Educational Giant Report

George S. Counts

Abigail L. Shockley

History and Philosophy of Education

Abstract

George S. Counts is known to be an American educator and educational sociologist (Biography, 2014). Throughout his time in the field of education he served in many capacities, including, but not limited to: President of the American Foundation of Teachers, author of 29 books and over a hundred articles, professor at a vast amount of prestigious colleges, and was active in the National Education Association (Biography, 2014). George S Counts was a leader, and he had an opinion and voice on education that reformed the way education was thought of. His philosophy of education still lives on today, though he passed away in 1974. Here we are, 40 years after his death, still implementing and following the culture he invented for teaching.

George S. Counts

Throughout history there have been many people that have had a strong influence on education. While some made small changes, and helped with the minor details, George S. Counts made a huge impact on education in the past, continues to in the present, and forever will in the future. His dedication to education has set an example for each and every one of us to follow as we begin our own path through education.

Biography

George Sylvester Counts was born on December 9, 1889 in Baldwin City, Kansas (Crutchfield, 2014). His first, initial education consisted of two years spent in a one-room school house (Biography, 2014). There, he was able to complete the work required of four grades in those two years (Biography, 2014). He went on to complete his education in the public schools of Baldwin City, graduating from high school in 1907 (Biography, 2014). Upon completion of high school, he chose to continue his education at Baker University in Baldwin City, Kansas (Biography, 2014). He received his A.B. degree in 1911 and once again chose to continue his education receiving a Ph.D. degree from the University of Chicago in 1916 (Crutchfield, 2014). At Chicago Counts majored in education and minored in sociology receiving his Ph.D. with honors in 1916 (Biography, 2014). After receiving his education, he began his professional career within education in 1916 at the University of Delaware as Head of the Department of Education and Director of summer school (Crutchfield, 2014). He also taught at Harris College in Missouri, the University of Washington, Yale University and the University of Chicago throughout his career as a professor (Crutchfield, 2014). The majority of his professional career was done at Teachers College, Columbia University, from 1927 to 1956 (Crutchfield, 2014). Once he had retired from Teachers College, he worked as a visiting professor at the University of Pittsburgh, Michigan State University and Southern Illinois University (Crutchfield, 2014). Serving as a visiting professor amongst these various universities allowed him to cultivate his passion for teaching, though he had already retired. George S Counts was the author of 29 books and more than 100 articles (Biography, 2014). Counts didn’t stop there though, he was also an active participant in several professional and civic organizations, including: the American Academy of Political and Social Science, the American Association of University Professors, the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Federation of Teachers, the American Historical Association, the American Sociology Society, the Liberal Party of New York State, the National Education Association, and the Progressive Education Association (Biography, 2014).

Major Contribution to Education

Perhaps George’s greatest contribution was a pamphlet he wrote titled, "Dare the School Build a New Social Order?" (Teeter, 2014). This pamphlet consisted of three papers that were read in February 1932 at national educational meetings (Teeter, 2014). One paper was read before the Progressive Education Association in Baltimore, while yet another paper before a division of the Department of Superintendence in Washington, and another paper before the National Council of Education in Washington (Teeter, 2014). The titles of the three papers were: Dare Progressive Education Be Progressive; Education through Indoctrination; and Freedom, Culture, Social Planning, and Leadership (Teeter, 2014). This small little pamphlet had a huge impact on the views of education and significant changes were made in regards to it. George Counts truly believed that teachers could help change society. George Counts believed the school was an agency involved in society's politics, economics, art, religion, and ethics (Teeter, 2014). If the school was involved, it could either reflect the knowledge, beliefs, and values of the society, or it could seek to change them (Teeter, 2014). He had a desire to change society and wanted teachers and education to help him in this cause. He wanted teachers to be the enforcers of knowledge and students to be the receptors. He believed that students needed to know what was going on in the world and how society worked. Because of this, teachers needed to be more informative about what some of the present societal issues were.

How it Affects Teaching and Me Today

George Counts said, “An education that does not strive to promote the fullest and most thorough understanding of the world is not worthy of the name.” I believe that George has a point in this statement and it has affected the way I view teaching. As we are striving to educate the children that will ultimately shape our future, this simple, yet profound statement will help us cultivate the education that will be necessary for us to present and teach our students. Without an education that allows our students to fully understand the world, we are but failing not only our students, but the future society and world that lies ahead. George S. Counts had hope for the future, a future of changes within society and within our world. Change has inevitably came and will continue to come as we progress through our sojourn here in mortality. Elaine S. Dalton said, “If you desire to make a difference in the world, you must be different from the world.” I think this is exactly what George S. Counts was striving to teach to our nation of educators. I know that he has at least taught this much to me. In order to make George S. Counts proud we must become leaders in our society to help change our world for the better. George Counts believed that teachers could and would shape the future based off of their teachings to the students of America; because of this, I too believe that as teachers we hold the future in our hands. It is our duty to educate our students and prepare them for the world we live in today and the world that they will live in in the future. George S. Counts has changed my whole perspective on teaching and because of him I have a new-found motivation and devotion to educate my future students not only in math, science, and social studies, but also about our society and how the world today has been shaped.

References

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