

Interest  
and Effort  
in  
Education

John Dewey

新闻学与传播学经典丛书·英文原版系列

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in Education

教育中的兴趣及努力

John Dewey 著  
〔美〕约翰·杜威

中国传媒大学出版社

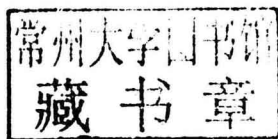
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# 出版说明

“新闻学与传播学经典丛书·英文原版系列”，选取了在新闻学与传播学历史上具有里程碑意义的大师经典名作。如传播学“四大奠基人”哈罗德·拉斯韦尔、保罗·拉扎斯菲尔德等及加布里埃尔·塔尔德、罗伯特·帕克、哈罗德·英尼斯、马歇尔·麦克卢汉、库尔特·卢因、卡尔·霍夫兰等这些学界耳熟能详的名家佳作。这些是传播学与新闻学的奠基之作，也是现代新闻学与传播学发展的基础。许多名作都多次再版，影响深远，历久不衰，成为新闻学与传播学的经典。此套丛书采用英文原版出版，使读者读到原汁原味的著作。

随着中国高等教育教学改革的推进，广大师生已不满足于仅仅阅读国外图书的翻译版，他们迫切希望能读到原汁原味的原版图书，希望能采用国外英文原版图书进行教学，从而保证所讲授的知识体系的完整性、系统性、科学性和文字描绘的准确性。此套丛书的出版便是满足了这种需求。亦可使学生在专业技术方面尽快掌握本学科相应的外语词汇和了解先进国家的学术发展的方向。

本系列丛书在原汁原味地引进英文原版图书的同时，将目录译为中文，作为对原版的一种导读，供读者阅读时参考。本系列丛书有些因为出版年代比较久远，也囿于当时印刷水平的限制，有些地方可能与现在的标准不太一致，在不影响读者阅读的前提下，我们未对其进行处理，以保证英文原版图书的原汁原味，

从事经典著作的出版，需要出版人付出不懈的努力，好在有全国新闻院系的专家教授们的大力扶持，为我们提供了备选书目并对英文目录进行了翻译，因此使我们得以在学术出版的道路上走得更远。我们自知本系列丛书也许会有很多缺陷，我们也将虚心接受读者提出的批评和建议。

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

It is a pleasant privilege to present the following monograph to the profession and the public, for there is no discussion which is more fundamental to the interpretation and reform of current teaching than this statement of the functions of interest and effort in education. Its active acceptance by teachers would bring about a complete transformation of classroom methods. Its appreciation by the patrons of the schools would greatly modify current criticism of the various programs of educational reform. The worth of this presentation is well summarized in the statement that, if teachers and parents could know intimately only one treatise on educational procedure, it is greatly to be doubted that any other could be found which would, within small compass, so effectively direct them to the points of view, the attitudes of mind, and the methods of work which are essential to good teaching.

By good teaching we here mean that provision

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of school experience wherein the child is whole heartedly active in acquiring the ideas and skill needed to deal with the problems of his expanding life. That our present instruction falls far short of this standard must be obvious to all who are not blinded by their professional adherence to narrow scholastic measures of efficiency, or by their loyal appreciation of the great contributions already made by schools in spite of their defects. Somehow our teaching has not attracted children to the school and its work. Too many children leave school as soon as the law allows. Too many pupils, still within the compulsory attendance age, are retarded one, two, or more grades. Too many of the able and willing of mind are only half-engrossed with their school tasks. And of those who emerge from the schools, duly certified, too many are skillful merely in an outer show of information and manners which gives no surety that the major part of their inner impulses are capable of rational and easy self-direction.

For a long time we have tolerated these conditions in the belief that economic pressure drives the poor out of school, and that the stu-

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pidity or perversity of children accounts for their retardation and their half-heartedness. But recent investigations have made us skeptical of these easy defenses. The pressure of poverty does not seem to be so great an influence on the elimination of pupils as that attitude of child and parent which doubts the worth of further schooling. And we find that many children, whom we have considered backward or perverse, are merely boied by the unappealing tasks and formalities of school life. The major difficulty with our schools is that they have not adequately enlisted the interests and energies of children in school work. Good teaching, the teaching of the future, will make school life vital to youth. In so doing it will not lose sight of the demands and needs of an adult society; it will serve them better in that it will have a fuller cooperation of the children.

A single illustration will suffice to show how completely we may fall short of realizing public purposes in education if we fail to center our attention on the fundamental function and nature of the learning process.

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At the present hour we are very deeply concerned with the universal education of youth. To this end we have established a compulsory school attendance age, forbidden child labor, and provided administrative machinery for executing these legal guarantees of the rights of children. Yet, a guarantee of school attendance will never of itself fulfill the purposes of state education. The parent and the attendance officer, reinforced by the police power of the state, can guarantee only one thing, — the physical presence of the child at school. It is left to the teacher to insure his *mental attendance* by a sound appeal to his active interests. A child's character, knowledge, and skill are not reconstructed by sitting in a room where events happen. Events must *happen to him*, in a way to bring a full and interested response. It is altogether possible for the child to be present physically, yet absent mentally. He may be indifferent to school life, or his mind may be focused on something remote from the classroom. In either case he is not attending; he does not react to what occurs. The teacher has not created an experience for him; she has



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not changed the child at all. Yet society has guaranteed him freedom from industrial exploitation and provided a school system for one purpose, — that he should be changed from an immature child with meager knowledge and power into a responsible citizen competent to deal forcefully with the intricacies of modern life.

Our whole policy of compulsory education rises or falls with our ability to make school life an interesting and absorbing experience to the child. In one sense there is no such thing as compulsory education. We can have compulsory physical attendance at school; but education comes only through willing attention to and participation in school activities. It follows that the teacher must select these activities with reference to the child's interests, powers, and capacities. In no other way can she guarantee that the child will be present. The evil of the elimination of pupils cannot be solved simply by raising the compulsory school age; or that of retardation by promoting a given percentage of pupils regardless of standards of grading; or that of halfhearted work by increasing the emphasis upon

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authority, uniformity, coercion, drill, and examination. The final solution is to be found in a better quality of teaching, one which will absorb children because it glves purpose and spirit to learning.

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## INTEREST AND EFFORT

ingly than when he goes at it out of the fullness of his heart. The theory of effort simply says that unwilling attention (doing something disagreeable because it is disagreeable) should take precedence over spontaneous attention.

Practically the appeal to sheer effort amounts to nothing. When a child feels that his work is a task, it is only under compulsion that he gives himself to it. At every let-up of external pressure his attention, released from constraint, flies to what interests him. The child brought up on the basis of "effort" acquires marvelous skill in appearing to be occupied with an uninteresting subject, while the real heart of his energies is otherwise engaged. Indeed, the theory contradicts itself. It is psychologically impossible to call forth any activity without some interest. The theory of effort simply substitutes one interest for another. It substitutes the impure interest of fear of the teacher or hope of future reward for pure interest in the material presented. The type of character induced is that illustrated by Emerson at the beginning of his essay on *Compensation*, where he holds up the

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current doctrine of compensation as implying that, if you only sacrifice yourself enough now, you will be permitted to indulge yourself a great deal more in the future ; or, if you are only good now (goodness consisting in attention to what is uninteresting) you will have, at some future time, a great many more pleasing interests — that is, may then be bad.

While the theory of effort is always holding up to us a strong, vigorous character as the outcome of its method of education, practically we do not get such a character. We get either the narrow, bigoted man who is obstinate and irresponsible save in the line of his own preconceived aims and beliefs ; or else a character dull, mechanical, unalert, because the vital juice of spontaneous interest has been squeezed out.

We may now hear the defendant's case. **Life**, says the other theory, is full of things not interesting that have to be faced. Demands are continually made, situations have to be dealt with, which present no features of interest. Unless one has had previous training in devoting himself to uninteresting work, unless habits have

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been formed of attending to matters simply because they must be attended to irrespective of the personal satisfaction they afford, character will break down or avoid the issue when confronted with the serious matters of life. Life is not a merely pleasant affair, or a continual satisfaction of personal interests. There must be such continual exercise of effort in the performance of tasks as to form the habit of dealing with the real labors of life. Anything else eats out the fiber of character and leaves a wishy-washy, colorless being; a state of moral dependence, with continual demand for amusement and distraction.

Apart from the question of the future, continually to appeal even in childhood days to the principle of interest is eternally to excite, that is, distract the child. Continuity of activity is destroyed. Everything is made play, amusement. This means over-stimulation; it means dissipation of energy. Will is never called into action. The reliance is upon external attractions and amusements. Everything is sugar-coated for the child and he soon learns to turn from everything

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that is not artificially surrounded with diverting circumstances. The spoiled child who does only what he likes is an inevitable outcome.

The theory is intellectually as well as morally harmful. Attention is never directed to the essential and important facts, but simply to the attractive wrappings with which the facts are surrounded. If a fact is repulsive or uninteresting, it has to be faced in its own naked character sooner or later. Putting a fringe of fictitious interest around it does not bring the child any nearer to it than he was at the outset. The fact that two and two make four is a naked fact which has to be mastered in and of itself. The child gets no greater hold upon the fact by having attached to it amusing stories of birds or dandelions than if the simple naked fact were presented to him. It is self-deception to suppose that the child is being interested in the numerical relation. His attention is going out to and taking in only the amusing images associated with this relation. The theory thus defeats its own end. It would be more straightforward to recognize at the outset that certain facts having little or no



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interest, must be learned and that the only way to deal with them is through effort, the power of putting forth activity independently of any external inducement. In this way only is the discipline, the habit of responding to serious matters, formed which is necessary for the life that lies ahead of the child.

I have attempted to set forth the respective claims of each side of the discussion. A little reflection will convince us that the strong point in each argument lies not so much in what it says in its own behalf as in its attacks on the weak places of the opposite theory. Each theory is strong in its negations rather than in its position. It is not unusual, though somewhat surprising, that there is generally a common principle unconsciously assumed at the basis of two theories which to all outward appearances are the extreme opposites of each other. Such a common principle is found on the theories of effort and interest in the one-sided forms in which they have already been stated.

The common assumption is that of the externality of the object, idea, or end to be mastered