

each province basically consist of three levels: elementary, secondary and post-secondary. The number of years required to complete each level and the dividing lines between them vary from province to province.

## Elementary and secondary education

6.2

At the elementary and secondary level, most public schools are operated by local education authorities according to public school acts of the provinces. This category includes Protestant and Roman Catholic separate schools, and schools operated in Canada by the defence department within the framework of the public system. Private schools, church-affiliated or non-sectarian, are operated and administered by private individuals or groups. Private kindergartens and nursery schools for children of pre-elementary age offer education at that level only. These schools may be church-affiliated and are administered by private individuals or groups. Schools for the handicapped provide special facilities and training. Most are under direct provincial government administration. Federal schools are administered directly by the federal government including overseas schools operated by the defence department for dependents of servicemen, and Indian schools operated by the Indian and northern affairs department.

**Local administration.** Schools in all provinces are established under a public school act and operated by local authorities answering to the provincial government and resident ratepayers. Provincial authorities delineate school board areas. With the growth of cities and towns, and of educational facilities and requirements, small local boards have been consolidated into central, regional or county units with jurisdiction over both elementary and secondary schools in a wider area. The boards, composed of elected or appointed trustees or commissioners, are responsible for school management. Their powers are determined and delegated by the legislature or education departments and vary from province to province. Generally, they handle the business aspects of education — establishment and maintenance of schools, appointment of teachers, purchase of supplies and equipment, details of school construction and budget preparation. Boards are authorized to levy taxes and manage grants from the department.

**Grade structure.** School attendance is compulsory for about 10 years in every province — the starting age is 5, 6 or 7, and the minimum leaving age, 15 or 16. However, the elementary-secondary program usually extends over 12 years. Particularly in urban areas, local authorities may also provide an introductory year of education prior to grade one. More than 1,200 private kindergartens operate under varying degrees of provincial supervision. Some private kindergartens admit 3-year-olds.

Before the secondary level, education is general and basic. High school students usually have a choice of two programs — academic or vocational. The latter range from one to four years. At one time secondary schools were predominantly academic and prepared students for university. Vocational schools were separate institutions, located only in large cities. Today, in addition to technical and commercial high schools, most secondary institutions are composite or comprehensive. Programs include both purely academic courses as a prelude to university, and vocational courses that prepare students either for an occupation or for further post-secondary non-university education. Vocational training covers such subjects as home economics, agriculture, shop-work and commercial skills.

The principle of promotion by subject has been implemented to a greater extent in secondary schools than at the elementary level. Some jurisdictions have partially or entirely eliminated age-grouped classes. The length of schooling depends on accumulation of a requisite number of credits. Thus subject-promotion is replacing grade-promotion. Most provinces have abolished external graduating examinations administered by the education department; schools conduct their own. Diplomas are still issued by the province on the recommendation of individual schools.

## Other types of schools

6.2.1

**Separate schools.** One obvious difference among provincial education systems is in provision for separate schools. Some provinces allow religious groups to establish