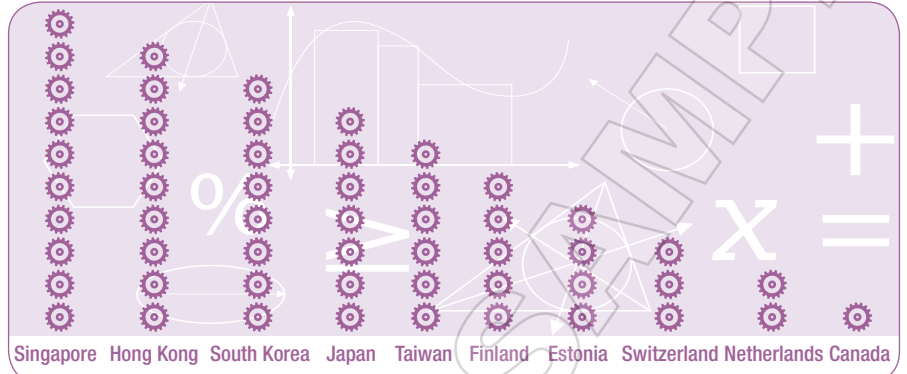


- 1 Work in pairs. Look at the infographic. What factors do you think make these the top 10 most intelligent countries?
- 2 Read the article. Is intelligence thought about differently now compared to the past?



What is intelligence?



Consider the game of chess. It has been around for thousands of years and is known as the game of kings. It has evolved as a game that requires considerable mental skills, or some might say intelligence.

It is a strategic game that requires tactics and the need to think many moves ahead. It is only recently that a supercomputer has been able to beat a grand master. Many world leaders have been competent chess players. Chess does need creative thinking, but when we think of creativity we think of the arts and the outstanding artists and writers who have created culture as we know it.

Indeed, different countries and their different cultures will define intelligence in many different ways. For example, in western culture there is a focus on mentally processing things quickly, such as on passing exams; in eastern cultures the quality of work might come into question if it has been completed too quickly. With so many differences, how can we measure which is the most intelligent country or where the smartest people are from?

Generally, the values of different cultures do not count when tallying up the most intelligent country. Many are based on western test results of subjects such as mathematics, reading and sciences, like PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) which is carried out on 15-year-olds

“Different countries and their different cultures define intelligence in many different ways.”



across more than 70 countries worldwide, such as Italy, New Zealand and Korea. In the modern world it is unusual to find an illiterate person in a prominent position, but historically there are many success stories of people who have overcome limited or no education to achieve success. Albert Einstein initially failed the entrance exams for university and Mark Twain had little schooling but educated himself by reading everything he could in a public library. Nearly all the kings and queens of Europe in the Middle Ages could not read and write – they had other people to do it for them. They relied on other skills such as an understanding of human nature, incredible memory or the ability to be a good orator.

In looking further at intelligence, we can start to see that there are big differences between western cultures and eastern cultures. A number of different philosophies across eastern cultures consider aspects of intelligence to involve things like waking up and noticing. Feelings, thoughts and opinions are also included. Where eastern cultures see things like mental effort and a person's level of determination as aspects of intelligence, through western eyes too much effort is seen as a struggle and therefore more of a weakness. There are studies that highlight, for example, how the Chinese concept of intelligence measures the ability to reason and have a good memory. In contrast, the American concept of intelligence is mostly about problem-solving, verbal ability and social skills.



It's worth highlighting how intelligence can also manifest itself in negative ways. For example, in western cultures the word 'clever' has some negative connotations. The phrase 'too clever by half' implies an ability to outsmart or trick others. It would seem that a more global and cultural approach should be taken when measuring and defining intelligence.

“Albert Einstein initially failed the entrance exams for university and Mark Twain had little schooling.”

3 Read the article again and then choose **T (True)** or **F (False)** for the statements below. Correct the false sentences.

- 1 Being able to think creatively will help you play chess. T / F

- 2 A computer has never been able to beat a grand master at chess. T / F

- 3 PISA is a western test given around the world as a measurement of intelligence. T / F

- 4 Most royalty in the Middle Ages were talented readers and writers. T / F

- 5 Feelings, thoughts and opinions all come under intelligence according to eastern cultures. T / F

- 6 The ability to reason is an American concept of intelligence. T / F

- 7 Verbal ability is an aspect of intelligence in western cultures. T / F

- 8 The phrase 'too clever by half' has a positive meaning. T / F

4 Read the article again and answer the questions.

- 1 How do you think many world leaders have played chess well?

- 2 How is intelligence often measured in western cultures?

- 3 How do attitudes towards mental effort differ between eastern and western cultures?

- 4 Which culture considers good memory an aspect of intelligence?

- 5 How can intelligence be presented in negative ways?

- 6 What does the author conclude should be considered when assessing intelligence?

OPTIMISE YOUR CULTURE

5 In pairs, or as a group, discuss the questions.

- 1 What do you think it means to be intelligent?
- 2 How does your country measure intelligence?
- 3 What is considered to be intelligence in your country and how does it compare to other eastern or western cultures?

PROJECT

6 You are going to prepare a short presentation about two well-known public figures that you consider intelligent. They should be people that you can research. Read the questions and prepare your project research.

- 1 Work in small groups. Choose two different people; one in your country and one in another country of your choice.
- 2 In your groups, think about the points below when you do your research online.
 - What makes them intelligent?
 - How are they different?
 - How are they similar?
 - Are they both considered intelligent in your country?
 - Any other useful information.

7 Present your findings to the class. Choose the most interesting points and add some of your personal thoughts and opinions too.