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Introduction

The theory of multiple intelligences is one of the most important and promising developments in education today. It is based on the work of Howard Gardner, a developmental psychologist, who set out to create a new theory of cognition as part of his work at Harvard University. Dr. Gardner's original book about the theory, *Frames of Mind* (1983), defined seven basic intelligences that he feels are as fundamental as those traditionally tested for in standard IQ tests. His work was directed toward psychologists but, to his surprise, was embraced by educators and others who are concerned about the quality of our schools.

Indeed, many educators have jumped on Gardner's bandwagon, and the theory is being implemented in a variety of ways. Curriculum is being rewritten, and teachers are being retrained.

This book will attempt to provide a look at the theory—what it is and how it differs from other definitions of so-called learning styles—and at the implementations—which ones seem to be truly valuable and which are merely trendy.

What Is the Theory of Multiple Intelligences?

The Ultimate Validation of Individual Differences

The theory of multiple intelligences is the ultimate validation of the idea that individual differences are important. Its use in education depends on the recognition of, and respect for, each learner's way, or ways, of learning, as well as each learner's special interests and talents. It not only acknowledges these individual differences for practical purposes, such as teaching and assessment, but also accepts them as normal, okay, and even interesting and valuable.

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Howard Gardner, whose name is synonymous with this theory, indicates that there could be many more intelligences than the seven he has defined, especially in other cultures. As it stands, the list can be rearranged and subdivided. The real purpose of making a list at all is "to make the case for the plurality of intellect" (Gardner, 1993). Whether or not there could be more, the seven intelligences he has given us are a giant step forward into a place where the individual is respected and diversity is cultivated.

The Seven Intelligences

The seven intelligences identified by Gardner (1983) are:

- ◆ Linguistic intelligence
- ◆ Logical-mathematical intelligence
- ◆ Spatial intelligence
- ◆ Musical intelligence
- ◆ Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence
- ◆ Interpersonal intelligence
- ◆ Intrapersonal intelligence

The two intelligences that are listed first are those most commonly recognized and appreciated in our society. They are the ones that assure success on IQ tests and standardized tests because they are the ones those tests were designed to test for in the first place. Students who possess and develop the linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences are virtually assured of success in the traditional school setting. This success is, however, not a good predictor of success in real life (Gardner, 1993).

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Linguistic Intelligence

Linguistic intelligence, which is referred to by some educators and writers as verbal intelligence, is different from the other intelligences because everyone who speaks can be said to possess it at some level. The criteria for more than this basic competence has yet to be set, although it is clear that some people are more linguistically talented than others (Kirschenbaum, 1990). Linguistic intelligence expresses itself in words, both written and oral. People who have this kind of intelligence also have highly developed auditory skills, and they learn by listening. They like to read and write and speak, and they like to play with words. They like words not only for their denotations and connotations but also for their shapes and sounds and for the images they evoke when they are put together in different and unusual ways. Gardner mentions the poet as the exemplar of this kind of intelligence, but it is also found in the crossword puzzle fan or Scrabble addict, as well as in the people on both sides of an acrimonious political debate and in those who make up puns or tell jokes that are plays on words.

People with linguistic intelligence can thrive in the stereotypical academic atmosphere that depends on listening to lectures, taking notes, and being assessed with traditional tests. They are also seen as possessing high levels of the other