

Montessori philosophy

Literature, Russian Literature



It is certainly true that the range of autonomy related to the early childhood has always been considered a key drive toward individual growth. According to that, appropriate variables and constraints need to be understood and, some essential requirements need to be met, when focusing on the importance of fostering the child's autonomy instinct at its start. For this reason, the main purpose of this essay is to develop an understanding of how, through an appropriate entourage, the right pathway for the child's self awareness and independence can be preserved and potentially encouraged.

Although a reasonable amount of different aspects, have to be strictly considered when dealing with early childhood behavior and understanding, the concept of independence impulse has been always considered a relevant key factor to be taken into account, in order to establish an holistic pathway for the child. “ The child's conquest of independence begins with his first introduction to life... A vital force is active within him and this guides his efforts towards their goal. It is the force called “ horne” (Montessori, 2007, p. 76).

Montessori (2007) argues that the need of independence, is to be intended as conceptually intrinsic to the active human being nature, getting it straight from the start. In fact, the early child's spontaneous purposeful approach is to try mastering challenges, on his/her own requested by the immediate surroundings. Furthermore, Montessori (1972) relies to the horne as the force that urges the child on to life, survival, and self construction, which in turn, is the motivation to explore life, to engage the child with the new alien environment.

At this stage - characterizing the first three years child's life - known as the "Spiritual Embryo", Montessori (1972, 2007) shows how, the primeval urge of the child, is only ruled by unconscious intentions, where the only need for child is to absorb as much as possible through the immediate environment, not taking care of other's needs. Obviously, the Spiritual Embryo stage - where the child shows an egocentric attitude towards the life's social peculiarity - gradually begins to decline.

On the other hand, the child shows interest in the social context, beginning to consider other's needs in a social perspective and, to discriminate the world through a rational behavior, the "will" (Montessori, 2012). Through this new perspective, the child will be able to discern his/her environment being able to identify conceptual frameworks. "Will is a conscious elaboration of the intelligence, a consequence of reasoning, etc" (Montessori, 2012, p. 123). A conceivable pedagogic environment, is the final result of intersecting different key factors, together with the concept of freedom.

According to Montessori, (1972, p. 110) "To assist a child we must provide him with an environment which will enable him to develop freely". In addition, as pointed out by Isaacs (2010) and Lillard (1972) to create a favourable environment, the sensitive periods of child's development need to be focused (Montessori, 2007). The nursery physical appearance perceived by children when entering it, for the first time, is quite relevant. Actually the atmosphere must be aesthetically pleasing and, a sense of continuity and reassurance between the home environment and the nursery needs to be settled so that the child can feel emotionally and physically safe.

In order to support a family environment, the classes are mixed and organized in vertical grouping in order to promote the sense of responsibility and social cohesion as well. Children begin a new routine characterized by every day life activities (MCI, 2010). Such activities are free to chose by children, in order to set an emotional bridge between home and the new environment they are involved in. In addition, children become more and more independent from adults because such activities are focused on the care of self, care of the environment and aim to refine their motor skills improving coordination and cognitive development.

According to the beauty of the environment, the element of nature plays an important role, as well, because children are free to move, to experiment and to capture the essence of the real life through outdoor activities. Also the predictability and the exactitude (Montessori, 1972), of how the environment is arranged, are relevant key factors. In fact, through a consistent and thorough environment, the child is enabled to engage activities, being self - confident in order to achieve independence.

According to that, Isaacs (2012) observes that, although a massive amount of Montessori schools are flourishing around the world, dealing with different cultures, some standard Montessori requirements as, the use of learning material and the organization of learning activities on the shelves should be preserved regardless of nationality. Actually, according to Montessori (1972) the accurate way, they are disposed on the shelves, implies and mirrors the child's inner urge of order.

Furthermore, also dedicated sizes, colours, textures, shapes and materials used for the equipment are first essential peculiarities, because they have to

be manageable and affordable for children. Such features can potentially influence and monitor children's appealing and concentration. As Montessori argues: (2007, p. 202) " Only he can organize his psychic life. None of us can do it for him. Indeed, it is just here that the importance of our school really lies". Although the activities can be chosen in freedom by children, they have to be responsible on their own, about their choice and about what this could affect the environment.

In addition they have always to keep in mind the ground rules and the common sense when behave in a social community (MCI, 2010). As the learning materials, have been selected in order to pursuit and facilitate an intellectual, emotional and functional independence for the child, they need to be determined by an explicit indicator to make children aware of their possible errors. So, according to Montessori (1972) children can control themselves autonomously, through an evident and palpable check, and consequently the error will be more comprehensible and easier to deal with.

Although the environment, the activities and the materials are child- focused and exhaustive according their potential and, about how much they can offer to the child's need of autonomy, the teacher plays an important role, as well, being a rational coordinator between children and the favourable environment. As Montessori argues (2010, p. 149) " A teacher, therefore, who would think that he could prepare himself for his mission through study alone would be mistaken".

When Montessori refers to the role of the teacher, she does not define it as a job, but she speaks about a mission, about a spiritual preparation. The teacher's aim is to observe the children within the environment, considering

that children are process-focused, while adults are target-focused. Only through the conscious tool of observation, the right individual didactic strategies for the child can be identified, considering the cognitive effort required by children in engaging in reflective, creative and collaborative activities. Obviously, the teacher must respect the children, must follow and trust them.

According to that, s/he is not allowed to interrupt a child when processing an activity because, freedom and time are the key point for the child's self-construction (Montessori 1972, 2007), in order to assimilate the whole tasks, through repetition and exercise as much as s/he needs. Furthermore, in order to reverse the relation between children/teacher, so that the transference of activity can be realized, the teacher needs to stay behind, not focusing the attention on his/her own, but on the contrary, she has to emerge through his/her spirit of self – abnegation.

Only through this approach, the teacher will be concerned about a spontaneous child's performance. Through the Case Study 1, Freddie has been introduced playing a puzzle and, watching a teacher introducing to Jonnie a refine motor skills activity (buttoning). Here, the spontaneous concentration, the need of order and the respect of the ground rules are shown. Freddie has been supposed to wait for Jonny to complete the activity. In the meanwhile the puzzle has been correctly replaced on the shelf, ready for another child.

Freddy's inner urges is evident in buttoning, trying to do it, on his own for several attempts before asking to be helped by a teacher. The teacher's attitude is clear: although she is observing Freddy's difficulties, she does not

interfere till she has not been asked. Freddy's assertion " I done it" evidently exemplifies his sense of fulfillment after repetition. Also the out-door environment is mentioned, where he has been allowed to play after asking for permission. Through the AEL activities he has improved care for self; he is able to dress/undress on his own.

Also the predictability of the environment is shown because Freddie knows where to look for staff, earning self-worth. Also the sense of will and the social attitude emerges because Freddie want to wait for two mates, to play outside. As far as I'm concerned, according to the previous synoptic analysis, the favorable environment (Montessori, 1972) can be beneficial to the child, because it spontaneously provides knowledge to be absorbed to reach independence. Being surrounded by an attentive context, it implies a long term investment for the child and for the society, as well.

Through the environment, child is offered an opportunity, " a return to what is normal" (Montessori, 1972, p. 148). Actually, through the activities provided, children are allowed to meet their individual needs and, day by day, they will be able to manage self-control and self-discipline. Gradually, the child will trust the environment, being able to nourish social expectations. In addition children will be aware about social convention, which in turn, will help them to adapt a proper behavior according to the context.