

Creating Extra-Ordinary Teachers: Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom and Beyond

Edited by Branton Shearer and Mike Fleetham *Cromwell Press, 2008, 130 pp., \$29.99 (AU – paperback), ISBN: 9781855393905.*

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This text is an accessible guide to developing ‘extra-ordinary’ teachers. Its main theme is the application of Gardner’s ‘Multiple Intelligences’ to leadership and education. The book is divided into four sections. The inclusion of various exercises and checklists (‘workbook format’) make it a useful resource. Although written in relatively straightforward language, it introduces key psychological constructs (intelligence, disposition, positive psychology, and principles of inclusive education).

Section 1 puts the topic into context and provides some helpful insights into leadership. Section 2 describes Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences (MI) before introducing the assessment scale, and subsequent profile of MI developed by the first author (Branton Shearer). It provides step-by-step applications of the MI theory. The third section focuses on leadership and career planning. The final section explores relevant, practical, and cultural aspects of MI by comparing the UK and US education systems.

The book would have many applications to educational/developmental psychologists: development of leadership (professional and personal), understanding diverse intelligences, and heightened self-awareness of skills and strengths. It would be a valuable asset to schools and other formal education settings. In my opinion, the value of Gardner’s MI theory is recognising that individuals learn in different ways. It is especially worthwhile for those practitioners who promote a shift away from a ‘one size fits all’ approach to schooling.

As a provisional psychologist, I noted the book’s emphatic support of Howard Gardner and the theory of MI. The authors suggest that educational psychologists are ‘devotees of IQ theory and tests’ (p. 80). It appears that they are suggesting that the ‘intelligence wars’ (p. 81) involve a more narrow debate over MI versus ‘traditional’ IQ. This perhaps reflects the speed at which intelligence research and theory develops, given this book was published in 2008. It also raised the question in my mind of the role of educational psychologists in Australia, where this speciality offers much more than ‘IQ theory and tests’. A notable limitation for Australian educational psychologists is the book’s UK and US focus.

I did, nonetheless, think this was a user-friendly, enjoyable read. I’d recommend it to educational psychologists (especially those working with teachers or in leadership). It would be valuable as an ‘adjunct’ resource, rather than as a standard reference.

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