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Basics of Multiple Intelligences and its Incorporation into Curriculum

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Abstract

In general, there has been a supposition that an intelligent person usually does each task with precision while an unintelligent man often does each with boredom. Exactitude should not only to be labelled with a commonly or traditionally said intelligent person. While performing a task it may be possible that despite of being given an equal instruction and opportunity a said intelligent person may slide down to a said stupid one. No one could be labelled as a truly stupid rather there is a need to peep into his unseen abilities. The cognitive and developmental psychologists who have so far put their effort in recognizing the abilities of an individual, one among them is Howard Gardner who came with a Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI Theory). There are many examples of the children who are unique learners and whose gifts, talents and abilities get ignored in schools. There must be a broadly designed curriculum, and that should be practised in a way that not a single individual may get ignored. Though each curriculum is supposed to look for the all round development of the children, and tries to provide a healthy class room set up where all the children could get opportunities to learn in a free and creative environment. But MI-inspired curriculum could be one of the best practices in this context. This paper is an attempt to understand the basics of multiple intelligences and how important its incorporation into curriculum is.

Key Words: Multiple Intelligences, Theory of Multiple Intelligences, Abilities, Curriculum, MI-Inspired Curriculum.

Introduction

In James Joyce's Ulysses, Stephen says, 'A man of genius makes no mistakes; his errors are volitional and are the portals of discovery'. In general, there has been a supposition that an intelligent person usually does each task with precision while an unintelligent man often does each with boredom. It could be somewhat right that an intelligent would do each with accuracy but it could not be right that whom we call as a stupid be inaccurate in doing each. Precision should not permanently be labelled with a commonly or traditionally said intelligent. In performing a task it may be possible that despite of being given an equal instruction and opportunity a said intelligent may slide down to a said stupid. The fact is that an ability of doing something varies from task to task. The said intelligent can be even a stupid in doing a certain task while for the same the said stupid can be an intelligent. An assumption could be such like that



an individual's intelligence itself varies from task to task while the other could be such like that for doing the same task intelligence varies from man to man. This common argument is meant only for this, no one could be labelled as truly stupid rather there is a need to peep into his unseen abilities. The positive effort in this regard could be that, the word intelligence has been taken for appreciating someone. So there must be an endeavour to quest what intelligence one has. Among the cognitive and developmental psychologists who so far have put their effort in recognizing the abilities of an individual, one is Howard Gardner among them who came with a Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI Theory). This theory came into existence when Gardner did his study on a range of groups including the individuals of diverse culture. His model of intelligence goes with differentiating intelligence into various specific modalities rather than considering it as dominant to a single construct of general intelligence (g). He argues on a wide range of cognitive abilities that bear a weak correlations among them.

Glimpse behind MI Theory and Frames of Mind

Behind establishing the Multiple Intelligences as one of the accepted theories in psychology Gardner put his incessant efforts of the years. This theory was developed during the late 1970's to early 1980's that Gardner presented in his book Frames of Mind (1983). Actually Gardner in his younger days enjoyed involving in arts and even enjoyed piano. When he started studying developmental and cognitive psychology his early goal was as to find where arts can be placed in academic psychology. Soon he moved to some other fascinating works in cognitive psychology after coming across the neurological works of Norman Geschwind. In the year 1975 when he published his fourth book 'The Shattered Mind' which was based on the happenings associated with individuals suffering from various forms of brain damage possibly made him to peep into another initiative of his master work. After this book Gardner thought describing over different human faculties and even wrote an outline with a tentative title 'Kinds of Minds' but the book could not come into existence. Few year later a book named 'Frames of Mind' came on canvas and that can be said as the possible consequence of the earlier seeded 'Kinds of Minds'. Gardner himself wrote in this context as "one could say that this book was never written- and indeed I have forgotten about it for many years. But one could also say that it eventually arose from the dead and became Frames of Mind" (MI after Twenty Years, Gardner).

Comprehensive Description of Gardner's Multiple Intelligences

There were initially seven forms of intelligences which Gardner put in his book Frames of Mind (1983) later he added the eighth one. Now there are eight different types of intelligences viz. linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, naturalistic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and intrapersonal intelligence which we together call as Gardner's multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1999). Less or more all the individuals bag these forms of intelligences.

Linguistic Intelligence: ability of using words efficiently both in oral and written communication. This is an ability to read and comprehend the written text. This is the intelligence that makes an individual able listen to others and to learn what they put into their words. People having this intelligence amazingly carry skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW). Commonly they quickly get language and its syntax. They use to create and even entertain new thing in the field of literature. Poets, writers, journalists, orators are such examples of those who credit to have rich linguistic intelligence. Why people like Kalidas (Sanskrit Litterateur) is known for his Shakuntala, Khaiyam (Omar Khaiyam, A Persian Poet) for his Rubaiyat, Shaw (George



Bernard Shaw, An Irish Playwright) for his plays, Eliot (Essayist T S Eliot) for his criticism, Ghalib (Mirza Ghalib, An Urdu Poet) for his Ghazals, Kuvempu (Kuppali Venkatappa Puttappa, A Kannada Poet) for his poems, Sobati (Krishna Sobati, A Hindi Fiction Writer) for her novels, Shakespeare (William Shakespeare, An English Poet and Playwright) for his sonnets and dramas, Stanley (Sir Henry Morton Stanley, A Welsh Journalist) for his journalistic writings, Azad (Maulana Abul Kalam Azad) for his oratory speeches? Without unfolding the other forms of intelligences they have, simple answer could be that all of these are gifted with this intelligence.

Logical-Mathematical Intelligence: This is the ability of solving problems in a scientific way, and of thinking something logically by using inductive and deductive reasoning. Individuals with this intelligence could discern pattern and relationship. Those who are good at this intelligence go to solve abstract problems; they could easily reach at central ideas of the abstract paintings. They could understand the relationship between objects, like to understand cause-and-effect relationships in an easier way. People with this intelligence not only enjoy solving simple arithmetic into a simpler way but also enjoy complex calculation like calculus. Aristotle, Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein, Richard Kuhn, APJ Abdul Kalam and such other people could be believed of having all forms of intelligences at high but blindly can be recognized as gifted to this one.

Musical Intelligence: This is the ability to understand and express music. They could search and discriminate the musical aspects in any sound. Persons with this intelligence high, generally have sensitivity towards percussions, pitch and melody. These are the people who find cuckoo singing and search melody in chirping of birds. These People can distinguish the various notes of sound. Tansen, Johann Sebastian Bach, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Leonard Rosenman, Akbar Ali Khan, Allauddin Khan, M S Subbulakshmi, Pt. Ravi Shankar, Ustad Bismillah Khan, Bhimsen Joshi, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Mohammad Rafi, Manna Dey, Kishor Kumar, John Williams, Ilaiyaraaja or A. R Rahman and such other great maestros in composing and singing could be said as of having high musical intelligence.

Spatial Intelligence: This is the ability to recognize and perceive visual and fine-grained spatial images. This makes an individual able to think visually and orient spatially. People with this intelligence are usually good at visualising things as this includes sensitivity towards space and its relationship. This is the capacity of observing geography and geometry minutely. These are sensitive towards colour and have good sense on colour combinations. People having this intelligence enjoy sketches and paintings; feel comfort in remembering faces, good in anticipating the moves in chess. Chessmen, Artists, designers, choreographer architects, pilots, sailors and decorators bag this intelligence comparative higher than other forms of intelligences. The Old Guitarist (1903) or Guernica- an anti-war painting (1937) of Pablo Picasso, Monalisa of Leonardo Da Vinci and Mother Teresa of Maqbool F. Hussain could come at canvas because of their spatial intelligence. Michael Jackson in the west or Birju Maharaj in east could get fame for their steps in dancing because of having this amazing intelligence. Pulitzer winning photographer Kevin Carter could be remembered for having this intelligence at high range. Spassky, Fischer, Kasparov or Vishwanathan Anand could be told maestro in anticipating of moves in chess because they are likely to be rich in this form of intelligence.

Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence: This is the ability to use one's own parts of body to solve a problem. This is such a capacity of an individual that makes him capable of doing all physical activities by keeping a good balance. They prefer handiness in work against the work of an idle



sitting. A teacher with good range of such intelligence moves in classroom to interact with all of his students. The people with this intelligence have good sense of timing and direction as well. Athletes, sculptors, dancers, actors, surgeons and mechanics are usually gifted with this intelligence.

Interpersonal Intelligence: This is the ability to interact people with a warm and welcoming behaviour. This is such a capacity of an individual that he understands how other people think and feel. People bagging high degree of this intelligence; usually be capable of reading other's mood and temperament efficiently. By reading the facial expressions and gestures, people with this intelligence even get at an untold reaction of the man before him. People with intelligence enjoy sharing their ideas and feelings. They enjoy working on team projects and like to cooperate with others. Teachers, journalists, marketing executives, politicians and religious leaders etc. belong to this category of intelligence.

Intrapersonal Intelligence: This is the ability to understand and recognize one's own feelings and intensions. This is the capacity to recognize one's own mood, temperament and intentions. People with this intelligence better know their inner self and have an accurate picture of his own goal. These people take proper decision in his life as they know their own weaknesses and strengths. They do what they decide as they usually are self confident. Spiritual leaders, psychologists, saints, therapist and writers are believed to have a remarkable level of this intelligence.

Naturalistic Intelligence: This is the ability to identify nature and make proper distinction among the different components of the natural world like plants, animals and so on. This is the ability of classifying natural objects and differentiating in animal and plant species. People having this intelligence up to a standard level usually enjoy gardening, attend environmental camps, visit zoological parks and enjoy reading books and magazines that capture nature and natural phenomenon. Environmentalist, Biologist, agricultural scientists and farmers etc. are said to have this intelligence at high level.

MI Inspired Curriculum and its Practices

Schools play an important role in shaping the children. But Thomas Armstrong (2000) put in his book 'In Their Own Way' that there are some of the examples of children that are unique learners whose gifts, talents and abilities gets ignored in schools. Schools should come up in the way that every child may properly be identified. For this there must be a curriculum broadly designed, and practised in such a way that not a single individual be ignored. MI inspired curriculum could be one of the best practices in this context. By examining the effect of MI based instruction on creative thinking, it is found that MI theory based instruction significantly improve creative thinking than the traditional method (Abdi & Rostami, 2012). Growing children at their school days usually think over many questions that they find around him and carry these from home to class room and vice versa. Along with formal classroom learning children also learn many things informally and try to utilize them during their class room problems. In solving classroom simple tasks on mathematical calculations like subtraction, addition, multiplication or division sometimes a child apply his communication done with his chocolate seller like after paying two rupees for his four chocolates how much rupee or paisa is being returned to him or in how much rupees he is getting ten chocolates. Sometimes despite having weak verbal skills a child's frankness towards sharing his problems with others benefits him in better performance of his writing. With regard to



having these (multiple intelligences), one can be sounder in one than another but each of these intelligences comes forward to support in performing a task. No two individuals have equal intelligence, in the same way an individual himself does not have all forms of intelligences equally at high level. MI based curriculum could provide differential curricular inputs and transactional strategies accordingly based on individual differences and the forms of intelligences that differ within an individual himself. In words of Howard Gardner "Intelligence is a biological and psychological potential to solve problems and/or create products that are valued in one or more cultural contexts." Large number of schools has incorporated theory of multiple intelligences into their curriculum around the world. Many books have been written so far that cover the significance of this theory for the educational institution and educators itself (Chen, Moran, & Gardner, 2009). MI incorporated curriculum is likely to advise teachers that they must have to know their own strength so the planning of lessons could be done accordingly. MI incorporated curriculum could support teachers in comprehending the individual's ability and potentials, and accordingly they may be guided. MI Model has widely been used by many good teachers even without knowing it properly (Mckenzie, 2005).

Conclusion

Though each curriculum looks for the all round development of the children and tries to provide such a healthy class room set up where all the children could get opportunities to learn in a free and creative environment. But there are some of the examples of children that are unique learners and whose gifts, talents and abilities getting ignored in schools. Campbell (1996) discusses about the responsibility of schools as there students could be helped discovering and developing their own potentials and strengths. MI inspired curriculum is likely to promote that teachers should apply this theory in a way that they find most suitable for their students. If a teacher is capable of evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of their students he easily can find reasons behind the learner's interest or disinterest towards any of the subjects or any of the topics within a specific subject. Many studies reveal that multiple intelligences model is very helpful in increasing interest and decreasing disinterest as well. There is positive change in interest and even achievement is seen by teaching through intelligences (Campbell & Campbell, 1999). Hence MI-incorporated curriculum could be one of the most significant tools to be practised in this regard.

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