

Montessori education

Education



MONTESSORI EDUCATION Today one of the most influencing educational theories in American schooling and in many other parts of the world is the Montessori Method of education. Montessori Method of education was developed by an Italian educator Maria Montessori (1870-1952) and is based on strong scientific research that focuses on understanding the enjoyment of learning. It is developed based on theories of developmental psychology and neurophysiology, as Dr. Montessori was a practicing physician and her experience in psychiatric clinic contributed immensely in developing her ideas on how to improve the learning environment. One of the most important differences between the Montessori Method and other traditional methods is that the Montessori Method focuses on enhancing the natural enjoyment of learning.

The following are the main principles of Montessori Education:

According to Dr. Montessori there are several “sensitivity periods” of development during which a child’s brain is chiefly open to learning definite skills or knowledge; From the birth to about the age of six children have an, “absorbent mind” through which they acquire boundless impetus to gain knowledge of and attain proficiency within their world. This is also a period where children perfect their skills and understandings; Movement enhances thoughts and learning. In other words this theory is against the traditional way of classroom teaching where the children have to sit in their respective places and the teacher imparts the knowledge from the text; Children do well when they are interested and get involved or actively participate in the learning process; Children are competent of independent learning, and learning is enhanced by having a sense of control within a learning environment; Order in the classroom environment is favourable for children’s

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learning; Children generally learn on their own during periods of independent powerful focus; Children become skilled through self-discovery, and learn from their own mistakes (Stoudenmier, N. D).

The Montessori educational system is unique and is gaining much popularity around the world. It has effectively undergone continued development for more than seventy years and has been used successfully among various categories of children such as mentally retarded, physically handicapped, normal, and gifted children. Several researchers point out that one of the significant reasons for its success and popularity is that it is a comprehensive method of education consequent from a combination of research on development, learning, curriculum, and teaching. Montessori approach works with the basic nature of the child rather than against it.

There are several studies that have compared the traditional method of teaching and the Montessori education. Some of the most common and significant differences between these systems are as follows:

A Montessori program teaches to individuals instead of to groups. In many traditional classrooms, lessons are presented by the teacher to a group of students. The advantage of individual teaching in Montessori's aid the teacher to address the specific needs of a child and be more familiar with the child. The various activities in the Montessori schools help children to learn through practice rather than listening and memorising. The Montessori programme is much broader than many other programs. It begins with the basics such as motor development, emotional development, and also helps children to develop a strong basis in language and math, and also subjects such as physical and cultural geography, zoology, botany, physical science, history and art. Several methods are also established for making the children

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independent such as practical skills for everyday life such as cooking, carpentry, and sewing. Additionally, the Montessori program emphasises on self-discipline without the use of any rewards or punishments. Montessori materials are cautiously designed and methodically researched to fit the developmental needs and characteristics of children and the teachers are trained in such a way to teach respect and positive values. It helps the children to become self-sufficient and disciplined individuals contributing to the society (Montessori School of Leesburg, N. D).

Today there are thousands of Montessori schools throughout the world and the awareness of this system of education is increasing the interest of public school teachers and administrators in the Montessori Method of education. However, since the popularity of this system is increasing and a number of schools are claiming to follow the Montessori Method of education, there are no set standards and accreditation procedures to evaluate these schools. Even though there are few Montessori schools that teach children beyond the age of elementary school, it is in general for preschoolers in most parts of the world. As a result the students leaving Montessori schools for further studies in the public schools find themselves to a great extent lost in a system that is fundamentally different from their Montessori schools (Sterneman, 2010).

References

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