Gardner’s Influence in Education

Daisy Roque

St. Edwards University

Learning Processes and Evaluation
Howard Gardner was a Harvard psychologist, most noteworthy for his influence on child development with his theory of multiple intelligences. Through his theory, Gardner placed a strong emphasis on the term intelligence, the ability to acquire and use knowledge, solve problems and reason in the abstract, and adapt to new situations in the environment. Before Gardner there were various forms of intelligence. General intelligence, described by Charles Spearman, was the basic ability that affects performance on all cognitive tests. Fluid intelligence is described as flexible and easily adaptable to new situations and acquires knowledge easily. Crystallized intelligence is culture specific and depends on experience and schooling. Another way of viewing intelligence is through Gardner’s perspective: intelligence made up of eight different traits. (Eggen, 2010)
To further understand Gardner’s theory we need to understand each trait. As stated before Gardner’s theory has eight different traits: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. Linguistic intelligence is being word smart or sensitivity to the meaning and order of words and the varied use of language, an example being putting thoughts into language or writing creatively. Logical-mathematical intelligence, number smart, is the ability to reason logically, particularly in mathematics and quantitative sciences, an example being efficiently solving math problems and solving geometric proofs. Musical intelligence is the understanding and appreciating music, an example being the ability to play a musical instrument or singing. Spatial intelligence is the ability to perceive the visual world accurately, an example being the ability to notice small differences in similar pictures. Kinesthetic intelligence is the ability to skillfully use one’s body such as playing sports. Interpersonal intelligence is the ability to understand other person’s behaviors such as understanding their needs, intentions, or motives. Intrapersonal intelligence is the understanding of one’s own thoughts, moods, and needs. Naturalistic intelligence is the ability to recognize patterns in the physical world. Each trait is remotely different and yet helps form the way people think and understand not only themselves but others as well.

After further understanding each trait I read a study evaluating the teaching of elementary science and technology classes. The purpose of this study was to determine which intelligence traits were being addressed throughout lesson activities in the course. A total of 254 teachers ranging from grades fourth to eighth and having between 1 to 20+ years of experience were studied. The results of the study showed that teachers of all grades used kinesthetic strategies. Teachers in higher grades hardly ever used musical strategies. Fourth and fifth grade teachers did a good job of using different areas of intelligence in their lesson plans. I personally think that the most important result of this study was that it made teachers more aware about using different areas of intelligences in the classroom. (Iflazoglu, 2011).
The next article I read studied which multiple intelligence traits were being addressed in the classroom correlated to primary and secondary teachers teaching style. Multiple Intelligences when applied to the classroom enable teachers to take note of various abilities and interest that students portray and also allow students to have a better learning connection and retention of the lesson. Both primary and secondary teachers in the study utilized and understood the effectiveness using multiple intelligence strategies brought to the classroom. Their teaching styles and choice of strategies differed due to the difference in the subject matter being taught. However the results were the same, focusing on various types of intelligences allows broadening the way students learn and engaging them in different styles. I really liked how it talked about how centers used in a primary classroom are an effective way of addressing the different types of intelligences. This is something that I hope to be able to put into practice in my own classroom. Having eight different centers themed to the different intelligences will allow students to practice all eight of them. (Sulaiman, Hassan, Yi, 2011).

I hope to become a bilingual education teacher, so when I saw the article studying the effects of the multiple intelligences theory had on learning English I was very much intrigued. The study was done among 61 students attending the Islamic Azad University. There was an experiment and controlled group tested. The experimental group was taught using the multiple intelligences theory while the controlled group was taught in a more traditional way. The study proves that by applying MI theory EFL/ESL teachers can address the great diversity in learner, develop learner’s intelligences and “create an individualized learning environment”. Applying the multiple intelligences theory gave students a better attitude about learning English. Learners learn because of their abilities and they are allowed to learn the way they have been taught themselves, learning would be pleasant to them. (Soleimani, Moinzadeh, Kassaian, Ketabi, 2012).
Gardner’s theory states that we all possess multiple intelligences that we combine and use in our own unique ways, IQ tests only measure a small range of these intelligences, each intelligence type is comprised of numerous sub-intelligences, each intelligence develops at its own rate, and rather than focusing on an IQ score, we should focus instead on establishing a cognitive profile. In the study done by Honglin Zhu we see that in China, task-based language teaching has been implemented to teach English. This strategy depicts the multiple intelligences theory. There are several aspects to teaching a language: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating. There is a correlation between task-based learning and multiple intelligences theory in each aspect. If we take listening, for example, task-based learning activities would be listening to English stories, news & songs, dubbing background music for texts, attending lectures, mimicking by means of real objects and pictures, and holding discussions in English. These activities correlate to the following intelligences traits: linguistic, spatial, musical, interpersonal and intrapersonal. The correlation can be seen through all aspects like speaking and reading. The result of this article is that it proves the multiple intelligences theory is a good framework to build lessons for students to be engaged and feel comfortable learning a new language. (Zhu, 2011).
Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences makes a large impact on teaching, his model of intelligence is a great asset for teachers to use and understand to better serve their students. By distinguishing the different types of intelligences in which children learn, teachers receive a better understanding of the way children can be influenced by their surroundings. From my personal experience with READ 2341 I know there is a broad spectrum of learners in a classroom. When we took the multiple intelligence survey it definitely reinforced where my strengths were: kinaesthetic (body smart) and interpersonal (people smart). I ranked very low in musical and linguistic, which makes sense because I can’t read music or play an instrument and sometimes struggle to understand certain words or to express myself. I remember thinking when I came into class with my results and saw that Marla’s were much higher in some traits that I was dumb or took the quiz wrong. After our class discussion I understood that everyone ranked differently and it was okay because everyone has different strengths and weaknesses. Gardner’s influence in early childhood education allows teachers to better understand their student’s and their strengths. By being able to better communicate to students, teachers can set up an environment in the classroom to positively influence students. I hope to teach preschool or kindergarten, which means I will be given the opportunity to set the stage for children’s learning atmosphere. When forming my lesson plans I will have to remind myself that my students have different strengths. In the future I hope if I am able to become a teacher, I will apply Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences into my way and understanding of teaching.
Works Cited


