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### **Daniel Coyle's Talent Code: a Key to Success for Everyone?**

Throughout centuries it has been believed that some people are more talented than others and that our talents, therefore our ability to succeed, depend not on us but on what is given to us by someone else—nature, universe, God. You either have it or you don't. And if you don't, there is nothing more to be done. A very simple, although not very proactive, approach to life. Daniel Coyle in the 1st chapter of his book *Talent Code* is quite sure that this is not the case and that success depends on effort, as long as the effort is right and made in the right way. What is right in Coyle's opinion, is explained in the chapter.

But first the author proves that a talent is not based on some secret ingredient but can be explained and replicated by others. According to Coyle, the reason for success lies in effort and practice.

When I started visiting talent hotbeds, I expected to be dazzled. I expected to witness world-class speed, power, and grace. ... I witnessed something very different: moments of slow, fitful struggle ... . It was as if the herd of deer suddenly encountered a hillside coated with ice. (Coyle, 12)

This kind of learning, which depends greatly on mistakes, is what Coyle calls "deep practice". His argument about mistakes is groundbreaking in many ways. Traditional approach to learning suggests that the fewer mistakes someone makes, the better and more successful learner he or she is. Coyle points out that it's quite the opposite that may be true.

Deep practice is built on a paradox: struggling in certain targeted ways—operating at the edges of your ability, where you make mistakes—makes you smarter. Or to put it a slightly different way, experiences where you're forced to slow down, make errors, and correct them—as you would if you

were walking up an ice-covered hill, slipping and stumbling as you go—end up making you swift and graceful without your realizing it. (Coyle, 18)

The chapter also gives us a somewhat new concept of memory and some tips on how to better use it. According to the chair of psychology at UCLA Robert Bjork, our memory is not a tape-recorder, but a living structure, a scaffold of nearly infinite size.

“The more we generate impulses, encountering and overcoming difficulties, the more scaffolding we build. The more scaffolding we build, the faster we learn” (Coyle, 19).

As a good example of deep practice, Coyle tells us the story of the Brazilian football training, “because since the 1950s Brazilian players have trained in a particular way, with a particular tool that improves ball-handling skill faster than anywhere else in the world” (Coyle, 15). Coyle’s point is that Brazilians produce so many talented football players not because of climate or culture or genes, but because of the special kind of training they are going through. So the “deep practice” concept is the clue to why there are some “chicken-wire Harvards” which seem to be small and humble but are extremely successful in producing talent.

Another example of brilliant learning by mistakes is about the US aviation right before the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Actually, the story reveals how harmful conservative beliefs about learning are. It was believed that good pilot could only be born, not made (Coyle, 21), so pilot training was rather superficial. A lot of pilots had to die to prove that point wrong. Things got better thanks to Edward Link with his device for training pilots (Links). As Coyle notes,

The Air Corps pilots who trained in Links were no braver or smarter than the ones who crashed. They simply had the opportunity to practice more deeply (Coyle, 24).

Coyle’s ideas can be of a lot of use in any area of human activity, not just football or aviation. Just imagine how many children (and even adults, to be fair) are limited by the traditional definition of talent “as a natural ability for being good at a particular activity” (Macmillan English Dictionary, online). Meanwhile there are two limitations: 1) people tend to believe that talent is

something given (and beliefs are not easy to be broken), 2) finding the right component for successful learning is a tricky task, because it can lie anywhere.

But if both these conditions are met, the boundaries for individual's development and achievement extend to great levels. The question is: what can and should be done to make Coyle's argument accessible worldwide and to everyone? Because if not, then not much will be changed: while now talent is the exclusive right of those born with it, with Coyle's ideas accessible only to a small group of people talent will remain the exclusive right. And still a lot of talent will be lost in vain, never getting a fair chance to be manifested to the world.

Coyle, Daniel. *The Talent Code*. [ISSUU](#)