

Applying The Theory of Multiple Intelligences to Develop Interpersonal Skills of Young Learners

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Abstract—Introduction: Interpersonal skills are considered as increasingly important that people, including young learners, should develop. Interpersonal skills involve showing sympathy, interacting appropriately, overcoming shyness and fear and managing emotions and feelings. As young learners develop the skills, they will be able to deal with complex problems in learning. Interpersonal skills are the skills produced from the interpersonal intelligence that people have. Gardner (1983) theorizes that there are eight of peoples' multiple intelligences (MI). This paper presents how MI theory can develop the interpersonal skills of people at very young age. It is advisable that teachers apply the MI theory in their classrooms to help young learners achieve interpersonal skills which will in turn facilitate their learning.

Keywords—*interpersonal skills; multiple intelligence; young learners*

I. INTRODUCTION

Young learners are very unique. They are in a state of constant cognitive, social, emotional and physical growth. They also have a limited but growing experience of the world. They are in constant gradual development, continuing to learn through concrete experience, what can be called 'learn through doing'[1]. At this stage, all of their skills, characters and abilities are started to develop. Interpersonal skills are those essential skills involved in dealing with and relating to other people, largely on a one- to-one basis [2]. Katherine Quinn defines interpersonal skill as the ease and comfort of communication between individuals and their associates, seniors' level, juniors' level, clients, and other stakeholders [3]. Quinn believe whether interpersonal skill contains the capability to inspire others, conflict managing, effective communication, and team building. T.Sundararasan and G.Kalaiyaran found that developing interpersonal skills is really important for students for a better learning, expressing themselves to others, personality development and improving academics too [4]. Therefore, there is a need to promote students' interpersonal skills, which because it helps them connect with people and benefits their personality development.

II. METHODS

This article is a systematic review that collects data from relevant indexed journals. These findings are discussed in this theoretical study so as to produce a conclusion.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Young learners

As young learners, children have their own uniqueness and characteristics. They are also very different as individuals with their strength and preferences. The social environment, the cultural context, and, in particular, the influence of peers, teachers, and parents engaged in interactions with children are also major sources of learning and development. As Vygotsky cited in Pinter states that the social environment too has important role to play [5]. In addition, Hunt (1970b, p.4) cited in Bruce et. al determines that growth is an interactive function of the person's level of personality development (or stage) and the environmental condition he encountered [6]. So, there are two factors that contribute to children's growth. Those are the individual's level of personality development and the social environment. Furthermore, Brumfit explained that young learners tend to be keen and enthusiastic learners. They also need a lot of physical movements and doing activities [7].

Based on their ages, Curtain and Dahlberg factor the young learners into four bases. First, pre-school students, with ages 2-4 years (normally still at kindergarten school), secondly, primary students, with ages 5-7 years, thirdly, intermediate students, with ages 8-10 (formally at elementary school), fourthly, Early adolescent students, with ages 11-14 (formally at Junior high school) [8].

Piaget has suggested that children construct knowledge for themselves and that they actively participate in the learning process. This is what he called "concreate operation" stage. The first stage is the stages of sensory-motor intelligence (age 0 to 2 years) [9]. During this stage, children relate to others and the world through senses and movement and are capable of what Piaget called practical intelligence, for example, at the end of this stage they can look for a desired object that vanished from their vision because it was hidden under several covers (i.e., object permanence).

The second stage is the stages of preoperational thought (age 2 to 7 years). This is characterized by the development of language and other forms of representation and rapid conceptual development. Children are capable of mental actions, for example, playing with a doll as if it were a dog (i.e., pretend or symbolic play). This is what Piaget called operations, or actions that are mental, reversible, and governed by rules of transformation. The third stage is the stages of concrete operations (age 7 to 11 years). During these years, the child develops the ability to apply logical

thought to concrete problems. Hands-on, concrete experiences help children understand new concepts and ideas. Using language to exchange information becomes much more important than in earlier stages, as children become more social and less egocentric. And the fourth stage is the stages of formal operations (age 11 to 15 years or older). During this stage, the child's cognitive structures reach their highest level of development. The child becomes able to apply logical reasoning to all classes of problems, including abstract problems either not coming from the child's direct experience or having no concrete referents. A child who is capable of operating at the intellectual domain is also capable of cooperating with others at the social domain, and of disputing or argumentation at the verbal domain. This solidarity among operation, cooperation, and argumentation is a token of Piaget's structural perspective, which lies at the heart of his epistemology and developmental psychology, and has implications for his views on education.

All those explanations about the young learners and their characteristic tells us that as young learners they will do a lot of social interactions. As we can see here, the needs of having good interpersonal skills is very important for them. Hargie defined interpersonal skill as: 'the process whereby the individual implements a set of goal directed, inter-related, situationally appropriate social behaviours which are learned and controlled' [10].

According to T.Sundararasan and G.Kalaiyaran, there are 10 types of interpersonal skills for students need to develop. First is Listening. Students need to pay proper attention to the teacher in the class by active listening. Generally, teachers give notes and important points orally and only if students are listening attentively that they will be able to raise their doubts and ask their teachers [4]. Second is Verbal Communication. Students need to learn to speak/talk with their teachers in order to express themselves. Third is Non-Verbal Communication. This is also a part of communication and it refers to gestures, sign language, facial expressions and body language. Fourth is Teamwork. It includes students participating in group activities and coordination among them to reach their objective/goal. Fifth is Creative Thinking. Throughout their schooling, students are required to work on assignments, projects and also to participate in events/competitions outside school too, so students need to excel their creative thinking to be successful at every level. Sixth is Helping Others/Empathy/Sympathy.

Students need to be understanding of others feelings bet it their teachers, parents, classmates and friends as it helps them build good relations with them and they reciprocally get support from the peers whenever they face any difficulty or need help. Seventh is Humour/Social/ Persuasive. Students need to be socially available to their friends and families as it helps them improve their personality as well as trust in their relationships. Eight is Leadership. Whenever students are required to perform group activities, they need to confidently participate in every task for their team and also be able to lead/direct their team members in the achievement of their goals. Ninth is Patience. Generally, lack of patience makes students give up on their task/studies/work easily. So, it is very important for every student to learn patience to track of their goals. And the last is Public Speaking. Students need to learn public speaking and they can improve this by participating in various activities like debates, group

discussions, recitation, and spelling competitions etc. It improves their confidence and helps them in connecting with people.

Individuals with good interpersonal skills are more likely to improve their ability to determine appropriate self-behavior, cope with undesirable behavior, absorb stress, deal with ambiguity, structure social interaction, share responsibility, and interact more easily with others [11]. Various techniques have been adapted in teaching and learning process. Many theories have influenced and become such things fundamentally constructed the teaching-learning process. One of them is the theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory proposed by Dr. Howard Gardner. Gardner, an American psychologist, suggested that intelligence had no unitary character; rather, it manifested itself in many different ways in different children (Frames of Mind: Theory of Multiple Intelligence [11].

According to Armstrong, Gardner described different types of intelligences. Linguistic Intelligence, refers to the sensitivity to spoken and written language, the ability to learn languages and the capacity to use language to accomplish certain goals. Logical-mathematical Intelligence refers to the capacity to analyse problems logically, carry out mathematical operations and investigate issues scientifically. Musical Intelligence refers to the skill in the performance, composition, and appreciation of musical patterns. Spatial Intelligence refers to the potential to recognize and manipulate the patterns of wide space as well as the patterns of more confined areas. Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence refers to the potential of using one's whole body or parts of the body to solve problems or creating products. Naturalistic Intelligence refers to the expertise in the recognition and classification of the numerous species (flora & fauna) of his or her environment. This intelligence has to do with the potential to think about and understand the natural worlds. It is the ability to recognize and classify plants and animals and other aspects of your environment. Interpersonal Intelligence which refers to a person's capacity to understand the intentions, motivations, desires of other people, and to work effectively with others.

Intrapersonal Intelligence refers to the capacity to understand oneself, to have an effective working model of oneself (including one's own desires, fears and capacities) and to use such information effectively in regulating one's own life. Recently, MI theory has been placed more than just a theory but it has been developed into a teaching and learning model. By using MI theory, teacher would teach students in eight ways and students could learn in many ways.

B. Applying MI Theory to Develop Young Learners' Interpersonal Skills

As explained above that MI Theory is the existence of eight basic intelligences; visual – spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, verbal – linguistic intelligence, logical – mathematical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, bodily kinaesthetic intelligence and naturalist intelligence to his theory. But, the way in which Gardner's theory has been translated into policy and practice has been varying varied. Gardner did not, initially, spell out the implications of his theory for educations in any detail.

Subsequently, he has looked more closely at what the theory might mean for schooling practice. Because of that, the teacher can apply this theory in very broad way, but still in a line with the theory itself.

Fred C. Lunenburg and Melody R. Lunenburg in their study, showing us some teaching activities adopted from MI theory. For Linguistic Intelligence, one of the activities is doing oral activities before writing [12]. These oral activities such as speed chatting, when the teacher prepare one or two simple questions related to the topic of the reading, then ask the class to make two rows facing each other, encourage your learners to ask each other the questions, with time limit is given. Another activity is discussion, by encouraging the learners to have a discussion about the topic of the reading. The teacher prepares four or five sentences with various opinions relating to the reading, then read them out to the class until finally place them around the room. The teacher encourages the learners to go and stand near the opinion that they agree with the most and then ask for their reason. Another example of activities that can be applied for linguistic intelligence are completing crossword puzzles with vocabulary words, playing games like Scrabble, Scrabble, Jr., or Boggle, etc. For Logical-Mathematical Intelligence, some of the activities such as performing scientific experiments, playing math games (like Sudoku puzzles), creating and analysing patterns, designing alphabetic and numeric codes, searching for patterns in the classroom, school, outdoors, and home, and etc. These all activities will guide the learners to interact with others and they will learn in fun way. Next is some activities that can be applied for spatial intelligence. Teachers can foster this intelligence through drawings and verbal and physical imagery. For example, they can encourage the learners to include drawings and pictures with their writing, using color coding for mechanical errors, draw illustrations for their poems, etc. For bodily-kinesthetic Intelligence, there are a lot of activities that can be applied based on the MI theory. The students who are good in kinaesthetic have special harmony between their bodies and their minds. They can control their bodies with grace, expertise, and athleticism. So, the activities that appropriate for them such as creating costumes for role-playing, skits, or simulations, do performing skits or acting out scenes from books, using charades to act out characters in a book, vocabulary words, animals, or other content-area topics, etc. Furthermore, the activities that can be applied for musical intelligence, such as writing their own songs and music, putting original poems to music, and then performing them for the class, singing folk songs and having students write new verses, etc. The learners who are good in musical intelligence have a superior ability to perceive, compose, and/or perform music. The interpersonal intelligence is the intelligence that produce the interpersonal skills. The activities for this intelligence actually can be applied across the other activities for the other intelligences. The examples of the activities are working with cooperative learning groups to design and complete writing projects, using peer groups for brainstorming, revising, and editing, connecting writing activities to the community outside the school, inviting guests to the classroom to tell stories or to talk about writing, etc. And for the Intrapersonal Intelligence, example of the activities such as: writing reflective papers on content-area topics, having students keep personal journals, allowing time for self-reflection about writing, etc. The learners who are

good in this intelligence have a deep awareness of their feelings, ideas, and goals. Finally, the activities that can be applied for naturalist intelligence such as: caring for classroom plants or pets, researching animal habitats and writing essays on the topic, observing natural surroundings, participating in recycling project, etc.

From all these activities that can be applied during the teaching and learning process, the interpersonal skills – that are produced form the interpersonal intelligence in MI theory – actually can be applied in all process of other activities for other intelligences. Even though it is not explicitly mentioned, the interpersonal skills are always there. When students need to do research, observation, discussion, interpretation etc, they will interact, and then give opinion, working together, listen to one and another, and then their interpersonal skills need to be applied. And as mention above, regarding the characteristic of the young learners, they like to do group work or peering, so that they can have interactions with their friends. These all are the correlations between young learners, interpersonal skills and the multiple intelligences theory. And as we can see here, if the school apply the MI theory in their classroom, at the same time, it will facilitate students to develop the student’s interpersonal skills.

IV. CONCLUSION

The MI theory is the theory of the existence of eight intelligences in human beings. Those intelligences are; linguistic intelligence, logical mathematical intelligence, musical intelligence, visual-spatial intelligence, bodily kinaesthetic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, and the last one naturalistic intelligence. Those intelligences recognize the diversity of the learners in their learning styles, learning potentials, etc. Hence, teaching the young learners based on their learning styles will lead to better results.

The application of MI theory is also very much needed because, in this theory, there are a lot of teaching activities that can be done and in the same time it helps the young learners to develop their interpersonal skills. These findings provide input for future research, namely in the field of applying the multiple intelligences theory for the development of young learner interpersonal skills.

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