



ON THE POWER OF KNOWING ONES' MAJOR INTELLIGENCE(S), IMAGINATION, AUTOSUGGESTION, AND TOTAL LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses some philosophically crucial issues of lives of any people in general, of university students in particular. First, it argues that to succeed in their lives, people have to have a clear imagination of their future, that is, what kind of life it is that they want to have in the years to come (i.e. an ontological issue). Such a dream, however, must be based on their understanding of their potentials or, in Howard Gardner's term (1993), their major intelligence(s). If not, they will fail, no matter how hard/smart they try to succeed. Hence comes the second issue, that is, how people can make such a dream, which is the bigger the better, true in their lives (i.e. an epistemological issue). Knowing ones' strengths, however, is just a part of their success stories; it is not sufficient because they must also believe in themselves (i.e. autosuggestion), that is, if they work/learn a bit harder/smarter (i.e. being total in working/learning), they will succeed. Third, it gives some reasons why it is important for people to succeed (i.e. an axiological issue), that is, success is good not only for those who succeed, but also for others, i.e., those who have been marginalised in their societies: the poor, the oppressed, and the voiceless. It is for those reasons that all should try their best to succeed, let alone university students as future leaders.

Keywords: Knowing ones' strengths, Big dream, Self-confidence, Independent learning, Totality

INTRODUCTION

Carl Yung (in Neville, 1989: 87) states that the dynamic principle of fantasy is play, which belongs also to the child, and as such it appears to be inconsistent with the principle of serious work. But without this playing with fantasy no creative work has ever come to birth. The debt we owe to the play of imagination is incalculable

On its statements, have you ever asked yourself how you can be more successful in your life so that through your success you can be more beneficial, not only to you yourself and your family,

but also to other people outside your family, wherever they are, and to your physical environment where you live in? If you have, what is your answer to the question?

This paper is to answer the question¹. Our thesis is that to succeed in your life: 1. you have to know, among other things, your major intelligence(s); 2. you have to have an imagination of what kind of life you want to live in the future, that is, you have to dream big, you need to believe in you yourself that you can indeed make your dream come true; and, 3. you have to be total in learning/working. In other words, in this paper, we

¹ You may have your own answer(s) to the question, of course, and you may have also simply practised them in your life; you may say, for example, that I succeed by "praying a lot and working harder/smarter" because you do believe that it is through prayer and hard/smart work,

you will definitely succeed and then make your life more fruitful for you yourself and for others. It is, of course, great. So, our answers here are just some alternatives.

argue that there are some major issues that you should possess and/or practice in your daily life to succeed, namely: knowing your inner strength(s), imagining a great life that you will live through in the future, believing in yourself to achieve it, and learning/working totally to change, that is, to make your life better and, through you, others' lives can also be better. These issues will be discussed further below.

KNOWING YOUR MAJOR INTELLIGENCE(S)²

The first step to succeed, we believe, is to look first into you yourself and find out what your strength is, or what your strengths are in case you have more than one strength, that you believe you can rely on to make your life more successful in the future and, through you yourself, to make others' lives better.

Looking inwards is a kind of self-reflection aiming at knowing your inner strengths or your talents which can be improved, through some training and/or education, so they can be stronger and stronger day by day and you, therefore, can be more talented. This, in turn, can make you more successful in your life.

Howard Gardner (1993) calls our inner strengths and/or talents intelligences³. He asserts that each of us has been given by our Creator some kinds of intelligences, that is: 1. verbal/linguistic intelligence; 2. logical/mathematical intelligence; 3. visual/spatial intelligence; 4. body/kinaesthetic intelligence; 5. musical/rhythmic intelligence; 6. interpersonal intelligence; 7. intrapersonal intelligence; 8. naturalistic intelligence; 9. spiritualist intelligence; and, 10. existentialist

intelligence. He adds that those intelligences can be improved and, therefore, can be taught and learned.

Yet, there is only one or two which are the strongest or the most dominant and the ones which are dominant, Gardner says, control those which are less dominant (in Budiningsih, 2002: 114-119). In other words, despite the fact that we have all of those intelligences within ourselves, in general, however, they have different levels of dominance or strength: some are stronger than the others or some are weaker than the others. For some exceptional individuals though, those intelligences are all very strong or dominant, but for others, they can be all very poor. This is why in our society we can find some people, for example, who are good at mathematics, but they are not good at other intelligences; some are good or even excellent at all of those kinds of intelligences; others, however, are all poor at every category of those intelligences.

Since each intelligence can be improved through learning and/or training, individually or collectively, it is crucial that we know what our dominant intelligence is and try our best to improve it. As stated above, knowing our dominant intelligence is important because when we find the right one to improve, we will succeed. On the other hand, we will fail, if we try to develop a wrong one.

In our real life, this is as clear as crystal: those who have very weak musical intelligence, for example, will fail to be well-known musicians although they try their best to, no matter how hard they try or no matter how many great musicians help them become great musicians in very conducive environments using excellent learning facilities. It is because they do not have sufficient music talent to be music giants. On the other hand, those who have excellently great musical intelligence plus, of course, having the right people, place, facilities, and

² Knowing your major intelligence(s) is not indeed a new concept. A maxim "Know thyself" (in Latin: *Nosce te ipsum* or *Temet nosce*) inscribed in the Temple of Apollo in Delphi, Greece, believed to be said by Socrates, is more or less the same as the concept of knowing your major intelligences. It is argued that knowing ourselves is a process of examining our own lives and when we do constantly examine our lives, our lives are, therefore, worth living. Yet when they are not constantly examined, they are not worth living

(<https://www.theschooloflife.com/article/know-thyself>). Why is it? Because they will certainly fail.

³ The term "intelligence" has been defined in various ways and contexts. In this paper, however, it is defined as one's talent that she/he possesses. Oxford Dictionary defines it as "the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills." This is why a person who is good at playing football, for example, is called a talented football player. On the other hand, one who is not good at playing soccer is not talented in playing soccer. That is also true for other fields of studies like mathematics and language.

willingness for them to improve, they will be great musical geniuses.

However, our real life also shows that those who are talented may not always end up as successfully great people because, among other things, they have no imagination or dream of what kind of life they want to have in their future. This is why, we believe, imagination is crucial for everyone to succeed in their lives as discussed below.

IMAGINATION

The second step to succeed, we guess, is having an imagination. It is the same as having future life image. It is an image that a person has on his mind about his/her future: he/she may want to be a good teacher, lecturer, lawyer, judge, doctor, politician, business person, scientist, researcher, policeman and many more.

Neville (1983) believes that imagination is important along the processes to become a successful person because of its great influence in controlling our subconscious being. It is our subconsciousness that, in turn, pushes our conscious being in such a way that it tries its best to succeed. This is also supported by Coue (1923) who says:

It is imagination that is the most important quality of man. You must know that we have in ourselves two beings. The first one is the conscious, voluntary being which we know, and the second one, behind the first being, is the subconscious or imaginative being, or imagination as you call it.

We don't pay attention to this being, and we are perfectly wrong, because it is the second being which runs us entirely ...

If it is the second being which runs us, and we learn how to run it, through it we learn to run ourselves. Do you understand? I repeat, because it is most important. It is our unconscious being which runs us. We learn how to run it. Through it we learn to run ourselves (p. 118).

In other words, what Coue is saying is that all we need to do to succeed is by controlling our subconscious being. In real life, this is logical. It is our imagination or dream that in general motivates us to move forward and do our best to achieve it. It is quite different, for example, for those who have no good imagination of their future. Street kids who think, for example, that they would die in the next few years would have no willingness to study harder and, therefore, they would fail. On the other hand, those who think, for example, that they would study at a school medicine in the next few years, they will just do their best to do so. It is understandable because, in general, none would want to become a great lecturer, but he/she sleeps all night long.

So, this is how our subconscious being influences our conscious being. One has to have imagination of his/her future, that is, he/she has to dream big and try her/his best to make it true. To successfully make it true though, one has to make sure that his/her dream is based on his/her major intelligence(s) as described above. That is crucial because dreaming a false dream, that is a dream which is not based on his/her talent, is useless. How can one who has, for example, no basic musical talent become a musical genius?

In such a context, it is important that dialogical education suggested by Freire (1972a/b/1976) be implemented. It is through sincerely intensive dialogs, in addition to parental observation and peer observations, students know what their strengths and/or talents are. This, in turn, would help them dream confidently and actively do their best to make their dream come true because they know that they are good at what they dream of. In addition, students should also have strong self-confidence or autosuggestion because it is also another major way they can use to control their subconscious beings as discussed below.

AUTOSUGGESTION

The third success step is autosuggestion or self-suggestion. It is a suggestion in which people tell themselves that they can do something or they cannot do it because, they think, it is within or without their major intelligence(s) as has been stated before. In other words, it is a subjective decision based on their subconscious or conscious understanding of their own potentials, which can be

right or wrong. In our lives, that is very influential: if we say that we can do something within our reach, we can do it; if not, we can't, although it is indeed within our competence to do it.

A great analogy for this way of thinking has been well-described by Neville (1989: 30) when he mentions Coue's (1923) method of autosuggestion. Neville (1989: 30) says:

Coue was fond of demonstrating that if you clench your fist and keep repeating the words "I cannot open my hand", it is impossible to open it. The only way your hand will open is if you allow, even for an instant, the thought (i.e. the words) "I can." Then your hands open without effort. For him this is an analogy of our self-imposed illnesses and our self-imposed physical and mental limitations.

This is what is called a fist philosophy of life, that is, about believing that you can do anything which is based on your major strength(s), if you believe you can do it. On the other hand, it is also about our failure to do something because we just do not think we can do it, although, as a matter of fact, we can do it.

Our imagination or our subconscious being, according to Coue (1923), can be managed by using what he calls verbal self-suggestion. He says:

As long as you live, every morning, before getting up, and every night, as soon as you are lying in bed, shut your eyes, and repeat 20 times, with your lips, loud enough to hear your own words, without to think of what you are saying – if you think of it, it is well; if you don't think of it, it is well – counting on a little string, providing yourself with a little string of knots, "Day by day, in every way, I am getting better and better."

In this little phrase there are three important words, "In every way," which includes all the suggestions. Thus it is quite useless to make particular suggestions, as they are all included in three words, "in every way," but you must pay attention to make the suggestion, the autosuggestion, very simply.

Try it like this, in a monotonous manner, without any effort, as they recite litanies in church (p. 125).

By uttering the words regularly, that is "as long as you live", Coue believes, one can then not only feel really good, but also believe that he/she can do something very confidently which is related to his/her major intelligence(s). In this sense, this is about an excellent path to become a successful person by, among other things, having confidence in you - yourself (Cf. Tough, 2012).

It is important to remember, however, that finding one's major intelligence(s), dreaming a big dream based on such excellently strong intelligences, and having a very strong self-confidence is not enough. One has to work smarter/harder and total to succeed as discussed below.

TOTAL LEARNING

The next step to succeed is learning totally⁴ anything relevant to one's imagination based on his/her major intelligence(s) and, of course, his/her autosuggestion. In this sense, learning is seen as a process of moving from learners' zone of proximal development to their zone actual development (Vygotsky, 1978), that is, from a state in which they cannot do things on their own to a state in which they can do them on their own. In other words, learning is viewed as a person's journey from being dependent to being independent or from being poor to being good, from being naughty to being polite, from being better to being the best, from being "stupid" to being "smart," from being unemployed to being employed, and any other kinds of movement that we can witness on our daily basis.

⁴ It is important to stress here that total learning or working should also be done in such a way that learners or workers keep themselves healthy because success does not mean anything, if one is not healthy. In this sense it is important

that learners/workers, whoever, keep themselves healthy by thinking well, eating well, moving well, and not doing things that put our health in danger like smoking (Paturusi, 2012).

To have those successful moves, students, from primary to tertiary levels, must implement what Rogers (1983: 20) calls “significant or experiential learning” that has five major elements. He says:

It has a quality of personal involvement – the whole person in both feeling and cognitive aspects being in the learning event. *It is self-initiated.* Even when the impetus or stimulus comes from the outside, the sense of discovery, of reaching out, of grasping and comprehending, comes from within. *It is pervasive.* It makes a difference in the behaviour, the attitudes, perhaps even the personality of the learner. *It is evaluated by the learner.* She knows whether it is meeting her need, whether it leads towards what she *wants* to know, whether it illuminates the dark area of ignorance she is experiencing. The locus of evaluation, we might say, resides definitely in the learner. *Its essence is meaning.* When such learning takes place, the element of meaning to the learner is built into the whole experience (italic forms are from its original author, Carl R. Rogers).

Such experiential or significant learning is the basis of what Rogers (1983) calls freedom to learn which is translated as “merdeka belajar” in Indonesian system of education under the leadership Mr. Nadiem Anwar Makarim. In practice, however, it seems to me that what is now practised throughout our Indonesian system of education, that is, from elementary to tertiary education, is still far from being “free” at all because of the absence of those five elements in our formal education, that is, it has no total involvement of learners, learners do not really self-initiate their learning, our students’ behaviour does not change since they keep on fighting each other after joining lessons related character building, they do not evaluate their own learning, and what they learn is generally meaningless because what is learned is not really related to their talents, interests, and learning needs (Tans, 2011/2014).

In that sense, it is crucial for Indonesia to reform its national education system. The present “Program Merdeka Belajar” (Freedom to Learn Program) is good theoretically. Yet, when it comes to practical issues, our schools, including tertiary institutions, are still not really free in their teaching (for teachers) and in their learning (for students). This happens because our schools have missed a very important aspect of a free education, that is, dialogical education (Cf. Freire, 1976) which is very crucial to create what we call in Indonesia “*Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka*”. In other words, freedom to learn campaign which is now massively done in Indonesia will not succeed when our schools/tertiary institutions underestimate what Freire calls as dialogical education.

Elaborating further his theory of dialogical education, Freire says, there must be a sincere dialog between students and their teachers to find out the students’ talents, interests and learning needs. Based on the students’ understood talents, interests, and learning needs, teachers can then design a curriculum in which their students learn based on their talents, interests, and needs. In other words, freedom to learn concept will not allow students learn subjects they have no good talent in, they are not interested in, and they have no learning needs in, which is in a very stark contrast to what is now happening throughout our educational system even when we are implementing what we call “*Program Merdeka Belajar:*” Our students, generally, learn subjects they are not interested in because their talents are irrelevant with the subjects they are studying and those subjects are irrelevant with their learning needs as well.

This, of course, has to be reformed soon to make sure that our students really learn totally because they know that what is learned is relevant to their talents, interests, and needs. It is also to make sure that our nation can then have its human resources with great character like those of the developed countries, that is, they truly “admire effort, energy, commitment, and fear laziness as well as mediocrity” (Dabney, 1982: 12).

Including in those kinds of character is our character in effectively using money, relation, energy and time, namely, four important things that are important to make our dream come true, if they are used wisely as Weber (2015) has indicated. She says that those are four life aspects that we need

to use effectively for our own benefit. Using our time, that is, our 24 hours or 1,440 minutes per day, for example, is crucial as it is related to having a great discipline. Those who are successful are usually those who use their time more effectively; those who fail are those who are unable to use their time more effectively. It is also the case for creating good relation, money and the space we have. All be used wisely to ensure that we succeed in our lives.

WHY WE HAVE TO SUCCEED

At this point, it is important to ask ourselves why we have to succeed. There should be a lot of reasons for that. We mention some here. First, we want to make sure that we do not have problems concerning our efforts to fulfil our human needs like having enough clothes, good shelter, and, of course, good foods.

Secondly, in relation to the first, it is to ascertain that we have enough resources to keep our body healthy. It is quite difficult, of course, to keep our body healthy, for example, if we do not have enough money to see a doctor and buy some medicine when we are sick. Having some money, in that sense, for that purpose, makes it easier for us to keep ourselves healthy.

Third, it can help us more capable of helping others in need. This is about our relation with others whose presence is so crucial that without them we are meaningless. In this context, Weber (2015: 30) say that we are not islands. We live together with others as social beings. In such togetherness, there are always some people around who are in need and, of course, we can only help them if we can help ourselves first. This also includes doing good things for our environment which seems to be in danger because of, for example, excessive wastes, global climate changes, floods, and fires. In addition, success in this sense can make us be more beneficial for others by, for example, becoming good teachers that, in turn, can create great people that can make life better for every one later.

Fourth, success may also mean giving more opportunities for us to refresh ourselves by doing things that, in turn, make ourselves feel happy and enjoy life itself. Visiting nice places and good people, domestically or abroad, is always

interesting. It can always elevate our spirit, of course, when it is well-one.

Fifth, it is our spiritual call, we guess, to make sure that any talent that we have got from Him above, no matter how small it is, we have to double it, unless we will not be allowed to enter heaven when our time has come to go there later, whenever it will be. Making our talent(s) grow and/or richer and then using such growing/richer talent(s) for the benefits of others in need around us and/or for saving our worsening environment is, of course, a great thing to do. It is part of salvation that, in turn, can indeed save ourselves.

Since it is influential to succeed, whatever success may mean, it is, therefore, urgent that we all try our best to succeed by following the paths we have shown above. It is also a crime, we guess, not to succeed because failure will limit our opportunities to do good things for others and/or for our environment. We cannot help others in need when we are powerless to do that, can we?

CONCLUSION

To conclude, it is important that those who want to succeed in their lives understand: 1. what their strong intelligences/talents are; 2. what dreams they have for their far better future; 3. that they can make their dreams come true because they are good at what they dream of, that is, they have a very strong self-confidence of themselves concerning their imagination of their future because it is based on their talents, interests, and learning needs; and, 4. to make their dreams come true, they are total for that, that is, they are very disciplined in using their time, money, relation, and energy to make sure that they succeed.

For us this is important because dreaming a wrong dream/imagination, which is not based on our talents, interests, and learning needs, means a total failure. To avoid this, it is crucial that we dream a relevant dream, that is, a dream which is relevant with our talents, interests, and needs. Yet, it is also important that we keep ourselves healthy by thinking well, eating well, moving well, saying no to smoking (Paturusi, 2012) and, we add, sleeping well as well.

Since to succeed is good not only for us individually, but also for others in need, including our environment, it is, therefore, crucial that all of

us in general, students as future leaders in particular, have to do our best to succeed by reflecting upon our own strengths, dreaming big dreams, believing in ourselves, and being total in doing good things for us and for those around us, whatever the good things are and whoever the people are.

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