

Creativity and the child's imagination essay sample

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



What aspects of the Montessori environment and education keep the child in touch with reality? And how did Dr. Montessori suggest we best help develop the child's imagination? Introduction Maria Montessori advocated a "prepared environment" for children, where they are provided an opportunity to grow independently with the least assistance from an adult. Being a simple, bright and beautiful setup, the environment itself draws the child towards learning. Such an environment is crucial to help nourish the child's curiosity, imagination and keep him connected to the real world.

It is the responsibility of the Montessori teacher to create such an inviting atmosphere where children can truly let their thoughts and minds develop. Development Montessori environment is essentially based on reality and nature. Montessori believed that a child's learning begins from the day he is born, simply by absorbing from his surroundings. Even at the little age of less than an year, his mind has soaked so much information from around him, that he begins to understand facial expressions, spoken words and is able to respond accordingly.

This absorbent mind is also at work when the child is in the Montessori prepared environment which is similar to the real world. By providing the children with situations similar to the ones they witness in their homes or around themselves on a daily basis, they are provided greater opportunities to explore and develop insights. The prepared environment is present with real objects instead of toys. There is a vast array of "Montessori materials" based on sequential learning, which are placed in special places for special purposes.

Being organized on open and clutter free shelves, the materials are easily chosen and returned as per the children's requirements. The teacher encourages the child to use his own power and judgment to select his choice of activity, take it from the designated shelf, and place it back once finished. Children are encouraged to carry out their daily activities independently. These may involve getting dressed or undressed with minimal help, packing and unpacking snack box, setting up meal table, gathering and collecting materials after an activity is completed etc.

As children perform these activities on a regular basis, they develop their skills to perfection and grow towards being self-dependent. The Montessori teacher is not required to work like a servant for the child, rather she provides a "dynamic link" which guides the child to freedom of choice and ability to perform irrespective of any assistance from an adult. The prepared environment hence aims to ready the child to join the real world with greater independence and confidence.

Another way in which the prepared environment helps the child's development, is by integration of real life objects inside the Montessori class, encouraging the child to actively participate in his own environment outside of the class. For example, I often found my sons intrigued about what happens inside a kitchen. They would bring forth questions regarding where the food came from, how it was prepared, how the taste of one food varies from another etc. I introduced them to child-size kitchen tools such as spoons, forks, ladles, bowls, plates, and jugs and we indulged in pouring and mixing activities of simple foods.

By providing them their own kitchen materials, I brought them closer to reality and yet providing the independence to use it as per their own imagination. Often, they would also accommodate foods made from play doh, paper, cardboard etc and were able to broaden their pretend play games, while being close to the base of realism. It came to my understanding early on, that if children are provided the appropriate means and activities, they only require little guidance to “ help themselves” develop their own personality and traits.

They gain greater independence in performing daily activities without being assisted, and begin an enjoyable journey of personality development. These crucial childhood years are often the deciding factor of a child's traits that pave the path for successful adulthood. By providing the child with tools inspired from “ reality”, it also served as a bonding time between me and my kids, as we indulged in the same activity, simultaneously, giving me the opportunity to exchange ideas, opinions, emotions, thoughts and instil strong moral values.

On more than one occasion, my sons showed keen interest in things of beauty and makeup. Initially I was hesitant about introducing them to “ feminine” things, but gradually I gave in to their curiosities, and was amazed at how wonderfully they could understand basic gender differences and several aspects that accompany them. Keeping them in touch with the reality of how men and women carry out activities different in nature, it was insightful and interesting for their little minds. This basic learning paved way for their imagination as discussed further.

Development of Imagination “ Imagination is the real substance of our intelligence. All theory and all progress comes from the mind's capacity to reconstruct something” (Maria Montessori, *The Child, Society and the World*). Montessori believed that the primary aim of the prepared environment is not to merely make the child understand, but to gently encourage his deepest imaginations to reveal themselves. In order to develop imagination, first a strong sense of reality must be in place.

As discussed previously, children are introduced to various types of sensorial materials, which provide them the opportunity to explore, construct, create and apply. To provide the children an opportunity for self-development, the montessori environment is prepared with a strong sense of reality, by inclusion of real life objects and activities. For example, there are real gardening tools like rake, hose, shovel, gloves, apron, water pouring jugs, which children can comfortably hold and use. They are exposed to true nature and outdoors where they dig, sow, plant, and learn about the miracles of Mother Nature in the most natural form.

Montessori believed that children achieved real learning joy when given freedom to make discoveries and connections in the real world. Hence, she advocated for teachers not to direct the child's imagination, but to merely help in its development. Without interfering too much with the child's activity, the teacher allows the child to perform duties on his own, thereby building greater confidence in self. These children also readily help one another when allowed to act independently. The “ reality based

environment”, coupled with “ independence” holds the key to development of imagination and unique ideas.

The child is now free to explore, create, build, according to his imaginations, with the realistic materials that he is familiarized with from a very young age. With time, he perfects his skills and is able to surpass all expectations of creativity and inventiveness. For example, as previously mentioned, when my sons were exploring my makeup and beauty products, my 2.5 yr would insist on trying the different brushes and colors. Through the power of reality coupled with imagination, he came up with unique ideas about mixing colors and creating new colors.

What began as a simple introduction of some objects, turned into a passion and he developed a liking for painting and mixing and experimenting with colors. On more than one occasion, I witnessed unique and creative ideas coming from the children as they would explore new objects. My elder son, 4 years, developed an interest in garden tools and devoted an extensive time of his day with nature. He was intrigued by how caterpillars turned to butterflies and went to great lengths chasing earthworms and squirrels.

With the amount of growing pollution being a great concern in our city, he also developed a keen sense of urge to help clean the air by planting more and more trees. Together, we planted and experimented by sowing different types of seeds and beans, and explored seasons and weather changes.

Conclusion “ The notion of the prepared environment and its high degree of order directly correlates to the unique way in which children naturally learn

and absorb information. The guide plays a vital role in the creation and maintenance of the specially prepared environment.

The influence of the prepared environment in the Montessori setting is what allows for children to take pride in their discoveries and forms the foundation for a lifetime love of learning. " (<http://tothelesson.blogspot.in/2013/04/what-is-prepared-environment.html>)

Bibliography

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2. Montessori, Maria The Child, Society and the World
3. Internet <http://montessoritraining.blogspot.in/2010/10/montessori-and-imagination-first-plane.html><http://tothelesson.blogspot.in/2013/04/what-is-prepared-environment.html>