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EXPANDING LEARNING HORIZONS: EXPLORING GARDNER'S MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO EDUCATION

Arafat Useini, Şehida Rizvançe Matsani, page 29-40

ABSTRACT

Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI), introduced in the early 1980s, has profoundly influenced contemporary educational practices by challenging traditional, singular conceptions of intelligence. The theory posits that individuals possess a variety of cognitive capacities, each reflecting unique ways of learning and understanding the world. Gardner initially proposed seven intelligences, later expanding the framework to eight, encompassing verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, intrapersonal, interpersonal, bodily-kinesthetic, musical-rhythmic, and naturalist intelligences. Each intelligence dimension reflects distinct skills, learning preferences, and modes of interaction with the environment, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of human cognition. This paper examines the principles underlying MI theory, its implications for curriculum design, and practical strategies for fostering diverse intelligences in educational settings. Recommendations include curriculum integration, individualized learning approaches, interdisciplinary activities, teacher training, and alternative assessment methods. The adoption of MI-based practices enhances student engagement, motivation, and holistic development, while promoting personalized and inclusive learning environments. Furthermore, integrating MI theory into teaching and assessment practices supports educational innovation and long-term societal benefits by preparing students with diverse cognitive, creative, and social skills. Overall, the theory of multiple intelligences offers educators and policymakers a framework for cultivating versatile, well-rounded learners who can thrive in complex and dynamic learning contexts.

Keywords: Multiple Intelligences, Howard Gardner, curriculum design, personalized learning, holistic education

Assoc.Prof. Dr.Arafat Useini,
International Vision University – Gostivar

e-mail:
arafat.husein
@vision.edu.mk

Asst. Prof. Dr. Şehida Rizvançe Matsani
International Vision University – Gostivar

e-mail:
sehida.rizvancemasan
@vision.edu.mk

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1.Introduction

In the age in which we live, the trends in every field in which mankind exists are changing rapidly. Changes in the field of science and technology also closely affect the field of education. At the beginning of these new directions affecting the field of education, the theory of multiple intelligences, one of the theories that has been mentioned the most recently, comes to the fore. Multiple intelligence theory is a window into the human mind, and all the natural forces that have children, uncovering potentials and talents, and developing them, trying to apply contemporary learning theory or theory. The main point to consider here, the education of our children is not a compensation or non-factor; their training is most effective to perform the duty of everyone. In this study, we will try to emphasize the theory of multiple intelligences, which has an important place in the education of our children, and the relationship of this theory with the basic elements of the educational program.

1.1. Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences

The theory of multiple intelligences, which has been on the agenda since the early 1980s, has significantly influenced educational practices and has become easily adopted by everyone in classroom practice. Especially in the recent program development studies conducted at the primary education level in our country, as a result of centering the learning process, applications related to the theory of multiple intelligences have been given an important place (Büyükkaragöz, 1997; Demirel, 1999). American University in neuropsychology and developmental psychology expert, conducted by the Boston Gardner individuals in understanding the pattern of their abilities, their cognitive capacity review in research at Harvard University, "Project Zero" in the project named in the brain and cognitive abilities of gifted children with normal intelligence and development of the disorders arising from damage studies on psychometric psychology through unexplained watching different things he noticed (Gardner, 1999). "My daily studies of children and adults with brain damage have deeply influenced me in terms of facts related to human nature and physical structure. People are full of very extensive capacities and abilities (Yavich & Rotninsky,2020). The superiority of an individual in one area is not simple enough to compare and predict with his strength in another area," he says. Accordingly, it can be said that the theory of multiple intelligences was born from this point of view. Gardner proposed seven different dimensions of intelligence in his book Frames of

Mind, published in 1983. Later, in his work Intelligence Reframed, published in 1999, he created eight different intelligence dimensions by adding a new intelligence dimension (Demirel, Başbay & Erdem, 2006).

1.1.1. Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence

This intelligence involves the knowing which comes through language; through reading, writing, and speaking. It involves understanding the order and meaning of words in both speech and writing, and how to properly use the language. It involves understanding the sociocultural nuances of a language, including idioms, plays on words, and linguistically-based humor (Bümen, 2005).

If this is a strong intelligence for you, you have highly developed skills for reading, speaking, and writing and you tend to think in words. You probably like various kinds of literature, playing word games, making up poetry and stories, engaging in involved discussions with other people, debating, formal speaking, creative writing, and telling jokes. You are likely precise in expressing yourself and irritated when others are not! You love learning new words, you do well with written assignments, and your comprehension of anything you read is high.

1.1.2. Mathematical-Logical Intelligence

This intelligence uses numbers, math, and logic to find and understand the various patterns that occur in our lives: thought patterns, number patterns, visual patterns, color patterns, and so on. It begins with concrete patterns in the real world but gets increasingly abstract as we try to understand relationships of the patterns we have seen (Demirel, 1999).

If you happen to be a logical-mathematically inclined person, you tend to think more conceptually and abstractly and are often able to see patterns and relationships that others miss. You probably like to conduct experiments, to solve puzzles and other problems, to ask cosmic questions, and analyze circumstances and people's behavior. You most likely enjoy working with numbers and mathematical formulas and operations, and you love the challenge of complex problems to solve. You are probably systematic and organized, and you likely always have a logical rationale or argument for what you are doing or thinking at any given time.

1.1.3. Visual-Spatial Intelligence

We often say, "A picture is worth a thousand words!" or "Seeing is believing!" This intelligence represents the knowing that occurs through the shapes, images, patterns, designs, and textures we see with our external eyes, but also includes all of the images we are able to conjure inside our heads (Büyükkaragöz, 1997).

If you are strong in this intelligence, you tend to think in images and pictures. You are likely very aware of objects, shapes, colors, textures, and patterns in the environment around you. You probably like to draw, paint, and make interesting designs and patterns, and work with clay, colored markers, construction paper, and fabric. Many individuals who excel in visual-spatial intelligence enjoy working with jigsaw puzzles, reading maps, and navigating unfamiliar places. You probably have definite opinions about colors that go well together, textures that are appropriate and pleasing, and how a room should be decorated. And, you are likely excellent at performing tasks that require "seeing with the mind's eyes," such as visualizing, pretending, imagining, and forming mental images.

1.1.4. Intrapersonal Intelligence

"Self smart" or "introspection smart." At the heart of this intelligence are our human self-reflective abilities by which we can step outside of ourselves and think about our own lives. This is the introspective intelligence. It involves our uniquely human propensity to want to know the meaning, purpose, and significance of things. It involves our awareness of the inner world of the self, emotions, values, beliefs, and our various quests for genuine spirituality (Bümen, 2005). The self is a whole that reflects an individual's worldview, thought system, and values (Kansu & Rizvance Matsani, 2024).

If this intelligence is one of your strong points, you may like to work alone, and sometimes you may shy away from others. You are probably self-reflective and self-aware, and thus you tend to be in tune with your inner feelings, values, beliefs, and thinking processes. You are frequently bearers of creat

ive wisdom and insight, are highly intuitive, and are inwardly motivated rather than needing external rewards to keep you going. You are often

strong-willed, self-confident, and have definite, well-thought-out opinions on almost any issue. Other people will often come to you for advice and counsel.

1.1.5. Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence

We often talk about "learning by doing." This way of knowing happens through physical movement and through the knowing of our physical body. The body "knows" many things that are not necessarily known by the conscious, logical mind, such as how to ride a bike, how to parallel park a car, dance the waltz, catch a thrown object, maintain balance while walking, and where the keys are on a computer keyboard (Doğan, 1997).

If you have strength in this intelligence area, you tend to have a keen sense of body awareness. You like physical movement, dancing, making and inventing things with your hands, and role-playing. You probably communicate well through body language and other physical gestures. You can often perform a task much better after seeing someone else do it first and then mimicking their actions. You probably like physical games of all kinds, and you like to demonstrate how to do something for someone else. You may find it difficult to sit still for long periods of time and are easily bored or distracted if you are not actively involved in what is going on around you.

1.1.6. Interpersonal Intelligence

This is the person-to-person way of knowing. It is the knowing that happens when we work with and relate to other people, often as part of a team. This way of knowing also asks us to develop a whole range of social skills that are needed for effective person-to-person communication and relating (Demirel, Başbay & Erdem, 2006).

If this person-to-person way of knowing is more developed in you, you learn through personal interactions. You probably have lots of friends, show a great deal of empathy for other people, and exhibit a deep understanding of other points of view. You probably love team activities of all kinds and are a good team member-you "pull your own weight" and often much more! You are sensitive to other people's feelings and ideas, and are good at piggybacking your ideas on others' thoughts. And you are likely skilled at drawing others out in a discussion. You are also probably skilled in conflict resolution, mediation, and finding compromise when people are in radical opposition to each other.

1.1.7. Naturalist Intelligence

The naturalist intelligence involves the full range of knowing that occurs in and through our encounters with the natural world, including our recognition, appreciation, and understanding of the natural environment. It involves such capacities as species discernment, communion with the natural world and its phenomena, and the ability to recognize and classify various flora and fauna (Bümen, 2005).

If the naturalist intelligence is one of your strengths, you have a profound love for the outdoors, animals, plants, and almost any natural object. You are probably fascinated by and noticeably affected by such things as the weather, changing leaves in the fall, the sound of the wind, the warm sun or lack thereof, or an insect in the room. At a young age, you were likely nature collectors, adding such things as bugs, rocks, leaves, seashells, sticks, and so on to your collections. You probably brought home all manner and kinds of stray animals, and today you may have several pets and want more. You tend to have an affinity with and respect for all living beings.

1.1.8. Musical-Rhythmic Intelligence

This is the knowing that happens through sound and vibration. In the original research on the theory of multiple intelligences, this intelligence was called musical-rhythmic intelligence. However, it is not limited to music and rhythm, so it's called auditory-vibrational, for it deals with the whole realm of sound, tones, beats, and vibrational patterns as well as music (Demirel, Başbay & Erdem, 2006).

If you are strong in this intelligence area, you likely have a love of music and rhythmic patterns. You are probably very sensitive to sounds in the environment: the chirp of a cricket, rain on the roof, varying traffic patterns. You may study and work better with music in the background. You can often reproduce a melody or rhythmic pattern after hearing it only once. Various sounds, tones, and rhythms may have a visible effect on you--others can often see a change in facial expressions, body movement, or emotional responses. You probably like to create music, and you enjoy listening to a wide variety of music. You may be skilled at mimicking sounds, language accents, and others' speech patterns, and you can probably readily recognize different musical instruments in a composition.

2. The Principles of Multiple Intelligence Theory

The most basic assumption of the theory of multiple intelligences is that "Every child has the potential to develop in one or more areas." The realization of this basic principle is possible by considering the following principles (Bümen, 2005; Demirel, 1999; Ertürk, 1994; Demirel, Başbay & Erdem, 2006, Useini,2017):

- Every person who is normal from birth has multiple intelligence dimensions.
- There are different levels of proven types of intelligence in every person.
- Each individual has a unique intelligence profile and different intelligence components.
- The development of each intelligence from individual to individual is different.
- All dimensions of intelligence are dynamic.
- All dimensions of intelligence can be defined, developed, and changed.
- All dimensions of intelligence can be improved by supporting or weakened by neglecting.
- Each individual can learn about the dimensions of intelligence and improve their intelligence.
- The development of the intelligence of each individual can be assessed on its own.
- Each dimension of intelligence has a different system in terms of memory, attention, perception, and problem-solving.
- Personal background, culture, and heredity affect the development of intelligence dimensions.
- All dimensions of intelligence are different and a special resource for human self-realization.
- At least one or more of the other intelligence dimensions can be used when using an intelligence dimension.
- Intelligence dimensions can be used for each other's development.
- Intelligence is multifaceted, but in itself it is a whole.

3. Conclusion

The theory of multiple intelligences is a philosophy or theory that originated as Howard Gardner's redefinition of intelligence (Büyükkaragöz, 1997; Demirel, 1999). Multiple intelligence provides a new perspective on human cognition along with environmental and genetic factors. Accordingly, a person uses their intelligence in all the communication and interaction they establish with their environment.

Because the brain has many different working centers and functions, and these functions differ in each person, working independently and separately from each other, these centers also reveal the learning identity and cognitive nature of the individual (Demirel, Başbay & Erdem, 2006). Gardner noted that people exhibit verbal-linguistic, intrapersonal, social, visual-spatial, musical-rhythmic, bodily-kinesthetic, logical-mathematical, naturalist, and related intelligence types.

It is inconceivable that the theory of multiple intelligences, which is a cognitive intelligence theory, does not influence educational programs (Useini, A., 2022). Educational programs are plans covering planned features to be provided to students, appropriate content and learning experiences, and decision-making elements regarding whether these experiences occur in students and how they reflect the educational process (Büyükkaragöz, 1997; Demirel, 1999; Doğan, 1997; Useini,2003).

The theory of multiple intelligences, which can be considered a new window to the human mind, has encompassed the educational program and its elements, influencing the program's entire design. It significantly affects the understanding of program objectives, content, and educational status, emphasizing a process-oriented rather than product-oriented approach in evaluation and assessment (Ertürk, 1994; Bümen, 2005).

4. Recommendations

1. Incorporate Multiple Intelligences in Curriculum Design

Individual is a social being and one of the most important features that distinguish him from other living things is his ability to learn. This situation ensures that the children and young people who are growing up

are in harmony with the society and age in which they live in a healthy and productive way (Rizvançe Matsani & Koca, 2023). Educators should design curricula that address all dimensions of intelligence, allowing students to engage in activities that match their cognitive strengths (Bümen, 2005; Demirel, 1999). This could include project-based learning, hands-on experiments, collaborative exercises, and arts integration.

2. Individualized Learning Approaches

Teachers should assess students' intelligence profiles and provide differentiated instruction tailored to their dominant intelligences (Useini, A., 2025). For example, visual-spatial learners may benefit from diagrams and mind maps, while bodily-kinesthetic learners excel in physical activities (Demirel, Başbay & Erdem, 2006).

3. Teacher Training and Professional Development

Educators should be trained to recognize diverse intelligences in the classroom and implement strategies that support all types of learners, enhancing motivation and engagement.

4. Integration of Interdisciplinary Activities

Lessons should combine multiple intelligences to promote holistic learning—for instance, incorporating music, movement, or storytelling into science or mathematics lessons (Büyükkaragöz, 1997).

5. Assessment Beyond Traditional Testing

Schools should adopt assessment methods that evaluate multiple intelligences, moving beyond standard exams to include portfolios, presentations, performances, and collaborative projects (Ertürk, 1994).

5. Implications

1. Enhanced Student Engagement and Motivation

Recognizing and nurturing students' varied intelligences can increase classroom participation, motivation, and confidence, especially among learners who may struggle in traditional, language- or logic-heavy teaching methods.

2. Promotion of Holistic Education

Multiple intelligences theory emphasizes the development of the whole child, addressing cognitive, emotional, social, and physical growth. This approach supports the cultivation of versatile, well-rounded individuals.

3. Personalized and Inclusive Learning

By acknowledging diverse intelligence profiles, educators can create more inclusive learning environments that accommodate different learning styles and needs, reducing educational inequalities.

4. Curriculum Reform and Innovation

The adoption of multiple intelligences theory may influence the development of modern curricula, encouraging interdisciplinary teaching, active learning, and creative problem-solving approaches.

5. Teacher and School Policy Implications

School administrators and policymakers may need to revise teaching standards, evaluation criteria, and teacher training programs to integrate multiple intelligences into mainstream education.

6. Long-Term Societal Impact

Educating students according to their unique intelligence profiles may result in a workforce better equipped with diverse skills, creativity, problem-solving abilities, and emotional intelligence, contributing to societal progress.

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