

Private schools are operated and administered by individuals or groups. Schools for the handicapped, most under direct provincial government administration, provide special facilities and training. Federal schools are administered directly by the federal government.

One obvious difference among provincial education systems is provision for separate schools. Some provinces allow religious groups to establish schools under the authority of the education department. They must conform to department regulations on curriculum, textbooks and teacher certification. As legal corporations, separate school boards can levy taxes and receive government grants.

About 5% of all elementary-secondary students attend schools that are run independently of the public systems. Provincial policies vary from direct operating grants to no provincial support.

A number of strategies have been developed to educate children with special needs or abilities, an estimated 5% to 10% of all students. They may be accommodated in separate institutions (public or private) or in special or integrated classes in regular schools. For academically gifted students there are enriched and accelerated programs. Schools for the blind and deaf are generally administered directly by a province, sometimes by interprovincial agreement. Many local systems provide special schools or classes for children with learning disabilities.

Although education is primarily a provincial responsibility, the federal government has assumed direct control over the education of persons beyond the bounds of provincial jurisdiction: native people, armed forces personnel and their families, and the inmates of federal penal institutions.

Education of registered Indian and Inuit children is an obligation of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. The Minister of the department is authorized to maintain schools for these children directly or provide access to educational services in public or private schools.

In 1986-87, the federal government owned and operated 141 schools on Indian reserves. In addition, native band councils managed 244 schools, although the Minister makes regulations on matters such as curriculum, buildings, inspection and teaching.

In the Yukon and Northwest Territories, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs cooperates with the territorial departments of education for the schooling of native children.

Across Canada, about half the native children attend provincial public schools. The federal

government reimburses the provinces, either by paying tuition or contributing to the schools' capital costs.

Counselling units in Ottawa and Winnipeg assist northern native students attending high school, technical school, college or university in Southern Canada.

The Department of National Defence maintains schools for dependents of service personnel at military establishments in Canada and overseas. The curriculum of these schools in Canada follows that of the province where they are located. The policy, however, is to avoid building schools where children can attend local institutions. Provinces are reimbursed on a per-pupil basis for armed forces dependents in public schools.

In 1986-87, there were nine overseas schools — in Belgium, the Netherlands and the Federal Republic of Germany. The curriculum to Grade 8 in the English schools is not patterned after any province; Grades 9 to 13 follow the Ontario curriculum. In the French schools, all grades follow the Quebec curriculum.

Grade structure. School attendance is compulsory for about 10 years in every province. The starting age is 6 or 7, and the minimum leaving age, 15 or 16. The elementary-secondary program, however, usually extends over 12 years. In most provinces, kindergarten classes are provided in public elementary schools; in other provinces, the only pre-Grade 1 classes are in private schools operating under varying degrees of provincial supervision.

Levels within elementary-secondary schools differ from one province to another. The elementary level covers the first six grades in most jurisdictions; in others, Grades 7 and/or 8 are considered elementary. As a result, interprovincial variations also exist at the secondary (high) school level. These schools include five or six grades and may be further subdivided into junior high schools, senior high schools or junior-senior high schools.

The curriculum of elementary-secondary schools also varies, although the provinces share general commonalities. Programs from Grade 1 to the beginning of secondary school are usually designed to develop the same basic skills in reading, writing, speaking and mathematics.

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 offer both purely academic courses as a prelude to university; and vocational courses ranging from one to four years that prepare students either for an occupation or for