



A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF MARIA MONTESSORI TRAINING METHODS

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ABSTRACT

This paper outlined the impact of Maria Montessori training method. The paper present aria Montessori's brief biography, her educational method (child centered approach), and influences on Maria Montessori such as Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Friedrich Frobel (1782-1852), Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), etc. the paper also present the prepared environment of Montessori (freedom, structure and order, beauty, nature and reality, social environment and intellectual environment), the purpose of Montessori's education ie by allowing each child to be active in learning and helping each child to perfect all his natural tools for learning. Finally, the paper presents the contributions of Maria Montessori to education.

KEYWORDS

Education, impact, Maria Montessori, training method.

INTRODUCTION

The Montessori approach to education takes its name from Dr. Maria Montessori, an Italian physician and educator (1870-1952). Dr. Maria Montessori developed her educational philosophy as a result of her observations of the way children naturally learn. Dr. Maria Montessori's first class consisted of 50-60 children, ages 3-6, and most of them suffered from malnutrition and were shy and fearful since they lived in the slums of Florence, Italy. Montessori found that the children needed very little persuading to do everyday tasks, puzzles or other interesting activities which allowed them to not direct their energy toward destructive behaviors. She described the ages from three to six as a particularly sensitive time during which young children are especially attuned to acquiring knowledge from and about their environment. To enrich their experience, Dr. Maria Montessori developed a "prepared environment", of child sized furniture and material, to adapt to the surroundings to the child's natural size and behavior. This helped the children to feel relaxed and comfortable which created a will to learn. Through this interaction and experience, the children developed an extraordinary high level of intellectual and social ability at young ages.

Maria Montessori expanded her study of the young child, and gradually refined her approach to all child development areas through her experience and research in countries as diverse as Spain and India until the time of her death in 1952. The Montessori Method is now being successfully implemented with children in nearly every country of the world. There was a significant influence in the United States in the early 1960's and today there are more than 3,000 Montessori programs in this country. The Montessori Method is applied most frequently in pre-school and elementary education grade levels but is very effective in the high school setting as well. Montessori education has no religious affiliation, is not a therapy, nor is it an approach useful only with certain categories of children. In addition, Montessori techniques can be used successfully with all children regardless if they are gifted, have learning disabilities or other special needs.

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MONTESSORI'S LIFE

The Italian educator and physician Maria Montessori was the first Italian woman to receive a medical degree. She was the originator of the Montessori Method of education for children. On August 31, 1870, Maria Montessori was born in Chiaravalle, Italy. Her father, Alessandro Montessori, a retired army officer, was very traditional. Her mother, Renilde Stoppani Montessori, was an intelligent, modern-thinking woman from a wealthy family. Maria's mother taught her daughter how to be compassionate by giving her the task of knitting for the poor every day. Maria herself chose to scrub a portion of the tile floor every day. Much later, as a teacher, Montessori included such work in her studies for children, calling them "exercises of practical life."

As an elementary school student Montessori blossomed. She was average in intelligence, but good at exams, and she led her classmates in many games. She found the classroom set-up and repetitions very boring, yet she learned. When it came time to leave elementary school she had to ask her parents if she could continue. Women in her time were not encouraged to get more than an elementary school education.

In 1894 Montessori became the first woman to receive a medical degree in Italy. Her experiences in the pursuit of this degree reinforced her already well-developed feminist (in support of equality of the sexes) ideas. Throughout her life she was a frequent participant in international feminist events.

Montessori's first appointment was as an assistant doctor in the psychiatric clinic of the University of Rome, where she had her first contact with learning disabled children.

MONTESSORI AND HER EDUCATIONAL METHOD

The Montessori Method of education, developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, is a child-centered educational approach based on scientific observation of children from birth to adulthood. Dr. Montessori's method has been time tested, with over 100 years of success in diverse cultures throughout the world.

It is a view of the child as one who is naturally eager for knowledge and capable of initiating learning in a supportive, thoughtfully prepared learning environment. It is an approach that values the human spirit and the development of the whole child-physical, social, emotional, cognitive.

INFLUENCES ON MARIA MONTESSORI

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939): the "father of psychoanalysis" was formulating his theories in the same years when Montessori was researching her new method of education. In a letter to Montessori, Freud commented on their mutual interest in the child's psyche (an interest further carried on by Freud's daughter, Anna). Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852): in 1837 he established the first school for very young children in Germany, a revolutionary idea for the time (Froebel's school became known as kindergarten, a German word meaning "garden of children", since in it children were supposed to grow like flowers.) Montessori inherited Froebel's emphasis on educational toys and on play to stimulate the child's development.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778): Montessori's discoveries are grounded in the philosophical pedagogy of Rousseau, who had emphasized the importance of training the senses as a channel to achieve knowledge, had explained the learning process as gradually going from the concrete to the abstract, and the essential nature of humans as good and compassionate.

American Montessori Society (AMS): founded in 1960 by Nancy McCormick Rambusch (appointed US representative of the Association Montessori Internationale), it is a non-profit association of teachers, teacher education programs, parent study groups, and schools with the shared mission to promote the principles and practices of Montessori within the specific context of American culture. At times, the AMS has been in tension with AMI regarding their different application of the Montessori Method and standards

The Montessori Education Centers Associated (MECA) website at www.montessorieca.org offers a resource center collecting a wealth of web links to organizations variously related to Montessori education, as well as to issues of general education policies, parenting, etc.

THE PREPARED ENVIRONMENT OF MONTESSORI

1. Freedom

Montessori believed that a child must be free to explore and follow his own natural impulses, thus developing his potential and increasing his knowledge of the world around him. Within the prepared environment, the child must experience freedom of movement, freedom of exploration, freedom to interact socially, and freedom from interference from others. This freedom ultimately leads to a greater freedom: freedom of choice.

2. Structure and Order

While Structure and Order seem counter-intuitive to the aforementioned freedom, nothing could be further from the truth. Structure and Order in the Montessori classroom accurately reflect the sense of structure and order in the universe. By using the Montessori classroom environment as a microcosm of the universe, the child begins to internalize the order surrounding him, thus making sense of the world in which he lives.

Montessori stated that there is a sensitive period for order which occurs between the ages of one and three years of age. This is when the child begins to draw conclusions of the world around him. If there is not order to his environment, the child's sense of reason may be off since he will not be able to validate his findings.

This is not to say that routines or classroom set-up or ways of doing things can't change. However, it does mean that change should be carefully considered. Is this change for the good of the children? If so, it should be done carefully and its after-effects should be observed to ensure that it is of benefit to the children.

3. Beauty

Montessori environments should be beautiful. Whether your school is in an old Victorian mansion or in a strip-mall or in the living room of your home, the environment should suggest a simple harmony. Uncluttered and well-maintained, the environment should reflect peace and tranquility. The environment should

invite the learner to come in and work. This atmosphere is easily seen by the attitude of those working there, both child and adult.

4. Nature and Reality

Montessori had a deep respect and reverence for nature. She believed that we should use nature to inspire children. She continually suggested that Montessori teachers take the children out into nature, rather than keeping them confined in the classroom. This is why natural materials are preferred in the prepared environment. Real wood, reeds, bamboo, metal, cotton, and glass are preferred to synthetics or plastics.

It is here where child-size real objects come into play. Furniture should be child-size so the child is not dependent on the adult for his movement. Rakes, hoes, pitchers, tongs, shovels should all fit children's hands and height so that the work is made easier, thus ensuring proper use and completion of the work without frustration.

5. Social Environment

Where there is freedom to interact, children learn to encourage and develop a sense of compassion and empathy for others. As children develop, they become more socially aware, preparing to work and play in groups. This social interaction is supported throughout the environment and is encouraged with the nature of multi-age classroom settings.

6. Intellectual Environment

If the above aspects are not recognized, the intellectual environment will not reach its purpose. The purpose of the Montessori environment is to develop the whole personality of the child, not merely his intellect. By guiding the child through the five areas of the Montessori curriculum (Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, Mathematics, and Cultural subjects), the child has the structure which is at the forefront of the creative work in a Montessori classroom.

The purpose of Montessori's Education

Dr. Maria Montessori believed no human being is educated by another person. The children must do it themselves or it will never be done. A truly educated individual continues learning long after the hours and years he spent in the classroom because he is motivated from within by a natural curiosity and love for knowledge. Dr. Montessori felt, therefore, the goal of early childhood education should not be to fill the child with facts from a pre-selected course of studies, but rather to cultivate the child's own natural desire to learn.

In Mis Manos Montessori school classroom this objective is approached in two ways; first, by allowing each child to experience the excitement of learning by the child's own choice rather than by being forced. Second, by helping the children to perfect all their natural tools for learning, so that the children ability will be at a maximum in future learning situations. The Montessori materials have this dual long-range purpose in addition to their immediate purpose of giving specific information to the child.

Parent should understand that a Montessori school is neither a baby-sitting service nor a play school that prepares a child for traditional kindergarten. Rather, it is a unique cycle of learning designed to take advantage of the child's sensitive years between zero and six, when he can absorb information from an enriched environment. A child who acquires the basic skills of reading arithmetic in this natural way has the advantage of beginning his or her education without drudgery, boredom or discouragement. By pursuing his or her individual interest in the Montessori classroom, he or she gains an early enthusiasm for learning which is the key to his or her becoming a truly educated person.

Montessori's Contribution to Education

Dr. Maria Montessori's work has considerably influenced modern educational theory and practice, especially in case of children at nursery school stage. Her gospel of love, respect and sympathy for the child has been accepted all over the world.

Her system of child education has become so popular that the word "Montessori" became synonymous with "child". All values her system have been absorbed and put into practice by the modern nursery school. Her main contribution is as follows:

(a) Scientific Concept of Education

Dr. Montessori started life as a doctor and, as such formulated her method of teaching young children in the light of her experience and experiment.

She gave us observation, experimentation and other scientific methods in education. She never insisted on material and method as the last words in the field of child education. She rather gave a scientific approach to education by breaking away from old traditions.

(b) Emphasis on Individual Teaching

As against collective and class reading, Montessori stresses individual treatment of each child. Because of individual differences in physical and mental make-up, each pupil should be observed, studied and handed in a different manner. Thus, like the modern educators, she made child as the "unit of teaching" in place of class.

(c) Psychological Approach to Education

Like Froebel, she has also given emphasis on sense training, which is based on psychological principles.

By introducing exercises for practical life, she has enabled children to meet everyday situations themselves. She has advocated auto-education in an atmosphere of freedom and in the spirit of play.

She has also emphasized child's development from within through his own efforts. All these principles have made learning more important than teaching, which is universally accepted today.

(d) Love and Respect for Small Children

Montessori often said that child-education was the most important problem of humanity. It is, therefore, that it should receive the best attention of the Government and the public. In her own words, "The child's soul which is pure and very sensitive requires our most delicate care".

For her "child was God, her school was the temple and deity of the temple was the essence of childhood."

The profound love for children that she had compelled her to travel from one corner of the world to another to start institutions for them, based on her system she also stayed in India from 1939 to 1951 and conducted a number of training courses for teachers in her system of child education.

CONCLUSION

Education is always evolving. The impact of Montessori's method today is that over a hundred years the system does not require change and updating. It is the only system that has worked for all the generation and will continue to do so. Therefore, Montessori's curriculum is set in a way of shape the children's personality with positive traits that will make them stand out as individuals to be proud of.

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