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Re-visiting Multiple Intelligences

Everyone is a genius, but if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will go through its entire life believing it is stupid. This simple yet profound quote, often credited to renowned physicist, Albert Einstein, speaks volumes about conventional education systems globally. As an inevitable paradigm shift occurred in the mode of delivery of classes, mainly attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face classes are now supplemented by hybrid models of delivery. Many institutions opt to employing blended models as their preferred method of instruction because of the proposed possibility of convenience and safety in extreme circumstances. From the pupil-teacher days to the present blended classes, Trinbagonian educators are continuously grappled with the task of finding innovative strategies to effectively educate the nation's students from pre-school straight through to the tertiary level.

The rigid post-colonial educational system encompassed ancient techniques of "chalk and talk" a teaching strategy where classrooms were teacher centred, and understandably so because of the limitations related to both resources and teaching personnel at that time. This approach was the most feasible in times past, unfortunately it is still often practiced because of its easy of delivery. Undoubtedly, it is a means of convenience to successfully complete the syllabus and get as many students through the system as humanely possible. All is well for students who are capable of mastering rote learning, those who can flaunt the art of memorization and provide their teachers with verbatim discourse. But for the other student, there are a myriad of challenges to this approach.

According to the conventional definitions of intelligence, students who are mathematically and linguistically inclined are destined for excellence. The question is where do students who are incapable of meeting these "standards" of intelligence stand? How challenging it must be to employ strategies virtually to grasp and adhere to every learner's individual needs. Imagine how students must feel when challenged with a curriculum which allows little to no consideration for their particular forte. More now than ever, Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence theory needs to be revisited by educators nationwide. Facilitators are plagued with the plight of finding innovative strategies to efficiently deliver content both face-to-face and virtually while facilitating a range of students with varying intelligences and capabilities. Howard Gardner posits that human in-

telligence is demarcated into ranging modalities and is not merely limited to one specific intelligence which is usually characterized by an individual's intelligence quotient (IQ).

According to Gardner, the intelligence spectrum consists of eight varying types of intelligences including: visual-spatial intelligence, linguistic-verbal intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, body-kinaesthetic intelligence, musical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, and naturalistic intelligence. Undoubtedly, individual human beings excel in different areas. A student's literature forte, may be a problematic task for a mathematically inclined student. Similarly, persons who are logically inclined may struggle with interpersonal activities and relationships. It may be challenging to completely alter traditional examination strategies for a number of reasons, however greater efforts can be made to employ multiple intelligences teaching activities to afford all students sufficient opportunities to amplify their learning achievements. Consideration of the multiple intelligences theory in lesson delivery, allows greater chances for equity within the classroom and by extension the education system at large which contrasts the ancient results cultivated by conventional teacher centred classrooms.

Inclusion of Gardner's multiple intelligences allows facilitators to identify, appreciate and consider individual's strengths. By considering the various intelligences, educators can strive to create an inclusive learning environment providing students with ample opportunities to thrive in activities which coincide with their individualized intelligences. An inclusive learning environment is a student's dream, where he/she is given parameters to shine without confining borders limiting the possibilities of success generally defined by their individual performances. As the world inevitably evolves, regardless of the paradigm shift, inclusive education will always steer in the right direction.

Adopting a multi-intelligence perspective enables customised learning strategies. Teachers may adjust their lessons to fit each student's cognitive level and preferred method of learning which will improve students' comprehension of topics. Employing the multiple intelligence theory in lesson planning promotes students' achievement as they will be well equipped to excel in assigned assessments based on their detailed understanding of what was taught. By tailoring lessons to align with the varying intelligences, students

are afforded equal opportunities to excel whether lessons are delivered virtually or in the physical classroom. Compare this to lessons which specifically appeal to a specific type of intelligence, one can quickly see how many students would be disadvantaged. With that being said, a fish would never be able to climb a tree, but employing multiple intelligences strategies will ensure that we do everything remotely possible to prepare it to swim and “sur-thrive” in open waters.

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