

mi theory and assessment

Multiple Intelligence Theory is all too often simplified or simply misunderstood. Catering to a learner's strength is critical but this theory is not actually about teachers creating an activity for mathematical kids; another for visual kids; and yet another for those who have musical aptitude. Quite frankly, this results in little more than teachers who are exhausted as they create two zillion activities!

MI Theory is actually about receiving, internalizing and expressing learning.

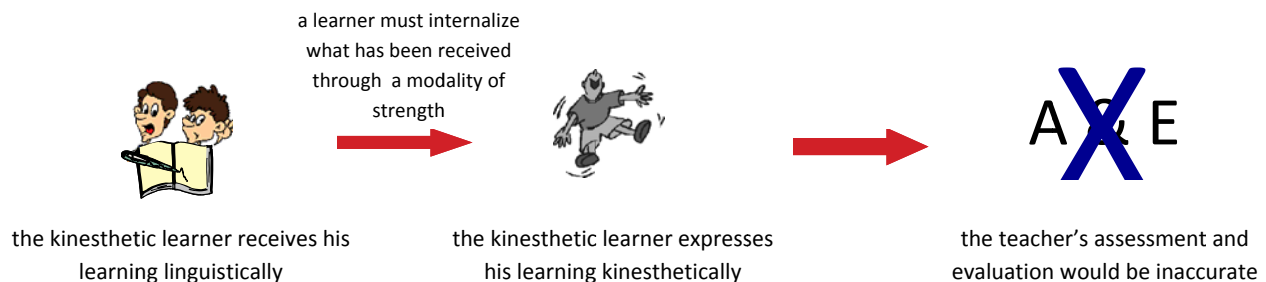
In order to learn anything, a learner must first take in the new learning (receive); he must process the learning (internalize); and finally, he will communicate his knowledge and understanding (expression) in an effort to share what he now knows.

While this may make perfect sense to you, it must be recognized that when it comes to assessment and evaluation, the teacher generally considers only the learner's expression. Very few teachers would consider how this learner took in or received the learning. Fewer yet would ever consider how, or even if, the learner actually internalized it.

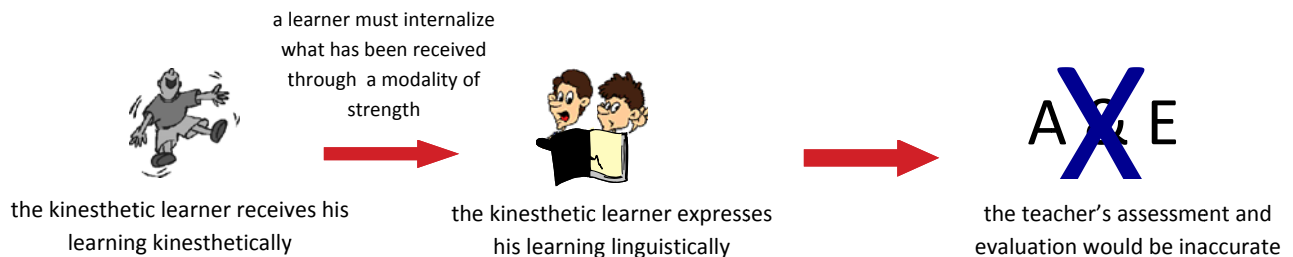
This incomprehensive approach to assessment and evaluation comes with a host of implications. However, when MI Theory is considered in relation to assessment and evaluative practices, the implications are compounded.

In an effort to keep this brief, I will attempt to make my point through a series of annotated images.

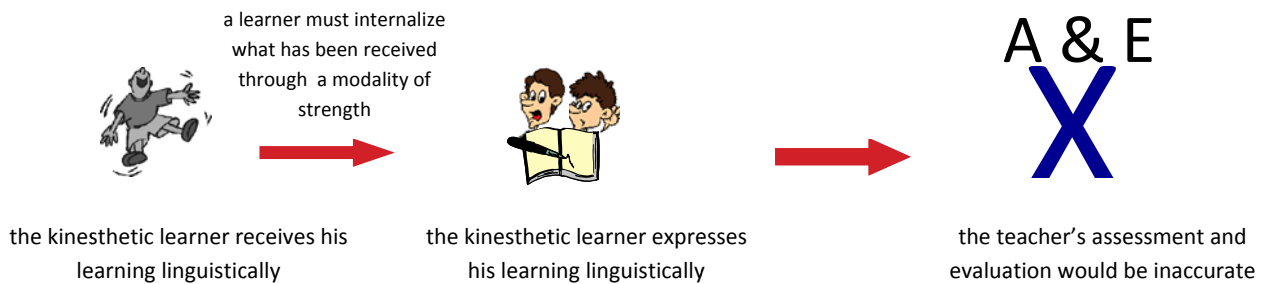
Let's assume you have a learner in your classroom that is strongly kinesthetic in his abilities. This does not mean the child does not have abilities in all areas of *intelligence* - remember - the entire brain is connected. Still, he enjoys kinesthetic experiences and responds well when engaged in such opportunities. The following images will illustrate very common scenarios that must be addressed if we wish to see our learners reach their true potential; AND if we wish our assessment and evaluative practices to be fair, valid, educative and comprehensive!



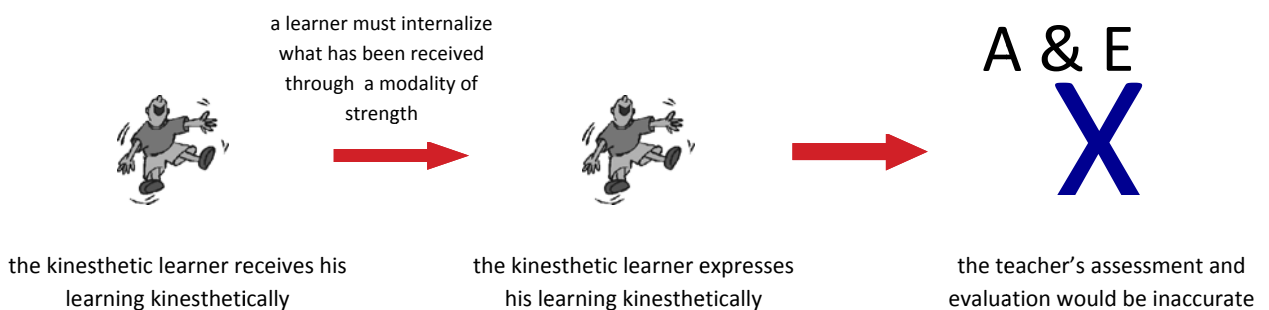
Scenario 1 often leaves the teacher and the learner 'none the wiser'. Because the learner has been given the opportunity to express his new learning through a modality of strength, both the teacher and learner would likely expect this evaluation to be accurate. However, a learner can only express what has been received, and in this scenario, the learner received new information through resources which present difficulty. Consequently, this learner's expression would be limited. If you don't take it in...you can't give it out!



The learner in scenario 2 may know and understand his learning but may be unable to share what this knowledge and understanding, given the expectation that this be done in a linguistic format. This scenario frustrates both the teacher and learner. Both know that the learner knows more...but he can't get it out!



Scenario 3 is perhaps one of the most tragic of examples. The learner is both receiving and expressing through modalities of struggle. What chance for success has the teacher really offered this learner? How many of our students have been diagnosed 'at risk', 'learning disabled', or 'struggling'? What are the implications if a learner has misdiagnosed, labeled unnecessarily and inaccurately? Knowing the effects of stress on academic performance and learning potential, how many learners have been further limited through the very nature of an inaccurate evaluative process?



The learner who has been provided the opportunity to receive, internalize and express in ways that draw upon their strengths and abilities, is the learner who has been assessed and evaluated accurately, fairly, and with validity. The teacher who offers this comprehensive scenario to the learner is the teacher who 'walks the talk' of MI Theory. It is this teacher who empowers the learner to develop 'intelligence' as the solid understanding of new learning is used by the learner to 'solve problems or create products, that are valued within one or more cultural settings.' (Gardner, 1983/2003)

So how does the teacher do it? How does the teacher possibly cater for each individual learner, ensuring that they receive, internalize and express through modalities that are personal? Let's look at thinkbox and thinktower to see how personalization can become a reality.

Multiple Intelligence Theory is not about differentiating through activities...it is about differentiating through the use of tools! It is about enabling and empowering learners to self-select tools to use when they receive, internalize and communicate their learning, that best suit their modalities of strength.

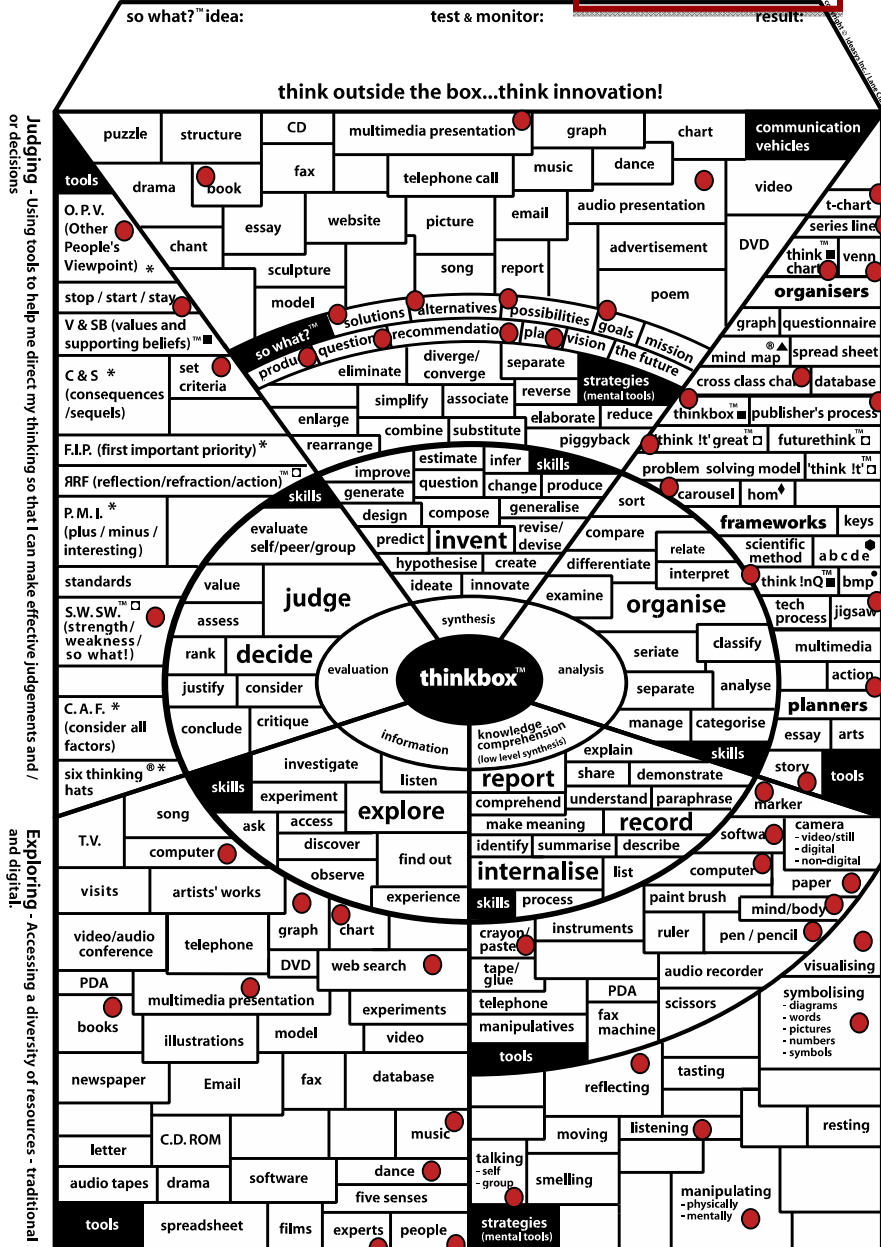
This is where the thinkbox and thinktower thinking frameworks come in. When using these frameworks to plan learning opportunities, a diversity of tools are explicitly outlined so that learners see options for accessing information, internalizing new learning and reporting understanding, analyzing and evaluating learning. This self-selection of tools ensures that learner modalities are catered to, while teacher directed 'must do's' ensure the development of **all** intelligences or modalities. Learners are encouraged to use tools that engage areas of strength before using tools that engage areas of struggle. Both are critical if learners are to develop their true potential.

In the image below(*next page*) you will see how learners identify the tools that they are using to find out (receive), process new learning (internalize), and communicate new knowledge and understanding (express). Note how the learner 'tracks' the modalities catered for within the tools used in their learning.

Inventing - Using tools to invent on two levels - First, I invent my so what?...I solve a problem or invent something new based on my new learning; then I invent a communication vehicle to share my idea with the appropriate audience. I test my idea...if it works...I am an innovator!

What SMARTS will I / did I use?

- math smart
- nature smart
- people smart
- self smart
- deep? smart
- word smart
- picture smart
- movement smart
- music smart
- deep? smart



Judging - Using tools to help me direct my thinking so that I can make effective judgements and / or decisions

Exploring - Accessing a diversity of resources - traditional and digital

Organising - Managing my information, ideas and myself - I can use an organiser to record information, to help me plan, to do my work independently or to help me evaluate. I choose the best tool for the job!

Recording / Reporting - Using a strategy and a tool to help me internalise and understand my new learning so that I can record and report what I know.

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