

## Education and civil society

Toward the end of the 20th century, comprehensive theories—such as those represented by the consensus and conflict models—were increasingly viewed as oversimplifications of social processes and, in many quarters, gave way to more particularized interpretations. One such perspective viewed educational expansion and extension less as a function of national interest and more as a by-product of religious, economic, political, and cultural changes that had occurred across most of Europe. Especially in the wake of the Enlightenment, an emphasis on the glorification of God was joined by the growing celebration of human progress (ultimately defined as economic growth), while concerns for the salvation of the soul were augmented by the cultivation of individual potential. As nation-states with centralized governments extended citizenship rights in the 18th century, state sponsorship of schools began to supersede the church-supported instruction that had become the norm in the 16th and 17th centuries. According to such scholars as John Meyer and Michael Hannan in *National Development and the World System: Educational, Economic, and Political Change, 1950–1970* (1979), formal systems of education not only represent the means by which nation-states have modernized and prospered economically but are also the surest route to enhancing the talents of individuals. As a requirement for all children and youths between certain ages and as an institution regulated by the

state, schooling also became the primary agency for creating citizens with equal responsibilities and rights.

These values emerged in education systems throughout the world, especially in the late 20th century as education professionals promoted them in developed and less-developed countries alike. As such, schools effectively carried modernity into many parts of the world, where it was met with varying degrees of resistance and acceptance. Teachers, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and government agencies contributed, for example, to standardization in the shape and style of the classroom, types of curricula, and goals for school enrollments. In the first half of the 20th century, schools in most industrialized countries came to exhibit similar characteristics—that is, schools could be identified as schools. By the second half of the 20th century, these traits had become prominent in most schools around the world.