

functions in conjunction with an elite system of private schools. In Japan, however, the elite universities are the imperial universities (public) and private post-secondary institutions appear to vary more widely in their standards than they do in the United States.

## Secondary Education in Canada and Japan

Canada is a federal state where each of the ten provinces has complete jurisdiction over education. While the central government has taxation powers, and makes a substantial financial contribution, in the case of education (as well as to health), it has been unable or unwilling to set educational standards for either primary, secondary or post-secondary institutions, including those for the education of teachers. There have been and continue to be ten provincial systems of education. Ontario, which has traditionally had 13 years of schooling (5 in high school) is now coming in line with the other provinces with 16 years of schooling and the standard 4 years of high school. However, in Quebec, the final year of high school and the first year of university are taken at a local college and this pattern differs from most others. Some provinces have junior high school, but elementary school is generally considered to be composed of grades 1–8. High school is generally composed of grades 9–12, Quebec of course being the exception.

In Japan, the nature of the unitary state has made for a centralized system of education with some power resting with the prefectures. The national examinations for university entrance which are written by most students (80 percent), creates a high degree of uniformity in education that is completely absent at the national level in Canada. More recently there has been some discussion of inter-provincial co-operation on these matters. By and large Canadian universities accept students on the basis of the marks they obtain on the examinations designed and administered by each school.

In Canada, the 1960's marked an abrupt change in the nature of education. Up until that time, in Ontario (the most populous province), for example, province-wide examinations had been administered at the end of the final year of high school. Indeed prior to that time, province wide examinations had been administered at other levels of the educational system as well. These examinations were used as qualifications for job seekers and for admission to university. Universities in Canada do not have admission examinations. The change in Ontario, although perhaps the most dramatic, was not that much different from other provinces. The change left the standards of secondary education up to the individual school. Concurrently, individual schools which had formerly had their own elected boards were put into larger districts with more centralized administration, making them more remote from parents, and less subject to parental and local influence. More power accrued to teachers and administrators as a result of this process and eventually there was considerable variation among schools.

The abolition of standard examination requirements was linked to a new philosophy of education which was "student centred", and focused on individuals developing at their own pace to their own potential. Amidst this atmosphere the more regimented private schools found themselves 'unpopular' and faced declining enrolments in the 1960's. While the ethos of the reforms was well intentioned, in practice, the absence of examinations and the absence of a specified curriculum, specified texts, and required courses did not always serve students well, particularly students who came from less advantaged backgrounds.

In Japan, the 1960's also saw a degree of democratization in the public system of education. From the 1960's through the 1970's, a number of prefectures made the decision to assign students to schools on what was roughly a random basis rather than on the basis of ability. Such practices had the backing of the teachers' union (Kariya, 1998). Prior to these changes schools had had a reputation in a status hierarchy of schools and had admitted students on the basis of their ability. The change meant that the ranking of schools based on their academic reputation no longer functioned effectively, and with little in the way of tracking within these schools, the efforts of teachers to teach students of varied academic ability was not as successful. As a result, formerly prestigious schools could no longer guarantee the same outcomes for the most able students. However, the examinations continued to be administered on a national basis, so the criteria for school performance and student performance remained in place. Nevertheless, for parents and students, there was a