were in an outbuilding, a separate building was constructed which was to house cooking and crafts" (Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918, p. 24).

Vignir B. Árnason (b.1934) started teaching in Breiðagerði elementary school, in Reykjavík, in 1963. Although he suspects many of his fellow teachers were not exactly sure where in the school the wood and metalwork studio was located, it was a fairly good one. It was of average size and equipped with workbenches and hand tools, but it was short on power tools: "The only thing missing was perhaps more machinery to prepare the material, which meant we got it machine prepared from the timber yard. We had a band saw and a drill press and that was all. We didn't have a bench saw or anything. It worked by getting the material prepared, roughly planed for thickness and such" (Vignir B. Árnason, b. 1934, p. 6-7).

Sigurður Úlfarsson (b. 1919) taught at the Vocational Secondary School in Reykjavík, which was the flagship of facilities as the model vocational school in the country. There were separate workshops for woodwork and for metalwork: "The facilities were good at this school, the best in the country at the time. And continued to be superior to what is common in the schools. Because the facilities for wood and metalwork teaching in schools are extremely poor in many places and in some cases completely lacking. It has improved over the years naturally, but this school was well equipped. You couldn't argue with that, considering the times. And it is still fairly well equipped" (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919, p. 8). The last comment refers to the fact that the school is no longer a vocational secondary school. It evolved into one of the academically oriented comprehensive schools which sprung up in

the 1960's and 70's as alternatives to the grammar schools. The woodwork studio is all that remains of the workshops designed and built for vocational studies.

Egill Strange (b. 1927) who taught for Hafnarfjörður School District described the work that went into upgrading and managing facilities, as well as equipment and materials and the importance of the relationship with the school administration in this regard: "We had, I had a machine, saw and plane and all that. Yes, and then it improved and expanded by and by. So it was passable at least, not bad for the times -- I started in 1961" (p. 4). Even in the face of relative success with such improvements "Well, there are many things I would have wanted different, I would have wanted better equipment and a different facility, a more spacious workshop. I admit that. And overall I've been lucky with my principals and those I've worked for, I've generally been given free rein with all the materials" (Egill Strange, b. 1927, p. 19). Svavar Jóhannesson (b. 1933) also teaches for Hafnarfjörður School District and for a while he and Egill Strange (b. 1927) taught at the same school. His attitude on the issue of facilities is that the initiative has to come from the teacher. Constant pressure must be applied on the school and municipal authorities if any improvement is to be expected. "They won't come to you and bring you the things you want" (Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933, p. 21). In some instances he has had to be "very insistent" (p. 21) to make anything happen.

The improvement of facilities and equipment for wood and metalwork has long been on Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson's (b. 1946) agenda. As a beginning teacher, he got a position in an elementary school in a town where the facilities were fairly good. The only problem was with maintenance and storage of hand tools: "And the attitude of the school administration was very positive, I was very lucky in that" (Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946, p. 14). In his

description Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b. 1946) identifies two important issues in regard to facilities and equipment: the attitude of the administration and the cost of machinery. These concerns are shared by most of his colleagues (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913; Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918; Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960).

"When I started here it was a real disaster. It was just due to inexperience that I started here. It was -- there were unpainted walls and not even plastered in most places. There was nothing here. It was a collection of old junk from other schools" (Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957, p. 8). This description refers to an elementary school built in Reykjavík in the 1980's. When Guðvarður Halldórsson and another wood and metalwork teacher were hired the school it was brand new, but there were no facilities designed for wood and metalwork. The space allocated to teaching this subject is in the basement and part of it had been intended as part of the solid foundation for the building. It is mainly subterranean and ventilation has been an ongoing concern. "When the air quality down here is at it's worst one doesn't feel like staying beyond actual instruction time. Which of course affects preparation. Maybe I'm just lazy but one has simply had enough after teaching all day in this stuffy air" (Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957, p. 18).

Getting improvements hasn't been that easy,-- in fact it has been "a rocky road, in the early days we had to fight tooth and nail, involve the Industrial Safety Commission and such... It has been a real battle, the items have been squeezed in one by one. You could say it has been a constant struggle and it is still going on because there are still no permanent facilities" (Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957, p. 9). The cost of building and equipping a workshop for

the subject is a considerable proportion of the budget for a new school: "Well, the building that was to be the wood and metalwork studio according to the plans, it was constructed and put to some other use as a general classroom area" (Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957, p. 9).

While Guðvarður feels that the facilities are still not up to standard he remarked that his principal probably felt they were the best in the district!

Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir (b. 1960) taught alongside Svavar Jóhannesson (b. 1933) at an elementary school in Hafnarfjörður and her description of the working conditions show why it is necessary for wood and metalwork teachers to be what Svavar calls insistent when it comes to improving the facilities. "No it was among the most unpleasant places in the school. It was in the basement and as I said the room was small and the workbenches were old and quite frankly worn out. Then they started replacing some of them and then they got used ones from some other school! And the machines, well Svavar was trying to get those improved... But it was awfully crowded and the machine room opened into the studio. He was trying to get a ventilation system. It was very crowded and unappealing to work there. I didn't find it a pleasant workplace at all" (Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960, p. 6).

Despite such examples, Svavar Jóhannesson (b. 1933) speaks for many colleagues in noting that there has been improvement in the quality and provision of materials and equipment for the schools (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913; Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946). Teachers suggested that in most schools the facilities are crowded, and the space allocated is too small. For instance, there is a tendency to cut storage area (Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960). The curriculum that a teacher offers is shaped by the facilities. In many cases the size of the facilities is the limiting factor

both in terms of the scope of student work and in terms of the range of techniques that can be taught. Svavar for example does not offer metalwork to his pupils although he recognizes that it would be of great value to them to experience such a different craft as an alternative to woodwork. But, he is still battling to bring the woodworking area up to standard in the face of tight budgets, so he doesn't see the resources in place to build up a metalwork facility.

Hera Sigurðardóttir (b. 1960) who works in a new school building with a wood and metalwork studio that is, in her opinion, in many respects well designed, however, she still has to contend with lack of space. The wood and metalwork area is centrally located in the school. It includes a meeting area, design area, and an area for painting and leatherwork apart from the woodworking area. The combination woodworking machine is located in a small room separate from the pupils' workspace, which is an improvement in terms of safety over many older facilities: "But because the school was reduced in size from the original plans a part of the original wood and metalwork area was cut off. It is bright though, but terribly small. There are twelve workbenches, which is little. The workroom, the machine room is small, which means that I have to cut the material down into such small units before I can take it through the machine itself.... It is inconvenient to have a new facility and the will to do things, but the authorities simply cut the size of the school building" (Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960, p. 7).

### The Love of Material, The Joy of Processes

Throughout the interview the teachers made references to the materials, their qualities and the visual and tactile pleasures of working with them. The importance of knowing and understanding the material in order to fulfill one's objective is underscored in this remark:

"This piece of wood was a tree of some particular kind, it does even have its law. We must know it technically, know that one kind is suitable for this, another one for that. There are qualities that you cannot know or understand except through experience, by working the material. But it must be connected to our objectives, our tastes and goals. Otherwise it would be like wanting to appreciate a poem while thinking of something else" (Ingólfur G. Ingólfsson, b. 1941, p. 19). The reference to aesthetic experience is revealing for the relationship with the material is part of the wood and metalwork teachers' aesthetic.

People have their favourite materials, and in many cases their explorations are a form of self education. These explorations offered opportunities for a more diverse wood and metalwork program. The colleagues were always interested to hear of new materials and techniques that they could offer their pupils. Ingimundur Ólafsson (b. 1913) experimented with using horn and bone, an interest which could be traced back into childhood: "Maybe it came about because when I was a boy back home in Meðalland it sometimes happened that fish washed ashore on the beaches. And of course it was used, it was cooked at home. The bones of the fish were so soft, I remember we took the bones from the fish head and carved birds and the like out of them. This wasn't insignificant. I think this led me to dabble in it" (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b.1913, p. 8). Horn and larger bones were also used in the traditional rural household to make various objects, Ingimundur referred to this part of the cultural heritage, which was passed on to his pupils with such projects as snuff bottles made of bull's horns.

Wood is the material of choice for many wood and metalwork teachers, which is not surprising for many of them come from the wood working trades. A description of the trade reveals the pride and enjoyment in the skills and materials. Sigurður Úlfarsson (b. 1919)

explained how the cabinetmaker needs to know the qualities of wood, when to use massive timber, or when veneer is called for: "People had the good sense to mix massive and veneer. Many people think that a piece made of massive wood is more solidly built. But this is a major misconception because massive wood must be assembled correctly so it fits and doesn't warp, particularly sheets of wood" (p. 4-5). In this regard veneered sheets of plywood are a more stable material than massive wood. Using veneer also offers exciting design options. It is possible to cut the veneer into patterns that would be impractical, costly and even technically impossible in massive material: "It was a remarkable task, cutting the veneer into all sorts of patterns. Tabletops with radiating designs based on the wood grain and root patterns as decoration on doors and panels" (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919, p. 5).

Svavar Jóhannesson (b. 1933) became interested in the possibilities of using tin in the classroom and his explorations lead to in service workshops for his colleagues. It all started in frustration with a common project -- sailboats out of wood which were damaged when the kids sailed them. The varnish wasn't good enough, the wood was dry and if a crack formed the water got in and the boat was ruined in no time at all. Wood and metalwork teachers in Svavar's district met to share ideas and at one of these meetings a colleague suggested that it would be interesting to use tin to make sailboats: "so it was because of him that I seriously got down to designing them out of tin. I went to the tinsmiths workshops and tin can factories, a can factory was operating in Reykjavík at the time, and I got tin plates and started working it. I experimented a lot and in the end I figured it out and could offer it" (Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933, p. 9-10). In this case the introduction of a new material and projects to utilize it happens as a result of a local problem which is solved through direct experimentation and consultation with peers.

A project that did not work presented a practical problem triggered Svavar's work with tin. Suitable materials for the intended function are one factor in making a useful thing, but technique and the quality and precision of craftsmanship such as precision are important factors as well. The tradesmen carried the standards of quality they were used to in industry with them into teaching (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Egill Strange, b. 1927; Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933). In some cases the teacher feels that the task of precise measurement and marking is beyond the pupils, such as in positioning dowels for joinery. As a beginning teacher Egill Strange (b. 1927) resolved, "I am going to let them make things that can be used. Useful objects. No damned junk that ends up on the rubbish heap" (p. 4). The precision work was still important to Egill as a teacher. When he set a project he made sure that the students kept to the dimensions and measurements he had prescribed: "They had to stick to the measure, otherwise it is no use. I gave them the measurements and they had to keep within those. Not almost but precisely. It could differ one or two millimeters but no more than that. Or the object is out of whack" (Egill Strange, b. 1927, p. 4-5).

When Vignir B. Árnason (b. 1934) was a young man he wanted to be a goldsmith: "I wanted to do more delicate work, or that is what I think today" (p. 3). He compared his dream to cabinet making, the trade he eventually took up. His predilection for delicate work continued. When Vignir retrained as a wood and metalwork teacher, he struck a bargain with his instructor which allowed him to pursue this interest rather than cabinetmaking projects. "In the second year many went into making larger projects to get more experience on the machines and such. But I had no interest in making furniture so we agreed that I would make a mandolin instead. Its structure is like that of a coconut and I had to seek assistance from an instrument maker here in Reykjavík. He explained the major calculations to me, such as that

of the fretted neck. I got into this because it was too complicated to make a violin" (Vignir B. Árnason, b. 1934, p. 5). The interest in finer, delicate work is also manifest in Vignir's hobby -- tying tackle for fly fishing. The elective courses he offers his pupils tend to be in jewelry rather than the large scale cabinet making. However, Vignir's enjoyment of black smithing and pottery in a further education course suggests that this preference is not simply for delicate work. All the techniques he prefers involve little more than the power of the hand. Compared to cabinet making, his preference involves virtually no use of power tools and the approach to the material is very direct.

One teacher remembers how a new world opened up with access to a wider range of materials: "Suddenly we were shown different kinds of wood, not just pine" (Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946, p. 3). Pupils were even allowed to select their own material from the local timber yard, with directions by the teacher. This was in Júlíus' mind revolutionary -- he was able to work with hardwood such as teak and mahogany. The things he made as a 12-15 year old school boy were quite memorable and he described them in detail. The pride and pleasure in the process and in a product well done is very evident in these descriptions. The voice traces the contours of the object, registering pleasant surprise at the accomplishment of his young hands: "I carved an oval or oblong bowl, I remember how he made us work toward a good finish... This bowl for instance is remarkably cleanly and precisely made. And polished and rubbed to a shine and really a beautiful thing" (Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946, p. 4).

Variety in material, attention to form and finish or texture were also important in his work out of school. As a 15-16 year old Júlíus started a small commercial venture by making

brooches of wood and bone: "I developed them by and by using nickel silver, silver and bone. In the end I made some brooches just out of bone, leg bones. It was great fun but when I was working the bone on a hand powered grinder in my dad's workshop the smell wasn't popular! (Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946, p. 5). Experimenting with different materials was part of the excitement, but the real passion was for the form: "They were sculpted, I buried myself in this and I'm surprised today at how one could subconsciously be so sure of the form. I still remember many of these forms. No two were alike. I drew them up on paper and transferred the design to the bone. It wasn't just shaped but sculpted into a 3-D form. Engraved, carved. It was quite an effort to cut and polish them" (Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946, p. 5).

This early interest became even more significant during Júlíus' teacher training. The instructor, Gunnar Klængsson, had a strong influence on generations of wood and metalwork teachers because of his skill as a draftsman and his mastery of style. For most students, accepting his lead in design matters was self evident, and design was not much of an issue: "I wasn't always happy with my work for one didn't always take enough time to study the form" (Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946, p. 9). Júlíus had a strong sense of form which was developing in directions that differed from that indicated by the instructor. He reflects on this using the example of metalwork: "I didn't go for the precise, fine tuned forming, the even hammering and polished look but rather a more modern style. He disagreed, I wasn't classical enough when it came to form" (Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946, p. 11).

Training and working in the subject of wood and metalwork didn't offer Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir (b. 1953) what she really wanted: "I started to gear myself up to go for

further education because I wasn't satisfied. For I was of course looking for some personal satisfaction through the subject" (Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir, b. 1953, p. 5). The solution was to enter "an art academy where art and craft are together" (p. 7) at the University of Industrial Arts in Helsinki, Finland. There she studied for four years and graduated as a textile designer. Carving designs in wood and linoleum for textile printing recently lead to her development of designs for wood carving: "So there the two overlap. Somehow I've always managed automatically to unite the two fields. Textiles and timber" (Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir, b. 1953, p. 13). Looking back on her training as a wood and metalwork teacher she said "I can just see myself there, in the overalls. Forever with some large sheets or boards that had to be glued together, putting them through the planing machine, cutting them lengthwise and all that. It was great fun to make some furniture but I still fell the hand matters most in finishing " (Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir, b. 1953, p. 7).

Machinery has certainly not taken over in the woodworking classes Helga Pálína offers to senior citizens. There whittling and carving are common techniques and the workshop only has hand held tools. The participants have to buy their material and have it cut beforehand. Helga Pálína describes the class warmly, it is her constructive community where the participants and instructor are at ease engaged in the learning process together: "What impresses me now that I'm working with those old men, and I adore them -- they are so skilled, is that they can spot the solutions based on the materials and tools at their disposal, they see which turn to take" (Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir, b. 1953, p. 7). These comments relate in two ways to those made by for instance Sigurður Úlfarsson (b. 1919) and Vignir B. Árnason (b. 1934). On the one hand is their preference for craft rather than the modern trade

of cabinet making, which is essentially based on mass production. On the other, is the need to be secure in the handling of materials and processes in order to grow and succeed.

### Summary

Looking back on the eve of his retirement, Egill Strange (b. 1927) commented, "I think I've done my job fairly, I don't think anyone hates me after those 30 years. I hope I've got something across by manual education, I hope so. There are quite a few who have become motivated in the manual subjects and gone on to study them" (p. 13). I found this comment illuminating in that it shows a certain characteristic of the interviews: the teachers did not see themselves in a position of influence in society, but found the idea that they might have made a positive contribution in the lives of their students enough reward for their effort.

The rationale for their life's work, their reason for teaching wood and metalwork, is important in the teachers' sense of placement within the larger social fabric. While this intrinsic motivation is important, it is countered with the conditions in which it is realized, or the material environment as well as the symbolic environment of curriculum and human environment of schools. When wood and metalwork teachers were asked why they thought it was important to teach their subject, they stopped to think. A direct question about the value of the subject for students, or the reason why it should be taught, often didn't generate much response. References to the rationale cropped up in the course of describing teaching, students, projects, materials and facilities.

In a few words, the interviews show that the place the wood and metalwork teachers take in society comes from their working class background and they remain close to their origin.

Their occupation is secure, but the income is low and socially it is not held in high esteem. Consequently they have to work hard to support their families adequately. The job is demanding but satisfying due to the personal relations with students of all ages, and what limited collegiality these teachers enjoy. The other main source of satisfaction is the subject itself: the enjoyment of working with materials, honing skills and developing solutions to technical problems and creating something of one's own. In this regard it is significant that they see themselves in a position to carry on, and to preserve the craft of wood working when the trades have moved away from the craft base. Due to the close personal relation with the wood working trades, where many of the teachers have had careers, the school subject bears a certain resemblance to these. However, an alternate vision has always existed, one in which the subject is seen to have general value in education. This general value is conceived as both extrinsic, due to the transfer onto other goals, and as intrinsic, for the subject is seen as a valuable activity in itself. The school subject shares with art an emphasis on the design process and on the promotion of creativity, but remains true to the utilitarian outlook of craft and trades. The teachers suffer the perception of being poor relations of the more prestigious, academic subjects.

The last few sections have detailed some of the negative aspects of being a wood and metalwork teacher. The teachers are proud of the work they do, but they are quite frank about difficulties and frustrations. The job is stressful -- physically and mentally demanding -- and the working conditions are in many instances appalling. It is a low status job, the teachers have to contend with the attitude that their subject is a soft option, useful but not important, universal but not central. In many cases they are professionally isolated within their school. Considering that they cannot even support themselves properly with their wages one wonders

what keeps them going. Their answer is the relationship with children and the love of the subject.

## **CHAPTER 5: THE CURRICULUM IDENTITY OF TEXTILE TEACHERS**

This chapter is a mirror image of the previous one. Here I account for the curriculum identity of textile teachers with the same organization of themes as for wood and metalwork teachers. Three aspects of the environment -- the human environment, the symbolic environment and the material environment -- (Apple, 1993) are used as a framework to organize the presentation of the curriculum identity of textile teachers.

The first section of the chapter deals with the human environment; that is, the curriculum community of the subject as reflected in the life histories of the teachers. The social background of the teachers is described and their lifelong relationship with textiles.

The second section refers to the symbolic environment, or the curriculum both formal and experienced (Goodlad et. al. 1979). Here the content of the subject, the rationale for the subject and teaching methods are described. The relationship with other curriculum communities and content areas is articulated as well as the perceived relationship with the world outside school. Textiles is a life skill, and a vocational skill and general economic asset.

The third section deals with the material environment. There are two main aspects of this issue. On one hand there is the facilities and resources for textiles instruction. On the other hand, there is the material nature of the subject, or the materials and tools used and the meaning and importance that the teachers attribute to this materiality.

The last section of the chapter is a summary and discussion. The curriculum community and its identity are described and an attempt is made to locate them in the development of a school subject.

### **The Human Environment: The Curriculum Community of Textiles**

#### Childhood and Youth

The eleven textile teachers interviewed for this study were born between 1916 and 1959. They came from a low to upper middle class background. Three are daughters of unskilled labourers, two from a family of farmers, two sisters are daughters of a tradesman, two are daughters of sailors, one is the daughter of a high ranking civil servant and one is the daughter of an M.P. The majority of their mothers were housewives, although in the families of labourers the wives also did unskilled labour for wages either outside the home or by taking in work. Only one mother had a profession. She was an accountant and married to an engineer. Only two textile teachers were brought up in the country.

Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir (b. 1916) was born and raised on her parent's farm. All the clothing for the household was homemade. Her description of the textile production in a rural household resembles that of several others (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913; Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918; Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939; Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924). The sheep were shorn and the wool was washed in spring, but the actual textile production took place over the winter months. Separating the outer and inner layer of the fleece and carding were the first steps and spinning came second. Women used the spinning wheel,

but men and women alike used the spindle. Svandís' mother was in charge of dying the wool, but her father wove on the loom. Children learned early to knit, and everyone knitted as much as possible, for socks and mittens were in constant demand.

Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir (b. 1939) experienced the typical shift from country to town in mid twentieth century Iceland. Growing up in a large household supported by farming and outport fishing, she recalls the processes of textile production described by Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir (b. 1916). As a child she too wore home made clothing. She knitted underwear and stockings made on her grandmother's knitting machine. After the family moved to town, the male members of the household became labourers, but the women continued with many of the same tasks as before: "A lifestyle of self sufficiency and it was taken for granted that everything would be as far as possible home made" (p. 2). Families living in town still had to rely on textile production to be self-sufficient, so the teachers recalled much textile work in their homes (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b.1932; Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1942; Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b.1948).

While most of the teachers observed their mothers and female relatives engaged in textile production for the home, knitting socks and mittens, sewing clothes, mending and so forth (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916; Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940; Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1942) there were also instances where their families hired other women to do textile chores. For example, Ragnheiður Thorarensen (b. 1935) and Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) remember that socks and mittens were knitted for the household, but not by a family member. Some of the women remember their female relatives taking on work such as knitting and sewing for other families (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1916; Hjördís

Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939). Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) recalled that it wasn't until in the late 1950's and 1960's that buying clothes off the rack became common in Iceland. Even then, sewing was still very common, and those who wanted to follow fashion made or had their clothes made to order (Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939; Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1948). Hiring a seamstress or a woman handy with dressmaking either to come to the house, or to go to her workshop to have a dress or a coat made, was also common. Some of the teachers had taken on such work (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916; Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951).

"There wasn't much craft done at home and I think it was just due to the daily toil for Mom and Dad. Mom didn't have any time for it and I don't even have early memories of her making clothes for us" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 1). This is rather unusual. In most cases memories of textile work in the childhood home were quite vivid. Guðrún's choice of words, "I don't even" show her awareness of this. Her mother had a different relationship with textiles, for she later went to work in a clothing factory as an unskilled seamstress. Guðrún was introduced to textiles by her aunts on the maternal side. They were keen textile crafts women who embroidered as well as knitted and sewed for their families. Most of the teachers had observed adult women around them engage in textiles as a leisure pursuit. Embroidery and crocheting were more common in this regard than other forms of textile work (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916; Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Ragnheiður Anna Thorarensen, b. 1935; Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940; Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1942; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951).

Every textile teacher interviewed had substantial background in the subject from home and school before training as teachers. They had a clear notion of what the subject was, both as a school subject and of its economic and social value, as well as its contribution to the family economy. It generated and extended available income and was a source of pride and pleasure for women. They were in a position to make a well informed choice about a career as textile teachers before entering teacher training. In this regard their situation resembled that of wood and metalwork teachers -- with the notable exception of female wood and metalwork teachers -- who did not have a childhood relationship with the subject.

### **Textiles in School**

It was rare that a textile technique was initially encountered in school. In most cases girls were familiar with the process before engaging in it as part of the textile curriculum. In school, all of them took textiles for it was a compulsory subject for girls. The curriculum in textiles was demanding and its objectives could not be met without a substantial amount of homework. This also meant that it was tacitly understood that female members of a girl's family would assist her in meeting the demands of the curriculum (Hjördís Þórleifsdóttir, b. 1934; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951; Ragnheiður Anna Thorarensen, b. 1935; Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1942).

Ragna Þórhallsdóttir (b. 1950) lived abroad and did not attend school in Iceland until she was twelve. In her first textile class the teacher handed out a pattern for stockings, yarn and needles and the girls were expected to begin the project. Ragna had never touched

knitting needles and the teacher cried out that she had never heard of such a thing as a 12 year old girl who didn't know how to knit. When Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) was to embark upon her first knitting project in school she had trouble for she didn't know how to knit, so she sought help from another girl in the neighbourhood. It is interesting that there was no mention of the possibility of learning the technique from the textile teacher at school. "We got lots of assistance and encouragement with the textiles at home. So I feel that the home had more influence than school. I think of the things I got from mother and the things I got from school, these are two distinct categories in my memory. The coarse yarn and hard, narrow needles from school and then the soft, beautiful and accessible at home. Still, I was interested, still I worked at the school textiles" (Ásrún Tryggvadóttir, b. 1939, 1).

The curriculum was a system of compulsory projects which defined both the scope of the curriculum and the standard of achievement (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916; Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939; Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940). Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) experienced the compulsory subjects as a student and reflects on how the approach was perceived. "It was compulsory *projects*, never any talk of compulsory *techniques* really. Always just compulsory projects. You were to make an apron, a pillowcase, a cap, a tablecloth. The techniques as such weren't discussed. You were to knit mittens or socks and it meant making this particular item according to this particular design or pattern rather than learning a general method or technique" (p. 3).

Examples of the compulsory projects were introduced to teachers all over the country and the supervisor of textiles upheld the standards by school visits and inspection of pupils

work (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Þórir Sigurðsson, b. 1927; Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940). Pupils and teachers alike recall that there was a very strict regimentation of the subject at the time (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939; Elínbjört Jónsdóttir, b. 1947). Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) said "it was all traditional, we had no say in it" (p. 2). She cites an example of how tight the control was: one of the compulsory projects in grade six was a blouse. The textile teachers at an elementary school in Reykjavík wanted to respond to their students' sense of what was fashionable and allowed them to make blouses or tunics with a basic pattern of two pieces, the back and front. The supervisor of textiles vetoed this as the compulsory project called for the insertion of sleeves into armholes and the teachers were obliged to cut separate sleeves for every blouse that did not conform to standard.

The list of compulsory projects remained unchanged for decades. The most notable instance is the textiles bag, which was the first project and girls were expected to use it to carry their textile projects between home and school. It was a simple bag with a drawstring opening and decorated with an embroidered motif and the owner's initials. In the early years the bag was handsewn but later machinestitched. The bag also served as an embroidery sampler. The motif and initials were done in cross stitch but along the sides were borders done in various stitches. The same material -- gingham in a white and red or blue small checkered pattern -- was always used. (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Ingunn Erna Stefánsdóttir, b. 1947; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951; Bryndís Björgvinsdóttir, b. 1957; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959; Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960). There were some signs of the times though, when one of Vigdís Pálsdóttir's

daughters went to elementary school, she had to embroider a Mickey Mouse on the textiles bag: "That was the only time I got on the phone with the textile teacher" (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924, p. 18).

One of the first knitting projects was a cover for a coathanger (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939; Elínbjört Jónsdóttir, b. 1947; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959). Another early knitting project was a pair of slippers, which pupils were expected to use at school because outdoor footwear was not allowed in the classrooms (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959). Projects involving whitework, or white on white embroidery and lace inserts, included pillow cases and other bed linen, tablecloths as well as a cap to wear to cooking classes (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Elínbjört Jónsdóttir, b. 1947; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951; Bryndís Björgvinsdóttir, b. 1957; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959).

Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) entered the Ladies Academy in Reykjavík because of the extent and renown of the textile program there. In 1946, the school had two instructors in dressmaking and knitting and an embroidery instructor. Dressmaking was allotted 3 periods per week and embroidery 2. The techniques taught were machine stitching, knitting, crocheting and embroidery. The embroidery projects were mainly whitework tablecloths. The school was famous for these tablecloths which were proudly produced by those attracted to the school for the textile component, but often resented by those attracted to the academic record of the school. Katrín Pálsdóttir (b. 1940) attended the school in the late 1950's: "I had enough embroidery for a lifetime while I was there. It was something terribly rigid and there were these entire tablecloths and for someone who

like me, wasn't terribly good at it, they took forever. I was 13 and they gave me pure linen, it was important to them to have expensive, quality materials, and there were 40 panels of perforation and surrounding embroidery to carry out. I worked on it for two years and couldn't finish" (p. 4).

In 1952 Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir (b. 1916) was hired as textile teacher at the newly founded Vocational Secondary School in Reykjavík. She described the program she designed for the textile course in terms of the projects she set: knitting baby clothes, making dresses, blouses and trousers, as well as embroidery. Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b.1948) recalls that her program at the Vocational School in Reykjavík 1962-'64 included the basics of dressmaking, making double seams, zig zag and casting over by hand. These techniques were taught on samplers first and then implemented in the production of compulsory projects.

Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b.1932) taught textiles at the secondary school in Akranes 1958-'64, where a handful of her students were enrolled in the vocational stream. There was no specific accommodation made for these girls -- they attended classes with the other girls. Hjördís tried to cater to their needs within this setting by offering them more instruction in patternmaking and cutting within the dressmaking component of the textile course.

The projects taught at secondary level, in the domestic schools and in teacher training, were not formally subject to the regulation present at the elementary level. Nevertheless, there was a certain degree of conformity and certain projects became compulsory at all levels. A project very common at all levels was an infant's pillowcase, or infant's or adult

bedlinen and other smaller projects involving whitework, in particular, monograms.

Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) said that such projects were used in teacher training for it was considered self evident that all linen would be labelled. The emphasis on baby clothes and infant's gear was seen as a preparation for motherhood. These projects were on such a small scale and so were efficient in terms of time and resources. While this appealed to the teachers, it didn't much impress students, particularly not during the 60's and 70's when more and more girls might not have immediate plans of marriage and motherhood.

Bryndís Björgvinsdóttir (b. 1957) was thirteen years old and reacted like this "Baby clothes! They wanted us to make **baby clothes** and I wasn't about to have babies!" (p. 3).

Elínbjört Jónsdóttir (b. 1947) experienced a changing of the guard in textile teaching during her elementary school years. In lower elementary, she had an elderly teacher who conducted a very traditional program with completely compulsory projects. In secondary school, around 1960, Elínbjört had a teacher who got around the compulsory projects by having her students do small samples of the techniques in question so that they could move on to projects that the teacher had devised herself. Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) gave a newspaper interview around 1970 and recalls the reaction of her colleagues: "In this interview -- I got flak for it, that's why I remember it! I said that I was content if I had managed to teach them to knit, to crochet and these basic techniques in knitting. They thought it was dreadful of me to say such a thing. I was supposed to have projects. That I would settle for the children's ability to knit!" (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932, p. ).

Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir (b. 1939) is an advocate of individual expression as children's way of learning. When she entered textile teaching in 1969 at a rather conservative school she

felt that "I couldn't have any say in things and it was just boring, deadly boring. And there was no free expression, no thought to giving these little children the chance to express themselves and to create something freely. So I quit" (Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939, p. 7).

In the late seventies teachers were starting to introduce more choice in the implementation of compulsory projects. In 1976, Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir (b. 1940) for instance used a basic pattern for a blouse, but allowed her students to choose the colour and pattern combinations of the material available to them. At the same time Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) was trying to make her program more creative, teaching the same project, a blouse. "I remember I let them make tunics, which were so much in fashion back then. And I let them tear the fabric into squares that they then sewed together in all kinds of ways" (p. 13). This was a step removed from the careful adherence to a pattern which was the rule.

Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) also made her students in the late 70's design their own patterns for embroidery. The students used paper for their designs and Sigrún painstakingly transferred those to fabric as she had learned in teacher training. Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) recalls that the choices she offered were unsettling to students at first. Pupils were also reluctant and timid in designing their own embroidery patterns, but eventually it became accepted as the tradition of the school or at least as the eccentricity of the teacher. These choices and variations were at first presented in the context of compulsory projects. They were a means to put an individual mark on the project or to make the projects more interesting and in tune with current trends.

The compulsory project was always introduced with a prototype made by the teacher, and to offer more variation meant to produce more prototypes. This, and catering to individual requests, added to the workload. Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) saw the dressmaking component as an opportunity for the girls to make fashion statements. This meant that she had to drop by the fashion boutiques to take a look at the items that the girls fancied to be able to design the patterns. In the early years she didn't find this difficult -- she was following the fashion herself and had time to do all these extra things. By and by her approach changed and the projects gave way to more open ended tasks involving a particular technique. Instead of presenting a prototype of a blouse, she would tell her students that they were to learn to use patterns to make a machine stitched garment and that within reasonable limits, they could choose the patterns from magazines or ready made patterns.

At the present time compulsory projects are used sparingly. Most teachers will to some extent set projects that involve the techniques they are teaching. Often the first project of the term is a compulsory one and upon completing it students can select their next project. In many cases, particularly with younger pupils, the teacher will use a prototype to motivate and help students visualize the possibilities. The projects are commonly designed so that they offer a variety of possible outcomes and call for some design decisions on the pupil's behalf. For instance, an initial knitting project for 9 year olds may involve knitting small strips that can then be stitched together in various ways and stuffed to make a worm, a ball or a spider (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959).

To the present day observer the curriculum consisting of compulsory projects seems to demand conformity at the expense of personal expression and this is the main shift of focus in official curriculum documents. However, many girls thoroughly enjoyed the subject, even the compulsory part of the old curriculum. Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) recalls that as a twelve year old she made a blouse buttoned down the front with a fancy collar as one of the compulsory projects. It was a complicated project but interesting enough that after it was introduced "I went straight home and cut one for my doll and made her a blouse just like mine" (p. 1). Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir (b. 1959) remembers looking forward to making the compulsory projects she had seen older girls complete. Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) speaks of the familiarity that came from knowing what to expect as a pupil and later when she started teaching, her pupils felt the same. When Þórleif Drífa began teaching textiles she was determined to get rid of the traditional textile bag. So she offered a variety of materials and showed her students variations on the theme of a drawstring bag, but "some of my students sulked, they felt cheated when I didn't offer the old bag!" (p. 3).

There were of course exceptions to the rule of compulsory projects. Þórunn Árnadóttir (b. 1929) attended school in a small town, now a suburb of Reykjavík, where the principal's wife taught textiles. As a 12 year old she knitted a sweater from leftover yarn she brought from home. At that point the girls had not been taught how to knit multicoloured patterns, but the teacher was willing to let Þórunn try her hand at a substantial project that required some improvisation along the way: "I did it, I knitted an entire reindeer on the front of the sweater. And this sweater, it was made from such odds and ends that it would be considered avant-garde even today! ... I remember that the reindeer hardly fit, for when I

had knitted past the armholes it had to bow it's head to make space for the neckline"

(Þórunn Árnadóttir, b. 1929, p. 3). Þórunn said that she had proudly sported the reindeer on her tummy and used the sweater to piece. She added that she had probably been very lucky to attend this school rather than any of the larger schools renowned for their textile programs, such as the Ladies Academy in Reykjavík, where such experimentation would not have been encouraged.

Embroidery was a popular choice for the free projects after the girls had finished the compulsory curriculum. Girls in the secondary grades tackled fine embroidery such as whitework, and in the case of Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir (b. 1940) the even more difficult black on black embroidery. There was more scope for individual taste in embroidery than in other aspects of the curriculum. The teachers and in exceptional cases the pupils could select the patterns used, provided certain stitches were taught (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932). Ragnheiður Anna Thorarensen (b. 1935) speaks of the satisfaction of this aspect, to be able to select colours and stitches to make something she found beautiful. Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir (b. 1942) remembers her teachers as "fairly liberal" (p. 1), for the girls had considerable freedom in selecting the free projects upon completing the compulsory ones. In most cases they opted for embroidery kits that they bought in town. But if they wanted to do something of their own design, the teachers were supportive.

Embroidery invited individual expression and could be carried out with independent work habits. It could be risky business though. Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) was 12 years old when "I did a folder and embroidered my own design on the front. And I just did it without asking anyone. I remember that when the teacher found out she wasn't

impressed, I felt like a freak for having made my own design" (p. 2). Bryndís Björgvinsdóttir (b. 1957) recalls using the free projects as the creative outlet in textiles and keeping it to herself. Once she made a picture of a fish. After the teacher had taught her the stitches, Bryndís made sure she didn't see the picture until it was finished. For Bryndís was more interested in creating a texture than following a pattern and made up stitches if she felt that something was missing. It was a precaution to keep this from the teacher, in case the project met with disapproval.

### **Deciding to Become a Textile Teacher**

Teaching was a defined occupation traditionally open to women. The subject textiles was particularly associated with women's vocation in the domestic sphere. During the period under study, new possibilities loomed on the horizon and some of the women who trained as textile teachers had envisioned alternate but related careers. Before the teacher training program in textiles became available in 1947, many women went abroad for study to be certified as teachers of the subject. Women were required to attend domestic school before admission to textile teacher training. Those who trained abroad often, but not always, met this criterion as well. Thus the certification was based on advanced studies -- a lengthy period of schooling by contemporary standards.

As one of the youngest in her family, Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir's (b. 1916) was offered sponsorship by two of her older sisters who wanted to contribute in return for the resources the family had devoted to their education. One sister offered her the chance to go to grammar school, and the other the chance to go to domestic school. She was torn

between the two options, but settled on domestic school. Svanhvít set her mind on professional training "to work and to be independent, my own master so to speak" (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916, p. 3). She decided to train as a textile teacher, which meant going abroad. Upon the advice of her family and former instructors she entered a domestic school in Bergen, Norway in the fall of 1939, to prepare for admission to the textile teacher training program in Oslo the following year. On April 9th, 1940, Norway was occupied by German forces. A safe passage was arranged for all Icelanders who wished to leave Norway, but Svanhvít felt that all the effort would have been in vain if she returned without meeting her goal of training as a textile teacher.

Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) took art classes available in Reykjavík and was interested in the design aspect of textiles, using her own designs and methods rather than ready made patterns. She went to domestic school in 1941-42, and got a good grounding in sewing, embroidery and weaving. At the time she dreamed of going to Scandinavia to train in crafts, preferably ceramics. However, it was impossible due to the war. Then textile teacher training program at the College of Crafts and Arts was advertised: "And I was at an impasse, so to speak. There a path opened up for me to do something I had dreamt of" (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924, p. 27). She joined the first cohort of textile teachers training at the College of Crafts. Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) had pursued her interest in textile crafts through attending the Ladies Academy in Reykjavík. Upon graduation she went to work. But she, too, was keen to go abroad and see the world. In 1952 she enrolled in a Swedish program comparable to the local domestic schools in Iceland. During that time, the notion of training as a textile teacher took hold.

As a young woman Ragnheiður Thorarensen (b.1935) didn't plan to be a textile teacher, she was interested in occupational therapy. It proved hard to make the right decision about training to enter an occupation virtually unknown in Iceland: "Even if people wanted to support me they couldn't really, for nobody knew what I was getting into. I had just read about it in a foreign magazine. And for instance my friend, she wanted to be an interior designer but she didn't even have a word for it, for what she wanted to do. She said she wanted to set up house for young people" (p. 7). Ragnheiður went to Copenhagen, Denmark to study but found out she had been admitted to a school of textile arts which offered a three year teacher training program, rather than the college of occupational therapy: "And when I had started there I felt it was too late to change schools, I was afraid that it might all come to nothing" (Ragnheiður Thorarensen, b. 1935, p. 7).

Another case of misinformation was when Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir (b. 1939) applied for what she thought was a domestic summer school in Sweden but when she arrived it turned out to be an agricultural program. But she did learn all about tractors and met her first husband. Lack of information was not only a problem for those wanting to go abroad. Even young women outside Reykjavík found it hard to get accurate information on the educational choices available there. Ásrún Tryggvadóttir (b. 1939) was interested in the College of Crafts and Arts. However, with very little information to go on, it wasn't considered a practical option: "So one of my cousins had gone through the textile program at the Teachers' College and that was considered a more rational option to go there so I did" (Ásrún Tryggvadóttir, b. 1939, p. 2).

As a contrast Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir (b. 1940) is one of the teachers who made up her mind early: "I think I was about eleven when I decided to become a textile teacher. Which transpired. I didn't bother changing that decision" (Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940, p. 1). She entered the textile teacher training at the Teachers' College in 1959. Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) also decided early and went into the Academic Preparation program at the Teachers' College straight from secondary school, for the domestic school requirement had been dropped. "I had struck a deal with the woman who taught textiles at my school that she would continue for four years and then I would take over from her. I told her she couldn't quit until I was finished with my teacher training" (Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951, p. 4).

Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) and Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) had taken the four year secondary school certificate. This meant that they continued with textiles as a subject of study right up to their entrance into the Academic Preparation Program at the Teachers' College. Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir (b. 1939) was twenty six when she entered the program in 1965, a mature student compared to her classmates, who were on the average ten years younger. At their age Bryndís had not passed the National Exams, which had been a shock that completely undermined her confidence for further academic education. It led her to explore other training options such as the Swedish summer school and on the job training as a seamstress.

Ragna Þórhallsdóttir (b. 1950), on the other hand, passed her National Exams: "I wanted to have something to do with textiles and was thinking somewhere at the back of my mind that I should take the textile teacher training. But it wasn't at all fashionable then,

not in at all, it was really dowdy" (p. 4). So she went through what has always been called 'general' teacher training; that is, the training of elementary classroom teachers of academic subjects. Several years later she went for textile teacher training. The year before one other teacher had gone through the program, but under different conditions for by then the program was within the The University College of Education. Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir (b. 1942) was a weaving instructor, but in the seventies the job prospects were very limited in that field so she wanted to retrain as a textile teacher. She was a graduate of the College of Arts and Crafts, so she had not opted for the matriculation exam, which by then was the entrance requirement. The instructors of the Textile Department supported her application. She was allowed to take the program, although not allowed to graduate with a degree.

After 1971, when the The University College of Education was founded, the matriculation exam became the only formal entrance requirement. Textiles were not part of the academic preparation course leading to the matriculation exam, hence the requirement for a foundation in the subject was no longer in place. Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir (b. 1959) describes how this affected her as an adolescent. She chose to go for the National Exams, but textiles were not part of the curriculum in that program. Because of her keen interest Guðrún sought permission from her principal to take textiles, in addition to her academic preparation program: "And I was not allowed! I don't know why. I was really put off. I think this was my first and most serious disappointment with the school system, to be denied the opportunity to continue with textiles. Because I had already then decided to enter the textile teacher training program" (p. 3). During the four years of

grammar school leading to the matriculation exam there were no textile options either: "I just kept on with my work at home, but of course nothing was gained in those years and full five years pass, the National Exams and then the Matriculation Exam, without really learning anything new" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 6).

From the time when Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir (b. 1916) went abroad to train as a textile teacher, to the point where Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir (b. 1959) entered the University College of Education in Reykjavík to become an elementary teacher with textiles as a specialization, textile education at the secondary level had gone through a rise and a fall. When Svanhvít was making her decision just before the second world war, textiles were a major subject in the domestic and rural secondary schools. Shortly after her return to Iceland, an effort was made with the 1946 legislation to increase provision of vocational education -- textiles included -- at the secondary level. In the 1950's and into the 1960's opportunities for pursuing the subject at secondary level were widely available through domestic schools, rural secondary schools, the secondary school certificate and last but not least the vocational secondary schools and departments. From the late 1960's and 1970's onward these opportunities gave way to an exclusive emphasis on the academic options.

### **Teacher Training in Textiles**

Most of Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir's (b. 1916) contemporaries sought teacher certification in Scandinavia and the models they encountered there were later imported. Svanhvít trained as a textile teacher at Statens Kvinnelige Industriskole in Oslo in 1942. After the first year

she had to pass a practical teaching test to qualify as an elementary teacher. The second year was preparation for secondary level teaching. There was more emphasis on fashion design, dressmaking and pattern cutting culminating in an exam where each student designed and made a dress for herself, submitting all the relevant design work as well. During the last term they had practicum for two hours per week. The course of pedagogical content seems to have been a general introduction to psychology and instructional methods. This description of the program is very similar to that of teachers trained in Iceland in the 1950's.

In 1947 Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) entered textile teacher training at the newly founded two year program at the College of Crafts and Arts. Vigdís pointed out that the foundation of the program was a result of the 1946 education which was to boost the vocational education. By this point the subject was legislated and still growing and it had a place at all levels of schooling. The path seemed clear to further promotion.

Many of the women in this first group had teaching experience and/or experience with textile work. They did not hesitate to voice their opinion if they felt the instruction was not up to the standard they expected. Vigdís recalls the group as close knit and remembers her instructors fondly. Kurt Zier and Ludvíg Guðmundsson were both involved with the pedagogical content of the program. There was some change of textile instructors after the first year. In 1948 Sigríður Arnlaugsdóttir (b. 1918) took on the dress and pattern making course, which she taught until 1971. The group of instructors at the College of Crafts and Arts had all been educated abroad in Sweden, Denmark, Germany and the United States and had brought their diverse backgrounds to bear on the program.

Vigdís noted that drawing was a larger component in the program than it was later on. This shows the initial kinship between the textile and art programs. The drawing instruction was not only foundational but specific for textiles. The Museum of Natural History and the National Museum were used to study traditional Icelandic embroidery and sources for textile design.

Other subjects that Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1947) took were pedagogy or instructional methods, and the textile subjects sewing, knitting and embroidery. The students took the initiative to hire a speech instructor for lessons in elocution, which were not on the official timetable. Sewing included making and cutting patterns and sewing clothes, both by hand and by the machine, systematically covering the making of boy's clothes and dressmaking. "Back then the tailoring system was still going strong so it was presumed it would last forever" (p. 5). In sewing and knitting students did a range of samples to show the techniques introduced. In addition to the samples and larger items they did small projects that were intended as school projects or prototypes to present as compulsory projects in the classroom.

The program was hard work: according to Vigdís they were on the premises from 8 am to 3-4 p.m. to be able to keep up, not only with the studio projects but also to copy all text by hand. For instance instructions to go with samples and extensive lesson notes from material studies. "It was a good time in the College of Crafts and one learned a lot. But it would have been possible to make the course, well perhaps a little easier on us. There were enormous demands for quality, on the finish, which is all right, everyone should make their best effort, accept no bungled work" (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924, p. 8).

Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b.1932) graduated from the textile department of the Teachers' College in 1957. The subjects taught in textiles were basically the same as during Vigdís Pálsdóttir's studies ten years earlier. In addition, there was health and physical education, Icelandic language and: "psychology, well I suppose it was simply called psychology. There wasn't much in the way of instructional methods or what we would call instructional methods today" (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932, p. 4). Handwriting was taught as a short course and design was mainly tied in with embroidery, where students were to work from their own designs. In contrast, all the work in knitting and crocheting followed patterns provided to the students. The bulk of the work Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b.1932) recalls from her teacher training was making and displaying samples in special folders: "It was intensive work, one never left until eight or nine o'clock at night every night and Saturday as well" (p. 5-6). Careful crafting always took priority over ease of execution of a task: "Everything was to be done exactly like this or like that, and truth be told -- I went to work in a sweatshop sewing clothes at a piece rate just to rid myself of this pickyness, to get it out of my system. One was brainwashed to think everything should be just so, that there was one right way" (p. 6).

Part of this emphasis was great attention to correct work posture and positioning of material and tools. The trouble that was taken to teach knitting is an instance of this: "We were told exactly how to move our fingers. I remember I wasn't, have never been a very proficient knitter myself even if I know all the techniques. A lot of effort went into teaching me plain knitting well enough to achieve a nice and even finish. One needle finer than the other, hold the needles differently to make the stitches glide more easily...

And how to enter the stitch correctly and how to do it this way but not that. It was well covered" (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932, p. 15). Despite all the attention that Hjördís got as an individual to help her perfect the craft, there was little overall discussion of how to teach children these skills. She noted for instance that there was no mention of how to teach left handed pupils, a considerable practical problem as patterns and tools are designed with right handedness in mind.

Ásrún Tryggvadóttir (b. 1939) and Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir (b. 1940) trained from 1959-1961 at the Teachers' College. They didn't do a preparation program but went straight into textiles. Icelandic and pedagogy were on the timetable: "We were very isolated there, really too isolated from the college" (Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940, p. 2). The Teachers' College which was then housed in the old building was small and overcrowded. The Laugavegur building which housed the craft teacher training programs while they were still under the auspices of the College of Crafts and Arts and they remain there even after they were passed on to the Teachers' College.

Most of the curriculum was in textile subjects but in addition to those, Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir (b. 1940) recalled art history and psychology. The textile subjects that she recalled were machine stitching, dressmaking, pattern making, embroidery, embroidery design and knitting: "The samples, we did many folders of samples. We started with that" (Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940, p. 3). In addition there were a few lessons devoted to interior design and to material studies. Ásrún Tryggvadóttir (b. 1939) discovered that she wasn't all that keen on sewing but the design component in the program really appealed to

her: "Embroidery design was just, just a dream come true for me to finally get into something, I just blossomed!" (Ásrún Tryggvadóttir, b. 1939, p. 2).

The assumption was very much that what the teacher needed was a complete repertoire of correctly presented techniques to pass on to prospective pupils. "It was inculcated in us always to be completely prepared for lessons, never to put anything in pupils' hands that we were not absolutely certain about how to make. We should always have made a prototype first" (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932, p. 6). The practica were limited. Hjördís was made to teach one lesson in craft when it was discovered that she had been left off the roster for a practice lesson in the first year. In the second year the college offered a short dressmaking course for the public, in which the students got some practical teaching experience.

"We did some teaching, but we had no idea of how to present things...One just had to figure all that out when one started teaching" (Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940, p. 3).

However the amount of practical experience was relatively high for Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir's (b. 1940) cohort. She taught both at elementary and secondary level. In both cases she was asked to prepare a project and introduce it. The practica involved both demonstration lessons to introduce her project and assisting pupils with the work they were already engaged in. The students went out individually to do their practica and meanwhile their classmates carried on with their textile work. The practicum culminated in a teaching test, which was taken quite seriously: "Yes of course one was terribly anxious about the test, made a very big deal of it" (Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940, p. 4).

In 1963 the textile teacher training program at the Teachers' College changed to a four year program. The first two were the academic preparation program for those who were to become specialist teachers in textiles, physical education, home economics and wood and metalwork (Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939; Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951). During the two years of academic preparation, the program for the aspiring specialists and generalists was similar but still they were kept in separate groups and their teacher certification was different. The textile department was at that point still training teachers who qualified both for elementary and secondary schools.

"There were no textiles in the first two years. Nothing. I think that was a really strange way of planning the program. I could never make sense of it. One could have done heaps in those two years" (Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951, p. 5). A comment made by a colleague suggests that a certain balance would have been preferred: "Well, there was no textile instruction in the first two years. And then the ball began!" (Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939, p. 4). In Icelandic idiomatic 'the beginning of the ball' is equivalent to 'all hell breaking loose'.

When Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir (b. 1939) and Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) were training in the textile department they took the same subjects Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) had taken in her teacher training twenty years earlier. The teacher in dressmaking struggled with a health problem that severely affected her work. As a result, the students had to work very independently in these subjects: "But nevertheless we finished our suits and dresses and coats and whatever it was" (Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939, p. 5). There

was also a subject termed handicrafts and the only academic subjects mentioned were art history and material studies that was taught by several instructors over the years.

Attendance was from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Home work took up every evening and weekend for the two years in order to keep up with the pace of the program (Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939; Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951). The workload was mentioned without exception by the teachers. It was, however, carried without openly complaining, although all three of the women who trained in the 1960's had heard that the cohort after theirs had officially complained. "I developed such a distaste for textiles after these two years in the textile department that I just couldn't even think of touching it for weeks. I simply fell sick, really sick when we were to mount our final exhibition after the second year, or rather the fourth. I put up my stuff and crawled home and into bed, lay there for a week. Couldn't even touch textiles for months. It was a horrible work load" (Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939, p. 4).

Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) described the program in the 1960's from the textile instructor's point of view: "They were finished with all the academic subjects and could devote themselves to the practical. It resulted of course in that one put more pressure on them in the textiles than one would have done otherwise. They could have 40-42 periods in textiles per week and they applied themselves to an absolute work frenzy and learned a hell of a lot and there was as has always been the case in this department, there have always been so many excellent girls. Handy, industrious, many with a very good practical sense" (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924, p. 11). Former students speak highly of the competence of their instructors in textile crafts: "They usually knew it all. They were

extremely competent women in their subjects. And very, very demanding of themselves and of us. We did all this work and it was like a big family. Even if it was often hard and a lot of work it was a really good time. Naturally we became quite close, the girls who were there, we got to know each other really well" (Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951, p. 9). For Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948), the "horrible amount of work" (p. 5) did add up to a foundation that she felt had been useful. When she went to Norway for further education and found herself in a program based on the premise of creative expression she felt better prepared to exercise that freedom as her technical skills afforded her more choice, and greater scope of expression than her peers.

Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) describes the main emphasis in the program: "It was practical. The emphasis was on the practical aspect first and foremost" (p. 6). The curriculum in machine stitching and dressmaking was as before to a great extent, covered samples to begin with, progressing toward making garments in the second year. Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) recalled that in machine stitching, and dress and pattern making they were following a Swedish system. It involved first making miniature mock up samples and then progressed toward making a garment for an actual client where the students would take the measurements and fit the garment for someone else.

The samples and the work involved in finishing and mounting them was a distinct feature of the program. When asked about the purpose of the samples and whether they were intended for future reference, Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) agreed, but added another reason: "Yes, and they were teaching us all the techniques. And the techniques we were taught, those were the techniques that should be used. Those techniques that we learned

were the correct techniques. There were no other correct techniques" (p. 7). The correctness of a technique was ensured through precision and meticulous attention to detail and a concomitant suspicion of any time-saving variations. As a result, much of the finishing of machine stitched projects was done by hand. For example taking pains to make trimmed buttonholes by hand was applauded and considered superior to machine stitching (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951).

The approach was certainly systematic and thorough, but not exactly creative from the students' point of view. Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b.1948) said of the samples "When you arrived in the morning the sample fabric had been cut to size and laid out on the tables even with a length of thread. You just sat there like in Chaplin's movie, as if you were on an assembly line, you did a certain thing, and everyone did alike. But you did learn a lot of technique, you developed skills" (p. 6). In knitting, the curriculum consisted of samples too, and as Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) explained, their finish and display was considered very important: "Great stock was put in keeping the number of stitches consistent throughout, and the dimensions of the samples the same, then one stretched them afterward to make them look better and stitched them to cardboard and put them in plastic pockets for display" (p. 8).

There was an element of subversion of the tradition of compulsory projects in the emphasis that Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) placed on individual expression and design in her embroidery and design classes. Vigdís didn't contend herself with advocating creative design in her own class. Sigrún recalls that she would drop into other classes and question

the uniformity of what they were doing and why they didn't vary the colour or design of their samples: "But I remember that in those embroidery design classes that Vigdís taught, then something actually happened for me. Those were lovely classes to my mind. ... It was very, I saw before me a new dimension. And it was first then that I really started to connect for it was the first time in my education that I encountered the two aspects, drawing or design and technique, as interrelated" (Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948, p. 5).

Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) demanded original designs from her students for their projects: "All this time one was of course trying to develop it toward involving them more actively. Around 1970 I tried spontaneous projects in embroidery, just heaped fabric and yarn on the table and set them a project on the spot. It worked beautifully for 2-3 years. Sometimes I'd tell them to use that many shapes or lines of a certain quality. They did it with joy and pleasure most of them" (p. 13). While there was a certain tradition of original design in embroidery as there had always been a drawing and design component in the program, the same was not true of knitting. There the tradition was to provide students with patterns. Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) wasn't about to follow that tradition: "I taught knitting for 2 years or so and one of the things we put in place was that they had to design their own sweaters. At first I really got it, they were irate! But then they came around and discovered it could be quite a lot of fun" (p. 14).

Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) described the embroidery and embroidery design curriculum which covered colour theory and formal composition and all sorts of designs and patterns using a variety of media. Collage, felt pens, water based paints and a lot of aids to support that work. "There are two folders full of those designs as I recall. Then we

were to use some of those designs for our own embroidery. And there we were completely brainwashed and branded with the notion that cross stitch and such ready made embroidery kits were counterfeit. Such things should not be on the market!" (p. 8). While much of the program demanded conformity, Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) was equally as strict in demanding non-conformity. Or perhaps more accurately, conformity to a different ideal. She is described as inspiring for the students who had an interest in expressing themselves through design, but also as a very harsh critic of those who did not meet her criteria (Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959).

Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) felt that the practica were quite limited. The students took turns teaching each other and then they paired up to teach pupils from the Model School, but only for three lessons. The following year the College advertised a course for the public which the student teachers then taught. In the period when the program was with the Teachers' College, 1950-1970, the practica were, according to Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924), more substantial than they were after the university program started. "Back then the practica were grueling, for we organized and supervised them ourselves. They taught a certain number of weeks at elementary level and a certain number of weeks at the secondary level and then the vocational secondary programs were still going. So they got grueling practica and an exam, a hard exam in both, both for the younger and the older grades" (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924, p. 12).

Although these practica were substantial, they were not fitted into the timetable. Each student took her turn to go out and teach while the rest of the class went on with their

textile work. The students spent a lot of time preparing, but did that on their own, or possibly in consultation with the sponsor teacher, rather than support from the department (Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959). "Then the girls just prepared the projects at home, all the samples for all levels and with a teacher's supervision and then it happened perhaps after school or in class and the teacher just checked on them. Then we usually tried to make up to them what they had missed out on in class, we made it up to them because we had the facilities to ourselves and we weren't adverse to giving extra tutorials" (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924, p. 20).

"You know, there was very little, overall, discussion of teaching as such. It wasn't, in hindsight we learned a lot of very solid techniques and had a lot of technical solutions at our command but one didn't have any idea of what to teach or how" (Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951, p. 9). Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) recalls making projects intended for demonstration lessons and that she went out on practica, but for both her and for Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir (b. 1939), the practica are not as vividly recalled as the rest of the program. Students were not concerned with this: "Not at all. There was just the discussion of how you planned the cut of your dress or what skirt pattern was most becoming and such. We were making fancy dresses for ourselves" (Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948, p. 8).

While the practica are not vividly remembered, the teaching test was. As in this vivid recollection of being observed by the examiners: "And all I remember clearly is this blessed teaching test that I took in the attic of the Teachers' College. In moss stitch. And

there they sat, these darlings, and stared at me and I had in front of me a group of kids from the Model School that I had never seen before, knew neither head nor tail of. And I took the ribbed stitch wrong and should be considered lucky to have passed!" (Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939, p. 6). Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) took her test with a full class in a secondary school and managed to teach them to add and take off stitches in knitting. Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951), on the other hand, recalled that her test situation was rather more idealized than the reality in schools at the time. She did not have a full class and the pupils were very much aware of this as a test situation and seemed to assume responsibility for her success. They may have been impressed with the novelty of the project, which involved fabric printing, a technique that was not widespread at the time.

The evidence given by instructors and students alike shows that the textile program was very demanding and examinations strict. Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) said of her students in the 1960's: "Of course they thought we were crazy about tests but we felt it was a necessary check, there was of course an examination every spring in all subjects just as had been the case when I trained" (p. 12). The final test that Vigdís passed was: "A test based on a project. One was to machine stitch such and such -- it was a child's skirt -- and then one was to enhance it with embroidery. So it required all the aspects; pattern making, machine stitching, embroidery and design. Everything was tested in one go which was, of course, a good experience" (p. 12). This tradition was continued in various forms at the Teachers' College and the The University College of Education, sometimes such a comprehensive approach, other times a more limited scope was set for the test.

The curriculum in teacher training up until the 1970's was a link in a continuum that encompassed an aspect of women's education from elementary school through to professional training. Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) talks of projects that ran like a theme through this continuum of textile education, such as making baby clothes. "One project that was a constant for a long time was a smocked girl's dress. It was a classic pattern and is still as pretty as it was back then. It was going in the domestic schools, the elementary schools, vocational secondary schools and of course with us in teacher training" (p. 17). These compulsory projects from the elementary curriculum that students reproduced were intended as exemplars for their prospective pupils. "There were few changes, almost none, there you were making the same projects you had done in elementary school to take them back to elementary school as a teacher" (Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948, p. 6).

When the Teachers' College became the The University College of Education in 1971 only a handful of applicants entered in the first year, only one woman enrolled in the department of textiles (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924). When she entered, two cohorts were finishing their Teachers' College program. For several years the demand for textile teacher training remained as low for only a handful of women enrolled in the program at any given time. The number of students was boosted with teachers seeking to add textiles as a specialization. Those few enrolled in the university program were trained alongside the others, who had a different background and received this education in a different context (Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1942; Ragna Þórhallsdóttir, b. 1950).

Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir (b. 1959) entered the The University College of Education in 1979 to take the 3 year B.Ed. degree with textiles as her elective subject. Textiles ran

concurrently with other subjects in the B.Ed. program. The curriculum that Guðrún describes is very similar to that of previous generations. Her description of the first class reflects that the traditional system of machine stitching, dress and pattern making described above. The instructor, Fríður Ólafsdóttir "distributes fabric samples, these were small pieces not even A-4 size that we got, all alike, and a spool of thread" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 6). The demand for precision was there immediately. The instructor told the class that she wanted them to stitch a straight seam. And, that straight meant exactly parallel to a thread in the fabric sample. Guðrún was close to tears when the instructor let her off the hook by suggesting that she accept the best possible effort: "And I handed in the damned sample with one kink" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 7). When asked to sum up the main goal of the program in the textile department, Guðrún replied very similarly to previous generations: "Well, yes, it seems, and this is of course the main thing, that is to teach the student teachers all those techniques, all those basic techniques that one should know" (p. 11).

Generally speaking there seems to have been more open discussion and overt criticism of the curriculum than before 1970, with the notable exception of the 1947-48 cohort, that apparently had been quite outspoken some thirty years earlier (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924). All these critics have in hindsight, more sympathy with the original counter point to their criticism. Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir (b. 1959) recalls instances of discussions of the extent to which they were taught pattern making. At the time students voiced the opinion that this was irrelevant for it was much beyond the scope of the textile curriculum of the elementary school for which they were being trained and certified. Ragna Þórhallsdóttir

(b. 1950) refers to a criticism of the sample system that was common in the late 1970's, but probably reaches further back. "There was some criticism of it back then, why we should do all those samples, why we didn't make real garments instead. But when all is said and done the folders of samples and instruction sheets are what is left for you to depend on. You still have the folder but the garment is long since worn out and gone" (Ragna Þórhallsdóttir, b. 1950, p. 5).

The evidence of criticism crops up here and there; from descriptions of students 'crusading' to a more conservatively worded suggestion of there having been 'some criticism'. Vigdís said of her students in the 1980's "they were of course crusading against exams. Tests were totally -- no reason for having exams... It was because they thought we set too complex projects for the test, which was perhaps true to some extent" (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924, p. 12). Discontent could develop in any aspect of the program and sometimes it is difficult to separate the issues of curriculum from issues of instructional method and personal style. Vigdís Pálsdóttir's (b. 1924) insistence on creativity took on the guise of yet another regime of control in the mind of Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir (b. 1959). She describes both attempts to voice opposition and compliance. "It was all supposed to be sort of free style and creative. But as we kept telling her, not everyone is free and creative. ... The attitude was such that one just didn't mention anything one might be doing outside the program. One just buried every idea that wasn't based on simply receiving, on swallowing what was pumped into you" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 21-22). One didn't question the instructors (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Bryndís

Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939; Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959).

The issue of relevance to prospective pupils remained. I asked Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir (b. 1959) what was said about pupils and instruction: "As little as possible. Too little, way too little. And it came from us mostly, some of the more original among us, whether something was applicable in the teaching situation, whether one could teach this or that and then there were no answers or woolly ones and like, nothing to bank on. We often talked about it, that we wanted more with the school situation and prospective pupils in mind. I think, still think that there should have been more talk of that, real instructional methods related to this subject" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 8). This comment is similar to earlier accounts (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940, Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951).

In the late seventies and eighties Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) started to feel the effects of the changes that the seventies had brought in textile education. The new entrants had less background in the subject than before, no secondary level education, half of the time allotment that their older peers had received in elementary school, and had also observed less textile work in the home. Their exposure to the craft was therefore lower than was the norm in their chosen profession. Furthermore, the establishment and development of the The University College of Education eventually brought about a change in the status of the Textile Department from relative autonomy to submission to a central administration. At the same time the teacher certification had changed from specialist to generalist with specialization.

The pitfalls inherent in loosening rigid standards became a concern (Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1942; Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948; Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924). Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) suggested that by resisting change too long the profession had brought upon itself a catastrophe in that when people succeeded in introducing much needed change, the change became a revolution rather than gradual development. When Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) was a student in Norway in the 1970's, she experienced what to her seemed too radical a capitulation. The curriculum there was changing to an integrated subject of art and craft where the pedagogy was a laissez-faire approach. The teacher was not to impose instruction on the creative process that the student was engaged in. Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir (b. 1942) shares these reservations: "And maybe we emphasize more this creative aspect, which can go too far. *What is the danger there?* The danger is that then you won't have enough time to really learn the techniques. So essentially you learn to blunder on, you never quite master the skill. You see, one has to know the sewing machine first, you have to know how to use it, understand it, before you are able to apply it freely and creatively. The question is whether we let students out of the program that perhaps don't know the medium well enough" (p. 12).

It is apparent the main features of the curriculum in the Textile Department were formed already in its first year. The department has developed its own tradition and stuck to it through shifts between institutions and levels of education. The tradition is best characterized as that of hard work, high demands and excellence in the craft. The attention to instructional method or the pedagogical side of textiles has been a minor concern from the time the department was moved from the College of Arts and Crafts

until recent times. The department has been relatively autonomous within the institutions it belonged to, but also isolated and marginalized at times. Over the years students have voiced criticism of the curriculum emphases, calling for more direct relevance to their prospective teaching situation. Despite such criticism, the department and its instructors were consistently remembered and respected for their proficiency and skill and the high standards they maintained. For the outsider it seems that the entire textile teacher profession accepts the notion that where there is no pain, there is no gain.

### Adulthood: Being a Textile Teacher

#### **Entering the Profession**

Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir (b. 1916) entered teaching in the position of principal at a domestic school. As principal Svanhvít also had a teaching load, but she didn't at first teach the subject for which she was qualified: "I didn't, there was another who taught the textiles. She didn't have certification but she was very skillful, particularly in embroidery but wasn't that well trained in dressmaking." (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916, p. 6). It was not uncommon, for a principal to balance the interests of a local, albeit unqualified person who had served the school, and those of a new, better qualified arrival (Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951).

Getting a job in Reykjavík and surroundings was not easy in the 1950's and 1960's.

Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir (b. 1916) had been principal of a domestic school for seven years before marrying and spending a couple of years looking after her young family. She was well qualified to apply when the Vocational School of Reykjavík first advertised for

faculty. Although positions were hard to get, and there were eleven applicants for the job, she had enough professional confidence at this point: "And I just told the principal that I was good and experienced and he hired me. I was head of textiles at this school, or that is, I decided how it was going to be and then we got excellent teachers" (p. 6). The Vocational School was one of few institutions where there was a group of textile teachers and a fully functioning vocational program in textiles.

When Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) graduated in 1957, she had to take a position with a rural secondary school for the first year. Although, she would have preferred a town or city location rather than fairly isolated boarding school. She recalls that she was allocated 16 periods of textiles and for some reason 2 periods of typing instruction. It wasn't until she had seven years of teaching experience that she got work in Reykjavík. Even then she could not get a full time position. From 1964 to 1968 she taught part time at eight schools in the Reykjavík area. Sometimes she taught at three schools in the same day. She finally got a full time position at a new school with Kópavogur school board.

The same year as Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) graduated from the Teachers' College textile department, 1957, Ragnheiður Anna Thorarensen (b. 1935) graduated from Handarbejdets Fremme in Copenhagen with her teaching certificate. "Then I just married and had children and it didn't occur to anyone back then to work outside the home if you had children. I got a job offer and it didn't cross my mind to take it, I was about to be married" (p. 2). While her children were young Ragnheiður Anna did not work outside her home but took on the occasional embroidery class at home. Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) and Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir (b. 1940) made similar decisions to stay at home with

young children. Sigríður did not go into full time teaching upon graduation in 1961. But she taught evening classes in pattern making and machine stitching for a sewing machine distributor as well as occasional relief teaching.

Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir (b. 1939) graduated in 1973, and was hired as a teacher at the neighbourhood school, where her son had been a pupil. She had a mixed teaching load of classroom teaching and textiles. There were two senior textile teachers at the school who made all decisions regarding the curriculum and implementation. Bryndís was very much in the junior role. The facilities were in the basement and classes were crowded. She also had to teach at a temporary teaching facility in a nearby sports hall. "I taught Friday afternoons and Saturday mornings, when the others wanted to have time off, you see. And I felt I had been given the dirty work so to speak and I couldn't have any say in it.... And, well, I quit. Rather than put my foot down and demand better facilities, fewer pupils and to be able to introduce my own ideas, I just quit teaching textiles" (p. 7).

Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) planned to continue her studies of textiles as an art form rather than go into teaching upon graduation. When these plans were delayed she decided to take a teaching job that she was offered at the Varmaland Domestic School. "I made this decision; now its time to be sensible and just go into teaching. It was this feeling of rationality that took over but it bothered me that I wanted something totally, completely different" (Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948, p. 8). Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) took the position of her old textile teacher when she retired and thereby became the only textile teacher at a sizable elementary school. This meant that she didn't have to

defer to anyone's seniority, however, the workload was heavy with 36 periods and pupils aged 9-16 years.

Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) was taking over from a teacher who had been in the position for a long time and was of a different generation. Sigrún was in age and outlook closer to her students than her colleagues. This could evoke the question of authority.

Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) recalls being concerned when she started teaching whether her sixteen year old pupils would respect her authority for she was only four years their senior and the teacher she replaced was retiring. Her fears were unfounded. On the contrary, it proved positive for textile teachers to be close enough in age and outlook to share the fashion sense with her pupils.

Both Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) and Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) were determined to increase the creative involvement of their pupils in the subject by encouraging individual design. They both met with some resistance, on the one hand from colleagues, on the other hand from pupils. "I tried you know, to ask other textile teachers what would be possible, what one could introduce and I wanted to introduce more creative design. I got a lot of 'it is no use' and 'it can't be done' kind of reaction....

And I remember thinking to myself, I just won't pay any attention to this, I'll just try it out anyway" (Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948, p. 13). For Sigrún it turned out that pupils welcomed the change, but Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) recalls that her pupils were initially reluctant. It was a novel idea in the school to demand original designs in textiles.

In both cases the teachers prepared prototypes to show students, and Þórleif Drífa was determined to offer alternatives to what she saw as the tired old compulsory projects. This

meant that for every project she introduced she had to show alternatives, which she did by making several examples. "I didn't think it was a big deal when I started out. But I just can't get over it today how anyone could even think of this. In any case I didn't do anything other than teach this first year" (p. 11).

Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir (b. 1959) tells a similar story, that initially she spent so much time on preparing because she had such great plans for her textile classes. But there weren't enough hours in the day to sustain her enthusiasm. She started teaching in 1983 in Reykjavík where she got a mixed teaching load as a classroom teacher with 10 periods in textiles per week. The textile teaching was temporary as she was relieving for the senior teacher who was on sick leave. Describing her initial difficulties she said: "Just that I only have two hands and maybe 15 pupils and you have to be with everyone at once, stand over them almost the whole time. It doesn't work like that. And you see, I found it really hard to swallow that one can't do all one wants to do. And it bothered me a great deal and I spent a lot of time preparing, to the point really of almost doing the work for them" (p. 11). She had unrealistic expectations of what could be achieved given the time and resources that a textile teacher has at her disposal.

Reviewing the comments about entering teaching it seems that the initial difficulties up until the 1970's were to get a position at all. Those who have the B.Ed. degree with generalist as well as specialist qualifications very often teach textiles only to a limited extent. The development of the school subject and the classroom situation described in the next section also means that while the earlier cohorts do not mention preparation as a

particular concern, the teachers who started after 1970 talk of preparation for class as a very significant workload.

### Working With Other Teachers

Those who taught in situations where there were more than one textile teacher, such as in the larger schools, the domestic schools or in teacher education, belonged to a peer group where seniority and professional authority went hand in hand (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916; Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959). The seniority of teachers determined their teaching load for the teacher who was hired first at the school had first choice. A junior teacher rarely challenged a senior colleague for a share of the load. She accepted what her senior did not take on and if there was a reduction in the allotment, it was the junior teacher who yielded (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959). Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) faced this situation even after finally securing a full time permanent position. When she was hired her school was growing but when the roll started dropping there wasn't enough textile teaching for the two specialists. The solution was to let her teach handicrafts to the 7 and 8 year olds.

As the only specialist in the subject area a teacher has considerable autonomy, particularly given the tradition of housing the subject away from the main arteries of school buildings (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951). Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) for instance, had considerable freedom regarding her curriculum. She did her own purchasing and acquisitions without

any question or comment from other teachers or her school administration: "There was really nobody who in any way checked into what I was doing. I could just as well have been doing something far from what I was supposed to be doing. I was just alone in my classroom" (p. 14). While autonomy is cherished, Þórleif Drífa points out that it can also be a sign of marginality, and lack of interest by other school personell.

The isolation becomes a serious handicap when it means that the teacher is not expected to be part of the team (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Ragnheiður Thorarensen, b. 1935; Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b.1939; Ragna Þórhallsdóttir, b.1950; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951). "When I started in 1972 the textile teacher had never attended staff meetings. Never had to. It was completely unnecessary. ... I had to apply quite some pressure to be able to attend, to be able to follow what was going on" (Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951, p. 15).

Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) is one of two textile teachers who have collaborated and coordinated their approach as well as worked with other teachers at the school on diverse projects. "The art teacher set aside time for pupils to work on designs and then they would do the embroidery with us. And I would often try to plan the projects such that they'd have to take it through to wood and metalwork to finish it. Perhaps a footstool with an embroidered cushion, then they'd have to make the frame in wood and metalwork. Or he would have them make a sailboat and then the sails would be made with us" (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932, p. 16).

Apart from other textile teachers, the art and the wood and metalwork teachers are the most likely candidates for attempted collaboration. The relationship with the wood and metalwork teacher is not always without conflict. He may be set in his ways, is likely to be overworked and he may not always take the interests of textile teachers to heart (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b.1932; Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951). "I tried but it just didn't work, he wasn't into it. He was just teaching, he taught at two schools so he was overworked at the time so it wasn't much of a collaboration" (Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951, p. 14).

Occasionally, there was an interest in involving textiles in the general classroom teaching, but often the textile teachers felt that this interest did not extend to actual objectives and goals for their subject. Rather, the textile component was to be included for variety or fun (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959). Trying to organize collaboration for the textile end of things may or may not work. Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir (b. 1959) recalls trying to fire the staff room up to collaborate on a fall theme, but the only response was: "'Well how nice that you are doing something more than just textiles' and that was it" (p. 17). "And there isn't a lot of interest in what others are doing. *Do other teachers turn to you as experts, for instance if they are doing a project with their class?* Yes, that happens now and then. Ever so often they'll ask for direction or advice on material and such. And then of course it is always popular to drop by the textile studio to get materials there. I think that is positive though, then they come here and they see what we are doing. All sorts of points come up on both sides even if this isn't direct collaboration" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 17).

Given the way schools are structured, collaboration is difficult for anyone. "I don't think there is a lot of collaboration today, maybe too because people just don't have the time to drop in and see what others are doing. Everyone is always teaching at the same time and for the most part in our school system one is shut up in one's classroom. Every one has their room, their class and their project and everybody is struggling to cover as much as possible in the limited time allotment" (Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951, p. 14-15). It is interesting that when asked about collaboration with others the teachers immediately think of projects. There was little mention of other aspects of school life. No reference to things like conferring with other teachers over individuals or groups of pupils needing particular attention, parent teacher cooperation or school policies in general.

### **The Symbolic Environment**

#### The Rationale for Textiles as a School Subject

"The textiles are just an important foundation for life's struggles. To be able to manage, use your hands, use your head and make it work together" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 27). The current state of the consumer culture is a cause for concern for the teachers who feel that the rationale above is undermined by the devaluation of crafts and other forms of manual labour and manufacture in Icelandic society. This is, in many teachers' opinion, not only socially and economically to the detriment of the nation, it is a damaging attitude to take toward the efforts of children (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Ragna Þórhallsdóttir, b. 1950; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959). One of the biggest frustrations for teachers is knowing that some of their pupils will bring the fruits of their labour into a

home and family that has no appreciation of the value of the child's work and that some of the children have internalized the attitude that their products are worthless: "When you admonish them to take care so that the product will be of quality, a source of pride and joy to them, too often they'll say: 'It doesn't matter, I'll throw it out with the garbage anyway'. And this is very hard to bear" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 14).

Other teachers discuss the social and economic value of textile education: "I feel it is very important for people to be able to do the simpler tasks around the house. I think people become so vulnerable, so helpless if they can't do anything. Maybe because I've always done it, but I'm afraid that if everyone stopped doing this it would be, well, both expensive and difficult for society" (Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940, p. 17). "The craft subjects are absolutely necessary for society. We have to have some people to make the things. We can't just have people who figure out how to do things and speculate, we need people who can actually perform the work" (Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951, p. 17).

"And the refrain here in this society is that it's so much cheaper to import everything. Perhaps we ought all to be exported, put at the market, must be even cheaper than having to bring the stuff out here, right?" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 26-27). Here the rationale touches -- with considerable feeling -- upon national and economic sovereignty.

Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) considers it a matter of honour for the nation as well as the individual to be able to produce to fulfill one's needs. "It is just considered jolly convenient to have some woman in India or in Portugal sew for you and pay her a pittance on a pebble as nobody has a mind to do it for themselves and everybody is right happy about it all!" (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924, p. 8). This is to her mind the epitome of

the consumer culture of idleness and waste, feeding on the toil of others without appreciation of the value of the work. Crafts are threatened in this climate as those who have no experience of manual work cannot appreciate them. "The foundation for it erodes when so few people appreciate it. Few people appreciate the quality of handmade things. 'Why should I buy this hand knitted sweater when the machine knitted one is cheaper?' Although, mind you, there isn't that much difference because the wages women get for hand knitting are a disgrace" (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924, p. 15).

Many of the teachers mention as a rationale the training of motor skills such as hand and eye coordination. Or, training the hand and the mind, a more ambiguous term as mind refers broadly to mental processes (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916; Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951). In her line of work in psychiatric care and work with the elderly, Ragnheiður Anna Thorarensen (b. 1935) sees the subject as having therapeutic value. Both physically as an exercise of motor skills and mentally both in terms of envisioning and executing a task and as an intellectual endeavour with a multitude of associations which are socially and psychologically beneficial. Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) speaks of the importance of textiles in building and developing manual and intellectual skills: "One is teaching them first and foremost to use their hands, to be able to apply themselves. In the elementary school especially, it is a question of developing the hand, developing the motor skills" (p. 13).

Many of the teachers speak of the tradition of decorating the home with things hand made by family members (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916; Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924;

Ragnheiður Thorarensen, b. 1935; Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940). When Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) was a young woman it was considered an accomplishment to be able to furnish your lounge with chairs upholstered with cross stitched motifs in your own hand -- or barring that -- at least to have several cross stitched cushions around: "It isn't in anymore to have a cross stitch cushion on a chair. It is in to have some cheap IKEA cushion stuffed with rubbish that you haven't had a hand in at all" (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924, p. 18-19). The consumer culture is a concern for younger colleagues as well. "What perhaps gets to me most is that people just buy everything, this work doesn't matter" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 14).

It is nevertheless still important for many women to be able to contribute to the family economy through their textile work (Ragna Þórhallsdóttir, b. 1950; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959; Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940). Although the utilitarian rationale is double edged, teachers still use it: "I think it is terribly important that what you make is useful. So I do understand that kids who don't see the use for what they are doing will ask why they should do it. So when I speak to them and try to elicit their ideas I often try to create a feeling of something that is needed, how someone might really appreciate this.... but still the utility rationale distracts because it takes so long to make things and they think that things are so cheap that you could just as well buy them" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 22-23).

The most important rationale for textiles is in many teachers minds that here is yet another opportunity for young children to create something freely. The joy of creating something is a pleasure inherent in the process (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b.1916; Bryndís

Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939; Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948). "I think they just love to create something, see it materialize into something. I think they are really happy when they take their things home" (Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940, p. 16). Given this rationale she feels that it is missing the point to emphasize productivity over the training of mental and manual processes. She feels that this is a common misconception of the subject and the prevalence of quickly made machine stitched projects a case in point. "They think it is about production, but it isn't, it's not about that but has a totally different purpose: To be able to respect, to appreciate what you can do with your hands. If you can get this through to kids during their time at school, I think that's excellent" (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924, p. 23).

Using knitting as an example, Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) presents this interpretation of how the perceived value of textiles as a school subject has changed over time. "The goal was to teach this skill, knitting. Then there were technical variations. But today I see the technique of knitting as a minor issue compared to what is gained through the process.... You have to coordinate sight and touch, hand and mind as they say. That's what I look at today. In itself knitting is not essential in today's society. I can't see individuals engaging in knitting as market production. Rather that people use it as a medium of expression, to create" (p. 18).

### The Formal and Perceived Curriculum

An interesting feature of the descriptions that textile teachers gave of their participation in the subject as pupils and teachers is that there are few instances of actual instruction in

school. Although girls took textiles as a school subject, they commonly learned the techniques outside school. Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) was prompted to learn knitting when she was given a knitting project at school but the actual learning took place elsewhere: "When I entered the 9 year old class in elementary school I didn't know how to knit and it was a real pain... Mother was too impatient so I couldn't possibly learn it from her. So I went upstairs where a girl little older than me lived and she taught me in no time at all. I came downstairs and I had learned it" (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932, p. 1). There is no mention of trying to get assistance from the teacher.

"Back then girls usually knew how to knit before starting school. One knew that and had done lots. Started knitting and embroidery" (Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b.1950, p. 1). Given this it was perhaps not surprising that when Ragna Þórhallsdóttir (b. 1950) first encountered textiles as a school subject as a twelve year old in 1961, her textile teacher was shocked to hear that she didn't know how to knit. From Ragna's account it seems that she relied on her aunt and friends for assistance rather than the teacher, who was more of an authority to whom Ragna felt she had to prove herself: "It was like I was making up for what I had missed out on, and that I meant to show this teacher that I wasn't hopeless even though I didn't know how to knit at the age of twelve" (Ragna Þórhallsdóttir, b. 1950, p. 3).

Productivity was an issue that often surfaced. The more one produced the more it seemed one had achieved. In order to achieve in textiles, girls had to work diligently both in class and particularly at home. Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b.1932) recalls this expectation from her classmates in elementary school and encountered again as a teacher. The mothers who

were concerned with their daughters' schooling expected and assisted them with quite a heavy load of textile work at home. Much of the responsibility for textile teaching was assumed by female family members.

The textile teacher's role was to monitor and supervise rather than instruct. "Inspect and correct or pick up stitches for them and undo their knitting for them. Machine stitching at home, these were old and foot driven machines that they really couldn't manage and it all came out wrong. ... So often I sat and undid things for them so that they could continue the next day" (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932, p. 8). In this example, the fact that much of the work was done at home with the assistance of family members was a mixed blessing. On the other hand Þorleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) relied on family support to be able to offer her older pupils the opportunity to make substantial projects such as overcoats: "But when they opted for something that big I wanted the home to be involved. That there was someone at home who could help out if it all got stuck and there wouldn't be time to finish" (p. 12). Things are different in the 90's: "If you are doing something like knitting you can never expect any help from the home" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959).

The extra projects that students worked on after the compulsories were often brought from home. Embroidery was favoured for extra work (Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948; Ragna Þórhallsdóttir, b. 1950; Þorleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951). Ragna Þórhallsdóttir (b. 1950) suggests that this was due to the fact that they did not require any instruction to speak of, and the teacher only had to get the pupil started on the project and then could devote her energies to those who had not finished the compulsory projects. Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) recalls the extra or free projects similarly. She brought a piece

of embroidery, complete with the yarns from home: "Then I just sat there sewing and didn't really bother the teacher much, there was enough going on in the textile class" (p. 2).

Summing up her teaching, Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir (b. 1940) feels that individual instruction is prevalent so that she needs to repeat her instructions to each individual in turn. "Then again I'm not good enough at making instruction sheets for them to follow. Sometimes I give out instructions or job descriptions" (p. 18). She feels that this would be helpful, not only as a class management strategy, but also to train pupils to work independently, for her goal with the machine stitching is that pupils should have learned to take a pattern from a magazine and follow it on their own. The individual instruction means that either the pupils line up at the teacher's desk, or more commonly the teacher moves around the class. Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir (b. 1959) tries to vary her approach to assisting pupils by alternately moving around the class and receiving those in need of assistance at her desk. In the former instance "I try to ensure that we reach the conclusion together that it would be most fair if I just move around the room in a circle so that everyone gets the same chance for assistance. This is really food for thought in class, how to organize this" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 15)

There were few instances where the tricks of the trade, how to go about teaching a particular technique, were mentioned. Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) described in quite some detail her struggle with teaching knitting, particularly to boys who are less dexterous, in her experience, than the average girl. The first hurdle was to get them use their middle fingers., Hjördís used an exercise where they were to raise their fingers one

by one -- it takes concentration for a young child to be able to move the middle and ring fingers without moving all four fingers. In knitting you need to use all fingers on both hands, so another problem was to train the right handed to use their left hand effectively and a third problem was how to train the left handed to knit without having to reverse the pattern. These were issues that Hjördís basically had to work out for herself as there was little attention paid to them in her training or among her peers, as is evident in how seldom they were mentioned in this research.

One instance of recollections of direct instruction is Ragna Þórhallsdóttir's (b. 1950) memories of her secondary school textile teacher and the introduction to dressmaking. The teacher intervened when Ragna was about to make a mistake in cutting the fabric according to pattern: "The fabric had been laid out on the table and the pattern correctly placed on top and I'm standing there at the table with scissors in hand and I lift the fabric up like that so it no longer lay flat on the table. Then she comes along and asks 'Where are you taking the fabric?' One of the things I hadn't paid enough attention to was that the fabric should stay in place while cutting the pattern. When I'm cutting I always think to myself 'I'm not going to take the fabric anywhere, I'm keeping it right here'" (Ragna Þórhallsdóttir, b. 1950, p. 3-4).

There was increased curriculum development and implementation work going on in the late 1970's, particularly in relation to the revised elementary school curriculum guide for art and crafts published in 1977. One of the projects growing out of this was offering textiles as a regular subject in primary grades, to pupils 7-9 years of age. Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir (b. 1940) was hired at Breiðholtsskóli, to teach the youngest pupils. Her

curriculum consisted of knitting, weaving and embroidery: " It was really good to teach children that young to knit. The hands are not as stiff as when they don't start until 9-10 years old" (p. 8-9). The embroidery involved the children's original designs, that is they drew their pictures directly onto burlap and then used simple stitches to execute the design. The whole process, drawing, embroidering and mounting the finished piece took place in the textile class. That the product be presented in some way was particularly important to Sigríður.

Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir (b. 1939) started teaching in this period of change. She did not feel at home with the traditional mode of teaching through compulsory projects where the teacher is the indisputable authority and expert. Her view is rather that "To me it comes first to give them the time and the environment that encourages rather than standing over them telling them in detail how to do things. That would be totally counterproductive. So as a teacher I'm just creating the possibility for the kids and then just let them loose like merry calves in a meadow" (Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939, p. 8-9). Having said that she acknowledges that there are instances where she wants her pupils to learn and master a particular technique -- to get it right -- and then she demonstrates processes that they are to imitate and "watch them like a hawk" (p. 9). But then it is important to allow them the opportunity to use the skills independently.

Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) had been searching for a more creative approach to teaching textiles than the tradition in Iceland allowed. Going to Norway to study provided an excellent opportunity. There the subjects were changing into an integrated art and craft subject that was to be completely student centered. Sigrún felt that her Norwegian

colleagues had indeed thrown the baby out with the bath water when the teacher was relegated to the role of observer and direct instruction was seen as disruption of the pupil's inherently creative process. Being able to contrast this extreme with the rigid ways she had experienced gave her a good opportunity to define her own stance: "It was a great education and fun to work it out by and by and bring it back home and it may well be that I went too far at times, you know. One does that, one takes risks all the time as a teacher, in teaching " (Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948, p. 12-13).

While the creativity rationale was taking hold in the 1970's, teachers felt their work was undermined by the cut in time allotment in 1977, which made the traditional standards of achievement in the subject unattainable. Many teachers look back on this period as a golden age of experimenting with new projects and techniques and enough time to take pupils to a high level of proficiency in the subject (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940; Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951). Adjusting to the loss proved hard; "I think it was terribly difficult for textile teachers. They felt that the subject as such suffered terribly. and this is natural because at the same time they refused to modify their expectations. The allotment per pupil was cut in half but they still expected the same outcomes, the same productivity. They didn't get it, it took quite a long time to swallow it" (Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951, p. 28).

Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir (b. 1940) has contrasting experiences of a small school where the pupils had ample time for textiles, and a large school with the minimum time allotment. In 1972-76 she taught in a rural boarding school where boys and girls did textiles. The

interest was greatest in embroidery and knitting, with projects such as cushions, wall hangings and tablecloths very popular. In this rural setting with small classes of children that Sigríður got to know really well both through her classroom teaching and through her duties supervising the dormitories, much more could be achieved than in larger settings, which is reflected in the comment "Today one can't really believe how much these kids accomplished" (p. 7).

"It is preposterous that grown women have to go and take classes to learn to knit again. It shows that the school system has failed" (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924, p. 25). Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) agrees but does not take as dim a view of the situation. "With two periods per week for half the school year in those subjects, you can't teach any child to knit to the extent that they could knit a sweater for instance. They have to find personal motivation for it later. But you have introduced this technique and I think that much more is gained than just the process of knitting. But if you want to take up knitting later you have every opportunity and you know what you are getting yourself into" (Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951, p. 19).

When the time allotment per pupil in textiles fell by half in the late 1970's it had of course repercussions for textile teachers: "And there wasn't either, in my mind, an effort made to change instructional methods, curriculum and lesson planning, to try to get more equipment, more sewing machines, when the issue was to make more efficient use of the time" (Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951, p. 28-29). In hindsight, Þórleif Drífa acknowledges that the resources were hardly in place to lead such a preparation.

However, she still feels that it would have been necessary: "I thought and I still think that

people weren't prepared systematically for the change. Maybe it was because it wasn't easy to figure out how it should be done. Nobody knew how, come to think of it" (p. 28).

It is interesting that in contrast to their older colleagues (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916; Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932), the younger teachers make no mention of taking pupil work home to check and correct it (Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959). The workload seems to have shifted from monitoring to motivation and preparation in response to pupil interest (Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939; Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1940; Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948).

Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir (b. 1940) speaks for many in mentioning that discipline is a bigger issue in her present teaching situation than before. As a specialist in a large school she does not get to know her pupils well for classes are big. For the adolescent boys it seems more difficult to see relevance in textiles than for the younger boys. Monitoring behaviour and preventing vandalism has therefore increasingly become a feature of her work as a teacher, issues that did not feature in the early descriptions of textiles as a school subject (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916; Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Ragnheiður Thorarensen, b. 1935; Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1940; Ragna Þórhallsdóttir, b. 1950). Regarding the changing views of textile teachers Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) said: "Yes there are changes but I feel it is happening too slowly. I think there are many older people who remember the old times who are still looking mostly at the product. They want to see, there are so many who need to see results of their work. I know that many of the women in the profession are really frustrated because they feel that they can't see any result of their work. They teach the kids to cast on and knit

this year and next year when they get them back it is all forgotten" (Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951, p. 19).

### **Projects: The Curriculum Content**

The main emphasis was on the projects and teachers tended to describe the curriculum in terms of projects rather than processes or intended learning outcomes. The textile curriculum for elementary schools was quite carefully controlled and coordinated at the three school levels through compulsory projects. This curriculum was imported, based on Scandinavian models and using materials such as gingham and cotton yarns. The projects were not designed with specific reference to Icelandic textile heritage. It wasn't until during the preparation for the celebration of 1100 years of settlement in 1974 that the national heritage became a focal point for curriculum development. This coincided with the movement away from the traditional compulsory projects. In the school year 1973-'74, many craft teachers embarked upon heritage related projects. In textiles, Icelandic wool became a subject of study (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959; Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932).

The emphasis in the curriculum was from the outset to teach girls to make useful objects and the projects were designed with utility for the pupil, or her family, in mind. Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir (b. 1916) recalls that in her last year of elementary school the students were taught to knit slippers. This would have been in 1930 at the local rural school. Most of the pupils, if not all, would have known how to knit before coming to school at the age of 9 or 10. The slippers were widely used as a school project and they were intended for use at

school (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916; Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959). The textiles bag, which all the teachers interviewed had made and Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) owns examples of from three generations in her family, was one instance of this policy of utility.

The practice of teaching textiles through providing prototypes and patterns for certain compulsory projects was dominant until the late 1960's and applied to all levels of education. Generations recall that the first project was a little bag, the textiles bag, which was to be used to carry the projects between home and school. Hand sewing the textiles bag out of gingham cotton and decorating it with embroidery was the first project that Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir (b. 1959) recalls doing as a 9 year old. Today, compared to her own teaching situation, she finds it amazing that this was possible: "And it was sewn together by hand. Lord, now I remember it! It was done by hand! It wasn't machine stitched. Something that wouldn't occur to you today. Cast over with many, tiny stitches. With thread. And this still resounds 'many, tiny stitches' (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 2)

These compulsory projects became so ingrained that pupils saw the sequence of projects almost as a rite of passage. Making the projects that their mothers and sisters had done before them marked their own progress. Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir (b. 1959) looked forward to the compulsory projects: "I had seen from older kids what it was one was supposed to make and I thought that when I would be older I would have textiles at school and be allowed to do these projects like the others" (p. 1-2). Some of Þorleif Drífa Jónsdóttir's (b.

1951) pupils felt cheated when they were not offered the opportunity to make the ubiquitous textile bag.

Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir's (1916) description of her curriculum in the domestic school and in the vocational secondary school was quite similar. It was based on projects that she designed. These were intended to be useful for the home and the family. Baby clothes and making clothes for oneself were the main projects. The emphasis was on providing pupils with a solid design, training them in precision and skill and to appreciate the qualities of the materials available: "And we taught them a little material studies, to teach them to identify cotton, linen, wool and silk and then we taught them quite a lot about the care of fabrics. How to wash and iron and all that" (p. 8).

Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir (b. 1940) described her elementary school textiles in the fifties: "There were always compulsory projects of both knitting and sewing. There wasn't much machine stitching. I did a lot of embroidery. In what would be grade 8 now I did a blackwork table cloth. It's not even worth trying to present something like that today" (p. 1). Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) went on to the Vocational School and there the program ran in a similar vein. "We learned those ordinary seams, shirt seam, right side together, zigzag and to cast over by hand and all that. We did samples and then a few garments and there was embroidery, I made a tablecloth" (p. 5). Patterns were provided also in embroidery. Pupils could vary the colour and the design if they wished.

When Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) started teaching in 1957, the curriculum was very tightly prescribed, even to the point of prescribing the fabric and yarn to be used. In her

professional lifetime the curriculum has developed toward more teacher autonomy and pupil choice. She talks of the old system loosening up or disintegrating, "and then it all started moving" (p. 11) in the seventies. Here she is referring to how the idea that curriculum is not a set of projects but a range of knowledge and skills, took hold. This, of course, was not an easy concept for proponents of a subject that had been defined through products rather than processes. Hjördís recalls that it was controversial when she publicly described her program in terms of the techniques she wanted her pupils to acquire rather than by the projects they did.

When Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir (b. 1940) started teaching in Reykjavík in the late 1970's there were various changes afoot. First of all the compulsory projects were loosening up a bit and the emphasis on pupil choice growing. In 1976 she recalls that a blouse was a compulsory project for 13 year old and that she tried to meet student interest by offering a basic pattern of a tunic, which was fashionable. Students could choose from fabric in a range of colours and put the pattern together in various ways. Sigríður preferred to limit pupils' choice, otherwise they wasted time trying to figure out what to do. She set a compulsory project at the beginning of every term. The pupils might have the choice of a pattern she provided or to use a pattern from a magazine. For younger pupils, she used prototypes of the project. For the older pupils, she referred to magazine pictures, partly because she could hardly keep up making examples of the latest fashion.

"And I emphasize knitting a great deal, but not with the 7 year old, they do projects where they have to cut and braid and things like that. Knitting, we do stress knitting particularly in primary because they are not as prejudiced against it. They are positive and it is nice

and easy to teach them while they are young and open minded" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 14). Machine stitching is really popular, but Guðrún complained that impatience is a problem there. Pupils in grades 7-9 have a hard time understanding that although the machine can go fast and save time, there is still a lot of detail involved in making garments: "you don't rush into things, you have to learn to approach the task, learn to finish and to clean up and all that" (p. 15).

The demands of textile teachers earlier in the century centered mainly on proficiency, and teaching girls the correct techniques and training them to work diligently. The latter half of the century saw the introduction of new demands. Changing teaching methods from reliance on standard projects to allow pupils more choice and individual design options involved more, rather than less, preparation on the teacher's behalf. It simply meant that instead of one example of a compulsory project the teacher produced several prototypes to illustrate different possibilities (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959). "It of course turned out such that I was always making some example or another, all the time so there wasn't an evening when I sat down without a knitting or an embroidery project. You always have to bring in something new and try to see it in a new light somehow to motivate them, so that they don't feel that it is all ancient and outdated" (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924, p. 16).

"It is always a bit of a problem, ideas and projects and all that. Because what we may have designed or dreamt up may turn out to be absolutely out with these people and offering it an insult no less!" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 21). So the textile teacher these days has to keep a close eye on fashion trends to be able to retain pupil

interest. Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) said that she had let them design their own embroidery patterns. It was a lot of work for her because she transferred all the designs onto the fabric herself: "I only knew this primitive way one had learned in the Textile Department, I didn't know how to simplify the process as one does today. So I did all this at night, transferred all these designs" (p. 13). The teachers were perhaps not prepared for the changing workload inherent in the shift toward greater pupil choice. The solid, time consuming methods that they had learned did not allow them the shortcuts needed to deal with a mass of diverse projects.

The problem with the shift from the traditional compulsory projects was to that the concept remained the same. The teacher provides a project complete with an example for the pupils to follow. Increased pupil choice meant in the first instance that the teacher provided more examples (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959). Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) explains that it wasn't until later that she developed the approach of introducing a technique or process to be learned, rather than projects to be made. Initially it was of course partly due to the fact she couldn't sustain the production of examples needed to achieve her ideal of pupil choice in a product oriented program. The discussion of the pedagogical issue inherent in the shift did not develop for her until the late seventies and early eighties.

### The Relationship of Textiles and Other Curriculum Areas

The extent to which textile teacher were involved and identify with art as a school subject or pursuit varies, but the majority of those interviewed have only been involved to a

limited extent, most often directly in relation to textiles and textile design (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b.1916; Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Ragnheiður Thorarensen, b. 1935; Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940; Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948; Ragna Þórhallsdóttir, b.1950; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959).

Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir (b. 1916) does not recall doing much drawing or painting as a child. The only drawing she recalls from her childhood home is her mother drawing patterns for embroidery. Other than that, she only recalls that she and her siblings had some colouring books (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916). Her first drawing instruction was when she went abroad to train as a textile teacher. During her study abroad she took several drawing courses, of which the first one stands out in memory: "We started with drawing. And then we did a lot of colour combinations and I remember we went out to collect leaves, the fall colours had set in and for me it was of course wonderful to see those large leaves, red, yellow and green and all. We collected these and used them to draw from and did all sorts of designs and patterns" (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916, p. 3). The other courses were more directly related to dressmaking and fashion design and model drawing.

Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) had a relatively extensive drawing education, first as a child in the Catholic School, and then in grammar school. There her instructor was one of the leading painters of his generation, Finnur Jónsson: "I drew mostly from cubes and cones those years. It was two periods per week, which isn't small considering what it is today" (p. 2). There is no art instruction at the school today. Vigdís continued with her art education by enrolling in summer courses and evening classes in drawing. When she

went back to school it was to attend domestic school where she became involved in the revival of traditional Icelandic patterns in embroidery and weaving. In teacher education the emphasis on drawing and on the national heritage in textiles was continued. Textiles and art were closer in those days than later, for the textile department was then part of the College of Crafts and Arts and many instructors taught in both programs. Given this background it is not surprising that Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) treated her subject, embroidery and embroidery design, as an art form.

Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) recalls that embroidery and embroidery design differed from other aspects of the teacher training program for the emphasis on students' original designs. "But the embroidery had to be our own design and colour combination and everything. It was sort of what we had in us. I'm still a bit surprised at a pillow that I made, that I hit upon it, it was a bit ahead of its time really" (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b.1932, p. 5). The surprise here is to find in oneself the ability for original, creative design, which at the time was not encouraged in elementary and secondary school textiles, and only to a limited extent in teacher education. The mainstay of the curriculum in art at both levels was similarly copying from a selection of pictures. In elementary school they were occasionally asked to draw freehand and set a task such as 'The farm where I spent my summer holidays'. Hjördís preferred to draw her own pictures, rather than copy. In secondary school some technical considerations such as shading and rendering form as well as mixing colours were introduced.

It wasn't until the 1970's when "there was this movement toward their own creativity" (p. 13), that Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) started connecting art and textiles: "Then one

might give them material and some yarn and teach them some stitches and then they were even to make their own designs. I did a lot of that, let them make their own designs and set time aside for drawing embroidery designs. Later there was collaboration with the art teacher that they could make the design in art or at least sketches" (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932, p. 13). As an experienced teacher in many settings, not only as a textile specialist but also as a classroom teacher and one time reluctant recruit to relieve as art teacher, Hjördís made this observation on the relationship between art and textiles: "I know that those who are talented draughtspeople and who draw a lot, they usually do not enjoy textiles. It takes too long for them" (p. 20).

Art instruction in school is not memorable for Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir (b. 1939) but she took art classes upon leaving school and has always had an interest in making art. She would have liked to go to art school, but felt it was impractical. "You see, I've always wanted, I've really always wanted to work at art somehow. It was just such a lofty and distant goal that I have never dreamt I'd get close to it. *How is that?* Well, I just feel, it is just above the daily routine somehow. I'm really practical so I always feel I must be doing something useful, you see. ... I don't know, I've always been badly cursed with the practical point of view" (Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939, p. 11-12). It is interesting how she encountered the curse of practicality in her teaching when she offered an elective course in textiles for 13-16 year old pupils. "I wanted a little art history in there and different things. Batik and printing and such, but they weren't interested. They wanted, they were there to make clothes for themselves" (Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b.1939, p. 9).

Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) was fond of drawing and did well in the subject. I asked whether she saw art and textiles as related back then: "God almighty, no! They were two totally different things no relation at all" (p. 3). Although there was no incentive or guidance to make this connection, Sigrún feels that her preference for making her own designs and her thoughts on the merit of following other people's designs suggest it. "Yes, even if I unconsciously always related them so to speak, these speculations when I was in elementary school about why I shouldn't draw my own designs. Like when I opened pattern books and looked at designs for embroidery I would think 'Why are the people who drew this considered such experts? Are they that good? Why does everything have to come from someone else?'" (Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948, p. 5-6).

The relationship between art and textiles did not become clear to Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) until her embroidery and embroidery design classes in teacher training. When she became conscious of the relation between art and textiles, she wanted to go to art school to pursue textiles as an art form. Although she has managed to maintain the connection in her own work, she reckons this is not the prevailing view: "People still have the mindset today that crafts are something different from art or art education being different again. The public doesn't relate those things and artists neither, they look down on anything to do with rags" (Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948, p. 16).

Ragna Þórhallsdóttir (b.1950) does not identify with fine art. "I'm not very artistic, not in drawing at least. I can appreciate it and make up my mind on what is good and what is poor but to make art, it doesn't come from the heart" (Ragna Þórhallsdóttir, b. 1950, p. 2).

Ragna did have at least one inspiring art teacher, her secondary art teacher, Guðmundur

Magnússon. "He was inspiring. He was very, he would take us to the beach and we were drawing the boat sheds and we went to parks and we did this, took a sketch book and were just supposed to draw what we saw. It was stimulating. Somehow one could work at that. But when one was to sit at a desk and do something, it didn't work so well for me. But he had projects that fired us up. And I was allowed to make a design for a wall hanging that I made in textiles" (Ragna Þórhallsdóttir, b. 1951, p. 3).

Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) was not very confident of her own ability in art when she got to secondary school: "I hadn't worked hard at it of course but I was worried about not being good enough because I couldn't draw things realistically. I was more into stylized forms and playing around with form and colour and such" (p. 4). She enjoyed art and her concerns were unfounded for her art teachers turned out to be supportive and encouraging. She feels that their approach made a lasting impact on her work. "I think in relation to colour and such, it must have had an effect to have teachers like this in art. Because there was such an emphasis on our own decisions, they didn't feed things to us. *Do you think it has affected your textile work?* Yes I think so. I haven't really thought of it or related it, but it must have... But in regards to textiles one didn't relate it to art at the time. It wasn't conscious I think. *You didn't see them as related subjects?* No. It wasn't, there wasn't any integration or collaboration. No thought of that" (Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951, p. 5).

Later as a teacher, Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) worked with the art teacher at her school on projects involving pupils both in art and textiles. "Then they drew their designs in her class and embroidered with me and there was never any embroidery done that they

hadn't designed from scratch. Selected the fabric, colour and designed their own patterns" (Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951, p. 13). When Þórleif Drífa decided to go into a diploma program in craft education one of the main attractions was the heavy emphasis on art and design planned in the program. "I had always felt that I needed that. I felt there I could get a foundation and that was encouraging although I had basically decided to go for it when the program was first announced" (p. 28).

The relationship between art and textiles was not at all obvious for all budding textile teachers: "But when I entered the Textile Department then the main thing was drawing, which I just didn't think had anything to do with it! Embroidery design and drawing and I understand it today, but back then I thought it plainly ridiculous that drawing had anything to do with textiles! That's how daft one could be!" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 6). Although the Textile Department was originally part of the College of Crafts and Arts and the connection, to some extent, was made, it seems that in the schools the two subjects, art and textiles were quite distant. They did not start to converge until in the curriculum changes in the 1970's, but still they remain very distinct. The distinction is not only obvious in the subject matter, but even more clearly in the approach of the practitioner where textiles retains its relation to practical work. It is related to sustenance as well as aesthetics, while art is conceived of as a purely aesthetic pursuit.

## The Material Environment

### Facilities and Resources

The facilities are a metaphor for the status of the subject in the teachers' mind. "*How were the art and craft subjects perceived within the school?* Well the textile studio was a basement room without windows or anything, very poor facilities. Yes, one always felt, at least there and then that it was a marginal subject, no doubt about that" (Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948, p. 13). Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) taught at Akranes Secondary School 1958-64 and there the textile studio was in a separate building in another part of town than the main school building. "And I was made to teach -- in the first instance the textile teaching took place in a small and crowded room in the basement with no windows or anything and then there were way too many children in every class. And sometimes I had to teach in a nearby sports hall" (Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b.1939, p. 7). "*Do your colleagues or the principal show much interest in what you are doing?* No. Generally not, and we are, like, in the basement... But in this school where the classrooms are all connected we are somewhat out of the way, the kids have to use a separate entrance to come here" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 16-17).

Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) mentions one of the textile teachers' perennial struggles: getting and maintaining enough sewing machines for her pupils. "We had foot driven machines, old ones that the girls had no control over ... and it didn't get any better when I finally got two sewing machines, those were high speed machines for industry. I had asked for machines with adjustable speed, suitable for schools and I got this, with two speeds, normal and high" (p. 8). There was a lot of work involved in maintaining these

machines and often it was necessary to take the machine apart to get at broken thread in the machinery. In the rural setting, where Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir (b. 1940) taught the facilities were good, except that there were no sewing machines for pupils use. Hence the heavy emphasis on embroidery and knitting.

The isolation also meant that the teachers had to assume the responsibility for acquisition of materials both for compulsory and extra projects. Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir (b. 1940) would make a trip to Reykjavík once or twice a year to purchase materials and then keep an account and bill each pupil for the amount used: "Yes I bought it all wholesale and then I had to -- it was quite a bit of accounting, to figure out what each pupil bought and enter that and then of course they didn't pay as they went along, it was collected with their school fees" (p. 6-7).

Crowding is a common problem: "I took part in designing the textile studio and today I would like many things to be different, but one just learns from that. However the facilities are very good I think. They are. But the whole school is too small given the enrollment. It was designed when the Elementary School Act was coming into being... and then the maximum class size was supposed to be 24, so the textile and wood and metalwork studios are designed for 12 pupils. But one has groups of 16" (Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b.1951, p. 14). Maintaining the group size within limits has always been a struggle (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b.1932; Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959).

"The facilities are horrible here. Terribly crowded and poor quality, there is leakage, no drapes and we can't get them. I don't know if or when they'll be replaced. There is no money of course. But first of all there just isn't enough space. And I only have one sink so I've given up on fabric printing for instance. I tried it and it was great, the kids and I loved it. But I only have this one little hand basin in the washroom so it's just impossible"

(Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 16). Upon closer examination it comes out that the hand basin that Guðrún counts among the facilities she has, is in fact in the rest room, and not part of the facilities for instruction. But as many teachers tend to do (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b.1939) she has utilized every possible and impossible feature of the physical space to be able to offer the curriculum she wants.

The Vocational Secondary School in Reykjavík offered one of the best facilities in the country for textile instruction. Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir (b. 1916) recalls that the teachers had opportunity to advise on the design of the facilities. "It was wonderful to work there and a lot of fun. The tables were so big, they could be enlarged and used to cut patterns. And we could work together, the teachers, preparing examples and talk after teaching, it made a great difference" (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b.1916, p. 8). While the textile studio was a central part of the Vocational Secondary School in Reykjavík, this was not the norm.

The Joy of Processes, The Love of Materials

The rationale for the subject or the reason why it should be taught often relates closely to the personal enjoyment of it. Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir (b. 1916), for instance, associated the importance of textiles with the pleasure that textile work had brought in her childhood. In most cases the textile teachers have as Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) put it 'really very sweet memories' of the textile work they observed and took part in as children. They speak of a certain calm and intimacy that is associated with it. Working in textiles can be a time for reflection, one can think a lot while working (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916; Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Ragnheiður Thorarensen, b. 1935; Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940; Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959). "I do for instance remember that when there was weaving at home, often we sat around Dad and we got such enjoyment from it. To see the shuttle speed across the loom and hear the thud of the loom and such. It was just so cozy" (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916, p. 9).

Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir's (b. 1916) memories of textile production in her home are full of instances of attention to detail and design. After spinning the yarn for knitting, her mother would sometimes go to extra trouble in dyeing it. Given the amount of work to be done such additional attention speaks of serious interest in the subject. Before leaving home for the first time at seventeen, Svanhvít made a dress that really symbolized her heritage. "I remember I left in a dress that I had made completely with my own hands. Because I had spun the yarn, woven the fabric and dyed it. Just black. And the dress was very becoming,

with a sailor suit collar and suited me well. I even have a picture of myself in that dress" (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916, p. 2).

Many of the textile teachers mentioned embroidery as a leisure activity that the women around them enjoyed (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940; Ragna Þórhallsdóttir, b. 1950; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951).

Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir (b. 1916) recalls that occasionally her mother would sketch a flower motif on a piece of fabric and embroider it over an evening, more for pleasure than utility. Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) had an aunt on her mother's side who "embroidered for pleasure and on special occasions, the other things were everyday labour. It was mostly roses... counted stitches, cross stitch for cushions and such, but every day she spun and knitted" (p. 26). The distinction between everyday and leisure work was borne out in a comment made by Ragnheiður Anna Thorarensen (b. 1935): "I think people generally had such Sunday work, something that wasn't just a necessity, that didn't have direct utility. That they sat down to engage in it and listened to the radio and such" (p. 1).

"Our family was obsessed with crafts" (Ásrún Tryggvadóttir, b. 1939). Ásrún suggests that their mother did not see the sewing as merely a chore, but in fact as creative work. Her sister Hallfríður's recollection of how ready mother was to help whip up a dress for a school dance, suggests that it was an enjoyable task. Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) and Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) didn't do much embroidery as girls. They were more interested in making doll's clothes and costumes. Like several other colleagues, Sigrún mentioned that her interest was stronger than average (Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940; Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1942; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1958). "I remember that in

those years when the kids my age started staying out on week end nights and such, when they went out -- it was embarrassing -- but I often propped myself up in my bed with my rag box on my lap making something" (Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948, p. 3).

The quality of materials is very important to many of the textile teachers, they speak at some length about what materials they used for various projects (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916; Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Ragnheiður Thorarensen, b. 1935). Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) spoke of the particular qualities of Icelandic wool and how important they were in her work. The use of traditional herbal dyes was being revived when Vigdís was a young woman, and she enjoyed being able to work with a range of materials from indigenous sources on projects using traditional designs. Here the love of materials and processes are part of the love and concern for cultural heritage and sovereignty bordering on distaste for anything foreign. For instance, she dismisses fashions and trends in imported crafts such as silk painting and the flood of Christmas Crafts as "an absolute nonsense" (p. 25) and "food for the dustbin" (p. 26).

Learning new techniques and knowing as many as possible was a passion for some (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b.1932; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959). "I need to learn everything, I have to figure out exactly how things are made. But then I lose interest. I don't need to pursue it further. There is an unbelievable amount of techniques that I have samples of but I haven't made a lot of larger pieces" (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932, p. 3). This interest in the process rather than the product is also evident in Hjördís' exploration of how to teach the skills, and how to train and use children's' motor skill to be able to master a technique. "I have always got to the bottom of all, as I told you I have to learn

all those techniques and think about each step in the process, each turn of the hand, how it all happens and what is the result of each movement" (p. 14).

For most of the teachers the love of textiles is an unbroken affair reaching back into childhood (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916; Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1948; Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959). In her childhood home, Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) had access to tools and materials whenever she wanted: "I loved these fabrics so much, when I got a new one I'd think what cut is best for it, how should I form it? That was the most interesting thing about the dolls' clothes, figuring out the cut and the form, this work" (Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b.1948, p. 1-2). She explained further how she enjoyed figuring out how the pattern and form of the garment would fit the human body and took as an example how much of a discovery it was when she realized as an adolescent how the seat of pants should be shaped to create a form that would fit the human body: "To be creative and to view your environment with discerning, with open eyes. You open a window, you see form and colour everywhere and you read these, you work your environment out for yourself. You don't let them feed you" (Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948, p. 12).

As a child Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir (b. 1959) was prolific. She finished the compulsories with pleasure and even made extras to use as presents: "My friends thought I was daft sitting inside with my textiles rather than skipping rope in the yard with them" (p. 4). Embroidery and knitting were then her chosen media, but as an adult she became interested in machine stitching as well. Today some of her closest friends are textile

teachers too and "We check out projects together or go into town to check what is in the stores. We look into things together a lot, what's happening, how projects went and such" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 22).

Textile teachers derive much personal pleasure from textile work. For Ragna Þórhallsdóttir (b. 1950) the personal rationale for doing textiles is simply the pleasure of the process and she enjoys sharing this pleasure by making things for others. For Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir (b. 1959), the best thing about teaching is to be able to share the love of the subject: "Oh, when you find their enjoyment too and just to see how happy and enthusiastic they can really be and just the pride in work well done. It is simply great, what keeps one going, I think it is just great" (p. 24) The love of the subject causes heartbreak when it is not shared: "This is my interest and why doesn't everyone share this great interest that I have? And then it has occurred to me 'What am I wrecking it for? This is my hobby and a hobby should be enjoyable and why am I wearing myself out and destroying myself by stuffing it into people that do not appreciate it?'" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 23).

### **Textiles as Waged and Unwaged Work**

Textile teachers use their skill for their home and family. They generally make their own clothes, their children's clothes as well as useful and ornamental objects for their homes, such as drapes, linen, rugs and quilts, pillows and such. They also take pleasure in being able to make presents for friends and family. This work is unpaid and as such contributes to the family economy, but just as important, it is a source of pleasure and pride for the

worker. Their professional skills do not lead to paid employment or income other than teaching to the extent that wood and metalwork teachers augment their income by using their professional skills outside schools. The details of this aspect of the relationship with the subject are explored further in chapter 5.

In the few instances where the skills of a textile teacher were used in paid employment outside of the school system this employment was less than lucrative. Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir (b. 1916) worked to support herself while studying in Norway by doing textile work by commission. Her instructors and their well to do lady friends hired her for a pittance to do various projects calling for considerable skill such as to embroider tablecloths, to alter garments -- and in one memorable case -- to make a patchwork coat out of tiny silk and velvet fabric samples. Svanhvít did not have much choice in the matter though, for she was stuck in Norway due to the war, and her family was unable to send her any money.

After teacher training Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) went to work for a dressmaking outfit specializing in evening wear, ball gowns and bags: "Then the cocktail dress was all the rage. It was a dress that is a bit bare, but with a jacket of some sort over it. And the importing of ready made clothing hadn't really begun back then, but the gowns were made to measure but were also available off the rack. There was also a line of handbags to go with the gowns. Everyone carried a little handbag then" (p. 9). Vigdís' job involved design and embroidery. She was hired to design and embroider the handbags. The work was partly by hand although the shop had a machine that did chain stitch. The main part of the designs were done on the chain stitch machine but all the finishing touches, such as

attaching the lock, hiding loose ends and adding sequins and rhinestones, were done by hand. Sequins were an absolute must on the ball gowns and they were individually attached by hand. Even with the design component the work was very tedious and poorly paid.

Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) also worked in the budding garment industry, took a summer job in a factory sewing garments at a piece rate. Several years before going into the textile department Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir (b. 1939) learned pattern making while working for a small dressmakers factory in Reykjavík. The master dressmaker and Bryndís cut the patterns and there were eight women working as seamstresses: "And it was a good school but I didn't get any qualifications out of it. Just learned to cut patterns as she taught it to me" (p. 3). After moving to the suburbs, Bryndís took in sewing, designing and sewing dresses for her friends and neighbours: "It wasn't anything much really, I always had enough work though. But I got very little money for it and it was terribly lonely to sit all by myself sewing" (p. 4). As an adolescent, Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir (b. 1959) was earning a bit of money through hand knitting. "I knitted woolen sweaters and sold them and got a little bit of money. My folks aren't wealthy and couldn't afford to give me pocket money or such. But I could earn, which I thought pretty neat" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 6). The problem with the textile industry was that the wages were quite low, as Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) points out the wages for hand knitters have been kept very low to compete with machine knitting.

Þorleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) points out that the curriculum in machine stitching and dressmaking in the textile department was so extensive that graduates, although not

formally qualified as tradeswomen, could easily take on commissions for friends and family. A few textile teachers have ventured out as independent designers. Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) started selling designs and designer children's wear after staying home with her young sons for two years. It was experimenting with clothes for the boys that would not make them look like little men that led to publishing a few designs in a Norwegian magazine as well as selling through a baby boutique. Sigrún continued this work when she returned to Iceland and eventually published two books with designs for clothing for the family, entitled 'Clothes for everyone'. Ragna Þórhallsdóttir (b. 1950) has also moved into publishing for the market of women who sew for their family. She is editor of a magazine that publishes patterns for machine sewing and knitting. Her work is, of course, to a large extent administrative. She deals with business partners overseas, printers and marketing people, but she also designs for the magazine and writes instructions. The last issue is dear to her heart. She feels that an effort is needed to develop a good Icelandic vocabulary of machine stitching and pattern making. The education side of the magazine is important too, with a core of teachers who offer courses and instructions to subscribers.

Teaching evening classes is another venue of income generated from the textile teacher training (Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940; Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1948; Ragna Þórhallsdóttir, b. 1950; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959). In most cases this work was not a preplanned career move, but a chance opportunity or to work while raising young children. Ragnheiður Anna Thorarensen (b. 1935) offered embroidery classes at home while her children were young. She imported the materials and patterns and sold these to

her students. While this generated some income, it was also a professional interest. By offering private classes she could follow her own convictions rather than an official curriculum.

"They were starting evening classes in pattern making and cutting and they really needed someone, one of my classmates from the textile department was doing this and they needed another teacher. So I worked at this at night. I worked afternoons for the first year but then I taught 4-5 nights a week. There was such a demand for it for a few years that I taught every night and some afternoons as well" (Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940, p. 5).

Twenty years later a colleague has a similar experience: "It was purely by accident that I heard that a teacher was needed for sewing classes. Evening classes for adults. And I was broke and gave it a go" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 18). The evening classes were so popular in the mid eighties that Guðrún was teaching 4-5 nights a week, first through clubs and associations providing courses for their members and then as part of a business venture with fellow textile teachers. "I had done it for several years and then two of my friends were talking of setting up on our own so we just did. Opened a sewing school and we were just swamped. ... Then all of a sudden the people must have got more prosperous for the demand suddenly dropped, so we quit" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 18).

Working in the health sector is another use to which textile teachers have put their training. In 1974 Ragnheiður Anna Thorarensen (b. 1935) saw an advertisement for an occupational therapist or a textile teacher for the City Hospital Psychiatric Ward in a newspaper: "And I, it came back to me that this was what I had always dreamt of and I applied" (p. 2). Occupational therapy was every bit as interesting as she had hoped for.

Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir (b. 1942) also worked with psychiatric patients, but in a different setting. On the basis of her weaving instructors certification she was hired as an unqualified assistant at a patient workshop at a psychiatric hospital. The manager of the workshop was the only staff member considered a health professional involved in patient care and treatment. Others were not privy to information about the state of patients' health or their treatment.

Despite courses and work abroad to keep herself informed about the field of occupational therapy Ragnheiður Anna Thorarensen (b. 1935) wasn't satisfied to remain in the profession without the right qualifications: "It was all right when there was a shortage of occupational therapists, but then as I got more insight into it I didn't want to end up half-old and a lot of occupational therapists arriving on the scene and then to occupy a position that one isn't qualified for, that isn't satisfying" (p. 2). In the early 1980's the first recreational centers for senior citizens were opening and when a call went out in 1980 for a textile teacher for the first Centre in Reykjavík, Ragnheiður Anna saw this as an opportunity. "I preferred that because they asked for a textile teacher and I have my teacher qualifications. So it was better that way" (p. 2).

In reviewing the paid work other than teaching school, it seems that catering to the consumer who sews at home, teaching evening classes and making designs for publication, are the bulk of this work. The garment industry has not been a major source of income, both due to the low wages and to the fact that it has not developed extensively in Iceland. In the health sector textile teachers are not necessarily treated as professionals, which limits their involvement. On the other hand there are a variety of professional

opportunities within education other than teaching the specialization. This applies particularly to those teachers who have generalist as well as specialist qualifications.

### Summary

The interviews offer abundant evidence of the importance of textiles in the domestic sphere and how the teachers accept and even embrace this identification. But there is also some evidence for their belief in the relevance of their subject in industry and the national economy as seen in previous sections. Furthermore, their participation in the textile industry, health sector and adult education, private as well as public, should not be disregarded as insignificant even though it is not as extensive as that of their male counterparts in wood and metalwork.

Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir (b. 1916) said of her domestic school: "It was an excellent school, I learned a lot in literature..." (p. 2). It is interesting to note here that the claim for excellence is backed by reference to the academic subjects taught, and it follows a comment where Svanhvít admits that she has wondered whether she shouldn't have gone to grammar school instead of domestic school. These comments bring home the hegemonic view that excellence in education equals academic excellence. "Education is mostly understood as academic. Maybe it is because the entire nation had to survive by the practical skills. Then the worship of those who got educated and rose above the toil to become officials, became such that it overshadows everything" (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924, p. 23). The definite hierarchy of status and social class where manual work and subjects related with that are devalued is a constant source of grief. Guðrún

Ásbjörnsdóttir (b. 1959) speaks passionately of this problem: "Nobody gets the notion of wanting to work, you know to make something. I'm telling you they might as well amputate our arms at birth! It's like a handicap, nobody wants to learn to work and if you do you're daft or better still, you just can't, we're not offering that kind of education, it can't be done" (p. 26-27).

The question is of course, as Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) points out, not only that of some abstract status, it has to do with material reward for one's work. One of Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir's (b. 1940) male pupils shows his awareness of the low status and reward of textile work by complaining: "Why should I have to do this?! I'm going to be an astronomer, no knitting woman!" (p. 9). The hand knitters, which the boy accurately identifies as knitting women, are among the lowest paid workers in Icelandic society. They have no recognition of skill, there is no educational qualification needed to be a knitter. On the other hand, as an astronomer the boy would have had to pass several qualifications all adding to his status as an intellectual, and his wages would far surpass that of any 'knitting woman'.

Textile teachers are rightly concerned about the detrimental effect of the perception that the road to economic prosperity passes their subject. Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) explained what this means for the upper elementary pupil who has the opportunity to elect textile courses. "It is a question of how the electives are handled by the school, what influence does the classroom teacher exert, what influence is brought to bear when the pupil brings the elective sheet home and sits down with the parents to look into it. They

sit the girl down and tell her 'you should take typewriting, it would be good if you get an office job, and accounting is good, good to have some grounding in it. And German, you should have one more foreign language'. And that takes care of the electives" (p. 16-17). Given this it comes as no surprise that when there is a shortage of qualified teachers they are assigned to teaching academic subjects. "I think it is the perception of society in a nutshell. It's that much more important to learn math's or languages from a qualified teacher, anybody could teach this. There isn't that much at stake" (Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951, p. 16-17).

It might be argued that due to the emphasis on academic learning the vocational secondary option never thrived. There was no overwhelming demand for it and the schools did not necessarily support their vocational departments. "It was a vocational department in name. I never had them in peace, there were so few of them that I was always forced to take in kids from the academic program into the classes, so I never really had the opportunity to teach the vocational department pupils as such" (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932, p. 7). The vocational departments and schools were eventually taken over by the demand for academic education, which was always considered more important. "Excellent schools were destroyed because everyone had to get that matriculation exam. The damned academic snobbery with this nation is such in this society" (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924, p. 23). Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) doesn't mince words either in describing the attitude toward vocational departments. "The vocational departments were of course for the poor blockheads who couldn't learn by the book, that was crystal clear back then" (p. 4).

Textile teachers do battle with the perception that their subject is not intellectual and that it is particularly suitable for pupils who are low achievers. "Nobody brags about their child being illiterate, but it is a different matter if she can't thread a needle. It just shows her to be brainy. But I think it goes together, those who do well in one thing usually do well in the other" (Ragnheiður Thorarensen, b. 1935, p. 7). "It is a real shame that if someone lacks intelligence then it is assumed that he can learn crafts. Always like something negative about it. And perhaps those children who cannot learn much by the book are able to learn practical subjects like textiles, but they need much more time and assistance. Kids who are quick with the academics are quicker in the practical subjects too" (Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940, p. 13).

The view that the academic route is for the intelligent and that those who are not intelligent can only manage in practical subjects was internalized by Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir (b. 1939), who, after failing her National Exams lost all faith in her academic ability. When she returned to school ten years later she still had very little self esteem as a learner but "I thought I stood the best chance by going to the Textile Department. That I could possibly manage that. I had zero confidence when it came to academic subjects" (p. 3). On the note of internalizing the view that as a practical subject textiles is less prestigious than the academic subjects Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir (b. 1939) added this in reference to the relative isolation of the crafts departments within the Teachers' College. "We were really separate somehow. Maybe it is that ingrained inferiority complex people have about how much more remarkable it is to stutter by the book than to do something with your hands. And doubtless it is one's own fault. Because

there wasn't anybody who directly -- it just was like that" (p. 6). This is an interesting point: nobody directly put the subjects down, discrimination is a bit more nebulous than that.

However the discrimination was there: "There was always you know, just below the surface one could clearly see this distinction, the craft departments and the general department, you see, practical vs academic. And it wasn't as cool to be in the crafts as to be in the general department. And it is funny when I think of it, that on the first day I was so nervous and too self conscious to ask proper directions so I wandered into class with the wrong group. And I stayed with them for two days until I found out they were not the craft group and then I just scurried out of there in shame. It was as if there was an abyss separating these two groups although we were there doing an academic program like the rest of them" (Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939, p. 6). Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) remembers this feeling as well and it contributed to Ragna Þórhallsdóttir's (1950) decision not to train as a textile teacher when she first entered the Teachers' College.

What the teachers who went through the academic preparation program at the Teachers' College are referring to is that their background and preparation was valued differently than that of those who enrolled in the general program. Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) points out that she entered the college with secondary school certificate. The only difference was that she had gone through a vocational department rather than an academic department, but both amounted to four years of secondary school. The devaluation of the background of prospective craft teachers became even more pronounced when the The University College of Education was founded and the matriculation exam became the

only entrance requirement. Which in effect virtually guaranteed that entrants had no secondary school education in crafts. The inequity is not lost on textile teachers. "You wouldn't be admitted to university with elementary school certificate in math's or languages. But you are in this subject!" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 11). Given the way things developed within the Teachers' College and later The University College of Education, it is not surprising that veterans are battle weary. "Those who never should, have the most qualifications and degrees and here I am speaking of the The University College of Education lecturers among others. They had such boundless contempt for textiles that it was unbelievable. Such doctors and professors and what not, that half of it would suffice!" (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924, p. 23).

## CHAPTER 6: GENDER

This chapter is devoted to discussing the gendered relationship to the craft subjects. How men and women, boys and girls relate and are perceived to relate differently to textiles on one hand and wood and metalwork on the other. This issue has been touched upon in the previous chapters, but is here treated in more detail with reference to the interviews.

The emphasis is on difference, rather than likeness, as the interviews reveal difference far more strongly than the likeness. Nevertheless, there are features common to the craft curriculum communities irrespective of gender, but those have been treated in detail in chapters 4 and 5. Generally speaking both communities feel marginal within the education system as well as in society generally speaking. The teachers relate this marginality to a hierarchy of knowledges where the intellectual or textual is valued above the manual or physical. Just how these communities orient themselves in the space they occupy on the margins is gender related. It is this orientation that is the theme of this chapter.

The chapter is organized along gender relations: first, it details the relationship of males to a male defined subject; then it details how females relate to a male defined subject, how females relate to a female defined subject and last how males relate to a female defined subject.

## **Wood and Metalwork**

### Boys Among Men: The Childhood of Male Wood and Metalwork Teachers

Male wood and metalwork teachers were introduced to their subject at home by observing others build and repair tools and housing. In most cases they participated in such tasks as soon as possible, not only out of necessity, but also out of interest. Their play involved the crafts, they built and constructed from an early age (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913; Axel Jóhannesson, b.1918; Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Vignir B. Árnason, b.1934; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946; Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957). Playing at woodwork and construction was a boys' rather than girls' game. Ingimundur Ólafsson (b. 1913) recalls that when he and his friends built farms and farmhouses, the girls were their wives and maids. Girls could play, but on the boys' terms. Ásrún Tryggvadóttir (b. 1939) is one of the few women interviewed who used woodwork in her childhood games. She was proficient with a whittling knife and used this skill to make cars and trucks to buy her way into the boys' games. Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b. 1946) and his brothers liked to make cars and trucks and were also called upon to use their skills with the farm chores. His sisters had a less defined role in this respect. They were included in slapping together boxcars and doing crude stuff like that "but probably not as much when it came to the chores" (p.6).

Egill Strange (b. 1927), Svavar Jóhannesson (b.1933), Ingólfur G. Ingólfsson (b. 1941) and Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b. 1946) all had tradesmen among their role models in the home or immediate childhood environment. Egill Strange (b. 1927) is the son of a foreman in a machine shop. He remembers visiting his father's workshop as well as getting guidance and instruction with things such as bike repairs and making wooden toys at home. Ingólfur G.

Ingólfsson (b. 1941) learned much from his boatbuilder grandfather who lived with the family in his retirement. Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson's (1946) father was an upholsterer by trade and ran a workshop alongside farming. Júlíus often helped his father in the workshop and later his father was to take an active interest in his son's education in wood and metalwork. Svavar Jóhannesson's (b. 1933) father had previously been involved in woodwork and the tools were available to Svavar as a boy. It was a neighbour who ran a cabinetmaking workshop next door who provided an example and all the scrap material needed for Svavar's boyhood projects.

What all these men had in common was that as boys they were introduced to their craft by adult men in their home environment. Often they were relatives -- fathers, grandfathers, brothers -- but neighbours could be an inspiration as well. The tradition is that wood and metalwork skills were passed on to boys by adult men. However, there have always been exceptions to this gendered order. The instances where women taught crafts that were generally male dominated, or where boys were taught female dominated crafts, are unaccounted for. The popular wisdom does not include these and hence these experiences are lost from the collective memory. Consequently such cases were not the first thing that came to a teacher's mind during the interview. Usually the case was not attributed significance until later in the account and in some instances the recollection and recognition of its influence was met with surprise (Vignir B. Árnason, b. 1934, Egill Strange, b. 1927).

Vignir B. Árnason (b.1934) who was brought up in a rural setting for the most part, learned woodwork from his mother. She was a single parent who did "what had to be done for our home, mending our boots as well as our clothes" (p. 13). Vignir also used carving in his

games, such as building boats and carving birds out of haddock bone. The latter is a traditional craft in Iceland. While the gendered tradition accords more importance to male involvement in wood and metalwork, there are examples to show that women did participate to some extent, and were at times recognised as skilled craftswomen in this area (Ásrún Tryggvadóttir, b. 1939; Vignir B. Árnason, b. 1934).

The tradition of men handing wood- and metalwork skills down to boys was prevalent in schools, with the few exceptions mentioned above and in previous chapters (Egill Strange, b. 1927; Vignir B. Árnason, b. 1934). Wood- and metalwork teachers were near universally male and up until the 1970's their pupils were boys. Projects and techniques that the teachers were introduced to in school reflected the male point of view on the world. Boys' toys and tools such as boats and cars were ubiquitous. Small objects intended as gifts such as jewelry boxes and jewelry were named, and as the boys got older the projects got more substantial such as furniture and a wider variety of materials and techniques was introduced (Egill Strange, b. 1927; Þórir Sigurðsson, b. 1927; Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933, Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946; Guðvarður B. Halldórsson, b. 1957).

#### Entering An Existing Order: Girls and Women in Wood and Metalwork

The women who trained as wood and metalwork teachers had little or no exposure to the subject as children, neither at home nor at school. This lack of background is an issue that comes up in many interviews as an Achilles heel for women in the profession. None of the women interviewed had wood and metalwork as a school subject in elementary school, where it was compulsory only for boys. Only one, Hera Sigurðardóttir (b. 1960), had an introductory course in elementary school and another, Ólöf Kristín Einarisdóttir (b. 1960),

took an elective involving wood carving in secondary school. Another issue, but perhaps more important, is whether boys and girls, women and men relate to the subject in the same way, and whether the male dominated tradition is of interest to females. It is obvious from the interviews that despite the mandate for equal instruction, the female foothold in wood and metalwork is as tenuous as that of males in textiles, although the problems manifest themselves differently.

Female wood and metalwork teachers interviewed had little experience with wood and metalwork as children (Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir, b. 1953; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960; Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960). They described their entrance into wood and metalwork as serendipitous, rather than as a road reaching back into childhood. Even if family members were tradespeople, it did not necessarily mean that the girls in the family would observe or take part in the trade (Margrét Jóelsdóttir, b. 1944; Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir, b. 1953; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960). Although Hera Sigurðardóttir (b. 1960) remembered playing with wood cuttings as a child when her father did wood work as a hobby, she recalled only one instance where she and her father worked together on a project. She described her father as being very handy and said that he had taught her. This is in some respects similar to the experiences described by her male colleagues, except that the extent of the participation as she described it was far less. Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir (b. 1960) doesn't recall much woodwork in her environment either and nothing that she worked on by herself. Her father did repairs around the house and on the family car and she was recruited as his helper: "I was used as the boy" (p. 1). When she wanted to enter the carpentry trade, Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir (b. 1953) was discouraged by her grandfather who was a carpenter,.

### **The Introduction of Wood- and Metalwork as a School Subject for Girls**

In the 1970's girls and women demanded instruction in wood and metalwork from principals and educational authorities at the local and national level. The incentive came near exclusively from girls and women. It was common for girls in the upper elementary grades, to make formal and informal requests to teachers and principals for instruction in wood and metalwork. They met with varying degrees of resistance. (Bryndís Björgvinsdóttir, b.1957; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b.1959; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b.1960; Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960). A case from the period, 1972-75, was that of "flat refusal, it was out of the question" (Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960, p. 1). Bryndís Björgvinsdóttir (b. 1957) tried to take matters into her own hands by pestering the wood and metalwork teacher to allow her into the wood and metalwork studio. She was unsuccessful. During the transitional stage some schools offered short introductory courses as in this case: "And after much discouragement and dissuasion we got one or two lessons in wood and metalwork" (Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960, p. 1). This would have been in 1973, just before the education act of 1974, which mandated equal education for all, was passed.

Many wood and metalwork teachers were favourably disposed toward teaching their subject to girls. Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) recalls that the issue of wood and metalwork for girls wasn't discussed at the school and the equal instruction mandate implemented late by single sex grouping in crafts. Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b. 1946) was interested in offering instruction to girls as well as boys and approached the textile teachers at his school with the idea to swap pupils to create a short introductory course in grade 6. I asked him why and he replied: "Why we did this? It was my idea, I don't know what my motivation was! I just thought it was

stupid the way it was" (p. 14). The teachers agreed without much discussion that this was worth trying out and it was fine with the school principal, it seemed like no big deal.

The attitude of most wood and metalwork teachers toward the inclusion of girls, was that it was not a problem. The general impression that wood and metalwork teachers gave of girls entering the subject was that it made no difference. It was business as usual, if not better.

"You know, I haven't heard from a wood and metalwork teacher who has had trouble with including the girls. Absolutely not" (Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946, p. 21). He was the wood and metalwork consultant to the ministry of education and maintained close contact with his colleagues around the country so he would have heard. Vignir B. Árnason (b. 1934) said "I don't recall any discussion, except it was absolutely accepted. We thought, most of us I think, even the older ones, that it was fine for kids to learn or to be introduced to both subjects so that as far as I recall, primarily so that they would experience different materials. And not least due to this discussion in society that people should learn to be equal" (p. 15).

The wisdom of the equal instruction mandate was questioned, but these questions were aimed at the implementation of it rather than the basic premise of equal education. To implement the mandate the instruction time per pupil was cut by 50%. At first the grouping of pupils was in many cases according to gender, but eventually co-educational grouping became the norm (Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1913, Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946). The perceived cut to allotment was a cut from the time spent with the pupils that the teachers saw as their constituency. Having the girls in wood and metalwork was one thing and acceptable in itself, but losing so much time with the boys was unacceptable. Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b. 1946) said of his colleagues "They were absolutely ready to take in the girls and teach them, the

majority was, that was quite all right. But they really resented the cut in instruction time. Resented it, the only complaints were not to be able to continue with the boys full time" (p. 20).

Ingimundur Ólafsson (b. 1913) felt that while the mandate added to the breadth of the pupil experience, it reduced the level of proficiency attainable in the craft subjects. Ingimundur stated that this caused a conflict between the craft teachers and the educational authorities. In addition wood and metalwork teachers faced the problem that their new pupils had no background in the subject: "The boys on the other hand had got much exposure to things and use of tools, equipment and materials at home that the girls had no experience of" (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913, p. 12). Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b.1946) is an example of this. As a 13-14 year old he was allowed to work unsupervised in the woodwork studio of his school. The teacher probably correctly assumed that the boy already had experience with such equipment from home. Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) speaks of male pupils with considerable experience: "For instance those who had watched their parents, or their dad" (p. 21). The very experienced and skilled pupil in wood and metalwork is likely to be a male.

When asked whether there was any difference between boys and girls in wood and metalwork the teachers tended to interpret the question in terms of pupil achievement and be quick to deny that there was any difference. The reputation that the girls have in wood and metalwork is good. Their teachers perceive them as industrious and meticulous workers. Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) said of the first girls' groups he taught: "They had more definite wishes about what they wanted to do. The boys were a bit more flighty. They had to be there, it was a compulsory subject for them. On the other hand it was a novelty for the girls and

sometimes they had greater ambitions than the boys, to make it in this subject" (p. 20-21).

Vignir B. Árnason (b.1934) teaches at the upper elementary level with pupils 13-16 years old and in his opinion girls do better in wood and metalwork, which he attributes to their general maturity compared with boys at this stage.

I asked the teachers if they had made any adaptations to their program to accommodate the girls, for example by changes to the projects they set, but they had not. Egill Strange (b. 1927) didn't think the subject changed with the presence of girls. "Nothing changed. They enter into everything and hold up their end 100%. They achieve no less, absolutely not" (p. 18). "No it is just the same to teach girls as boys. I don't find any difference, they are just as good at it as boys. Even show more care and craftsmanship" (Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933, p. 15). "Many of the girls are more meticulous and careful when it comes to the finishing touches. I'm not trying to praise the girls or put the boys down, but they often take more care" (Egill Strange, b. 1927, p. 18). He puts this down to natural gender difference, the delicate sex "Although there are of course exceptions, absolute shrews" (p. 18).

What adaptations were made had to do with the lack of time to practice the craft. Ingimundur Ólafsson (b. 1913) felt that this had required paring the subject down to the basics. When he had described how this had affected the boys, I asked what it meant for girls, and what the basics were that they had to be taught. "It was, I remember when I was working with the girls that we were training them in sawing and in general to use the common tools, use a saw, and a mitre, use a knife, a file and the most common equipment. It was of course useful for them to some extent, undoubtedly" (p. 12). While Vignir B. Árnason (b. 1934) and Egill Strange (b. 1927) did not feel that the inclusion of girls meant major changes to their program, they

agreed that for the first years teaching became a little more difficult for they received mixed groups. Girls had no background in the subject, while the boys had been in wood and metalwork through elementary school.

Over time, some of the teachers had perceived a difference in boys' and girls' preferences in the subject; that is they choose different projects and emphasize different aspects of the subject. Svavar Jóhannesson (b. 1933) said that his female students have a keener eye for good finishing. He had also kept track of which projects were more popular with one gender than the other. Of the designs he offers his pupils, only boys have chosen to build a computer desk, whereas girls choose a design for a small sidetable for plants, a child's rocking horse and a small chest or jewellery box. Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) also mentioned that girls had a different outlook when it came to choosing projects. He felt they were more certain about what they wanted to make and that it was usually something they needed. Egill Strange (b. 1927) teaches at the secondary level where students are in the 16-20 age group, and for him the gendered difference in choice of projects is not as apparent. Most of his students are interested in furnishing their first flat by making a bed, table or chairs.

There have always been doubts about whether the craft subjects are equally valid for boys and girls. The gendered image of the curriculum communities is so strong that the teachers often referred to textile teachers as 'the women' (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913; Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946). The wisdom of totally disregarding traditional gendered distinctions was called into question and such questions are posed anew in a climate of increased attention to and acceptance of gender difference (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1942). Ingimundur Ólafsson (b. 1913) wasn't

sure that the girls entering his classes identified with the subject. "I felt that many of the girls, they didn't regard this, their work in the wood and metalwork class as naturally their subject. They took the crafts with their teacher in sewing and such as their subject. I noticed this a bit. But of course there were always girls, the odd one that had a great interest, worked well, worked exceptionally well" (p. 12). This remark is in many ways typical for the discourse -- a tentative comment on difference is followed by a disclaimer stressing that there are exceptions.

The wood and metalwork teachers became self conscious about this topic. The possibility that girls might not identify with the subject was not one easily approached in the interview. Their comments were guarded and in some cases indicated that they didn't know whether it was appropriate for them to comment on the subject, particularly when it came to andy views females might have on the subject. In some cases they suggested that I would be more knowledgeable about this (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Egill Strange, b. 1927; Svavar Jóhannesson, b.1933; Guðvarður B. Halldórsson, b. 1957).

### Women as Wood and Metalwork Teachers

There are particular issues regarding gender in teacher training in the crafts. While no male person has entered the training program in textiles, many women have trained as wood and metalwork teachers. This is in keeping with the proportion of female students in teacher training which fluctuates between 70-80%. Women born before the mid-sixties rarely had wood and metalwork as a school subject, which means that most of the women who have gone through the training program entered with little or no background.

Guðvarður Halldórsson (b. 1957) trained in a group including women and men. When I asked whether it had been an issue that the men and women in the program had different backgrounds he replied, "No. Well, I don't take that position" (p. 7). His argument was that it made little difference whether one had taken the subject in elementary school or not. Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir (b. 1960) recalls that some of her male classmates had very little background in the subject, although there was no mention of this creating particular problems. Ingólfur G. Ingólfsson (b. 1941) suggested that the lack of background, which is a disadvantage for female student teachers, may be in other respects an advantage. Belonging to the tradition can inhibit rather than enable teachers to think about their subject in a new light. Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b. 1946) also tends to downplay the absolute advantage of prior wood and metalwork experience and believes that the experience that women bring from other art and craft areas transfers to wood and metalwork.

I asked whether men and women had a different outlook on the subject and Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b. 1946) commented that in teacher training, "I think men enter because of some familiarity with the subject, but the women out of some need or desire" (p. 25). The experiences of the female wood and metalwork teachers interviewed support this idea. They all had a strong interest in the subject but had few opportunities to pursue that interest until they entered teacher training (Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir, b. 1953; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960; Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960; Þórunn Árnadóttir, b. 1939). There is an interesting paradox here: on the one hand, the women desire wood and metalwork, but on the other hand they are not familiar with the subject. This leaves room for different interpretations. The subject, the traditional and the desired are not necessarily the same. When explaining why they were attracted to the subject the women tended to speak of the sensory qualities of the

materials, rather than what they made or whether they perceived themselves as good at wood and metalwork.

I asked the women directly what had attracted them to the teacher training program in wood and metalwork because they were less forward with that information than the men, who tended to explain it in terms of their boyhood. Hera Sigurðardóttir (b. 1960) said: "I just wanted to do manual labour of some kind, you see, something heavy and industrial like. And then there was the smell of timber that always wafted out of the wood and metalwork studios" (p. 2). "I have always loved to, I had done some carving and just loved to hang around the workshop because I like being around timber. It is primal somehow, haven't you felt it yourself, don't you love the timber a little bit, the smell of wood?" (Þórunn Árnadóttir, b. 1939, p. 14). Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir (b. 1953) had developed a strong interest in woodwork and entered the teacher training program because it was the only available option to pursue her interest. Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir (b. 1960) tells a similar story; her only encounter with the subject was an elective in carving at secondary level. "*Why did you want to go into carpentry?* Just because I wanted to do some manual work" (Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960, p. 2-3). The interviews also suggest that the desire for wood and metalwork was in some cases at least a more general wish for something other than the tried and traditionally female pursuit of textiles (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Bryndís Björgvinsdóttir, b. 1957; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960; Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960).

Upon entering the training program and subsequently teaching, the women felt a certain mismatch between the subject they desired and the subject as it was presented. The most obvious signal is that very few women enter and fewer still remain in wood and metalwork

teaching. "There was no attempt in the program to appeal to us women, nor was there any discussion about the issue that girls were to be present as well as boys in the subject. But I think that when it comes to achievement we did just as well as the men. And then again one asks oneself how come that this is not reflected in the profession? Why have the women dropped out? Some from my class for instance started teaching, but there are not many left" (Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir, b. 1953, p. 6). Hera Sigurðardóttir (b. 1960) and Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir (b. 1960) agree that few of the women remain as wood and metalwork teachers. Hera is the only one among the women interviewed who has constantly taught the subject since graduation.

There are no definite answers offered in the interviews as to why women do not last as wood and metalwork teachers. One suggestion was made repeatedly, that physically the work might be too difficult for a woman. "It is often very heavy, hard physical labour. One gets the timber almost intact and it is quite heavy even if one is strong to log it around, cut it down and store it" (Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960, p. 6). Tools, equipment and the modules that materials are delivered in are ergonomically more suitable for the average male than for females and children. Schools buy materials in large modules or units; for instance, plywood is delivered to schools in whole sheets that the teacher then cuts down for storage. The sheets are too big for a medium to short woman to maneuver easily. This means that it is difficult and potentially dangerous for the woman to put the sheet through a table saw on her own. The solution to this problem has been getting help from husbands and brothers on evenings and weekends (Ólöf Kristín Jónsdóttir, b. 1960; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960).

While both men and women agree that their preparation for teaching left much to be desired, the women seem to have found it harder to overcome this as they feel less competent in the subject. Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir (b. 1960, p. 8) entered the profession as a classroom teacher with a part time allotment in wood and metalwork, feeling anxious due to the perceived deficiency in her background. Ólöf enjoyed the generalist teaching position more than the wood and metalwork as she felt better prepared and competent in the classroom than the workshop. She now teaches general classroom in primary grades. Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir (b. 1953) said of her teaching experience: "I lacked confidence...I was of course not a man and men were somehow supposed to know all this, both in terms of the machines, although I could manage. But I just realized that this wasn't what I wanted, I wanted something smaller, more delicate projects but wasn't secure with that somehow" (p. 5-6). Because she didn't manage to develop her personal rationale for the subject and its relevance her relationship with pupils and her teaching experience suffered. Although in some respects well prepared and competent, Helga Pálína did not feel confident in her role as a wood and metalwork teacher and more importantly, did not enjoy it. "All in all I couldn't see myself continuing, to make this my life's work. I just felt that it didn't fit me, and perhaps not as a woman" (p. 6). She opted out of the field by entering a textile arts program in Finland.

The difficulties that women have as wood and metalwork teachers are compounded by lack of collegial relations. Although there is no evidence of hostility or conscious withholding of support from their male colleagues, the women prefer to seek assistance from each other or from family members. Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir's (b. 1960) more experienced male colleagues offered advice and support, but she was too self-conscious about her need for it to

feel comfortable in her novice position. I asked her how she had coped with difficulties on the job. "There were few options really, few to turn to. The other teachers or just nobody. *Did you find it easy to turn to them?* No, I didn't feel particularly comfortable with it" (p. 9).

Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir (b. 1953) entered teaching in a situation similar to that of Ólöf Kristín, where there was an experienced male colleague. She recalls feeling intimidated and insecure in her ability to teach the subject and not confident to seek support.

Hera Sigurðardóttir (b. 1960) has been from the beginning the only wood and metalwork teacher at her school and she prefers to turn to other women, some of her male classmates from teacher training or her family for support rather than to experienced male colleagues. In her interactions with one in particular she expects him to be thinking "'hmrp, a woman wood and metalwork teacher'" (p. 8). She suspects that there are tacit assumptions at work, for instance, that it becomes more of an issue if she confuses the names of materials than if a male colleague made such a mistake. Her solution has been to join up with a female colleague for inservice and evening courses in wood work to increase her competence, as well as to meet informally with a group of female wood and metalwork teachers in her area to discuss professional matters.

Although most wood and metalwork teachers believed that the subject had not changed with the inclusion of females, there are some signs that women wood and metalwork teachers approach the subject in a way that differs from the tradition. Women voiced and were attributed certain reservations about the usefulness of wood working machines so the reliance upon these may diminish as women enter teaching. Also, projects are smaller and include more than wood work, such as metalwork and leatherwork. There is also more attention to

taking the children through the entire design process rather than production of a design provided by the teacher. It should be noted that these changes relate not only to the changed gender definition of the subject, but also to the presence of more child centered curricula in general and the change in time allotment in the subject. (Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960; Ingólfur G. Ingólfsson, b. 1941; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946; Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Þórir Sigurðsson, b. 1927).

### Boys' Toys? Equipment and Facilities in Wood and Metalwork

The issue of equipment, facilities and power tools in the school arose in most interviews with wood and metalwork teachers. The acquisition and maintenance of workshop facilities and equipment is a major theme in their working life. There is the question whether this equipment supports the goals and objectives of an elementary wood and metalwork program. The machines are mainly used to cut down material for students' projects and also for the teacher to assist the student by executing the more difficult tasks. The question is whether these machines denote an overemphasis on cabinet making at a level of complexity above the students' ability, and thereby a focus that is too narrow and too vocational to be appropriate for the elementary school. Safety is also an issue, both the safety of students in the studio where such equipment is employed and the safety of the teacher, particularly those whose training in carpentry and cabinet making is limited.

An interesting theme came up in the discussion of facilities and equipment -- that of the wood and metalwork teacher as fighter in the system. Some of the male wood and metalwork teachers had been engaged in virtually a lifelong battle of acquisition with the administration. As in any other warfare, there is an element of heroism which accounts for a few battle tales

in the interviews. Egill Strange (b. 1927) was describing how the facilities for teaching had been at his school: "I'm really fussy, terribly fussy and particular, I'm difficult to work with, maybe because I have definite opinions on everything. Fierce, damned fierce. *You wanted to change the facilities?* And did. And was permitted. Yes. It improved a great deal" (p. 4). "I never settle for next to nothing as some do. I don't, it is not enough" (Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933, p. 14). There is a definite note of pride in the attitude toward the equipment and facilities, where achievement is a victory in a constant struggle with school and municipal administration. "If you don't ask for the thing and push really hard for it and use all measures to get it, you will never get it, nothing is ever gained without pushing for it" (Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933, p. 21).

One is tempted to ask whether the one who has more tools at the end of the day wins? "One has a workshop in the basement here at home and is particular, damned particular when it comes to tools, obsessed with tools" (Egill Strange, b. 1927, p. 4). His colleague Svavar Jóhannesson (b. 1933) suggests that "Maybe I have been too pushy here, but I've always found that I was ahead of everyone else with the equipment. I don't know, but I doubt that any school around has a power sander, I doubt it. When I started at Lækjarskoli there were of course no machines so one started by getting the machinery. I think I was the first one to get a plane, well I wouldn't have got it if I hadn't bought it myself and used it for 2-3 years before the purchase was approved. It was the same at this school, there was no plane until I came in 1983. Then I went home and got my own and used it here for 2 years while I waited for the money. If I had owned a sander I would have brought it too, but I just didn't have one" (p. 14).

Those who did not enjoy good and improving facilities sound apologetic. Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) taught at a school where the wood and metalwork studio burned down and rebuilding took a long time and was never adequately completed: "It wasn't funded, the equipment or facilities, maybe I was soft on it" (p. 10-11). The balance between being soft and being pushy is not obvious, and the flip side of the coin is superfluous equipment. Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) recalls that in one of the schools there was a piece of equipment that really never was of any use for it was too big and potentially dangerous as well as inappropriate to the program. Hera Sigurðardóttir (b. 1960 ) questions the usefulness of the machinery: "I have a machine here worth half a million krónur, maybe there is too much money put into it" (Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960, p. 6).

While the women agree that machinery is useful for preparing material for pupils, they question how much of the wood and metalwork teacher's workload should be devoted to that. Hera Sigurðardóttir (b. 1960) suggests that it would be appropriate to buy more pre-cut material rather than take time from instruction and preparation, such as project designs and lesson planning to saw and plane wood. On the emphasis on equipment and facilities Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir said: "It's just one of the effects of this policy or lack of policy that there's this tendency to buy major equipment, lots of stuff and then it sits there. And it's just this one wood and metalwork teacher or whoever is in charge that gets to use it but I don't want to be a wood and metalwork teacher who is just a machine operator" (p. 6-7).

Svavar Jóhannesson (b.1933) believes that today it is even more important than before to teach students to handle power tools as many will use such tools at home, where electric drills and handheld electric saws are commonplace. Svavar says that one can get more results

by using tools and machinery but nobody becomes a carpenter through that alone.

Nevertheless, even the clumsy will get better results with good equipment than bad equipment in his opinion. The reason for the emphasis on the use of machinery is that he believes that students should become as independent as possible without the teacher constantly having to pitch in to do tasks they cannot handle. To achieve this end "I teach them quite systematically to operate these machines. The projects I offer are based on the machines, so to speak"(p. 12).

A more detailed description of pupils' use of power tools reveals more about the program and the attainment of its goals. At the age of 13 they move into machine work by making the compulsory project of a shelf. In the project they use the power plane or leveller to achieve the desired thickness of the board used for the shelf. While the aim is that they should be working independently, "I cut the corner at a straight angle for them, then they cut it down to size and use the plane. That way they can do it for themselves, almost" (p. 13). Another colleague feels that there are limits to what kind of machinery is appropriate in the school. His solution to the problem of correcting mistakes is to take the project home and fix it in his own workshop as his machines are better (Egill Strange, b.1927, p. 12). So even with access to the power equipment, independence for the pupil is not necessarily attained.

The women raise the point that reliance on the machinery can be counterproductive in attaining the curriculum goal of making pupils able to construct an object independently. "I'm not sure that it is necessarily such a great thing to be very clever with the machines. Maybe it saves time on preparing the material but I think one is not as tempted to finish the projects for the kids or to set projects that are too difficult for them" (Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960, p.

5). Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir (b. 1953) shares such reservations, adding that as the average person does not have access to woodworking machines, hence the program cannot rely on them. And she feels that the machinework threatens what she sees as the core rationale for the subject -- to teach children that they can use their hands.

Fear was a term that frequently came up in the comments on machinery, particularly when women's attitude to machinery was described. Girls were even said to be afraid of the sewing machine (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932). A healthy fear of the equipment is safe, for many tradesmen suffer injuries that could be avoided by a more cautious approach to power tools. Fear is also an impediment: students and teachers could suffer to the point that they were hindered in their work. It was generally accepted that in order to use the equipment in schools safely and competently, substantial training is necessary. Even the trained carpenter is not proficient until after years of experience (Egill Strange, b. 1927; Ingólfur G. Ingólfsson, b. 1941; Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919). The older generation of wood and metalwork teachers, that is those who trained exclusively as teachers of the subject and entered training from the trades or from a vocational secondary stream, have an advantage over their younger colleagues in this respect. The entrance requirements for teacher training no longer include wood and metalwork courses at the secondary level. There was a commonly expressed feeling that women were especially disadvantaged when it came to preparation and experience.

Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b. 1946) is confident that many of the female student teachers will succeed as teachers but notes that in terms of machinery: "they are, they are probably, probably warier and more frightened. But not many to the extent that it becomes

insurmountable. Although there are cases, occasionally you see individuals who are always dithering" (p. 25). Egill Strange (b. 1927) notes this too "They are more scared sometimes if they have to do things like use a power saw, a band saw or jigsaw, they are often more scared of that. It is just their characteristic. And then I just demonstrate and let them do it. They are just scared, these are just things that they haven't done before and hasn't been acceptable for them to do, which is at the back of some of their minds still" (p. 19). When asked about the notion that women fear the woodworking machinery Hera Sigurðardóttir (b. 1960) responded "Yes, one has heard this. It is something one has to get over. Girls or women do not approach the machines with the same mindset as men do" (p. 6). Hera feels that this is due to upbringing and previous work experience which grants men more access to tools and machinery than women.

Although the problem is visible to both men and women, instructors and pupils, the problem is rarely discussed openly. I asked the women if the problems women seemed to have in dealing with the machines were addressed in teacher training. "No. I didn't feel that it was. I don't know if the instructors acknowledged the problem, I don't think they realized. You were just thrown in. It was a certain foundation, but to be scared of the machines was just not acknowledged. One didn't draw attention to that, one just did it" (Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960, p. 6). While one extreme seems to be to ignore this anxiety and lack of experience, the other is to overemphasize the weakness of females in this regard.

When Ólöf Kristín Jónsdóttir (b.1960) entered the wood and metalwork teacher training program, her instructor decided that for the first year the women in the program were not prepared to use the woodworking machinery. He and their male fellow students would have

to execute all machine related tasks for the women: "So we missed out on a whole year of training although some of the boys didn't have much more experience than we did" (p. 3).

When she entered teaching this had negative consequences, for although the senior wood and metalwork teacher wanted to be supportive, his emphasis on using machines in the program meant that she experienced stress in her weakest area in the subject. The problem that Ólöf Kristín had with teaching the subject can only partly be traced to the issue of machinery for she successfully used such equipment out of school, as at the time she was building a house. She didn't feel as anxious using power tools on the building site among her family because the situation was non-threatening compared to school.

While there is a general awareness of the risk of injury the response varies between acceptance and avoidance of the risk "I have been lucky in that there has never been an accident with me, fortunately. But it has come close, I have to admit to that. The thing is that in this as in everything one takes a certain risk" (Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933, p. 13). On the note of taking risks, Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b.1946) recalls that his elementary wood and metalwork teacher let him and another friend use the woodworking area unsupervised two mornings a week for two years: "We were 13-14 years old and we stood there alone turning wood at the lathe ... He was in my mind damned daring" (p. 2). What is being risked goes without saying in most interviews. The risk of injury or even the death of a child in a teacher's care or that of a teacher in the presence of children is not worded but implied. Ólöf Kristín Einarisdóttir (b. 1960) comes close to wording it when she talks of her work in the wood and metalwork studio "I didn't use the machines much during class, but they loved to watch me when I did. And one was of course scared like shit!" (p. 6). For Sigurður Úlfarsson (b.1919) the risk is a cause for serious concern. He talks candidly of the risk of injury and

how it has risen with the decrease in time spent in training. He said that his biggest fear was for the safety of teachers and pupils in a situation where an inexperienced teacher surrounded by pupils in class makes a decision on the spot about using the machinery.

The issue of equipment and facilities had a gendered dimension. Men and women had not only differing experiences, but also different views. A certain kind of manliness was associated with the machinery, which made those men and women who did not identify with this image uncomfortable. The male wood and metalwork teachers assumed personal responsibility for the adequacy of the facilities they teach in, and the degree to which they fight for improvement in this area emerges as a reflection of their professionalism. The dominant perception is that a good wood and metalwork teacher stands up to the administration, demands and gets more equipment and facilities. This perception is questioned, particularly by the women in the profession, who do not share the male experience with tools and equipment and earnestly ask whether they should.

## **Textiles**

### The Order of Industriousness: Girls and Women in Textiles

At home and at school it was commonly assumed that the average female would industriously apply herself to textiles out of interest as well as obligation. For most families a degree of self sufficiency in clothing the members and decorating the home has been necessary. Textile crafts were a legitimate leisure activity, even for women with little time for leisure, because it was practical as well as a source of pride and pleasure. Vigdís Pálsdóttir's (b. 1924) description of her aunt reflects the dual purpose of textile work. The aunt was "very

proficient and industrious and spun the finest yarn, and she was continuously knitting socks for sale. Embroidered for pleasure and leisure, because the other stuff was just daily labour, and it was mostly roses. She had this terrible desire for beauty but her circumstances made it hard to fulfil" (p. 26).

During winter nights the traditional rural household was engaged in wool production. Children played alongside the adults working. The clicking of knitting needles, din of the spinning wheels, the swishing of the shuttle across the loom and later the clatter of knitting machines were sounds of childhood. In this atmosphere the children learnt a variety of textile techniques at an early age. In childhood Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir (b. 1939) observed the same process as Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir (b. 1916) had nearly a quarter century before -- wool production from shearing the sheep through to the finished garment. "I was brought up in a home where a lot of things were made by hand. I come from such families on both sides that it is just everyday work to construct all kinds of things and to knit and sew, basically to design and make whatever it was you needed" (Elínbjört Jónsdóttir, b. 1947, p. 1). The teachers mentioned that people had different roles in the textile production, women spun on the wheel and did all the sewing, while anyone could knit.

Women made the clothes for their families, knitted socks, mitts and underwear and saved anything from plain skirts to ball gowns for their daughters (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916; Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924). Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir (b. 1942) notes that in her childhood after the war, a shortage of commercial goods forced women to be self sufficient. Hallfríður recalls that in 1954, as a twelve year old, she knitted a sweater for her youngest sister. Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir's (b. 1948) earliest memories are of her mother at the sewing machine and

fitting the children's clothes, asking them to choose the colours and cut of their clothing. Þóra Lovísa Friðleifsdóttir (b. 1952) talks of the aesthetic dimension to her mother's work "Mother didn't, I never recall her drawing anything, but she was very, phenomenally industrious, sewed a lot and of course she was remaking a lot of clothes from old as was done back then, so she designed the patterns and created the clothes herself" (p. 2). Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) recalls her mother doing textile crafts for pleasure as well as practical purposes, she knit woolen sweaters for sale as well as crocheting and embroidering items for her home.

The textile work had a social function for it was common, particularly before the introduction of television, to pass time in the evenings by doing textiles. The family often gathered to listen to the radio "I have really sweet memories of this" (Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951, p. 1). This was also a common way to spend the evening at the Women's Domestic Schools and residential elementary schools (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Vignir B. Árnason, b. 1934; Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940; Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1942; Elínbjört Jónsdóttir, b. 1947, Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959). This tradition of women working on textiles in their leisure time has continued after the introduction of television as many women knit while they watch. "I find it necessary to have some project going. It is also, I think because of how I was brought up in never being idle. I remember mother often telling me this, after I learned to knit it bothered her greatly to see me doing nothing" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p. 19).

Another institution of socializing related to textiles is the sewing bee. Many Icelandic women belong to at least one sewing bee, if not more. Doing textiles is not the only, or even the primary function. The sewing bee is a way to make the commitment to stay in touch with a

group of female friends by meeting, usually once a month, at each others house. The sewing bee may be formed in elementary school, often in professional training or domestic school, or at a workplace, or even by women who met through an evening course in textiles -- and it continues to meet for years (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940; Margrét Jóelsdóttir, b. 1944; Ragna Þórhallsdóttir, b. 1950; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959).

Grandmothers were named as a significant influence, they often had time and space where learning could take place in a leisured manner. The time spent with grandmother was special and her place a special place, associated with peace and quiet application to some task (Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940; Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1942; Bryndís Björgvinsdóttir, b. 1957). Ásrún Tryggvadóttir (b. 1939) talks of her grandmother's boxes full of fabric scraps, thread, buttons etc as a treasure trove. The sensation of different materials, their smell, their texture and colour was an inspiration for her as a child. The memory of the feel and look of fabric is related by Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) who remembers her grandmother's chest of carefully stored bundles of fabric left over from gowns commissioned from seamstresses. Having access to these was a privilege. It was a treasure for a girl whose favourite pastime was making dolls' clothes.

Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir (b. 1916) remember that she and her sister also used textile techniques in their play, by making dolls' clothes, "because we wanted the dolls to be stylish" (p.2).

Making doll's clothes seems to have been a common pastime (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1942; Þóra Lovísa Friðleifsdóttir, b. 1952; Helga Pálína Brynjólfsson, b. 1953; Bryndís Björgvinsdóttir, b. 1957). Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) recalls that the first thing she made was a pair of knickers for her doll. At the age seven she

went away for the summer holidays with a box full of clothes she had sewn for her doll. In adolescence she was still very interested in making doll's clothes, but the emphasis had shifted to experimenting with how fabric and pattern interacted and, for example, figuring out how to cut a pattern so that the seat of trousers would fit.

In some cases girls were encouraged to take up textiles by presenting them with a task, such as an embroidery kit (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1942; Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948). Embroidery had very specific gender connotations for Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir (b. 1959). When I asked her about her first involvement with textiles she laughed and said that this was quite a story: "The first memory I have of myself touching any textile work really grew out of some trouble. Mother thought I was too much of a tomboy and that the company I kept definitely not good enough, definitely not. One day when her sister was visiting she was grumbling over this, saying that she was at the end of her tether when I came home dirty and smelly from digging in the trashcans with the boys. And then her sister, who is a great textile worker, she threw her the question whether she had taught me to knit or provided any textile work for me" (p.1). Auntie took charge of the situation and set the seven year old Guðrún to work. Thereby she had found the work that became a passion and later a vocation. She became so interested in textiles that her girlfriends thought she was peculiar -- to sit and sew rather than come outside and skip rope or play tag! The boys dropped out of the story at this point.

While some of the women interviewed had an unusually avid interest and opportunities, most of them had plenty of experience with textiles, particularly sewing and dressmaking at home. Typical comments from the women who did not pursue textiles vocationally come from art

teachers who mention in passing as a given that as adolescents and young women they made their own clothes (Ingunn Erna Stefánsdóttir, b. 1947, p.8; Þóra Lovísa Friðleifsdóttir, b. 1952, p. 3, Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir, b. 1953, p. 1). Bryndís Björgvinsdóttir (b. 1957) said, "Well, I wasn't about to press it and pin it all down neatly and precisely according to a pattern" (p. 4). The issue of having it all "pressed and pinned down" according to pattern is significant here as two distinct approaches to the making of clothes were described. On the one hand, the more meticulous, pre-planned approach where a pattern is used faithfully and conventions of cutting, sewing and finishing are honoured as a skilful and solid way of accomplishing the task. On the other hand, there is a more carefree and spontaneous approach, where the pattern is used as a basic guide rather than template, and the whole process subject to experimentation. The former approach was favoured in the school curriculum both in elementary school and particularly in the Women's Domestic Schools and in textile teacher training. The latter approach was a more private venture and often tolerated at home only as long as there was no harm done, no material wasted, and the machine treated well (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940; Þóra Lovísa Friðleifsdóttir, b. 1952; Helga Pálína Brynjólfsdóttir, b. 1953; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959).

For most of the women their introduction into textiles was a seamless process of assuming the work and leisure that the women around them engaged in. Learning textile crafts at home, the experience of many is economically summed up by Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir (b. 1940) "I learned to knit when I was about eight years old. Mother and grandmother did a lot of textiles. I was used to it" (p.1). The example of Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir brings forward the assumption that went unspoken in other cases: that doing textile work is integral to proper

femininity. As girls they had observed women in their childhood home making clothes and household items and using textile crafts as a leisure activity. The first textile endeavours were commonly part of a girl's play, making dolls' clothes was common. In other cases, a task such as embroidery or knitting was set by an adult friend or family member. In most cases the task was set in response to expressed interest by the girl.

### **At School**

Homework was a substantial factor in the progress of pupils, and it was generally accepted that mothers had a duty to supervise their daughters. One teacher describes her teaching situation: "Girls did an incredible amount of homework and the leading ladies of the town really kept their daughters at it" (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932, p. 7). Most girls could rely on female family members or friends for help if they encountered problems with their textile projects outside class. Not only were the techniques commonly known, but older family members might have done the same projects when they went through school. Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) was explicit about the need to involve the home if her students wanted to embark upon extensive dressmaking projects. She demanded that "there would be someone at home who could help if they were stumped or unable to finish on time" (p. 12).

While the help extended at home was generally within reasonable limits, there was always the suspicion that some mothers carried out the textile homework for their daughters. In the interview, many of the women felt the need to emphasize that the women who helped them **did not** do the work for them. Ragna Þórhallsdóttir (b. 1950) says about the help that she got at home, that it was "not as in some cases where the mothers got the marks in textiles, not in my case, I wanted to do it all by myself" (p. 2). Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir (b. 1953) did not

do well in textiles in elementary school, and she thinks it was because the other girls had mothers who did a lot of the work for them. "The girls were constantly on about how good my mother was at sewing and of course they thought she did the work for me. But of course she didn't" (Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1942, p. 2). This constant distrust often hurt, as in the case of Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) whose teacher accused her of presenting her mother's work as a free embroidery project because it was too well done. She is still shocked 30 years later. Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir (b. 1959) came under suspicion by her classmates when she completed a dressmaking assignment at home with her mother's supervision, but she told me with emphasis "I was really hurt for **every single** stitch was mine!" (p. 5). Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) maintains that despite her interest and various projects at home she didn't do exceptionally well in textiles at school because she wasn't very diligent with the homework. She did get good grades though, and recalls that girls were competitive about their marks in the subject.

The demands for quality and the difficulty of the projects was such that it can safely be assumed that many mothers helped out at home (Sólveig Helga Jónasdóttir, b. 1945; Ragna Þórhallsdóttir, b. 1950; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1957).

The demand for a flawless product often came up in the memories of textiles as a school subject. Girls were taught that nothing short of perfection would be satisfactory to themselves as well as other observers of their efforts (Ragnheiður Anna Thorarensen, b. 1931; Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959). Sólveig Helga Jónasdóttir (b. 1945) had a teacher who was accepted in the community as very efficient but very hard on her students. If a student turned in a project that was not up to the teacher's standard, she would

undo it completely in front of the class so that the pupil had to start from scratch. A mistake, however minor, should be corrected even if it made you cry. Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir (b. 1959) was 13 when she knitted a long shawl with an intricate scallop pattern from very fine wool. She used every opportunity to press ahead with the project and one night she took the shawl along to baby sit for her aunt, who: "Blast her, she noticed a small flaw right at the beginning and I was more than half finished! And she convinced me that I would never be satisfied with this and she unravelled it completely. I was in tears but I didn't protest, wouldn't have dared to. And of course I knew deep down that she was right, I wouldn't be happy with it like that" (p. 5).

Maintaining such high standards did not only put pressure on pupils and the women who supervised their work at home, it meant that textile teachers had their work cut out for them as well. Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir (b. 1916) recalls that when her pupils were learning patterned knitting she often had to bring home 3-4 sets of needles to correct and mend the projects to set the students back on track (p. 7). "One took home two bags full every night, I sat until 11-12 at night checking and correcting their work, undoing and redoing, picking up stitches that ran and such" (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932, p. 7). "That first year I did nothing but teach" (Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951, p. 11), giving extra time to students who had to finish projects, visiting the fashion boutiques to check out the latest patterns, making samples and preparing the classroom as well as monitoring student work.

Textiles were not only offered as part of general education for girls at the elementary level, they were an important subject in women's secondary level education. Many women entered Women's Domestic Schools upon completing their compulsory education. While the majority

of young women attended these schools to prepare for their vocation of motherhood and housewifery, a significant minority was there for part of their professional training for work outside the home. Aspiring teachers of home economics, weaving and textiles prepared for admission to teacher training by completing the course of study at a Women's Domestic School. These institutions are therefore particularly important to this story.

### Women's Domestic Schools

The Women's Domestic Schools or Schools of Housewifery were an important institution in Icelandic women's education. These secondary level schools were founded all over Iceland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Their main function was to prepare young women for the roles of mother and wife. Initially, the curricula were developed locally by principals and teachers, but became increasingly regulated by legislation. Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir (b. 1916) attended the Domestic School at Hallormsstaður 1934-'35. In her view the school offered an excellent education and she particularly mentioned the extensive course in literature taught by the principal Sigrún Blöndal. The school at Hallormsstaður put particular emphasis on weaving and added a training program for weaving instructors in 1943. Guðrún Vigfúsdóttir (b. 1921), was one of the two first women to graduate from this program in 1945. The training program consisted of a solid foundation in weaving techniques and textile studies, a practicum in the form of a course for the public.

Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) attended Laugaland Domestic School 1940-'41. "There one worked hard of course" (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1921, p. 2). The 9 month course consisted of cooking and textiles, which involved both sewing and weaving. The year that Vigdís attended, the school was put under quarantine for more than 3 months due to an outbreak of

scarlet fever. "And we couldn't do anything but sew or do other kinds of textiles. So we worked every night" (p. 2.). Quarantine or not, it was typical of a domestic school that the girls worked on their textiles in the evenings, even into the early hours (Vignir B. Árnason, b. 1934; Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1942; Elínbjört Jónsdóttir, b. 1947).

Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir (b. 1916) became principal of the domestic school at Laugaland in 1943, when she returned from study in Scandinavia. At that point the legislation mandated three months in each of the three main subjects, cooking, sewing and weaving. Guðrún Vigfúsdóttir (b. 1921) took up a position as weaving instructor at the domestic school in Ísafjörður upon graduation in 1945. At the time weaving instruction was on the increase in the domestic schools and was allotted equal time with sewing and cooking. Apart from weaving techniques and design for weaving, Guðrún taught interior design, colour theory and textile studies. Later she was recruited to teach machine knitting, both at the Ísafjörður school, and as an in-service course for teachers at other domestic schools. The reason for this inclusion was that "The men responsible for these institutions hit upon this, that machine knitting should be taught in domestic schools because there were machines, there was so much knitting produced on the farms" (p. 4). The main purpose was to make the production more marketable.

Guðrún Vigfúsdóttir (b. 1921) talked of how important it was for her to follow the trends of fashion, something that the domestic schools were not exactly renowned for. She tried to encourage her students to develop their own designs, and felt that in hindsight it had been the only shortcoming of her own training that it didn't include drawing and design. She also emphasized the use of traditional Icelandic patterns and yarns dyed with indigenous plants.

After a study leave in 1958-'59, she returned to her position even more determined to encourage her students in developing their design skills and confidence in making personal statements through weaving. She introduced more drawing into her classes and taught the girls to use simple shapes and symbols such as their hand or footprints to create compositions. Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir (b. 1942) was Guðrún's student in 1960-'61, and speaks warmly of the encouragement for individual expression.

In the years leading up to the declaration of independence in 1944 particular interest was the promotion of traditional Icelandic designs and the use of yarns dyed with indigenous plants. The school received supplies of yarn from the workshop of Matthildur í Garði, who is credited with the preservation of the traditional dyeing methods. Traditional patterns were drawn from carvings in the National Museum and old textile patterns and embroidery stitches were revived. Highly fashionable then, these patterns have not had a come back "they are so outdated now that it wouldn't occur to anyone to display them, not to a cat!" (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1921, p. 4).

Ásrún Tryggvadóttir (b. 1939) attended Laugaland domestic school in the late 1950's. She wasn't particularly keen on the idea, although all her friends went to domestic school after graduating from elementary school. Ásrún went to domestic school because it was presented to her as a condition of entry into the teacher training program in textiles. The women who attended domestic schools generally agree that they learned a lot in textiles and worked hard during the program (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Ásrún Tryggvadóttir, b. 1939; Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1942). Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir (b. 1940) attended domestic school at Ísafjörður in 1959. She felt that the domestic school textile program was a good preparation

for her teacher training, particularly as it demanded an enormous industriousness. "There was a lot of textile work. The course was rigorous. We were allowed out for an hour a day, other than that we were working, went out between 5 and 6 in the evening and that was it. And we worked on weekends. It was a lot of work and I think we learned a lot about working, not the least about efficient use of our time. One was constantly busy" (Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940, p. 2).

Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir (b. 1942) was at the domestic school in Ísafjörður 1960-'61 and she too talked of the industriousness and enthusiasm for the textile work that she experienced as a student there. There was such an interest in weaving at the time that students got up in the middle of the night to sneak back to the loom and work until morning. Hallfríður recalls that she and her room mates often stayed up til two o'clock in the morning working on their textiles. She considered herself lucky to get a spare lamp from her mother's sewing machine. She used the lamp to light her upper level bunk without disturbing the others. One night she fell asleep without unplugging the lamp and woke up to a room full of smoke and her bedding on fire and the bunk starting to burn. "It was a major issue, we didn't dare to tell anyone, we just put the fire out and slept next door. The day after there were lengthy interrogations about what had happened. When I visited the school years later they showed me my old bunk and there was a deep gauge where they had cut away the burnt wood!" (Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1942, p. 3).

In 1967 Elínbjört Jónsdóttir (b. 1947) took up a position as weaving instructor at Staðarfell, a rural domestic school. Her students had a 7 week course in weaving, which Elínbjört organized as quite intensive. The facilities were good, there was an adequate number of

looms and a few broad looms and Elínbjört wanted her students to make the most of the opportunity. In addition to the common compulsory projects of towels, tablecloths, rugs and runners, they wove fabrics for dressmaking. Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir (b. 1942) captures the essence of what the schools were meant to be when she talks of Varmaland, the school where she taught, as a large home and a large household. Her experience as a teacher at a domestic school 1963-'66 highlights the implications of this vision. On one hand it was stressful to be in such close quarters with so many people for 24 hours a day, and to be ready to take on the duties of hostess when called for. Furthermore, it could be difficult for a very private person as the students cleaned the teachers' apartments and did their laundry and all meals were communal. On the other hand, this arrangement left the teacher with spare time to devote to weaving and textile work.

Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) became textile teacher at Varmaland, a domestic school in 1970. This was toward the end of the era of domestic schools. Sigrún had not attended such a school herself, and recalls her amazement at the many and strict regulations. She found the atmosphere of the domestic school stifling. She felt that students were treated as children, for they were, in her opinion, denied their independence and subjected to illogical and excessive regulation. "I didn't feel it was in step with the times I was living in. For example the rules were that you couldn't wear trousers at school, neither teachers nor students. And all I had were trousers and miniskirts" (p. 8-9). Sigrún spoke passionately about her objections to the kind of education she saw offered at the school. "I couldn't accept that this was the goal, to prepare women and girls for the future by in essence locking them up in the kitchens and planning the whole day with toilet cleaning, washing floors and cooking and to organize it so that 100% or even 200% of yourself would be devoted to this!" (p. 9-10).

The discipline, the work and the isolation of the residential domestic school originally resembled the working conditions of the women they aimed to educate -- the rural housewife. As the importance of housewifery as the vocation of women dwindled, so did the relevance of the domestic schools. When the program lost relevance, an increasing emphasis was placed on rules and regulations of behaviour within the institution. Guðrún Vigfúsdóttir (b. 1921) speaks of how she felt it was important to make it clear to her students at the outset of her course that she meant to treat them with care and respect and expected them to do their part to create such an environment. It is interesting how she chose to deal with issues such as swearing and beligerent students by setting a good example. The unspoken assumption is that the usual way would have been to impose rules regarding the behaviour.

In the sixties the domestic schools were increasingly used as a dumping ground for students that families and public schools had difficulty with. Guðrún Vigfúsdóttir (b. 1921) relates an example of a student who had suffered debilitating head injuries, and although little was expected in the way of progress for the student, the domestic school was an option. Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir (b. 1942) had students with severe social and behavioural problems. Some had lived high and were sent to the school basically to get them out of trouble. Teaching students in such circumstances could be taxing, for students could only take out their frustrations on teachers and fellow students. Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) said of her students in 1970 "Some of them were sent there, had gotten into trouble, had children maybe and gotten into serious trouble of some sort so they were sent. Quite a few were sent to the school for some reason or another. Just to be converted and put into a school that would make women of them, the way they were supposed to be" (p. 9). This was toward the end of an era that had

originated with programs suitable for the vocational prospects of women in a rural society but the programs atrophied as an outdated image of restricted femininity in an urban society.

Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b. 1924) reflected on the rapid changes that took place in the 1970's after a long period with little change. "It was the textile teachers' fault because of how conservative they were through the years. Then when one tried to move things ahead a little it went too fast, it became an avalanche. The avalanche was such that in its wake they didn't bother with the basics anymore, just want it be quick and easy and done with in a flash. Maybe it is our own fault that it all collapsed so they don't learn enough, they don't learn anything anymore" (p. 18). While not all textile teachers agree with this assessment of the situation, there is general agreement that the subject has changed profoundly over the last two decades. These changes are due in no small part to the mandate for equal instruction for boys and girls in crafts and its implementation. The presence of boys in what was a women's world used to be an exception, when it became the rule the world changed.

### Boys Among Women: Boyhood Experiences With Women's Crafts

#### **At Home**

Most textile work was considered women's work, but certain aspects such as knitting and weaving were carried out by men as well. Knitting was one of the techniques that everyone was taught. While knitting was mainly done for utilitarian purposes, embroidery was a more leisurely activity, an artistic pursuit identified as a feminine virtue. It is therefore to be expected that most of the men interviewed had some experience with knitting. The prevailing perception is that textiles, particularly embroidery, is women's work and that men and boys

did not practice these crafts. But how accurate is this perception? Men's experiences with textiles are probably more common than the popular wisdom allows. When asked about their childhood experiences, many of the wood and metalwork teachers remembered acquiring textile skills of one kind or another from the women around them. None of them had however kept up these skills in adult life.

Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) describes his childhood home as typical of the traditional rural household where he observed women, rather than men, engaged in the textile production. He was taught to knit at about 6 years of age. His colleague, Egill Strange (b. 1927) was brought up in town, but his grandmother lived in the same house. Egill remembers with great fondness that she taught him to knit, and that he had enjoyed spending time with her, knitting away. At 10-11 years he was knitting doll's scarves, but did not embark upon more extensive projects. Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b. 1946) was taught knitting by his mother, but claimed that he was never any good at it.

Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b.1946) and his brothers had an interest in crafts and one of the crafts they engaged in was embroidery. He recalled that they had been fond of colourful, tie-dyed yarns, and produced a few tablecloths embroidered with flower patterns in various stitches. Júlíus recalls that his mother taught them a few embroidery stitches "at some point when we got this interest in embroidery" (Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946, p. 6). In this case the interest arose with the children and mother, who did not have much time for embroidery herself, passed on the skills. Júlíus remembers this as an enjoyable craft although he claimed that his brothers were better at it than he ever was.

Vignir B. Árnason (b.1934) is another wood and metalwork teacher who was introduced to embroidery as a child. He was 9 years old when his mother took a job as a maid at a Women's Domestic School in Western Iceland. There she was subsequently recruited to teach and continued her carving. The students and staff, who were all resident at the school, used to gather in the evenings and do embroidery while they listened to the radio. As the only child in residence Vignir participated in this pastime with the women and embroidered two pillowcases that winter.

### **At School**

Another venue for initial encounters with textiles for boys was at school (Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918; Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957; Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919). Although drawing and the crafts were rarely among the subjects taught by itinerant teachers, it seems that textiles and various soft crafts were introduced early and taught to boys and girls. Axel Jóhannesson's (b. 1918) earliest memories of schooling by an itinerant teacher or a tutor included this : "I was the only boy, and 7 or 8 girls and I had to sew -- well I don't know if I **had to** -- I had to sit with a needle or sat with a needle along with them and embroidered with them" (p. 1). He could identify the stitch as cross stitch and said he made 'a little piece' which suggests a sampler, but the piece was long lost. Another wood and metalwork teacher who started school in a rural area, Sigurður Úlfarsson (b. 1919) remembers that his female teacher included a variety of crafts and drawing in her programme, including embroidery, and that the instruction was coeducational. Sigurður speaks with appreciation of being lucky to have this teacher and benefitting from the program she offered, stating that this was probably a significant encouragement of his interest in crafts. Guðvarður Halldórsson (b. 1957) attended

a rural primary school. He said that "there they didn't teach any wood and metalwork. It was textiles of sorts that I was taught. We did cross stitch, that was what was convenient there" (p. 1).

The self conscious qualifying remarks made by some of the men about their experiences with textile crafts suggest an acute awareness of crossing gender boundaries. "Perhaps I remember this so well because I was made to do embroidery rather than carving" (Vignir B. Árnason, b. 1934, p. 1-2). In some cases the enjoyment of the task needed to be qualified as well. When I asked Vignir how he had perceived the embroidery at the time, whether or not he had been conscious of his involvement as non traditional, and he responded: "Yes, yes it was a given of course, the tradition. But I can't deny that I enjoyed it. I have to swallow that today. I can see, I see in hindsight that I did really enjoy it. *But not at the time?* Yes, I did this without comment. There was no need to coax me into it, but it was in this particular environment" (p. 14). The particular environment was that of a women's domestic school -- a women's world. Axel Jóhannesson (b. 1918) starts out by stating that he "had to" but adds "I don't know if it was **had to**" (p. 1) adding emphasis, and goes on to say "I had to sit down with a needle ..." (p. 1). The attitude is ambiguous: on the one hand the men have a perception of having broken with tradition, and on the other hand, there is an awareness that the tradition is called into question. Egill Strange (b. 1927) resorts to irony when describing that in his school the crafts were segregated, while he went with boys to learn woodcarving from a woman teacher "all the girls were in sewing. We were supposedly unable to wield a needle" (p. 1). This remark is then followed up with information about his childhood interest in knitting.

While there was nothing in the education act of 1936 that stipulated that the craft subjects should be gendered, the formal curriculum and time allotment were gendered. The subjects were named boys' and girls' crafts respectively and the time allotment reflected this. Schools in the towns were more likely than rural schools to segregate as their enrolment and resources made it possible to offer separate craft programs for girls and boys. In rural schools conditions such as availability of instructors and facilities had not always permitted instruction in both craft subjects. Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir (b. 1940), taught textiles in a rural residential school in the 1970's. Boys and girls were instructed coeducationally, and there was a tradition for this in the school for there had not been a wood and metalwork teacher. There was an avid interest in textiles and the children spent their evenings working on their projects, mainly knitting and embroidery. Their ambitions were focused on a craft show in the spring where they proudly displayed their work. Sigríður's husband subsequently took on instruction in wood and metalwork for the school. The tradition of this particular school and the calls for equality in education at the time demanded coeducational instruction for girls and boys.

The instruction that Sigurður Úlfarsson (b. 1919) described suggests the influence of the training at the Teachers' College in the 1920's. Handicrafts were part of the curriculum in teacher training from the inception of the program. The course in crafts was for the most part coeducational. Halldóra Bjarnadóttir was an influential instructor and an advocate for these subjects. Her curriculum involved various crafts such as paper crafts, knitting and bookbinding and she was adamant that both male and female students engage in this subject. Vigdís Pálsdóttir (b.1924) made the point that the tradition of the rural society and the early teacher education did not exclude men from textiles to the extent that was the case around the

mid twentieth century (p. 24). Furthermore, as the examples of Axel Jóhannesson, (b. 1918); Sigurður Úlfarsson, (b. 1919); Guðvarður Halldórsson, (b. 1957); and Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, (b. 1940) show, a separate craft program for girls and boys was often not an option for a school.

The notion of textiles as exclusively feminine was strongest around mid century and into the sixties. It was seriously challenged by the second wave feminists in the 1970's, along with many other preconceptions in the gendered order. Equality in education was an issue which the movement successfully put on the social agenda. One of the most obvious instances of inequality was the segregation of boys and girls into separate craft subjects. This practice was publicly challenged (Gerður G. Óskarsdóttir, 1970; Ásdís Skúladóttir, 1970). While most educators believed that equal access was beneficial, many had reservations because there was no manifestation of an increased interest in textiles among males corresponding to that of females in wood and metalwork. This was a cause for concern and caution for many within the curriculum community of crafts (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b.1919, p. 17-19; Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b.1924, p. 20-21). Such reservations did not carry the day, for the tide had turned, and the curriculum community had to accept that gender segregation in crafts was untenable.

### Mother's Machine: The Sacred Sewing Machine

Women use fewer tools and machines, and the machine they are most likely to use --the sewing machine -- has a mystique of its own. This is illustrated in the experience that Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b.1946) had with machinery as a boy. He and his brothers had ready access to his father's industrial sewing machine and had helped him with sewing tasks in the upholstery workshop. He remembers that one day the brothers were home alone, and in the

fun and games, one of his brother's pants burst at the seam from crotch to the waistband in the back: "It was quicker to take the pants and fix the seam out in dad's workshop than to look for another pair" (p. 7). But mother's sewing machine was off limits. She used it to make the family clothes and the boys had no access to this precious machine, set in an inlaid cabinet which doubled as a sewing table. This attitude towards mother's sewing machine was experienced by girls as well.

Mother's sewing machine features in the early memories that most textile teachers and female teachers in general have of textiles. The exceptions are the older women whose mothers did not have a sewing machine, but made clothing by hand. The issue of access to mother's machine is often brought up -- if a girl had access this is cause for comment. Having access was clearly understood as a privilege, and a sign of encouragement and faith in a girl's ability. Not having access is not perceived as very negative, rather as a reflection of the importance of the machine for the family. The sewing machine was used to make the children's clothes, but also often for dressing the whole family or even to take in work. It is interesting to note here that the term that the women use to denote the sewing machine or the making of clothes as off-limits is 'sacred'. 'It was no sacred world', or 'the machine was absolutely sacred' (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959; Þóra Lovísa Friðleifsdóttir, b. 1952). The wood and metalwork teachers did not use this term about the workshop or tools of their trade.

Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) had an early interest in all kinds of textile crafts but "Mother's machine was always sacred, like all sewing machines were until I was 12 years old. Then I started sewing, but mother was as I say very industrious with the sewing. She made all my

clothes so I didn't get into that a lot" (p. 12). When Hjördís speaks of her female pupils' relation to the sewing machine, echoes of her own childhood may be heard, "These were sacred objects to the girls. They had been taught to, they were so in awe of the sewing machine that it was almost disgusting. I was of course like that myself" (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932, p. 13). She explained that the girls had been so strongly conditioned at home against tinkering with machines, that it caused them great distress in the school programme. If the needle broke or anything went wrong with the machine a girl would be devastated, even in tears.

Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir (b. 1959) is an example of having late access to the machine.

Although she showed a strong interest in textiles she did not use a sewing machine until she was 14 years old. At that time she completed a school project at home on her mother's sewing machine, but her mother watched carefully while she used the machine. Sigrún

Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1947), on the other hand, started using the sewing machine early. The family album contains a picture of her as an eight year old at the sewing machine with a heap of doll's clothes that she had made (p. 1). In many homes the machine was always there in use and the girls could use it as well (Ásrún Tryggvadóttir, b. 1939; Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1942; Þóra Lovísa Friðleifsdóttir, b. 1952; Bryndís Björgvinsdóttir, b. 1957).

### Equal Access to Textiles

Attempts to teach textiles to boys were made in the schools before this was mandated by the education act of 1974. Initially individual teachers and school administrators experimented with short introductory courses in textiles for boys and in wood and metalwork for girls. This was often done by swapping students between wood and metalwork and textiles, which was

administratively more expedient than to regroup the classes coeducationally (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b.1946). Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) was one of the textile teachers who took up the challenge to initiate a textile course for boys. In her school, which was a sizeable urban school, the textile teachers and wood and metalwork teacher agreed that in grade 6 students (11-12 year olds) should have a six week course as an introduction to the non-traditional subject.

For this introductory course she designed a project, a pillow case with a picture of a jeep. The headlights were buttons and the grill was mending stitch and it included casting over. "I taught them this, you could use it if the hem on your trousers or the zipper broke, it is a good stitch for that" (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932, p. 12). Incidentally Guðvarður Halldórsson (b. 1957) took part in this experiment as a pupil in 1969-'70. He speculated on the rationale behind it by adding that it was "probably for those of us who wouldn't get ourselves wives. So we learned all the basics" (Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957, p. 2). While the comment about the relevance of marital prospects was presented as a joke, it does point to the prevailing perception: that even if boys and men engage in textile crafts it does not change the gendered nature of the work.

Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) fought to have textiles a mandatory subject for boys as well as wood and metalwork for girls and she feels that this was an essential step toward the goal of equality. She used every opportunity at the time to show that textiles was an appropriate subject for males. One incident that she recalls from the 1970's was that one of her male colleagues came to the textile studio where she was teaching and asked for help as a button had come off his suit. She was happy to be of assistance. She seated him at the front of the

class and brought him needle and thread and a pair of scissors. Hjördís said that her colleague had probably expected her to fasten the button for him, and that he was a bit self conscious sitting in front of her class. This is an important point, that teachers and parents at the time of change expected to see their own anxiety arise with the children. This point was also made by Vignir B. Árnason (b. 1934) regarding girls in wood and metalwork. He said "I wonder if the problems didn't often rest with us the teachers rather than the children" (p. 15). Adults -- parents and teachers alike -- seem to have shown more distress during implementation than the children (Elínbjört Jónsdóttir, b. 1947; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946; Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Þórir Sigurðsson, b. 1927).

The curriculum documents from 1977 mandated equal instruction for boys and girls in crafts. It was implemented by cutting instruction time per pupil in each subject in half to accommodate a student population twice as big. Teachers of both craft subjects felt this was a serious blow to the subject for they could not take their pupils to the level of earlier achievement. In textiles, the problem was compounded as the subject traditionally involved a substantial amount of homework, but there was no tradition of homework in wood and metalwork. Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951), who was textiles consultant to the Ministry of Education, talks of the compromising situation that a boy might find himself in with the homework that textiles required when adult men in the home reacted strongly against the boy's engagement in it. This had serious implications, for not only were boys deterred from homework due to prevalent notions about the gendered nature of the subject, but they were not used to homework in crafts. Accepting the traditional textile homework meant that their workload would have increased substantially. Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir (b. 1932) suggested that

the demise of homework is one of the most significant changes to the subject. "The boys were not used to any homework, never took anything home, the girls have always been forced to knit this and that much at home or to sew such and such at home, but they never had to do anything" (p. 13). Textile teachers were in a precarious position to enforce homework when boys were reluctant recruits to the subject in the first place.

But the objections went further than various implementation issues. In some cases they had to do with the presence of boys, rather than the absence of girls, for half of the instruction time in textiles. Textile teachers were terribly frightened of getting the boys. They just didn't want the boys. Not just because the girls were losing time, but because they just didn't want the hassle of having to instruct boys" (Július Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946, p. 20). "Textile teachers didn't want, very many didn't want the boys in their classroom. They clearly feared the boys, thought they would not be interested and just cause trouble" (Þórir Sigurðsson, b. 1927, p. 20). Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir (b.1940) recalls these times; "Yes, many of the textile teachers were dead against it. They found the boys too difficult. In schools the difficult pupils are often boys. They are just as difficult in other subjects, usually the children who are difficult in crafts are as difficult elsewhere, girls and boys" (p. 9).

Although the initial perception seems to suggest that some textile teachers were unduly reluctant to implement the mandate, further probing reveals a foundation for their fears. "The girls always wanted to take wood and metalwork, the boys never wanted to take textiles. Girls' work, the womenfolk have always strived toward the men's domain rather than men toward women's domain or women's work" (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932, p. 12). "The woman sought equality with the man and strived for all positions. The men defended

themselves in their bunkers" (Þórir Sigurðsson, b. 1927, p. 22). For men and boys textiles was seen as an effeminate pursuit. Þórir Sigurðsson (b.1927), then a supervisor of art and crafts for the ministry of education, recalls parents of boys attacking the curriculum writers and school administrators for forcing their sons to take textiles at school. "They didn't see it as befitting boys, it is beneath my son to sit in textile classes. And there were labels attached, about the effects it might have on boys to submit to sewing and such things" (Þórir Sigurðsson, b. 1927, p. 21). Elínbjört Jónsdóttir (b.1947) conducted an experimental program in weaving for boys and girls in an urban school in 1978. It met with resistance and confrontations, mainly with fathers who were indignant that their sons be set to such a feminine task as weaving.

Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b.1946) talks of the different position of textile teachers and wood and metalwork teachers in regard to equal access for boys and girls in crafts. On the one hand the girls were perceived as quiet, neat and industrious and this was what the textile teachers were used to. On the other hand, boys were perceived as boisterous, rough and tending to rush through their projects and that was what wood and metalwork teachers were accustomed to. "So in a sense the textile teachers had a harder time" (Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946, p. 21). The issue is described in different terms by textile teachers; "The girls who went into teaching, of course some fought like lions and did very well but others just couldn't cope" (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924, p. 21).

Textile teachers who are interested and experienced in teaching textiles to boys offer insight into the problems that they have had to cope with. Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) describes her experience of the transitional period when pupils in grade 7 were offered gender

segregated introductory courses. Despite virtually no background in the subject, the boys were generally very interested and industrious. But she takes it for granted that boys are more boisterous: "So this was a very hectic time, these courses, but it was quieter in the wood and metalwork. Because discipline problems at that time generally involved boys rather than girls" (p. 16). Things can get more than hectic, "The textile studio is very small and when the boys are 15 years and do not want to participate, then they are bossy and they are getting scissors to punch and vandalise. One has to watch that a lot, if they are negative. It would of course be very nice not to have to have them. Whether they were any better in wood and metalwork is a different issue. I don't know " (Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1940, p. 9-10).

Making textiles more boy-friendly was essential for the survival of textiles as a subject. The implementation process involved the redesigning of projects in textiles which in the long run entailed different content in terms of skills and knowledge taught. It has meant a heavier emphasis on the sewing machine. By drawing the analogy between the sewing machine and a car, the boys are offered a "manly" way to ease down to the task. "One thing, the boys were much better at the machines. They got a tremendous kick out of driving the machines. It was just brm brmm all the way! They were never afraid of the sewing machine" (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932, p. 13). It was suggested that in the transition phase it might be necessary to alter the program by dropping techniques not perceived as appealing to boys in order to get them to feel positive about the subject. "Get the boys into machine stitching and the coarser things while working to change the morale" (Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946, p. 21).

The finer points of textiles such as embroidery have been de-emphasised as well as knitting, which most teachers find hard to get the boys interested in (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924, p. 21). Þórir Sigurðsson (b. 1927) points out that this is a response from the teachers to the perception that boys are interested in machinery. And that with less time, and a student population less prepared in the subject, techniques that are quickly mastered and produce fast results are favoured over labour intensive processes. Knitting for instance requires a lot of effort and training before the learner becomes proficient enough to enjoy it and become productive. Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951) makes an important point about the need to adapt the curriculum to boys' needs by noting "One had to begin by teaching the basics and perhaps didn't realize how basic, how low level the instruction had to be" (p. 16).

Using the sewing machine to make clothes has become central to the curriculum. Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir (b. 1942) feels that this change is occurring now as textile teachers adapt to the boys who have no background knowledge or support from home. Therefore they select techniques that are simple to teach and master and require little training: "So it is falling into the routine that the sewing machine dominates, it is easiest and suits all. The boys want the sewing machine, they prefer the mechanism" (p. 13). Textile teachers are starting to notice the absence of other techniques. "With the aid of the sewing machine boys could quickly produce objects, such as clothing that they could take pride in and use" (Þórir Sigurðsson, b. 1927, p. 21-22). This was the experience of Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) who taught a compulsory textile course at the secondary level which became over time mostly fashion design and making clothes. In this course the boys really enjoyed being able to design and make their own clothes. Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir (b. 1939) offered an elective in textiles for

secondary level in the early '80's, and the few boys who attended her class were there explicitly to add to their wardrobe.

Making the products of the learning process more relevant for boys has been an ongoing struggle for the textile teachers as in the world outside school textiles continues to be irrelevant to males. There are, for instance, virtually no patterns for boys' clothes available, and many projects were closely related to preparing for motherhood and housewifery.

Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir (b.1940) complained that: "We get two fashion magazines monthly, and baby magazines as well. But there just aren't any boys' magazines. I've tried hard to find them but they just don't have them, maybe one page in each issue" (p. 11). Sigríður felt that this limited the boys' ability to pursue personal interests. Ragna Þórhallsdóttir (b. 1950) is the editor of a sewing magazine. Her experience and the marketing surveys conducted for the magazine show that the consumer is generally is a woman with a young family who uses patterns for women's and children's clothing, but prefers the magazine to offer at least one item of men's clothing per issue.

Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson (b. 1946) and Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir (b. 1951), who were consultants with the ministry during this transition, recall that textile teachers needed a lot of help in designing projects that would appeal to boys. Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir (b. 1942) commented that her students at the Teachers' College still design projects that are more suitable for girls than boys. Hallfríður suggested that this is because they are all women, but fortunately many are mothers and have sons which is often useful in the teacher training program to at least hear of boys of school age. Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) captures the problem as she has lived it "I remember that before I had children I couldn't bear the thought of having boys

because they were such miniature images of male chauvinists, little men and so stuffily dressed and no excitement. So when I had boys I loved it because I could break it up a little bit and make them a bit softer" (Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948, p. 15).

There are instances of textile teachers who have succeeded in getting boys involved in the techniques commonly deemed of no interest to them. Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir (b. 1959) puts it down to the ability to catch the pulse -- if an item is fashionable it will take off for boys and girls. She had great success with knitting in the early to mid '80's when fingerless gloves were all the rage. Black was most fashionable but it is very hard for beginners to use dark coloured yarn for knitting, for you cannot see the stitch as clearly. The boys were undeterred and worked hard to produce these prized fashion items. A trend sometimes develops in a school or class. Some of the boys in a grade 8 class with Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir (b. 1940) decided to enhance track suits they had made for themselves by embroidered motifs taken from their favourite T-shirts. Sigríður suggested that they use painting or stencilling to transfer the image because it is faster, but they preferred to use embroidery, which means that in order to finish the project a substantial amount of work needs to be done at home.

Embroidery is thus not as far from a boy's mind as commonly held, according to textile teachers who have had male pupils develop an interest in the craft. Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir (b. 1948) has taught embroidery at a secondary school. Her approach is that of creative needlepoint, specifically as a form of design or an art form where the stitches are seen as marks, rather than a regular pattern in an image created by different colours. She spoke of the pleasure of working with male students who do not know the tradition of embroidery which emphasises small, even stitches and are therefore free to create stitches of any shape and size

imaginable. "Sometimes there were boys in the class and it was very different to teach them embroidery for instance. They didn't have any traditions somehow and they just stitched, there wasn't a problem -- they'd include all sorts of materials. Band-Aids and what have you, they weren't afraid of anything" (p. 17).

Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir (b.1959) and Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir (b.1940), who teach at the same school, found that their male students one year fell into a spell of cross stitching. Guðrún had noticed that a popular Danish women's magazine was publishing quite a lot of small cross stitching patterns and thought that this might be of interest. The patterns require a very fine stitch, a meticulous counting of the threads in the backing to accurately transfer the pattern, and are executed in fine cotton embroidery yarn. Sigríður had two big classes with many boys in grades 8 and 9 who were not terribly interested in making clothes but showed an interest in cross stitching. These boys attend another school but take textiles at Sigríður's school due to shortage of facilities. This means that they have to walk several blocks from their school to hers in the darkest weeks of the year, which did not deter them from dropping by after school to get extra thread if they ran out while working on the projects at home. Guðrún's pupils were a bit younger "and the boys were the keenest!" (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b.1959, p. 25).

The notion that textile teachers expect less from their male than female students is raised. The question of whether the teacher lets the boys off the hook (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924) comes up. Ragna Þórhallsdóttir (b. 1950) speaks from a mother's perspective. Her sons have had textiles as a compulsory subject in school. She feels that their teacher has not succeeded in raising their interest or their appreciation of the subject, partly because of her low expectation

of their involvement. In contrast the boys show interest and pride in their achievement in wood and metalwork. While this may be partly due to the particular school situation, the issue of expectations of male students is more general. It surfaces also in the success stories where the teacher puts particular emphasis on the fact that a project *even* appealed to the boys, which is still more of an achievement than to get the girls involved. Despite individual successes where the textile teacher manages to interest boys and girls in the various aspects of the subject, the mandate for equal instruction for boys and girls in textiles has involved considerable battles in the classroom. Given the fact that there was no pressure from the male population, but rather a resistance to engage in textiles, the teachers of the subject were faced with a difficult task and quite rightly questioned whether and how they could assume it. These doubts and refusal to accept the task unconditionally tended to be seen as reactionary at the time. Schools were granted a ten year period of grace to implement the equal instruction mandate. Initially it was common to group students according to gender, but eventually co-educational grouping has become the accepted norm for instruction.

Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir (b. 1959) captures the feeling of many textile teachers when she said that her preconception was that teaching textiles to boys was a doomed undertaking, but that she braced herself for battle when she stuck to the mandates of the curriculum. At the outset the implementation followed traditional gendered expectations where the most feminine techniques such as crocheting and embroidery as well as the labour intensive knitting gave way to machine stitching. Whether these changes relate to the presence of boys and the perception of what suits a boy or to the lack of time is still a question for the subject community. None of the textile teachers could recall any specific references to gender and to the specific issue of teaching boys in their training. Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir (b.1959), who

graduated in 1983 was asked if anything was said in the program about teaching boys, and she responded: "No, I almost feel as if all the preparation or how we were prepared for this was 'well, now it is all co-educational, which is of course a lot harder', and that was all" (p. 13).

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, craft teachers' relationship with their subject will be drawn together and discussed around the themes of human, symbolic and material environment. These three themes are useful in accounting for the interplay of agency and structure that affects curriculum identity. The three themes address the social, ideological, and physical settings in which curriculum identity is formed and lived. The last section of the chapter is devoted to discussion of the main implications of this thesis for further research and educational policy.

This study indicates that the craft curriculum community is marginal in the education system in Iceland. It is an unsuccessful contender for membership in the group that defines the value of knowledges (Eggleston, 1977). Lack of status in the symbolic environment of the education system is reflected in the status of the community practising and teaching the subject, i.e. the human environment. The marginal status of the curriculum community is also entrenched in the material environment where isolation and marginalization are manifest in the location and furnishing of facilities for teaching the subjects. The curriculum community of crafts is thus a small stakeholder in the development of educational policy.

### **Human environment:**

Human environment is a concept that refers to the people involved in craft education.

They form the community, which can be labelled a human environment to shift the focus away from the individuals and their personal life histories, to the social characteristics of the group by which the community is formed. Gender and class are the main social constructs that define the human environment. By their gender and class identity, craft teachers are marginal. The segregated gender identities of the craft subjects have been challenged by coeducation, and that challenge has led to an identity crisis for the curriculum community. The working class identity of the curriculum community places it in a lower status position relative to other curriculum communities.

There is a persistent trend in nearly all the interviews to trace curricular identity back to childhood, even to the genetic make-up of one's family. Comments such as 'I have always been' or 'As far back as I can remember I was' and 'At home we always', are abundant.

My initial reading of this was to compare it with biographies of artists, where the natural inclination toward art from infancy onward is a pervasive theme. Upon reflection it seems that there is a general tendency for people to explain themselves as born this way or that, for instance in regard to sexual orientation. Faraday & Plummer (1979) discuss this as a trend among the subjects in their research on sexual identity, who tend to recall instances from childhood which confirm their view of their present identity.

This general trend has implications for the gender organization of the community. Craft teachers perceive childhood experience with the subject they later chose to teach as

contributing to their curriculum identity. Their childhood experiences with the other craft subject are not presented as having such significance. Women are perceived to lack experience in wood and metalwork, which undermines the curricular identity of female wood and metalwork teachers and their membership in the curriculum community of wood and metalwork. Male membership of the curriculum community of textiles is also problematic, which is evident in that no men are teachers of that subject.

The community of craft teachers is identified with the working class, defined in this study as an association with manual labour. Most craft teachers come from families that belong to the working class and they retain working class identification, although as teachers they belong to a middle class occupation dominated by intellectual traditions. Craft teachers see their subjects as relating to the world of manual, physical work and providing an alternative in a school system which has a myopic focus on the academic tradition. While proud of this alternative, they are keenly aware that associating with the lower class impedes their efficacy in the school setting. The craft teachers perceive themselves as marginal in the hierarchy of school subjects, a hierarchy which places mind over matter. In this respect their outlook is similar to that reported by Berge (1992) for Swedish craft teachers.

Various studies have shown that among women the notion of a career, in the sense of planned, gradual career advancement is not the norm (Acker, 1989; Elgquist-Saltzman, 1985; Gaskell, 1987; Gerson, 1985; Nias & Aspinwall, 1992). Women need to accommodate both waged and unwaged work, family and job (Nias & Aspinwall, 1992). Various labels have been applied to the female deviation from the male defined concept

of career: 'broken', 'two stage', 'horizontal', 'parallel'. The interviews from this study contain descriptions of such compromises from both men and women. Family obligations, financial status, educational options and employment prospects have in many cases led men to dual careers and sometimes compromised their goals. Like the women, they frame their decisions as rational choices given the options, rather than labelling them as compromises (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913; Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918; Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Egill Strange, b. 1927; Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933; Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957).

Historical evidence suggests that there is a deeprooted global tradition of distinction and hierarchy where women are placed in a submissive position to men (Connell, 1987). A gendered relationship to work seems to have been near universal. Textiles are women's work, but wood and metals fall under the male domain of work (Lucie-Smith, 1981; Parker, 1986). Another way of conceiving of the distinction is to focus on the public and the private spheres of human activity (Elshtain, 1981). In the case of the Icelandic farming society the literal division between inside work as women's work and outside work as men's work has been argued (Sigríður Dúna Kristmundsdóttir, 1989; Rosenberg, 1982; Scott, 1988). In the Marxist tradition this distinction is framed in terms of productive and reproductive spheres of labour.

While in many ways helpful, none of these distinctions adequately captures the complexity of the gendered distinction in people's relation to work. Firstly, the distinction is not only of gender but also of class (Scott, 1988). Secondly, the gendered distinction

does not in all cases, at any given historical moment, signify a devaluation of women's work. For instance the traditional textile production in the Icelandic farming household was broken down into many, more and less gender specific tasks. Carding was often done by men, while spinning on the wheel was generally done by women, but these tasks were perceived as equally important in the entire process. In my own research on traditional leatherwork in Iceland, the same division is evident. Certain tasks were men's tasks and others were women's tasks. There is no mention of their relative importance, except that it was often noted that sewing shoes, which was women's work, required a lot of skill (Guðrún Helgadóttir, n.d.). There is an inherent symmetry or complementarity, where the tasks of men and women are dependent upon each other and both are indispensable for the survival of the kin.

The curriculum community of crafts is affected by the contest for the legitimacy of gender specific knowledge and skill. During the seventies, the craft subjects were made compulsory and coeducational. That is, boys and girls were required to have equal instruction in the subjects, and instruction was to be offered in mixed gender groups. This was done in the name of gender equality, for the concern was to provide the same education for both sexes. While textiles has been redefined as a result of being organized as a coeducational subject, wood and metalwork has remained a male defined subject, despite coeducation. Women's traditional fields of expertise have undergone devaluation, especially in the last couple of decades. Experience has shown that equality as sameness does not adequately address discrimination and hence there is now concern for equity, that is equality, which honours difference.

Twenty years after the mandate for equal instruction by coeducation in crafts was stated in a formal curriculum document, the term 'Girl's craft' is still used in some schools and there are instances of schools breaking the mandate by segregating girls into textiles, boys into wood and metalwork (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959, p.13; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951, p. 29). Reflection on these issues is current in the curriculum community and most often revolves around the concrete question of whether the craft subjects should be electives in the upper elementary grades, regardless of whether it would result in gendered grouping. When pupils have a choice between wood and metalwork and textiles, their choice is generally along traditional gendered lines. Girls opt for textiles, with few exceptions, and boys opt for wood and metalwork (Þórir Sigurðsson, b. 1927; Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1952).

The curriculum community has difficulty assessing the effects of the change to coeducation, that is making both subjects compulsory and providing instruction in mixed gender grouping. It seemed peculiar to some that the mandate has not led to a situation where males and females have equal interest in the craft subjects (Þórir Sigurðsson, b. 1927; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951). Others were sceptical that the genders will ever have equal interest in the craft subjects (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1918; Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1942). Others are concerned that the needs of male and female students differ to the extent that they cannot both be met in the co-educational setting (Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Ragna Þórhallsdóttir, b. 1950; Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1942). Many teachers were, however, of the opinion that the mandate for equal instruction had offered boys and girls a valuable introduction to the

non-traditional craft for their gender, an introduction that sometimes developed into an avid interest (Egill Strange, b. 1927; Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959).

In the reflection on the effects of the mandate some of the teachers maintained that it had backfired, for coeducation led to further devaluation of textiles, which cannot have been the intention of the policy makers (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1942). They make the point that the mandate for equal instruction in textiles and wood and metalwork is a superficial attempt at equality, and true equality is not a question of who does what but of respect for the work of both men and women (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924).

There is a difference in discipline and workload between textiles on the one hand and wood and metalwork on the other hand. Discipline was much stricter, working hours longer and the demands for quality higher in textiles right from elementary school through teacher training. Girls had to do homework in textiles and the teachers refer to the struggle to meet the standards of achievement (Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939; Sólveig Helga Jónasdóttir, b. 1945; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959). There is no mention from the men of having to correct or remake a project or of doing homework. While the women worked at night and on the weekends during teacher training, the men had jobs concurrently with their studies (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Vignir B. Arnason, b. 1934; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959). Words like 'strict', 'demanding', 'gruelling' came up in descriptions of the textile program, whereas the wood and metalwork program is

described as quite cosy (Axel Jóhannesson, b.1919; Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b.1924; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1946; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b.1959).

Perhaps this is an indication of the sexism among women that hooks (1984) speaks of, or the tendency to regulate and control women's lives that many authors speak of (Grumet, 1988; Parker, 1986). In any event this discrepancy in attitude toward work became one of the issues complicating the equal instruction mandate (Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b.1932; Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir, b. 1951; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959).

The interviews contain evidence of another common pattern of gender inequity, that of teachers' inordinate attention to boys (Gaskell, 1992). This is reflected in what was said of life in the craft classrooms, where boys seem to be demanding and getting more attention than girls. Furthermore the sheer volume of commentary about boys in the interviews, compared to comments about girls, is a manifestation of this inequity. The presence of boys in textiles was a major issue, while the presence of girls in wood and metalwork was 'not a problem'. Yet girls and women tend not to identify with wood and metalwork after compulsory education and few female wood and metalwork teachers last in the profession (Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir, b. 1957; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960; Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960).

### **Symbolic environment:**

The symbolic environment refers to the ideological or textual environment of the subjects. That is the public, printed discourse on the subjects, manifested in curriculum documents and educational policies on the one hand, and on the other hand in the

educational debate carried on by the various stakeholders in curriculum. I found it useful to think of the symbolic environment partly in terms of development through stages of development of school subjects described in the model outlined in chapter 2.1.1.

(Goodson, 1987; Meyer & Rowan, 1983; Reid, 1984). The stages are invention, promotion, legislation and mythologization. At the first stage isolated innovations or curriculum initiatives are made, that then are promoted and advocated as potential school subjects. At the point of legislation the school subject is formally defined, but in order to become mythologized it has to be central and universal, and have sequential and status relevance.

Using this model, it is apparent that the subjects wood and metalwork and textiles have not become mythological. Literature with a structuralist bent, as referred to in chapter two, would suggest that this is due to the low class status of the subjects, and in the case of textiles, to their definition as a feminine pursuit. These interpretations are also offered by the teachers, who maintain that manual work and particularly women's work is constantly devalued and that this devalues their curriculum identity (Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b.1924; Egill Strange, b. 1927; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959).

In elementary school, the oldest participants in this study experienced the subjects as they were moving from the stage of innovation to a stage of promotion. Then the subjects were introduced and promoted by interested teachers (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913; Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916; Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918, Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919). At that point there was no formal curriculum or text which mandated this kind of instruction but

it was offered for its perceived universal pedagogical value. Itinerant teachers tried to include craft instruction which could be accommodated in the lack of facilities and resources that characterized itinerant schools (Guðmundur Finnbogason, 1903).

The generation that was born in the 1910's and entered teaching in the 1930's and 1940's was to implement the legislation of the craft subjects and carry them further on the road to mythologization. In their secondary education, some individuals in this generation of teachers had enjoyed opportunities to study the subjects which had then been promoted to the extent of being available in the rural secondary schools and the women's domestic schools (Ingimundur Ólafsson, b. 1913; Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916; Axel Jóhannesson, b. 1918). In 1936, when this group of participants was in their youth about to decide on a career path, crafts became mandatory school subjects (Lög um fræðslu barna 94/1936).

The next generation of teachers in this study, those born in the 1920's and 1930's, were pupils in an era of expansion of the crafts as legislated subjects. The subjects acquired limited sequential significance in regard to textile teacher training (Guðrún Vigfúsdóttir, b. 1921; Vigdís Pálsdóttir, b. 1924; Þórir Sigurðsson, b. 1927; Egill Strange, b. 1927, Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933; Ásrún Tryggvadóttir, b. 1939). During their childhood and youth an initiative to establish the subjects further was made with the 1946 double streamed secondary school (Lög um skólakerfi 22/1946).

As students and even as teachers they participated in this attempt, but keenly felt the lack of status relevance and sequential significance of the subjects which hampered their

growth (Egill Strange, b. 1927; Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, b. 1932; Svavar Jóhannesson, b. 1933). At the secondary level, the craft subjects lost ground to the academic subjects after the mid-century, when these teachers began their careers. At that point the educational options developed by the craft curriculum community such as weaving in the domestic schools and the vocational stream of the secondary school were identified with low academic achievement (Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b. 1939; Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1942; Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, 1948).

In the late 1960's and particularly the 1970's, the gains that the subjects had made toward status relevance and sequential significance were gradually lost. The entrance requirements to teacher training became exclusively academic (Lög um Kennaraháskóla Íslands 38/1971). At the same time the options for craft study which previously existed at the secondary level eroded (Ragna Þórhallsdóttir, b. 1951; Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir, b. 1953; Guðvarður B. Halldórsson, b. 1957; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959). Even though the subjects were made universal by legislation in 1974 making them compulsory for boys and girls in the elementary school, this did not move them closer to centrality for lack of status relevance and sequential significance (Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960; Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960). As discussed above, the change to coeducation also did not increase the status of the subjects, again illustrating the ways the human and symbolic environments interact.

#### **Material environment:**

The material environment is the third main aspect of the Umwelt of craft education. This is largely due to the physical nature of the subjects, for their aim and objective is to teach pupils to manage in the material world. But no less important is the role of the material environment in curriculum, the facilities and resources for instruction are part of the spectrum of curriculum that has often been labelled as hidden. That is, educational values are communicated through the material environment, even when they are not stated in text or spoken.

Craft teachers see the status of their subject reflected in the facilities they have for instruction and in the allocation of resources. The common practice of housing the craft subjects away from the central areas of the school buildings is experienced by the teachers as a constant reminder, and a physical expression of the marginal status of their subjects. One of the pervasive themes in the teachers' accounts is therefore the struggle for adequate facilities and materials for craft instruction. The craft teachers are constantly engaged in struggle with their school administration over facilities and materials. Their relative success in that struggle becomes a factor in their curriculum identity. This is especially evident in the interviews with the men for they identify even more with the facilities and equipment than women.

The relationship with machines is an important aspect of the craft subjects. First it should be noted that there is a big difference between the craft subjects in this respect. The number of tools used, both power tools and hand powered tools, is much higher in wood and metalwork than in textiles. The cost of equipment for wood and metalwork is

therefore quite high, both in terms of the actual machinery and supporting equipment such as ventilation systems and safety items. Wood and metalwork teachers speak of the danger and discomfort of their working environment. The workshops are noisy and dusty places, and in many cases the facilities are inadequate and poorly equipped. Managing the equipment and materials for instruction is physically demanding. In addition the danger of accidents is an ongoing concern.

Textiles includes instruction in the care and use of the sewing machine, which is the only power tool used in the subject. In woodwork, which has a larger share of the time allotment in the subject; students will eventually have access to electric drills, lathes, band saws and in some cases sanding and grinding wheels. Most schools are equipped with a combination woodwork machine consisting of a table saw, plane and beveller for teacher use. While mishaps can occur with a sewing machine, it is a safer piece of equipment than most of the woodworking machinery. The rotary action of drills, wheel saws, lathes and bevellers can lead to nasty accidents. Hair and clothing can get caught and loose bits of wood and other debris can fly away with great force, resulting in disability or even death. Flammable and explosive materials are used for soldering and fusing in metalwork.

Given the importance of the facilities for the subjects, it follows that the craft teachers see the struggle for improved facilities as a mission they must undertake. For the male wood and metalwork teachers especially, this struggle was an important part of their curriculum identity. It was generally accepted that in order to get improved facilities teachers had to

be 'pushy', 'damned fierce' and 'insistent'. Those who had not, thought that they had perhaps been 'too soft'. The importance of the facilities was discussed on different terms by the female wood and metalwork teachers, who questioned the emphasis on power tools and machinery in the subject. Their concern was that this posed the subject closer to industrial production than craft.

The material environment of the subject is an important factor in the curriculum for the facilities shape the instructional options. In order to offer a program of machine stitching the textile teacher has to have an adequate supply of sewing machines. The craft teachers are often hampered in their efforts to broaden the scope of content in their subjects by the traditions inherent in the facilities for instruction. For example, the wood and metalwork facilities are usually equipped for woodwork rather than metalwork, which makes the provision of metalwork instruction limited. For textile teachers techniques such as batik, dying and printing are difficult to implement as the studios do not include facilities for wet work (Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957; Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, b. 1959; Hera Sigurðardóttir, b. 1960) .

Last, but not least, several teachers mentioned the aesthetic message conveyed by the facilities for the subjects. Textile teachers emphasise that the studio should represent the aesthetic of textiles, the textures, colours and traditions should be evident in the visual environment that pupils work in (Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, b. 1942; Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir, b. 1948). Furthermore, the lack of aesthetic qualities in the facilities adds to any potential disaffection with the teaching situation (Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, b.

1939; Guðvarður Halldórsson, b. 1957; Ólöf Kristín Einarsdóttir, b. 1960). Conversely, good facilities are remembered with affection and pride (Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir, b. 1916; Sigurður Úlfarsson, b. 1919; Egill Strange, b. 1927; Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson, b. 1947).

In short, the craft teachers identify strongly with the material environment. The physical facilities for instruction that they work within are perceived as a reflection of their curriculum identity and their professional status. As discussed above, the way in which the human environment of the craft curriculum community is interpreted in the symbolic environment of craft education places the curriculum community in a marginal position within the education system and society at large. This marginality is then reflected in the physical location and condition of the facilities for instruction allocated to the curriculum community of crafts. The struggle for improved facilities is therefore more than an attempt at improving the working conditions for teachers and pupils. It is a struggle for legitimacy and centrality of the subjects, a struggle for their status in the symbolic environment.

### **Implications:**

This particular study suggests two main directions for further research; on the one hand the study of curriculum identity and on the other hand the study of gender issues in craft education. In the following paragraphs I will briefly mention research topics or issues based on those main directions. Furthermore, the study has certain implications for educational policy in the crafts.

In this study the concept of curriculum identity was applied to subjects that are marginal within the school system. Application of the concept to subjects that are central in the school system would have value both in terms of refining the concept and of shedding further light on the development of school subjects. Subjects such as languages, which are central in the Icelandic school system would be ideal for further research with a similar theoretical framework and research methods as this study.

Among research topics on gender issues in craft education, an account of the development of the Womens' Domestic Schools from the perspective of the curriculum community is long overdue. Such a study would be a significant contribution to feminist reassessment of the history of womens' education. Such a study would be timely for at this point the future of what remains of the institutions and facilities once belonging to the Women's Domestic Schools is being decided. Furthermore, a new rationale for the craft instruction offered by these institutions is emerging in the effort toward craft revival, in which women's craft cooperatives around the country are now engaged.

This study sheds light on the gender issues from the perspective of craft teachers, but very little is known about the perception that pupils and their parents have had of the subjects. It would be of immense interest for research and development in the craft subjects to investigate this further. In terms of further research on gender in craft education, further information on the lived curricula of girls in wood and metalwork and of boys in textiles, is needed. The parent generation of today's elementary school pupils is also an important group for further research, as they are the first generation that experienced compulsory

coeducation. Educational policy should ideally be based on such information, rather than the preconceptions of curriculum developers and/or the craft teachers themselves.

The policy implications of these findings are first and foremost that coeducation alone does not promote equality in craft education. The aims and objectives of crafts as school subjects must be redefined with reference to gender, that is the rationale for both subjects must account for their role in the education of girls and boys. Craft education has a gendered tradition which must be acknowledged and addressed, rather than denied and suppressed. The shift from compulsory gender segregated subjects to compulsory coeducation as the only option in offering craft instruction, diminishes the possibilities teachers have to meet the various needs of their pupils.

Research into the nature and development of crafts as school subjects is still in its infancy. Over this last decade the field of curriculum studies in Iceland has grown to form a community concentrating on the subject area of art and crafts. Thus the crafts can now be seen as a legitimate field of study and research into curriculum issues and problems. Gender issues are, in my opinion, still the major research interest within the craft area. This particular study indicates several areas where more research is needed, both historical research as well as ethnographic. Therein lies perhaps its greatest value, that it can serve as an incentive and foundation for further research.

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## APPENDIX: PARTICIPANTS

Alda Sveinsdóttir, art teacher born 1936

Ragnheiður Anna Thorarensen, textile teacher b. 1935 \*

Axel Jóhannesson, wood and metalwork teacher b. 1918 \*

Áslaug Sverrisdóttir, weaving instructor b. 1940

Ásrún Tryggvadóttir, textile and art teacher b. 1939 \*

Bryndís Björgvinsdóttir, art teacher b. 1957 \*

Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, textile teacher b. 1939 \*

Edda Guðrún Óskarsdóttir, art teacher b. 1938 \*

Egill Strange, wood and metalwork teacher b. 1927 \*

Elínbjört Jónsdóttir, weaving and art teacher b. 1947 \*

Gréta Mjöll Bjarnadóttir, art teacher b. 1958 \*

Guðrún Ásbjörnsdóttir, textile teacher b. 1959 \*

Guðrún Vigfúsdóttir, weaving instructor b. 1921 \*

Guðrún Þórhallsdóttir, art teacher b. 1925 \*

Guðvarður B. Halldórsson, wood and metalwork teacher b. 1957 \*

Gunnsteinn Gíslason, art teacher, b. 1946.

Hallfríður Tryggvadóttir, weaving and textile teacher b. 1942 \*

Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir, wood and metalwork teacher b. 1953 \*

Hera Sigurðardóttir, wood and metalwork teacher, b. 1960 \*

Hjördís Þorleifsdóttir, textile teacher b. 1932 \*

Ingimundur Ólafsson, wood and metalwork teacher b. 1913 \*

Ingólfur Gísli Ingólfsson, wood and metalwork teacher b. 1941 \*

- Ingunn Erna Stefánsdóttir, art teacher b. 1947 \*
- Jakobína Guðmundsdóttir, weaving instructor b. 1930 \*
- Júlíus Sigurbjörnsson wood and metalwork teacher b. 1946 \*
- Katrín Pálsdóttir art teacher b. 1944 \*
- Margrét Jóelsdóttir art teacher b. 1944 \*
- Ólöf Kristín Einarisdóttir wood and metalwork teacher b. 1960 \*
- Ragna Þórhallsdóttir textile teacher b. 1950 \*
- Sigríður Vigfúsdóttir textile teacher b. 1940 \*
- Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir textile teacher b. 1948 \*
- Sigurður Úlfarsson wood and metalwork teacher b. 1919 \*
- Sólveig Helga Jónasdóttir art teacher b. 1945 \*
- Svanhvít Friðriksdóttir textile teacher b. 1916 \*
- Svavar Jóhannesson wood and metalwork teacher b.1933 \*
- Vigdís Pálsdóttir textile teacher b. 1924 \*
- Vignir B. Árnason wood and metalwork teacher b. 1934 \*
- Þóra Lovísa Friðleifsdóttir art teacher b. 1952 \*
- Þórir Sigurðsson art teacher b. 1927 \*
- Þórleif Drífa Jónsdóttir textile teacher b. 1951 \*
- Þórunn Árnadóttir art and wood and metalwork teacher b. 1929 \*
- Örn Þorsteinsson art teacher b. 1948 \*