

U.S. PUBLIC EDUCATION: COLORADO AS A WELFARE STATE

A THESIS

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By

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Abstract

This paper discusses the historical progression of the transformation of Colorado's public education system from one that prioritizes providing excellent academic outcomes for students into one that prioritizes meeting the non-academic health and welfare needs of students. This paper explains how the Colorado public education system's transformation into a welfare-based system has been influenced by U.S. government policies underlying federal programs and legislation that reflect welfare values. The paper demonstrates that Colorado public schools are now used as vehicles for the redistribution of funds within the state to achieve federal adopted social service policies and goals rather than state level academic policies and goals for Colorado's students and educators. This paper presents arguments and possible solutions for returning the Colorado public education system to its original priority of delivering strong academic experiences to students by correcting the current misalignment between federally funded or mandated programs and Colorado's locally-derived public school values, needs and priorities.

Colorado Public Schools: A Welfare State

The purpose of this historical research is to better understand how U.S. public schools, and those in the State of Colorado in particular, have progressed from seeking to provide equal access to academic opportunities for their students. Once a public system favoring resource allocations focusing on the academic needs of the student-learner in their school system, has now progressed to nationally focused funding redistribution schemes that focus on the economic and social welfare needs of the student populations in less affluent communities. This paper examines the effects of welfare-based programs on K-12 public education in Colorado. The goal

of this research is to deconstruct the historical progression of education-as-welfare programs from 1965 until present. Guiding questions for this research entail: how Colorado's funding and education values have shifted over time to fit into the "welfare state" system; who is responsible for creating a system that devalues Colorado students; and how do Colorado educators function in the "welfare state" system?

This paper also analyzes and exposes how federal welfare programs delivered through Colorado's K-12 public education system have caused a shift in priorities away from student achievement in civic education at a local level to the re-allocation of money and attention to standardized, nationally-based social and economic achievements desired by policy-makers at both the federal and state levels. This paper will identify historical examples of federal policy influences over the Colorado K-12 public education system that have had and continue to transform the system into one that aims to close economic gaps in Colorado's population instead of eliminating the achievement gaps across Colorado school districts.

This paper argues that increasingly centralized education decisions, standards and funding in the Colorado public K-12 education system based on federal policies is minimizing local control over public schooling policies, decisions and practices in an unhealthy way. Resulting from this heavy top-down influence is that parents and guardians are being pushed out, the quality of education is faltering and students are achieving less academic success. The intended outcome of this paper is to provide recommendations to Colorado K-12 public school educators on how they might correct the current misalignment between the welfare-state system that now exists and Colorado's need for solutions based on locally-derived values, needs and priorities.

Methods

This paper uses historical critiques of federal education policies as a vehicle for constructing an idiographic causation methodology. This holistic research design is dependent on idiographic causes that are contextualized in federally initiated education policies. Grounded in historical policy, this paper is structured chronologically based on the implementation dates of major federal education policies and programs. Policies and programs addressed in this paper were selected based on their overall impact on the education system and presented in chronological order: Elementary and Secondary Act, Head Start, No Child Left Behind, Race To The Top, Blueprint, and the ESEA Student Act. Each federal policy or program is critiqued based on its financial impact on education and how the values of the federal initiative contribute to the larger welfare system.

Due to the researcher's association and relationship with Colorado public schools, the State of Colorado is utilized as a micro representation of one of the many states that is functioning within the confines of the larger welfare-based system. This paper critiques each of the previously mentioned policies as causality for the current education system in Colorado. An idiographic methodology grounded in historical context is utilized to best explain how Colorado public schooling has continued to function within the structure of welfare system.

Keywords: education as welfare, education welfare policies, federal education, Colorado public schools, student welfare

Review of Literature

This literature review is an extensive historical critique of U.S. public school's transformation into a welfare state. A historical critique of federal education programs and their impact on students, teachers and staff in the Colorado public schools is essential for developing future recommendations for the State of Colorado. These recommendations, grounded in historical evidence, are intended to serve as a pathway to restoring the Colorado's K-12 public education system to its pre-1965 focus on the academic success of its students.

Historical Overview of A Welfare State

A "welfare state" is a public system of prioritizing and protecting all citizens' health and well-being (Rose, 2013). The United States welfare state is a collection of federal programs intended to establish economic security for all citizens. Welfare programs are designed to guarantee fundamental necessities such as food, shelter, childhood protection, medical care, and elderly care (Katz, 2016). Welfare seeks to provide all children and families with these necessities through the allocation of benefits such as pensions or grants. Welfare states work within the confines of federally funded programs or pensions. Welfare programs are approved by the federal government and supported by state collected taxes, which notably are the same funds responsible for backing local public schools. Once federally approved, funds are then allocated to specific government agencies, and then distributed to state officials to support specific welfare services. Education programs are similar to welfare services because they are funded by state-collected tax dollars, are administered by centralized governmental agencies, and target people in need of support or security. Colorado K-12 public school educators can benefit from a better understanding of how the top-down, welfare-state economic structure of their school system has

created and fueled an unstable co-dependency between local public education and federal funding sources.

The federal side of this co-dependent relationship principally resides in the U.S. Department of Education (USDE, 2016). Administered by the U.S. Secretary of Education, the USDE is a cabinet level department in the executive branch of the U.S. Government. The USDE's basic purpose is to implement policies that result in a strong, equal, civic education for all students so they are prepared for global competitiveness. Federal policies are utilized as means of laws and guidance intended to limit federal involvement in public education. For example, the USDE operates within the policy confinements stated in the legislation, regulation, and guidance of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

The USDE values equal public education across all school districts. Their values of equality are evident through the increasing amounts of government programs and pensions emerging in local public schools (Gunlock, 2014). The U.S. government considers education equal when all citizens receive the same educational experience. Equity is kept in mind while attempting to provide equal schooling opportunities. Equity seeks to provide citizens with what they need but is more challenging for the federal government to ensure equity across public school districts (Rose, 2013). Equality is the foundation for the current education welfare state. Over the decades of public schooling, a pattern emerges within the economic redistribution through federal welfare programs. The federal government continues to extract increasing amounts of state tax payer dollars from Colorado's local control with the intent of funding welfare education programs.

The USDE was not established to engage in welfare operations, which is within the purview of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). HHS is responsible for

protecting the health, well-being and safety of American citizens. Despite HHS' mandate, many USDE policies use public education institutions as a vehicle for delivering health and nutritional services (HHS, 2016). Pursuing a stated goal of equality of education across the nation, the USDE determines educational policy in a top-down approach with application to all public schools. Administering universal welfare-based education programs under the guidance of the USDE, which is evident in programs like NCLB, allows for the federal government to better facilitate and monitor accountability state-by-state.

The co-dependent nature of the relationship between local public education and federal policy makers is somewhat of a modern relationship, principally beginning in 1965. 1965 historically marked the initial involvement of the federal government in public schooling with the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA). For the first time in the history of U.S. public education, bureaucratic officials allocated enough control to introduce welfare-based programs across U.S. K-12 public schools. Generally, education and healthcare are considered separate welfare services, however, the two have become increasingly more intertwined overtime. Public schools manage one of the nation's largest programs of economic redistribution (Katz, 2016). Like many welfare programs, public school funding comes from state and local income, sales, property, and other taxes. The greater the influx of welfare programs in public schools, the lesser will be the amount of resources available for local school staff to teach effectively (Gunlock, 2014). Breaking down the distribution and allocation of federal funds on a state level further explains how federal welfare programs effect local public schools.

Within the USDE, is The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) which is a state level department functioning within the policies and rules legislated by the U.S congress. Moreover, congress grants the CDE federal dollars for education funding within the parameters of

congressional rulings. The purpose of the CDE is to better monitor, assess, and support Colorado's district-level public schools (CDE, 2016). The CDE values the advancement and betterment of Colorado's public education system to prepare all students for success in a globally competitive workplace. The CDE is expected to implement and function within the state and federal education laws, distribute state and federal funds, meet performance expectations, and provide public transparency of academic performance and spending data (CDE, 2016). Later analyzing Colorado's spending reports and the integration of federal welfare programs in Colorado's local public schools reveals a co-dependence between public schooling and federal welfare programs.

As a state offering school leadership, resources, support and accountability, Colorado consists of 178 school districts, 1,836 public schools, about 56,000 teachers, over 2,800 administrators, and approximately 889,000 public school students (CDE, 2016). Each district, depending on its academic performance and economic circumstances, requires varying amounts of support. A 2013 fiscal year report on Percentage of Total Revenue, sorts the percentage of federal and state contributions to elementary and secondary education in the state of Colorado. In total, approximately 8% of funding came from the federal government, about 42% was state contributions, and 50% was locally funded (Public Education Finances, 2013). These percentages of total revenue in Colorado emphasize the importance of and reliance on district funding for local public schools.

Colorado's 8% of federal funding contributions for public education are spent on federally mandated programs, while the other 92% of Colorado tax-payer dollars are divided under legislation of the Public School Finance Act of Colorado. It would become clear that welfare program funding is highly dependent on state dollars if this fiscal report was further

divided into percentage of state funding allocated to public schools and percentage of dollars supporting federal welfare programs. Head Start, a federal program heavily funded by state taxpayer dollars, annually cost Colorado over \$75 million in 2013. It is questionable that out of 889,000 public school students in Colorado, only 10,259 were enrolled in Head Start in 2013 (ECLKC, 2013). Moreover, in 2014, the federal government funded the state of Colorado approximately \$83 million to spend on public education. This funding discrepancy supports the intended claim that Colorado public school financial decisions function within the confines of this federally created “welfare” state model.

The state of Colorado utilizes The Public School Finance Act of Colorado as a formula to determine state and district funding amounts for all 178 public school districts and over 170 charter schools. After this calculation, schools are then allocated a specific amount of money called a “Total Program” (CDE, 2014). Factored into the Total Program is per-pupil count, average cost of living, personnel costs, and school size (CDE, 2014). It is imperative to recognize that this state-level funding distribution includes Colorado public schools as well as over 170 charter schools, which inevitably lessens the economic resources available for public schools (CDE).

State funding for public education is derived from various tax-collections. In budget year 2015-16 under the Public School Finance Act of Colorado, this legislation funded over \$6.2 billion to Colorado public school districts via state taxes (\$4.1 billion), local specific ownership (vehicle registration) taxes (\$149.7 million), and local property taxes (\$1.97 billion) (CDE, 2015). This legislation supposedly provides each school district with just enough funding to support all costs necessary for providing a strong public education (CDE, 2014). Missing in this

Colorado state budget is the percentage extracted from education budgets and reallocated for welfare-based programs like Head Start, No Child Left Behind, and Race to the Top.

Colorado public school benefits and the implementation of welfare programs varies based on a districts municipal wealth. In every U.S. state, there is a blatant discrepancy for funding between high spending and low spending districts (Rose, 2013). The federal government has failed to acknowledge and solve the housing discrepancies that greatly limit funding necessary for public school districts to effectively educate students. Instead of attempting to solve housing discrepancies, bureaucrats have created welfare programs for public schools as a vehicle for economic change. Welfare state programs which are funded by state-collected taxes, further exemplify greater economic implications.

Federal programs created for public schools draw their funds from local property taxes. This reallocation of funds from public school budgets to welfare programs further cuts public school spending. In low-spending public school districts, teachers and school officials already struggle to provide effective classroom resources, cannot pay reasonable teaching salaries, and have little budget for classroom resources, tools, and extracurricular activities (Rose, 2013). Power shifts away from local control and into the hands of top-down officials as Colorado public schools operate within the governments welfare state model. It seems concerning that top-down officials, who are disconnected from local teachers, students, and staff, are responsible for influencing state funding by introducing programs that effect daily functions of public institutions.

Colorado's "Priority Improvement and Turnaround Support" is an example of an initiative providing district level support for low performing schools. This state mandated operation effectively utilizes bottom-up and state-level power to help support low-performing

local Colorado schools (CDE). State operations become problematic once state initiated programs are welfare-based and mandated by the U.S. federal government.

Colorado public schools are transforming into agents of the welfare state as top-down officials continually use state-funds for welfare programs (Rose, 2013). State-level support for Colorado public schools decreases as economic resources for federal welfare programs are prioritized. The greater the federal attention and support for state-level welfare services, easily forgotten is the needed financial support for teachers and professional educators to best serve their students academically. Nutrition and health services for school age students, both being elements of welfare, are some of the greatest concerns for the ED and other federal departments. As the amount for federal programs for public schools has increased overtime, state funding for public schools has shifted from enhancing classroom learning experiences to supporting federal welfare services.

Colorado professional educators such as teachers, staff, and superintendents, are greatly affected by federal funding collected from state taxes. This economic redistribution is significant because rather than using other federal mechanisms to help solve health and nutritional problems affecting students, the U.S. government is using public education (Rose, 2013). U.S. public education was original founded on the grounds of providing a strong civic education for all citizens not a distributor for social services. A concerning disconnect between the federal government and professional educators widens as public school resources are redirected to fund welfare programs instead of supporting strong academic resources. Aligning welfare and public education not only limits the amount of funding for districts to support greatly needed educational services but also places less importance on the strength of education provided in public schools.

Over the past few decades, Colorado's students and professional educators have transgressed into school system dependent on welfare services. Federal programs such as Head Start, No Child Left Behind, and Race to the Top, have increasingly been integrated into Colorado's low-income public schools. All three of these federal programs have re-shaped the structure and values of Colorado public schools. Depending on which welfare-based policy is administered by federal bureaucrats, Colorado public school teachers and staff are expected to alter their teaching and schooling operations to support those specific federal standards and regulations. These federal welfare-based education programs share several concerning characteristics but Colorado professional educators should be wary and informed on the economic implications created by top-down government officials.

It is crucial that professional educators understand the historical progression of Colorado public schools as they have transformed into a welfare-dependent state. Prioritizing a strong academic experience has continually decreased as federal welfare programs manifest public schools. Colorado teachers, staff, and even students should challenge the effect that welfare programs have on their careers and students' academic future. Analyzing the historical effects of welfare programs in Colorado public school's raises the greater issue of the current values and priorities of students and professional educators in Colorado public schools. Colorado professional educators need exposure to the greater implications for supporting top-down decision maker's presence in and power over public education. Overtime, government officials have utilized their power over state-level education funds to allocate exorbitant amounts of state funding from public school budgets to support nationwide welfare programs.

Elementary and Secondary Act and Head Start

Leading up to 1965, U.S. public schooling maintained universal principles aimed to provide a strong civic educational experience for all U.S. citizens. In 1965, the original value of focusing on student betterment, achievement, and success, shifted to prioritizing student's overall welfare (Craig, 1985). Examining the past 50 years of public education as it has manifested into a welfare state reveals a shift in values due to a heavy top-down influence on education. This shift into a welfare state directly effects the purpose of public education and the future for teachers, students, and public school districts. The passing of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was the United States first effort to utilize the public education system as tool to help fight the "War on Poverty" (ESEA, 1965). This effort represents the first of many circumstances in which the federal government has used public education space to better economic and social circumstances for American families and students.

The characteristics of the ESEA support the notion that, historically, U.S. public schools have been evolving to prioritize welfare services. The goals of the ESEA align with the welfare states objectives: equal access to education, establishing high academic standards, and accountability through supporting each child with equal opportunities (ESEA, 1965). From the perspective of ESEA's creators, equal education opportunities could only increase with the assistance of welfare programs like Head Start (NHSA, 2016). Head Start is a federal program that launched in 1965 to ensure strong early childhood education, health services, and nutritional support for low-income children and their families (NHSA, 2016). Important to consider is that low-income students and families have benefited from Head Start's social service support overtime. However, this program has been extremely costly for taxpayers in exchange for insignificant results.

The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) released a 2012 report, “Third Grade Follow-up to the Head Start Impact Study” (Puma, 2012). Considering that Head Start is an \$8 billion per year federal preschool program, one would expect the program to generate beneficial and valuable results for supporting low-performing students. On the contrary, the results were highly disappointing, expensive, and the majority of Colorado public schools remained financially vulnerable. Vast sums of federal funding have annually been allocated to the Head Start program, racking up a bill of over \$180 billion. In Colorado, Head Start has required over \$83 billion dollars of tax-payer dollars to support the program. Since the programs inception, Head Start has proven little significant results in bettering student achievement (ECLKC, 2014). Details of the OPRE report support the ineffectiveness of relegating low-income children to underperforming Head Start programs.

For decades, Head Start has been referenced as a cohesive welfare program that effectively supports the whole-child through their public schooling. In reality, Head Start has statistically proven to be ineffective in bettering low-income students socio-emotional development and cognitive abilities (Puma, 2012). Ineffectiveness can also be found in Head Starts unstable model. Head Start centers are commonly found in churches and struggle to sustainably operate. Inside these buildings a culturally insular teaching model is occurring and there is a universal misunderstanding of student needs across programs. This model may seem effective for early-childhood students who need more facilitating and nutritional and health support; however, Head Start creates a student reliance on these welfare services. Combining a consistent turn over in leadership and low quality teaching, Head Start lacks stability and sustainability for students as they progress through schooling overtime.

Considering these results, professional educators in Colorado public schools should be wary of supporting an increase in funding for Head Start programs. Though Head Start has a strong and important mission, it does not deliver significant enough results for the exorbitant amount of state tax-dollars allocated to the program. Notably, the same tax-dollars that are intended to fund and support local Colorado public schools.

Reallocation of education funds has continued to be a constant battle fought between top-down officials and bottom-up professional educators. This reality stems from the inability for professional educators and the federal government to settle on what the U.S. public school systems values should be. Head Start is only one of the sixty federal preschool programs fueled by tax-payer dollars (USDE, 2013). Head Start's expensive and disappointing results are one of the many questionable and concerning welfare programs proving to be a disservice to Colorado's students and educators. The Head Start program does not effectively address the needs of Colorado's public school students, therefore, perpetuating the welfare state model. By not addressing the learner's academic needs and prioritizing student's health and nutritional needs, public schooling's value of providing a strong and civic education is forgotten. Succeeding Head Start and adding to Colorado's education services, No Child Left Behind emerged in 2001 as another federal welfare program intended to lessen economic disparities across U.S. public schools.

No Child Left Behind

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is a federal reform effort focused on creating accountability across low-performing public school districts. Moreover, NCLB was written to address the poverty discrepancies that were causing an achievement gap in U.S. public schools (McElroy, 2005). NCLB was one of the most ambitious statutes ever, seeking to ensure

proficiency for every single American child by financially assisting underserved elementary and secondary public schools (Hess, 2007). NCLB held states accountable for measuring success in schools as defined by standardized tests (Rose, 2013). NCLB's greatest failures reside in what the program did not do. NCLB did not utilize the learner's needs as a tool to close the widening achievement gap. Supporting a learner's basic needs would entail strengthening school leadership, providing financial support for the instalment of more academic extracurricular for students, or providing support for professional educators so that may most effectively support their learner's individual needs. NCLB perpetuated the welfare-state as it did not focus on the needs of the learner, rather the program remained attentive to accountability through state standardized test outcomes.

The foundation of NCLB rests on the troubling assumption that teachers are teaching ineffectively by holding low expectations for their students (Rose, 2013). Not only were public educators discredited as a service profession but also the program sought to increase student achievement outcomes rather than focusing on student performance. Once again, like previous welfare initiatives, there is a top-down shift in priorities for public education. More characteristics of a welfare state emerge when considering the reallocation of funds necessary for supporting the program. Federal funds for NCLB have annually been extracted from state collected tax-payer dollars. Over \$200 billion has been allocated to NCLB and like Head Start, there has been little to improve student achievement outcomes (Atlas, 2015).

Though NCLB is not necessarily a welfare program in the sense that it does not allocate funds to children and families for social services, it shares similar characteristics with other federal welfare programs. Not only was NCLB developed from a top-down perspective prioritizing federal influence over public schooling, but it also creates a system of accountability

rather than an education system focusing on the learner. A system valuing accountability over maintaining high expectations for the learner inevitably restricts the power of choice for local control. The consequences of prioritizing welfare-like programs such as Head Start and NCLB, are high for teachers, students, and professional educators. The subject of concern in education moves away from teaching to better student achievement to measuring accountability by teaching-to-test.

Race to the Top

Following the NCLB program, Race to the Top (RTop) was introduced in 2009 as a federal initiative intended to spark reform and innovative learning throughout K-12 U.S. public schools (Office of the Press Secretary, 2009). RTop values equitable and equal educational opportunities for all students, prioritizes college and career readiness, and expects great teachers and leaders in every school. RTop functions under a point system in which states are awarded points for meeting specific criteria within the expectations of educational policies, created by the USDE. Teachers and principals are then evaluated for their performance based on multiple measures of “effectiveness” (Office of the Press Secretary, 2009). The bureaucrats creating these teaching standards have commonly never taught in a classroom. Once teachers, principals, and schools are evaluated, the federal government decides how to best reform that specific public school. During this RTop process, local district control over school operations and classroom teaching methods are restricted. This large amount of federal involvement is a greater indicator of U.S. public schools merging into a welfare state. Once mandated by local officials, U.S. public schools are in the hands of government officials.

RTop, like Head Start and NCLB, is a selective and expensive program that started with a \$4.35 billion federal grant (Fullan, 2015). In 2010, Colorado was required to budget between

\$60-175 million of tax-collected dollars per year to support the programs operations. Public schools must apply for RTop funding and in December 2011, Colorado was awarded a four-year grant of \$17.9 million for the closure of low-performing public schools (CDE, 2011). In turn, the granted funds would support the re-enrollment of students in higher performing schools, busing and transportation to a new district, and severance packages. Though Colorado paid its RTop fees in 2010, the program was integrated in only a few local Colorado public schools a year later. As Colorado tax-payers anxiously waited for the federal government to prove their state-collected dollars valuable, learner's across local school districts continued to suffer in low-performing school environments. State reliance on the RTop program is a result of Colorado having to function within the financial obligations expected by the welfare state. The federal government has financially bound the state of Colorado to the RTop program, leaving local professional educators financially strung and young learner's academically vulnerable.

The RTop 2011 grant for Colorado exemplifies how Colorado public schools are now functioning under the rule of a federal welfare state. Not only is Colorado economically required to reallocate exorbitant sums of state tax-dollars to the RTop program, but they are also obligated to shut down low-performing schools. The closing of local public schools in low-spending housing districts effects not only teachers and public educators but also negatively impacts the families living in the low-performing neighborhoods. This top-down federally granted initiative shows blatant disconcert for hard-working public educators, dismisses pre-established school communities, and requires an immense amount of funding from devalued tax-payers. As states increasingly applied for RTop grants out of desperation for public school turn around, the government responded with a re-modeled bureaucratic initiative.

Blueprint

Due to the significant increase in public school's enrollment for the RTop program, in 2010 the federal government introduced "A Blueprint for Reform" to further enhance the program's effectiveness. The new approach to RTop is Blueprints program objectives: college readiness, rewarding progress and success, and turning around the lowest-performing schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Blueprint shows great strides in accountability by recognizing and prioritizing student achievement, pushing for low-income school support, and increasing levels of teacher commitment. Moreover, Blueprint actively highlights and works to fix all the major problems with NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Blueprint claims it is not a "one size fits all model" as local standards are created to fit specific public school districts. As Blueprint is described by the Department of Education, it appears the solution to bettering low-income schools and the overall achievement gap in America; however, there are a few noteworthy flaws with the programs new model.

Blueprint functions in the modern world of education reform as it pushes for a "well-rounded education" for all students, encompassing literacy to mathematics, science and technology, civics, the arts, foreign languages, and so on (Blueprint for Reform, 2010). In reality, this modern approach to education values is overambitious as public schools are still required to teach-to-test. For teachers and principles, teaching this overwhelming variety of subjects in underfunded and over-stretched schools seems unfair and impossible. What Blueprint fails to recognize is that measuring student and teacher success on a federally regulated level is a great challenge. This challenge supports the notion that U.S. public schools experience greater disadvantages while functioning under a federal umbrella because not every school can be measured using universal methods.

Blueprint initiatives began in Colorado in November 2010 after the CDE approved a comprehensive turnaround for persistently low-performing public schools in the Far Northeast Community of Denver (Blueprint Schools Network, 2016). By 2015, over 70 schools in Denver were included in the implementation of the Blueprint Program in low-performing public schools. During this implementation process, Blueprint public schools are assigned new principals, undergo extended school operation hours, introduce and heavily emphasize college readiness, require interim assessments every six weeks, and top-down officials administer teaching recruitment (Blueprint Schools Network, 2016). Blueprints implementation process highlights the increasing presence of top-down officials in education reform.

The Blueprint programs values, principles, and structure are helping cause education to progress into a welfare state. Colorado's bottom-up professional educators should be wary of Blueprint's effect on the current public school system. Blueprints top-down, managerial approach to turning around Colorado public schools is an unstable, welfare-based model, prioritizing federal involvement in public school districts (Rose, 2013). The future for Blueprint involves greater collections of state-tax dollars to support a nationwide expansion of Blueprint programs. Made very clear in the most recent Blueprint report, top-down officials are utilizing the Blueprint program as a tool for securing America's economic competitiveness (Obama Administration, 2015). Continuing the integration of federal programs in public schools will push public education into a deeper welfare-state, furthering an increase in the demand for state tax-payer dollars. The Blueprint program is another blatant example of the federal government prioritizing the economics and welfare of education rather than valuing a strong and civic education for all public school students.

ESEA Student Act

Only until recently has it become evident to the federal government, state-officials, and professional educators that heavy federal involvement in U.S. public schooling is problematic. By 2013, the federal government had already allocated approximately \$35 billion to K-12 public education. Along with exorbitant amounts of funding, federal involvement in public education through the implementation of over 80 elementary and secondary programs over the past thirty years has roughly increased by 400% (Kline, 2015). In attempt to reduce federal influence over public schooling, on July 8, 2015 the Obama Administration passed the “Student Success Act” (ESSA) aiming to restore local control for U.S. public education.

The ESSA is a bipartisan measure reauthorizing the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), a national education law intended to provide equal opportunities for all U.S. public school students (ESSA, 2015). Like previous federal programs, ESSA seeks to close the achievement gap by utilizing state funds to establish accountability across district public schools. ESSA claims novelty as the program empowers state and local decision-makers to create solutions for school betterment based on their individual learners needs. ESSA seeks to eradicate the “one-size fits all” model that past programs like NCLB valued (Kline, 2015). Moreover, ESSA places more power in local school official control by decreasing the amount of standardized tests issued in classrooms so that teachers may provide a higher-quality learning experience. The federal government is re-allocating power from the U.S. Department of Education and back to state and district officials as a new method for measuring accountability.

Up until the ESSA reauthorization, the definition of accountability has taken various forms but has consistently derived from top-down official’s values for education. Prior to the

recent ESSA modifications and as seen in NCLB, accountability has traditionally been utilized to measure how well-performing a public school is at a state level. Missing in the previous system was a bottom-up voice to reiterate the needs of Colorado's public school students across districts within the state. ESSA aims to return power to local education forces by allocating a new measuring system for evaluating accountability across states.

The ESSA provides a novel form of measuring accountability in comparison to the past few decades of public schooling. The reauthorization's goal is to provide workable guidelines and expectations for every state so that they may have a foundation for success, supported by the federal government. The ESSA method for measuring accountability entails: Academic Standards and Assessments, Timeline for New Accountability System, Data Collection, Disaggregation, Reporting, School Interventions and Turnarounds, and State Accountability Plans (ESSA, 2015). These various methods for assuring accountability is a novel approach for the federal government in comparison to past programs like NCLB because this system requires both state and local participation. What becomes problematic with the ESSA reauthorization is that although the federal government is reallocating control back to state and local levels, public schools are urged to emphasize college readiness.

According to the ESSA, the USDE is responsible for monitoring and assessing school content and student performance. This is problematic for Colorado learners and professional educators because, like in NCLB, this federal involvement proves that teaching-to-test is still prioritized in public education over strong classroom experiences. If still required to teach-to-test, state officials are bound to teach Colorado students content that is chosen by the USDE (ASBO, 2015). Concerning for Colorado professional educators is that in reality, the federal government continues to determine the conditions of power allocated to the state of Colorado.

Colorado decision-makers are bound to the expectations of the ESSA and are inevitably encouraged to teach-to-test and function within the confines of federally determined state standards (ESSA, 2015).

Evident in the reauthorization is that the learner lacks importance and priority of the federal government as the act is intended to develop new methods for assessing accountability across states. Individual learner's experiences remain devalued as the ESSA focuses on student outcomes and college-readiness rather than providing academic support for bettering student learning. Due to the ESSA's emphasis on student outcomes, the current education system continues to function within the expectations and qualities of a welfare-state. As noted before, the welfare-states greatest flaw is that it focuses on measuring state performance and accountability through standardized testing, prioritizes testing outcomes over learner's experiences throughout schooling, and centralized government officials are the policy and decision-makers for public schools rather than the local leaders.

ESSA shares greater characteristics with the welfare-state as federal funding is now reallocated through competitive block grants, intended to fund educational technology (Agile, 2016). Moreover, schools that receive these federal grants are selected based on performance and evidence of efforts for providing an innovative education experience. Though the grant money is technically available for reallocation based on state decision-maker's choice, the federal government highly emphasizes the importance of testing via technology. This heavy emphasis on testing coerces public schools to invest their grants in technology used for testing (Agile, 2016). As seen before in 2011 with Colorado's RTop process, not all schools receive grants but this new form of block grant differs as it is intended to raise student test scores by familiarizing learners with online testing.

The characteristics of ESSA provide ample proof that public education is continuing to expand within the confinements of a federally run welfare system. Colorado professional educators should be wary of ESSA's purpose and intentions for measuring accountability and teaching for greater testing performance. Restoring public education's purpose for providing a strong civic education for each individual learner appears lost in the modern education welfare-state. The greater the focus on standardized testing for college readiness and presence of incentivized federal funding, the less value placed on the learners' needs. Colorado professional educators functioning in this new reality of public education purpose need to consider possible solutions for progressing out of the current welfare state so that their learners may receive a strong civic education.

Limitations and Future Research

Recommendations for Colorado Professional Educators

Purpose

The following recommendations are intended for Colorado public school teachers, faculty, and staff. These recommendations prioritize student academic success in this new era of a welfare education system. The goal of these recommendations is to build off of the previous literary research and to provide Colorado K-12 public school educators with possible solutions for restoring its pre-1965 focus on the academic success of its students on a more individualized basis.

Problems

There are several underlying problems with structuring education to fit a welfare-state model, the most severe of which is local leaders ceding policy control to centralized government bureaucrats. The federal government's initial involvement in local public schooling was grounded

in reforming education by being able to efficiently deliver welfare services. By delivering welfare programs through public schools, the federal government has attempted to simultaneously close economic and achievement gaps in the U.S. population. The delivery of welfare services becomes problematic when the “whole child’s” health and nutritional needs are prioritized over student academic success in the classroom. A strong civic education values an equally strong academic experiences across public school’s districts. Due to the heavy influx of federal welfare programs in public schools, state officials are financially and legislatively obligated to work within the structure of a welfare-state.

In addition to the lack of consideration for learner’s needs, the current welfare-based education model, needs an exorbitant amount of state-tax funds collected for operating these federal programs. For example, the \$75 million dollars derived from tax payer dollars to fund the Colorado Head Start program (ECLKC, 2014). Astronomical sums of public tax-payer dollars are being reallocated from the state of Colorado to fund federal programs that prioritize bettering student welfare rather than supporting academic success. Utilizing public schools as a vehicle for welfare betterment redirects the fundamental values of public schooling away from supporting student academic success. Greater value, money, and attention is now being directed towards funding centrally initiated programs that shift traditional public schools into welfare institutions.

Needs

There is a blatant need for local, bottom-up control over public education in the state of Colorado. State-level control over district funding and local power over education values for public schooling ensures that Colorado students’ academic needs are prioritized over the welfare-state. Moreover, if the federal government provides state-levels the freedom to choose how they allocate their granted funds, like in the ESSA, public schools should be urged to fund for learners

needs, not for test preparation known as “teaching to test”. Student academic success and support needs prioritization across Colorado public school districts. Once federal programs are issued from a state-level, Colorado’s public school students blend into a larger mass of U.S. public schools. Colorado professional educators need to consider the future for teachers, students, and staff if Colorado continues to function as another supporter of the welfare-state.

Separating Colorado public schools from the larger welfare-state operation will not be an easy feat to accomplish. For decades, Colorado public schools have functioned under the legislation of federal welfare programs. Colorado’s financial commitment of allocating tax-payer dollars to these federally-initiated programs that show no turnaround, is a devastating disservice to Colorado’s education system. Professional educators have increasingly supported Colorado state funding for federal turnaround programs in hopes that their public school students may achieve academic success. Unfortunately, Colorado has received little to no turn around including the education support that was expected from the federal government. Moreover, the astronomical amounts of money that Colorado has allocated to federal welfare programs for schooling support is inaccessible. Generating solutions to combat this economically unstable and welfare driven education system requires a re-evaluation of bottom-up and top-down control efforts.

To reestablish a bottom-up education system that prioritizes the needs of the individual student-learner, Colorado districts and their professional educators need to regain their power of choice to best support every learner. Since the integration of welfare programs in Colorado, public school teachers and staff are required to teach under the guidelines of federal legislation. Federal legislation is not tailored for every district; therefore, teachers and students may not receive the individualized academic support they may need. Moreover, federal programs require

several standardized test reports to prove effectiveness and legitimacy. As more federal welfare programs increasingly appear in public schools, the more class time allocated towards test prep. A testing focused education system only drives public schooling further away from maintaining the values associated with a strong, locally operated civic public education.

Possible Solutions

A possible solution for the lack of autonomy across public school districts in Colorado is to provide more opportunities for bottom-up officials to vocalize their economic and academic needs to the state and federal Department of Education. Colorado educators should negate the integration of universal welfare-based programs that transforms the traditional civic model of public schools into a federal operation. Moreover, CDE officials should create education-driven initiatives that align with federally approved state standards but also push further and create programs intended to support every learner. Currently, school districts operate under the state of Colorado's legislation and the state functions under the jurisdictions of the federal government. This power structure is problematic for public education because there is lack of accessibility for professional educators, students, and district families to help turn around their local low-performing schools.

Providing opportunities for local public schools to bypass the state of Colorado's and federal governments stringent legislation is necessary for shifting public schooling away from continuing as a welfare state. The welfare state has devalued professional educators to be more service providers than innovative teachers. To restore public schooling as a strong civic education system, the state of Colorado and its professional educators need to emphasize the importance of reinstalling local choice and control. Reestablishing Colorado's local support and control requires a reallocation of federal funds. Colorado should consider a decrease in allocation

of taxpayer dollars towards federal welfare programs. Instead of competing for federal support, Colorado should use these newly available funds to revamp and support the states pre-existing programs like the “Priority Improvement and Turnaround Support”. As this program is a district supported initiative, local learners and their public school teachers will be better supported on a personal level.

The values of Colorado public school professional educators need recognition and support from the state of Colorado. Moving away from operating as a welfare-based education system will require great involvement and leadership from teachers, parents, and district officials. The sheer volume of increase and scope of federal programs over the past few decades, has caused a decline in the perceived value and effectiveness of public educators. It has also disenfranchised parents and families by substituting central for local planning and policy control. If Colorado-state officials, district leaders and local families are to restore a strong, locally-driven civic public education system, all of those constituencies will need to reevaluate their support of federal welfare programs and demand the right to meaningfully participate in, collaborate on and have a controlling voice on Colorado’s education policies and practices. As a current system driven by top-down official’s priorities and values, it is Colorado’s responsibility to take steps towards supporting learners needs by breaking down the welfare state.

Limitations

Limitations in this paper are the characteristics of design and methodology that influenced the interpretation of historical context. The researcher initially chose the mentioned education programs and policies based on access to historical context available. Due to a lack of available or reliable data specific to the state of Colorado, not all programs were addressed under the same lens. The lack of public reports released on federal program outcomes specific to

Colorado's public schools narrowed the researcher's data analysis. Developing a trend or meaningful relationship across time between welfare programs and Colorado public schools became challenging. There is a lack of statistical data available on Colorado public school outcomes while functioning under the operation of federal programs. This lack of data reports specific to Colorado made it challenging for the researcher to distinguish a greater trend between the financial effects of federal programs and the overall effectiveness of top-down initiatives in Colorado's K-12 public schools.

The methodology of the design was formulated around historical context and lacked self-reported data. To better establish external validity while seeking to answer the researcher's initial questions, the researcher could construct a qualitative study that provides opportunity for interviews with Colorado professional educators. Conducting interviews at a local level would better recognize Colorado professional educator's voice and their perspective on their individual role in the current education welfare system. An interview process would allow for more valid and reliable recommendations for local bottom-up officials. Without the interviews, the researcher's recommendations for Colorado public professional educators were inevitably general and lacked validity. If to research this topic further, researchers should consider progressing away from using idiographic causation methods and instead, use data collection methods through a qualitative research study. Combining strong historical evidence with the voice of professional educators allocated through interviews would enhance the value in recognizing the top-down influence driving the current welfare state in Colorado.

The researcher spent time working alongside a social worker at a local public school in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Though no formal interviews were conducted for the paper, the researcher gained greater personal insight on the social service conditions in a local Colorado

public school. Through observation, conversation, and student interactions, the researcher recognized the importance and scarcity of social service resources in this local school. The researcher discovered that there are several requirements and limitations for students who need social service support. Without a district-approved learning disability diagnosis, students cannot receive support from a social worker in their local school. This system approach is based on federal guidelines developed by government officials. In low-income schools, social workers are forced to turn away students needing emotional, cognitive, or behavioral support due to the strict confines found in federal legislation.

Becoming clear while working alongside a social worker in a Colorado public school was the lack of academic resources and emotional and cognitive support available for learners. This lack of access and support hinders student learning and leaves students ill-prepared for classroom experiences. Though there are several expensive and state-funded federal programs present in the current education system, students and professional educators are not able to support every learner's needs but only those that qualify. Evident is the need for bottom-up officials to determine their learner's greatest needs and to vocalize them to Colorado's education officials. The current welfare system will continue to expand and neglect the numerous students without learning disabilities who are in need of extra support. Moreover, Colorado professional educators need to question the economics and values of the current education system so that they may demand and receive resources to support their students' various needs.

Based on the researcher's personal experience in local Colorado schools and interactions with a social worker, it is blatant that the learner is not being prioritized. Rather, students with learning disabilities are the only learners eligible for extra social service support. Future research conducted on the welfare system should consider interviewing social workers across Colorado

public school districts. These interviews could support a trend across public schools that majority of learners are not actually receiving the social service support that the federal government has continually promised. Gathering data on social worker's experiences and perceptions of student support through specific grants and programs could enhance the problems associated with operating in a welfare system. Data collection through interviews is necessary for developing context-grounded recommendations for challenging social service allocation methods at local Colorado public schools.

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