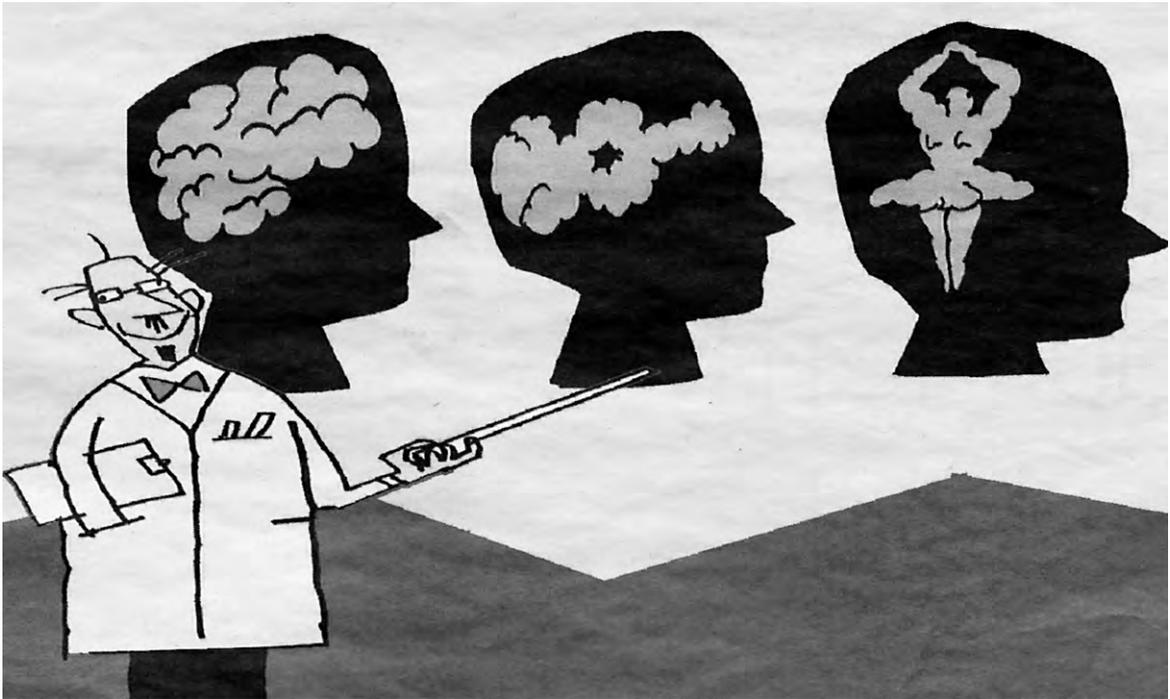


## Tekst 6



# Multiple intelligence? It's a flaky theory

## John White

- 1 'How many of your intelligences have you used today?' This notice at the entrance to an Australian school refers to Howard Gardner's multiple intelligence (MI) theory, which is big in school improvement in Britain and across the world. Gardner claims that there are eight or more intelligences – not just one – including musical, spatial and bodily-kinaesthetic as well as the linguistic and mathematical sorts found in intelligence tests. There is only one problem: the intelligences have no substance.
- 2 This is not just of academic interest. Across the world, pupils are being taught that they are by nature bodily or spatially or interpersonally intelligent. They are becoming

imprisoned in mythical self-perceptions which may well limit their ideas about what they are capable of learning. Granted, MI is a godsend to teachers dealing with children weak on the basics and hampered by thoughts of themselves as “thick”.

- 3 There is an excellent example of this in Channel 4's recent series *The Unteachables*. Teacher of the Year Phil Beadle, faced with a group of disruptive and low-attaining 13-year-olds, managed to get them sitting down long enough to tick their way through an inventory of their various abilities. The verdict was, as he told them, that most were strong in bodily and musical intelligence. He tailored his pedagogy accordingly, teaching punctuation karate-fashion and the concept of the

- adjective via lyrics sung to the guitar.
- 4 It was a riveting piece of teaching, but does the theory behind it hold water? Human beings are intelligent creatures in all sorts of ways, and Gardner is right that there is no reason to privilege abstract areas like language, logic and mathematics. Intelligent behaviour is about flexibility in the ways one reaches one's goals and there are as many types of intelligence as there are types of goal. Whether we take boxing, biology, or bringing up children, each activity brings its own kind of practical judgment.
- 5 Gardner has corralled this variety into eight categories, not by painstakingly examining how people behave, but through his own value judgments about what intellectual competences are important. He is looking for "a reasonably complete gamut of the kinds of abilities valued by human cultures" – and the multiple intelligences are what fit the bill. As he admits, he might well have decided not to call them "intelligences" at all, but "forms of knowledge". This is not psychology at all.
- 6 The further one looks into the theory, the more unsubstantiated it appears. There are eight criteria by which an intelligence is identified, but no reason is given for selecting them. Gardner stirs into his own flaky theory another 18 one about symbols, taken from aesthetics. He also holds that each intelligence unfolds from birth to maturity on the pattern of biological development in plants and animal bodies.
- 7 This is assumed, not argued, and it is also false. As they grow up, children usually become better at understanding other people, but this is

not because some seed of interpersonal intelligence has been genetically implanted in their brains and gradually develops to its full potential. It is because of what they learn through experience, from those around them and the writers they may read.

- 8 Back to Phil Beadle and the thousands of other British teachers sold on MI. Why do they think it true? Do they go along with it because so much of today's teaching world says it delivers the goods? Because it emanates from a Harvard professor who must have done the proper research?

- 9 We don't know. What we do know is that for many of them it is a lifeline. They use it to change pupils' beliefs about themselves, to coax them to learn in non-traditional ways. Does it matter, then, if MI theory leaks like a sieve as long as it works in practice? In other words, does truth matter?

- 10 It should do, to teachers of all people. That aside, is it really the case that MI yields results? Zaak and Grace and the other young "unteachables" may now think of themselves not as thick but as bodily or musically intelligent. That is the sort of person they are. They are made that way, so how could they be expected to be anything else? The danger of this kind of thinking should be obvious – especially to teachers sceptical about the traditional idea of intelligence and its assumptions about mental limitations. MI shares with this idea its determinist orientation, its belief that nature calls most of the shots. In its pluralistic way, it is as constraining as IQ.

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- 1p 15 Which of the following can be concluded about Howard Gardner's MI theory from paragraph 1?
- A It demands a great deal from schools that try to put it into practice.
  - B It improves pupils' overall school performance.
  - C It is widespread but it lacks foundation.
  - D Its principal strength lies in intelligence testing.
- 1p 16 What is the example of Phil Beadle's teaching (paragraph 3) meant to make clear?
- A How abstract concepts should be made concrete for young learners.
  - B How Gardner's theory is used to help motivate difficult pupils.
  - C That gifted teachers need a theory to deal with a challenging educational setting.
  - D That learning difficulties decrease when pupils are set manageable and meaningful tasks.
- 1p 17 Which of the following can be concluded from paragraph 4?
- 1 More than ever, we need intelligence in non-abstract domains.
  - 2 Intelligence is the ability to respond adequately to various tasks.
- A Only 1.
  - B Only 2.
  - C Both 1 and 2.
  - D Neither 1 nor 2.
- 1p 18 Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 6?
- A equally questionable
  - B rather more credible
  - C surprisingly innovative
- 1p 19 What does the writer argue in paragraph 7?
- A Children will learn regardless of the environment in which they grow up.
  - B Emotional development is just as important as intellectual development.
  - C How children develop depends largely on environmental factors.
  - D Interpersonal intelligence is the key to the development of all other forms of intelligence.
- 1p 20 By which of the following could "delivers the goods" (paragraph 8) be replaced?
- A creates better chances for highly intelligent pupils
  - B leads to better school results
  - C opens up new ways of making teaching attractive
- 1p 21 What might be the dangerous effect of the application of the MI theory, according to the last paragraph?
- A That educational theories will no longer be taken seriously by teachers.
  - B That education will be focused exclusively on creative skills.
  - C That pupils will not be stimulated to develop to their full potential.

- 1p 22 “... mythical self-perceptions ...” (paragraph 2).  
In view of the article as a whole, which of the following dictionary definitions of “mythical” fits the context?
- A “based on a traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to explain a practice or belief”
  - B “being of a size that exceeds reality as it can be perceived by the senses”
  - C “embodying the ideals and institutions of a society or segment of society”
  - D “having only an imaginary or unverifiable existence”