METHODS FOR INTRODUCING HOWARD GARDNER'S THEORY OF MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE IN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

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Abstract

The need for a more holistic approach to management is being widely recognized but there are very few models and approaches which seek to include a holistic approach within the existing management education framework. The selection process for B-schools entrants ensures that the selected few are among the best in a narrow band of criteria believed to be essential for managers and corporate leaders of tomorrow. However, the reality of industry needs would suggest that future leaders need skills beyond those bracketed by the stringent selection process laid down by schools. One way to remedy this is to provide diverse opportunities for learning leadership and entrepreneurial skills based on Dr Howard Gardener's multiple intelligences. It is argued that the use of multiple intelligences in management education would inculcate core competencies and capabilities required by management students when they start practicing management in real life scenarios. The paper further provides methods including rationale, content development and delivery mechanism to teach these intelligences within the academic framework of management schools.

Keywords: *methods, gardner, theory of multiple intelligence, education, management education*

In India, particularly in B schools, the entrance exams such as CAT, XAT and in some cases CMAT test a student's Verbal, Quantitative, Data Interpretation, Critical Reasoning and Analytical abilities. The standards are set very high depending on the institute a student is applying to. It could range from 80% to 98 % scores to ensure the cream of these mindsets get offers for admission. In addition, work experience is considered another critical component that is the deciding factor to gain admission in these temples of Management training. This also means that the students who are weak in the qualifying criteria but may have strengths in other areas simply get turned away.

The obvious danger of using standardized entrance tests, is that we get top notch thinkers skilled in a certain way of thinking, which may not be the characteristics of entrepreneurs and corporate visionaries of the future. It is also noted that these admission criteria are more skewed to ensure that students who get selected will be academically successful in the B school program and keep out those that are likely to perform poorly (Daft, 1979: 48). In another study, referring to the use of the GMAT, a test criteria designed to achieve the same weeding out results, the authors conclude that in todays accelerated global economy, managers need to have an innovative and entrepreneurial attitude but the MBA students admitted based on high GMAT scores are not eager to work hard and take risks- qualities that are essential for successful managers (Dean A Sheperd, Evan J Douglas, Jason R Fitzsimmons 2008). The study further questions whether our MBA programs are biased toward candidates that are less likelyto benefit society than those excluded due to lower qualifying scores.

In an effort to expose future managers to empathy and sensitivity towards the world around them, B schools do mandate social activities that force students to deal with ruralprograms, teaching kids in rural schools and sometimes working with NGO's.Ways of incorporating design thinking practises in the management school to build sensitivity, empathy and creative skills in management schools have also been studied an proposed (Serpes C., Menon G., Springer 2017). But how do we train students in the other qualities of good leaders? Areas like interpersonal, intrapersonal, observation, self-awareness, respecttowards nature, ideation, visualisation, proto typing and abstractions are very critical for management education. These skills and understanding is also hard to teach and achieve in a rigid classroom environment. Skills that are not driven by grades but are based on self-learning and self-discovery as a reward in itself, somehow do not fit into our narrow academic framework.So, there is a critical need to provide B school students with alternate methods to learn leadership, empathy, sustainability, ideation, and compassion, intrapersonal and interpersonal skills and conceptualise methods of delivery and practice out of the formality of graded classroom environment. This led to examining the possibility of using the teaching suggestions of multiple intelligence and the concept of "individualisation" or "personalization" inbetter teaching and learning (Gardner, 1983).

Multiple intelligence theory

The theory of multiple intelligence was first developed in the 80s and had far reaching ramifications (Gardner, D. H, 1983). It was suggested that people have more than the generally accepted understanding of intelligence set by educational institutions- verbal, quantitative and analytical and individuals had their own unique ways in learning and demonstrating their aptitude and intellectual abilities.

Eight intelligenceswere identified at first, followed by the later addition of the ninth intelligence- existential intelligence(Gardner, D.H., 2006). The proposed multiple intelligence model challenges the standardized system of education both in terms of delivering the content and evaluation the students while moving away from the pre dominance of linguistic language based and logical quantitative modes. (Joneja , 2016)

Implications of the theory on educational pedagogy

The implications were that different people had different ways of learning and therefore were intelligent in different ways not generally accepted as "intelligent" by traditional academic benchmarks. So the question is whether we as educators guilty of teaching in ways that appeal to only a narrow margin of able learners.

Further down the line Gardner clarifies his theory with some rumination on his vision for education and learning. The theory was further elaborated with some thought provoking insights on personalisation of learning. It includes individualisation in terms of taking into account the particular abilities, interests, ways of learning, and motivations of the learner (Gardner, 2014). There is more than one way a person can be taught and learn and therefore recall content. Therefore can we as teachers find ways to reach and deliver content that connects with differentially able learners in ways that they can absorb and retail content in a more meaningful way?

The second aspect of learning explored was the principle of pluralisation: are the important ideas, concepts, skills, and theories presented in a number of different ways?(*FrieSkoler,* August 2014). He essentially elaborates about different ways of presenting the content to learners. Some might absorb better with visual aids, some by

a hands on or a practice based method.It is important to understand the subject well to be able to present it in more than a standard way in a learning environment. So how does this affect the way we deliver content to learners in today's world of online learning and MOOCS? It is inferred that "Pluralisation" has always been an option more so today with digitisation and democratisation of media. Even individualisation as a method is now easier than ever, as online channels allow for immense flexibility to personalise and pace learning like the old days when students would have personal tutors to deliver content to suit the learner.Teachers are encouraged to use different teaching methodologies, exercises and engagement activities to reach all students, not just those who excel at linguistic and logical intelligence.Many educators have also spoken about connecting content and subject matter with the student's experience. The onus is on the teacher to put in efforts and come up with varied delivery mechanisms to enable each students to learn keeping in mind the individual characteristic of each student's need "by providing link between the subject matter and the student's developing experience. (Dewey, 1974, p. 205)

Although the multiple intelligence theory is more focussed towards the delivery of key concepts and subject matter, it could also have critical ramifications in terms of content development through developing and learning the various intelligences for a more holistic education.

Content development for learning varied intelligences in a management context

Although it is widely understood that all intelligences are required for holistic development, especially in early pre primary education, the theory and principles of multiple intelligence have to be analyzed further in terms of its direct application in specialized higher education such as management education. How could we practice and learn key management skills using these principles? How do we adapt some of the nine intelligences? How could we convert them into fun ways of learning? Which of these nine intelligences could we develop? Which of these skills would deliverthe shift in character for future managers?How do we provide a learning environment that was flexible and yet had some kind of checks and balances to ensure the learning was successful?

Out of all the nine intelligences proposed, some seemed to offer a better connect with the desired leadership skills required to be imparted to future managers. The possible learning from each of the intelligences was mapped onto the requirements of management education. Three intelligences which topped the list in terms of providing the maximum benefit in terms of developing management abilities were selected to be developed further.

Musical Intelligence: While it seems obvious that it involves the understanding of pitch, rhythm and tones, this intelligence hadthe potential to teach the importance of working together to achieve a common goal. This could be practiced by singing in a choir. The discipline of singing in a choir demanded a group to be split into Sopranos, Altos, Tenors and Bass. For a musical piece to be delivered successfully requires discipline, commitment, and self –effacement to deliver group excellence. It would also teach the importance of commitment and team spirit- qualities that helped build better corporate managers.In addition the playing of a musical instrument and even the practice of listening to music taught pattern recognition and learning by repetition- an essential skill in data analytics, problem solving and mastering a skill.

Interpersonal Intelligence: To deliver learning in this context, the obvious method was to provide opportunities to interact with each other under different circumstances. Theatre was a way to do this allowing multiple roles and diverse situations in an informal out of class setting. This was possible by encouraging play writing and performance competitions based on specific themes that best allowed diverse roles and complex plots. By exploring street theatre there was a further opportunity to learn empathy and social awareness.Theatre also taught participants public speaking, social conversation patter, reading off the body language of others and live script response.These qualities are essential for good leadership.

Naturalistic Intelligence: As managers and corporate leaders, sustainable ideas and practices have become key in corporate philosophy and public image. It embraces an awareness of nature and the issues of climate change and global warming. Some of the ways to bring these issues into focus by practice wasto have participants learn about hydrophonics and grafting by holding training workshops in these areas of knowledge. Learning models of these methods had to be created and demonstrated. Failures were celebrated and used as further learning opportunities. Photography competitions with themes that covered landscapes, animals, birds, and nature helped participants pay attention to these subjects very closely. Sketching and painting classes on subjects of flowers and vegetables were a fun way to get participants to "notice" diverse aspects of nature.

Delivery mechanisms for introducing selected intelligences in management education

While some of these learning modules could be introduced into electives in a classroom governed by grades and forced attendance in keeping with set pedagogical rules, the challenge was to take these opportunities out of the classroom and validate the learning in the absence of these rules that ensured presence and participation but not necessarily learning and recall.

All workshops were conducted without formalised class-room rules. The duration, time and dress codes were open to consensus by participants; Trainers were carefully chosen for their background knowledge, age appropriateness and teaching style; All training modules were "free of charge" to ensure maximum participation; Registration docs were floated and participation was open to mixed disciplines to ensure maximum diversity of specialisations, backgrounds and genders; Every workshop/ training module was designed with a "proof of learning" on completion of the module; Every module was evaluated by the participants on set criteria to elicit a consensus on ways to improve the experience and learning; Clubs and volunteer groups were also formed in areas of music, Visual communication, theatre, dance, and fine arts.

In order to initiate these activities and put them into practice in an academic set up, formalised structural changes were proposed at the management school. First a Centre for Creativity and Innovation was created. The Centre's mandate was to provide diverse opportunities to drive awareness and practice of key skills deemed necessary to leadership. It was decided that workshops and competitions that explore different ways to bring some of these intelligences to life would be offered. These activities are coordinated and conducted through the centre and have become an integral part of the education system.

Conclusion

Entrants into a B school program are strong inVerbal, Quantitative, Data Interpretation, Critical Reasoning and Analytical abilities. The management entrance tests ensure this. If they are to broaden their skills in areas that develop other critical leadership skills which is the critical key to managers of future corporate, they need ways to learn these skills and internalise them through practice. This was done by tapping into a few key intelligences seen relevant to qualities needed for B school skills at this time. Judging from the proof of learning evaluation set down, participants have shown a remarkable response to these activities and have displayed increased competence in the areas covered by the modules. Trainers were told to test participants before and after the engagement and provide feedback. Participants were also encouraged to provide feedback on standard forms that could be tabulated. Storytelling is the next module needed to be explored. Further formal studies may need to be conducted to conclusively prove the co-relation between the learning during these modules and the corporate leadership skills needed for successful managers.

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