

Conservative vs. Progressive View of Education

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Eric Donald Hirsch Jr., better known as E. D. Hirsch and John Dewey are two well-known men that have had a great influence in education. Dewey is known as an educational progressive and began his work in the field of education in the late 1800s. Hirsch is known for his conservative philosophy. He emerged much later in the 1990s when he started writing books critiquing the educational system. Hirsch felt that “American students lacked the basic knowledge of cultural terms and concepts that are necessary for academic advancement” (Hirsch, 2018). It is clear that these two men have completely different views. However, as you can see from the comparison table below, both of them have many pros and cons in their way of thinking and they both make some very valuable points about education.

	E.D. Hirsch	John Dewey
Approach	Conservative/Traditional	Progressive
Teacher's Role	Hirsch believes that a teacher's role in the classroom should be more traditional. The emphasis on individual teaching and the teacher is the authority figure, instructor, and source of knowledge. The teacher should be responsible for leading the students and communicating the curriculum to them. Teachers are there to control the classroom and make decisions for the students. Hirsch favors whole-class instruction so that everyone gets the same instruction and no one is left out (O'Neil, 1999).	Dewey considered a teacher's role to be more of a guide for students. There is an emphasis on team-teaching and the teacher is looked at more as a facilitator, mentor, or counselor. The teacher is there to create a learning environment that provides the fundamental tools where students can learn from each other. With the teacher being a guide, students are encouraged to exercise their own intelligence and build on what they already know through their experiences (Stern, 2014).

Students' Role	The students are passive in their learning environment. They are expected to listen to and respect the teacher.	The students are active in their learning environment. They are encouraged to express their feelings and opinions. They can act as a peer mediator and it is okay for them to question the teacher (Waks, 2013)
Instruction	Instruction takes place in a homogeneous setting. Students learn by memorization, practice and rote learning. Hirsch believes that the more that students repeat the material, the quicker they would be able to recall it. Studying your multiplication facts is a good example of this (Goldberg, 1997).	Instruction takes place in a heterogenous setting. Students learn through discovery techniques and self-directed learning. Working cooperatively with others is emphasized and encouraged (Waks, 2013).
Curriculum	There is little emphasis on creative expression because Hirsch believes that curriculum should involve rote learning and memorization. Academic areas are looked at as separate subject matters and students have no say in the curriculum. Students should be taught to master the tools of power and authority and know how to read, write, and communicate. Hirsch proclaims that the more people know, the more someone can learn. Students should gain enough traditional knowledge to understand the world around them (Hirsch, 1996).	Dewey felt knowledge is not a thing to be delivered by someone. He advocated for exposure of academic and social experiences that encompass integrated subject matter and include a range of issues. Curriculum should revolve around a child-centered philosophy, embrace higher order thinking, and celebrate creative expression to help students develop critical thinking skills. Students should be encouraged to participate in curriculum planning because if they have a say in what they are learning, they will be more interested in the content and they will develop a love for learning (Stern, 2014).
Character Development	External rewards and punishment are used to create a competitive person. The conservative approach to education helps to hone self-control in individuals.	External rewards and punishment are not necessary. Dewey's approach to education helps to develop self-direction, cooperation, responsibility, and self-esteem in students (Dewey, 2008).

Professional Development	Hirsch expects teacher education programs to involve pedagogical training. Teachers need a deep knowledge of the material they teach and to be knowledgeable about various teaching strategies.	Dewey believed that teacher education programs should be nurturing. Teachers should learn by experience and develop necessary knowledge about how kids learn. Teachers need to know how they can best meet the needs of each child so that they develop a lifelong passion for learning in them.
Outcomes	Hirsch believes that the more knowledge people have, the more competent they will become in life. He is an advocate for a common shared knowledge and is most concerned with academic standards and traditional core areas. The standards demonstrate that all children attempt to reach the same level of proficiency giving everyone an equal opportunity (Hirsch, 1996).	Dewey felt that schools are an extension of society and they help equip students to become future members of a democracy. He was not very concerned with conventional academic standards. His emphasis was on educating the whole child and meeting their psychological, social, and intellectual needs. In fact, he felt that standards can be adjusted to meet the differences among learners giving everyone an equal outcome so that everyone can succeed (Progressive education, 2018).
Assessment	Hirsch feels it is important to measure knowledge. Students are evaluated by the grades they earn from periodic testing with norm-referenced, objective tests (Hirsch, 1996).	Dewey believed that success is not measured by how much stuff you know. Grades are downplayed and students are evaluated through social interactions, portfolios, and projects.
Purpose of Education	Hirsch insists that the purpose of education is to promote literacy and general knowledge. Someone that knows basic facts can build their knowledge from there. Knowledge is important to create competent members of society and to help people advance (Hirsch, 1996).	Dewey believed that education is lifelong and never-ending. Education helps people make sense of the world around them. This may be the only area that Hirsch agrees with Dewey on. They both feel that education is necessary for students to become contributing members of society (Dewey, 2008).

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