



My name is Sólveig Þórarinsdóttir. I have been working as a kindergarten teacher for the past 20 years, and the last 10 years I have been working as an administrator.

First as a principal in kindergarten Ösp in Breiðholt Reykjavik, and for the past 4 years as a vice principal in Dalskóli which is the newest school in Reykjavik with about 400 children. I graduated in 2003 as a kindergarten teacher from the University of Iceland.

(B.Ed) Then I finished my master's degree from the University of Akureyri in 2013 in Management of educational institutions (M.ed) I supervise 23 teachers in my school and 4 head teachers. In the kindergarten, we work with Reggio Emilia in arts and music and themes. I enjoy being outdoors, biking, hiking, swimming and enjoying nature. Staying with my family and travelling. My life motto - Always try to look at the positive in every situation and embrace every day with a positive mindset and be thankful for what I have. I think that the Icelandic school system is democratic, and we want every voice to be heard. There are many different methods of teaching and the schools try to meet the different needs of the children that attend the schools.

What is your role in Dalskóli?

I am a vice principal in the kindergarten part of Dalskóli

When you say Dalskóli - what images come to your mind? What differentiates your school from other schools in Reykjavik? Is there anything unique? Dalskóli is a joint kindergarten and primary school, and there is also a recreation center. It is the only such school in Reykjavik and that makes it special.

Dalskóli is creative and there is a lot of joy, and the children are the most important thing in the school and their voices get to be heard.

From your bio I see that your life motto is: Always try to look at the positive in every situation and embrace every day with a positive mindset and be thankful for what I have. How have you implemented these words in your teaching career?

If you want to last 20 years as a teacher, you have to enjoy your day to day work and see difficult days as a challenge and something to learn from and take with you going forward in your work.

You have to be ready to learn new things and develop at work. Mistakes are for learning from them, becoming better and being grateful for working with children. They teach you something new every day.

In the preschool that you run, you follow Reggio Emilia method. Could you briefly explain what it is and why you have chosen to take this path.

The Reggio Emilia approach is an educational philosophy and pedagogy focused on preschool and primary education. This approach is a student-centered and constructivist self-guided curriculum that uses self-directed, experiential learning in relationship-driven environments. The programme is based on the principles of respect, responsibility and community through exploration, discovery and play.

We chose Reggio Emilia because children have 100 voices, and they are creating and learning through exploration and discovery, and in my opinion, Reggio Emilia has a lot of respect for children and what they have to offer.

What social competences, according to you, are most important to teach ?

In my opinion, the most important thing is to teach them is cooperation, respect and to listen to others, and learn that it is better to work together than as individuals. Learn to respect yourself, and that we all have something to offer.

Outdoor learning is characteristic for all Scandinavian schools. How much time do you spend outdoors?

We go out every day, for part of the day, and three times a week one group is out in nature for a few hours.

What do you appreciate most in the Icelandic education system?

Freedom is what I appreciate most about the Icelandic education system. Although we work according to the curriculum, we have the freedom to work on projects within it, and thus we can allow the children to be participants in the education on their own terms and in their field of interest.

Do you like to be a teacher? What is the most pleasant and most difficult thing about it? How do you improve your qualifications?

Yes I would not be working in the field after 20 years if I did not like it. The most pleasant thing is to get to know the children and their families, and also all my co-workers from the schools I have worked at over these 20 years. The hardest part of the job is when there is a lack of teachers, and witness children and families who live in difficult social situations.

Do you visit schools abroad? Are there any good practices that you would like to implement in your school?

Yes, we have visited schools abroad, most recently about a month ago when we went to Sweden to visit a school that works according to Reggio Emilia. Whenever you visit a school abroad, there are some innovations

that can be used in your work at home. It is very rewarding to be in contact with colleagues in other countries. As I said, we work better together than separately.