

Importance of applying Multiple Intelligence Theory in Bangladeshi Schools

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the importance of Multiple Intelligence Theory in Bangladeshi schools. In Bangladesh most of the schools does not have a MI theory based education system. A lot of teachers support an MI theory based education system in our country and they are very much interested to apply this theory in their classes but due to certain impediments they cannot. This report studies the opinion and general views of tertiary level students from different universities of Bangladesh. Research findings indicate that both students and teachers realize the necessity of an MI theory based education system and they agreed to imply this in our schools. On the other way most of the school authorities are not resourceful enough to facilitate their education system with MI theory and more importantly their lack of willingness also stands as an obstacle in this issue. As a result the entire teaching-learning process is being affected along with the teachers and the students. Eventually the classroom system remains inside the shell of the traditional education system. This thesis concludes some of the reflections of both students and teachers to justify their real perception about this issue.

Declaration

I certify that the work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, wherever contributions of other sources and information have been used, they have been acknowledged. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in a whole or part, for a degree or award at this or any other institution

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
Declaration.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	
1.1 Background of the research.....	
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	
2.1. Theories of Multiple Intelligence.....	
2.1 Linguistic Intelligence.....	
2.2. Logical-Mathematical Intelligence.....	
2.3 Musical Intelligence.....	
2.4 Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence.....	
2.5 Spatial/Visual Intelligence.....	
2.6. Interpersonal Intelligence.....	
2.7. Intrapersonal Intelligence.....	
2.8 Naturalist Intelligence.....	
Chapter 3: Research Design.....	
3.1. Objectives of the Research.....	
3.2. Research Questions.....	
3.3 Significance of the Research	
3.4 Methodology.....	
3.4.1 The Instrument.....	
3.4.2 The Participants	
3.4.3 Procedure.....	
3.4.4 Method of Analysis.....	
3.5 Limitations of the research.....	

Chapter4: Research Findings and

Analysis.....

Chapter 5:

Conclusion

Work cites

List of Tables and

figures.....

Figure

1.....

Table 1.....

Table 2.....

Table 3.....

Table 4.....

Table 5.....

Chapter One

Introduction:

“Nature never repeats herself, and the possibilities of one human soul will never be found in another.” - Elizabeth Cady Stanton

This famous quote by Stanton says about the uniqueness of every human being.

Everything about every human being is different than the other. We should appreciate their uniqueness by providing necessary ways to show their potential. There is a famous saying by Albert Einstein: “Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.”

Similarly, in a classroom there must be different types of students. Their style of learning and approaching is also different. For example, some students learn better in groups, some students dislike working in groups and love to learn individually, some students learn better in mathematical way, others love to learn through games. Like this there are varieties of students whom we need to teach in different ways and this is very important if we want the proper outcome from them. This diversity of learning and teaching is considered to be the basic principle of Professor Howard Garner’s Multiple Intelligence Theory.

“I want my children to understand the world, but not just because the world is fascinating and the human mind is curious. I want them to understand it so that they will be positioned to make it a better place. Knowledge is not the same as

morality, but we need to understand if we are to avoid past mistakes and move in productive directions. An important part of that understanding is knowing who we are and what we can do... Ultimately, we must synthesize our understandings for ourselves. The performance of understanding that try matters are the ones we carry out as human beings in an imperfect world which we can affect for good or for ill. " (Gardner 1999, P.180-181).

This is how Dr. Gardner states the importance of knowing ourselves so that being ourselves we can improve our performances every where. So it is very important both for the students and the teachers to know about a student so that they can find out what the student is interested in and can conduct their learning and teaching process that way.

1.1 Background of the research:

Once I read a story about a man who was trying to make a rose bloom by forcefully opening its petals. A passerby asked him what he was doing he explained that his boss wants to bloom all the roses to bloom on that day. As we know roses have their own way of blooming. We can assist them by providing water and sunshine and the rest should be left to nature. Children are like roses. "Teachers, pressured by their bosses, follow official timetables, which demand that all children learn at the same rate, and in the same way. Yet children are no different than roses in their development: they are born with the capacity and desire to learn, they learn at different rates, and they learn in different ways." (Hunt, 2008, p. 7). Identifying a student's particular intelligence is equally important to teach them in their own way. In Western countries both teachers and their parents are concerned about this issue but unfortunately in Bangladeshi schools many

teachers are even unfamiliar about the process of teaching under MI theory. “Many research studies show that the expectations teachers have about a child’s learning abilities strongly influence the child’s academic performance.” (Hunt, 2008, p. 12) For example, a teacher who always assigns students lesson with group work gets to know about the ability of the students who are good at group works. So s/he will always expect great performance from those students which directly de-motivates others students whose way of learning is different. As a result only a few students do great with their grades and the majority fails to get a deserving grade. Does the teachers of our schools realize the necessity of applying MI theory in the classroom? Why don’t they apply? Are the parents conscious about this disability of the schools? Is the school authority eager to introduce MI theory to the classes?

This paper will find out the answers to all these questions which is a very important issue behind the improvement of our education system.

Chapter: Two

Literature Review

Intelligence was regarded as a single entity in the days of behaviorist era. It was believed that human minds are like blank slates and they can be taught anything that is presented in an appropriate way. But now researchers have found that every human being possesses a particular type of intelligence and they can be taught things effectively under those specific intelligence methods. Smith (2002) noted that “Howard Gardner has questioned the idea that intelligence is a single entity and that it results from a single factor” (p. 27). He disagreed with the fact that intelligence can be measured simply via IQ tests.

The theory of multiple intelligences was developed in 1983. Gardner initially formulated a list of eight intelligences.

1. **Linguistic intelligence** (word smart)
2. **Logical-mathematical intelligence** (number/reasoning smart)
3. **Spatial intelligence** (picture smart)
4. **Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence** (body smart)
5. **Musical intelligence** (music smart)
6. **Interpersonal intelligence** (people smart)
7. **Intrapersonal intelligence** (self smart)

10. **Naturalist intelligence** (nature smart)

2.1 Linguistic Intelligence: Those who possess linguistic intelligence are good at using language for different activities. According to Kurt (2010) linguistic intelligence “Involves sensitivity to spoken and written language, the ability to learn languages, and the capacity to use language to accomplish certain goals” (p. 34). Under this intelligence one can successfully express himself using language and for them language also becomes a means to remember information. Lane(1988) noted that “They like playing word games, reading books, making poetry and stories and doing other word related activities” (p. 11). Smith (2002) mentioned that “According to Gardner, poets, lawyers, speakers and writers are among those who possess Linguistic intelligence” (p. 4).

2.2 Logical-mathematical Intelligence: This type of intelligence provides the ability to understand and analyze anything in a mathematical and logical way. “These people are scientific and logical in the way of learning things. Analyzing problems logically, carrying out mathematical operations, investigating issues scientifically are the activities which they are good at” (Smith, 2002, p. 5). Kurt (2010) reported that “According to Howard Gardner this intelligence entails the ability to detect patterns, reason deductively and think logically” (p. 87). They are scientific and mathematical thinkers. They are good at reasoning, calculating, thinking conceptually, solving puzzles, doing experiments etc. “They need to learn from concepts before they can deal with details” (Lane, 1988, p. 57).

Mathematics and other complex logical systems are their area of interest and can be taught anything effectively through the activities followed by these categories.

2.3 Musical Intelligence: These kinds of students are good at learning something which is presented in a form of music. Larsen & Freeman (2000) reported that intelligence is “An ability to recognize tonal patterns and a sensitivity to rhythm and, pitch and melody (p. 170). They love music and learn things better with music in the background. “They can be taught tapping out time, speaking rhythmically, turning lessons into lyrics” (Lane, 1988, p.37). They are skillful in composition and appreciation of the pattern of music. Smith (2002) noted that “According to Howard Gardner, musical intelligence is structurally almost similar to linguistic intelligence (p. 127).

2.4 Bodily-kinesthetic Intelligence: They learn well through bodily activities, for example, making things, touching etc. They are good as using body language to communicate. Acting out things, role playing, study tour etc can be used as a means to teach them. “They communicate well through body language and be taught through physical activity, hands-on-learning, acting out, role playing” (Lane 1988, p. 39). When they are given any lesson in a form of physical activity, they learn better though they also get a chance to use their psychological potential in this way. Smith (2002) mentioned that “Howard Gardner sees mental and physical activity as related” (p. 128). Mimes, basketball players, dancers, actors possess bodily kinesthetic intelligence.

2.5 Spatial Intelligence: This type of intelligence enables a student to learn better through observing something visually. According to Lane (1988) “They learn through observing things differently in terms of physical space like architects and sailors” (p. 131). They closely analyze their environments. They like day dreaming, reading maps, drawing etc. Drawing verbal and physical imagery is an effective way to teach them. Mostly, models, graphics, charts, photographs, drawings, 3-D modeling, video, videoconferencing, television, multimedia, texts with pictures/charts/graphs are used as equipments for teaching them (Lane-1988).

2.6 Interpersonal Intelligence: “Interpersonal Intelligence is concerned with the capacity to understand the intentions, motivations and desires of other people” (Kurt-2010). They are excellent at interacting with others and learn through it. They can make friends easily and like to work in groups. They are good at understanding motive and intention of others. They are street smarts and like seminars and dialogues as well. Salespeople, counselors, political and social leaders possess such intelligences. “Tools include the telephone, audio conferencing, time and attention from the instructor, video conferencing, writing, computer conferencing, E-mail” (Lane, 1997, para. 6).

2.7 Intrapersonal Intelligence: Those who possesses interpersonal intelligence are good at understanding themselves and loves to study alone. According to Mustaro and Silveira (2006) “In Howard Gardner's view it involves having an effective working model of ourselves, and to be able to use such information to regulate our life” (p. 41) Unlike

Importance of applying Multiple Intelligence Theory in Bangladeshi Schools

interpersonal intelligence, an intrapersonal intelligence deals with ones own interest and is able to understand ones motivation. “They like learning things themselves. They're in tune with their inner feelings; they have wisdom, intuition and motivation, as well as a strong will, confidence and opinions” (Lane, 1988, p 117). This style depicts concentrated, mindful students, encouraging meta-cognitive practices such as getting in touch with their own feelings and self motivation. There teaching equipments include books, creative materials, diaries, privacy and time.

2.8 Naturalist Intelligence: Students of this kind learns anything better with the touch and presence of nature. That means if lessons are taught outside the classroom where they can get close to the nature then their learning process becomes effective. According to Denig (2004) naturalistic intelligence is “the potential for discriminating among plants, animals, rocks, and the world around us, as used in understanding nature, making distinctions, identifying flora and fauna (p. 98)”. They learn well when they are in touch with the nature. Field visit or teaching under the sky can be useful to teach them. “According to Gardner, hunters, farmers, and gardeners would have high levels of Naturalistic intelligence, as would artists, poets, and social scientists, who are also adept at pattern-recognition” (Visser, Ashton & Vernon, 2006, p. 491).

It is a difficult issue to decide how to teach the students with different intelligences in one class. Campbell (1997) describes five approaches to curriculum change:

- **“Lesson design:** Some schools focus on lesson design. This might involve team teaching ("teachers focusing on their own intelligence strengths"), using all or several of the intelligences in their lessons, or asking student opinions about the best way to teach and learn certain topics.
- **Interdisciplinary units:** Secondary schools often include interdisciplinary units.
- **Student projects:** Students can learn to "initiate and manage complex projects" when they are creating student projects.
- **Assessments:** Assessments are devised which allow students to show what they have learned. Sometimes this takes the form of allowing each student to devise the way he or she will be assessed, while meeting the teacher's criteria for quality.
- **Apprenticeships:** Apprenticeships can allow students to "gain mastery of a valued skill gradually, with effort and discipline over time." Gardner feels that apprenticeships "should take up about one-third of a student's schooling experience." (Para. 5)

Gardner says that these differences in learners challenge an educational system that assumes that everyone can learn the same materials in the same way and that a uniform, universal measure suffices to test student learning. Logically Schools, administrations, teachers and parents can help a student by understanding a learner's type through a better

understanding of Gardner's multiple intelligence theories. It might enable the students to explore their own learning independently and learning could become more effective with the proper implementation of multiple intelligences. It is not possible for a teacher to learn something in eight different ways but s/he has to find out the most effective teaching tool that focuses on all the eight categories equally.

Chapter: Three

Research Design

3.1 Objective of the Research:

The objective of this study is to find out whether applying Multiple Theory in our schools should be considered or not.

3.2 Research questions:

1. Are Bangladeshi school authorities concerned/ interested about applying MI theories in the class room?
2. Are teachers applying MI theories in the class room?
3. What is the factor that does not influences our teachers to apply MI theories?
4. Shoul we apply MI theory in our schools effectively in future?

3.3 Significance of the research:

Multiple Intelligence Theory is very much popular in the Western countries than in the South Asian countries. For instance, in the Bangladeshi Bengali medium schools MI is hardly applied in teaching. Moreover the English medium schools are also very few in number that are following this theory. This research will study the factors deterring teachers from applying MI theories in Bangladeshi schools.

3.4 Methodology:

3.5 The instrument:

i) **Questionnaire for Intermediate level students:** The entire questionnaire was distributed among 40 students from 3 private universities of Dhaka. Among them 18 were from BRAC University, 12 were from American International University and 10 were from North South University. The targeted students were Tertiary level students because the importance of MI theory could be seen through them as they are the outcome.

ii) **Questionnaire for teachers:** The second survey was done on the teachers of 6 schools. Among them 3 were bangla medium and 3 English medium schools. A set of questionnaire consisting 5 questions each was prepared for them but they were not distributed the questions. It was like an interview.

3.5.1 Participants:

Students: In total the students were 40 from 3 private universities. Among the 40 students, the number of the students from Bangla medium school background is 23 in total and rest 17 are from English medium school background.

Teachers: In total 25 teachers were interviewed among whom 13 teachers are from Bangla medium Schools and the rest 12 are from English medium school.

3.4.3 **The procedure:** Major portion of data was collected from students' responses by distributing questionnaires to them. Mixed method was used for collecting the data that combines both quantitative method and qualitative components in the questionnaires. Another set of questionnaire was designed for the teachers to get their response.

3.4.4 **Method of analysis:** Microsoft Excel was used to organize the raw data and graphs of the research. Percentage of the students' response was calculated by using the same software.

3.4.5 **Limitations:** This research was conducted in universities of Dhaka only. Moreover, the research was limited to very few institutions due to time constraints. Even it was almost impossible to get in and reach the students of some universities because of the strict security system, so, it was quite difficult to generalize the importance of applying MI theory in our schools. There were only 5 questions in the questionnaire that were designed for the students. A very small number of participants did answer those open-ended questions. They were very fast to answer the multiple or yes-no questions but seemed very lazy to descriptive answers.

Chapter Four:

Research Findings and Analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to conduct this research. This chapter consists of the data obtained from students and subsequent analysis. The interview section of the teachers will also be reviewed and discussed here. Around 40 students and 25 teachers from six different schools are involved in this survey.

Analysis of students' questionnaire:

This study is mainly based on the data collected from the tertiary level students of both English and Bangla medium background students from three private universities of Dhaka. 17 of the students are from English medium Background and the rest, 23 students are from Bangla medium background. The following pie chart shows the ratio of participation of the English and Bangla medium background students in this research.

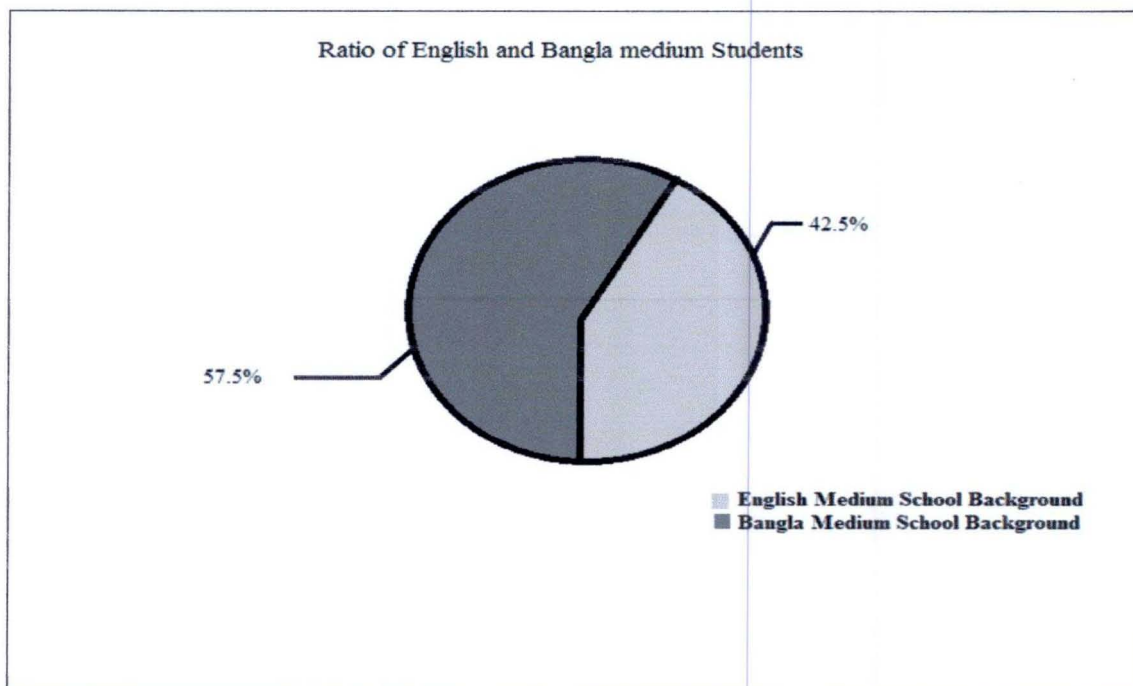


Figure 1: Ratio of English and Bangla Medium Background Students

As per the pie chart (Figure 1), 42.5% of the participants are from English medium background and 57% of the participants are from Bangla medium background.

There were 5 questions in the questionnaire that were given to the university students. At first, the students were asked if they are familiar with the Multiple Intelligence Theory or not.

Table: 1 Familiarity with Gardner's MI theory:

Ans. Type	No. of students'	%
Yes	17	42.5
No	23	57.5
No comment	0	0

The result of this question was quite expected. 42.5% of the participants were familiar with the MI theory classroom system and all of them are from English medium background. So it seems that many English medium schools of Dhaka have a MI theory related education system. On the other hand 57.5% of them said they are really not familiar with it. This result proves that only English medium schools have a MI theory related education system and Bangla medium schools do not apply it. The questionnaire had an option for 'no comment' but none of the participants chose that.

Table 2: As a student do you feel any importance of a MI theory facilitated education system in your schools? Think of your personal experience to answer the question.

Ans. Type	No. of students'	%
Yes	32	80
No	5	12.5
No comment	3	7.5

This table shows students opinion of having a MI Theory facilitated education systems in their schools. Some Bangla medium background students were not familiar with MI Theory so I had to describe about it first. This table shows that 80% of the students think that having an MI theory based education system can really help students to adopt lessons effectively. 12.5% students think that it has no effect on learning process and only 7.3% answer with "no comment"

Table3: Do you think students from an MI theory based classroom system can do better in their future educations because of a versatile learning personality?

Ans. Type	No. of students'	%
Yes	29	72.5
No	10	25
No comment	1	2.5

This table shows that 72.5% students think that having an MI theory based classroom can help students in their future education because it makes them capable to learn under any kind of environment. 25% students disagreed with this. They think that MI theory based classroom has nothing to do with it and only 1 student answers with “no comment”.

Table 4: Do you think an MI theory based classroom provides more opportunity than the traditional classroom system to express one's thought?

Ans. Type	No. of students'	%
Yes	34	85
No	6	15
No comment	0	0

This table shows that 85% students answer is “yes”. It means they think that an MI theory based education system is helpful for the students to express their thoughts. On the other

hand 15% students think that MI theory based education system has no influence in this case. 0% students answered with “no comment”

Table 5: Which option is closer to your opinion?

- a. It is not possible to apply MI theory in Bangladeshi schools because it's time consuming and expensive.
- b. MI theory could be and should be applied in Bangladeshi class rooms and the Government should make it mandatory.
- c. No comment.

Ans. Type	No. of students'	%
a	9	22.5
b	28	70
No comment	3	7.5

This table shows that 22.5% students answered with option no 1 , 70% answered with option no 2 and rest 3 answered with no comment. So it says that majority of the students thinks that MI theory based education system should be made mandatory in Bangladesh.

Analysis of teacher's questionnaire: In this part 25 teachers from 6 schools participated and shared their opinion. The analysis of their opinion is given below:

Table 1: Did you ever apply MI theory techniques to your classroom? If yes then how was the response?

Ans. Type	Yes	No	No comment
No. of teachers	13	12	0
Percentage	52%	48%	0%
How was the response from students?	Not Good	Good	Excellent
No. of teachers	0	10	3
Percentage	0%	67.92%	23.08%

This table shows the number and percentage of the teachers who applied MI theory in their classrooms. According to these table's 52% teachers applied MI theory and 48% didn't. To measure the percentage of the responses I used the number of the teachers who answered with "yes" and their number is 13. In that case 67.92% got good responses and 23.08% got excellent responses. As the majority got "good" responses but not "excellent" so I would say that there is still some problem in the way of application of MI theory in our schools.

Table 2: Do you support that MI theory is an effective way to utilize every student's merit properly?

Ans. Type	No. of students'	%
Yes	18	72
No	7	28
No comments	0	0

This table shows that 72% teachers support the fact that MI theory is an effective way to utilize every students merit properly and 28% disagreed with it. The noticeable point I

found here is that some teachers who even never applied this theory in their classes also answered with “yes”. That means they realize this fact but could not apply this theory due to some obstacle in our education system.

Table 3: Do you support this fact that a student learns better when he is facilitated with the environment that he is good to learn at?

Ans. Type	No. of Teachers	%
Yes	23	92
No	2	8
No comments	0	0

This table shows that 92% of the teachers support that a student learn more effectively when he finds an environment which is similar to his learning trait. Only 8% teachers answered with no and 0% answered with no comment. That means majority of the teacher’s support that MI theory can improve a students learning ability.

Table 4: Do you think it is also helpful for a teacher to teach under such an environment where combined teaching styles can be applied?

Ans. Type	No. of Teachers	%
Yes	21	84
No influence	4	16
No comments	0	0

This table shows that 84% teachers support that teaching under MI theory education system can also help the teachers to teach as they can apply various strategies. 16% of the teachers support that it has no influence on helping the teachers with their teachings. 0% answered with no comment.

Table 5: According to your opinion what is the main impediment for not applying MI theory based teaching-learning system in our classrooms?

Ans. Type	Lack of interest	Lack of equipment	No comment
Teachers number	12	13	0
Percentage	48%	52%	0%

In this table the teachers were asked about their opinion on which they think to be main obstacle for not having An MI theory based classroom system in Bangladesh. 48% of them think that it's simply because of the lack of interest of our school authority and Government and 52% think that we don't have enough equipment to support for an MI theory based class. So it shows that the two facts are quite closer according to this survey though majority supported "lack of equipment" as a reason.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

“The real power behind whatever success I have now was something I found within myself , something that's in all of us, I think , a little piece of God just waiting to be discovered” Tina Turner

This famous quotation by Tina Turner reflects the importance of discovering oneself in order to meet success. Similarly Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence theory focuses on finding out a child's specialty in order to make his learning process successful. Every child is special with different hidden talents so if teachers can use their special quality effectively it is possible to get a satisfied output from the students. MI theory not only makes the education process successful but also helps the students to build up a fearless personality trait. For example Under MI theory students get to perform different types of tasks like working with each other, working individually, working both inside and outside the classroom etc. Thus from a very early age they develop such a personality which teaches them how to be self dependant or how to share their thoughts with others. More importantly it develops a leadership quality among them. For instance, in Bangladesh when a student finishes his intermediate level education and enters to the university level education, he has to learn a lot of things. As this research shows that most of the English medium school has an MI theory based education system so the students from that background are quite familiar with these changes in universities. So when they are asked to give a presentation in front of the class we can hardly find any hesitation among them.

Opposite to this Bangla medium background students are not familiar with such activities so we find them really nervous while giving a presentation. This is just one example but there are many other cases where the differences among these two types of students are clearly seen. In addition in the universities of Bangladesh, MI theory is applied effectively in the classes so the students from Bangla medium background needs time to cope up with this change where the English medium background students do quite well in this issue as they are used to with this education system from an early age. So, this fact also affects the grades of the students in university level. Therefore Bangladeshi schools needs to apply MI theory in the classrooms not only to make an effective teaching and learning environment in the schools but also to prepare the students for their higher education levels.

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