

REORGANIZATION OF THE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

(Notes for the Commissioner's Remarks)

INTRODUCTION

Since 1960, when the organization of OE was last studied, the programs administered by the Office have grown from about half a billion dollars to about three and one-half billion. The number of employees and of individual programs has grown apace and the end is not in sight. The character of OE today is drastically changed from that of even five years ago and a new structure must be provided to reflect that change and to meet effectively the heavy demands upon us.

PROBLEMS IN PRESENT ORGANIZATION

A number of organizational deficiencies are evident in the present structure of OE. Some of these were flagged by the White House Task Force. Others have been apparent for some time. These include:

1. Certain functions not adequately provided for. We have long recognized that among the most significant gaps in our structure has been the absence of an effective program planning and evaluation function. Our statutory and executive order responsibilities for inter-agency coordination have also been staffed inadequately, and there has been a lack of effective internal coordinating mechanisms with regard to the various programs of the Office. As a result, I have experienced significant difficulty in exercising effective leadership with respect to developing and administering OE programs.

2. Fragmented pattern of organization. There has been a strong tendency for OE to create a new Branch for each title of each statute. This has caused unnecessary layering and delay but, more significantly,

it has deprived branch heads of adequate breadth and scope for contributing significantly to inter-program comparisons and evaluations. In addition, we have found it necessary to establish new units for each new authorized program, thus contributing to the delay in implementation of new legislation.

3. Anomalies in assignments. No one of the five major constituents of the Office has all of the functions which would logically be suggested by its title. Some functions are divided among as many as three bureaus - research, for example. Although I do not regard this division of functions as a serious problem - indeed, some division is probably inevitable - the confusing nomenclature and assignment of functions has been a source of difficulty for our clients and other outside groups.

4. Field organization. Our approach to work in the field has been halting, uncertain, and characterized by patchwork. We have placed Regional Representatives of the Commissioner in the field without adequately defining their authorities and responsibilities and without giving them the wherewithal to perform the functions assigned to them. The 1962 field study resulted in only modest suggestions for strengthening the field which did not appear to me to offer significant promise for improvement. With a three and one-half billion dollar program, reaching into fifty states and 25,000 school districts, we must now plan to have far greater strength in the field.

5. Management and service functions. The program bureaus have been significantly burdened with unnecessary administrative details in the areas of personnel, fiscal and contract administration. The

Bureaus should be freed to concentrate on program matters and on those aspects of management which are essential to the discharge of their responsibilities, while the staff offices should be organized so as better to assist and facilitate Bureau operations - within OE guidelines and policy.

6. Communications. Lateral and vertical communications have been entirely inadequate. Coupled with the pattern of organizational fragmentation, this has accentuated the tendency to view each and every statutory authorization as separate and inviolable.

CONCEPT OF NEW ORGANIZATION

Henry, Wayne, and I, and the Task Force, are in agreement on the basic features of a new organization. The substantial growth in programs supporting higher education and the emergence of adult education programs now make it possible to organize OE primarily on the basis of levels of education. I have determined that our three principal operating Bureaus should be organized around programs serving elementary-secondary education, higher education, and adult education. This will permit the maximum concentration of office resources in relation to the purposes to be served by the authorizing legislation. It should permit us to attract and retain the highest quality personnel in the nation to fill key positions in these principal Bureaus. It should clarify the names and functions of our principal operating Bureaus, facilitate the relations of the Office with the educational community, and reduce the number of separate contact points for many of our clients.

The decision to establish a Bureau for adult education obviously poses a difficult question with regard to vocational education. Clearly, manpower

training programs should be assigned to such a Bureau and I have concluded that vocational education would best be housed there as well. I think it would be very cumbersome if such programs were split between this Bureau and the elementary-secondary bureau. Furthermore, I believe that vocational education will increasingly become a subject of post-secondary concern. Since I favor that development, I believe it would be desirable for our organization structure not only to reflect it but, indeed, to spur it on. While this arrangement will make the elementary-secondary bureau somewhat incomplete, I have determined that we must pay that price in order to achieve our other purposes. I will, of course, expect close cooperation between the two bureaus in regard to education programs at the secondary level.

While our basic structure will reflect the levels-of-education approach, I feel that practical considerations argue strongly for the retention of a National Center for Educational Statistics - substantially as now constituted, though augmented somewhat by the assignment of survey functions now carried out elsewhere. Similarly, I believe we should have a genuine Bureau of Research - divested of extraneous functions and strengthened by assignment of research functions now performed elsewhere. This is required in order to increase greatly the strength and stature of OE personnel in developing a research program, in stimulating research activity, and in evaluating research proposals. At the same time, I believe the internal organization of this Bureau should include a general purpose research division and other divisions corresponding to each of the other bureaus to ensure responsiveness to the needs of their programs. (It may be necessary to combine higher education with general research for the time being.)

It should be emphasized that, in an organization as complex as this one, there is no way to organize which will eliminate all problems of coordination and neatly package all aspects of our programs within Bureau lines. For this reason, I will expect to see freer and more thorough communications within and between our major organizational units. We will also have a continuing need for strong staff elements in a number of areas. These include program planning and evaluation, information, legislation, and administration. I have also decided that a continuing and valuable contribution can be made by an Office of Federal-State Relations. We may also establish a separate Office for Contracts and Construction Services, although this has not yet been determined finally.

Because it is clear that our international education activities cannot properly be organized within a single bureau under our new structure, I have determined that we will also need a [special assistant] [staff office] for international education to oversee the performance of functions in this area by the several bureaus. I also expect to have a Special Assistant who will support me in regard to my supervision of the regional staffs. Finally, we will need, for at least a transitional period, staff offices in the areas of equal education opportunities and programs for education of the disadvantaged.

ASSIGNMENT OF FUNCTIONS UNDER NEW ORGANIZATION

The essential structure of the Office will be as shown on the chart, though the exact titles of the bureaus are subject to revision. The division structure shown on the chart is highly tentative as is the branch structure which has been drawn up to support these divisions. I am asking the full cooperation of key officials with the Task Force this week in refining the division and branch structure and the assignment of functions which has been tentatively announced

at these levels. I would emphasize, however, that this tentative structure is based on our strong desire to break the stranglehold of organization by statutory titles. Accordingly, I urge that in our efforts to refine the proposed branch and division structure, we keep this consideration in the forefront.

I will also appreciate an aggressive and imaginative approach by top staff toward identifying functions which can effectively be performed in the field. The emphasis should be on delegating, wherever practicable, the power to make decisions at that level - within policies and guidelines established by headquarters.

CONCLUSION

I know that reorganization is always troublesome and disruptive but, from time to time, it is essential. The President and the Congress have placed a heavy trust in us. We must move quickly and decisively to complete the new structure and get on with the job. I'm sure I can count on your full support.