

Major Problems

It is important to point out that there has been no infringement or reduction of local control over educational programs. Although there were indications in the beginning stages that the Economic Opportunity Act Administration might seriously infringe upon local control, these threats have gradually been overcome. There is, in fact, considerable evidence to indicate educational programs have been strengthened substantially through Federal funds. Nevertheless certain problems have occurred.

1. Each recent act has been for a specific purpose, has required the development of an involved application and establishment of separate standards, and has required separate fiscal and quality controls. Categorical aid projects have proliferated the number of budget accounts and evaluation reports.
2. Serious staff deficiencies have occurred in the need for personnel with specific types of training and experience. There has been a substantial increase in the demands for in-service education programs not provided for in the specific purpose program funds. There has also been a great increase in administrative load without adequate increases in staff to handle the load, and projects do not provide funds to relieve such extra loads.
3. There have been serious delays in Federal funding. Programs have been hastily organized without assurance that the Federal funds would in fact be available. This delay has resulted in serious problems in local administration and has not made possible sound fiscal or educational planning. More recently partial funding has been provided with considerable delay and full funding prolonged beyond the period of reasonable and efficient use, if received at all. Funds are more effectively and efficiently used when they are received in advance. Better planning, staffing, and operation of projects will occur when authorized projects are fully funded.
4. In some cases state plans and Federal administrative regulations have been extremely complex and beyond the basic requirements of the act. In other cases few understandable guidelines have been provided. Both have added to the complexity of administration. More effective, efficient, and dynamic local programs will be possible when state plans and Federal regulations are less confusing and better coordinated.
5. Categorical aid funds may be useful as incentives to districts to develop projects to meet special needs but have made it difficult for them to maintain balanced and articulated educational programs. The result has been serious planning and organizational problems. Once incentive levels are achieved and special needs are being met, it would be better programming to appropriate and allocate funds on non-complex basic aid bases.