A RATIONALE FOR DEVELOPING A CEDA PROGRAM

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The Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) will mark its tenth anniversary on September 13th, 1981. In those ten years CEDA has grown from a purely regional concept into a viable national alternative to traditional NDT debate. As we begin the second decade of CEDA, it is important to recall the basic principles upon which the organization was founded. It is especially important that those principles be appreciated by schools new to CEDA, and to remind those of us in established CEDA programs of the circumstances which have made CEDA as attractive as it has become. My purpose, in this article, is to examine those foundations and develop a rationale for those considering the transition from their current debate programs into CEDA.

The association began with an agenda which included four basic objectives:

1. To seek a method of restoring a better balance among evidentiary support, sound analysis, and effective delivery in debate than is currently encouraged by national propositions that emphasize evidence almost to the exclusion of these other areas.
2. To provide the opportunity for diversifying a student's collegiate debate experience by making available the cross-examination format and by offering topics in addition to the national proposition.
3. To try and arouse an interest in debate among college students for whom a current national topic might have little appeal, by furnishing them with an alternative which may be more timely and interesting.
4. To create a healthy rivalry among debate squads, as opposed to that between individual teams, as schools compete in the standings for national sweepstakes awards at the end of the season.[1]

As CEDA developed a national following, these basic objectives were incorporated into the organization's constitution in 1974. They remain today as the basis of the CEDA approach to competitive debate.

These objectives laid a foundation for an approach to debate which is fundamentally different from the traditional-NDT approach. It may be helpful to examine some of the dimensions where the CEDA approach significantly departs from the current NDT emphasis.

1. National Awards

A national championship in college debate has existed since 1946.[2] That championship is one which is based on a single team's performance at the National Debate Tournament. Clearly, if a team survives the long and arduous season using the National Debate Topic, and further climbs atop the ladder at the national tournament, they deserve recognition.

In CEDA, national sweepstakes awards are sought after. The top several schools in total points receive awards at the end of the CEDA debate season. This award is based not on an individual team's performance, but the total points achieved by all debate teams (with some restrictions to compensate small institutions) representing a particular school. Thus an

award is based on total squad contribution rather than individual team performance. It has been my experience, as well as other's, that this type of competition brings a higher degree of cohesiveness to the debaters as a group. Instead of acting as individual debate teams, they develop into a debate squad.

2. Focus of the Debate

It is generally accepted today that in traditional-NDT debate, the focus of the debate is event-centered. Many debate coaches claim that the event itself, the competitive debate, is the paramount factor in the preparation and performance of debaters. It is suggested that this is the "excuse" for rapid delivery, card-reading, and other related actions. These behaviors have been defended as being situation-specific and that debaters would adjust their behavior to other situations.

In contrast, CEDA stresses a focus on a public-centered approach. A CEDA debate should be one where the audience, potential or real, is taken into account. A debate which is public or audience-centered is one where the use of language, delivery, evidence, and the way the topic is debated could be understood by the layperson. This approach does not excuse a debater from using evidence or a logical organizational pattern. Rather than lowering the level of argument, it makes greater demands on the participants. Debaters must not simply take into account those who are privy to their jargon and devices, but be able to appeal to a more diverse audience.

3. Interpretation of the Proposition

One of the most often voiced criticisms of intercollegiate debate during the last decade revolved around the "spirit" of the resolution. The issue of reasonable interpretation has been debated nationally in both conventions and competitive rounds. Professor Trapp points out that the issue is a complex and difficult one.[3] This does not mean it is one we should not address. The 1974 National Development Conference on Forensics suggested "parameters" be used as clarification for the propositions selected for traditional-NDT debate. It is interesting that such a need existed in the first place. Such attempts are a result of the great lengths some teams have gone to in stretching the topic to fit a case which, they hope, the negative has no or little evidence with which to respond.

In CEDA the "spirit" of the resolution has survived, yet is under assault. CEDA has encouraged approaching the topic in a more direct manner. Debates should deal with the resolution as a whole rather than one particular (albeit significant) aspect. This does not mean teams shouldn't use examples or stress some particular aspects, but the resolution as a whole must not be relegated to only a minor part of the debate.

4. Quantity or Quality

The issue of quantity or quality has also been long argued in college debate. The issue revolves around two basic debate elements, use of evidence and development of arguments. The evolution of traditional-NDT debate, with its event-centered focus, has stimulated a heavy reliance on evidence and also the development of so-called "spread" arguments.

One of the most obvious differences between a traditional-NDT debate and a CEDA debate, should be that the CEDA debaters will avoid "spreading" in favor of establishing a few solid arguments. The CEDA

debate should also find debaters who emphasize reasoning and analysis as well as evidence, but not utilizing any one to the exclusion of others.

It can be argued that these important differences are a part of what has made CEDA an attractive alternative for college debaters. Some additional observations may add to the development of a rationale for adopting CEDA debate.

In adopting propositions that have been value-oriented over the past six years, CEDA has taken the lead in providing alternative topics and formats for the college debater. This does not mean CEDA should be cemented to value debating, a mistake some in the forensic community have made. CEDA may well adopt propositions of policy in the future. The topics selected for use between 1971 and 1975 were indeed propositions of policy. While CEDA has greatly contributed to a renewed interest in non-policy debate, CEDA's basic philosophy is applicable to either policy or non-policy debating.

It should be obvious that CEDA does offer valuable alternatives in collegiate debate. CEDA has encouraged creativity and experimentation in debate in the spirit of the Sedalia Conference, which urged such efforts.[4] For example, when a value topic was first selected for use in 1975, CEDA debaters found their accustomed arguments over "inherency" and use of "disadvantages" to be inappropriate devices for challenging affirmative cases which (1) had no plan, and (2) did not require a defense of the status quo. One of the first significant alterations in negative strategy was developed by debaters at Brigham Young University and Cal-Poly Pomona. These debate squads developed "value objections" for use in the second negative constructive, thus answering frantic concerns over the role of the second negative speaker in a debate where no plan existed. Used properly, and not simply as "disads" disguised, the value objection strategy is a powerful set of arguments in value-oriented debate.

In approaching value topics, affirmative teams also became innovative. Several teams began developing cases which outlined a value system supporting the resolution, which in some cases (especially with the 1978-79 resolution) included the status quo. Arguments over inherency appear to be irrelevant in such debates. Affirmative arguments were built around the "desirability" or "superiority" of the affirmative value when compared to the value(s) defended by the negative. Such innovations in debate should be applauded and further ones encouraged.

It is of vital importance to view CEDA as not merely a provider of alternate topics and formats, but more importantly as an alternative in basic philosophy. As CEDA has grown, the unfortunate tendency has been for some institutions to forget that most important difference. Thus, especially in the past few years, some CEDA debates have sounded remarkably similar to the type of debate the organization has tried to avoid. CEDA debaters, judges, and coaches must make the effort to retain the organization's philosophical integrity. In developing a CEDA program, it is the basic philosophy that provides the true alternative and opportunity for the education of a college debater.

When developing a rationale for the use of CEDA as part of a forensics program, it is my hope that the elements presented here are incorporated. While not trying to be prescriptive or rule-oriented, I do believe that this underlying philosophy

of CEDA must be accepted by member and participating schools. If CEDA is not approached as essentially different in philosophy, as well as format and method, then it well might become only a poor imitation of traditional-NDT debate. I encourage all who explore CEDA debate to begin with an understanding and appreciation of that fundamental difference.

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[1]James Tomlinson, "A History of the Cross Examination Debate Association." unpublished paper, California State University - Long Beach, 1975.

[2]J. H. Howe, Intercollegiate Speech Tournament Results. Long Beach: privately published, 1975. Vol. XIV.

[3]Robert Trapp, "A Situationally-Guided Perspective for Propositions of Judgement," Perspectives on Non-Policy Argument. Cross Examination Debate Association, 1980. pp. 17-26.

[4]Austin J. Freeley, Argumentation and Debate. Belmont: Wadsworth, 1976.