

A Past President's Reflection

Magaly Lavadenz

Loyola Marymount University

It was my great honor and privilege to have served as President of the California Council on Teacher Education (CCTE) between 2010 and 2012, as part of a six-year term of office. As an active member of CCTE for more than a decade before, during my early years as a tenure-line faculty member at Loyola Marymount University, I always felt CCTE was an authentic professional learning environment at which rich dialogue and collaboration about research and policies related to the preparation of pre- and in-service teachers could take place with colleagues from around the state. As I became more active in the organization, first as conference co-chair for several conferences and then as a member of the Board of Directors, I experienced amazing insights, garnered support and encouragement from my colleagues and peers, and became engaged in opportunities to test out ideas and propose initiatives, conferences, and planning together, all in order to build on the collective strength of our organization.

As I look back on these years, review the messages, reports, and documents I wrote over the course of that time, it seems to me that there were four critical areas of focus that were my priorities for the organization during my tenure as President: (1) annual strategic planning; (2) collective leadership in teacher education policy; (3) ensuring

Magaly Lavadenz is a professor in the School of Education at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California. She served as President of the California Council on Teacher Education from 2010 to 2012.

a fiscally sound organization; and (4) Sustaining and strengthening our alliances. In this reflective essay, I will address each of these areas and describe what occurred within CCTE during that time.

Strategic Planning

As I observed, listened, and dialogued with my fellow Board members during my two-year term as President-Elect (2008-2010), I began to gain clarity on what areas I might possibly contribute in order to hopefully leave the Board in as good as or better place than when I entered. A prior strategic plan had been finalized in 2006, under the leadership of Andrea Maxie and Vicki LaBosky, and it was now a good time to review and update. I could not possibly formulate a plan without guidance, collaboration, and thoughtful attention to larger contextual issues as well as internal matters, all of which resulted in scheduling a facilitated Board retreat at which all members could be fully engaged without having to attend to details such as note-taking, time-keeping, etc.

I therefore proposed a Leadership Retreat in conjunction with the June Board meeting. Seventeen participants, including past presidents and key leaders, met for that strategic planning workshop. Our facilitator, Dr. Robert Vargas of New World Associates, worked with Alan Jones and myself in preparing and planning for the retreat several months in advance of the event. The results were beyond our expectations; the Board and the membership ratified the new Strategic Plan, which included five strategic priorities, provided for activities and action to carry them out, and created better structures within CCTE to maximize efficiency. This annual strategic planning process has been continued since then, allowing for each President to identify their priority areas as well as to steer refinement and updating on organizational progress.

Collective Leadership in Teacher Education Policy

In my statement of candidacy for President of the California Council on Teacher Education in 2008, I wrote about the strength of the membership and leadership of the organization. My commitment to CCTE has been inspired by my experiences with all of you, my statewide colleagues over the last 16 years. These experiences have bolstered my enduring belief that we can work towards a position of greater engagement to develop, inform, and apply our collaborative expertise in order to lead teacher education policy. As CCTE enters its 70th year, this priority is even more important and critical. Ideological, political, and economic challenges face our community of teacher educators at the local, state,

and national levels. CCTE's mission statement calls upon us to address these challenges with the strength that is "drawn from diverse constituencies, who seek to be informed, reflective, and active regarding significant research, sound practice, and current public educational issues." It is from this statement articulating the strengths of our mission, our members, and our history which CCTE will continue to grow, thrive, and sustain its leadership capacities from the last 70 years into and beyond the next 70 years.

Affirming Our Past and Building on Strength

When I assumed the role of President following the caring and thoughtful leadership of Jim Cantor, my immediate predecessor, CCTE's strength had been built upon slightly over six decades of prior dedication and leadership in teacher education in the state. In the wisdom of the founding leaders of CCTE, the six-year term of President includes two years as President-Elect, two years in the actual office, and two years as Past President. This time frame allows for continuity and coherence in the organization. A central source of our strength, the fall and spring semi-annual conferences, have always reflected diverse perspectives on research, policy, and practices in teacher education, and serve, along with the two journals *Teacher Education Quarterly* and *Issues in Teacher Education*, as a primary vehicle for building a teacher education professional learning community in California and nation-wide. As a CCTE member, whether serving on conference committees, as conference chair, or just attending our conferences, it has been implicitly and explicitly understood our conferences should always be timely, reflect a rigorous research agenda, and serve as a beacon of hope for members and constituents.

In affirming CCTE's past, we acknowledge our collective histories, our legacy of advocacy for K-12 education, and a vision of excellence in teacher education. The affirmation of our past is one of the central tenets of my own vision of leadership. Additional leadership principles that have inspired and informed my conceptualization of leadership include Freire's notions of *hope* and *action*. We need to have hope in order to envision the possibilities that can counter current political, economic, and ideological challenges. We also need to have action, what Paulo Freire (1994) labels as *praxis*, in order to promote greater justice in education. These concepts do not occur in a vacuum; hope and action are shared values that occur through dialogue, negotiation, and community building.

CCTE and Strategic Action

As I attended Board meetings and engaged with my colleagues from diverse institutions and organizations during my two years as President-Elect, it became even clearer that we must build on our legacy and act in more strategic ways to take on greater leadership roles in teacher education policy. Enacting the values of hope and action that I noted previously, I then volunteered to serve as co-chair, together with the past two CCTE presidents, and Policy Committee co-chairs, for the Fall 2010 conference committee. I felt (and still feel) a sense of urgency that stems from alarming federal and state education policies that impact the lives of the K12 students—our ultimate constituents.

The Fall 2010 conference, which I co-chaired with Reyes Quezada and Jim Cantor, was the first official conference at which I welcomed our participants as President. The conference theme, “Directions in Teacher Education Policies,” underscored for me the laser-like focus that was and is aimed at teacher preparation and that requires CCTE’s increased proactivity. This became one of my priority areas as President. This point in time also marked a “tipping point” in our organizational history. Our membership affirmed the Board’s focus on *developing* policy, as contrasted with *reacting to* policy, throughout the conference and in the three policy sessions held that week. We began by inviting leaders from the National Center for Teacher Quality (NCTQ) to discuss their agenda directly with our Board of Directors and to engage critically with CCTE’s in-depth policy analysis on *The Complexities of the Relationship of Teacher Evaluation and Student Achievement*. The CCTE Policy Committee has served and continues to serve as a grounding force in this area.

An Enduring Question: “Measuring” Teacher Educator Effectiveness

In the years since our 2010 policy analysis brief, a variety of practices have emerged that define systems of teacher evaluation, as compared to the unsatisfactory and flawed single-point (standardized-test alone) approach that has been used in several states. An example of a systems-based approach is currently being piloted by the California Charter School Association and applies a teacher development/growth approach and multiple points of evidence of student performance. This system approximates a “professional learning community” model.

On the horizon, however, and connected to teacher evaluation questions, is the issue surrounding the evaluation of teacher preparation

programs and, subsequently, teacher educator effectiveness. In 2013, the National Education Academy produced a report that summarizes the purposes of teacher preparation program (TPP) evaluations systems, concluding that:

TPP evaluations serve three basic purposes—holding programs accountable, providing consumer information to prospective TPP students and their potential future employers, and supporting program self-improvement. (Feuer, Floden, Chudowsky, & Ahn, 2013, p. 4).

This report was a fascinating read, as the authors identified the need to have in place a design framework, and the purposes mentioned above are important considerations as we enter into a new era of teacher education in the nation.

It reminded me of my Spring 2011 message in *CCNews* in which I referred to the Frameworks Institutes' *Preparing America for the 21st Century: Values that Work in Promoting Education Reform: A Frameworks Research Report*. That organization conducts research based on the social and cognitive sciences to help bring understandings of public perceptions to "communications practice." This quote implied that, as a profession, it is our responsibility to apply these understandings from the science of public perceptions to the development of the communication about the values on teacher preparation:

The success of Future Preparation may very well be in the notion that it succeeds in reminding the public that there is a larger goal to which we must contend if we are to preserve the standard of living and benefits that we currently enjoy as a nation.

—Tiffany Manuel, FrameWorks Institute, January 2010

Significant here is the identification of the importance of the values that we deem critical in U.S. public education, namely: fairness, justice, and voice. We should also consider an educational system that provides for a much more expansive vision of global citizenry, imagination, creativity, and democracy. These are not easily measured in an evaluation system for teacher education, however, it is our continuing task to center on the *operationalizing* of a collective vision for educating the next generation of learners in the U.S., and especially here in California as expressed in the *Greatness by Design Report* (2012).

This enduring question of measuring teacher effectiveness is now moving to teacher education programs and to teacher educators ourselves. In April, 2014, the Obama Administration announced its intention to rate teacher training programs, using some of the NCTQ's 2013 rankings as a rationale for this proposal (*New York Times*, 2014). The fact remains that as teacher educators, like our PK-12 counterparts, our schools

and colleges of education (SCOEs) are also contending with academic standards reforms, as there is increased accountability in preparing teachers to implement these new standards. The recent merger of the two national teacher preparation accrediting agencies, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and Teacher Education Accreditation Council, to form the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), has provided SCOEs and their district partners five accreditation standards for ensuring teacher quality (CAEP, 2013):

Standard 1: Content and Pedagogical Knowledge—All candidates develop strong content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge.

Standards 2: Clinical Partnerships and Practice—Candidates develop, practice, and demonstrate content and pedagogical knowledge and skills that promote learning for all students in authentic school-based environments.

Standard 3: Candidate Quality, Recruitment, and Selectivity—Part of candidate quality includes recruiting a diverse recruitment pool and providing necessary support for all candidates to be proficient at the completion of preparation.

Standard 4: Program Impact—The judgment of a teacher preparation program's impact is dependent on the impact the completers have on-the-job with P-12 student learning and development.

Standard 5: Provider Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement—Effective organizations must use evidence-based quality assurance systems and data in a process of continuous improvement.

For California's teacher preparation programs that are nationally accredited, as well as within our own system of accreditation by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, the questions generated by Standards 4 and 5 around impact and quality continue to be of utmost importance to us as an organization as well as a profession. By necessity, these questions should be addressed, framed, and decided jointly by our profession, our stakeholders, and our constituents.

Ensuring CCTE's Financial Stability

In order to thrive for the next 70 years, CCTE must also continue to ensure its financial stability. As a stated goal in our Strategic Plan, CCTE will continue to develop a business plan that integrates strategies for the ongoing fund development required to build our capacity to improve the education of California's citizenry, and to ensure that the

next generation of teacher educators receive the same quality support, collegiality, and mentorship that CCTE has provided over the past 70 years. To that end, fund development strategies were put in place, and they have grown and have succeeded through the support of our members and leaders. These include: (1) an annual sponsorship plan; (2) ongoing grant funding from AACTE to support and mentor new teacher educators; (3) building our “Friends of CCTE” program; and (4) building a reserve fund for rainy days. Without solid financial stability, CCTE could be, to quote former Board member Chuck Zartman, “one conference away from financial disaster.” Over the course of my term, our priority became to ensure a reserve fund not only to avoid such a disaster, but also to develop initiatives such as dissertation awards and new scholar projects after initial seed monies run out.

Sustaining and Strengthening Our Alliances with Teacher Education Organizations

In addition to CCTE’s diligent ongoing efforts and affiliate status relationship with AACTE, we have collaborated with Division K (Teacher Education) of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) to maximize our relationships and common interests in teacher education nationally and internationally. We have continued to seek to align, support, and strengthen our participation in these national organizations through our vice-presidents as well as individual member efforts.

CCTE now has a visible and prominent position in AERA. With support from *Issues in Teacher Education* editors Joel Colbert and Suzanne SooHoo, we had our first meeting with then Vice-President of AERA’s Division K, Dr. Etta Hollins, who welcomed us to this stronger alliance-building by inviting us to initiate a new committee on Teacher Education Policies, launched at the AERA 2011 Conference in Vancouver. I was invited to represent CCTE at the AERA Division K Teacher Education Summit on September 8 of the same year and for the next two years at AERA headquarters to participate in dialogues on the intersections of research and policy in teacher education. All of this was relevant to the activities of AACTE’s National Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Practice. This resulted in an amazing opportunity to collaborate on a soon-to-be published volume entitled *Rethinking Field Experiences in Pre-Service Teacher Education* edited by Hollins.

As perhaps the strongest state chapter of AACTE, our national connection has always been vital and from a position of strength; this collaboration was strengthened further by the submission and acceptance of several state chapter grants that supported our strategic planning

efforts and initiatives, including mentoring new teacher education faculty, providing financial resources for them to attend CCTE conferences and become members, and most recently to undertake the current CCTE Quest for Teacher Education Research. These key grants, co-written on behalf of the CCTE Fund Development Committee by Juan Flores, Alan Jones, Lettie Ramirez, Reyes Quezada, and myself, with input from several other CCTE members, have motivated and challenged us to continue seeking outside resources, think creatively about the needs of our organization, and support our membership in their own grant-development activities.

Anticipatory Reflections of Hope: CCTE's Role in Teacher Education through 2085

The pedagogy of hope contains an imaginary horizon of possibilities, an opening for new roads in the middle of the neoliberal fog that obscures subjects and hides the optimism of history. Freire bet on the contingency of history and, therefore, on the possibility of altering its legacy and he founded his pedagogy precisely on that unpredictability. But the unpredictability of political, social and cultural coincidences does not eliminate the permanence and validity of universal hopes for social justice, full democracy, and a human world. (Puiggrós, 1997, p. 158)

In her reflections of the possibilities for the future, Chilean educator Adriana Puiggrós so articulately states above the notion of how hope sustains and nurtures our profession by reminding us to reflect on the past and anticipate the unpredictable in order to “imagine that horizon of possibilities.” For the generations of teachers, past, present, and future that we have been privileged to prepare and be touched by, I have always appreciated Van Manen's definition of *anticipatory reflection* (1995), which he defined as the part of epistemologies of reflective practice that are corollaries of teaching practices. In combining Freire's notion of hope and Van Manen's anticipatory reflection, we can both acknowledge and honor the wisdom of those who have preceded and buoyed us in contested times and led to our highest accomplishments. The horizon of possibility is one that we can imagine together for the education of children who will be touched by those who we prepare today and tomorrow.

References

- Bales, S. N. (2008). Framing for public consideration. *The Chamber Executive*. Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. (2013b). *CAEP accreditation standards and evidence: Aspirations for educator preparation*. Retrieved from <http://caepnet.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/commrpt.pdf>.

- Feuer, M. J., Floden, R. E., Chudowsky, N., & Ahn, J. (2013). *Evaluation of teacher preparation programs: Purposes, methods, and policy options*. Washington, DC: National Academy of Education.
- Fischman, G., Puiggrós, A., & Thompson, J. (1999). *Neoliberalism and education in the Americas*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Freire, P. (1994). *Pedagogy of hope*. New York: Routledge.
- Puiggros, A. (1997). Remembering Paulo Freire. In H. Giroux (Ed.), *Journal of Rhetoric, Writing, Culture and Politics*. 17, 1.
- Hollins, E. [Editor] (in press). *Rethinking field experiences in pre-service teacher education*. New York: Routledge.
- New York Times. (2014). <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/26/us/obama-administration-plan-seeks-to-rate-teacher-training-programs.html?smid=pl-share>
- Torlakson, T. (2012, September). *Greatness by design: Supporting outstanding teaching to sustain a golden state*. Retrieved September 18, 2012, from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr12/yr12rel81.asp>.
- Van Manen, M. (1995). On the epistemology of reflective practice. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 1(1), 33-50.