Multiple Intelligences and Curriculum Implementation: Progress, Trends and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the qualitative results of a study that aimed to identify developments, trends and opportunities for innovation in relation to the theory of multiple intelligences applied to the curriculum. A systematic review of the literature was conducted, using a strategy based on the snowball selection technique and a rigorously search strategy. The sample consisted of 244 publications produced between 1983 and 2015. The results obtained allow to identify the advances in terms of teaching models based on the theory; roles and actions that a teacher inspired by this approach applies; educational activities and teaching resources; criteria, strategies and instruments of assessment, and application experiences in real contexts. From this, the state of research is analyzed and evidence-based theoretical elaborations are generated with a clear practical guidance.

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Introduction

Conceiving the development and cognition from a broader, more integrated and comprehensive perspective from the one considered at that time, Gardner (1983) proposed the theory of multiple intelligences (MI), whose definition of intelligence was reformulated in 1999, understanding it as “psychobiological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are valued within that culture” (Gardner, 1999, p. 33). In this sense, it is acknowledged that all intelligence “is activated or not based on the given values of a determined culture, the opportunities available in that culture and the decisions taken by each person, family or teachers, and others” (Pérez-Sánchez & Beltrán-Llera, 2006, p. 149). This idea of a neurobiological support for the theory is argued along the texts that describe it and studies such as the one conducted by Sierra-Fitzgerald and Quevedo-Caicedo (2001), that point to it as “a neurocognitive theory based upon neurological, evolutionary and transcultural testimonies” (p. 1061).
Now, as far as education is concerned, an emphasis has been placed on the benefits of the same regarding the strengthening of teaching-learning processes; promoting a diversity-centered approach; improvement of school-family-community interactions; and inspiration for the creation of effective instruments, projects and experiences (Ferrándiz-García, 2005).

“In the background, the theory of multiple intelligences requires to generate a fundamental shift in the way schools are structured. This gives educators around the world the strong message that all students that show up in schools at the beginning of each day have the right to live experiences that activate and develop all their intelligences. During a typical school day, every student must be exposed to courses, projects or programs that focus on the development of their intelligences and not just in standard verbal and logical skills that for decades have been exalted” (Armstrong, 2009, p. 122).

A curriculum based on this theory integrates the teaching-learning processes and evaluation with the development of the intelligences, resulting in integrated and meaningful processes (Fogarty & Stoehr, 2008). In addition to fostering rich experiences, it constantly provides inputs for a continuous monitoring while also generating a direct involvement with the material and objectives in a contextualized manner (Moran, Kornhaber, & Gardner, 2009).

So well, starting from this, it is important to know about how the theory is applied to curriculums and educational settings and, in that order of ideas, the current project establishes its object of study (Figure 1) and formulates as general objective: identify progress, trends and innovation opportunities regarding the application of MI theory as favorable for implementation processes in the curriculum in educational contexts. Hence, the specific objectives are: (a) describe the components, contributions and implications of the applied theory in school settings; (b) identify the state of affairs regarding pedagogical, didactic and instrumental experiences based on the same, and (c) generate awareness about trends and lines of work to be explored.

**Method**

**Type of study**

The current study, a systematic review of the literature, is defined as “a systematic, explicit and reproducible method to identify, evaluate and synthesize the existing body of work performed and recorded by researchers, academics and professionals” (Fink, 2005, p. 3). This is a “synthesis of the available evidence” as representing a “study of studies” (Manterola, 2009, p. 897).

**Sample**

The sample consists in 244 publications or analysis units, whose inclusion came from the three stages that are described in Figure 2 and whose characteristics are observed in Figure 3.

Publications made between 1983 and 1999 are contemplated as historical synthesis, and from 2000 to 2015, as the main source of the review (current criteria). Out of these, there are 150 publications, which are the input of the quantitative indicators for the original study, taking here the ones with most qualitative contribution.

**Procedure**

**Stages**

The research was conducted through the stages and actions that are described in Figure 4.

**Search strategy and selection criteria**

Figure 5 discloses the search process as well as the contemplated inclusion/exclusion criteria. A snowball bibliographical exploration technique was utilized by making use of descriptors (keywords) and
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