

The traditional role of the Office of Education for nearly a century was that of collecting and disseminating education data.

In sharp contrast, the result of changing national and worldwide economic, social, and technological circumstances and the subsequent enactment by the Congress of large-scale programs of financial assistance to education to meet pressing nationwide needs, the Office finds itself in the role of administrator of vast financial operations to help support elementary and secondary education, higher education, student financial aid, vastly expanded vocational programs, newly devised manpower development and training activities, library development, the improvement of State departments of education, upgrading of teachers, help to the handicapped and disadvantaged, and research, to cite some of the major areas of current challenge.

At the same time during the decade of the 1960's, as Secretary Gardner cited on November 18 before the Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations of the Committee on Government Operations of the U.S. Senate—

this decade is characterized by (1) civil rights struggle and (2) the extraordinary reshaping of our Federal-State-Local Government relationships.

Add to these unprecedented developments the financial magnitude of the challenge to the Office of Education of a budget which grew in about 4 years from three-quarters of a billion dollars to considerably over 3 billion, and it can readily be understood that the Office had to change radically in organization and personnel to do its new work effectively.

I need not invite the attention of this distinguished group of legislators to President Johnson's "vigorous and determined interest in good management." Out of these factors emerged the reorganization of the Office of Education, including a commitment to a policy of decentralizing a number of functions and services to the established regional headquarters. The thrust of regionalization is to bring essential program services requisite to efficient administration close to where the State, local, and institutional education leaders are.

Washington is far from the college or school district in northern Maine. Travel is very expensive and travel time is at a premium. Often States and local institutions lack any but the most meager travel funds. Federal personnel stationed in regional offices are readily available to applicants for assistance and can maintain firsthand knowledge of needs, assist in understanding and interpreting legislation, and in developing plans and applications. At little cost they can visit the State or local situation and make recommendations or decisions on the basis of firsthand knowledge.

Regional personnel are in a favored position to cooperate with related Federal and State agencies to bring to bear on the solution of problems of common concern and, I should add, human need, a multiple array of departmental services.

A case in point is the recent joint visits to each State of Federal Health, Education, and Welfare staff members with the help of their State counterparts to study and reveal all the services available or that are lacking in a State as they affect or could affect the lives of human beings of all ages needing assistance. Human problems are so complex that a single agency approach, as in the case of the poor or the exceptional, is generally too limited to be of really lasting help.