

Multiple Intelligence Theory :

Do you ever feel intelligent out on the Football pitch or intelligent when you are making things or fixing things at home ? Yet, not so intelligent when it comes to the school exams and trying to remember the stuff you studied for 2 hours the night before. The Multiple Intelligence Theory will explain that very mystery to you. It is about looking at new ways of looking at ourselves.

This modern theory developed by Howard Gardner (1983) now recognizes that there are 8 different types of intelligence. They are all equal and fully valid. They go together in evaluating someone's varying forms of ability. The theory holds that we each have different kinds of intelligence and that the traditional exam system does not give everyone the chance to display their strengths.

The I.Q tests of old, are now seen as narrow and often misleading. They had been testing and documenting a third, at best, of our intelligence quotient. Students who were strong at the 'right' kinds of intelligence excelled in the traditional school system. These traditional I.Q tests are not held up as a good indicator of broad intelligence.

Unfortunately the school system mainly acknowledges ' linguistic ' and ' logical, mathematical intelligence ' and school in turn suits people with those learning styles. The traditional I.Q test put almost all emphasis on only 2 of the 8 forms of intelligence, largely ignoring the other 6.

It is obvious, when we look at the world around us, that doing well in the Leaving Certificate is not a prerequisite for a successful life. We are surrounded by people who have done very well in life without being brilliant at Maths or French. Some Educationalists believe that the Leaving Cert is not meeting the needs of some 40% of our teenagers. Gone are the days of calling someone ' stupid ' that does not fit into the limited and ill-informed theory of intelligence. The wise individual will be aware of the complexity and diverse nature of real and actual intelligence. Very importantly, we all have our preferred ' learning styles ' .

The so-called ' genius ' at school, may not in reality be as broadly intelligent as we were once led to believe. The all-round student will in fact have a far greater advantage and blend of intelligence.

All of us possess some of the 8 different types. Basically put, they are the following:

1. Linguistic intelligence – languages, being articulate, telling stories and jokes.
 2. Logical / mathematical intelligence – mathematicians, scientists,
 3. Spatial intelligence – artists, engineers, architects, designers.
 4. Bodily / kinesthetic intelligence – athletes, footballers, surgeons, craft, dancers.
 5. Musical intelligence – music, sound.
 6. Inter-personal intelligence – dealing with people, their moods and motivations.
 7. Intra-personal intelligence – understanding yourself, your weaknesses, self-assessment.
 8. Naturalist intelligence – gardeners, farmers, weather experts, archaeologists,
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Linguistic intelligence – Some people have the ability to pick up languages quickly. Others are articulate and can easily express ideas they have. Linguistic ability has always been highly valued in the education system. Usually traditional school methods, textbooks and note-taking, suit the learning style of an individual blessed with a strong linguistic intelligence.

Logical / mathematical intelligence – Mathematicians and scientists would be typical examples of people who can think abstractly. Before the ‘ Multiple Intelligence Theory ‘ was developed, this form of intelligence was considered the only real intelligence. It was the ‘raw intellect ‘ that Western culture so highly valued. Exam curricula suited the logical / mathematical mind. This is no longer the case that one form of intelligence is superior. We know better now.

Spatial intelligence – Many people find it easier to express themselves in images rather than words. Artists, engineers, architects, designers as we have already mentioned, are very good examples of this. In the world around us, much of the information we receive is from pictures. Yet as a school subject, art has not always been properly recognized. Students with spatial ability may not write a great essay, but may produce an outstanding photo-montage that expresses perfect understanding of a subject.

Bodily / kinesthetic intelligence – This is the control of body movements and the ability to handle objects skillfully. John O’Shea and Ryan Giggs would have high levels of this intelligence. For too long, physical prowess was seen as something separate from the working of an intelligent mind. Everyone has certain control of his or her movements. We all have agility, balance and grace. To react appropriately when a ball is passed to you on a frantic football pitch demands a lot more than fitness and practice. It demands a complex interplay of problem-solving, spatial awareness, imagination and an understanding of the natural world. It’s not just about sport. A classroom could prove a limiting experience for such a person.

Musical intelligence – Some people have a gift for melody or rhythm, more than words or numbers. Louis Armstrong, the jazz musician grew up in an orphanage with no musical direction, but by the time he was 12 he had learned to play the trumpet.

The ability to perform and compose has been scientifically pinpointed in particular areas of the brain. Some autistic children who have great difficulty talking and interacting with others can perform brilliantly in musical contexts.

Inter-personal intelligence – dealing with people, their moods and motivations.

This intelligence enables people to understand feelings, moods and intentions of others. These people can easily negotiate with others. All of us find our own way to interact with people, but only some of us have a highly developed inter-personal intelligence. Again this intelligence is credited to a specific part of the brain, the area of the frontal lobe. In a classroom situation, pupils with this intelligence learn most when they are interacting with others.

Intra-personal intelligence – understanding yourself so that you can make good decisions about your life. You can use your talents wisely and deal in an effective way with your weaknesses. Constructive self-assessment is very important without being over-critical at the same time. People with this intelligence learn from the experiences in their lives.

Naturalist intelligence – The way we react with our surroundings is an important form of intelligence. Survival is of the utmost concern to mankind. Weather experts play a vital role in our daily lives, as do those that understand the workings of our planet.

Better approaches to education need to be undertaken. Students need to be taught how to learn, rather than told what to learn. Multi-disciplinary learning is central to the 'Multiple Intelligence Theory'. We need minds that can synthesise massive amounts of information, deciding what to use and what to discard. There is very little training in synthesis in our schools. We need minds that can relate to, and respect others. Maybe the workload of the traditional subjects could be reduced to make time for these other necessities. As Howard Gardner said 'trying to climb up school league tables is like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.'