

A Brief History of the Comparative and International Education Society¹

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The founding of the Comparative Education Society, 1956 to 1960

The Comparative and International Education Society, initially the Comparative Education Society, evolved from annual conferences at New York University begun in 1954 by William W. Brickman. Although only thirty-five were present at the first conference, Brickman labeled a collection of papers presented there: "Proceedings of the First Annual Conference on Comparative Education (1954)" - thus signaling hope that he and this group would henceforth occupy comparative education turf in the United States. The Comparative Education Society (CES) was founded at the close of a subsequent conference (April 27, 1956), with Brickman as President and Gerald Read of Kent State University, Secretary-Treasurer.

During the first six years of its existence, the Comparative Education Society led study tours on five continents and in twenty-four countries. It also inaugurated a new journal, *Comparative Education Review*, and it drafted and ratified a Constitution calling for annual elections and a nine member Board of Directors. From the beginning it courted an international membership. In addition to Americans, scholars from Canada, England, France, Germany, Switzerland, Chile and the Netherlands served on its Board of Directors or on the Editorial Board of its journal.

Organization building, 1960-1975

In the years following the founding of CES, a group who could be considered "Founding Fathers" assumed positions of leadership. William W. Brickman served as President from 1957 to 1959. He was followed by William H.E. Johnson, 1959-1960; Joseph Katz, 1961; C. Arnold Anderson, 1962; Claude Eggertsen, 1963; R. Freeman Butts, 1964; Donald K. Adams, 1965; David G. Scanlon, 1966; William W. Brickman again, 1967; Stewart E. Fraser, 1968; Reginald Edwards, 1969; Foster, 1970; Andreas Kazamias, 1971; Cole S. Brembeck, 1972; Harold J. Noah, 1973; Robert F. Lawson, 1974; and Rolland G. Paulston, 1975.

In the 1960s focus was on three issues: constitutional reform, a name change, and a decision to hold separate meetings. Constitutional reform took place in 1966 when the Society ratified a revised Constitution that regularized practices already in place. It also gave student members the same rights and privileges as mature scholars. On the matter of a name change there was heated debate, echoes of which can still be heard today. What did the word *international* connote? Did it describe a community of comparativists? Debate notwithstanding, on February 14, 1968, the Board of Directors unanimously approved a name change. They put the issue before the Business Meeting two days later, following which mail ballots were sent to the membership. Of these, 149 were in favor of a change and 51 opposed. The September 1968 *Newsletter* states: "The Constitution is now amended to read, 'The name of this organization shall be the Comparative and International Education Society' " (Article 1, Section 1).

The third issue of the 1960s, the separate meetings issue, reflects a particular historical moment. Until 1970 the society met annually in Chicago during February, coordinating its meetings with those of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, the National Society of College Teachers of Education, and the Association of Student Teaching – organizations with which it affiliated at the time of its inception. In an era, however, when Harold Noah and Max Eckstein, George Bereday, and Brian Holmes were exploring new methodologies in comparative education, identification with teacher education was beginning to weaken. The first separate annual meeting took place in Atlanta in 1970. Thereafter, the Board voted to hold its Annual Meetings in a locale designated by the incoming Vice President.

Growth and consolidation, 1975 to 1990

During the years that followed, CIES established societal markers that reflected an emerging maturity. In 1980 it established a CIES Collection in the Kent State University Archives, thus providing a vehicle for the preservation of historical memory. The CIES Collection, which now occupies over 80 cubic feet, has become an important resource in the field of comparative education. It includes correspondence by CIES presidents and CER editors, issues of the *CIES Newsletter*, minutes of Board meetings, policy discussions, and much more. Another societal marker was establishment of Eggertsen Lectures, set up by former students of Claude A. Eggertsen of the University of Michigan, a Founder, past president, and Honorary Fellow. Brian Holmes gave the first Eggertsen lecture in 1980. A third societal marker is the designation Honorary Fellow for selected senior scholars. The first Honorary Fellows were elected in 1987.

Contentious issues and systemic change, 1990 to 2006

The modern era has given rise to particularly contentious issues, both epistemological and practical. On the one hand, debates have raged over what is sometimes referred to as thinking within or thinking outside the black box. See, for example, the issues raised by Vandra Masemann and George Psacharopoulos in the pages of *Comparative Education Review* (34, 1990, nos. 3 and 4). At the same time, like other comparative education societies CIES has grappled with international political concerns: apartheid in South Africa, events in Tiananmen Square, globalization, border crossing difficulties for participants in CIES conferences. In addition, the society has had its own domestic issues: a contested election in 1990, problems with the Internal Revenue Service because it had not properly filed for tax exempt status – a situation that illustrates the difficulty of transforming a gathering of like-minded scholars, not always the most practical people, into a larger professional organization. Not all issues have been worrisome, however. In 2000 CIES received its first endowment, a bequest of \$100,000 from George F. Kneller, a UCLA professor of the philosophy of education. Terms of the endowment include a directive to establish an annual George F. Kneller Lecture.

The modern era has ushered in systemic change. The Constitution of 1998 created a new office – Historian, an office with a three-year renewable term and Executive Committee status. The first Historian was appointed in 1999. The Constitution of 1998 also introduced the first Bylaws in the history of the society. Amending the Constitution still requires two-thirds approval by mail ballot; but passing or rescinding a Bylaw requires no more than a two-thirds affirmative vote by a quorum of the Board, a procedure that

can take place either during a board meeting (Article XII, Sections 1 and 2) or electronically (Bylaws, Article V, Section c).

A significant recent development is a trend toward decentralization through committees and Special Interest Groups. When the Constitution of 1998 was ratified, the CIES had three Standing (permanent) Committees: the Nominations Committee, the Awards Committee, and the New Scholars Committee. In 2000 three newer committees – the Investment Committee, the Gender and Education Committee, and the Under-Represented Ethnic and Ability Groups (UREAG) – were converted from Ad Hoc to Standing Committee status by changing the Bylaws, an event that took place at a regular board meeting. In addition, Special Interest Groups, such as those on language or peace, have formed in response to member interest, thus signaling flexibility in the accommodation of disparate interests and concerns.

As it celebrates its first half century, the CIES has become more than just a professional association. Loyalty runs long and deep. The membership includes some of forty years standing, but even among the younger generation CIES generates a special ambience. A graduate student, who was a member of the Board of Directors, has offered the following testimony:

The annual CIES conference creates a social space where human beings from many different parts of the world connect on topics of mutual interest and learn from one another (even from those [with whom] they may strongly disagree). The greatest value of being a member of this society has come from my interactions with people who have different frames of reference and different realities. (Maria Fatima Rodrigues, *CIES Newsletter*, no. 121, May 1999.)

For those to whom CIES speaks, these “different frames of reference and different realities” are indeed evidence of the strength of this fifty year old work in progress.

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Notes:

1. An edited version of this article appeared in the program for the Fiftieth Anniversary Conference of the Comparative and International Education Society in Honolulu, Hawai'i, March 2006.