

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 of the MI perspective-in theory and practice-is taking human difference seriously.”

Source: “Reflections on Multiple Intelligences: Myths and Messages,” by H. Gardner, 1998. In A. Woolfolk (ED)., *Readings in Educational Psychology* (2nd ed). (p. 64-66). Boston, Allyn & Bacon. Copyright 1998 by Phi Delta Kappan