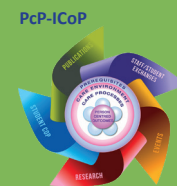


International Practice Development Journal

Online journal of FoNS in association with the IPDC and PcP-ICoP (ISSN 2046-9292)



IDEAS AND INFLUENCES

Into a place where thoughts can bloom: a reflection on how raising awareness of our multiple intelligences can support learning and growth

Grace Cook

Foundation of Nursing Studies, London, England
Email: grace.cook@fons.org

Submitted for publication: 5th April 2023
Accepted for publication: 17th May 2023
Published: 24th May 2023
<https://doi.org/10.19043/ipdj.131.012>

Keywords: Active learning, multiple intelligences, creativity

Introduction

A prerequisite of the Person-centred Practice Framework is ‘knowing self’ (McCance and McCormack, 2021). ‘Knowing self’ includes being aware of our own values and beliefs, and is essential for authentic facilitation. Active learning supports the development of this awareness as it can enable a deeper understanding of our perceptions, emotions, values and beliefs (Dewing and Lynch, 2021). According to those authors, the methodology of active learning has six principles, one of which is: ‘In-depth drawing on the primary senses (including seeing, noticing and observing), and multiple social intelligences’ (2021, p 270). I first became aware of the concept of multiple intelligences a year ago and this article will focus first on what multiple intelligences are and why they are useful to consider. Following this, I will share how I am discovering which of the intelligences I favour and how I can use them to develop knowledge. Finally, I will consider what changes I have made so far.

Multiple intelligences

Gardner (1983) suggested that intelligence was more than just IQ and wanted to make a ‘case for the plurality of intellect’ (Gardner, 1987, p 190). According to Gardner there are eight types of intelligence (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Gardner’s multiple intelligences

Intelligence type	Preferences
Visual-spatial	Images and space
Linguistic-verbal	Words and language
Logical-mathematical	Logic and numbers
Body-kinesthetic	Body movement control
Musical	Music, sound, rhythm
Interpersonal	Other people’s feelings
Intrapersonal	Our own feelings
Naturalistic	Natural environment

Interestingly, Gardner never intended for his theory of multiple intelligences to be used in education and there has been some criticism around its lack of empirical evidence (Cerruti, 2013). However, there is increasing evidence that using multiple intelligences in learning can promote achievement and motivation to learn (Lei et al., 2021), achieve greater cost effectiveness than traditional methods (Durand et al., 2021), improve exam results and support persons to achieve their maximum potential (Sheahan et al., 2015). With this in mind, I wanted to reflect on how I use multiple intelligences to facilitate my own learning and that of others.

My multiple intelligences

When I first read the theory of multiple intelligences, I automatically assumed that I leaned towards linguistic intelligence as I enjoy reading and lectures, and I recognised that this is how I mainly have gathered knowledge previously. It wasn't until I attended the International Practice Development School hosted by the Foundation of Nursing Studies in August 2022 that I began a journey of in-depth reflection on my personal use of multiple intelligences. This was the first time I had the opportunity to really consider my own learning style and take an active part in exploring alternative approaches to learning. This led to numerous discoveries.

Given the time and space to explore, I started to realise that I store a lot of knowledge within me, knowledge that is not immediately accessible to my conscious mind. This lightbulb moment came to me while listening to music. Like many persons who were children in the 1990s, I grew up watching Disney films. *Colours of the Wind*, the theme song from the film *Pocahontas* (Kuhn, 1995) started to play and as I was singing along to myself it hit me – I have never tried to learn the lyrics to these songs. I have never sat down to write down the lyrics as I do when I make notes during lectures or in meetings. Instead, I learned as I sang (and danced). As a result, there are not many Disney songs that I wouldn't be able to sing word for word. If you asked me to, I wouldn't be able to speak them or write them down but I know them. They are a part of me, a part of the knowledge that is within me and that only comes to the surface when I listen to the music.

Having the opportunity during the residential programme to explore my understanding of these intelligences, I discovered that listening to music, movement and being in nature 'unlocks' something in me, helping me to access where knowledge is stored in my body. It helps me to think clearly, helps me to put ideas into words and share these with others. In other words, music, movement and being in nature enhances my linguistic intelligence.

As Dewing (2010, p 23) argues, '*learning about one's own learning*' is just as important as learning itself. How can I continue to develop as a nurse and a facilitator if I do not know myself and how I learn? This new insight has enabled me to really reflect on my work. By walking or running in nature and listening to music I can continue to gain new perspectives and insights and learn from these. For example, when I started writing this article I went for a walk and put some music on and let ideas flow. While doing so, a song was played with the lyrics '*into a place where thoughts can bloom*' (Panic at the Disco, 2008). This brought another lightbulb moment, as it felt that this was what I was trying to share. By using different intelligences, I was creating a space where thoughts could bloom in my conscious mind.



Picture taken in the Magic Garden at Herstmonceux Castle – August 2022

Facilitation of others' learning

This newfound knowledge has also helped me to facilitate the learning of others. First, by having reflective time for myself after facilitation I use my own multiple intelligences to process and reflect on what has gone well, any challenges and any changes I would make to my facilitation in the future. This enables me to keep developing and growing as a facilitator of [resilience-based clinical supervision](#) (RBCS).

It has also enabled me to think outside the box and ensure that I include different ways of learning for others. For example, when facilitating 'check ins' on feelings, I now ensure that I share a variety of options including pictures, words, and songs. This enables participants to consider what helps them identify how they are feeling, something they can then use outside sessions. Similarly with grounding exercises – which, like check-ins, are part of the RBCS process – I employ a variety of approaches that include listening to music, using our five senses in nature and being creative – for example, with origami or drawing.

I also now ensure that individual reflection time is included within group sessions and encourage others to consider how they will use this time to facilitate their own learning.

Finally, I have used multiple intelligences to share my ideas with others through a blog (Cook, 2022) using both a picture and comparison with phenomena in nature to explain my perspective on resilience.

I would therefore like to conclude with an invitation for readers to discover your own multiple intelligences. There are many resources online to support this discovery. However, I would encourage you to explore and discover your own learning. Rather than immediately doing what you have always done, do something different – go for a walk, listen to music, spend time in nature, use pictures, '*paint with the colours of the wind*' (Kuhn, 1995).

References

- Cerruti, C. (2013) Building a functional multiple intelligences theory to advance educational neuroscience. *Frontiers in Psychology*. Vol. 4. Article 950. <https://doi.org.10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00950>.
- Cook, G. (2022) How can we use ecosystems to think about resilience in a different way. *Foundation of Nursing Studies Blog*. Retrieved from: fons.org/common-room/blogs?year=2022&month=11. (Last accessed 17th May 2023).
- Dewing, J. (2010) Moments of movement: active learning and practice development. *Nurse Education in Practice*. Vol. 10. No. 1. pp 22-26. <https://doi.org.10.1016/j.nepr.2009.02.010>.
- Dewing, J. and Lynch, B. (2021) Being an active learner. Chp 28 in McCormack, B., McCance, T., Bulley, C., Brown, D., McMillan, A. and Martin, S. (Eds.) (2021) *Fundamentals of Person-centred Healthcare Practice*. Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Durand, R., Díaz, N. and Sotomayor, D. (2021) Cost-effective evaluation of an educational intervention based on multiple intelligences versus traditional care to improve exclusive breastfeeding in mothers' clubs in Peru. *Investigación y Educación en Enfermería [Research and Education in Nursing]*. Vol. 39. No. 2. E02. <https://doi.org.10.17533/udea.iee.v39n2e02>.
- Gardner, H. (1983) *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. Boston, US: Ingram Publishers.
- Gardner, H. (1987) Beyond the IQ: education and human development. *Harvard Educational Review*. Vol. 57. pp 187-193.
- Kuhn, J. (1995) *Colours of the Wind*. Burbank, US: Walt Disney. Retrieved from: youtube.com/watch?v=O9MvdMqKvpU. (Last accessed 17th May 2023).
- Lei, D., Cheng, J., Chen, C., Huang, K. and Chou, C. (2021) Discussion of teaching with multiple intelligences to corporate employees' learning achievement and learning motivation. *Frontiers in Psychology*. Vol. 12. <https://doi.org.10.3389/fpsyg.2021.770473>.
- McCance, T. and McCormack, B. (2021) The Person-centred Practice Framework. Chp 3 in McCormack, B., McCance T., Bulley, C., Brown, D., McMillan, A. and Martin, S. (Eds.) (2021) *Fundamentals of Person-centred Healthcare Practice*. Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Panic at the Disco (2008) *Nine in the Afternoon*. New York: Decaydance. Retrieved from: youtube.com/watch?v=yCto3PCn8wo. (Last accessed 17th May 2023).
- Sheahan, L., While, A. and Bloomfield, J. (2015) An exploratory trial exploring the use of a multiple intelligences teaching approach (MITA) for teaching clinical skills to first year undergraduate nursing students. *Nurse Education Today*. Vol. 25. No. 12. pp 1148-1154. <https://doi.org.10.1016/j.nedt.2015.05.002>.

Grace Cook (MSc, PgDip, BSc, RMN), Practice Development Facilitator, Foundation of Nursing Studies, London. UK.