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**Volume 57, Issue 1**  
1 April 1987

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RESEARCH ARTICLE | JANUARY 05 2011

# The Higher Education Acts Contrasted, 1965-1986: Has Federal Policy Come of Age?

Francis Keppel

*Harvard Educational Review*(1987) 57 (1): 49–68.

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<https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.57.1.2t5096n6g7025686>

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Francis Keppel, former United States Commissioner of Education, 1962-1965, and Chairman, National Student Aid Coalition, 1981-1986, here gives his view of the evolution of the historic Higher Education Act of 1965 from the time of its passage to its reauthorization in 1986. He focuses particularly upon those sections of the law that deal with undergraduate education and student financial aid, for which the act is now best known. While the basic intent of the act — increasing equality of educational opportunity — has remained constant, there have been important shifts both in the methods chosen to approach that goal and in the social context within which the act operates. The present political and economic atmosphere differs markedly from that of 1965. Federal support for higher education has shifted in emphasis from financing of physical resources to support for students themselves, and has come to rely increasingly on loan programs. Priorities for serving different kinds of institutions and student populations have changed in attempts to meet new needs. Yet, the author remarks, several difficult challenges and unresolved problems in the field of higher education finance remain. Careful collaboration among the branches of government and the higher education community will be required if we are to achieve the full potential of the Higher Education Act in the coming years.

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Because earlier European American settlers had come mostly from northern and western Europe, many policy makers believed that the more recent immigrants would not fit easily into American society. Accordingly, Congress passed immigration laws in 1921 and 1924 that set quotas for the numbers of immigrants from each region who would be admitted into the country. These quotas were based on the numbers of immigrants who had arrived during earlier eras. President Lyndon B. Johnson signing the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which substantially changed U.S. immigration policy toward non-Europeans. Johnson made a point of signing the legislation near the base of the Statue of Liberty, which had long stood as a symbol of welcome to immigrants. The Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 is a federal law that created new financial assistance opportunities for post-secondary students. The HEA, as it is commonly known, increased federal money given to post-secondary institutions, developed scholarship programs, provided low-interest loans to students, and founded a National Teachers Corps. Part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society domestic agenda, the Act was signed into law on November 8, 1965. Key Takeaways. The Higher Education Act of 1965, or HEA, is a piece of existing legislation in the United States that provides resources for college students. The HEA provides access to financial aid, including subsidized grants and student loans to qualified post-seco Has Federal Policy Come of Age? Francis Keppel. A former US Commissioner of Education offers an analysis of the evolution of the historic Higher Education Act of 1965. Those aspects of the law that deal with undergraduate education and financial aid are discussed. [Click here to purchase this article.](#)