USING THE MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES THEORY IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

Anca-Olga ANDRONIC[1]
Răzvan-Lucian ANDRONIC[2]

Abstract: *The paper presents a brief overview of the theory of multiple intelligences, focusing on its applications in teaching designing – an essential component of educational management.*
Based on this theory, we have designed and developed a module in a program of continuous training by which teachers from Mehedinți and Sibiu, Romania, accomplished the differentiated planning of a learning unit depending on the types of intelligence described by Howard Gardner (1983).
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1. The theory of multiple intelligences – a short preview

The Theory of Multiple Intelligences was introduced by Howard Earl Gardner through his work Frames *of Mind*: *The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (1983), recently reprinted and including the passage of the first thirty years of application of this theory (Gardner, 2011).

In Gardner's view 'intelligence is a way to solve problems and develop products considered values of at least one culture', involving a broader sense than the one of general intelligence (measured by IQ).

With this approach, he has established eight different and autonomous intelligences, leading to different ways of knowing, understanding and

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[1] "Spiru Haret" University, Romania Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Braşov, pp.pv.razvan.andronic@spiruharet.ro
[2] Spiru Haret" University, Romania Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Braşov, pp.pv.razvan.andronic@spiruharet.ro

learning: verbal / linguistic intelligence – intelligence of words; math / logic intelligence or intelligence of numbers and reason; visual / spatial intelligence or the intelligence of images, drawing and painting; musical-rhythmic intelligence or intelligence of tone, rhythm and timbre; body-kinaesthetic intelligence or intelligence of the whole body; interpersonal intelligence or intelligence of social interaction; intrapersonal intelligence and self-awareness intelligence and, naturalistic intelligence or intelligence of regularities and patterns of behaviour.

Howard Gardner's findings were received with great interest by the education community, the theory being adopted truly at a global scale (Chen, Moran and Gardner, 2009). Until this theory was developed, general intelligence was the only one addressed in educational management: unique, measurable, a predictor of academic success. By contrast with this approach, the theory of multiple intelligences has the following implications in educational management:

- application of multiple intelligences can make teaching and learning more attractive for both teachers and students;
- every student should be encouraged to use their preferred type of intelligence when learning;
- students remember the material better if they learn in their own style. As can be easily ascertained, Romanian education still addresses more to the mathematical and verbal intelligence, neglecting the development of other types described by Gardner;
- there are often children labelled as having learning difficulties or suffering of hyperactivity, but in reality they are not involved in learning through a task suited for their type of intelligence.

2. *Applications in teaching designing*

The theory of multiple intelligences can be successfully used in all stages of educational management. One of the most widespread applications is found in educational designing, a context in which Lucia Gliga and Jody Spiro (2001) describe the following design algorithm from the perspective of the theory of multiple intelligences, applicable in mandatory education:

The first step in drafting the teaching project from the perspective of multiple intelligences is the formulation of questions which can help us discover the opportunities through which we can involve as many intelligences during the class (such as: <<How can I include calculations,

critical thinking, classifications in the work?>>,<< When can I use different rhythms, specific sounds from the ambient, music? >>).

The second step consists of listing the teaching methods and procedures that we use most often, in order to identify the types of intelligences which we operate best through them. We talk primarily about self-evaluation, through which we draw up a list of methods, techniques and procedures commonly used in training and linking them to the categories of intelligence. Also, it is recommended to work with teachers of the same specialization and teachers from other disciplines to observe both individual differences in the choice of working methodology during the class (intra-disciplinary), and those derived from the specific of the subject they teach (interdisciplinary).

The third step is that each teacher systematically records how each form of intelligence was used. A daily and a weekly graphic can be used. After a week, it has to be checked that all the activities stimulated all eight different types of intelligence and adjustments can be made in the teaching methodology.

The last step is to perform designing exercises in order to develop the competence of strategy diversification of instruction through the filter of multiple intelligences. Gliga and Spiro (2001) recommend a gradual introduction to the knowledge and application of differentiation techniques, because the initial training of current teachers has not included, as a rule, the differentiated designing by types of intelligence.

3. The Theory of Multiple Intelligences in teachers' permanent training

Between September 2014 and December 2015, the project called 'DidactIno - Innovative Training for value and performance in a teaching career' was implemented, a project funded by the Regional Operational Programme Human Resources Development, contract code: HRD / 157 /1.3/S/137440 in which Spiru Haret University formed a number of 2678 teachers in compulsory education from Mehedinti and Sibiu counties.

These teachers had to choose from a training offer that included a number of nine programs, including one of educational management, which was completed by 287 teachers. Given the fact that teaching designing based on the theory of multiple intelligences is not a common practice in Romania, we developed within the program of educational management, a training

module based on this specific theoretical approach (Andronic, and Andronic, 2014).

At the end of this module, the students were encouraged to develop a plan of a study unit in which to include elements aimed at stimulating the eight intelligences described by Gardner. These plans were submitted to the evaluation commissions in the final exam for graduation of the permanent training program in educational management, being appreciated at a high level by the committee members (by the ratings given) and also by the students (teachers) who developed them, who appreciated the usefulness of this kind of planning for their future activity.

A recent evaluation of the project's impact on the target group, made through the use of focus group method, showed that the previously described module (based on the theory of multiple intelligences) was rated as one of the most useful modules of those included in the nine programs training (Făinişi, 2015, p.14).

4. Conclusions

The theory of multiple intelligences continues to represent a considerable useful source in educational management, and it is still little used in Romania: 'Even if it is proclaimed the need <<to adapt to the age and individual requirements of students>> it is only addressed to the ideal and not situational level, stating, at best *what* to do and not *how* to do it' (Dragomir, 2013 p.110-111).

As we stated in the previous section, to include a module on teaching planning within a project for permanent training of teachers proved to be a successful initiative, being appreciated as useful both by students and the evaluators of the project.

With the intention to replicate this initiative in other areas, at the time of writing this article, 51 teachers from Braşov county follow the permanent training program in educational management (described above), including the module based on the theory of multiple intelligences.

For this approach not to remain isolated, it would be useful to apply a national generalization of a course for future teachers in secondary education (within their initial training) which would focus on designing teaching, differentiated according to the types of intelligence described by Howard Gardner.

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