

it difficult to ask whether the narrow spectrum of intellectual properties targeted are the entire range of properties on which education ought to focus.

Adapting to the school system is another key part of the educational experience. Even if a student closely fits the model for whom the system has been designed, there is no guarantee that she or he will succeed by traditional standards, such as grades. This is because the skills of teachers as educators vary to a large degree. The more homogeneous the students and the more the teacher is like the students, in class and culture, the more likely a student is to achieve high grades within the public education system.

The Myth of Meritocracy

The third general assumption about the school system is that the rationale behind the operation of public education is necessary for the social and economic system to continue. The argument is that the school system in its present form prepares people for a social structure that is dependent on a certain form of social order. The public school system is important as an objective, dispassionate, impartial, rational mechanism for 1) ensuring that children learn, and 2) differentiating the abilities of students to determine who will have access to higher education, credentials, and jobs. The school system is set up as the basis of the meritocracy.

The assumption of meritocracy is that people are not equal in their talents and abilities nor are their strengths of equal importance. Meritocracy has been justified because it has been presumed that social and economic efficiency and progress are necessary. These are dependent on identifying and rewarding people whose natural gifts sustain the welfare, culture and progress of society. Education is the medium for meritocracy. Inequality is, according to these assumptions, not only justifiable, but necessary.

These are dangerous assumptions. There is no necessity for the education system to operate as it now does. In fact,