

Five Minds For The Future. Podcast for the Australian Institute of Company Directors Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2007. Keith Suter Interviews Professor Howard Gardner.

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K – Howard, why did you write this book?

H – All over the world people are claiming that education is very important and are talking about the many changes that are taking place on the planet. Yet in the United States and all too many other countries the schools that we have are preparing people for the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century and while professions and business are somewhat more contemporary. I think that there hasn't been a serious stepping back to say what do we really need to have in our minds for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and also what kinds of minds do we want to have.

K – Now you created a stir some time ago with your notion of multiple intelligences. We will come back to this a little later. Are you expecting this book to generate the same degree of controversy?

H- I am not sure that it will generate as much controversy because in my work on intelligence I was attacking something that almost everyone believes which is a single intelligence that you can measure with an IQ test. I was one of the first people to take a body blow to that notion. I have already discovered though that with five minds for the future which was published in April 2007 that there is widespread interest in the book but perhaps less because of it being controversial and more because people haven't thought of some of the issues that I deal with in the book.

K- Lets go back to the question of multiple intelligences. This is where you first came to international prominence when you argued that in fact there is not one measure of intelligence. You argued that you get people who are very good on say visual intelligence or good with words or mathematics or good at moving around while others are good at music for example. Can you take us through the work that you did that lead up to your international recognition for your work on multiple intelligences? What really got you going on that one?

H- I'm a psychologist by training for a decade or more. I work with two different populations – individuals who were once normal but suffered some kind of stroke or other type of brain damage and therefore had certain capacities either destroyed in isolation or spared in isolation or I was also working with young people who were gifted in one area or who had a learning disability in an area. I became convinced that a notion of a single, you might say integrated intelligence where if you have a lot you are good at everything, a little and you are bad at everything just didn't compute with the facts. In my book "Frames Of Mind" (published by Basic Books, ISBN-10\_0465025102) which was my first on multiple intelligences I said, if we take a look at all of the evidence about the brain, about genetics, about different kinds of populations about evolution about what is valued in different cultures we are not going to come up with a single intelligence but with several. I now think that there are eight.

The important point for this conversation is that in my work on intelligence I was writing as a psychologist. I would say that if we really understood how the mind developed and how it is organised we would find it better now to think of seven or eight or nine relatively independent capacities than a single capacity called smart or dumb. That was the psychologists' book. Five minds for the future, which appeared in 2007, is not primarily a psychologist's book it is what I call a policy makers book. To put it sharply, if I was Tsar of education all around the world what are the kinds of minds that I would think it most important to cultivate. Now I realize what happened to the Tsar, it is not an unmixed blessing. I am not really talking in any detail about how these minds work in a psychological sense. I am talking about why they are important and what we might do in an education sense to try to cultivate them.

K- Business leaders have long recognised that a high IQ was no guarantee of a productive or creative employee. This of course has had real impact in terms of human resource work, and many businesses have grasped your ideas enthusiastically. Are you expecting something similar to flow out of this book? Do you expect people to start changing their recruitment policies?

H- I think that the early signs are quite promising and I say that being a congenital pessimist. At the highest executive level people who have lead companies or who are very senior managers and in certain departments especially human resources I think that this book has struck a nerve and so I have had a steady stream of invitations to meet with business groups or to talk to individuals who have responsibilities for hiring, promoting and so on. I was helped by the fact that this was published by Harvard business school, which has an international following, and because of two articles that appeared when the book was launched. One in the Harvard business review, which is widely read and another in a magazine called "strategy in business" so yes, business has shown a lot of interest in the book. I am expecting that educators will as well but it is summertime in the US now so it is a

bit slower on the uptake. On the other hand, I am going tomorrow to a school in the United States that wants to think about how to do its assessments in terms of the five types of minds. I have not even thought of that aspect yet. There is one school that is ahead of me!

K- Lets run through these five minds now so perhaps you would like to take us through the five different categories as you have identified them.

H- The first three are cognitive minds, namely they are to do with thinking and problem solving and my own background is in that.

- 1) The disciplined mind
- 2) The synthesising mind
- 3) The Creative mind.

They are cumulative in that you need a certain amount of discipline to synthesise and a certain amount of synthesising capacity in order to do creative work. So, those are the first three. The last two are in an entirely different key. They are:

- 4) The respectful mind
- 5) The Ethical mind.

Those have to do with our relationships with other human beings and with the kind of world in which we would want to live. Therefore, the book is in two quite different keys.

K- Lets run through them in a little more details. So according to the list we have the disciplined mind, which means the long-term mastery of a specific practice. So for example in the same as someone would get an MBA or a Doctorate in one basic subject.

H- Right or profession or arts or craft and I also play on the word discipline because discipline means working steadily at something and a huge difference between now and fifty years ago is that fifty years ago you could get your training and then rest on your laurels for the next decades but that is true in almost no field any more. The disciplined person has to maintain the discipline of learning and improving steadily so both aspects of discipline are important.

K- Your second mind is called the synthesised mind selecting crucial evidence from all of the vast arrays of information that is available now.

H- I think that the synthesising mind is the one that I am most excited about because we are all deluged with information now and the challenge is what to pay attention to, what to ignore and to pick which episode makes sense to you so that you can communicate it to others. I am excited about it both because I think it is so important and because there has been so little work done. I think that many of

us have been synthesising without knowing. We now need to make it much more explicit. We need to figure out how to help people do a better job.

K- Mind number three, the creative mind. Going beyond existing knowledge or boundaries and coming up with new questions and submissions.

H- There are two points in that. One is that anything nowadays that can be done by machine will be and it will be done better in most cases. The real premium comes to people who can think beyond where the machines are who can raise new questions, think of new projects and ideas and of course do a credible job in responding to those questions and challenges. One of the things that is not widely understood is that you cannot think outside of the box unless you have a box. It is only the people who have gone through that discipline and synthesis who can come up with these types of creation. Creativity changes the way in which other people think and do, we don't sell in art galleries the paintings of five year olds, we look at people who have had the discipline and who know the field and then go ahead and do something new. That is true whether you are talking about law, medicine, managing, accounting or whatever the sphere is.

K- Then the fourth one is when you take us into a different level of understanding because you call it the respectful mind. Responding sympathetically yet constructively, seeking to understand and work with different people. Moving beyond simple tolerance.

H- The respectful mind is one that really begins at birth. As soon as you are born, you begin to notice how people relate to one another. Do they scream at each other, do they hug one another? Do they work together or are they always in conflict. You also note what happens when people look different and have different ideas. All over the world, it is easier to get along with people who are carbon copies of yourself. The real test for respect is how you deal with individuals who don't have the same kind of background. I remember when I was in Sydney I went to the museum of tolerance. There is a whole history of how individuals relate when they come from different backgrounds. In any society when we aren't all clones of one another setting, an atmosphere of respect is essential and yet we are not very good at doing it. This starts from day one.

K- Finally the ethical mind. Extracting from experience in order to do good work. Good citizenship.

H- The ethical mind is one that I have been working on trying to understand for the last 12 years or so as part of what you referred to as the good work project. This is not the mind that say a five year old could understand. It is more abstract. It says, I am a worker in whatever field, and I may have rights but what are my responsibilities and not just what do I have to do to obey the law but what do I have to do to make the work environment and to make the product better. To

improve the world rather than to simply exploit it. Similarly, we are not just workers we are citizens. We are citizens of our community, of our region and now of our globalised planet and again people have no problem in talking about rights but what are my responsibilities. Whether it has to do with how you communicate to other people, what car you drive or how you vote. Are you simply promoting your own self interest or are you thinking about what the world would be like if everybody behaved the way you did. I fear that unless ethical considerations take much more centrality than in the past. The world will be destroyed either by nuclear weapons or by global warming. Clearly, this type of intelligence doesn't just depend upon schools; it depends upon communities, the working environment, political leaders.

K- Listening to this list are you asking for the impossible? Can you think of anyone who is a good example of all of these types of intelligence?

H- Well, I think that people whom I admire both historically and contemporarily would score well in these areas. People like Jonas Salk (American Biologist who developed a Polio vaccine) and Rachel Carson (marine biologist and writer of the book "A Silent Spring" which kick started the environmental movement). I am also involved in a TV series called extraordinary minds at work TV series and I try to select people who exemplify these types of minds. Yoyo mau the chellist is one mind featured; I know him personally and find that he has the aggregate of these minds. It is also useful to learn from people who have some of those minds and not others, in the book I have a section for each mind, which I call the "no cigar" section, which is about people who feign having these kinds of minds, but don't really do so. These people respect people in power but who disrespect people who they have power over.

K- Getting back to what you would do if you were the education Tsar. Obviously, the disciplined mind is quite straightforward. You could instruct your schoolteachers or university academics to continue their work on particular disciplines.

H- I would interrupt for a second. A lot of what goes on in schools even up to university level is what I call subject matter rather than discipline knowledge. Subject matter means lots of information and facts, which you can easily test. This is why I said before that schools are focusing on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Anywhere you go you can find information, facts and background data. Discipline is a way of thinking. What does it mean to think historically or scientifically? To think like a lawyer or a doctor? That is the heart of the discipline and I don't think we do as good a job on that. We teach lots of stuff.

K- Well, I was thinking earlier on that perhaps you wanted to have four reforms instead of five but now it looks like you want five! What would you do to go about reorganizing Harvard for example in terms of producing graduates that produce these five requirements? How would you create a standard Harvard businessperson with these five minds? Do you want to go somewhere different from just say, a course on ethics?

H- That is a very big question. I will start by quoting Charles Handy who is a very well known education and business authority who said to me some years ago how you can train discipline synthesising and respect but that you have to select for ethics and creativity. Now I don't think that Charles is necessarily correct but I think it is important to say that by the time you have people entering at the professional level, at university whether they are 20 or 25, if people are unethical, the notion that you are going to change them is pretty optimistic. Perhaps we should be looking for people who have already established that they know the difference between what helps them and what helps the broader society. But that said, at whatever level we are at the most important thing is the role models around you, not what they say but what they do and to be blunt about it the sanctions positive and negative for people who either embody these kinds of minds or don't. If you have faculty members who are plagiarising and they aren't chastised or fired, you can't be surprised if students are plagiarising. Therefore, I think it is the role models that the institution has which is the most important lesson. Beyond that, I think things like synthesising can be taught and nurtured much more than they have been in the past. I am continuing to work on this issue. On the issue of creativity, the notion of what you can do alone and what you can do with other people is a very important thought line that hasn't been explored enough and certainly with respect to the ethical issues, issues of respect should be judged on not how the junior faculty treats the Dean but how the Dean relates to the people who clean the rooms and serve in the dining room. Therefore, going back to the question, I would begin with the atmosphere of the whole place. As an educator I can go in a K-12 school and within minutes can tell if there is a respectful atmosphere or not. If I am treated like too much of a dignitary, I tend to draw the opposite conclusion that this is a place that doesn't treat people like human beings based on what they deserve but rather goes by reputation or by flattery, which to me are not good kinds of indices.

K- So it is a very revolutionary book isn't it. In order to implement your reforms we would have to see an overhaul in the way that educational institutions are structured and how they behave.

H- Well I am interested to hear you put it this way. I guess when speaking honestly that when I wrote the book it seemed like most of these things were reasonable and that everyone ought to ascend to them, I compared it to the intelligence book which was more provocative or incendiary but what you are pointing out is that even though people might get notional ascent to what I am saying but when it actually came to trying to realize these things it could be revolutionary and you have convinced me that the book is more turbulent than what I thought in writing it.

K- Well let's look now at the implications for company directors. What are the implications for an Australian company director in picking up the book do you think.

H- I think that any person in a leadership position will automatically think about himself or herself and which of the areas are they strong or weak in. They will think about their hiring and promoting apparatus within the company. How do they select people? Are there tests for it? What sorts of things do you look for and then when you want to promote people what kind of factors do you impress on? I would be very surprised if everybody didn't read the book in that spirit. To the extent that if you are in a leadership role, the issue is not do you have all five kinds of minds but rather if you don't what do you do about it. I think that it is perfectly reasonable to find people to fulfil some of these roles outside of the leader. On the other hand, if you wanted to become a better synthesiser for example, there would be things that you can do. Returning to the selection and promoting roles one thing, which is not done enough by individuals in any kind of setting, is to see what we in psychology call the zone of proximal development. That is, when two people tend to perform at the same sort of level but you give both of them some help over some time and you will see which one gets better quickly and see who makes good mistakes verses the person who makes the same mistakes over and over. So, to my mind to give somebody some information and say synthesise this may be an unreasonable request if they have never done this before. To have someone go and do it and over time give them some pointers and feedback, that to me is a better way to make decisions about placement. When it comes to the promotion or moving of people, I think that the biggest mistake is when people say "Jones is good in A so he will be good in B and C". These are perhaps not revolutionary but they are sensible ideas to keep in mind.

People always ask for tests in these things but you are better to judge these things in context to the task rather than in an abstract test scenario.

K- would you then, as a sequel produce a type of workbook so that people who are attracted to this can go onto the workbook and develop their own mind in these five categories?

H- You are not the first person to suggest that. At present, I want to sit back and see how people use or misuse this. In the case of multiple intelligences, I actually waited ten years before becoming involved myself in any type of curricula. Meanwhile there were hundreds of people around the world who produced their own material, some of which I liked and some I didn't. I think in the case of Five Minds for the Future, I am more likely to take a hand earlier on. The ink is hardly dry though so I want to see how it goes.

K- I think that there would be a lot of interest to help boards select CEO's based on these five minds.

H- We will take that under advisement as they say!