

The fundamental differences between the pedagogies and beliefs of John Dewey and E.D. Hirsch Jr. represent what this course is set out to provide. The definition of inquiry provided by the lectures for this course simply states that *"Inquiry in education refers to the ways that people search for knowledge of teaching and learning, organization and leadership in schools, local and national policies and their consequences, and more."* The purpose is for each teacher to sort through different media and differing perspectives to come to form their own personal beliefs and views of education and to understand how current practices were formed. The ideas of John Dewey, the progressive educator, and E.D. Hirsch Jr., the educational conservative both serve a purpose in understanding current educational ideas and policies.

John Dewey's "My Pedagogic Creed" exemplifies the very meaning of progressive education. Dewey is a strong supporter of understanding how the child learns and providing them with "active" and "hands-on" learning. He firmly believes that education must grow out from the child's experiences and must not be information given to the child that must be expected to learn. He believes that the curriculum must be formed based on the child's personal experiences, rather than learning from a pre-set fact based curriculum. In "The Child and the Curriculum" Dewey states that the child is taken from his small, narrow perspective and history and expected to learn the perspective and histories of others from the past, therefore "overlying" the child's own experiences. He firmly believed that the child must come to their own understanding of the world in their own way and that a teacher is someone who guides them in their own inquiries instead of "imposing certain ideas" on them. Dewey explains that the educational process should be both psychological and social and that the child's own experiences should be the starting point for all instruction. Dewey warns that if attention is not paid to the psychological structure, education will have no real meaning for the child. He firmly believes that the future is uncertain and there is no certain way to know what sort of education will prove useful for the child's future. He instead recommends in his creed that we "give him command of himself...train him that he will have the full and ready use of his capacities...his judgement may be capable of grasping conditions under which it has to work." Dewey believes that school is a "process of living and not a preparation for future living." This statement firmly contrasts with Hirsch's view that education is actually the preparation for future living.

E.D. Hirsch begins "Traditional Education is Progressive" with his outright statement that he is an "educational conservative." Hirsch begins his essay with the contrasting view of Gramsci and Friere. Friere believed in progressive education and Gramsci was all for educational traditionalism. Hirsch makes a claim that modern nations who have followed Gramsci have improved the condition of and heightened the power of their countries while nations who have followed Friere's belief's (including the USA) have not been successful in doing so. Hirsch makes many strong points when he compares the language progressive educators use to "sell" their views on education. Hirsch sets up his views in a compare/contrast structure where he "de-bunks" views on the differing language. When comparing the words traditional and modern, Hirsch explains that modern does sound much more appealing. Progressives would say that traditional involves the "sit and get" information where a child is expected to sit in silence and learn information based on memorization and recall. Hirsch explains that most advanced nations used traditional methods of teaching and are very successful. He also argues that a

good teacher can make any lesson exciting. When comparing hands-on and merely verbal instruction, Hirsch cautions that moving to solely hands-on methods ignores the fact that every human must learn to speak and write as well. Many times in his essay, Hirsch explains that the disadvantaged children are the ones who are hurt by progressive education. He states that because progressives believe in “developmentally appropriate” education, important, very crucial, early education is eliminated. He also warns against “individualized education” as it can often be characterized by “individual neglect.” As a special educator, this statement struck me as something to consider moving forward in my practice.

These two contrasting views have in a way defined my very own beliefs about education. I do believe that the child should be at the center of education and that we need to teach the “whole” child, much like Dewey believed. However, I also agree with Hirsch in that students need consistency and standards in education. Dewey believes in providing education that is natural, based on the child, and individualized. Dewey believes the curriculum is born out of, or comes *from* the child. On the other hand, Hirsch believes the curriculum needs to be structured and given *to* the child. Hirsch makes strong points that students need to master core knowledge necessary for success in life and denounces the constant need for individualized education. The Common Core State Standards were born out of Hirsch’s thinking. This unit has brought forth some of the many great debates in education and has opened my eyes to viewing different perspectives and how they come together to form the current system we have in place today.