

## A Conceptual History of Teacher Education at Beloit College

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Prior to the opening of Beloit College in 1846, education in the United States had already developed from a model, the Boston Latin School, established in 1635. Unlike the town schools or dames schools, grammar schools, such as Boston Latin, emphasized primarily Latin, some Greek, and occasionally Hebrew. Much of the curriculum favored coursework in logic and rhetoric, including composition, oration and disputations. By looking at the Beloit College catalogues starting in 1849, one can see that the pedagogy at Beloit College promoted European educational thought based on humanists like Erasmus; religious reformers like Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli; rationalists like Bacon, Comenius, and Locke; and, naturalists like Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Herbart, and Froebel.

Between 1830 and 1865 the common school movement began to develop in American education. Common schools were the result of individuals, such as Horace Mann, Catherine Beecher, and Henry Barnard, who advocated for state systems of education that were supported by direct taxation and public support for all children. Along with efforts to establish common schools (elementary schools), Mann and others also campaigned for improving the status of the teaching profession and organizing the training of teachers in institutions, which came to be known as “normal schools.” Of utmost importance in the normal school curriculum was the development of moral character and then learning methods of instruction, philosophical approaches, and classroom management.

*The 1849-52 Beloit College Catalogue states that students who wished to go into teaching were placed in the “Normal and English Department.” In 1852-53 the course catalogue states that “[The Faculty of the Institution] hope to prepare many to go forth as Teachers, fully competent to take charge of and elevate the rising schools and academies of this region.” In that year, the course catalogue name for the Department was changed to the “Normal Department.” Later in 1855-56 the Preparatory and Normal and English Departments were combined into the new “Preparatory and Teachers’ Department.” During this time, students were given a “Teacher’s Class,” which prepared them with information on current teaching practices and pedagogy.*

As formal education increasingly demanded better-educated teachers, the criteria for teacher training became more carefully defined. Also, with the huge population growth and greater demand for elementary or common schools, secondary education became a popular notion. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, women such as Emma Willard, actively integrated their desire for education with designing and building schools to train female teachers in subject areas and pedagogy, as in the Troy Female Seminary (1821). With many contributing forces, it became a matter of time before women were awarded places in normal schools and colleges, and did not only hold primary teaching positions. Also states began to regulate the development of teacher training and courses became more routinized. Therefore the development of a Preparatory School or an Academy, as the one created at Beloit College in the late 1880s became part of the patchwork of schools, colleges, and universities that addressed quality educational opportunities.

*For the first time, in 1857, the Normal Department was organized to conform “to the Regulations of the Wisconsin Board of Regents of Normal Schools” and the course of study became four years. From the course catalogue in 1888-89, we learn that Pedagogics is listed as a department. “The work in this department includes one lecture a week, during the winter term, upon the Ends and Methods of Instruction,*

*by the Professor, with courses of reading, discussions, and preparation of themes by the class.” In the same catalogue, an entry under the Academy—a prep school run by the College—mentions that its English course will fulfill the needs of those students who don’t want to go to college, but who intend to enter a life of teaching. A year later the first mention is made that Academy students had to pass an examination “required for teaching in the common schools of the State.” Significantly, women were admitted to the College and the department beginning in 1895.*

Of renewed historical interest for Beloit College and the training of teachers is the fact that Jane Addams, the great pioneering social worker and education reformer in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, had direct ties to the College. She was born and raised less than 40 miles from campus in Cedarville, Illinois. The College archives have records of Jane Addams’ step-brother, George Haldeman, who was a student at Beloit College in the 1870s and early ‘80s. Sarah Blaisdell, a close friend of Addams, was also the sister of James Blaisdell, a faculty member at Beloit College from 1856 to 1896. Interestingly, Jane Addams mentions Beloit College in this connection in her well-known *Twenty Years at Hull House*. Jane Addams’ reform-minded legacy is one that is still being discussed in education classes today. She valued citizenship and taught immigrants how to use their skills, in order become integrated into the fabric of American society. Her leadership included building the first playground in Chicago, organizing for city garbage removal, educating immigrants at Hull House, and fighting to lower infant mortality rates. Second perhaps only to Eleanor Roosevelt, Addams was a leader who profoundly affected American education and to this day her educational ideals inspire our students who want to become teachers.

Though many changes affected the development of teacher training in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century educational reforms began to make increasingly bigger demands. With growing urbanization and larger schools, state control encompassed a variety of areas: teacher certification, requirements for teacher education programs, school curricula, and guidelines for school facilities, and financial support. Progressive thinkers, such as John Dewey and Ella Flagg Young established an intellectual foundation for progressivism, also known as a movement loosely organized to subvert pedagogical formalism. As historian Lawrence Cremin suggests in *Traditions of American History*, the intervention of education came “in the interest of equalizing opportunity and encouraging individual development and at the same time achieving a certain measure of socialization for public ends” (124). Parallel to the times, the Department of Education at Beloit College struggled with name changes to match the reformist thinking of the era, which included both a bureaucratizing of education and an emphasis on a child-centered pedagogy.

*In the 1917-18 Beloit College Catalogue, the field of study known as Pedagogics was changed to Education. Significantly, the catalogue also listed Education as a major consisting of 18 hours in the department, a correlated course of 18 hours in one or two related departments, and an additional 18 hours in consultation with the head of the department. The new department and its major also gained a second faculty member J.F. Crawford who taught at Beloit College from 1917-1940. A State Life Certificate was granted after two years of teaching by the State Board of Examiners of Wisconsin. In 1927-28, the catalogue stated that the Education Major was 21 hours and courses such as Child Study and Child Training and Harvard Exchange were taught. From 1926-1934 the Major in Education remained at 21 hours and not more than three hours in sociology, psychology, and philosophy were allowed.*

A continuing chorus of conflicting aims for education at various levels and for different constituents also had an influence on educational institutions. The growth in American industry and in the economy encouraged a reform among some educational theorists that focused on social efficiency and vocational

and/or pre- professional training. Key thinkers of such reforms were Edward Ross, Frederick Taylor, and John Bobbit. They argued for an emphasis on schools as an instrument of social control, scientific management for economic reform, and utilitarian learning to address the needs of the workforce. While the energies of scholars and practitioners volleyed back-and-forth among many such reform-oriented concepts, the curriculum of institutions followed their respective leaders, much like the courses at Beloit College.

*In 1944-45, specific aims of the department of education were first noted in the Catalogue. They were as follows:*

- 1. giving students an appreciation and understanding of the functions of the school as a social institution*
- 2. making students aware and critical of current educational trends and issues*
- 3. training students to think critically with respect to educational problems and providing them with techniques for the scientific study of educational problems*
- 4. assisting students in understanding those aspects of the physical, motor, social, emotional, and intellectual growth of the individual which are most closely related to the educational process*
- 5. assisting students in learning to function as directors of learning so that maximum realization of educational goals can be attained*
- 6. enabling students who so desire, to fulfill the legal requirements for a teaching certificate*
- 7. assisting qualified students in securing teaching positions*  
*(Catalogue of Beloit College, 1944-45 pg. 68)*

*While some debate whether the department goals were pre-professional or not, the College Catalogues did not mention teaching as a pre-professional activity until 1953 and its listing as such, along with medicine and other areas, extended through 1959. However, it is important to note that as early as the 1940s, although Beloit had “a teacher-training program that fully qualifies students for teaching certificates,” the Department vigorously maintained that most of the courses were designed “as liberal cultural courses” and were “open to all students whether or not they intend[ed] to qualify for teaching certificates” (Beloit College Catalogues 1942-43 through 1948-49).*

Development of the training of teachers continued voraciously after WWII and subsequently in the 60s many post baccalaureate programs were added. Along with a growing number of masters programs, departments of education included studies in foreign languages, civil rights, and African American and Native American education. New programs were designed to reflect the experimental spirit of the 60s and 70s decades, as in the Beloit Plan. Alongside these dramatic inspirations, the computer era was heralded as a new intellectual frontier.

*In 1963-64, the Department of Education began offering a Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT) and thus added an Internship and Seminar, which included four full courses. In 1970-71 a Teacher Placement Bureau “under the Department of Education” assisted “Certified students to obtain positions, and also to aid in the advancement of alumni in the teaching profession (Beloit College Catalogue 1970-71, pg. 28). A significant change occurred in 1973-74 as the department began to offer a course in Early Childhood Education to prepare nursery and kindergarten student teachers. In 1974-75 an international component in the education department was called Student Teaching in Britain or Australia (Elementary or Secondary). Later in 1978-79 other courses entered the catalogue, including Human Relations in Education, Story Theater, Educational Communications, British Education, and Education of the Exceptional Child. They continued to be taught through 1983-85. The computer era influenced the department to offer its first computer course in 1985 with a course entitled, “Introduction to Micro Computer and Logo Programming.*

In contrast to the booming, buzzing, and bartering climate of the 60s, 70s and even early 80s, the following decades at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century heralded a major re-evaluation of public education. Unfortunately, many politicians and educators began to retreat and education became a battle ground for intellectual property rights, privatized large-scale education projects, and an American public that demanded its consumerist rights. As a matter of survival, education institutions had to address many self-centered goals by their constituents and the thriving ideal of education as the “great equalizer” ceased to be foremost in the American imagination. While schools promoted outcomes assessment and performance-based education, Pandora’s box had been opened to a myriad of new educational demands that increasingly put American public education at a disadvantage.

*When the NCA review of 1996 came due, and as the Wisconsin Department of Curriculum (DPI) allowed for flexibility with the advent of state teacher performance standards and assessment, the Department adopted a new approach. For this curriculum revision, an Education Studies major was added, while at the same time the Master of Arts of Teaching (MAT) program was discontinued. Philosophically, the department articulated its position as “more clearly serv[ing] a broader group of students rather than only those who wish to teach in K-12 schools” (Report to APC, Curricular Revisions, 1996). As the report stated, “A rigorous curriculum [was] designed to attract students with a commitment to education in its broadest interpretation.” An integral part of the curriculum revision included ten principles, which guided the curriculum changes. These principles included a ten-course program for both Education Studies and elementary and secondary certification. They were based the following ideas: core courses taught by permanent faculty with a minimal dependence on adjunct faculty, minimal faculty course “marriages,” an open course per semester (selected topics, FYI or IDST) maximal integration between elementary and secondary programs, and contact with all full time faculty members both early and late in the students’ programs of study. Significantly, new courses in the department included Education Policy, Comparative Education, Selected Topics in Education, Curriculum Theory, and Research. Every student in the Department, both certifiers and new Ed Studies Majors enrolled in four core courses, methods courses, and field experiences.*

Here is where the story of American education and one of its actors, the Department of Education and Youth Services at Beloit College, moves from the past to the present. With great hope and humility, we anticipate that the department will continue to serve the well being of its community and that its service may uphold the legacy of its original founders.

*The year 2004-5 brings the history of the department to the current revision of the curriculum, which was approved by the Senate on March 15, 2005. With this revision the Department changed its name from the Department of Education to the Department of Education and Youth Studies. The name change marks a new major with three tracks: Children and Schools, Adolescents and Schools, and Youth and Society.*

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