The Theory of Multiple Intelligences

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The Foundations of the Theory of Multiple Intelligences

In 1983, almost eighty years after the first intelligence (IQ) tests were developed, a Harvard psychologist named Howard Gardner challenged the commonly help belief that something called "intelligence" could be objectively measured and reduced to a single number or "IQ" score. Saying that our culture had defined intelligence too narrowly, Gardner proposed the existence of at least seven basic intelligences in his book Frames of Mind (Gardner 1983.) He sought to broaden the scope of human potential beyond the confines of the "IQ" score. He seriously questioned the validity of determining an individual's intelligence through the practice of taking an individual out of his normal learning environment and asking him to do isolated tasks he'd never done before – and would probably never choose to do again.

Instead, Gardner suggested that intelligence has more to do with the capacity for problem solving, and fashioning products in a context-rich and natural setting. The concept of intelligence began to lose its mystique and became a functional, reachable reality that could be seen working in people's lives in many ways.

Since 1983, the response has been significant. Continued research is funded by organizations such as the Rockefeller Foundation, the Lilly Endowment and the MacArthur Foundation. This philosophy of education and attitude toward learning and understanding has been incorporated into the philosophy of schools and training programs across the country.

Key Points of Multiple Intelligences
Each person possesses varying capacities of all the Intelligences.
With appropriate encouragement and instruction, most can develop each intelligence to an adequate level.
Intelligences usually work together in complex ways.
There are many ways to be intelligent within each category.
The Intelligences Described

Linguistic Intelligence
The capacity to use words effectively, whether orally (storyteller, orator or politician) or in writing (poet, editor, journalist). This includes being able to manipulate the structures, sounds, meanings and practical uses of language.

Logical Mathematical Intelligence
The capacity to use numbers effectively (mathematician, tax accountant or statistician) and to reason well (scientist, computer programmer, logician). This includes sensitivity to logical patterns and relationships, statements and propositions, and other related abstractions.

Spatial Intelligence
The ability to perceive the visual-spatial world accurately (hunter, scout, guide) and to perform transformations upon these perceptions (interior designer, architect, artist). This intelligence involves sensitivity to color, line, shape, form, space and the relationships between these elements.

Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence
Expertise in using one's whole body to express ideas and feelings (dancer, athlete) and facility in using one's hands to produce or transform things (sculptor, mechanic, surgeon). This intelligence includes specific physical skills such as coordination, balance, dexterity, strength, flexibility and speed.

Musical Intelligence
The capacity to perceive (a music aficionado), discriminate (a music critic), transform (a composer), and express (a performer) musical forms. This includes sensitivity to rhythm, melody or tone color of a musical piece.

Interpersonal Intelligence
The ability to perceive and make distinctions in the moods, intentions, motivations and feelings of other people. This can include sensitivity to facial expressions, voice and gestures. It is the capacity to discriminate among many different types of cues and the ability to respond effectively in some pragmatic way.

Intrapersonal Intelligence
Self-knowledge and the ability to act on the basis of that knowledge. This intelligence includes having an accurate picture of oneself; awareness of inner moods, intentions and motivations; and the capacity for self-discipline and self-esteem.