

Paper #2

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807: Implementation and Evaluation of Curriculum

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CONSERVATIVE VS. PROGRESSIVE VIEW OF EDUCATION

IDEA

Educational
Equality

E.D. HIRSCH JR.

CONSERVATIVE

The education that students receive is impacted by their socioeconomic status. Students who come from low-income backgrounds tend to receive an inferior quality of education, which can hinder their ability to climb the social ladder. In order to address this issue, schools must identify the root causes of this disparity. "This becomes more feasible to achieve adequate yearly progress for all groups" (Hirsch, 2007)

CRITIC'S ARGUMENT

PROGRESSIVE

Contrary to the determinist theory, some argue that students are capable of learning and improving through instruction. These critics draw parallels with the arts, which demonstrate that success is not predetermined by one's environment. Instead, one's knowledge and experiences can shape their growth. Educational equality should not be based solely on innate intelligence and social status, as individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds have succeeded despite the obstacles they faced. As Bagley noted in 1922, "I have witnessed moments where even those with initially low levels of intelligence demonstrated a spark of understanding" (Bagley, 1922, p. 13).

IDEA

Common Core Standards

E.D. HIRSCH JR.

CONSERVATIVE

Standards play a crucial role in creating a curriculum and improving instruction. However, vague and general standards do not contribute to enhancing the curriculum, and they are often considered just checkboxes for schools to indicate that skills are being taught. Specific skills should be identified for each grade level to ensure meaningful guidance to teachers, test-makers, and textbook publishers. Hirsch argues that, "ambiguous standards provide no practical direction to teachers, test-makers, institutions offering teacher training, or publishers of textbooks" (Hirsch, 2008, p. 10).

CRITIC'S ARGUMENT

PROGRESSIVE

As educators, standards such as the State or Common Core serve as a guide to instruction. Contrary to the public's concern about the ambiguity of the standards, teachers welcome them. "These standards were created based on feedback from educators, researchers, and pedagogy experts" (Bleilberg and West, 2014, pg. 4). They also align with the needs of schools. Moreover, universal standards are more advantageous, especially with the shift to computer-based testing, which the author considers more efficient than paper-based assessments.

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Achievement Gap

E.D. HIRSCH JR.

CONSERVATIVE

According to Hirsch's "Theory of Opportunity," providing everyone with knowledge can increase their competence and contribute to a fairer society (Hirsch, 1998). It is the responsibility of educational institutions to offer equal opportunities to improve life chances regardless of one's background. Hirsch argues that a standardized curriculum can improve literacy and learning levels, thereby reducing the achievement gap among different social groups (Hirsch, 1999). In his view, the greater the amount of knowledge a person possesses, the better they will perform in life.

CRITIC'S ARGUMENT

PROGRESSIVE

According to Williams (2017), Dewey posits that it is the responsibility of educators to bring about cultural changes in the classroom that students can accept, internalize, and implement. Taylor (2005) notes that creating positive learning communities in classrooms can enhance academic achievement. Establishing expectations and cultivating a positive environment can aid in improving the academic and social interactions of students.

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Curriculum Content Design

E.D. HIRSCH JR.

CONSERVATIVE

Hirsch created the "Core Knowledge" approach, which involves a specific set of content that he considered essential for all students to learn. He also advocated for a diverse knowledge of various subjects so that students could easily understand new information in the future. His curriculum design emphasized covering a wide range of topics, rather than delving deeply into specific ones. This approach is often referred to as "Breadth over Depth."
(Hirsch, 2001).

CRITIC'S ARGUMENT

PROGRESSIVE

Gardner's approach to education differs from Hirsch's "breadth over depth" concept. While he does emphasize the importance of science, math, arts, and history, Gardner argues that students should have a deeper understanding of specific subjects rather than all subjects. He suggests that students should learn to think and act like a scientist, mathematician, artist, or historian. By focusing on a limited number of subjects, students can develop a more individualized perspective on learning
(Gardner, 1999).

IDEA

Reading Construction

E.D. HIRSCH JR.

CONSERVATIVE

Hirsch argues that teaching factual knowledge is an essential part of reading education, as it enhances fluency and comprehension through the connection between new and previously acquired information. It is especially critical to provide reading instruction for children who come from underprivileged backgrounds (Knight, 2017).

CRITIC'S ARGUMENT

PROGRESSIVE

According to Wiggins, the main objective of education should be to enhance and intensify students' comprehension (Wiggins, 2015). To effectively absorb and learn the material, students must establish connections while reading. Students' interest and comprehension of the relationships they create can improve their reading skills and strategies.

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Impact on Creativity

E.D. HIRSCH JR.

CONSERVATIVE

The Core Knowledge curriculum aims to provide students with a set of lessons and subjects that will prepare them for secondary education. Creativity is an essential aspect of this curriculum and is fostered by the knowledge gained through it. Hirsch's approach of breadth versus depth can be incorporated with the belief that exposing students to more concepts can enhance their creativity. The Core Knowledge Foundation acknowledges this idea, and it was later backed up by Dr. John Baer's research in 2004, which found that the Core Knowledge approach stimulates creativity (Baer, 2003).

CRITIC'S ARGUMENT

PROGRESSIVE

The Core Knowledge curriculum emphasizes the memorization of facts and doesn't prioritize creative thinking (Scoffham, 2011). Critics have referred to students in Core Knowledge schools as "informational blotters" and claimed that there is little productive thinking happening (Paul, 1993). Additionally, Bernstein and colleagues have argued that having a broad range of knowledge can actually decrease creativity since excess knowledge can interfere with generating new ideas (Bernstein, Roy, Srull, Wickens, 1991).

IDEA

Technology in Primary Education

E.D. HIRSCH JR.

CONSERVATIVE

The role of technology in education is limited to providing additional support to instruction and should not be relied upon as the primary means of learning. The use of technology cannot replace important skills and qualities necessary for success.

According to Hirsch (2016a), computers are not a substitute for critical thinking and the ability to make difficult decisions. For young students, a personal connection with their teacher is crucial and cannot be replaced by computer-based learning.

CRITIC'S ARGUMENT

PROGRESSIVE

Technology is useful in early education, as it can be used to enhance learning and promote communication among parents, teachers, and young children (Marquez, 2019). This perspective differs from Hirsch's belief that technology cannot replace the personal connection between a teacher and their students or create a positive classroom environment.

IDEA

Intellectual Capital

E.D. HIRSCH JR.

CONSERVATIVE

Hirsch's "Theory of Knowledge" emphasizes that a person's knowledge and skills at any particular moment are their intellectual capital (Hirsch, 1996). He compares this to monetary capital, suggesting that the more knowledge a person has, the more they can grow and develop. Hirsch emphasizes the significance of concentrating on preparing students for real-world objectives and situations.

CRITIC'S ARGUMENT

PROGRESSIVE

Wiggins (2011) argues that students are actively engaged in the process of acquiring knowledge. He asserts that students learn more effectively through active participation rather than passively reading textbooks at their desk. For students to acquire knowledge, they need to have a genuine desire to learn. This motivation and interest will fuel their learning process. Students should study subjects that align with their talents, interests, aspirations, and practical needs, to prepare them for adult life (Wiggins, 2011).

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