

Conservative vs. Progressive View of Education

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E.D. Hirsch has many critics such as Walter Feinberg, Professor Emeritus at the University of Illinois. Although Feinberg and Hirsch believe in supporting quality public education, Table 1 summarizes their individual views of education.

**Table 1**

<b>Idea</b>	<b>Hirsch</b>	<b>Feinberg</b>
Core Content	All students need to learn important subject matter, which is specific to each grade level (Hirsch, 2006). Students cannot learn inquiry and other critical skills without learning content. Many of Hirsch's writings support the theory that a curriculum rich in content is the solution to social and economic inequality. The different learning styles of students do not play a role with this ideal (Feinberg, 1998).	Content delivery or different modes of delivery is more significant than content. Pedagogical styles and the instructional and classroom experience is something Hirsch overlooks; he ignores the importance of the instructor and teaching methods. Content is secondary to context. Education should be "child-centered" not "subject-centered"—the learner is the center of education rather than the content (Feinberg, 1998).
Transmittal view	The instructor is the instrument transmitting/relaying information to the student. Education's purpose is to transmit information, which is scaffold with each year of development or grade. Standardized tests assess mastery of the material. The transmittal view of learning involves the student memorizing material and rote exercises to remember this material (Feinberg, 1999)	Feinberg (1999) supports a transactional view of education, which describes how the instructor and the learner share the learning experience. The instructor encourages interaction, the educational experience as well as experiential learning. With the transactional view, learners need to make connections with the material, it is vital to support the individual's ability to make connections with material and experiences during the learning process.
Achievement Gap	Hirsch's (2006) theory is an individual's opportunities align with the individual's general knowledge—believes the more general knowledge a person has, the more opportunities an individual	Feinberg (1998) believes in embracing multicultural education and the relationship between democracy and culture. He believes in the importance of retaining individual identity, and to

Idea	Hirsch	Feinberg
	<p>will have in life. One way to attain this knowledge is reading, and Hirsch stresses the importance of reading to lessen the achievement gap. Hirsch focuses on the school's role in the achievement gap. Though he does not believe in the true economic disparities, it is his belief the "achievement gap" is the fault of the education system, not economics.</p>	<p>embrace the differences to add to the diversity in education. Factors other than education account for the disparity in achievement of different minority groups. Poverty and racism limit opportunity, not the lack of general knowledge.</p>
<p>Reading Comprehension /Cultural Literacy</p>	<p>Schools do not provide the necessary reading material to promote reading comprehension. Hirsch created the term/concept "Cultural Literacy," this concept aligns with his views about the achievement gap. Hirsch argues literacy is not about the ability to read, but children need exposure to specific, content-rich books to support reading comprehension (Hirsch, 2006).</p>	<p>Again, Feinberg supports learning, which includes reading comprehension, is a combination of experiences and content. There is no specific core content or specific reading material to promote comprehension. Feinberg (2007) refers to "culturing" the connectivity with society, and teaching children to not only understand a multicultural society but a feeling of connectivity as well.</p>
<p>Role of Government in Education /Political Agendas</p>	<p>Government standards are important in supporting education. According to Hirsch, political liberals should oppose progressive educational ideas. The current system is broken and the progressives are to blame, and he urges liberals to oppose progressive ideals because it is these ideals, which have led to failure and much more social inequities. The only way to more social equality is to support conservative educational policies (Feinberg,</p>	<p>Though it may seem Feinberg and Hirsch agree on the liberal view of education but there are some differences. Feinberg notes how liberal theory overlooks major structural and administrative problems in the system. Feinberg believes the liberal view will blame issues on "administrative" problems without looking deeper into the economic causes and political issues. Government's role is to protect the rights of the individual and to support or facilitate not dictate</p>

<b>Idea</b>	<b>Hirsch</b>	<b>Feinberg</b>
	1999).	education (Apple, 2014)
Critical Thinking	Mastery of the core subject material paves the way to refining critical thinking skills. Hirsch stresses the importance of the subject material over the practical application of such knowledge. Critical thinking or in a way, common sense depends on knowledge, Hirsch (2006) believes without this knowledge, an individual will lack critical thinking skills.	Feinberg (1998) believes the purpose of school is to prepare students for the complex social and political realities of life. An individual develops critical thinking skills via a combination of knowledge, experiences, and participatory/ active learning. Problem-solving skills and decision-making are all part of the active learning process and support the development of critical thinking skills.
Standardized Tests	Memorization and rote exercises are a way to ensure mastery of the subject material (Feinberg, 1998). Standardized tests measure or access such knowledge. It is necessary to provide standardized tests by grade level because it is the best method for assessing the effectiveness of the education but more importantly if the student is not learning the material (Hirsch, 2006).	Standardized tests do not support “higher-order skills. “Performance on standardized tests is not indicative of critical thinking skills or knowledge of the material, rather the standardized tests prove “teaching to the test.” Feinberg does not support teaching the core subject areas to guarantee performance on tests Formative assessments and student feedback during the learning process are more conducive than standardized tests (Feinberg, 1998)
American Schools are Failing our Children	Hirsch (2006) believes the progressives are the main reason for failing schools. Although he recognizes economic disparities, his focus is the education system and how schools do not teach what students need to learn. Hirsch does not believe in fostering an individual’s talent or innate abilities rather he believes all students need to learn the basic subject areas. Educators	Feinberg (1999) criticizes Hirsch for an elitist view that he is not looking at the entire picture including considering social disparities. Hirsch believes the teacher is the center or leader in the class and it is not important for students to communicate. Feinberg believes in fostering relationships and the student experience. Though the content is important, most

<b>Idea</b>	<b>Hirsch</b>	<b>Feinberg</b>
	should not provide individual attention but need to make sure they are providing attention to the entire class (Coppola, 2011).	students will remember and learn from the experience. Standardized tests and core knowledge are contributing to gaps in the education system, not supporting growth (Feinberg, 2017).

## References

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