

The Place of Interest
in Education.

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References.

1. Interest and Education - De Garmo.
2. Philosophy of Education - Horne.
3. The Psychology of Child Development.
King.
4. School Management - White.
5. The Study of the Child - Taylor.
6. Lectures on Teaching. - J. G. Fitch.
7. The Meaning of Education - Butler.
8. The Educative Process - Bagley.
9. Letters on Early Education - Pestalozzi.
10. Philosophy of Teaching - Tompkins.
11. Science of Education - Herbart.
12. Herbart and the Herbartians - De Garmo.
13. Open Pedagogy of Herbart - "
14. School Management & School Method. Baldwin.
15. Early Education - Currie.

Interest is a doctrine associated with many great minds, and has been discussed at length by many of the great educators of the present and the past.

What is Interest? This is a question which, notwithstanding all this discussion, is yet incapable of exact definition. It is not a form of knowledge; it is not a kind of action; but it is a "feeling to be felt not defined" says De Garmo. It is a feeling familiar to every growing mind, yet we cannot exactly define it.

In his work on "Interest and Education," De Garmo defines interest thus "Interest is a feeling which accompanies the ideal of self expression."

Hinsdale says, "Interest

is the name given to the pleasurable or painful feelings which are evoked by an object or idea."

Many other great writers also agree that interest is a feeling; a feeling of the real value of the end in view. If the end seems to us to be of great value, our interest will be proportionately great. On the other hand, if the end in view seems to be of small value to us, our interest will likewise be small.

De Garmo gives great prominence to the idea of self-expression. By the term "self-expression" we mean that which the self now is and what it hopes to be in some future state of expression. It is upon

this feeling of the desire for self expression that the feeling of interest depends.

Interest and this idea of self expression go hand in hand. The artist in his desire for self-expression, i.e. in his desire to express himself as an artist, is interested in everything connected with his vocation. So it is in every profession. The implements of that profession are intensely interesting to those who follow that profession, because it aids him in his desire for self expression.

We have three means of becoming educated. The widest form of education is that which we receive through life, for every experience in life has its influence upon us. The other two forms are oral and written

instruction. We are indebted to all these forms for our education, but among the primitive people, life is the primary educational factor. When life is the means of education, interest is assured. The primitive man is interested in daily labor, because it furnishes him with food to eat and clothes to wear, the wherewithall to live. So it is with the whole human population. We are interested in that which aids us in self survival and self expression, not only in regard to food and clothing, but in that which will put us upon a higher plane in life. We know that if we are educated, we can be of more use to the world and to our own immediate family and friends, therefore, we

are interested in that which will aid us in attaining this higher plane of usefulness.

We have two kinds of interest, the immediate and the mediate.

The first can hardly be called an interest. It is rather an instinct. With the child, play is a universal instinct, although we sometimes hear it called immediate interest.

The child plays instinctively; there is no effort, no interest, or rather the child does not know himself to be interested.

He only knows that he likes to engage in this kind of activity, and simply plays from impulse.

It is the mediate interest with which education is concerned. Here we find both desire

and effort. Of this however, we will treat later.

On the title page of de Garmas's work on Interest and Education, we find the following words, "Interest is the greatest word in education." To those who have not studied the question, this quotation from Prof. Schurman may seem to be too sweeping a statement. We cannot deny, however, that interest is a very important factor in education, for "interest is the life of teaching," says Currie.

In older times, the students were driven to study. They learned under compulsion, no efforts being made to get them interested or to make their work and surroundings attractive. Now we try ~~to~~ develop interest, for it is a recognised fact that

it is economy to develop acquired interest, "that the impulses or primitive interest may be replaced with higher needs." It is a saving of time and energy. Without interest, there could be little education.

Memory, will and effort, of course, have their place, but without interest, the memory would be too largely called upon, constant attention and great effort would be required, and as a result, little of value would be retained. Few people have the grit, energy, or ability to acquire an education under such adverse circumstances.

Interest makes drudgery unnecessary. By drudgery, we mean interest in the end, but not in the means. School work is drudgery to those who

are interested in getting a problem or a certain lesson, but really despise the work necessary to attain it. If interest removes this drudgery, education will be much easier to acquire, if we can develop interest. It does away with monotony, and gives zest and life to undertakings.

Interest then, is a very essential factor in education, and its importance can scarcely be overrated.

Interests depend largely upon various factors, such as, heredity, age, temperament, environment, and others.

Heredity plays an important part here. Interests in young children are common, but in later life, individualities crop out. It is these individ-

volities which show the bearing
 of heredity upon interests. Many
 children inherit tendencies
 directly from their parents,
 some from generations back. In
 fact, there are very few who do
 not in some form or other, in-
 herit some like or dislike from
 their forefathers. This inherit-
 ance may be a fondness for
 animals, or a passion for
 mechanics, and such interests,
 it is evident, have a direct
 influence upon the education
 of the individual.

The child's interests are
 necessarily different from
 those of older people, for
 interests follow the development
 of the mind. The young child
 learns chiefly through the
 senses, and during this sense-
 perception epoch, they are of

course deeply interested in all things which appeal to the senses. Thus the teacher of small children uses concrete methods, and illustrates with real objects, pictures and models. When the child reaches the imaginative period, his interests are necessarily different, and when the reasoning time of his life comes, his interests are entirely changed.

The environment, perhaps, has less influence than the other factors. It simply modifies the natural interests of the individual. The moral tone of the home life does much for the child either for good or for bad. Those who are surrounded with good influences

will of course have more chance to be something in the world than one who lacks these advantages. They will be better fitted to enter civil society.

The temperament of the individual should also be taken into consideration. The interests of all people are not alike, for what will awaken interest in one might call for indifference in another.

Interest may be permanent or temporary. By permanent interests we mean either inherited interests, and therefore a part of the original nature, or those acquired early in life, and so become habits.

It is these permanent interests which show the temperament, the real character of the individual.

Few have done as much for education as that great philosopher and teacher, Herbert, who was the first to elevate pedagogy to a science. His theory of interest revolutionized the whole system of education, and called forth wide-spread admiration and discussion from many great educators. He laid the foundation for education, which the modern Herbartians have developed far beyond its original outline.

In his discussion of interest, Herbert gives the following classification:

1. Interests arising from knowledge.
2. Interests arising from intercourse with others, as in the family, school, church, society, and the like.

Under the first division, he treats of empirical, speculative, and esthetic interests.

In empirical interests we find that the principal elements are, contemplation of surroundings, novelty, and wonder. The latter element is perhaps the most important. Plato calls wonder "the starting point of knowledge". Empirical interest, then, is the beginning of education. If this is, so we must begin the education of the child by appealing to these elements. Here we can see the great work of the Kindergarten, where the little ones are taught largely through the senses, according to the development of their minds.

We may give "reasoning interest"

as another name for speculative interest. It is important for education. The never ending "why" of the young child certainly show a desire for knowledge, and this desire should be satisfied whenever possible.

Herbart also speaks of "aesthetic interest," that interest which shows a love of beauty in nature, art and morals. Such interests should be developed and encouraged.

His second class of interest, i. e. interest arising from intercourse with others, includes sympathetic, social, and religious interest.

Sympathetic interest should begin in the family. The children must be taught to cooperate, and to take an interest

in each other. Such a training will enable the child to cope better with the world, and teaches him to share his sympathy with others.

The social interest is developed all through life. Its foundation is laid in the kindergarten, where the children are taught to consider one another's feelings, and to enjoy the company of other children.

This interest is further developed in later life by the study of literature, civics, commercial geography, etc. Such studies give an insight into the nature and development of the race, and teaches the duties of a good citizen.

Herbart also believed the religious interest to be of much

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importance in the development
of the individual.

So much for Herbart
and his theory. Let us now
turn to the question of interest
and effort.

We have spoken
before of mediate interest, that
interest with which education
is concerned. In mediate
interest we have both desire and
effort. By effort, we mean the
process of trying to realize an
end through work. Effort
shows desire, a wish to accom-
plish the object of effort, and
this desire develops into interest.

Attention without effort
is interest. Attention without
interest is effort. The first we
may call involuntary attention;
the second, voluntary. By volun-

to any attention, much that is uninteresting can be learned. No uninteresting or unchanging thing, however, can hold the attention of the mind more than a few seconds at a time. Without interest, therefore, there would be a constant wandering of the mind, and a constant readjustment of the mind to the subject. An education gained under such circumstances would be a tedious, wearisome task. It is the place of interest to do away with this waste of energy, and to make it a pleasure to work for an education. The great aim of the teacher, then, should be to promote interest among her pupils. The primary aim, to be sure, is knowledge, but little knowledge can be gained

without interest.

We must first get the pupil interested, before we can gain his attention. The lecturer has the attention of his audience if he can gain their interest.

This is why every lecturer begins his lecture with a striking sentence, which gains the interest of the audience at the start.

Although we cannot speak too favorably of interest, we must not forget that effort is also very important. Both interest and effort are often necessary. Indeed, interest often incites effort. The fact that we are interested in a subject, does not mean that we put forth no effort to master

that subject. If often means
that the effort is strengthened
by our interest in the subject.
If such subjects require effort
even when accompanied by interest,
how much more effort would be
necessary without that interest.
It is needless to say that un-
der such circumstances, the ne-
cessary effort would not be put
forth, and the subject would
not be mastered. If the pupil
is not interested, even while
seeming to study, his mind will
be engaged with far away thoughts.
There will be a sort of subconscious-
ness going on which will prevent
him from absorbing that which
he is presumably studying. Such
mechanical activity should be
discouraged.

The child's activity naturally

run ^{and will} along the line of least resistance; It is not natural therefore, for him to put forth much effort in mastering those subjects which are distasteful to him: Since this is the case, the teacher should never cease to strive to turn the pupils' interest into the right channels. A man's success in life is often determined by his power of attention. The cultivation of this power, then, in the child, is important, and we must cultivate this attention through the power of interest.

Imitation and interest, too, are closely associated. It is instinctive for a child to imitate that which goes on around him. He does not imitate everything, however; he imitates only that which he

admirer, that which appeals to him. The necessity of good examples and good models is evident.

Such examples should begin at home, for if good principles and right living are practiced before him, he will naturally imitate these good qualities. These good examples should be carried on in the schoolroom. Here the child imitates freely, and his teacher should be one whose example he can follow to advantage.

The child's interest often depends upon the interests of his fellow pupils. They do not stop to consider whether the subject might be interesting to them, but simply follow blindly the likes and dislikes of the other pupils. A change of association will then develop interest in these very subjects before disliked, because of the

absence of those who fought against them.

From the ages of ten to twelve, imitative games seem to appeal to children of both sexes. Many of them wish to follow the occupations of those around them. The little girl, for instance, likes to play at housekeeping or teaching school.

Imitation bears directly upon habit. It is a safe plan therefore, to get the children interested in the best models.

Memory is one of the important factors in education, and interest is a great aid to memory. By the law of association we know that the greater the number of ideas associated together, the more quickly and easily will those ideas be recalled. Interest

in the thing learned, then, will
lessen the difficulty of remem-
bering. If, for instance, an as-
sembly listens to a lecture on
"Birds," there will be many in
the audience who will go
away and remember very
little, while others will re-
tain much. The former, are
those who probably care little
for birds, and have practically
no interest in them. The latter
class retain more because
they are interested in the
subject, and have perhaps
made original investigation along
that line. To such people,
everything said by the lec-
turer will be of interest.

From the foregoing discussion,
it is evident that interest
is a very important factor
in education. Since this is

so, it might be well to discuss the art of securing interest.

The personality of the teacher has much influence. The teacher must set a good example in every way. Character of manner and skill in presentation are essential.

Interest in school work is not always interest in getting knowledge, but is sometimes caused by the thought of some reward. This is a fatal error, and should be discouraged by the teacher. Study for its own sake should be encouraged. The teacher should search out the natural interests of the child. This requires time, skill and patience, but it can be done, if the teacher perseveres. She should show the pupil how nearly related to his own good, these interests are. Many a pupil will

we spurred on to noble effort, and his interest awakened, by his desire for knowledge and future good. An educated man is better fitted for the world than an ~~uneducated~~ one, and this desire for future good will appeal to a child more than such abstract ideas as the sense of duty and honor.

"Interest" says Tompkins, in his "Philosophy of Teaching," "is the most persuasive idea in the art of teaching," and we are ready to believe with him, that interest is, indeed, an essential factor in education.