

Chapter 10

Concepts of Propaganda: Educating Responsible Citizens by Integrating Multiple Intelligences and Learning Styles Into a Smart Learning Environment

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ABSTRACT

Propaganda represents the communication of information or ideas aimed to influence the audience's view and position on subjects. Forms of propaganda have permeated society for centuries and have evolved to become a common tool of warfare. Through the study of propagandistic posters from the two World Wars-era in the proposed project, students assess the powers of words and images in communication and learn to evaluate the messages they encounter, particularly when those messages urge action. The project is designed as a smart learning environment with the use of open educational resources that focuses on the strengths of all types of learners and the improvement of their weaknesses by integrating learner-centered theories and multiple intelligences and learning styles strategies with various combinations and by enhancing the efforts for self-discovery. This aims to promote students' cognitive engagement, which enables them to immerse themselves in in-depth reflective learning processes that are situated in realistic problem-solving tasks.

INTRODUCTION

Encouraging historical thinking in students is not a new idea in history education. Since the turn of the 20th century, many historians and history educators have argued that history consists of not only facts, but also historians' interpretation of those facts, commonly known as the process of historical thinking, or how to analyze and interpret historical evidence, make historical arguments, and engage in historical debates (Holt, 1990; Wineburg, 2001; Bain, 2005; Suh, 2013, p. 135). An important goal of teaching history is to enable students to acquire the habits of mind that characterize what it means to think historically.

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Concepts of Propaganda

Learning history subject requires students to master historical thinking skills which are vital elements for improving academic attainment. The crux of thinking historically is that in order for students to be interested in and truly learn history, they must be involved in it. Research has shown that when students have a low level of learning motivation, this is due to the lack of external motivations to encourage them to be more committed in learning academic subjects (Ahmad et al., 2015).

H. Gardner (1998, p. 23; 2003, p. 9) suggested that classroom instructors can find diverse ways to arouse students' interest in history. He claimed that a historical topic can be introduced to students through a variety of entry points drawing on several intelligences, a historical subject can be made more familiar through the use of analogies and metaphors drawn from diverse domains, and the core ideas of a historical topic can be captured not merely through a single symbolic language but rather through a number of complementary model languages or representations (Gardner, 1998, p. 23). Nowadays, given the means of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), it is more possible to develop critical/historical thinking in students – to see how they can argue, debate, look at data, evaluate sources, study works of art, and so on. Gardner has often used history to illustrate the potential of his model of multiple intelligences, remarking that there is no reason why everyone has to learn history in the same way (Gardner, 1993; Lambert, 1997, p. 52; Cantu, 1999). According to Gardner:

...if you approach a topic from different perspectives, you get a much richer view... (Gardner, 1998) (P. 23).

Gardner proposed a theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) in his book, "Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences" (1983/2003). This book was a direct challenge to the classical view of intelligence. Gardner proposed that there is no single 'intelligence,' but a cluster of eight intellectual abilities, or multiple intelligences and has suggested the possible addition of a ninth known as "existential intelligence." Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences certainly provides one approach that at least attempts to address the multiple ways of learning and understanding that students bring with them to the history classroom. Gardner's theory suggests that individuals may possess many different kinds of intelligence. The intelligences are, Verbal/Linguistic, Logical/Mathematical, Visual/Spatial, Bodily-Kinesthetic, Musical, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Naturalistic, and Existential. Because each student possesses different strengths and weaknesses, according to Gardner, it is recommended that teachers present content in ways that capitalize on as many different intelligences as possible and help students understand their strengths and weaknesses in each (Gardner, 1995, pp. 16-17; Brahams, 1997, p. 7; Cantu, 1999; Armstrong, 2009, pp. 6-7; Giles et al., 2010; Foster, 2013, p. 1). Gardner defined intelligence as:

The ability to solve problems or to create products that are valued within one or more cultural settings (Gardner, 1983/2003) (P. x).

According to Gardner, nearly all major scholars in the area of human cognitive development have agreed on what it means to be 'well developed' adult. Today's studies have not been looking only at the estimate of overall intelligence, but also at the different combination of intelligences (Erkan & Üster, 2012, p. 274). Multiple Intelligences theory seeks to describe how individuals use their intelligences to solve problems and fashion projects. Due to this, Multiple Intelligences theory has been described as:

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