

Talent Abounds

*Profiles of Master Teachers
and Peak Performers*

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Overview

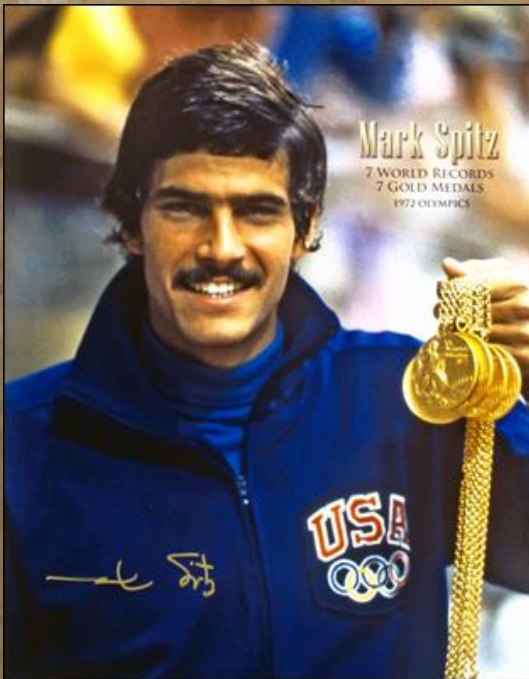
- History of the Study & Sample of Subjects
- Central Questions Driving *Talent Abounds*
- Nature vs. Nurture
- Characteristics of Master Teachers
- Shared Characteristics with Peak Performers
- The Nature of Fields and Constraining Nature of “isms”
- Japanese “Living Treasures in the Arts”
- The Importance of Public Policy
- What Is To Be Learned from Gifted Public School Teachers
- Conclusions

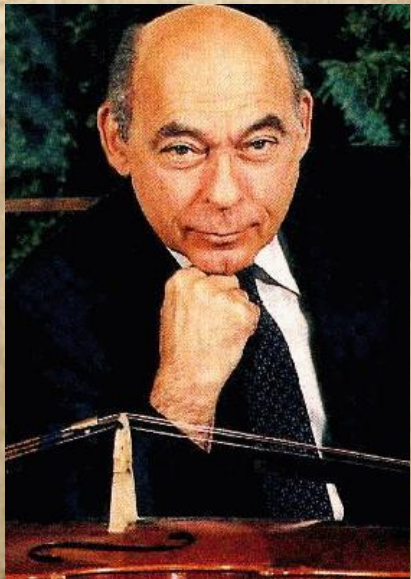
History of the Study & Sample of Master Teachers and Peak Performers

- Japanese “National Living Treasures” in the Arts: Comparative Perspective
- Commonalities and Differences across Different Fields of Endeavor:
 - *Classical Music and Jazz
(violin, cello, piano, trumpet, trombone, saxophone, tuba, percussion)
 - *Opera
 - *Modern Dance
 - *Chess and Mathematics
 - *Swimming and Diving
 - *Culinary Arts
- Purposive and Convenience Sample
 - *over 150 interviews, 30+ with gifted Indiana public school teachers



39-15 Dorothy DeLay at 70th birthday party, 1987 photo © Peter Schaaf





Central Questions Driving *Talent Abounds*

- What is the nature of talent?
- How is nature identified and nurtured?
- Is exceptional talent an innate quality?
- Is expert intervention essential to the fulfillment of talent?
- What are the characteristics of master teachers?
- What do master teachers share in common with peak performers?
- How do social class, gender and ethnicity influence access to instructional and performance opportunities?
- Can lessons learned in one particular national and cultural context or in one performance field be extended to other societies and fields?
- How does public policy shape the recognition and development of talent?

Characteristics of Master Teachers

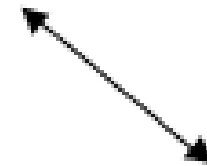
- Metaphors: “X-ray vision,” “tailoring instruction,” providing “short cuts”
- Ability to detect technical or conceptual problems students have
- Ability to detect what student capabilities are and provide them with precise challenges or set of tasks enabling them to reach next performance level
- Ability to break down complex problems into specific steps and provide tools essential to accomplish these tasks, leading to peak performance
- Guiding students to become self-reflective, self-directive life-long problem solvers and contributors to communities of practice

Peak Performers: Shared Characteristics

- An early start, often as a result of family influences
- A passionate love of their vocation
- Perfectionism, often obsessively involved
- Curiosity, deeply exploring their field and seemingly unrelated domains
- Development of highly valued personal vision
- Development of a distinctive signature/voice
- High-energy, performing and teaching into their 70s (except in sports)

Master Teachers/Coaches/Mentors

Knowledge/skills/techniques
Overall philosophy/vision and approaches to a field and teaching/coaching/mentoring
Personality traits
Past teachers/coaches/mentors



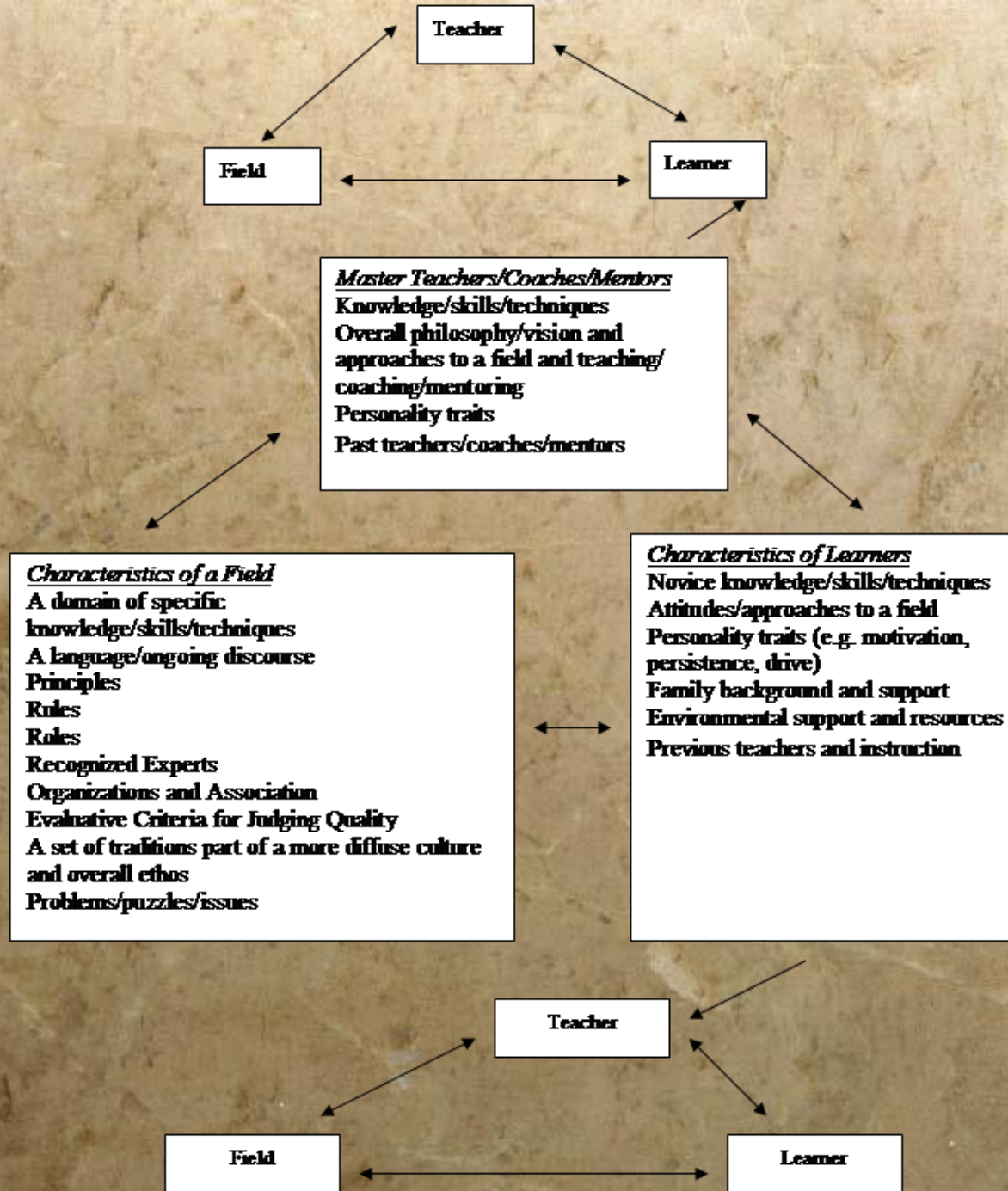
Characteristics of a Field

A domain of specific knowledge/skills/techniques
A language/ongoing discourse
Principles
Rules
Roles
Recognized Experts
Organizations and Association
Evaluative Criteria for Judging Quality
A set of traditions part of a more diffuse culture and overall ethos
Problems/puzzles/issues



Characteristics of Learners

Novice knowledge/skills/techniques
Attitudes/approaches to a field
Personality traits (e.g. motivation, persistence, drive)
Family background and support
Environmental support and resources
Previous teachers and instruction



Japanese Living National Treasures: Ryohei Matsuda (Knox College)

Performance Fields & Featured Artists Studied

Noh

Shōroku Sekine



Kyōgen

Sensaku Shigeyama IV



Shamisen

Gosakichi Kineya II



Japanese Sword (polishing)

Matsuo Fujishiro



Bunraku

Tamao Yoshida



Japanese Dance

Kikunori Onoe



細道代 (尾上菊乃里)

Characteristics: Teachers and Teaching

- Strictness (rigorousness) is of utmost important

師厳しからざるは道尊からず

*More scolding than praising

*Public humiliation

*“Things are flying over all”

物が飛ぶ

- Mastery of basics (technical skills) vs. Cultivating artistic sensibilities
- vigor or vitality

ki or chi 氣

- Patience & persistence; family sacrifice
- “Copying the model” vs “adding personal interpretation”
- Creativity: more at advanced levels; no clones

Lessons for Japanese Public Schools

- Patience and discipline
- Close and caring personal relationships
- Less reliance on technologies
- Instilling respect for education
- Teaching “learning how to learn”
- Finding something students excel in
- Not just for the gifted, but for all children
- Start at an early age:
 - * “What a 3 year old child has learned stays with her/him for 100 years”

三つ子の魂百まで

What Can Be Learned from Gifted Public School Teachers

- Challenges facing teachers in the bureaucratic setting of public schools
- Margaret Clements study of Armstrong Teacher Educators:
 - *Enthusiastic and passionate about learning and teaching
 - *Have a deep respect for each of their students
 - *Believe that the potential of all students can be developed
 - *Find the means to provide the challenges and arrange the specific academic tasks that further students' learning and personal growth
 - *Continually striving to increase their own mastery of subject matter and pedagogical knowledge as well as their effectiveness as educators

The Importance of Public Policy and a Widening Circle of Supportive Contexts

- Importance of public funding
 - *Venezuela's State Youth Orchestra System
- In-school and after-school programs in the arts, sciences, mathematics, chess
- Specialized schools and magnets schools allowing a greater degree of specialization and focus
- Advanced placement courses and university programs enrolling high school students
- Not-for-Profit/Private Sector Programs
 - *Scholarship Apprenticeship Programs, Emerging Choreographers, Imagine That

Conclusions

- Even the most innately gifted in various fields of endeavor benefited from a progression of masterful teachers.
- Both teachers and their extraordinary students manifested similar traits
- Gifted public school teachers share similar values and engage in many of the same practices as renowned master teachers
- Although there are differences between the ways in which talent is identified and nurtured there are also similarities across societies/cultures
- Contrary to current conservative state policies, truly gifted teachers need both subject matter expertise and pedagogical expertise

- Pedagogical knowledge/skills and value orientations are best learned in university teacher education programs that form reflective practitioners with a broad, humanistic education
- The challenge to educational policy and practice is not what extraordinary teachers can do to develop the potential of exceptional students, but what ordinary teachers can do to nurture the abilities of all students so that they can live fuller lives
- Public policy needs to provide teachers with the resources, support, and autonomy to work their magic
- Public policy needs to provide an expanding circle of supportive and stimulating contexts that: *engage students in meaningful activity to develop their potential and enable them to be contributing members of communities from the local to the global