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Abstract

Introduction

Howard Gardner is renowned world wide for his work on Multiple Intelligences. Previous to this intelligence had been defined in narrow intellectual terms. He recognised that intelligence is much broader, so he included other skills such as intrapersonal intelligence and musical intelligence. This has meant that we are now able to assess a far wider range of components that may make up intelligence.

In Five Minds for the Future, Howard Gardner again proposes that we need to redefine how we see ourselves and presents the idea that there are five types of mind needed to cope with the challenges we face in the future.

The first is the disciplined mind. He states that we need at least one field of knowledge in which we have an in depth understanding and a sufficient level of expertise. This forms the foundation of all that follows.

The second is the synthesizing mind in which information from different areas is brought together to form a coherent body of knowledge.

The third is the creating mind. It is not just taking existing knowledge and synthesising it, but is having new ideas and linking knowledge in novel ways to create innovative solutions.

The next mind is the respectful mind, where we work in with other people so that differences between people can be accommodated and help bring about higher levels of productivity and understanding. This respectfulness needs to be genuine and not just used as a strategy to get what one wants.
Finally is the ethical mind which requires reflecting on one’s role and actions. It means knowing and living from the core values of your profession and handing on those values to the next generation.

In the respectful mind and ethical mind, issues are less clear and more open to interpretation. Gardner’s Multiple Intelligence concept is sometimes criticized as being more intuitive than empirical and the same could be argued here, especially with these two minds.

Howard Gardner has a strong background in education, so many of his examples relate to the world of academia and the teaching of the younger generation.

Howard Gardner does not specifically relate in any depth to the principles of chaos and complexity, but he does clearly recognise that we need to use all five minds to best cope with the complexities of modern life. It is interesting to see how he sees the five minds being connected. In some ways he presents them as a nested hierarchy where one is gained leading onto the next, but he also stresses the necessity for all five minds to be developed from the beginning. Respect especially, he states, needs to be inculcated from the beginning to ensure that it remains a core part of the development of an individual.

It may have been interesting for Gardner to have explored in more depth the question of what sort of change is likely in the future and how the different minds he proposes will enable us to cope more effectively with the challenges that will arise from our increasingly complex, technological world?

All in all, Howard Gardner presents us with a useful framework for looking at how we can develop our thinking in an holistic way so as to allow us to face the ordeals that await us in the future. This book lays the foundation for good discussion on the types of mind that will see us successfully navigate what could be a very treacherous journey into the 21st century.