Misuses and Applications of Multiple Intelligence Theory

Howard Gardner described these negative and positive applications of his theory. The quotes are his words on the subject.

**Misuses:**

1. **Trying to teach all concepts or subjects using all intelligences:** “There is no point in assuming that every subject can be effectively approached in at least nine ways, and it is a waste and effort to do this.”

2. **Assuming that it is enough just to apply a certain intelligence, no matter how you use it.** “For bodily kinesthetic intelligence, for example, “random muscle movements have nothing to do with the cultivation of the mind.”

3. **Using an intelligence as a background for other activities,** such as playing music while students solve math problems. “The music’s function is unlikely to be different from that of a dripping faucet or humming fan.”

4. **Mixing intelligences with other desirable qualities:** For example, interpersonal intelligence “Is often distorted as a license for cooperative learning, “and intrapersonal intelligence is often distorted as a rationale for self-esteem programs.”

5. **Direct evaluation or even grading of intelligences without regard of context,** “I see little point in grading individuals in terms of how “linguistic” or how “bodily kinesthetic” they are.

**GOOD Uses:**

1. **The cultivation of desired capabilities:** “Schools should cultivate those skills and capabilities that are valued in the community and in the broader society.”

2. **Approaching a concept, subject matter, and discipline in a variety of ways:** Schools try to cover too much. “It makes far more sense to spend a significant amount of time on key concepts, generative ideas, and essential questions and to allow students to become familiar with these notions and their implications.”

3. **The personalization of education:** “At the heart f the MI perspective-in theory and practice-is taking human difference seriously.”