# Creativity and the visual arts

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# Definition(s) of talent & the visual arts

- Giftedness = IQ?
- If talent is domain-specific how is it best assessed in the visual arts?
- Dearth of research outside the fields of sports psychology and corporate talent management
- In the visual arts there can be confounding between SES, education, knowledge, interest and talent
- Should training in the visual arts be seen as a “bonus” for gifted students or as an alternative to academic study?

- Talent: is it domain-specific? developmental? incremental?

- We will present a developmental model of talent in the domains of music and visual arts as a reference point for the discussion.

# General Theoretical Framework

Exceptional levels of performance are made possible by a combination of cognitive and psychosocial factors, including:

- general intelligence,
- domain-specific skills,
- deliberate practice,
- supportive environment and social appreciation of the skill,
- educational environmental interventions

# Sternberg's theory of Successful Intelligence

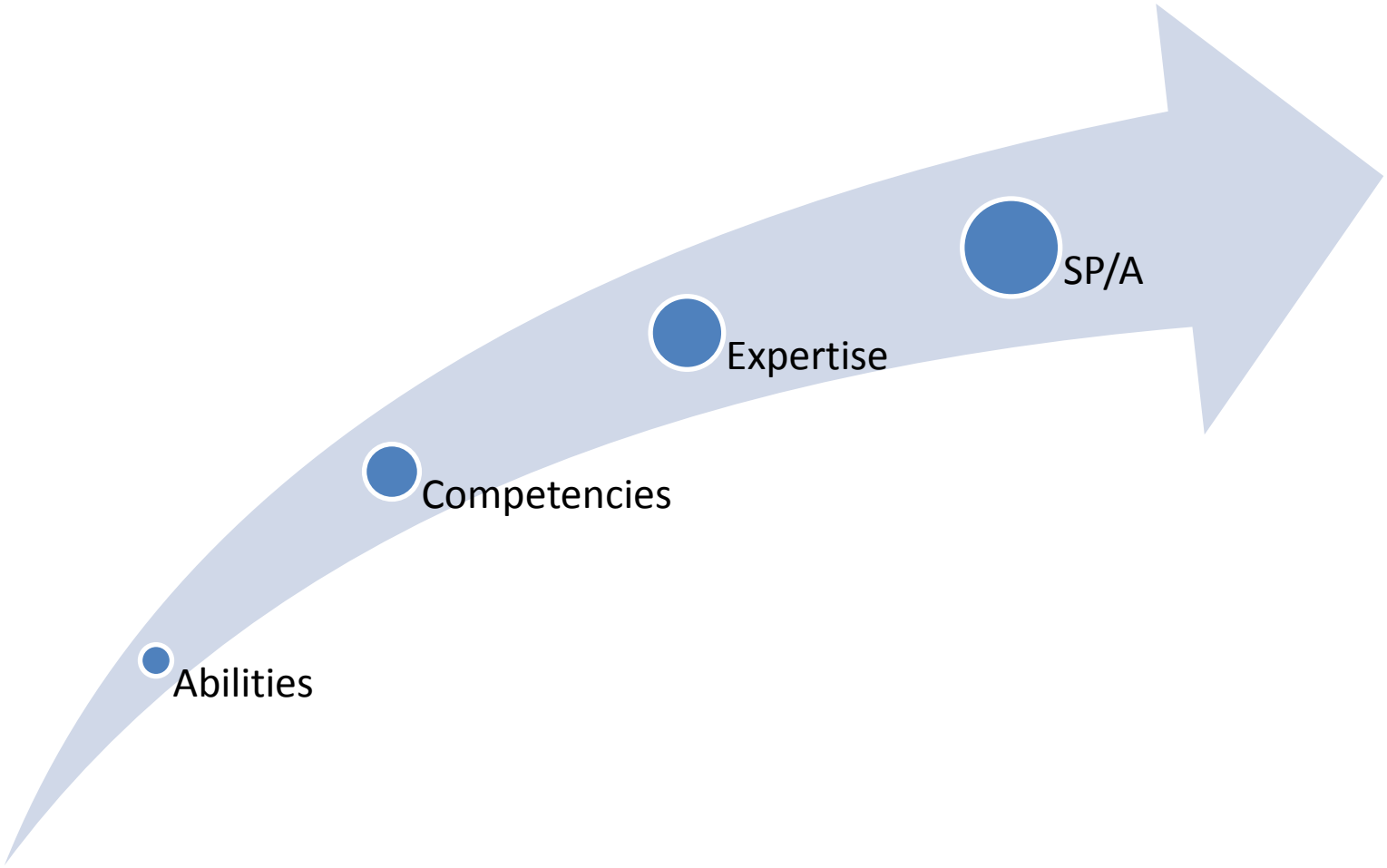
To be successfully intelligent is to

- Balance analytical, creative, and practical abilities to
- Achieve one's goals in life through
- Adaptation, shaping, and selection of the environment, and
- Capitalizing on one's strengths and correcting or compensating for one's weaknesses.

# Theoretical Premises

1. Abilities are forms of developing expertise: they have interactive genetic and environmental components, yet are modifiable to a large degree;
2. Beyond expertise exists the realm of elite talent: scholarly productivity or artistry (SP/A);
3. In the transition from novice to expert and beyond, key personality, ability, and skill factors become increasingly or decreasingly important;
4. This is a developmental model that does not apply to prodigies.

# A developmental model



# Abilities

- Extraordinary abilities tend to be manifested in one or two domains, not across the board.
- Without opportunities to learn from skilled instructors, abilities may develop too slowly or even counter-productively.
- Insufficiently challenging instruction can also hamper opportunities available to a youngster with high abilities.
- The age at which the stages of transformation from ability to SP/A take place vary, even within a domain. For example, vocalists develop much later than violinists.

# Competencies

- A high-quality teacher channels abilities into competencies by introducing a series of sufficiently challenging experiences that can be practiced and mastered.
- Great teachers encourage their students to embrace rather than fear adversity: mastery over such fear allows for persistence through practice, disappointment, and even failure.

# Expertise

- Expertise involves using one's abilities to acquire, store, and use explicit knowledge of a *domain* (i.e., a knowledge base) and implicit or tacit knowledge of a *field* (i.e., the social organization of that knowledge base);
- Explicit knowledge is knowledge of the facts, formulas, principles, and major ideas of a domain of inquiry;
- Implicit, or tacit, knowledge is the informally taught knowledge necessary to attain success in a field.

# Importance of each factor over time

| | Stage 1 to 2 | Stage 2 to 3 | Stage 3 to 5 |
|---|---|---|---|
| External rewards | *** | *** | *** |
| Persistence | *** | *** | *** |
| Intrinsic motivation | *** | *** | *** |
| Musicality | *** | *** | *** |
| Charisma | *** | *** | *** |
| Ability to learn quickly | *** | | |
| Technical proficiency | *** | *** | |
| Parental support | *** | *** | |
| Teachability | *** | *** | |
| Teacher-Student | *** | *** | |
| Strengths and weaknesses | | *** | *** |
| Self-promotion | | *** | *** |
| Play the game | | *** | *** |
| Social skills | | *** | *** |
| Self-confidence | | *** | *** |
| Risk taking | | | *** |

# Strengths and weaknesses of the SP/A model

- The model was developed for the domain of classical music (USA, Russia, France).
- Expanded to the domain of academic talent generally, and mathematics specifically. The model adapts to different domains, with some variations: e.g., charisma at the ultimate stage of SP/A is more important in a performing arts domain
- The biological age will depend on the domain

# Proposed model for the visual arts

**Classical Music**

- Persistence through good and bad times
- Self-confidence
- Knowing your strengths and weaknesses
- Social skills
- Ability to learn quickly and to analyze structures and patterns
- Technical proficiency
- Risk taking
- Knowing how to play the game

**Visual Arts**

- Persistence through good and bad times
- Self-confidence
- Knowing your strengths and weaknesses
- Social skills
- Ability to learn quickly and to analyze structures and patterns - > Conceptual thinking
- Technical proficiency
- Risk taking
- Knowing how to play the game

# Proposed model for the visual arts

**Classical Music**

- Teachability
- Intrinsic motivation
- Musicality
- Charisma
- Self-promotion
- Availability of external rewards such as money and recognition
- Parental support and / or pressure

**Visual Arts**

- Teachability
- Intrinsic motivation
- Visual cast of mind
- Charisma
- Self-promotion
- Availability of external rewards such as money and recognition
- Parental support and / or pressure
- Oral and written communication skills

| | Stage 1 | Stage 2 | Stage 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Persistence through good and bad times | * | ** | *** |
| Self-confidence | ** | *** | *** |
| Knowing your strengths and weaknesses | * | ** | |
| Social skills | | ** | *** |
| Conceptual thinking | ** | *** | *** |
| Risk taking | *** | *** | *** |
| Knowing how to play the game | ** | *** | *** |
| Intrinsic motivation | *** | ** | ** |
| Self-promotion | | | |
| Availability of external rewards | * | ** | *** |
| Parental support and / or pressure | *** | * | |
| Oral and written communication skills | *** | *** | *** |

# Societal and political considerations

- In France there is still a prevalent view that gifted and talented students are to be considered privileged and therefore not granted any support, adaptation or special programs, and that available funding should instead benefit the majority of school-aged children.
- In higher education that perspective shifts, and significant funding is devoted to expensive public programs in the visual arts.

# Further readings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