

***Frames of Mind*, by Howard Gardner, 1983**

Review by Lisa Abbott

This book by Howard Gardner is a critique of the dominant assumption that human intelligence can be defined and measured by a single number, the IQ score. In contrast, he proposes a new theory of multiple intelligences, which suggests that there are at least seven distinct and independent types of intellectual abilities. These “frames of mind” include:

- Linguistic intelligence (poetry, speech, writing)
- Musical intelligence
- Logical-mathematical intelligence
- Spatial intelligence (art, navigation and orientation, design)
- Bodily intelligence (movement, athleticism)
- Personal intelligence (both interpersonal and self-knowledge)

The author then looks at the role of diverse educational systems in developing specific forms of intelligence while under-developing others. He resists making specific policy recommendations, but suggests that institutions and governments interested in human development take into consideration this broad range of intelligences as they decide how and where to invest educational resources.

The central thesis of the book is not a surprising idea, namely that intelligence should not be reduced to a simple numerical ranking. Most people have observed that individuals have a broad range of abilities and talents. However, Gardner’s detailed exploration of seven distinct areas of intelligence pushes educators and those committed to leadership development to examine our own biases and assumptions. Specifically:

- Which skills and abilities do we consider as evidence of “intelligence?”
- Which skills are we more likely to discount or overlook?
- How can we design training programs and workshops in ways that encourage people with different strengths to learn and grow to their full potential?
- How can we expand our vision of leadership so people with a diverse range of talents – musical as well as artistic as well as linguistic – can see themselves in the picture?

“Multiple intelligence theory posits a small set of human intellectual potentials, perhaps as few as seven in number, of which all individuals are capable by virtue of their membership in the human species. Owing to heredity, early training or in all probability a constant interaction between those factors, some individuals will develop certain intelligences far more than others; but every normal individual should develop each intelligence to some extent, give but modest opportunity to do so.” (p. 278)

“The powers-that-be in the worlds of international development and national sovereignty have become convinced that the ingredients for human progress, success and happiness are closely linked to better educational opportunities for their client citizenry and, particularly, for young individuals.” (p. 368)

“I have here linked two forms of intelligence (interpersonal and intrapersonal)...Intrapersonal intelligence (is) involved chiefly in an individuals examination and knowledge of his own feelings, while the interpersonal intelligence looks outward, toward the behavior, feelings and motivations of others.” (p. 241)

“It is clear to me that the issue of leadership will – indeed must – go beyond multiple intelligences. It will involve capacities not dealt with in this present book – capacities that may be as emotional and social as they are cognitive.” (p. xxv)

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