

Montessori sensorial essay



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The sensorial materials are sets of objects designed to educate the senses. In addition, and perhaps even more important, they also appear to assist the child's concentration, ability to make judgments, move with purpose. Maria Montessori was greatly influenced by the ideas of his two predecessors - Jean Itard and Edouard Seguin. She took the idea of introducing didactic materials and the three period name lessons to the child in Sensorial curriculum from Seguin. In fact, it was Seguin who first followed the scientific method of teaching, which was later adopted by Dr.

Montessori in a more concise and modified form. She also took the idea of isolating one sense. 1 " The sensorial materials establish a solid basis for the language and mathematical materials to follow. Materials introducing literacy and numeracy (numerical understanding) to the children do not represent subject matter for the children to " learn" in the usual sense. When feasible the sensorial materials are composed of sets ten objects, giving the children an indirect exposure to the basis of the decimal system. They also represent basic measurement designations and geometrical shapes.

Ten rods represent variations in length, ranging from decimeter to a meter. A hexagonal box shows that a hexagon can be made of equilateral triangles, trapezoids and rhombi. " 2 Understanding how to conduct a three period lesson is fundamental to Montessori teaching. Teachers begin using the Three Period lesson when introducing sensorial material. It is initially used to teach properties such as size but is also effective in using geometric names for shapes or so. It is a simple tool for the teacher to use and an effective learning procedure for the child.

Allow the child to use the material for several times before introducing the vocabulary. “ Dr. Maria Montessori emphasizes that there is a period which comes before the three periods of Seguin. This is the period when the child works alone with the sensorial apparatus, and experiences the differential sensory stimuli without verbal interruption. This period of acquisition of sensory impression should precede the three period of Seguin. ” 3 “

Teachers do of course evaluate the children in Montessori; it is simply not obvious to the children that they are being evaluated.

One way in which Montessori teachers evaluate children is by the manner in which they give lessons. Following Seguin, Dr. Montessori advised that lessons involving nomenclature be given in three stages, or periods. The three periods might be thought of as association, recognition, and recall. These nomenclature lessons figure prominently in Primary, because Dr. Montessori believed children should have precise terminology for describing the world. She believed that the first five years are a sensitive period for acquiring vocabulary (Montessori, 1967).

Children in Montessori learn sophisticated terminology that many a educated adult does not know, but that children appear to learn easily. The format of three period lesson is as follows. The teacher first shows the child the materials to be named- for example the rough and smooth boards, wooden tablets covered with different grades of rough and smooth sandpapers. As she or he runs fingers over each, the teacher gives the child the referring vocabulary, “ rough” and “ smooth”.

For the second period the teacher tests the recognition: " Give me the rough one," " Give me the smooth one. If the child is unable to pick the right one at this second stage, the teacher does not correct the child but assumes that the child did not get the concept to begin with. The teacher would then repeat the presentation another day. If the child did correctly choose the rough one, the teacher would go on to the third period, holding up one of the sandpaper tablets and asking the child," What is this? " A great deal of vocabulary is taught in the primary classrooms through such lessons, and they give the teacher the opportunity to evaluate whether a child has mastered the key concepts. "

1. The First Period: Naming " This is" " Since the lesson in terminology should consist in establishing an association between a name and its object or with the abstract concept of the name itself, both object and name should strike the child's understanding at the same time, but only the name itself, and not some other word, should be pronounced." - Maria Montessori 5

The association of the sensory perception with the name. The child is presented with three colors. Presenting the first- " This is red"-then another- " This is yellow"-then the last- " This is blue". This could also be called the period of " introduction".

Seguin suggests we leave the object under the child's observation for a few seconds in order of the child to absorb the impression accurately." 6 When proceeding to the next period, always begin with the object you did last in the preceding period. This helps maintain a certain continuity.

2. The Second Period: Recognition “ Show me” The Second period begins a few moments later and is there to ascertain whether the child had managed to make the correct associations. The teacher asks the child questions very slowly and distinctly, using only the noun or adjective that has been taught e. g. “ Which one is blue? Which one is yellow?” or “ Show me blue.” The child will be asked to point his finger at the relevant object and the teacher knows whether or not he has understood. This stage is the most important one of the three and comprises the real lesson and assistance to the associative memory. This could also be called the period for Practice.

The teacher can vary the order that the objects are presented in . This helps to differentiate between when the child has just memorized the order, and when the child has actually memorized the names. Be sure to spend a lot of time in the second period. 7

When the teacher sees that the child understands she can repeat the question a number of times to confirm the relationship and fix it in his mind. If, however, she sees that he has been unable to do so she does not correct him, but suspends the exercise without letting the child feel in any way uncomfortable, and delays it until another day.

3. The Third Period: Recall “ What is” The third period is a rapid verification of the first one. It consists of the teacher asking the child “ What color is this?” and the child replying appropriately “ It is blue” etc. Again this stage can be repeated a few times to aid the association. Montessori saw that this technique could be introduced to all areas of the curriculum where a child needed to make a particular association. What was important was that the

teacher was sensitive to the developmental levels of the child. Should she discover that he was not ready to make the appropriate mental step, she should not in any way coerce or correct him, but should be content to wait for another opportunity.

“ The senses, being explorers of the world, open the way to knowledge. Our apparatus for educating the senses offers the child a key to guide his explorations of the world, they cast a light upon it which makes visible to him more things in greater detail than he could see in the dark, or uneducated state.” 8

Montessori was very influenced by the work of Edouard Seguin. He specialized in working with mentally deficient children and had developed a series of exercises that helped to train their senses and to teach them the skills of everyday life.

He also felt that the education systems of that time denied children the possibility to develop their individual potentials. “ Respect for individuality”, he wrote, “ is the first test of a teacher” and he contrasted it with “ the violent sameness of most of education.”

9. Montessori would also have been familiar with the work of Rousseau and Pestalozzi, both of whom emphasized the importance of the training of the senses. She started her career working with special needs children and had seen how effective the results of specific sense exercises were. She began to be curious about how working with such materials would effect normal children.

Based on her knowledge of the earlier apparatus designed for this purpose, and on her observations of the children in her care, she began gradually to develop her own set of materials. It was always the spontaneous activities of the child that came first though, and the materials second.

The need for order, exactness, self-correction and reflection – all were qualities that Montessori saw were needed in order for the children to develop as they should. When she saw that children were particularly drawn to certain activities she then concentrated on developing materials that would extend that interest.

She carefully took each of the senses and thought how best she could help the children to clarify and expand their existing experiences. By isolating specific qualities in the materials and by grading each set in ever-refined series, she was able to give the children the ability to increasingly refine each of their senses. The following writing by Maria Montessori explains why and how to isolate the sense and extremes.

“ Material for training the senses comprises a system of objects which are grouped together according to some definite quality which they possess, such as color, shape, dimension, sound, surface texture, weight, temperature, etc. Examples of these are: A set of bells which reproduce musical tones; a collection of tablets which present different colors in a graduated scale; a group of solids which have the same shape but graduated dimensions and others which differ among themselves in geometrical form; things of different weight but of the same size, etc. Every single group of objects represents the same quality but in different degrees; there is

consequently a regular but gradual distinction between the various objects and, when this is possible, one that is mathematically fixed... Every series of objects... is graded so that there is a maximum and a minimum, which determines its limits, or which, more properly, are fixed by the use which a child makes of them." 10

The following writing form The discovery of the child describes how to isolate the difficulty.

“ One ought to begin with very few contrasting stimuli, for which purpose is collected a number of objects similar in kind but showing gradation, growing finer and less perceptible. For example, when it is a matter of recognizing tactile differences, we begin with only two surfaces, one perfectly smooth and the other very rough; if we are experimenting with the weight of things, first will be presented tablets which are the lightest of the series and afterward the heaviest; for sounds, the two extremes of the graduated series are offered; for colors, the brightest and most highly contrasting tints like red and yellow are chosen; for shapes, a circle and a triangle, and so on. In order to make the differences still clearer, it is well to mix together with the greatest contrasts the identities (in contrast to the great differences), offering a double series of objects; in a mixture of pairs, in which all are mixed in confusion, would be sought similar things two by two—two sounds equally loud and two equally faint, two things having the same yellow colour and two of an identical red. ”

11. The following are some examples for isolate the sense, isolate the difficulty and isolate the extremes 1. Visual Discrimination: example: Broad

Stair Isolate the sense: The child learns to differentiate the thickness of the stairs. Isolate the level of difficulty: Child arranges the stairs from thickest to thinnest. Isolate the extremes: The child compares the thickest and the thinnest stairs. 2. Auditory Discrimination: example: Sound Cylinders

Isolate the sense: The child learns to differentiate the sounds. Isolate the level of difficulty: The child matches the sounds and pairs them Isolate the extremes: When grading, the child grades the sound cylinders from soft to loud. 3. The Tactile Sense: example: The Fabric Box

Isolate the sense: The child differentiates the fabric textures. Isolate the level of difficulty: The child matches the fabric squares based on the matching textures Isolate the extremes: The child can feel ' rough' and ' smooth'. 4.

The Baric Sense: example: The Baric Tablets

Isolate the sense: The child differentiates the weight of the tablets. Isolate the level of difficulty: The child matches the tablets based on their weight. Isolate the extremes: The child can feel the lightest tablet and the heaviest tablet. 5. Thermic sense: example: The Thermic Bottles

Isolate the sense: The child differentiates between the temperatures of the bottles Isolate the level of difficulty: The child matches the bottles based on their temperatures. Isolate the extremes: The child can feel hot and cold bottles 6. Olfactory sense: example: The Smelling Jars

Isolate the sense : The child differentiates between the smells. Isolate the level of difficulty: The child matches the jars based on the smells. Isolate the

extremes: The child can smell sweet smell and pungent smell. 7. Gustatory sense: example: The Tasting Jars

Isolate the sense: The child differentiates between the tastes. Isolate the level of difficulty: The child matches the matching tastes. Isolate the extremes: The child can taste sweet and bitter.