

equal for each child in the school system. The third presumption is that the education system is structured and run in a way that is necessary for the continuation of the current economic and social systems. The final myth is that the structure of the education system results in a social and economic system that ensures equality based on ability.

These four assumptions tend to be framed both as prescriptive and descriptive—in other words, they both ought to be the case and they are the case.

Many people who work in and influence the education system act upon these assumptions as though they are fact. They will argue that integration is either unnecessary or damaging to the education system's accomplishments. Any person who challenges the educational system by attempting to integrate children with mental handicaps will encounter the resistance of these teachers and administrators. It is important to understand their position based on these assumptions and to decide the soundness of this position.

The Myth of Universality in Education

The first assumption is that education in Canada is universal; in other words, that everyone has access to it. Universal and free education has been held as both a right and a necessity in a democratic society. It is a right because, in Canada, we believe that people should be able to read and write and to have equal opportunity in life. It is considered necessary that education be universal because it is assumed that people learn a basic set of social values in school. Education is considered so important that it has been made compulsory.

What realities challenge the universal education myth? The reality is that there has never been a truly universal education system in Canada. Historically, many people have been excluded from the mainstream education system. While most of those people are now provided with some form of education, the quality is inconsistent. And there still exists an entire class of people who have no access to the regular school