

The Evolving Role of Government in Education Essay

The introduction

A brief overview of important historical points

The role of government in American education is considered to be a question of great sensitivity. Generally, one is to keep in mind that originally “policymakers have supported state and local control rather than federal directives and federal education legislation has normally contained strong prohibitions against federal control of education” (Orfield, 2004, p. 4).

In other words, there was a need to protect a national department of education from any abuse of government. General support for American society and fears of radical changes prevented government legislation for many years.

Traditionally, there were the conservatives, who tried to protect education from federal control; liberals and moderates, however, were of the opposite opinion and wanted to develop federal programs, in order to support the growth of educational establishments.

It should be pointed out that the supporters of public education also wanted to involve the federal government in education, in order to equalize funding of the establishments and create a strong support for poor children. Thus, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which was created in the mid of the sixties, led to a significant governmental role in public education.

The thesis statement

The impact of the federal government on public education is recognized to be extremely important for the development of American society. Although the evolving role of the federal government is regarded ambiguously, nobody can deny the fact that various education programs and laws created by the federal organizations help improve students' academic achievement.

The body

When discussing the evolving role of the federal government in education, there is a need to consider some important historical data. Thus, first of all, it is necessary to trace back the events, which had a great impact on modern education system formation. As far as there are a lot of data concerning the education system of American society, one is to keep in mind that there are key events, which are to be highlighted. On the other hand, it is necessary to touch on the most influential events the modern system of education is related to.

The No Child Left Behind Act

In the early eighties, the Department of Education was created; the main purpose of its establishment was to promote "student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access" (Nelson, 2011, p. 1). Twenty years later, the federal government established one of the most important laws for the education system development, which greatly impacted on education restructuring.

The No Child Left Behind Act is recognized to be an extremely important document for American society, as it sets needs for particular purposes in relation to education progress in peculiar subjects. The No Child Left Behind Act is an unfunded mandate, which provides the states with federal education funding.

However, NCLB was regarded as an aggressive entry into a long-established educational policy of the USA, as according to its requirements certain penalties could be imposed on schools, if annual progress aims for establishments had not been met.

From a civil rights perspective, however, certain chapters of NCLB are regarded positively in the principle of “the insistence on accountability for racial and ethnic minorities, the policies for more qualified teachers, the requirement to offer choices to students in failing schools, and the aspirations for substantial progress for all groups of students” (Orfield, 2004, p. 4-5).

Generally, the principles of NCLB are rather ambiguous, as the law rearranges relations between the states and government; thus, in some fields the control over the federal government can be both decentralized and expanded.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act

Another document created by the federal government, which should be analyzed is the first title of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

It appeared to help economically deprived learners. ESEA provides high poverty schools with additional resources. So, one can make a conclusion that ESEA reauthorization provided by NCLB, can be regarded as a necessary step to help economically and educationally disadvantaged students.

Generally, major policy changes of ESEA reauthorization of Title I include equal educational outcomes, certain deadlines to improve students' academic achievement, test-based accountability expansion (this point is related to all students), etc. Some words must be said about Improving America's Schools Act. It should be noted that “IASA was notable for mandating that challenging standards apply to all students, including those receiving Title I services” (Sunderman & Kim, 2004, p. 16).

The implications of NCLB

The major implications of The No Child Left Behind Act for the Governance of Education expand the role of government in the education process, change federal-state dependence in relation to education control, and give an opportunity to reform educational systems. When speaking about federal-state relations, one is to keep in mind that NCLB implementation caused both intergovernmental conflict and cooperation.

The conflict was caused by strict deadlines, strong beliefs, fiscal constraints, certain requirements, etc. However, the most important issue is that “grassroots political support is eroding as elements of NCLB increased the bureaucratic burden on districts or disrupted the normal functioning of schools” (Sunderman & Kim, 2004, p. 25).

The federal government vs. non-federal organizations: a comparative overview

It seems that the role of government in education is really great; of course, there are certain distinctions between the federal efforts and non-federal ones. For instance, when speaking about the Core Standards, there is a need to state that they were created by the national efforts. Moreover, most states supported The Common Core Standards Initiative of 2010.

The document reflects the kinds of skills, which students should possess according to their grade level. Assessments, in their turn, were created to check whether The Core Standards are met or not. In other words, the system works in such a way that students, who are not progressing, must be punished. On the other hand, The Race to the Top was implemented by the federal government.

In spite of the fact that this program shuts down underperformers, financial incentives are also used to reward those, who meet the expectations and requirements of academic performance. The federal government provides the

schools with huge sums of money, if departmental expectations of the government in relation to students' academic achievement and conduct are met.

The key issue in education

While speaking about the effectiveness of federal and non-federal programs, it is necessary to highlight the key question, i.e. *what is the learning process for students?*

First of all, it should be pointed out that there is a strong need to develop a love for learning. However, the process of development is not easy at all, as it requires a student's intelligent flexibility. The success of the learning process mostly depends upon well educated teachers. They are to show students *how* interesting a certain discipline is.

In most cases, students describe the learning process as extremely difficult. For this reason, the primary task of both federal and non-federal organizations is to think about the ways to arouse students' interest in education as well as about the ways to facilitate this process.

The conclusion

To promote interest of learning, it is necessary to develop the so-called intellectual virtues: "courage in asking questions, caution in forming opinions, candor about their shortcomings, attentiveness to the speech of others, industry in preparation, and meticulousness in expression" (Nelson, 2004, p. 4).

If the above-mentioned virtues could be so easily achieved, there would be no so strong necessary to reform educational systems. There are not only the members of federal and non-federal organizations, who must understand that education is extremely important for social cohesion.

First of all, there are students, who must understand the importance of education. The evolving role of government in education gives us an opportunity to judge challenges in the system of education experiences. Thus, we can say for sure whether the government plays an enormous role in education development or not.

It is obvious that the federal government is important for the system of education. It is important for students, whose rights are also protected by law. “Students who believe that a constitutionally protected right has been violated by the action of the school district may bring an action against the school board, administrators and teachers under Section 1983 of the Civil Rights Act of 1871” (Dennis, 2000, para. 54).

References

Dennis, R. (2000). The Role of the Federal Government in Public Education in the United States. [Bucknell.edu](#). Web.

Nelson, C. (2011). The Role of the Federal Government in Education and Consideration of Common Core Standards and a National Curriculum. *St. John's College*. Web.

Orfield, G. (2004). [Foreword: Federal State Relationships](#). *Ucla. edu*. Web.

Sunderman, G., & Kim, J. (2004). [Expansion of Federal Power in American Education: Federal-State Relationships Under The No Child Left Behind Act, Year One](#). *Ucla. edu*. Web.