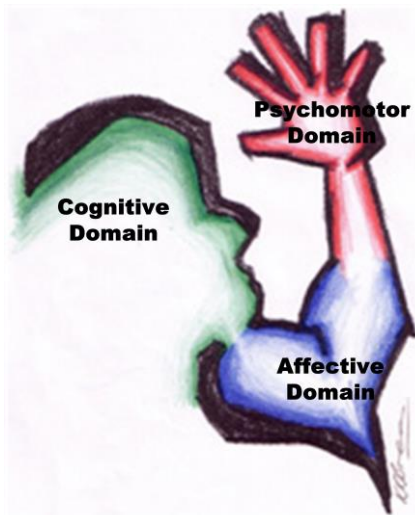


Creativity is no more than doing do something different with the knowledge, skills and attitude that we do well.

In other words, only a person who has mastered the craft can be creative. How do we get to this point?

How we Learn

We have a lot to learn before we become creative. No one is creative without being an expert in what they do. You can't even open the lid of a tin of paint with a screwdriver, unless you know what a screwdriver is, and how to use it. You also must know how the lid of the paint tin is shaped so that it seals the tin.



To understand this concept of knowledge, competence and creativity, we must understand Bloom's Taxonomy. The educational psychologist Dr Benjamin Bloom designed this model in 1956. His model sees learning taking place in three Domains, the Cognitive, Affective and Psychomotor – thinking, feeling and doing.

The entertainment media are a very good example of how competence relies on all three domains. We must think – there are skills that involve structure, targeting an audience, and evaluation.

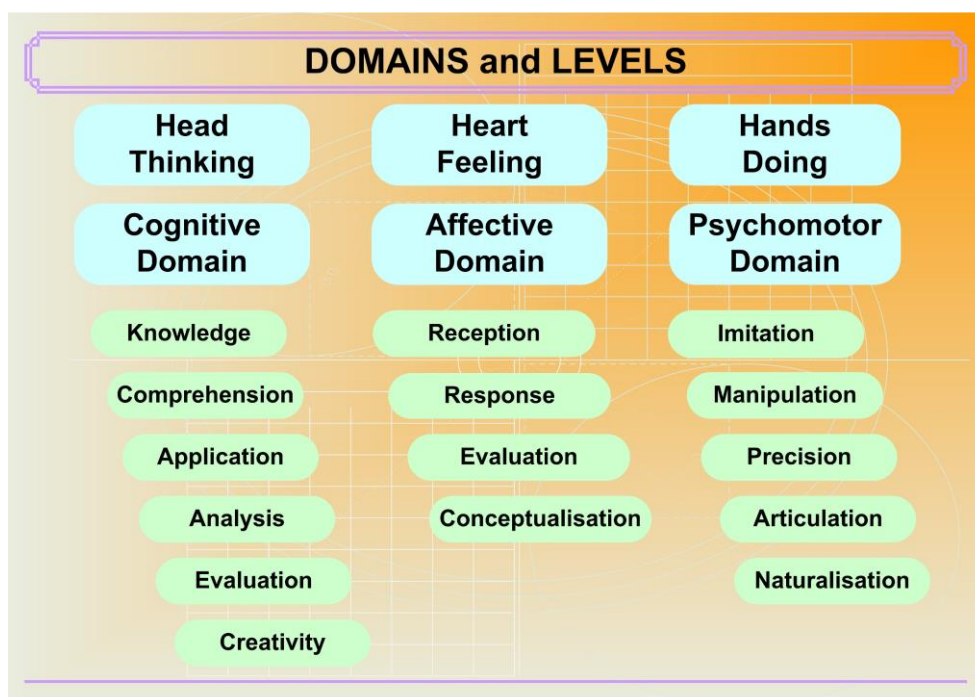
Then there is the feeling side. The media attracts an audience because it peddles emotions in order to elicit emotions from the audience.

Finally, there is the doing side – even a writer must know how to use a pen or a keyboard.

Bloom Level

Within each of these domains is a level. The learner must go through all these levels before they can reach competence -and then creativity.

Here is a simple diagram of the levels in each Domain:

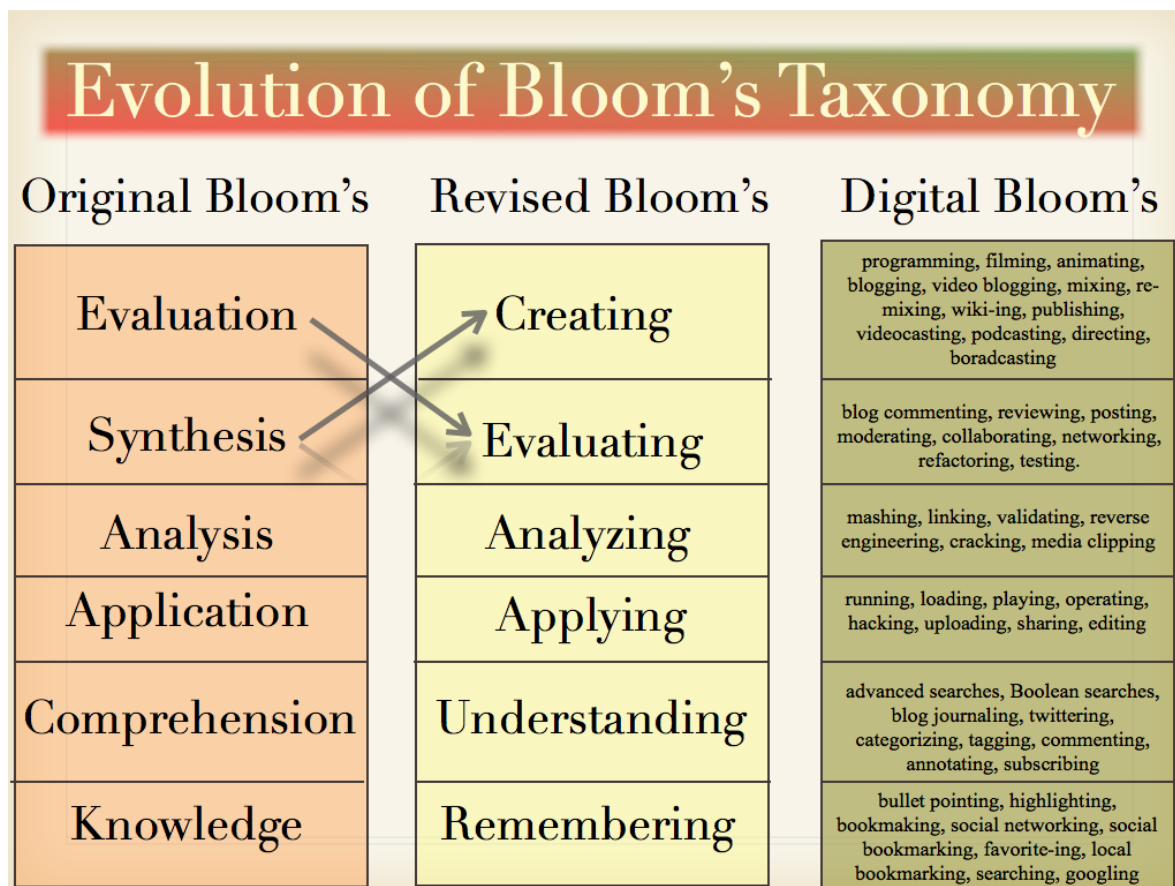


An interesting aspect is that the highest level within the psychomotor domain is naturalisation, which of course refers to activities such as dancing.

Bloom's Taxonomy has gone through a major change in this century to address our new age of electronic digital communications. Anyone working in education and training in the 1990's would have known that the highest level in the Cognitive Domain of Bloom's Taxonomy was Evaluation.

As the century wore on, and Services overtook Industry, and Media Entertainment overtook three Humanities, it became necessary to revisit Bloom.

This diagram illustrates the modernisation: ¹



Source: MaxVibrant. <http://www.maxvibrant.com/bloom-s-taxonomy/bloom-s-taxonomy>

This adjustment is more aligned to the needs of the creative industries. However, for simplicity we will concentrate on the Cognitive Domain - the realm of thinking.

Creativity

To be creative, we must: know the subject, understand it, be able to do it, be able to pull it apart into its components, and judge whether it is a good job or a bad job.

- | | |
|------------------|---------------|
| Know the subject | Knowledge |
| Understand it | Comprehension |

¹ This assumes the Taxonomy of Benjamin Bloom (1956) as adapted and modernised (Anderson, Krathwohl, Airasian, Cruikshank, Mayer, Pintrich, Raths, Wittrock, 2000).

Do it	Application
Pull it apart	Analysis
Judge it	Evaluation
Be creative	Creativity

No one can be creative only with knowledge, or comprehension. You can only be truly creative when you have gone through, and mastered all the levels in this domain. This applies to the other Domains as well.

If you want to know more about Bloom's Taxonomy, the Domain and Levels, there is an excellent explanation at <http://www.maxvibrant.com/bloom-s-taxonomy/bloom-s-taxonomy>

Another aspect

Creativity, like all artistic concepts, exists only in a context.

There are basically three contexts for creativity:

- ❖ The artist
- ❖ The audience, viewer.
- ❖ The culture of the society of both.

But there are three words that confuse creativity:

1 Variation

Variation can be just in the present time. Is it a variation on something that exists now in time and in space?

2 Innovation

Innovation is only recognised in retrospect. You must look back to see if something is new.

3 Novelty

Novelty refers to something fresh, new and unusual. However, the usual way we express it is to refer to something trivial, rather than serious. It would seem to passing and superficial value.

The components of creativity

However, there are some essential components to creativity:

Competence

To be creative, or exercise something that is different and new, you must be competent. Creativity is expression. You must have something to express with. If expression is fundamentally the expression of emotions, remember that you cannot receive the emotions someone else is expressing except through the senses. You must see, hear, touch, taste or smell.

Therefore, the creator must have produced SOMETHING that you can see, hear, touch, taste or smell.

This immediately implies that the creator has the ability and competence to create something for you to see, hear, touch, taste or smell. This competence must include the craftsmanship to produce is competently in such a way that it communicates the emotions that you can see, hear, touch, taste or smell. The artist can create with greater ease and proficiency, the more these skills are second nature, and she does not have to consciously think about using them. They are at the stage where they are second nature.

Experience of the artist

It is highly unlikely that someone can create a great work of art unless one has experience on which to base it. Even the most unworldly fantasies are based on actual experience. It is hardly conceivable that a person can communicate an emotion unless he has felt it himself.

This also seems to imply that the more mature a person is (the more personal experiences they have) the better the artist they will be. This is not necessarily so, as the artist must communicate, which means that there is as much knowledge and empathy for the audience required as personal experience.

You could say that an artist can make up for lack of personal experience by means of craftsmanship (competence in the craft), and in an ability to understand and empathise (feel with) the audience.

Experience of the audience

A creative work is only different if the audience says it is. If the audience says it is not new, then the audience has experienced it (or something like it before). But even if the creative work is not innovative, different and new; then if the audience has never experienced anything like it before, it will be innovative, different and new.

Also, the audiences' experience must be such that they are able to understand the artist. They must speak the same aural, visual, body and verbal languages. They must find that there is something within their emotional experience that enables them to "connect" with the artistic work.

There are some fine lines and grey areas here. Maybe this is what Phineas T Barnum meant when he said that, "You can fool some of the people all the time; you can fool all the people some of the time, but you can never fool all of the people all of the time."

He also said, "No one went broke underestimating public taste."

Experience and the story

One of the most common forms of creativity is the experience of storytelling. Once again, the components above apply. The artist/s (writers, composers, directors, designers, painters, performers) must be competent in their crafts. The artist must have some experience of the story, even if she has only experienced as a detailed visualisation in her mind. Finally, the audience must find it creative within their experience, and must be able to receive and appreciate it from the context of their experience.

Stories give meaning and value to events and episodes in our lives. They also alleviate our anxiety about the unknown. They help us to develop strategies to help us cope with change.

Nor are they the preserve of novelists, writers, playwrights and poets. They belong to us all. We are creatures of stories because we are storytelling creatures.

We all tell stories every day. It doesn't matter whether we are relating epic myths and legends to our children; or whether we are telling our partner about what is not available at the supermarket. These are all stories. They appeal to our curiosities and needs.

When we tell a story, we are using the craft of narrative. There is very little practical reason for there to be so many scholarly books and theses on "narrative", when all it means is "telling a story".

We start a story at the beginning of the story, but this is not necessarily the start of the history being related. We can start with a "flashback" or a "flash-forward". The storyteller makes this decision based on what the storyteller judges to produce the most suspense. (Suspense is just one part of the Craft of Storytelling.)

In short, narrative is the way o in which we make sense of memories and prognoses, chance and coincidence, limits and possibilities.ⁱ In life we frequently occupy the position of a storyteller during the story we are living.ⁱⁱ

In so doing, the writer (narrator) must delve into his own consciousness, and comes to terms with accepting the past and the way he feels about it. It may have direct bearing on how he imagines his future, or the lives of characters of total fantasy. This is the pain that the artists experiences to create.

To give birth to creativity, something must die. Death is usually painful.

Every generation faces new kinds of restrictions, and opportunities that define who they are and what they might be. You may tell a story that was told fifty years ago, but if it is told within the context of today's generation it can be different enough to be highly creative.

Creativity and industry

There are many debates about the “cultural industries”, but they have been going on for centuries. The fact remains that an artistic creation involves materials and somewhere along the line, someone must pay for the materials.

If that someone wants to give the money away, or whether that person wants to invest and make a profit is neither here nor there. The fact remains that creativity when realised in a material form costs money.

Most artists today operate in the commercial world where they sell their works to exist.

Because of that, they are usually subject to constraints: it must appeal, it must reach the target audience, and it may even have to conform to genre, duration or budget.

These are not restrictions – they are challenges that draw further on the creativity of the artist.

There are also challenges to the artist to stand up for her belief in the audience for her creative works. Commerce will always want to reduce risk by giving audiences what they have liked in the past – which naturally leads to mimicking other works.ⁱⁱⁱ

It is the artist who has researched the audience, and the integrity of other works on the market, who will win the argument and allow artistic integrity to rise above commercial mediocrity. But these artists now must be skilled in audience research and audience psychology.

Access

One of the benefits of the digital age, in which we live, is that technology gives us access to our target audience, no matter where they are. By means of satellite and the Internet, we can reach out audience, even if they are travelling or resident at the other end of the planet. We can also reach audiences that before we did not even bother to dream of.

This often introduces even more restrictions and hence artistic challenges. We may have to adapt our creative work to achieve the same effect in another language, within the contact of another culture, or even through another medium.

Never before has the artist had to come to terms with so much technology and so many crafts.

Hence the concept of the “multiskilled creative”. In the last section we pointed out how artist who want to rise about the mediocrity that commerciality often brings, also must be skilled in audience research and business tools.

The effect of all this is that creative work is accessible to just about everyone and anyone, from the foreign to the disabled. From the rich to the destitute. Somehow or other, there is a way for them to access creativity. (It's the “somehow or other” that also offers creative challenges to those who care.)

Conventions

Artist often must conform to conventions for reasons other than commerce avoiding risks.

- ❖ Sometimes these are technical
 - For 70 years, pop songs were confined to three minutes because that was as long as a record could take. Convention still confines them to three minutes.
 - In the early days of colour TV so few people had colour TV sets that all TV production had to be done so that it could also be seen clearly in monochrome.
- ❖ Sometimes these are symbolic
 - Colours mean different things in different culture.
 - Various shapes and signs have different meanings to different people.
- ❖ Sometimes they exist in form:
- ❖ Television, music, film and writings are made and marketed in genres.

But these also change:

- ❖ Technology changes
- ❖ Cultures change^{iv}
- ❖ Symbols change their meanings
- ❖ Forms, formats and genres change as cultures change.
- ❖ Artist change – they mature, experiment with other format and genres, or they get better at what they do best.

Further reading

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ⁱ Negus, Keith and Pickering, Michael. *Creativity, Communication and Cultural Value*. Sage, London. 2004. P34.

ⁱⁱ To take this statement to an extreme, see Neal Gabler's *Life: The Movie*.

ⁱⁱⁱ This is known in TV terms as "Do what everyone else does differently, but for heaven's sake, never do anything different."

^{iv} Consumption culture can change in just six months. Media takes longer to change – up to two years. National culture may only show signs of changing every 10 to 20 years.