

# Applying Multiple Intelligences to Teach Buddhist Doctrines in a Classroom

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**Abstract**—The classroom of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is an ever changing forum for new and innovative thoughts and ideas. With increasing technology and opportunity, students have rapid access to information that only decades ago would have taken weeks to obtain. Unfortunately, new techniques and technology are not the cure for the fundamental problems that have plagued the classroom ever since education was established. Class size has been an issue long debated in academia. While it is difficult to pin point an exact number, it is clear that in this case more does not mean better. By looking into the success and pitfalls of classroom size the true advantages of smaller classes will become clear. Previously, one class was comprised of 50 students. Being seventeen and eighteen- year- old students, sometimes it was quite difficult for them to stay focused. To help them understand and gain much knowledge, a researcher introduced “The Theory of Multiple Intelligence” and this, in fact, enabled students to learn according to their own learning preferences no matter how they were being taught. In this lesson, the researcher designed a cycle of learning activities involving all intelligences so that everyone had equal opportunities to learn.

**Keywords**—Multiple intelligences, role play, performance assessment, formative assessment.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**M**ULTIPLE Intelligences theory is the theory about people and their different types of intelligences which differentiate into specific (primarily sensory) "modalities", rather than seeing intelligence. Gardner articulated seven criteria for a behavior to be considered intelligence. These were that the intelligences showed: potential for brain isolation by brain damage, place in evolutionary history, presence of core operations, susceptibility to encoding (symbolic expression), a distinct developmental progression, the existence of savants, prodigies and other exceptional people, and support from experimental psychology and psychometric findings. Gardner chose eight abilities that are held to meet these criteria: musical-rhythmic, visual-spatial, verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. Gardner later suggested that existential and moral intelligence may also be worthy of inclusion. Although the distinction between intelligences has been set out in great detail, Gardner opposes the idea of labeling learners to a specific intelligence. Each individual possesses a unique blend of all the intelligences. Gardner firmly maintains that the theory of multiple intelligences should "empower learners", not restrict them to one modality of learning. Gardner argues intelligence

is categorized into three primary or overarching categories, those of which are formulated by the abilities. According to Gardner's intelligence is: 1) The ability to create an effective product or offer a service that is valued in a culture, 2) a set of skills that make possibility for a person to solve problems in life, and 3) the potential for finding or creating solutions for problems, which involves gathering new knowledge. In fact, Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory [1] says that all human beings possess "eight intelligences", though not each of people is necessarily strong in all of these. With this reason, this is very challenging and practical to apply this theory in teaching Buddhism. This lesson is geared toward the deeper understanding of Buddhist doctrine of The Four Noble Truths and the various facets that can be applied both inside and outside of the classroom. Students are to summarize Buddhist Doctrine: The Four Noble Truths and can apply in everyday lives.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The researcher realized and felt interested in this theory, then eagerly started to introduce students to it which could have accommodated for this variety of learning styles. To clarify this theory, here comes Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences [2] as following:

- A) Naturalist Intelligence involves the ability to understand nature's symbols, to respect the delicate balance that lets us continue to live. This is much relevant to awareness of nature and how to conserve environment and think positively to this world. The learners must be optimistic to create better place for society to exist harmoniously with environments.
- B) Interpersonal Intelligence consists of the ability to understand, perceive and discriminate between people's moods, feelings, motives, understanding, interacting with others. These students learn through interaction and have many friends, empathy for others, street smarts. This can be designed for group activities, seminars, dialogues. Tools include the telephone, audio conferencing, time and attention from the instructor, video conferencing, writing, computer conferencing, E-mail.
- C) Logical-Mathematical Intelligence consists of detect patterns, reason deductively, think logically, and calculating. The learners think conceptually, abstractly and are able to see and explore patterns and relationships and like to experiment, solve puzzles, ask cosmic questions. All learners can be taught through logic games, investigations, mysteries and need to learn and form concepts before dealing with details.

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- D) Spatial Intelligence is good for physical space, as do architects and sailors. This is supported to be aware of environments as well. The learners like to draw, do jigsaw puzzles, read maps, and daydream. And also can be taught through drawings, verbal and physical imagery. Tools include models, graphics, charts, photographs, drawings, 3-D modelling, video, videoconferencing, television, multimedia, texts with pictures/charts/graphs.
- E) Intrapersonal Intelligence develops from internal resources. It focuses on imagination, patience, discipline, motivation, and a great deal of self-respect. According to this intelligence, it is focused on understanding one's own interests, goals. These learners tend to shy away from others. All in tune are with inner feelings; having wisdom, intuition and motivation, as well as strong confidence and opinions. The learners can be taught through independent study and introspection. Tools include books, creative materials, diaries, privacy and time.
- F) Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence entails the ability to understand the world through the body. This includes ability to manipulate objects, and to carry out dedicate movements using precise control. The core is to use the body effectively, like a dancer or a surgeon. The learners like movement, making things, and touching and communicate well through body language and are taught through physical activity, hands-on learning, and acting out, role playing. Tools include equipment and real objects.
- G) Musical Intelligence makes use of sound to the greatest extent possible. This involves the ability to understand of pitch, rhythm, and timbre. It shows sensitivity to rhythm and sound. The learners love music, but are also sensitive to sounds in atmospheres surrounded also including music in the background. In consideration of method, it can be practical by changing lessons into lyrics, speaking

rhythmically, tapping out time with equipment including musical instruments, music, radio, stereo, and multimedia.

- H) Linguistic Intelligence involves the mastery of language. Having students write, read and role play develops their linguistic intelligence. This is emphasized on using words effectively. These learners have highly developed auditory skills and often think in words. Learners like reading, playing word games, making up poetry or stories and can be taught by encouraging to say and see words, reading books together. Tools include computers, games, multimedia, books, tape recorders, and lecture.

### III. PROCESS OF RESEARCH

In order to assess students for understanding, the qualities of good assessment are important to be considered. The researcher always introduces two assessments to students namely Performance Assessment and Formative Assessment.

#### A. Performance Assessment

The role play project allows students to explore their creativity. Students can choose to make plays funny, serious, or both while still providing adequate information to the reminders of the class. The reason that the researcher always chooses role play as a method in teaching this topic is students are able to engage personally with the material, and the researcher enjoys the fact that students are able to. To assess students fairly and appropriately, students will be rated in group. At first, students form a group of seven and pay close attention because students are fascinated with the material, rather than simply feeling obligated to stay awake and prepare for role play project. Every group has about 10 minutes to do the role play. From this point, students with various intelligences can fully show their capacities. The following rubric is specifically provided for the role play:

TABLE I  
ROLE PLAY RUBRIC

Scoring criteria	4 Excellent	3 Good	2 Need some improvement	1 Poor
<b>Participation</b>	Always willingly focus during group work and presentation.	Usually willingly focus during group work and presentation	Sometimes willingly focus during group work and presentation	Rarely willingly focus during group work and presentation
<b>Remaining on Task</b>	Complete work with the expected timeframe Manage time effectively	Complete work with the expected timeframe	Require some assistance to complete the task	Need to be redirected to the task by teacher or other member of the team
<b>Achievement of purpose</b>	A purpose is clearly established and effectively supported	A purpose is clearly established and generally supported	A purpose is established but may not be supported	A purpose is vaguely established and may not be supported
<b>Group Creativity</b>	Co-operatively work and fully share abilities to one another	Well organized and show abilities clearly	Quite organized yet some mistakes found	Choices demonstrate little awareness and do little to enhance a role play

#### B. Formative Assessment

In addition to assessing from role play, the researcher is supposed to check their understanding and judge the students' success from the mid-term paper. The researcher prefers an essay writing to multiple choices questions since the essay gives students an opportunity to show how effectively students can develop points of view, present ideas logically and clearly, and use language precisely. [3] The rubric below fosters communication between the teacher and students. This method

of assessment allows the facets of the mid-term paper and corresponding point values to be clear to both parties. The students and the teacher also benefit from the assessment's ability to account for the whole as well as its components. Primarily the test is graded with two specific standards in mind. The question is worth to give points. Three from these five points are judged contents and ways in which the students perceive and interact with the question. The remaining points are incorporated grammar and sentence structure.

TABLE II  
RUBRIC FOR MIDTERM EXAMINATION

Criteria	3	2	1	0
<b>Content</b>	Successful completion of all parts of the question as well as creative incorporation of outside knowledge.	Most part of the questions was answered, and above average knowledge of the material was shown.	The bare minimum of information was related, and at times inconclusive.	The answer clearly displayed that the student was unfamiliar with all parts of the question.
<b>Grammar</b>	N/A	Spelling errors are few and do not affect understanding. Word choice is thoughtful and shows mastery of the English language.	Spelling errors are numerous, but do not greatly affect understanding. Word choice is correct and shows knowledge of English	Spelling errors are numerous and effect understanding. Word choice is sometimes incorrect and shows little knowledge of English

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

Having taught this topic for almost 3 years, the researcher found that students gained knowledge from various styles of learning. In the past the theory of multiple intelligences benefited the researcher as a lecturer to create a daily lesson plan for practical use in the classroom. [4] This, in turn, allowed each of students to learn in a way that was associated to ones' strengths.

Step 1. Introduction Stage. The researcher introduced the lesson by giving a brief overview, while allowing students to answer questions and reacting to handouts, pictures, and posters to check their prior knowledge.

Step 2. Setting Group Work. From observation in the first semester, the researcher found that each of the students in a classroom had various styles of learning. This benefited to form the group appropriately and then discussed "Life means suffering". Students enthusiastically shared ideas and worked together to achieve the goal of group. Group work enabled students to understand and discriminate between people's moods, feeling, and motives. The interpersonal intelligence can be fostered through having students work together. The researcher really touched to the sense of humor and fun when they worked happily with their friends; moreover, each group created some pictures or posters related to what they planned for role play. They cut paper, colored pictures, and eventually produced the Bodhi tree, lotus, and many others. Then, students created role plays and enjoyed sharing and creating work with others happily.

Step 3. Performing Role Plays. In this specific role-play, students worked cooperatively with friends and displayed empathy and understanding. This refers to Interpersonal Intelligence. Also, students had the ability to push to the limits both personal and academic knowledge and meld into cohesive learning. Each group performed role plays from the topic provided for 10 minutes.

#### V. DISCUSSION

The Role play, for students, was far more successful. Students were able to engage personally with the material. The researcher enjoyed the fact that students were able to pay close attention because all were fascinated by the material, rather than simply feeling obligated to stay awake. In this specific role-play, students were able to work cooperatively with their friends from different learning styles and had the ability to

push to the limits both personal and academic knowledge and molded into cohesive learning experience. One of the students said that this method had allowed understanding leadership. The conclusion found that teaching without role play showed 40% for their writing abilities while applying the role play to support the lesson showed more than 60% from all students to improve the writing ability. Eventually, applying multiple intelligence theories to teach students is one of the most effective ways that fosters students to discover new things from various styles of learning. Also this benefits to all subjects and allows students to gain knowledge understandingly and easily. [5]

#### VI. SUGGESTION

By no means do students get bored of lesson so long as the researcher applies the role play to teach them. Not only students can show abilities to others but also all are able to understand the lesson deeply and keep retention to apply in their lives. With reference to the result, all students prefer learning with this style to applying direct teaching. This is not strange that applying Multiple Intelligence Theory can be applied to different field of subjects appropriately. Definitely Gardner says that the difference challenges an educational system that assumes that everyone can learn the same materials in the same way and that a uniform, universal measure suffices to test student learning. Indeed, as currently constituted, an educational system is heavily biased toward linguistic modes of instruction and assessment and, to a somewhat lesser degree, toward logical-quantitative modes as well. Gardner argues that a contrasting set of assumptions is more likely to be educationally effective. Students learn in ways that are identifiably distinctive. The broad spectrum of students - and perhaps the society as a whole - would be better served if disciplines could be presented in a numbers of ways and learning could be evaluated through a variety of means."

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