

70 Years and Going Strong

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Riding a Roller Coaster

Given the historic roller coaster of educational policy and practice in the United States, the ups and downs of school financing—especially here in California, and the ins and outs of methodology, reading instruction, assessments, and high-stakes testing, I find it remarkable that the California Council on the Education of Teachers/California Council on Teacher Education has not only survived, but has in fact prospered over its 70 years of existence.

The odds against survival, let alone prosperity, for any organization associated with teacher education during the years since 1945 are heavy. First, consider the traditional marginality of the teacher education field, marked by low status within the academic world shared with other disciplines and professions and by uncertain relationships with the K-12 schools that receive the new teachers being prepared. The role of teacher education as a service to the public schools has never been well understood by higher education colleagues in traditional academic disciplines, or even by other faculty in schools and colleges of education, nor is the process of teacher education at colleges and universities appreciated, applauded, or sometimes even supported by the world of K-12 schooling.

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Second, and more specific to California, the political climate has been stacked against teacher education. The years since 1945 have been marked by changes in legislation governing teacher education in California whose root goal has been to limit the power, authority, and even the expertise of teacher educators. Championed by faculty in the hard sciences who believed that the only important preparation for teaching was knowledge of subject matter and who allied with headline-seeking politicians, the Fisher Act of the 1950s eliminated the education major and required all prospective teachers, both elementary and secondary, to have a major in an academic field. Then, as the campus unrest of the 1960s engendered political outrage from all sides, one of the ironic results was cooperation between liberal assemblyman Leo Ryan and conservative governor Ronald Reagan that resulted in the Ryan Act in 1970, legislation that specifically limited credit hours in teacher education and created the Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing (CTPL, since renamed the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, CTC) to oversee the field. Ryan's motivation stemmed from the fact that when he had moved to California a few decades earlier and sought a teaching position, he had been forced to take more education courses than he deemed appropriate. Reagan's motivation was purely anti-higher education, stoked by his dislike of the student unrest of the 1960s and his belief that college and university faculty should be punished for the resulting chaos.

CCET Enters the Fray

The California Council on the Education of Teachers was created within the office of the State Superintendent for Public Instruction in 1945 as an advisory group of education deans from both public and private college and university campuses, and as commentary in this special issue of *Issues in Teacher Education* from Jim Stone, Doug Minnis, and other past presidents indicates, that fledgling organization initially enjoyed a significant role in advising the State Superintendent and in influencing state policy related to teacher education. Such favored status soon changed with the election of Max Rafferty to the State Superintendency. Rafferty was already well known as a critic of public education whose writings frequently belittled the role of teachers. He was also a man who shared the same disdain for student protest and faculty expertise as soon-to-be governor Reagan. Agreement was quick between Rafferty and the CCET group that their presence in the Superintendent's office was now unwanted, and CCET became an independent organization. While loss of a formal advisory role to the California Department of Education

lessened the political voice of CCET, the threatening political climate of new legislation attacking the role and authority of teacher educators served to increase membership and participation in the organization and to focus its role as the primary voice and representation for the field.

The challenges did not dissipate. Both the Fisher Act and the Ryan Act were clearly attacks on the traditional scope and role of schools and colleges of education and the voice of teacher education faculty as experts in their own field. When the Ryan Act became law and Governor Reagan had the opportunity to appoint the initial membership of the CTPL, he chose an unusually conservative group who, in turn, selected George Gustafson as the first executive secretary of the agency. Gustafson was Reagan's personal choice for that role, and his charge was to degrade teacher education, if not to eliminate it altogether. The threat to the membership of CCET was clear, and for the first few years of operation of CTPL there was near warfare between staff from the agency and the campus programs they sought to evaluate and control. This situation was modified when Gustafson tired of his role and resigned. The Commission then selected Peter LoPresti from Connecticut as the new executive secretary. LoPresti was an experienced state agency administrator who valued cooperation and consensus, and he worked quickly to establish liaison with CCET and to hire Commission staff with experience as teacher educators.

My Personal Story

The beginning of my own personal history with California teacher education was closely intertwined with LoPresti's arrival in California. Two years earlier, in 1972, I had moved from Michigan to Connecticut to assume the position of chair of the Department of Education at Sacred Heart University in Bridgeport, and my initial task there was to prepare documentation for reapproval of the teacher education program with the Connecticut State Department of Education. It was in this role that I met LoPresti, who was then responsible for accreditation of teacher education programs for that state. During that year, I consulted with Peter, drafted a thorough program document, hosted an accreditation visit, and received appropriate approval from the state. At the end of the process, Peter noted that our Sacred Heart University self-study accreditation document was the best he had ever seen.

Despite successfully obtaining state reapproval of the Sacred Heart University program, I left that position after one year because my requests for additional staffing to grow the program were ignored. Instead, I returned to a temporary institutional research assignment at the

University of Michigan while scouting about for longer-range employment in teacher education. When LoPresti was hired as the new CTPL executive secretary, he invited me to visit California and consider a staff position with the agency. I accepted that challenge. My first assignment with the Commission was a series of contacts and meetings with teacher education leaders at several campuses who, now four years after passage of the Ryan Act, were still reluctant to cooperate with the new agency. One of the people I met early in this process was Doug Minnis, then the coordinator of the teacher education program at the University of California, Davis, and the president-elect of CCET. My next assignment from LoPresti was to attend a CCET conference, where despite my affiliation with CTPL, I was very well received, likely because I was introduced to many of the attendees by Doug.

Throughout my participation in CCET/CCTE over the 40 years since that initial introduction, it has been my consistent observation that this is an organization that welcomes newcomers, encourages networking and cooperation, and is always happy to put folks to work on behalf of teacher education. It was only a few years later when I was invited to be a candidate for the CCET Board of Directors, and I was thus the first CTPL staff member to be elected to the Board. Subsequently numerous other CTPL/CTC staff have been similarly elected and served in leadership roles with CCET/CCTE, including Carol Bartell, Larry Birch, Phil Fitch, David Greene, Mary Sandy, and Dennis Tierney. This phenomenon was a clear indication that effective collaboration was ever evolving between the state agency and CCET. Three of those individuals—Phil, Dennis, and Carol—would later be elected to serve as CCET president, each after leaving CTPL/CTC for teacher education positions at CCET/CCTE member institutions.

However, part of the political and educational roller coaster can be observed over the years in the relationship between CTPL/CTC and CCET/CCTE. After LoPresti healed some of the initial wounds, the political winds reversed, and he was replaced by a new executive secretary who distrusted higher education and teacher educators, and the relationship soured for a few years. This pattern has swayed back and forth now for over four decades, with rotating periods of antagonism, peacemaking, and—sometimes—close cooperation. Today the outlook for such collaboration is excellent, as current CTC executive director Mary Sandy is both an experienced state agency leader as well as a long-time supporter and one-time Board member of CCTE.

While my personal involvement with CCET/CCTE has spanned 40 years, it started with two brief periods of employment with CTPL that were separated by two years as executive secretary of the Michigan

Conference of the American Association of University Professors, and then another more lengthy period back in Michigan as an editor and publisher at Prakken Publications, during which time I was invited by CCET to take on the joint role of editor and publisher of *Teacher Education Quarterly*. I served as editor of that journal for 12 years and have since remained as publisher through Caddo Gap Press on behalf of CCTE. I stepped down as editor when I was appointed executive secretary of CCET/CCTE and have served in that role now since 1998. Forty years of attending CCET/CCTE conferences, involvement with the organization's journals as both editor and publisher, participation first in early efforts to create a policy committee and then later serving as chair of the first formalized CCET policy committee, attendance at Board meetings first as an elected member, then as journal editor, and for the past 17 years as executive secretary have all given me a fairly unique vantage point to watch and admire the ongoing development and success of the organization.

Challenges and Accomplishments

The unique assemblage of articles in this issue of *Issues in Teacher Education* offers observations of challenges and accomplishments chronicled by many of our past and current presidents, and it has been my great pleasure to serve as a guest editor for the collection. In that role, it is now my turn to add to the dialogue by offering my view of the major challenges and accomplishments of the 70-year CCET/CCTE history. As suggested previously, perhaps the most significant accomplishment is that the organization has lasted 70 years and is still going strong. I would attribute that to several factors.

First, Policy

The challenging and threatening history of prescriptive and limiting legislation has served to galvanize teacher educators in this state, and ultimately to force them to become engaged in policy analysis and advocacy on behalf of the field. This has not been an easy road. I participated on an initial CCET policy committee appointed by president Al Thompson in 1979 and when that committee recommended at a semi-annual conference in Monterey that it become a permanent committee, a huge debate raged, resulting in a tie vote which Al wisely decided not to break as he chaired the meeting. If CCET was going to participate in the policy arena, it needed to be by more than a one-vote majority.

Nearly two decades later I was asked to chair a new CCET policy committee, and this time when we drafted and recommended a policy

framework for the organization, our efforts were rewarded with adoption with only one dissenting vote. Since that time CCTE has had an active Policy Committee, regular policy sessions at all semi-annual conferences, employed two part-time policy analysts, coordinated lobbying activities in Sacramento, participated in Day-on-the-Hill AACTE activities in Washington, and continues to wrestle with how to be an advocate and not just a reactor in the policy arena. It has been a slow, deliberate pattern of growth, resulting in not only a willingness, but indeed a commitment to play an attentive and aggressive role in protecting and advocating for teacher education in the broader policy arena.

Second, Membership

Despite gradual cutbacks in budget, staffing, and faculty numbers in teacher education over most of the decades CCET/CCTE has existed, there has been a steady growth in organizational membership. Institutional membership has increased in part because of an expansion in the number of campuses engaged in teacher education, particularly in the private and independent college and university sector, but perhaps more importantly because nearly all campuses have found membership in CCET/CCTE to be valuable as a means of staying up with the field and being in contact with other campuses for purposes of sharing information and exploring new ideas.

Indeed, it has been my own theory, often shared with other CCTE leaders, that the greater the challenges teacher education faces, the more valuable participation in CCTE becomes for both institutions and individual teacher educators. I have often heard comments such as “we never have the time or opportunity back on our campus to talk openly about the issues, concerns, and possibilities that are always part of the CCTE conference programs.”

In recent years, CCTE has emphasized expansion of membership by reaching out to other organizations and constituencies. Each semi-annual conference involves meetings of three associated organizations: the California Association of Professors of Bilingual Education (CABTE), the California Association of Professors of Special Education (CAPSE), and the Independent California Colleges and Universities Council on the Education of Teachers (ICCUCET). Strong mutual support has also been established with the Beginning Teacher Support and Evaluation (BTSA) and induction community. Perhaps most significant for the future of CCTE, we now have strong participation from new faculty and graduate students, aided by the operation of our CCTE New Faculty Support Program and CCTE Graduate Student Support Program, both

of which offer participants complimentary annual CCTE memberships, the waiving of conference attendance fees, and encouragement and opportunities to participate on our conference programs.

Third, Funding

Over the years CCET/CCTE has fashioned a fiscal structure that relies for income on two primary sources: institutional and individual annual membership dues, and semi-annual conference registrations. Both dues and registration fees have been raised occasionally to keep up with rising costs of operation, but there has always been a strong effort to keep things as inexpensive as possible. The result is that an individual membership in CCTE today is just \$100, which is a significant bargain since with the membership one receive two high quality journals which if purchased at the usual annual subscription rate would by themselves cost more than the \$100 membership. Institutional memberships are \$600, covering six delegates who receive all the same membership benefits. Thus a campus is receiving far more for that \$600 than they could obtain spending it anywhere else. And one should remember that the journals, while significant and of high quality, are only a small part of the benefits of membership and participation in CCTE.

In recent years, CCTE has also explored other fund-raising activities, including silent auctions at conferences, solicitations for support of the Graduate Student Support Program, receipt of state chapter support grants from the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), development of an annual co-sponsorship program through which several of our member institutions have contributed additional funding to CCTE, creation of a CCTE Fund Development Committee to initiate other fund-raising activities, and now this year the organization is undertaking a special fund drive associated with celebration of CCTE's 70th anniversary.

Fourth, Journals and Research

CCET began the *California Journal of Teacher Education* in 1972, and 11 years later the journal's name was changed to *Teacher Education Quarterly* in order to appeal to a broader national and international audience. *Issues in Teacher Education* was started by the State of California Association of Teacher Educators (SCATE) in 1992, and in 2001 CCTE became the sponsor of that journal as well when SCATE merged with CCET and the California Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (CACTE) to become CCTE. Down through the years both journals have enjoyed excellent editorial leadership and both have prospered in the

quality and number of submissions and their reputation across the teacher education field. While always seeking to respond to the needs of the CCTE membership, authors contributing to both journals now typically come from all across the United States and even internationally.

In addition to the two journals, CCET/CCTE has for several decades opened its semi-annual conferences to a range of peer-reviewed research and practice presentations, which more recently also includes a highly-popular and well-attended set of poster presentations. The interest in encouraging and supporting research has now this year, in 2014-2015, evolved into the CCTE Quest for Teacher Education Research, a program funded by a grant from AACTE through which we have identified and invited participation of 37 different research studies involving faculty and graduate students at CCTE member institutions which we will monitor during the year, offering mentorship to each by experienced CCTE leaders, and then bring together all participating researchers on the Saturday of the Spring 2015 Conference for a day of research reports and analysis, with particular attention to identifying implications for teacher education practice and policy.

Fifth, Planning

As has been reported by several of the past presidents writing in this issue of *Issues in Teacher Education*, CCTE has over the past decade or more engaged in significant planning efforts, forging a series of five-year plans, conducting annual leadership retreats each June, and focusing on such significant issues as organizational mission and focus, policy analysis and advocacy, funding alternatives, current and future staffing needs, ongoing support for the journals, and expanded use of technology to best serve the membership. Indeed, through the leadership of several recent presidents and buy-in from the Board of Directors, CCTE has shown determination to learn all it can about the role and potential of being a vibrant non-profit organization in service to its membership and the broad field of teacher education.

Sixth, Semi-Annual Conferences

The consistent backdrop to all of the above are CCTE's semi-annual conferences, held each fall in San Diego and each spring in San Jose. Both are statewide events with a significant number of institutional delegates and individual members attending both each year, while others attend in either the north or south depending on the location of their home campus. The conferences are amazing in several respects. You will note that several past presidents have focused on and praised the

important and timely conference themes during their tenure; this is not surprising, since the thematic choices have continued to address the big issues of the day in teacher education, while also building consistently upon each other, always with attention to issues of equity and meeting the needs of all students in our schools.

Another amazing aspect of the conferences is the collegiality, the opportunity to see friends twice a year, to keep up with what we are all doing across the state, and to always learn from and enjoy each other. Lots of organizations have regular conferences, but if you hang around CCTE very long, you come to feel that no one else has conferences as good as, as rewarding as, or as much fun as ours.

Some Simple Explanations

How does one explain all of this? What is it that has allowed CCET/CCTE to grow and prosper during 70 difficult years? My answers to such questions are fairly simple. Teacher educators across California are highly committed professional educators who continually respond to, engage in, and overcome the challenges faced by our profession, our institutions, and the schools and students we serve. These teacher educators are driven by the continual need to articulate and express the importance of what they do, and CCTE provides a cooperative, effective, and productive venue for those efforts.

Above all else, I believe, is the amazing quality of our membership and of the leadership that has emerged every year within CCTE. Indeed, this has been the case throughout the 70 years of CCET/CCTE, as you can clearly judge from the words shared with us by past presidents dating back 40 years and through interviews with some of our leaders who span the full 70 years. These have been and are fantastic people. I have known and worked with them at Board meetings, in editing and publishing the journals, in planning and carrying out two conferences a year, in committee meetings, in leadership retreats, and in day-to-day communication by telephone and more recently by e-mail.

As executive secretary I have now worked closely with 10 CCET/CCTE presidents, each of them an outstanding professional leader and an even better human being. I have also known all of the presidents who served during the 25 previous years as well as at least some from the first 30 years of CCET history. The same can be said for them all—the organization has been and continues to be peopled by great leaders and outstanding individuals. Read what many of them have to say in this issue, and I know you will agree with me.

To complete the circle, the membership is just as strong and just as

viable as the leaders that emerge each year. There are annually some 500 CCTE delegates and members who make up the core of this organization, while there are another several hundred who attend at least some of our conferences and work with our associated organizations. And as a backdrop to it all there are overall some 3,000 individuals across California who work as teacher educators at either the higher education or K-12 level. Every one of them has a stake in CCTE, and CCTE has a stake in every one of them. Together we all make the profession and our organization strong.

Seventy years and going strong, thanks to all of you.