



## ***The Talent Code* by Daniel Coyle**

### **Think you might want to read this book?**

In *The Talent Code*, Daniel Coyle proposes all hotbeds of talent (e.g., Russian female tennis players from 2005-2007, Dominican players in the Major Leagues, the home that produced the three Brontë sister authors) have commonalities: Deep practice, Ignition, and Master Coaching. In some ways the sociological equivalent to Daniel Pink's *Drive*, *The Talent Code* offers solid examples of how myelin is the key to developing talent. Coyle explores the benefits of “deep practice” in futsal (the Brazilian condensed version of soccer), Master Coaching from the legendary basketball coach John Wooden, Tom Sawyer-like psychological games, and Suzuki violin teachers’ method of perfecting each segment before progressing. Covering a myriad of topics, *The Talent Code* is thought-provoking from beginning to end.

### **What would Socrates ask?**

- Should all intellectual journeys begin with a question?
- What if every course began with a single or handful of Essential Questions?
- Should students be encouraged to practice presentations/speeches from the beginning until they make a mistake... and then start over?
- How do schools normalize, or even celebrate, mistakes so that students see them as important parts of the learning process?
- How do we create learning experiences that allow for pause, struggle, errors and lessons learned?
- What if all student learning experiences had incomplete cognitive tasks built into them?
- How do we train our teachers in a manner similar to “craft guilds” so they get thousands of hours of deep practice and feedback?
- How do we slow down learning for students in the moments right before learning happens?
- How could we set up a system where students decided when they were ready to be assessed?
- How can we restructure the school day with the knowledge that 3-5 hours is the ideal window for deep practice?
- How do we train students to view mistakes as opportunities for growth?
- How do we ensure that assessments are done when students have had enough time to master the learning?
- What if all teacher training was done in schools?”
- What should the role of schools be when students are skilled at self-regulated learning?
- How do we ignite a passion for learning in our students?
- How do we train teachers to give short and specific feedback for smaller tasks that have been broken down for students?
- Should we embed group problem solving in all administration teams?

## Research

- Studying a list with incomplete words/letters missing will cause you to remember it three times more than the same list with the words complete/without the same cognitive effort required.

## Concepts

- Playing a tune or rehearsing something we should practice until we make a mistake and then going back to the beginning (while making notes of how to improve along the way) is optimal for learning.
- Being a prodigy is an unreliable predictor of long-term success ([Originals](#) stated the same thing).
- The best learning happens when we struggle, make mistakes, try again and find success.
- Some of the best commercials are the ones that require just a little bit of cognitive work.
- “Rage to master”- Some people seem to tap into their talent because maybe they possess an innate desire to improve- what psychologist Ellen Winner calls “the rage to master.”
- Skating in California skyrocketed when a skating team found that practicing in empty swimming pools gave them the ability to improve at a rapid speed (similar to what futsal did for Brazilian soccer).
- “Skill consists of identifying important elements and grouping them into a meaningful framework. The name psychologists use for such organization is *chunking*.”
- At Meadowmount (a music school), one teacher says that if a passerby can recognize the overall tune being played, then the song isn’t being practiced correctly- an example of how we should break down the task into small parts.
- Deep practice is being at the sweet spot of your capabilities for 3-5 hours a day.
- American students are less comfortable struggling with a problem at the board than Japanese students are.
- All talent hotbeds use the language of rewarding effort and not talent- it is best to acknowledge the efforts to master small tasks.
- One of the secrets to basketball coach John Wooden’s success was repeated affirmation that mastering the small tasks was worthwhile and key.
- A common phrase heard in talent hotbeds by coaches was “Good. Okay now do \_.” When it was mastered it was followed by “Good. Now do it \_ (e.g., faster/with harmony)”.
- In talent hotbeds, “small successes were not stopping points but stepping stones.”

## Quotes from the author

- “Every journey begins with questions.”
- “Geniuses are not scattered uniformly through time and space, he pointed out; to the contrary, they tend to appear in clusters (e.g., Athens from 440 B.C. to 380 B.C. and Florence from 1440 to 1490)”.

- Baby steps are the royal road to skill.

**Quotes from others**

- “If I skip practice for one day, I notice. If I skip practice for two days, my wife notices. If I skip for three days, the world notices.” - Vladimir Horowitz
- “Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.” - W.B. Yeats
- “A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.” - Henry Brooks Adams
- “If it’s a choice between me telling them to do it, or them figuring it out, I’ll take the second option every time. You’ve got to make the kid an independent thinker, a problem-solver.” - Robert Lansdorp
- “A teacher is one who makes himself progressively unnecessary.” - Thomas Carruthers

**Organizations/schools working on answers**

- Yale’s [Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning](#)
- [The Transforming Teaching Project](#)

**Referenced books with the potential to impact leading and learning in education**

Author(s) Last Name	Title
Kurtz	<a href="#">Practicing</a>
Stigler and Hiebert	<a href="#">The Teaching Gap</a>
Simonton	<a href="#">Origins of Genius</a>
Nater and Gallimore	<a href="#">You Haven’t Taught Until They Have Learned</a>
Tharp and Gallimore	<a href="#">Rousing Minds to Life</a>
Sykes	<a href="#">Dumbing Down Our Kids</a>

The applicability of this book to education is ....



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