

The philosophy of education: dewey vs. counts

[Profession](#), [Philosophers](#)



Education is one of the world's most affluent institutions. Every weekday, children go to school and are educated within the many subjects we study in our grades. Whether it's math, english, science, history, geography, or any other subject, the process is the same. We are told to memorize information and we are tested and graded on our knowledge of the subjects. Only, why? Why are we assessed to measure our intellect? Why are children educated? Educational philosophers have pondered upon the purpose of education for quite a while now. In this comparative essay, I will be comparing and contrasting the philosophies of the reputed educational philosophers John Dewey, and George Counts. I will compare and contrast the polar opposite philosophies that both advocate their perspectives on the purpose of education.

The two philosophers have set traits that an ideal student should have. The only difference is that each has a different perspective of what the perfect student looks like. Dewey, believed that the ideal student is quiet, and not talkative. Dewey theorizes that students should always be quiet, with no talking or interaction whatsoever, between classmates. In contrast to Counts, Dewey also believes that one should be independent and should only work for oneself. He thinks that students should only work on their own, for their own values and benefit, and not for others. Unlike what Counts would advocate, another trait that an ideal student has in Dewey's perspective is obedience. Dewey advocates that students must be obedient to their instructions. This means that they cannot question their instructions whatsoever, and must follow what they are told to do. Even though these characteristics are the qualities the ideal " Dewey Student" would have,

Counts has some other ideas. Counts believes in the ideology that an ideal student should be curious. They should be critical thinkers. Counts wants students questioning in a purposeful manner. Counts wants his students to do things with a purpose or reason, like critical thinkers would. Counts also believes that students should be collaborative with others. He wants students to be cooperative when working with other people, when doing things such as group work.

The two philosophers share some commonalities, too. Dewey and Counts both believe students should have good qualities. They want students to be responsible, and respectful to others. They also want students to be prepared to learn. Just as they have many differences in their philosophies, they also have similarities, in what they think the qualities of the ideal student should be. Students learn in several different ways, or at least they are obliged to learn this way. Both philosophers have different ideas of how students should learn. Dewey for instance, believes that students should learn through tests and assignments. The purpose of these tests is to evaluate your overall academic excellence. Dewey advocates that students should memorize information, and should be tested of their knowledge. Assignments are also given to continue to exercise the memorization of the given facts and information. Dewey is individualistic, and as expected he would support independent work that is teacher-paced. The reason why is because it helps you exercise doing things independently, and being self-reliant at a certain pace.

Only that's not all independent work does. It also creates competition between students, for the status of having the highest academic excellence merits in class. Basically, it means you are the person who is the "smartest" in the class, and someone who can keep up with what they are learning with their teachers, the fastest. Likewise, this occurs in society, too. People outcompete each other in many things such as the first to have the best car, or the largest home. They do this in order to gain a high status within the society, as someone who has wealth-based power and is authoritative. Dewey also believes in giving rewards to students who have educational merits. Usually the only students getting these awards are the ones whose overall assessments have reached or surpassed a certain point or mark. However, the students who don't achieve this, are not awarded. On the other hand, Counts has philosophies some of which are vastly different from what Dewey believes. For one thing Counts, argues that students should engage in interactive, collaborative group work.

As we now know, Counts believed the ideal student is collaborative with others, obviously we then know he would want children to engage in group work. The purpose of this group work is so that children learn that they should view things as a group, and that they should see the bigger picture or the macro of things. It helps them seek different strategies to a problem as they are addressing all of the groups' perspectives. Counts theorizes that learning should be student paced where they can take part in active self-learning. In contrast to Dewey, Counts wants students to learn through active self-learning which is basically student paced work. He believes students should learn at their own pace so they can understand it. Counts

also believes in conceptual learning. Learning about things and their concepts. Counts wants students to be critical thinkers and find the purpose of why we do things.

On the contrary, Dewey would teach things in a procedural manner, always following preset instructions with no clear purpose. Reasonably, both philosophers believe that students should work hard to get good report card marks, as they both believe that these marks are what will motivate students to surpass the mark in the next term. Even though Dewey and Counts both have different ways of teaching, they both give importance to students' learning. John Dewey and George Counts both have philosophized many thoughts on the purpose of education. Now the question is, what are the main goals of their educational philosophies? What do they want the outcome of their philosophies to be, when applied to society and the real world? First off, Dewey wants students to grow as an individual through assessments and tasks. The assessments that are handed to the students show them their overall mark. Dewey believed students should only worry about oneself. He believes students should improve themselves as they grow older based on their marks at school, as he believes this will be beneficial for a job in the future. Dewey also wants to enhance opportunities to those who have merits in education, and limit opportunities for those who do not have educational merits. Dewey understands that in society there needs to be people with jobs that earn high income, and those who have jobs that earn low income.

Usually, the people that earn a lot of income are the people who have merits in academic excellence. On the other hand, people that don't have merits in education, are not awarded these opportunities, and are rather limited. This creates a hierarchy in society, where the people with academic merits and good jobs, are in. Another goal Dewey aims to reach is gradual change in society, but not fundamental. Dewey theorizes that we should preserve the past and not change our ways, but in order to live in an ever-changing society like ours, we're going to need some kind of change. This is called social reform. Social reform is a type of social movement that aims to make gradual change, or change in certain aspects of society, rather than transformative change. Counts theorizes the exact opposite. Counts believes his philosophies aim to create change in society that is transformative. Counts argues that we should continue to enhance, and improve society to make it better to live in. Counts wants his philosophies to result in equal opportunities for everyone. Unlike Dewey, he wants everyone to be granted equal opportunities, so that it is fair for everyone. If everyone had equal opportunities, then there will be equity in society, as everyone was awarded the same opportunities as everyone else.

Counts wants students to become critical thinkers and do things purposefully. Instead of being pragmatic, like Dewey, he believes students should be purposeful. In contrast to Dewey, Counts does not want a pragmatic approach to an education system. He wants students to think critically, as this will help for the betterment of society. Asking questions that provoke critical thought will promote taking action. Not only does it mean we are critical thinkers, but it means we can apply our knowledge to the real

world. Dewey and Counts also have similar goals based on their philosophies. Both believe that education is here so that we can prepare to live in our society. We need to understand the the laws of our society and how to live as a citizen.

During that time we start to build social skills in a social environment. School is what develops us to live in a society like out, with laws and many people around us. The two philosophers also believe that school is for occupational preparation. In school is where we enhance skills we need for our prospective jobs. We learn how to do math, learn science, and study language in order to develop skills we need for our future jobs. Other than that, these are the goals Dewey and Counts aim to reach through their educational philosophies. In this essay we have been comparing and contrasting the philosophies of Dewey and Counts. We now understand that they are not completely opposite, but share a few commonalities, too.

After analyzing the educational philosophies of Dewey and Counts, I will suggest a new way educating students that brings the best of Dewey and the best of Counts. Students will have an equal amount of independent work and collaborative work so they can learn how to work on their own with others in real life situations. Students will learn at their own pace and will engage in active self-learning, so that they can understand what they are learning at their own pace. Teachers will teach in a conceptual manner and a procedural manner so that students will understand what they are learning and the concept of it. Students will learn from different perspectives so that the students can put the views together and compare them to see the bigger

picture or macro of what they are learning. Students will develop the skills they need for future professions. Students will also focus on personal improvement, and maturing into an adult and making themselves a better person. My philosophies are what synthesize the ideas of Dewey and of Counts.

After reading this essay we should now understand the purpose of education and why we actually go to school. You probably also realized that Dewey's ideas sound very familiar. In fact, today, our education system is influenced by the ideas of Dewey. If I was to take sides on which philosopher I would support, I wouldn't choose either. I will choose Mortimer Adler. Adler is another philosopher that brought together the ideas of Dewey and Counts, adding some of his own, too. The proponents of education, Dewey and Counts both philosophized many ideas about the purpose of education that influences society today. As we continue going to school everyday, whether you're a teacher, a student, or anybody else, we now see school in another light that brings out the real truth about our educational system.