Midwives of progressive education: The Bureau of Educational Experiments 1916-1919
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INTRODUCTION

Pratt’s vision was of educating through industrial life in the classroom. Children were to learn by experimentation and experience. Through play, children reconstructed the work relationships and processes of the real world that were once available to them to learn from in the course of their daily lives...Blocks for younger children, school jobs for older children, and trips into the community provided the work and play, the first-hand experience that helped children to learn about living creative, productive lives within the community. In this active environment, traditional learning was a by-product of real learning.


Johnson frustrated and annoyed academic traditionalists, so sharp were her attacks on bookishness and so strong her preference for experience as a way of learning. On the printed page, moreover, her views sometimes came across as simplistic; and yet people who heard her speak, or better still visited the Organic School and watched her work, sensed something that was hard to put into words. Johnson had a gift. Somehow, she managed to lift her school high above the pedagogical jargon that mired the child development literature...and, yes, the students in her school did seem to read easily, naturally, happily.


The aim of this dissertation is twofold.

First, to gain insight into American educational renewal during the Progressive Era. The knowledge is important because the reform efforts and disputes for and against the renewal show strong parallels to Dutch twenty-first-century Nieuwe Leren (New Learning) educational reforms and an accompanying debate.

The Introduction begins with a synopsis of the most important arguments in the Dutch New Learning debate, followed by an overview of parallel American education reforms and related arguments. The choice of order of description corresponds with the wish to highlight a narrative, rather than in any way denoting the history of American educational reform efforts as derivative to the Dutch reforms and debate.

Though the passions surrounding the New Learning debate have declined since 2008, the conditions that led to it remain. The most important themes of the debate likely will surface again in the near future. In the Introduction I argue that this dissertation may help lead to a more informed exchange of opinions over the kind of classroom reforms typified by Nieuwe Leren.

Considerations specified in the first sections of the Introduction lead to the central research question of this thesis: What was the role played by the Bureau of Educational Experiments and its members in the history of progressive education between 1916 and 1919?

The second aim of the dissertation is to shed new light — informed by research of (mostly) recently uncovered documents and archival material — on the role played by the NYC Bureau of Educational Experiments in American early twentieth-century educational renewal and in American educational historiography. The penultimate section in this Introduction further addresses the second aim of the dissertation.
Midwives of Progressive Education

Nieuwe Leren (New Learning)

In January 2005, Dutch educational psychologist Greetje van der Werf asserted that the theoretical basis for Nieuwe Leren (New Learning) educational reforms lacks empirical underpinning. These reforms were recently propagated by, among others, her colleague Robert-Jan Simons. The editor of Pedagogische Studiën, in a special issue of the journal, responded that New Learning “helps schools to face the ever increasing problems of reduced motivation in (pre-) vocational education” (Wubbels, 2006). Other contributors to the special Pedagogische Studiën issue support the contention that enhancing student motivation is the core rationale for adopting New Learning reforms. Simons (2006) emphasized that New Learning outcomes depend on balancing processes of guided, action and experiential learning — and that instruction should be “durable, flexible, functional, meaningful, generalizable and application-oriented” (p. 81). Simons, Van der Linden, and Duffy (2000) had previously contended that New Learning methods replace conventional teaching methods with experiential learning and action learning. Experiential learning includes discovery oriented, contextual, problem-solving, case-based, social, and intrinsically motivated learning. Action learning includes active, cumulative, constructive, goal-directed, diagnostic, and reflective learning. In conventional guided teaching approaches, teachers make the relevant decisions regarding learning goals, learning strategies and measuring learning outcomes and students “can and should follow” (p. 4). In contrast, in experiential learning approaches to education “circumstances, personal motivation, other people, innovations, discoveries, experiments, etc., determine what and how one learns” (ibid.). In action learning approaches to education, students themselves “determine the goals of learning according to needs arising in their actions” (p. 5).

A New Dutch School War

In hindsight, Van der Werf’s 2005 article was catalyst to numerous popular media articles regarding the pros and cons of New Learning. Discussions of authentic learning, natural learning, problem-based learning, inquiry learning, discovery learning, and experiential learning appeared in Dutch national newspapers De Volkskrant, NRC Handelsblad, and Trouw — and in educational magazines like JSW, Didaktief, Het Onderwijsblad, among others. As well, “Nieuwe Leren” began appearing in the titles of many Dutch books, articles, pamphlets and other texts on education reform.

In a Volkskrant interview, Simons claimed he invented the phrase Nieuwe Leren in 1995 to cover three educational reforms: students should learn to study and learn cooperatively, students should learn to learn by doing, and students should learn how to learn. That is, students should decide for themselves the best ways to study and learn independently (in Reijn, 2007). However, barely half a year later, in a NRC Handelsblad interview, he came to regret using the expression, asserting that it had spoiled the atmosphere of educational reform discourse, exclaiming, “Let us not discuss this phrase anymore” (in Hagers, 2007).

While the Dutch New Learning school war began in professional education journals, soon newspaper and magazine reports would be based on onsite visits to New Learning educational institutes. For but one instance, in an article about the new prevocational secondary education school Via Nova College, teachers were deemed “expert coaches” and classrooms “learning plazas” (Schrijver, 2005). The principal of Via Nova College represented the school’s mission as a synthesis of old and new education reforms, including the Montessori Method, the Dalton Laboratory Plan, Gardner’s ‘multiple
intelligences,’ and Dutch educator Stevens’ ‘adaptive education.’ The Via Nova College principal did not distinguish specific New Learning methods from other educational practices employed at the school (Dorreboom, 2005). While a Via Nova College teacher eloquently documented the school’s success in preparing students for the future kennisamenleving (knowledge society, learning society), he too failed to bring out whether the school’s application of New Learning practices were the determining factors in that success (Dees, 2005).

**New Learning and Dutch Teachers Study Centres**

The New Learning suppositions are that: traditional educational models fail to motivate students; students are “naturally” motivated to learn; learning to learn is more important than acquiring knowledge; students learn best by independent and cooperative study (such as writing interdisciplinary assignments using the internet); portfolios, papers, and assessments can and should substitute formal examinations (Giesen & Schöttelndreier, 2005).

Since 2005, Dutch teachers eager to update their pedagogic and didactic understanding have had available a number of English books on the latest educational reforms, including the *Courage to Teach*, *Learning Organizations*, *Learning Through Children’s Eyes*, *Multiple Intelligences*, *The Big Picture: Education is Everyone’s Business* and *Flow*, as well as Dutch books suggestively titled *Learning Less and Less*, *Amongst Teachers*, and *We Demand Education*. In addition to books, there are DVDs, including *Implementing New Learning*.

Thus, Dutch teachers in the early twenty-first-century Dutch school war have an implicit, and sometimes an explicit, opinion on New Learning. One side advocates that Dutch schools of education and national teacher continuing education centres play a leading role in implementing New Learning reforms (Castelijns, Koster, & Vermeulen, 2004). The former director of the Algemeen Pedagogisch Studiecentrum (APS) teacher continuing education centre located in Utrecht was once dubbed the “father of New Learning” (Vink, 2005). He asserts that the suppressed motivation — of students and teachers alike — shows the need for greatly expanding the use of New Learning reforms in Dutch primary and secondary schools. He distinguishes an ‘old’ Paradigm A learning model (in which teachers convey so-called objective knowledge; students read and listen) from a ‘new’ Paradigm B learning model (in which students construct their knowledge from doing and experiencing; teachers stimulate learning processes). And he believes a shift to the new paradigm is long overdue. Similarly, a senior advisor of the Katholieke Pedagogisch Centrum (KPC) Groep teachers continuing education centre located in Den Bosch asserts in the *NRC Handelsblad* that late twentieth-century societal changes inevitably led to changes within the education system. She finds that an educational paradigm shift has already occurred with the acceptance of the understanding that students’ “motivation [to learn] leads to better acquiring of knowledge than being compelled [to learn]” (Tabbers, 2007).

**New Learning Opponents**

Education reform often, perhaps always, begets heated resistance. New Learning opposition surfaced almost immediately with columnists and authors of letters to the editor critical of articles praising Dutch New Learning schools. One suggested, for instance, that the Utrecht APS continuing education centre merely promotes pseudo-scientific theory (Rienks, 2005). Another referred to a robustly negative government
assessment of a New Learning school by the Den Bosch KPC Groep (Hanzen & Opmeer, 2007). Another letter to the editor countered that students are not intrinsically motivated to learn at all, that only extrinsic motivation will get students going (Lemmens, 2007). Yet another letter claimed that the observation of a paradigm shift is not supported by data based research, that New Learning is not new, and that it does not even deal with learning as such (Nelissen, 2007). A well-known Dutch author characterized New Learning educational approaches as merely consisting of plain and simple strategies of “dumbing down students” (Zwagerman, 2007). A historian went so far as to assert that New Learning devotees “infiltrated” the APS and KPC Groep education schools and demonstrated sectarian quarrelling and conduct (Blokker Jr., 2007). A psychologist took another tack, asserting that adolescents’ brains are not ready for New Learning learning strategies (Jolles, 2007). Neuroscientific research shows, he claims, that the prefrontal lobes are still maturing and students experience difficulties learning to plan and take consequences of their actions into account. A NRC Handelsblad journalist observes that the Dutch phrase Nieuwe Leren (New Learning) sets off alarm bells in parents, in which they would envisage schools devoid of separate classrooms; students who do no more than whatever gives them pleasure; and teachers who are reduced to coaching students instead of conveying knowledge (Hagers (2005). A Dutch political party politician was adamant in De Volkskrant that New Learning educational reforms simply reflect an acute teachers shortage (Lambrechts, 2005). Although not necessarily critical of New Learning reforms, union leaders also found that New Learning requires more, ‘fresh’ teachers (Van der Mee, 2006). Aggravated by New Learning, a philosopher lecturing at the Amsterdam Free University even founded the new advocacy group Vereniging Beter Onderwijs Nederland (Verbrugge & Verbrugge, 2006a-b).

“Competent teachers are needed!” declared a schoolteacher in a letter to the editor in NRC Handelsblad (Lamers, 2006). Another teacher explained that she left teaching because of the instruction that teachers are supposed to “guide processes” instead of transmitting knowledge (Kooijman, 2007). A third teacher warned that New Learning strategies at Dutch teachers colleges and schools of education would lead to a primary education disaster that cannot be rectified or remedied (Meijs, 2008).

A Volkskrant journalist scrutinized numerous aspects of New Learning praxis in primary, secondary and vocational education. Sommer’s sketches of e-learning at the Deltion College in Zwolle, and an APS seminar discussing U.S. educator Parker J. Palmer’s pedagogic views present a particularly gloomy view of analogous New Learning approaches to education (Sommer, 2006).

Lastly, the 2008 Dutch Parliamentary Commission on Educational Reforms report, Tijd voor Onderwijs (Time for Education), severely criticized New Learning, emphasizing that Dutch educational reforms focusing more on learning processes than on end results led to a downward trend in test results in reading and arithmetic. The Commission found no scientific basis for New Learning approaches to education. Instead, they strongly recommended a gradual restructuring of Nieuwe Leren schools that includes a considerable involvement by (expert) teachers rather than large-scale educational reform from above. They also recommended developing and maintaining a clearinghouse infrastructure (body of knowledge) for educational reforms. In their plan, to acquire the necessary data, small-scale short-term research focusing on specific projects would have a preference, taking into account diversity of schools, diversity of pupils within schools, and differences between urban and rural schools. The Commission also advised investing in both initial training and expertise training of teachers and
recommended that schools, in the context of “good governance,” must be accountable to parents (Commissie Parlementair Onderzoek Onderwijsvernieuwingen, 2008).

Since the publication of the 2008 parliamentary report, the heated New Learning debate cooled down significantly. It would first appear that New Learning will not be the frontrunner in the initial new millennium Dutch school war. While New Learning educational reforms are still taught within (pre-) vocational education in the early years of the second decade of the twenty-first century, the first established New Learning schools have already closed down.

Is New Learning New?

The problem of suppressed motivation to learn is certainly older and more widespread than the Dutch New Learning school war (Wardekker, Boersma, Ten Dam, & Volman, 2012). Perrone (1989) wrote in the early 1970s that he had often been reminded that “large numbers of children are not motivated,” and “hence not successful” (p. 8). In contrast, Furedi (2009) asserts that the “purpose of education is to help young people develop their capacity for thinking, knowing, reflecting, imagining, observing, judging and questioning” (p. 56). This leads him to state that the “imperative of motivation” has corrosive effects on teacher-pupil relations, that it infantilizes education, and that “educationalists tend to be preoccupied with innovating pedagogic techniques that can work to motivate children” (p. 56).

A NRC Handelsblad journalist observes that perhaps the earliest form of New Learning in The Netherlands occurred in 1974 when the University of Maastricht taught students with Problem-Based Learning strategies (Duursma, 2006). This statement suggests that the Dutch New Learning reforms began at least 40 years ago. Indeed, several articles suggest that the heart of New Learning has its roots in American progressive education and, among others, Dewey’s philosophy of education. Van Hout-Wolters, Simons, and Volet (2000) distinguish three distinct tidal waves for the active learning elements of the New Learning. The first wave flooded The Netherlands’ educational landscape during the first decades of the twentieth century when the “traditional school reformers…proposed new types of schools [Montessori schools, Dalton schools, etc.], all stressing active learning in various forms” (p. 23). They added that Dewey “emphasized the value of self-discovered knowledge” (ibid.). A second wave occurred during the 1960s and 1970s, when the “traditional school-reformers attracted new attention and new innovative schools were founded” (p. 24). Lastly there is the present New Learning wave.

In a 2007 report, University of Amsterdam Kohnstamm Institute researchers observe fascinating parallels (“tangent planes”) between New Learning and early twentieth-century reforms of Montessori, Boeke, and Parkhurst (Blok, Oostdam and Peetsma, 2007, p. v). The author of the opening chapter to the report tells how the English New Education Fellowship (NEF) founded in 1921 in Calais, France, inspired Dutch Bilthoven education reform pedagogue Boeke, and asserts that the New Learning learning to learn element has its roots in early twentieth-century theories.² He added that with concepts like ‘New Education’ “it would be worthwhile to pay more attention to these tangent planes between the ‘old’ Reform pedagogues and New Learning” (Kok, 2007, p. 7). He claimed, “It is our expectation that other parallels exist as well” (ibid.).

Advocates of American self-styled New Education reforms during the 1890s until the 1920s, and of Progressive Education during the 1920s found the structure of the American school curriculum failing, identifying the prevailing “graded class system…with its lock-step of progress and promotion” as the cause of failure common to
all schools (Burk, 1913, p. 6). They demanded radical reform of the lock-step system, including new teaching materials, new teaching techniques, new types of text books, new types of exercise books for students who work at their own pace and who correct their own exercises, individualized instruction, cultivation of the senses and manual skills, flexibility in the amount of lessons per week, Socratic discussions in the classroom, no repetition of grades, and — among many other claims — integration of the arts, social sciences, health science and civics in the curriculum. Note that they introduced and used wording parallel to the vernacular used in current Dutch New Learning suppositions. For instance, “Information is important, but ways to get information are more important. Children should be shown how to investigate, [how] to go to sources” (Smith, 1924, p. 5). Several historians of education argue that early twentieth-century progressive pedagogical phrasing and language became dominant as the ruling reform-minded rhetoric in teacher training schools (e.g., Labaree, 2004a-b; Lagemann, 2000).

So, the Dutch New Learning reform stance and idiom cannot be categorized as new; there are historic and rhetoric parallels dating from at least the early twentieth-century U.S.A. Current Dutch criticism of educational reforms cannot be categorized as new either. Critics of American New Education and Progressive Education (e.g., Lynd, 1953) and current Dutch New Learning opponents seem to target analogous themes — e.g., the reformers’ cult-like manner avoiding criticism, anti-intellectual tendencies, showing disrespect of subject matter, depreciated teaching, and inferior learning — while sharing a mistrust of teacher training institutes.

Central Question

Until recently, during the first decade of the twenty-first century, the school war on methods, aims, usefulness and efficacy of the New Learning raged in The Netherlands. The war reached its peak between 2005 and 2007 and came to a rather abrupt cooling down when in 2008 the Dutch Parliamentary Commission on Educational Reforms in their governmental report *Tijd voor Onderwijs* did not favourably portray and evaluate the New Learning.

While literature of the period discussing this first Dutch school war in the twenty-first century summarily referred to the history of the New Learning related education reforms in the United States in the first decades of the twentieth century, there was no in-depth discussion of those reforms. Neither proponents of the New Learning, nor their opponents, exhaustively evaluated early twentieth-century American experimental progressive education.

The omission reinforces both the New Learning supporters and opponents’ stands that the school war only concerns a typical Dutch exchange of views — and that New Learning educational renewal merely constitutes recently devised reforms, implemented in no other place than in The Netherlands during the first decade of the twenty-first century.

American education history shows that, for instance, Marietta Johnson and Caroline Pratt were key figures in early twentieth-century American experimental, innovative education related to the current New Learning in The Netherlands. The schools they founded still exist today. Johnson’s School of Organic Education, established in 1907, now renamed Marietta Johnson School of Organic Education, however, no longer strictly promotes its founder’s pedagogy, curriculum, and didactic approach. Pratt’s Play School, on the other hand, founded in 1913, now named City and Country School, still has the mission to remain congruent with its founder’s pedagogy, curriculum, and didactic approach.
Both Johnson and Pratt, during part of their lives, joined the Bureau of Educational Experiments, the New York City education clearinghouse and research institution. My research led me to the understanding that the Bureau and its members played a far greater role in the history of progressive education and the professionalization of educational reformers than previously recognized and that all of the female Bureau members had built up extended grassroots educational reform expertise before joining the BEE.

The above considerations led me to the following central research question of this thesis: What was the role played by the Bureau of Educational Experiments and its members in the history of progressive education between 1916 and 1919?

The Dutch New Learning Debate

That the Dutch twenty-first-century *Nieuwe Leren* (New Learning) has historical and rhetorical parallel in early twentieth-century American New Education and Progressive Education reform is sufficient reason to focus on that era of American education. Another reason *must* be the notable fact that the New Learning school war abruptly cooled as soon as the Dutch Parliamentary Commission on Educational Reforms issued its report. The sudden silence of an extensive and heated educational discussion creates an impression that the differences of opinion are no longer valid, that nothing was learned, nothing of value was cherished, and finally, that the Commission’s recommendations do not really matter, can be ignored. As a mathematics teacher in the Dutch school system, I find the suppression of discussion of issues raised by the New Learning debate rather unfortunate. After all, the classroom conditions that were a stimulus for the reform remain very much a reality today.

I examined the history of three organizations promoting educational renewal: the local Public Education Association of the City of New York, the national Progressive Education Association, and the NYC Bureau of Educational Experiments (BEE), as well as the professional lives of BEE key members. My research shows that during the first decade of the twentieth century, when these leading American reformers were teachers, settlement house workers, and social activists, the reform-oriented education initiatives they championed included specific concerns for class management, class discipline, class size, playgrounds, the impact of manual training in the curriculum, and suppressed intrinsic student motivation. During the second decade of the century, the majority of the reformers worked as intelligence test administrators and/or visiting teachers for the Public Education Association. Subsequently, beginning in 1916, they formed and/or became members of the Bureau of Educational Experiments. There, the contexts of educational renewal were constituted by ongoing daily discussions concerning top-down imposition of educational reforms, (non-) consultation of parents and community leaders, psychological testing of students and separate classes for children with special educational needs, cooperative forms of learning, challenges of immigrant children, professionalization of teachers, (pre-) vocational education, and community functions of urban and inner-city schools. All these reform-oriented themes remain relevant to the current Dutch New Learning debate — which, until 2008, was heavily laden with strong emotions. The following chapters include new information and exploration of sources not previously considered, and may actually serve to better understand the struggles of the Dutch New Learning debate participants. Indeed, if the debate were to continue in light of the matters I explore in some detail, it might have more depth, and, perhaps, be conducted more adequately, and with more wisdom.
This dissertation challenges the orthodox historiography of American early twentieth-century educational reform, its revisionist interpretations, as well as an intermediate post-revisionist interpretation of histories of that period of educational renewal.

The orthodox historiography embraces studies containing near-hagiographic biographies of the professional lives of pedagogical pioneers and philosophers of educational renewal, such as Horace Mann, John Dewey and William Heard Kilpatrick (e.g., Benedict, 1942) and/or taxonomic-like tableaux of educational reform philosophies during various epochs (e.g., Demiashevich, 1935). Though mostly devoid of social context, these authors stress reformers’ aims to change social order through education. A later revisionist historiography includes works of authors whose interpretations of histories of educational renewal point to differing underlying factors of reform. They describe the reformers’ aims as promoting social control and stabilization of prevailing socio-economic circumstances, rather than reforming socio-economic conditions and social relationships through education (e.g., Greer, 1972), accentuate the constancy of hierarchical teacher-student relationships within schooling structures (e.g., Zilversmit, 1993), emphasize the structural context of teaching where teachers feel forced to maneuver within strategic positions between the rhetoric of child-centered learning activities and the day-to-day on-the-job teacher-centered teaching practice (e.g., Cuban, 1993), and other issues of critique like processes of Americanization, truancy, segregation, social stratification and racism, feminist historiography and gender, special educational needs and religion (Tyack, 1974; Clifford, 1976). Notions that temporary outcomes of a mélange of struggles of adherents of distinct educational reform movements determined the curriculum of schools during the first decades of the twentieth century — by reformers either promoting social efficiency, or child-centered education, or social reconstruction through education, and those promoting social meliorism (Kliebard, 1995) — represent a third, post-revisionist way of interpreting educational reform histories.

The dissertation first, but not foremost, revises a general view about John Dewey’s influence on educational reform during the Progressive Era. Like Cremin (1961) in his highly influential history of American early twentieth-century educational reform, historians of education of the era, even when discussing schools that formed independent of Dewey’s direct influence, tend to frame those education reforms as manifestations of “Dewey’s vision” (Semel, 1999a, p. 7). In contrast, I find that Dewey’s education writings had at most secondary impact on the impetus for education reform taken up by educators focused on here. By way of sketching biographies of Marietta Johnson and Caroline Pratt’s professional lives, the dissertation outlines that female members of the Bureau of Educational Experiments had extensive participation in grassroots reforms beyond education as well as significant classroom experience before interacting with Dewey, or his writing, and before forming or joining the Bureau.

Further: historians of education (e.g., Antler, 1987; Cremin, 1961) certainly acknowledged changes wrought by women leading the Public Education Association of the City of New York, as well as women educators Johnson and Pratt. This dissertation continues their arena of research, in various ways confirming their research. Yet, thus far no historian of education known to me has described an intertwined history of the women who formed the core of a vigorous and dynamic network of women aspiring political, societal and educational reform. Various aspects of educational renewal introduced by members of this network of women, as teachers, and as settlement house workers during the mid-1900s, Women’s Trade Union League members between 1906 and ± 1915, Public Education Association workers between ± 1908 and 1916, Gary School League
Introduction

members in 1916 and 1917, and Bureau of Educational Experiments members as of 1916 are central to this dissertation. In this sense, the dissertation revises, and therefore solidly challenges, the near-universal historiographic tradition of sketching life histories of individuals.

Finally, the dissertation corrects a number of particular, specific, petites histoires. For instance, it shows that writings of both Johnson and Pratt not earlier reviewed elsewhere advance a yet unacknowledged social reconstructionist approach. The dissertation also presents a completely new version of the founding of the Progressive Education Association.

Structural Outline

The structure of the thesis will be as follows.

Chapter 1 delivers a short review of the diverse educational reform activities between 1890 and 1919, and of professionalization processes between 1919 and 1935 related to educational reform that began with the establishment of the Progressive Education Association (PEA). The first part of the chapter shows that many grassroots educational reform initiatives (Reese, 1986) butted, and flourished, or just withered away. Examples taken from New York City show that mainly groups of predominantly women in changing combinations of cooperation aided most to educational reforms. The second part of the chapter discusses causes of a sudden halt in educational reform in New York City during the final two years of World War I, and professionalization of educational reform immediately following the end of the actual war activities. The PEA, the first nationwide organization promoting education renewal, initiated the latter. The synopsis of the chapter points to a gap in the body of knowledge that exists for the period ending World War I.

Chapter 2 chronicles the major part of the professional career of Marietta Johnson, one of America’s early twentieth-century educational reformers. In 1907, she founded a private experimental rural school in Fairhope, Alabama, based on her vision of an organic education. The narrative outlines her initial successes as a teacher, a teacher of teachers, her existential crisis, the consequences of a conversion experience, her painful losses, the birth, awakening and growth of the school she founded, the responsibilities she took maintaining that school of her dreams, her successes, her passion, and her political ideals. The narrative also explores her school’s unchanging curriculum with its centrality on creative shop work and field trips, as well as Johnson’s many winding steps on the road to her BEE non-resident membership.

Chapter 3 draws the formative years of the professional career of Caroline Pratt, an American educational reformer who, one hundred years ago, founded an inner-city experimental school in Manhattan, New York. The narrative outlines her endeavours as researcher, social settlement reformer, trade unionist expressing socialist conviction, and endeavours as toy manufacturer. The narrative also explores her critical texts, her role as education theoretician focusing on socializing elementary education, and her role as education practitioner creating specific strategies of learning by experiencing through field trips to the immanent surrounding world of work and life, and recreating field trip experiences afterwards through organized creative and cooperative play. The chapter illustrates Pratt’s many steps on the road to her BEE charter membership.

Chapter 4 focuses on the cooperation of educational reformers working for the Bureau of Educational Experiments between 1916 and 1919. The chapter shows how individuals, mostly women from very different backgrounds, cooperated and reinforced each other in motivating their actions. The biographical facts and story of
interconnections between the lives of a dozen school reformers outlined in the first chapter, and in the form of more-or-less extended professional biographies of Johnson and of Pratt in the next two chapters highlight another interesting pattern emerging at the time. Their participation in settlement house reforms, union organizing, and the NYC Public Education Association had forged the majority of the BEE members into an accidental cadre of professionally skilled, dauntless, and effective educational activists. The Bureau, in turn, became a model for the Progressive Education Association (PEA). BEE members in 1919, and later, were among those shaping professionalization initiatives by the PEA.

An *Epilogue* — discussing the history of Marietta Johnson and her school during the 1920s and 1930s and of Caroline Pratt and her school during the 1920s, 1930s, and early 1940s — concludes the dissertation.