

# Speed-Swept Times: Where Is Rest, and How Shall Education Stand?—Rethinking Leisure Education

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The coupling of informatization with an ethos of efficiency has spawned “sped-up living”, spilling over into study and leisure alike. On the surface, it accelerates access to knowledge; in substance, it fragments time, infiltrates leisure with efficiency logic, and drives learning toward the shallow and the quick—thereby inducing time anxiety and psycho-physical strain. Taking the vogue of “speed-up” as an entry point, this paper exposes the alienation of time beneath it, arguing that speed is no shortcut to freedom but a symptom of alienation. The excellence of education lies not in winning by speed, but in disciplining speed by leisure. Accordingly, we propose to rebuild “leisure education” through three coordinated strategies—value clarification, capacity cultivation, and institutional safeguards—so as to reconstruct an educative order that seeks measure amid speed and lets measure beget wisdom, offering actionable guidance for talent development in the new era.

*Keywords:* variable-speed playback, time anxiety, time alienation, leisure education, educative order

In a reality deeply embedded in platforms and information infrastructures, “efficiency first” has become the governing logic of everyday life. Learning and leisure practices characterized by “compressed time”—variable-speed playback, speed reading, short-video learning—have proliferated. The ostensible result is faster knowledge acquisition; the real corollary is time anxiety, fragmented attention, and impoverished meaning, with consequences for learning quality and well-being. Capital’s capture of attention and leisure has replaced “living better” with “using time faster”. Leisure slides from a resource for self-development into a measurable consumption unit, laying bare an alienating trend (Wang & Lai, 2022). In response to this symptom of the times, education must reaffirm the formative value of time through “leisure education”. By rebuilding conceptions of time, learning, and value, education can correct the one-way pull of efficiency-ism and enable the co-generation of intellect and character. To this end, leisure education should begin with a pedagogical diagnosis of sped-up living, establish leisure’s value foundation and theoretical propositions, and finally translate them into implementable school actions.

## **Time in Splinters, Busier Than Ever: When Time Is Alienated Into a Token of Exchange**

Informatization and platformization convert lived time into measurable pointers. Time ceases to be an inner field for life’s self-unfolding and is reduced to a unit that can be sliced, compressed, and exchanged. Algorithms center on metrics such as dwell time, click frequency, and completion rates, breaking continuous experience into countable micro-intervals and nudging individuals to arrange daily life by the calculus of short-cycle returns. Meanwhile, instant messaging and remote collaboration erode the boundaries of work, study, and social life;

institutional time seeps into the private sphere, producing a standing expectation of being “always on”. Chunks of concentration are traded for fragments; the result is a mirage of busyness—“busy without measure”. Task-switching proliferates to meet external timelines; while more items appear completed, overall rhythm unravels and spaces for deep understanding and reflection vanish. Evaluation systems harden this externality: Speed and frequency are privileged, while the qualitative dimensions of time are eclipsed by measurable ones. We become busy with records and returns, but short on meaning and growth. Epistemologically, the structure of perception shifts. Screens interrupt our sense of being-present-to-the-world; attention is steered toward high-stimulus, low-context information streams; understanding moves from contextualized to de-contextualized; time loses narrative thickness. Axiologically, ends and means invert. Techniques meant to serve life’s unfolding are elevated into rules of action; calculation overwhelms existence; time is treated as a container to be filled with more tasks, rather than soil that nurtures understanding and creation. When efficiency and speed are pre-set as primary aims, learning is encoded as “finishing more tasks” or “watching more content”; qualitative dimensions—feeling, understanding, creating—recede; quantitative dimensions—count, frequency, speed—become the reigning doctrine, fueling chronic time anxiety and self-reproach. Time is “stripped of background”, losing the heft of life. At root, this is an imbalance between institutional time and lived time. Organizations, needing predictability, supervision, and comparability, favor homogenized and fragmentable time management; personal growth, however, requires continuity, oscillation, and margin. When these decouple, individuals compensate quantity for quality, speed for a sense of control—thus time anxiety ensues. The remedy begins by restoring time’s threefold standing: (1) affirm the inherent non-commensurability of life-time, stressing the dependence of experience and meaning-making on time’s cadences, free time should be regarded as the time prerequisite for individual self-actualization in different types of activities (Yang, 2024); (2) reaffirm the generativity of practice-time, in which learning is not mere intake of information but the formation of problems and weaving of evidence, requiring sustained investment and deferred gratification; (3) establish the communal property of public time, whereby schools, families, and platforms reach consensus on rhythms and order, shifting people from passive response to active arrangement. On this basis, efficiency can be bounded; speed is governed by measure rather than assuming the driver’s seat. The diagnosis of alienated time does not reject technology; it re-situates technology as a regulable tool, and returns time from exchange token to the ground of formation—providing a firm logical starting point for educational renewal.

### **Speed and Profit Encroach on Leisure, and Education Loses Its Balance: When Efficiency Usurps the Educative Telos**

When speed and gain are enthroned as education’s primary aims, formation yields to performance, and imbalance appears simultaneously across goals, processes, and evaluation. First, at the level of goals. The ground hue of education is the becoming of persons—depth of understanding, steadiness of judgment, breadth of empathy, and freshness of creativity. Efficiency logic rewrites this holistic end as “mastering more content faster” and “completing more tasks sooner”. Learning degenerates into information throughput; training of thought gives way to technique-cramming; short-term, visible returns displace long-term, less measurable formation of virtue—*the speed of knowing replaces the growth of wisdom; short-term performance supplants long-range character*. Second, at the level of process. Teaching is carved into micro-units easy to count and schedule; fast reading, fast watching, and fast doing become the norm; interaction thins; pedagogical moves that deepen understanding—waiting after a question, probing follow-ups, restatement—are compressed. Teachers shift from leaders of inquiry

to executors of workflow; students from co-constructors of meaning to achievers of indicators. Reflective practice recedes; the classroom's communal quality withers; the intrinsic experience of learning is impoverished. Third, at the level of evaluation. The availability of data seduces evaluation toward what is readily countable. Duration, counts, and frequency are conflated with learning outcomes; activities that yield deep evidence—extended writing, projects, public presentation—are marginalized; learning to go slow, to leave space, and to pause is misread as inefficiency. The imbalance has distributive effects. For those advantaged in self-regulation, cultural capital, and metacognitive skill, fast modes may yield marginal gains; for the many still building method and meaning, speed widens gaps in understanding and heightens psychological load, exacerbating inequity. In school governance, the chase for data visibility easily puts comparability and compliance ahead of educational goods that resist instant display yet matter for character growth. Under commercial incentives, platforms maximize use time and engagement; absent clear boundaries, institutional aims are quietly converted into platform aims. “Speed and gain invading leisure” not only crowds out rest and repair but also molds an internal paradigm of “high-frequency, shallow, short-cycle” learning, causing the loss of measure in formation. Returning to education's first purpose, the virtue of technology lies in extending human possibilities, not substituting for human becoming. The way back is to rebuild three boundaries: a telos boundary that subordinates speed and technique to understanding and character, making value orientation the premise of any pedagogical innovation; a process boundary that restores learning's rhythmic structure—protecting basic units of sustained focus and necessary rest, and reinstating the primacy of high-density practices such as questioning, dialogue, writing, and making; and an evaluation boundary that privileges deep evidence—problem evolution, evidence weaving, long-form writing, multi-week projects, and public presentation—while loosening rigid dependence on counts and duration. Only when speed is brought under the triple governance of value, meaning, and rhythm can education return—surface to depth—to its formative telos.

### **Return to Leisure to Set Education Aright: Governing Speed by Leisure to Rebuild Order**

The continuous application of digital technology has broken through the limitations of time and space, improving the utilization efficiency of teaching time. However, it has also brought about the risk of alienation such as teaching time anxiety, the control of teaching time, and the depletion of the meaning of teaching time (Lu, 2025). To “govern speed by leisure” is not to deny efficiency but to install *measure first* as a principle of governance—giving speed a gate to pass. Through value clarification, capacity cultivation, and institutional safeguards, speed is subjected to measure and efficiency to human formation. Value clarification: At the programmatic level, schools should inscribe the principles of seeking measure amid speed and letting measure beget wisdom into curricula and syllabi, legitimating slow reading, deep writing, dialogue, practice, and aesthetic activity. A learning vision should take problems as the driver, evidence as the anchor, and public expression as the home. Campus culture needs to steadily transmit a sense of rhythm: Understanding takes time, innovation needs margin, and character requires oscillation—correcting the prejudice that equates emptiness and pausing with inefficiency. Capacity cultivation: Build a cluster of courses in leisure literacy to systematically train time governance, attention restoration, and meaning-making. Time governance stresses tiered goals and rhythm design, encouraging students to plan blocks of sustained focus and proactive rest windows. Attention restoration emphasizes bodily and sensory recalibration via walking, arts and athletics, labor, and encounters with nature to repair the faculties of feeling. Meaning-making stresses problem-driven reading and evidence-chain writing; research logs, learning narratives, and peer review nurture deferred gratification and deep focus. Assignments

should follow a low-frequency, high-quality, full-cycle principle, building a learning loop of evidence, review, and transfer, to ensure internal coherence and public presentability of learning outcomes. Institutional safeguards: At the academic-year level, establish buffer periods and no-disturbance windows; stipulate minimum units for sustained focus and minimum thresholds for necessary rest; optimize timetable density and homework load; institute assignment “white space” and the right to screen quiet. Evaluation should add deep-evidence indicators—long-form writing, cross-disciplinary projects, situated practice—into the core, de-emphasizing rigid assessment of time and frequency, and encouraging students to develop personal knowledge maps and problem-evolution charts. In technology governance, choose rhythm-friendly platforms, disable infinite scroll and autoplay, and provide tools for immersive reading, annotation, and review—optimizing for progress in understanding rather than dwell time. Teacher professional development should include rhythm design and attention pedagogy, strengthen the generative power of questions and the educative force of waiting, and rebuild the classroom’s temporal architecture. Student self-governance should help draft and oversee campus time conventions, linking libraries, clubs, and public spaces to cultivate a community ethos of “slow with measure, leisure birthing wisdom”. Families and communities should align with school rhythms, temper the chase for instant returns, and support children’s experiences of labor, service, and collaboration in real settings. The effectiveness of governing speed by leisure ought to appear in three families of evidence: cognitive (deeper problems, tighter conceptual linkage, more complete argumentation), characterological (self-regulation, deferred gratification, quality of public expression), and communal (collaboration, responsibility, public spirit). Interlocking, these evidence families manifest an order in which wisdom emerges from measure. Thus, to return to leisure is not to retreat to a pre-technological past; it is to establish, under modern conditions, a temporal governance framework that centers human becoming—restoring speed to its place as tool, giving efficiency moral direction, and returning to learning its thickness, warmth, and growth. This is a feasible path for educational renewal in our time, and the strongest answer to sped-up living.

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