Philosophy: Intelligence Theories

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Intelligence is the ability of a person to develop certain cognitive functions to the level of perfection. The cognitive functions include understanding self, understanding ideas, adapting to the environment, utilizing past experiences in future endeavors, problem-solving, and different types of reasoning. General intelligence (or, the g-factor) is a measure of the mental ability that forms the foundation of all types of intelligence or behavior, as put in by Spearman. His theory presents two factors of intelligence, the g-factor and the s-factor, which is the measure of a person’s ability in a specific cognitive area. S-factors are abstract reasoning, spatial skills, verbal comprehension, attention, and memory. The g-factor is the sum of all s-factors. Triarchic theory given by Sternberg stated that intelligence should be considered as a combination of different individual abilities: analytical ( problem-solving), creative (situation-handling), and practical (environment-adapting). In other words, he explains intelligence to be componential (mathematical skills, verbal skills, abstract thinking, and logic), experiential (adjusting to new situations and giving new ideas), contextual (organizing everyday activities) and emotional (managing emotions) 1. IQ-test usually measure componential intelligence.

Gardner proposed that intelligence comprises eight distinct skills or abilities including visual/spatial (visualizing or navigating skills), verbal/linguistic (communicate through efficient use of words), bodily/kinesthetic (control over body and communicate through it in arts and sports), logical/mathematical (being good with numbers, logical reasoning, and deductive analysis), interpersonal (understanding others’ actions, motives, and thoughts), intrapersonal (knowing self), musical (distinguished ear/sense of sound, rhythm, pitch, and timber), and naturalistic (enhanced sensibility toward nature and wayfinding ability) 1.

Individuals with verbal/linguistic intelligence prove to be good orators, writers, teachers, and lawyers. They can memorize extracts from readings and quote those extracts at the right time. Those gifted with logical/mathematical intelligence can play with numbers exquisitely, recognize patterns briskly, and perform computations exceptionally. Bodily/kinesthetic intelligence allows individuals to remember things by doing rather than by hearing or seeing, demonstrate extraordinary physical coordination, and communicate exquisitely through their bodies.

Gardner’s theory is considered by some theorists to be too broad to be used effectively in developing curriculum for students. Others argue that the theory is not based on empirical evidence. Some others state that the theory describes certain traits of the human cognitive abilities, and does not provide a solid base for understanding human intelligence thoroughly.

Reference List/Endnotes

1. Sternberg RJ. *The Triarchic Theory of Successful Intelligence.* The Guilford Press; 2018

2. Luo S. Multiple Intelligences. *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching*. 2018:1-8.