

Role of montessori teacher essay



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The Montessori teacher plays a radically different role from more well-known roles in relation to children such as parent, babysitter, friend, primary grades teacher or traditional pre-school teacher. The vision we all have of a teacher, standing before the blackboard and giving a good lesson to the whole class, is very seldom a part of what Montessori teachers do. This is because the founder of this new challenging educational system for young children below six years old, Dr. Maria Montessori believed that teachers should focus on the child as person, not on the daily lesson plan. She also believed that Montessori teacher's ultimate objective is to help the children to learn how to learn independently, retaining the curiosity, creativity, and intelligence with which they were born. Therefore, Montessori teachers do not simply present lessons; they are facilitators, mentors, coaches, and guides for the children. To underscore the very different role played by adults in her school, Montessori used the title 'directress' instead of teacher.

In Italian, the word 'directress' implies the role of the coordinator or administrator of an office or factory. Today, many Montessori schools prefer to call their teachers as 'guides'. The Montessori teachers have four principle goals and they are as listed below:

- To awaken the child's spirit and imagination.
- To encourage the natural desire for independence and high sense of self-esteem.
- To help children develop the kindness, courtesy, and self-discipline that will allow them to become a full member of society.

- To help children learn how to observe, question, and explore ideas independently.

The Montessori teacher recognises that her role is not so much to teach as to inspire, mentor and facilitate the learning process. " The real work of learning belongs to the individual child. Because of this, the

Montessori educator remains conscious of her role in helping each child fulfil his potential as a human being and of creating an environment for learning within which children will feel safe, cherished and empowered.

(The Montessori Way, Chapter 2, Pg. 38) The teacher prepares the learning environment and uses the children's interests to enrich the curriculum and provide alternate avenues for accomplishment and success. Before discussing the roles and responsibilities of Montessori teacher and her extrinsic preparations, Figure 1 may help to illustrate the difference between Montessori method of teaching and traditional teaching. Figure 1: Three Elements in Teaching The traditional teaching is a simpler affair.

In traditional teaching model, the primary direction of influence among the three parts is from the teacher to the child. Materials and environment are seen as of a secondary importance; their role is primarily to support the teacher's instruction. Thus in this traditional model, the heaviest arrow comes from the teacher to the child. The teacher teaches and the children listen. A lighter curved arrow shows that the teacher (not the child) uses the materials and to a lesser extends the environment, to deliver instruction.

While in Montessori method, half of the diagram shows the heaviest line is a two way arrow indicating interaction between the child and the environment. A heavy line between teacher and environment and materials shows the importance of the teacher's role as developer and maintainer of the learning environment. She must organise the environment and in some cases create materials for the class of children. A light arrow shows that the teacher still has some responsibility for teaching the child directly. We saw the important

link between teacher and environment and materials and the children in Montessori method.

Therefore, a good Montessori teacher must always prepare herself first by being well acquainted with the materials and keep it constantly before her mind. This constitutes a major part of the preparation of a teacher. It is important for her to acquire a precise knowledge of the techniques that have been experimentally determined for the presentation of the material and for dealing with the child so that he is effectively guided. A teacher should not simply look at the materials, study it in a book, or learn its use through the explanations of another.

Rather, she must exercise with it for a long time, trying in this way to evaluate through her own experience and difficulties of, or the interests inherent in, each piece of material that can be given to a child, trying to interpret, although imperfectly, the impressions which a child himself can get from it. She can study theoretically certain general principles that will be very useful to guide her in actual practice, but it is only through experience that she will acquire those delicate insights needed for treating different individuals.

Moreover, if a teacher has enough patience to repeat an exercise as often as a child, she can measure in herself the energy and endurance possessed by a child of a determined age. This helps the teacher to grade the materials and thus judge the capacity of a child for a certain kind of activity at a given stage of his development. A teacher “ should not hold back minds that are more developed by giving them materials beneath their individual capacities

and thus bore them; and, on the other hand, she should not present objects to others who cannot as yet appreciate them and thus discourage their first childish enthusiasm.

(The Discovery of the Child, Chapter 10, P. 151). Another essential step toward becoming a successful Montessori teacher is to develop her self-knowledge. For this, a teacher must be a growing person, one who is involved in ever striving toward his or her own potential. In order to be involved in this process of becoming, a person must have a realistic knowledge of self and be capable of reflecting objectively on one's own capabilities and behaviour. " The real preparation for education is a study of one's self.

The training of the teacher who is to help life is something far more than learning ideas. It includes the training of character; it is a preparation of the spirit. " (The Absorbent Mind, Chapter 12, P. 131). It is always said that an educator or teacher should not stop reading and learning new things, keeping her updated with current issues, observe things happening around her and keep her imagination alive. All these will help her to be able to answer appropriately to all the questions asked by her children. A good Montessori teacher must always understand her relations with children.

To discover defects that have become part and parcel of the teacher's consciousness requires help and instruction. Montessori felt that the teacher, by examining herself in this way would begin to understand what it is that stands in the way between an adult and a child. " The adult has not understood the child or the adolescent and therefore in continual strive with

him. The remedy is not that the adult should learn something intellectually, or complete a deficient culture. He must find a different starting point.

The adult must find himself the hitherto unknown error that prevents him from seeing the child as he is. "(DMT 101 Montessori Philosophy, Chapter 7, P. 78-79). To see the child as he is, is made difficult for us adults on account of our own defects. Because of this defective vision the teacher is generally too much occupied in looking for defective tendencies also in the child, and seeking to correct them. According to Montessori, " We must first remove the beam from our own eyes, and then we shall see more clearly how to remove the mote in the child's.

In this " removing the beam from her own eyes" consists the spiritual training of the teacher. " (Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work, Chapter 18, P. 299). The teacher should not assume that the child is an empty vessel waiting to be filled with our knowledge and experience. It is important to understand that the child has his own potential for life and teacher together with the environment should help the child to reveal his own potentials. Therefore, the teacher must aim to diminish her egocentric and authoritarian attitude toward the child and adopt a passive attitude in order to aid in his development.

She must recognise her role as a secondary one and approach the child with humility. In order to understand and follow the child, the Montessori teacher must develop the desire and ability to observe him. " The teacher must bring not only the capacity, but the desire to observe natural phenomena. In our system, she must become a passive, much more than an active, influence,

and her passivity shall be composed of anxious scientific curiosity, and of absolute respect for the phenomenon which she wishes to observe.

The teacher must understand and feel her position of observer: the activity must lie in the phenomenon. (Montessori-A Modern Approach, Chapter 3, P. 79-80). Observation helps the teacher to determine where her children are in terms of development. This information is used by teachers to know when to intervene in a child's learning with a new lesson, a fresh challenge, or a reinforcement of basic ground rules. Anyway, the skill of observing her child's learning and behaviour should be developed by practice and for that she has to be 'trained'.

Training of the teacher's spirit involves three main elements. They are as below: Interest In Humanity: The teacher must first study how to purify her heart and render it burning with charity towards the child. She must have intimate relationship with children in her classroom and regard herself " as one that serves" instead of someone whose duty is to mould the growing personalities. " Montessori compares the directress to a humble labourer who works at the task of building up the child's freedom.

This is a lowly task requiring minute knowledge and patient attention. The child cannot attain to true freedom without the help of the teacher. "(Maria Montessori: Her Work and Life, Chapter 18, P. 301) The teacher must make her preparations; but at the same time she must duly observe the limits of her interference by leaving the child free to choose his work. To see children as individuals: The Montessori teacher must have the ability to see children as individuals, each unique and unlike any other.

“ Now, child life is not an abstraction; it is the life of individual children.

There exists only one real biological manifestation: the living individual; and toward single individuals, one by one observed, education must direct itself.

” (Montessori-A modern Approach, Chapter 3, P. 80). Since every child has its own potential for life, the teacher’s duty is to provide a conducive environment to aid their psychic development.