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# MoRE - Montessori Research Europe Newsletter

# 1

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Montessori school in Frankfurt, 1956

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## Editorial Clara Tornar

Dear members of MORE,

welcome to our first issue of the MoRE Newsletter in the year 2012.

There you will find interesting contributions and news about scientific initiatives concerning Montessori, including the next Congress of Montessori Europe, which this year will be held in Italy, October 26th to 28<sup>th</sup>, at Roma Tre University.

In particular, I would like to recall your attention to this event because, as usual, our next meeting is scheduled within it (Sunday 28th, 9 am).

This year I would like to propose the following specific points around which to focus our discussion:

- a. A directory of researches and data collection to establish a database (see questionnaire developed for this purpose). Current situation.
- b. Recent researches conducted by members: possible presentation and discussion.
- c. Possibility / Need for sharing of methodologies and tools in order to collect comparable research data. Drafting of an agreed protocol.

d. Proposal for a new coordinator of the Network for the next year 2013.

e. Any additional topics.

I will be pleased, of course, to receive from your part further ideas and proposals to discuss together.

I sincerely thank those who contributed to this newsletter. I hope that you will enjoy it!

With kindest regards,

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## Contributions

### The contemporary context of Montessori pedagogy in the light of modern psychology

Iwona Sikorska  
(Poland, Institute of Applied Psychology,  
Jagiellonian University)

#### I. Maria Montessori's pedagogy as an inspiration for contemporary education

Maria Montessori created her first institution over one hundred years ago. Thanks to the progress in knowledge, development in social sciences and interdisciplinary synthesis, we can now talk about many similarities between Montessori's ideas and the results of psychological and pedagogical research in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

The article is going to present a parallel between Montessori's ideas, especially their theoretical basis, and modern psychological concepts of cognition and emotion. The parallel includes:

- The concept of flow according to Mihály Csikszentmihályi and Maria Montessori's idea of the polarization of attention
- The concept of multiple intelligences by Howard Gardner and Maria Montessori's idea of multi-sensory learning and the importance of kinesthetic movement
- The concept of emotional intelligence by Peter Salovey and John Mayer and Maria Montessori's requirement for joy and passion in education.

#### II. The concept of flow and the polarization of attention

##### 1. What is the similarity between the two phenomena?

*"The sense of flow is a state of deep concentration on action as such (Nakamura, Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Several conditions are to be met for this state to occur: the action is personally important for someone performing it; the action is characterized by great fluency; the action is taken in an attempt to transgress the person's own achievements in the area. On the one hand, the sense of flow is characterized by a vivid consciousness of present activity and a feeling of total control. On the other hand, it is connected with the relaxation of the consciousness of other aspects of the self, situation and progress of time" (Trzebińska, p. 50).*

The definition above speaks about a deep immersion into the activity, feeling of complete absorption in the current occupation. The feeling of flow is a special kind of state that is motivated internally and is connected to the feeling of immense pleasure experienced by a person without being engaged in the activity. Inner motivation, joy and satisfaction from the results of the activity are those dimensions that seem to be highly important in the process of education.

*"Although there is more to inner motivation than just a positive affect, it is worth noting that positive emotions are strongly connected to experiences of this kind. The feeling of satisfaction is very often a suitable measure of inner motivation. This seems quite sound because it explains why we should do something for reasons other than the fact that we simply like to do something, in the situation where there are no outer awards or challenges" (Linley, Joseph, 2007, p. 24).*

In the accounts of Montessori's pedagogical ideas, we come across a phenomenon which seems to resemble the sense of flow described by positive psychology. The polarization of attention can be understood as an ability to focus on an interesting activity, which leads not only to the quality performance, but most of all to the maximum intensity of child's concentration.

The polarization of attention is a highly desirable phenomenon in the process of education because it facilitates effective and pleasurable knowledge and skills acquisition. It is a state that allows quick and easy learning, which according to Montessori a child should experience as often as possible and, thus, broaden its knowledge. In a nutshell, the accumulation of individual experience and the acquisition of new skills will be easy, pleasurable and effective, if the polarization of attention accompanies the process.

*"The polarization of attention on a certain object or activity provokes inner change, raises a child's awareness and organizes its movements. A child becomes calmer and more intelligent. It is a moment of crystallization in which certain characteristics are established, including patience and perseverance" (Surma, 2008, p. 48).*

##### 2. Applications for education

The recognition of importance and validity of both the polarization of attention and the sense of flow is not sufficient for obtaining satisfactory educational results. The key question remains: what is the way of obtaining the desirable results?

*“According to Montessori, the polarization of attention cannot be arbitrarily induced, forced or produced. It emerges in the space of freedom, even though its genesis can be accompanied by external difficulties. It arises as a result of free and mature decisions taken when accomplishing certain tasks”* (Surma, 2008, p. 48). Hence the following answer: maximum freedom of choice, independence, work in one’s own rhythm and according to one’s own interests are necessary conditions of effective education. According to Montessori, all children’s activities should take place in the environment of freedom. It is an essential factor for a full growth of personality and a feeling of being free and happy. However, this process is not about supporting a child’s willfulness:

*“[...] freedom and discipline are two aspects of the same thing, they are inseparable like two sides of the coin (...) it lies not in the fact that one can do everything one wants and to which external conditions invite, It rather lies in the fact that one can do what is considered to be right, In a straightforward manner, without any reluctance and inhibitions”* (Standing, 1995, p. 174).

*III. Howard Gardner’s concept of multiple intelligences and Maria Montessori’s multi-sensory learning and the importance of movement*

### 1. A child is intelligent in many ways

Types of intelligences described by Gardner are as follows: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, naturalistic, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and existential.

In their accounts of multiple intelligences, Gardner and his followers indicate most of all the functional aspects of the model, including the application of this knowledge in the education of a young person (Gardner, 2002). This is connected with the necessity to modernize the approach to education, its means of transferring knowledge and student evaluation. The centuries of tradition in European education has accustomed us to thinking about school aims mainly as knowledge acquisition. Initially, education was about the reproduction of the remembered knowledge. After that, the application of knowledge was emphasized. Only recently, the Socratic debate has resurfaced as a way of common arrival at knowledge.

Montessori pedagogy very often emphasizes the necessity for relating the content taught to children’s senses, their motor abilities in

particular. What is characteristic of Montessori’s anthropology is that it recognizes the fundamental importance of motor activities for a child’s proper development.

*“Montessori believes that man is the most active of all living creatures. Man is a creature that maintains equilibrium thanks to its inner life and whose body is a sign and symbol of its mind”* (Helming, 1995, p. 97).

The importance of movement results from its stimulating effect on the following fields:

- Sensory development: contact with tangible objects improves children’s sensory development.
- Abstract thinking development: manual activities allow children to learn and cognize the world through sensory memory. Tactile sensations trigger the process whereby a concrete apprehending of an object turns into its conceptualization, which in turn creates the abstract representation of the world.
- Will-power development: movement is becoming increasingly arbitrary, dependent on individual acts of volition and connected with children’s own decisions and plans.
- Social development: movement facilitates the process of making social contacts, expressing children’s own emotions and non-verbal communication.

### 2. Attempts at integration

Two theories can be mentioned which creatively follow Maria Montessori’s recommendations for educational practice in that they respect children’s natural needs and their individual optimal learning modalities: the brain-compatible education theory of Susanne Kovalik (1989) and Paul Dennison’s educational kinesiology (1985).

Kovalik owes her idea of disseminating knowledge on the specific nature of sensory modalities effective in child learning to her associations with Maria Montessori’s pedagogy. The latter furnished the basis for Kovalik’s systematic proposal on how to diagnose types of learners (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile, and mixed) and devise teaching environments which are better suited to their needs. Kovalik integrates the recommendations of Montessori’s approach with Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences. Since traditional school primarily engages linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence to the neglect of other types, Kovalik posits that teachers should be encouraged to develop their repertoire of teaching techniques.

*“Many children learn it the hard way. Unable to meet their teacher’s expectations, they believe themselves worse and less intelligent than their peers who think along expected lines. Other types of intelligence are also important for success in life. And yet it is not unusual to see that an inability to learn via linguistic or logical-mathematical intelligence, even if other types are used, often translates into serious scholastic failure [...]”* (Grochulska\_Stec, 1995, p. 46).

Paul Dennison’s educational kinesiology arose from the rejection of traditional forms of schooling. It is based on the assumption that the learning process does not take place in the head alone.

*“The idea that intellectual activity can occur in isolation from the body is deeply entrenched in our culture. It is related to the idea that everything we do with our bodies, our bodily functions, impressions and emotions, is somehow lower and less human. This view underlies many approaches to educational theory and practice”* (Hannaford, 1995, s. 2).

Brain gymnastics proposed by Dennison provide a means to implement “whole-brain” approach, one that would engage several senses, types of activity and intelligence at once. The main purpose is to activate both brain hemispheres and create new neural connections through the cooperation between the senses. Employing movement in the teaching process as much as possible and allowing for movement breaks during classes has a physiological (increased blood and oxygen supply to the brain) and a motivational effect on the students.

*IV. The concept of emotional intelligence by Peter Salovey and John Mayer and Maria Montessori’s requirement for joy and passion in education*

### **1. Multiple human skills and capabilities**

High emotional intelligence makes it easier to recognize, name, and manage one’s emotions. These abilities are referred to as the psychological or intrapersonal component of emotional intelligence. The social skills component, on the other hand, otherwise known as interpersonal competence, includes empathy, assertiveness, persuasiveness, and two skills important in group interaction: leadership and cooperation. Praxeological competence includes skills needed for effective action, such as motivation, adaptability, and diligence.

### **2. The need to develop the complex and unique personality of each child**

When analyzing Maria Montessori’s pedagogy for parallels to the theory of emotional intelligence, we find suggestions on how to organize the learning context and choose educational techniques to liberate the child’s potential for joy. Child learning occurs thanks to a receptive mind through

*“The unconscious process of learning. The child absorbs everything subconsciously and gradually transforms it on a path filled with joy and love”* (Montessori, 1994, str. 70).

There could be no clearer emphasis on the natural ability of each child to engage emotions in the development process. For Montessori, learning is inextricably linked with the feeling of power and competence, the joy of gaining control over new things. The acquisition of skills is a very natural process, which takes place in the well-known context of the child’s everyday life. Once the educational offer is adapted to the learner’s receptiveness stage, learning becomes effective, effortless, and easy. An additional advantage is the joy experienced when attempting a new skill and trying to perfect it; dominant emotions at that time include great interest, fascination, and rapture. Positive feelings, in turn, strongly motivate the child to explore new things. The child is able to focus on the task at hand with such intensity that the world outside nearly ceases to exist. Montessori believes that the child’s drive to work serves to prove the original unity of joy, creativity, and effort which brings fruit in the form of a new skill or product. It is not until adulthood that a split can be observed between pleasure, associated with play or hobbies, and duty – associated with work. (Helming, 1994).

The analysis of children needs described by Montessori shows numerous similarities with the system of competences proposed by researchers in the field of emotional intelligence.

*V. The contemporary context of Montessori pedagogy*

A comparison of the main ideas of Maria Montessori’s pedagogical approach with current research in psychology and human development allowed to draw numerous parallels. It is extremely interesting to observe how many patterns and phenomena related to children’s needs and optimal learning methods were already described by Maria Montessori almost 100 years ago. These phenomena were researched, proven



and expressed in a language which did not come from the field psychology, but still essentially referred to the same thing. The scientific foundations of Montessori pedagogy were finally confirmed many years after it was implemented in the educational process all over the world. Contemporary advances in methodology and the social sciences, as well as increased funding granted to research on large groups, currently allow to collect ample data proving the effectiveness of the teaching methods advocated by Maria Montessori.

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### The International spreading of Montessori pedagogy

*Paper presented at the Montessori International Conference "Today relevance of Montessori pedagogy", organized by ANINSEI, Roma Tre University-Centre for Montessori Studies. Rome, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2012.*

Gudula Meisterjahn-Knebel  
(Germany, President of Montessori Europe)

Thank you very much for this invitation. It is an honour for me to speak about the international spreading of Montessori education here at Rome and also at this place. At first let me say that it would be an unrealisable task to speak about the whole Montessori world. So for me it is only possible to say something concerning the world situation in common or in general because exact numbers of organisations, institutions or students/children in Montessori institutions don't exist we have only a rough estimate. And in consideration of the limited time, I have to speak with utmost precision.

What I have to tell you also at first is that at the beginning of my working life as a teacher in secondary schools and also at university I was very sceptical about the statements that were communicated about Montessori education. For me, at first all this was very strange and non-credible. You have to know that I'm not something like a Montessori apostle. I was convinced by the daily work, the visits of schools all over the world, observing children in their daily work in Montessori institutions and so on. So I really think that Montessori education is one of the most effective kinds of learning for all children. I would like to illustrate why.

Hence, my speech will point out the following five aspects:

1. The historical genesis of Montessori education, development and international worldwide spreading;
2. Montessori Europe – Achievements and priorities of the Montessori movement across Europe;
3. The benefits and advantages of Montessori education for children and wider society and the relevance of research to the continued development of Dr Montessori's theories and objectives;
4. Political and public awareness of Montessori pedagogy;
5. The main priorities for the Montessori movement – especially in Europe

### **1. The historical genesis of Montessori education, development and international worldwide spreading**

For children and young people Montessori education was from the beginning an opportunity to become an autonomous personality characterized by a self responsible self determination by following this way of education, a way first pioneered by Dr Maria Montessori in 1907.

You all know that the person the whole movement was named after – Dr Maria Montessori – was born 1870 in Italy – Chiaravalle. She was one of the first female physician in Italy but, after her groundbreaking work in education, she became internationally known as an educator and child advocate. She based her educational method on careful observation of children and the environment in which they learned best. Her observations and philosophies, based on the principle of fitting a child's learning environment to the child's developmental stage, are as true today as they were more than 100 years ago. Years of research and practice have validated their importance. Maria Montessori started her work in Rome in 1907 (San Lorenzo) with her first *Casa dei bambini*, based on the ideas of the French physicians Itard and Séguin who developed very early material for working with handicapped children. Her first book *Il Metodo della pedagogia scientifica applicato all'educazione infantile nelle case dei bambini* from 1909 was translated very quickly into different languages (more than twenty)) and accepted by society like a bestseller, especially in the USA. The first 5000 books of the translated *Il metodo* were sold within a few days. A lot of people travelled to Rome to have a look to that successful *Casa dei bambini*. And 1913 Dr Montessori herself travelled the first time to the USA, that was her international breakthrough.

Very quickly Dr Montessori became truly famous, also as a person. The result was a kind of an international celebration of her pedagogy from the beginning on, a lot of teacher trainings took place, institutions were founded, Montessori's theory and praxis were communicated.

So we have to state that this way of learning and living with children was very effective and widespread from the beginning on. Already during Maria Montessori's lifetime her method was diffused not only in Europe. This diffusion was something like a triumphal procession. In 1911 after the publication of *Il Metodo* first schools were founded in Italy, Switzerland, France, Great Britain, Argentina and the USA; models of Montessori schools were established in Paris, Boston and New York. 1912 the first international Montessori teacher training course took place in Rome. The extension to *Montessori primary schools* was achieved even before the First World War and wasn't really stopped by this event since Montessori kept on doing her work in the USA and Spain and from 1920 often in Great Britain. She lived and worked in Barcelona from 1916 to 1936.

Dr. Montessori started with teacher training courses in 1926 in Milan, Spain, France and Germany/Berlin, The Netherlands and Austria. In autumn 1926 she was invited to South America – Buenos Aires, La Plata and Córdoba. She mentioned first proposals with regard to secondary education – how to run a Montessori Lyceum. Many things happened during the subsequent years - it is impossible to mention them all. Many international Montessori conferences took place.

During that time the first national organisations were founded: the *American Montessori-Education-Society* in 1913, 1917 the *Netherland Montessori Society*, 1924 by Dr Montessori herself the *Italian Society Opera Nazionale Montessori (ONM)* at first located in Milan - Milano, 1925 the *German Montessori Association*, followed later on by the *Montessori Society AMI UK* and so on.

The first international society was founded **1929: the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI)**.

Unfortunately, the growth of this concept of education was after all stopped by a war, the Second World War. Otherwise we would have had even more Montessori associations, institutions, children and students learning in this kind of education. Goodness knows how many. Montessori education was from the very first an education without national restriction. It was and is

a fundamental reform of kindergarten, primary and a little bit later also of secondary education. Today there are more than 22 000 Montessori schools in 110 countries all over the world (AMI 2006). It is rather difficult to find out the right number because there still exist a lot of schools that are not AMI affiliated or accepted. So another number could be right: 40 000, mentioned by a Montessori company in the internet ([www.montessori-material.de](http://www.montessori-material.de)). However, there is no litmus test for calling a school a Montessori school. Even if one uses the criterion of accredited schools, the different Montessori organizations have very different accreditation criteria, with some adhering more closely to Dr. Maria Montessori's methods than others. Most of them are for children between 3 and 6 years of age, but you can find also many primary schools (round about 15 000 thousands) and maybe approx. 300-400 secondary schools, no universities but several teacher training institutes hosted at universities. - The last numbers are my own estimation after studying the worldwide situation)

The *Association Montessori Internationale* – AMI (located in Amsterdam) has affiliated societies in Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Mexico, Pakistan, Romania, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States, with four different groups.

In the last few years AMI supported also the founding of the *International Training Centre of Montessori Education of China* where in Hangzhou 2007 the first International Montessori Centenary Conference took place.

The situation in the **USA**: Two large organizations have been established – **AMS** in 1960 (American Montessori Society – Accreditation of schools and courses) and **AMI/USA** in 1972 (Association Montessori Internationale USA).

Members of AMS also belong to **MACTE** (Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education) and **IAME** (International Association for Montessori Education). Both organizations – MACTE and IAME – have members who are also part of AMI. An important part of AMI is **NAMTA** (North American Teachers Association). They are responsible for publications for courses, schools, videos, DVDs, an online bibliography of Montessori publications and so on. Part of MACTE is also the **PAMS** – Pan American Montessori Society (Mexico, South America, Texas, Latin America etc.).

So Montessori education is - because of its international character from the beginning on –

nowadays really an example for an international worldwide way of education. That must be strongly emphasized.

At the turn of the century in different European countries people thought about founding a European organisation and came together in 2000 to set up an European umbrella organisation: **Montessori Europe - ME**, based at Bonn, Germany.

## 2. Montessori Europe – Achievements and priorities of the Montessori movement across Europe

Montessori Europe is a movement established in 2000 to enable and encourage Montessori pedagogy at political, social and educational levels throughout Europe. It was founded by people from Norway, Sweden, Ireland, Poland, Austria, Switzerland and Germany.

The reason why we founded this organisation was that we noticed the insufficient educational cooperation at a European level, not only with regard to Montessori institutions.

In the first years the European Union (EU) clearly has placed two main aims to the fore: the securing of peace as well as economic unification. Educational policy played only a minor role. However in the last eight years EU programs have been established to promote cooperation and contacts in the areas of primary and secondary education in European schools.

We believe it is necessary for developing a true European community that the issue of education will take a role of paramount importance. Without any change in consciousness we will not be able to create the continent Europe in which all the aims named in various treaties can be achieved.

Montessori education plays a significant role in the given context because Montessori education is a world wide education. Each child all over the world could develop itself if we give them the possibility to take part in the Montessori educational system. It is really an international education. Maria Montessori herself was a citizen of the world and this it is what we all will probably be one day: citizen of the world as one contribution to live in peace.

From the beginning Montessori pedagogy was a pedagogy that surmounted borders because at the centre of it all was the child. Up to the year 2000 we had never had an European organization. But it is necessary as one presupposition of European union. The

differences between the educational systems must be overcome.

The main thing we aim to do is to coordinate the diverse activities that had evolved for the children's rights. This involves developing educational-political policy positions and statements and support their representation throughout Europe, as well as supporting the UN Convention for Children's Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Another important aim is to promote a European network of Montessori organisations, to promote cooperation and the unrestricted exchange of experiences and people, for Montessori teachers, pupils and parents.

It is not enough to be satisfied with the work in one's own area or in the private area. If we want to discuss and change the situation of the child and the youth we have a socio-political responsibility. Democracy as a highly complex social form of living: in particular it needs persons who actively participate in society. Montessori's idea of active man forms the basis for the development of personality through education. This is the idea of Montessori pedagogy: allowing a maximum of individuality and at the same time demanding responsibility for the community.

Montessori pedagogy offers education for life by providing free choice in a structured learning environment. Children of differing ages, abilities and backgrounds are integrated in Montessori environments. This leads to the development of a unique personality that is free, self-motivated and self-responsible.

Since 2000 the yearly conferences of Montessori Europe were held in Aachen (Germany, a border triangle – close to Belgium and The Netherlands), Dublin- Ireland, Salzburg – Austria, Lodz – Poland, again Dublin, Prague – Czech Republic, Gothenburg – Sweden, Vienna – Austria, Amsterdam – The Netherlands, Oxford – United Kingdom, Krakow – Poland, Bad Honnef-Bonn – Germany and 2011 Bratislava – Slovakia. In 2012, this year, our conference will be in Rome at the end of October (26-28.10.2012) in cooperation with Prof. Clara Tornar and the Università Roma Tre, Centro di Studi Montessoriani.

All these conferences were organised in cooperation with the help of the national Montessori organisations, schools and universities.

For an organisation like Montessori Europe it is important to cooperate. So we started to inform the AMI about our association in November 2003, we met each other in Amsterdam at the headquarter of AMI and we stay in contact all the time. Another cooperation is important for us: In November 2004 we signed a cooperation treaty with the European Forum for Freedom in Education (EFFE) to intensify the contact to Brussels. We are part of European meetings at Brussels and have had the chance to speak to the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth in 2007 to present the ideas of Montessori education. We are part of several meetings of EMIE (European Meeting of Independent Education) and ECNAIS (European Council of National Associations of Independent Schools).

All these activities point out the educational-political impact of Montessori Europe. We are mainly interested in international educational work on the basis of Montessori education, to show how it works, in international cooperation, in developing guidelines. We are not interested in earning money by arranging teacher trainings. Our work is honorary, it is non-profit.

### **3. The benefits and advantages of Montessori education for children and wider society and the relevance of research to the continued development of Dr Montessori's theories and objectives**

In terms of the advantages for children, Montessori education provides a child-centred education. The aims and objectives of a Montessori school are based on anthropology. The most important aim of education is to help the child to do it himself, means becoming independent from adults, which requires a deep trust in the child's potential. Also, this kind of education guarantees the freedom the child needs to explore. The child is free to choose its own learning tools, and to determine when, where, how long and with whom he or she works. Of course the boundary of this freedom is the freedom of others, so an inner self-discipline is asked of the children. The task of the teacher is to observe the child and to prepare the environment geared to the needs of each individual.

It means a shift from personal to environmental authority. All-in-all the individual child's development is at the centre of Montessori education.

Regarding the benefit to society, the Montessori ideal of 'active man' forms the basis for the



development of personality through education. The idea of Montessori pedagogy is to allow maximum individuality while demanding responsibility for the community. Empirical studies have shown the special abilities of Montessori-trained children in mathematics and science, and especially in social behaviour. These children are open-minded, interested in each other and know how to make decisions – important in a democratic society. In short, they participate in society and are able to change society where necessary. The basis for that is personality which is the result of child centred education that forces self-esteem. All this leads to the development of a unique personality that is free, self-motivated and self-responsible.

In this context research is becoming increasingly important. Dr. Maria Montessori was a scientist, trained in medical research. She believed and scientifically tried to prove that intrinsic, innate forces are directing the child in its physical and mental growth into adulthood and that development is a function of the interaction between inner potentials within the organism and the environment. Hence, she worked out her special way to live, learn and work with children, the so called Montessori 'method'.

The core of the Montessori approach is her cosmic theory and practise, the notion that all non-living and living beings should be viewed in cohesion, each participating, inter-functioning within a system. The human being as an individual cannot be divided in parts to study. Characteristic for this personality is the pursuit of independence, the mastering of autonomy. Different functions, marked as integral aspects of the person to be, can be interpreted as developmental fields. These fields can be studied, but can only be studied with the integral context in mind, since they are all related in the individual person (cf. Ewijk, Nico van: Guidelines to operate a Montessori-School (3-12), ME working paper 2011).

Montessori distinguishes sensorial, motor, volitional, cognitive, cultural, emotional, social, moral and creative domains. These fields are all fields of research. Besides those mainly individual fields of research it is necessary to have a closer scientific look at the teachers, of course, the schools and perhaps the parents.

We need to discuss the relevance of Montessori education as part of teacher training at universities, for example. Many people express doubts about the scientific basis of Montessori techniques, and often it is accepted as early

childhood teaching and nothing more. It is not recognised that in many countries Montessori education is a part of primary and increasingly secondary schooling. University faculties and a multitude of ministries in different countries ignore this fact, unfortunately. It is our task to remind everyone of the scientific basis of the method. The problem with most existing research is the relatively small number of students involved. Our vision is that students of European universities should be asked to take part in large-scale research, so that the results obtained are more accurate. We intend to ask the European Commission if it is possible to get a grant for such a project.

On the other hand there still exist quite a few empirical studies and research results. The past twenty years have seen a vast increase in the amount of scientific research confirming the Montessori approach, they have come to prove that Montessori's observations accurately describe the learning needs of children and have shown as well that the principles Dr. Montessori envisioned do create joyful learners. The most recent will be still published this year. It is a comprehensive research study about Waldorf- and Montessori-Secondary-Education with four main points in comparison:

- learning success
- values
- health
- cultural education.

Prof. Heiner Barz of the University of Düsseldorf (Germany) is coordinating the different studies and results. Still we have to say that the total number of empirical studies is moderate concerning the more individual aspects as well as the research about the academic effect of education. Rindskopf Dohrmann (2006) - for instance - from Milwaukee shows the significant advantage of Montessori students in Mathematics and Science at the end of secondary education. Lillard/Else Quest 2006 again compared Montessori trained children with others and showed that the advance of Montessori educated children in reading and Mathematics decrease after the age of 12. But the social competences are still higher, also creativity in writing. In Germany there are still some more similar researches from 2001, 2006, 2007, 2009 and 2010 out of Primary Schools ( all at Eck 2012). In summary most of the research deal with various aspects of the Montessori practise , the results of her specific way of learning especially in Montessori Primary Schools. Only a few studies exist as yet about Montessori Secondary Education or working with handicapped children.

There is a need of more research, of more evaluation.

#### **4. Political and public awareness of Montessori pedagogy**

Unfortunately there is not enough political and public awareness of Montessori pedagogy, the question is why. There is often the problem that Montessori and Waldorf education are confused because the history of both began at about the same time. We have to consider that there is a lot of misunderstanding in terms of public and political awareness. For me, the question is whether a holistic approach to education based on development and observation should be made more mainstream. Most educational legislation works against this, opting instead for a more “cookie-cutter”, “one-size-fits-all” approach, which is counter to Montessori education entirely. Many controversies are based on incorrect information. A lot of politicians think it is only for very small children or handicapped children, but Montessori wrote about an education up to university level. Or the fact that it is not a factory model of education. Moreover things Montessori education fosters (such as love of learning, social skills, creativity, peace) are not readily measurable by testing methods employed by governments. It is difficult to speak to politicians about our aims, but the Montessori Europe congresses are one good way to spread the word, or today to speak here at Rome but again in the context of nursery education.

If you think about the best ways to address the common doubts and misconceptions about this educational method it should be mentioned that Montessorians have to realise that they must do more than teaching their own groups in their own classrooms. We have to be more political, discussing our theories and methods with the public and working together with mass media to be part of the reality of our society. It is necessary to document what we do and show whether or not it is effective. Let me give you an example: The *Declarations* of each Montessori Europe Congress.

Declarations as a set of coherent statements articulate the essence of the conferences of the eight years. At the congress in Prague 2004 the first declaration was issued and ratified by participants “Children love to learn – not to be taught!” The Declaration of Gothenburg (2005) dealt with children’s rights “Power to the child – children’s rights in our world”, the one in Vienna 2006 with “Democracy starts with the child”, the subject of the declaration of Amsterdam 2007 was

“The prepared environment and architecture of school”, followed by the Declaration of Oxford (2008) about “Observation in Education – Montessori’s Approach”. In Krakow/Poland 2009 we sent out a declaration about “Montessori Education and Inclusion”, in 2010 Bad Honnef-Bonn/Germany the declaration had the subject “From Childhood to Adolescence – Montessori and Secondary Education”. The last one was formulated in Bratislava/Slovakia 2011 with the title “Montessori today – a scientific approach to education”. This year in Rome we will have the subject “Imagination – Montessori’s ideas on creativity and the development of the child’s artistic talents” and of course again we will spread again an impressive declaration.

Of note could be in this context perhaps that the American Montessori Society (AMS) has now also started voicing declarations, for example in New Orleans 2009 with the Declaration of Peace and Justice. They wrote to us: “It is a step in the direction that Montessori Europe has accomplished. Thanks for leadership!”

The cooperation with AMS is one example how to work together in an effective way. Many things go faster and faster, education is treated as something technical. Children are considered more and more again like little adults. So we have to stick together against government changes regarding school education and Montessori qualifications. We have to be open, we need to be present in the mass media, develop guidelines, and our work must be transparent following international standards.

#### **5. The main priorities for the Montessori movement – especially in Europe**

The focus of our work should be to conduct studies on larger scale to find out how to build efficient educational institutions based on Dr Montessori’s principles. Many people don’t realise that Montessori education is international and it can provide ideas on how to build effective educational institutions, how to deliver peace, how to respect the needs of early childhood, childhood and youth. It has existed for more than 100 years, in countries all over the world, and perhaps this aspect means that it can help to solve some European problems. Researches could be one medium of support.

Furthermore we hope to finish setting up a network of Montessori organisations and schools, and work needs to continue on a set of guidelines for schools and training institutes. We would like to work on gaining political influence and create

our own documentary films, to represent ourselves in society. It is important to work together with parents and the public. We would also like to create working groups inside existing universities, but the main emphasis is on coordinating the diverse activities relevant to children's rights. When we founded Montessori Europe we said that the situation of the child in the European Union would be key to our work. That means to form educational-political policy positions and statements and support their representation throughout Europe, as well as supporting the UN Convention for Children's Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Why it is important to fight for children's rights? Why it is necessary to give children power? I believe it is very simple: Because with every young child just born mankind has the chance to start again, to start everything from afresh, from the beginning on. And another thought: Each politician is at first a child and then a politician. What I mean is if we accept children's rights from the first day of their life, if we accept their right to become autonomous personalities characterized by a self-responsible self-determination, if we live together with children and youth in respect, patience and love, we will achieve the aim of developing normal and intact politicians and a chance to change our societies, to live together in peace one day - to cooperate, not to fight.

Overall, I believe it is necessary in developing a true European community that the question of education takes a position of paramount importance. Without a change in consciousness, we will not be able to achieve all the aims named in various contracts, various international agreements. Education is the only way to do it, and I think Montessori education has a role to play because it is so international in nature.

I would like to close with some sentences out of our Declaration of Oxford (the conference was about 'Observation and Education'): "We ask all adults to observe on order to discover what children really need rather than what we, the adults, think they need. Adults must also listen to children and young people and support them as they try to show us their true needs. This will allow them to grow into tolerant, intelligent and competent adults who will be responsible for Europe".

Thank you for your attention!

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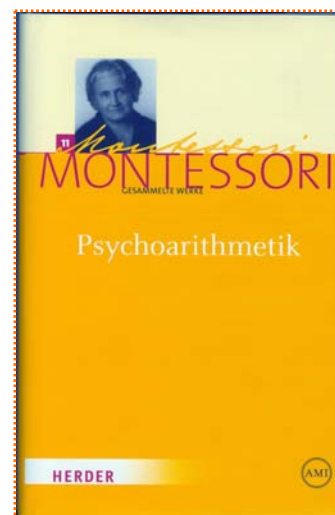
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[www.montessori-ami.org](http://www.montessori-ami.org)

### New publications



#### Maria Montessori - Collected Works

Edited by  
Harald Ludwig  
in cooperation with  
Christian Fischer,  
Michael Klein-  
Landeck and  
Volker Ladenthin  
in connection with the  
Association  
Montessori  
Internationale (AMI)



Volume 11

#### Psychoarithmetik

Introduced, critically  
revised and annotated  
by Harold Frank  
Baumann

[Freiburg etc.] :  
Herder, 2012

## Conference abstract

### A report from the Nordic Montessori conference in Oslo 2012

(Eva-Maria Ahlquist, Stockholm University)

In April 2012 the Third Nordic Conference in Montessori education brought together more than 400 professional teachers and school leaders, from preschool to secondary school from Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and even from Switzerland and the Netherlands. The main subject was The Hand – Tool of the Intelligence, a very important subject as Montessori herself did put an emphasis on movement and perceptual experiences. Kristin Halvorsen, the Norwegian minister of education, held the conference opening speech. Halvorsen could see many advantages in Montessori schools and she said that “Montessori schools must continue to preserve and further develop, its educational character” and that teachers with further education in Montessori pedagogy with improved pedagogic and didactic skills will make the Montessori schools a real alternative to Norwegian public schools. She referred to the 50 Montessori schools and 30 preschools in Norway today and told the audience that there are requests for the establishment of 18 new Montessori schools. Halvorsen’s judgment is, after listening to students, that there is too little practical work in Norwegian public secondary schools. I interpret Halvorsen that she considers that Montessori education in this matter has important values which can contribute to the development of the Norwegian schools in general. It is of course interesting and very important that Montessori education has a strong support from a minister of education.

In accordance with the main theme there were many different perspectives on the importance of embodiment and the use of the body in the learning process. There were examples on geometry and art; the sensorial material; practical work at a farm school in Sweden and a comparison between Montessori and phenomenology in relation to the lived body. The neuropsychologist Steve Huges who was the conference main speaker gave several proves from scientist reports which elucidates the benefits of Montessori education.

You Tube: Kristin Halvorsen åpner Nordic Montessori Conference 2012  
Steve Huges: [www.goodatdoingthings.com/](http://www.goodatdoingthings.com/)

YouTube.com: Dr. Steve Huges discusses Montessori.

## News



**Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin  
Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology**  
is pleased to invite you to participate in a  
common, interdisciplinary project called:

### **LEARNING IN MONTESSORI CLASSROOM – THE PROCESS OF BECOMING INDEPENDENT PERSON**

Most of educational documents, teaching curriculum and school reports nowadays, stress the need of child-centered education – the education which respects child’s unique abilities, his/her inner potential and individual rate of development. The idea that good education should support and enhance natural development of every child seems to be almost common conviction. At the same time, however, this idea is often opposed to or even contradicted by official state regulations, like: “standards of achievements” or “tests of competencies”, designed as if the developmental change in any child could be programmed and determined in advance.

Contemporary school seems to be in urgent need of coming back to origins, to a wellspring of Maria Montessori thoughts and ideas. Such mental journey is necessary not only to prove the universal value of Montessori visions, but also to refresh our own knowledge, to clear it out from folk myths and inconsistencies, to reveal possible misunderstandings and lay concepts. Teachers, school administrators and policy makers need to be constantly reminded that every child is born as a spiritual embryo, the cell which contains a predetermined plan for its development. The only task of a true educator is to assist the child in fulfilling this plan, by creating a proper learning environment which would respond to a child’s needs, direct his attention and offer the order for his mental and physical activity. Such well organized environment should serve as developmental scaffolding, enabling the child to



construct his own knowledge and achieve the next level in life competencies. To quote Dr Montessori: "As were the vestals to whom it had been given to keep pure and clean from ashes the sacred fire that others had lit, so must be the teacher to whose care has been consigned the flame of [child's] inner life in all its purity. If this flame is neglected it will be extinguished, and no one will be able to light it again" (The Child 1971, p. 24).

On the other hand, Maria Montessori stressed that teaching profession should be understood neither as an art, nor as a mission, nor a technical craft. True educator is a scientific pedagogue "using observation as a primary technique and the classroom as a dynamic laboratory setting to discover new and important information and data about children's learning and development" (Margaret Loeffler, Scientific Pedagogy Revisited 1994, s. 136). Montessori teacher is constantly learning, questioning his own knowledge, reflecting on his methods in order to refresh his spirit and operate with both the willingness and objectivity of a scientist.

Such reflection is particularly important nowadays, in constantly changing socio-cultural contexts of school and childhood. The effort should be taken to refresh our pedagogical concepts in search of new, subtle meanings or forgotten ideas, to reinterpret or redefine Montessori's principles in the light of contemporary psychological research results, to rethink and improve the way we are practicing Montessori pedagogy in contemporary school. That is why we would like to invite you to participate in our new project – preparing interdisciplinary book: **Learning in Montessori classroom – the process of becoming independent person**. The book has been designed as a study of unique characteristics of learning process in Montessori classroom, but also the study of barriers and challenges in effective education without any doctrinal presumptions or inconsistencies. **The book content will consist of four parts:**

1. **Montessori pedagogical concepts in contemporary world / pedagogy and psychology:**
  - Montessori – method, system or philosophy of life?
  - Core principles of Montessori pedagogy in the light of contemporary research – what and how was confirmed, deepened, reinterpreted? Which elements should be redefined and why?
  - Evaluating Montessori education – process, methods, principles

2. **The child – essential value of Montessori pedagogy**

- The child as a creator of himself and a father of humanity
- The child rights to respect / Respect for the rights of the child
- Building up knowledge about children and the nature of their development

3. **Learning – the process of building oneself**

- Concentration – the key to all pedagogy
- Child's independence as a characteristic of his mind, activity, creativity and personality – its sources and constrains
- Classroom as a community of learners - individualized education and cooperation as two different sides of the same model

4. **Montessori classroom – prepared environment as scientific laboratory**

- Changing child in a changing environment
- Unique culture of Montessori prepared environment
- Different dimensions of learning/developmental environment in contemporary school

We cordially invite Montessori teachers, school administrators and experts to participate in preparing this new project. We do hope that this kind of common effort would be relevant to the educational needs of our time.

Deadline for papers submission is 30th of November 2012. All the submitted materials must be in English, and will be a subject to professional revision. Authors guidelines will be sent in a separate e-mail.

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## Events

### XIII. Congress Montessori-Europe (Rome, 26<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> October 2012)

“Firing the Imagination!” is the theme of the XIII. International Congress from 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> October 2012. Cooperation partner: University of Roma Tre – Centre for Montessori Studies.

Around this focus will be developed: presentations on Friday afternoon (opening speech by Prof. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, USA, “Firing the Imagination”), and on Saturday morning (Prof. Clara Tornar, Italy, “Montessori: a way to imagination and creativity”; Prof. Dr. Georg Peez, Germany, “Imagination and Art Education”; Prof. Dr. Henkjan Honing, Netherlands, “What makes us musical animals”), 22 workshops on Saturday afternoon, a panel discussion on Sunday morning.

As part of the congress activities are also provided opportunities for meeting (“Meeting Point”), in order to exchange experiences and good educational practices, and visits to Montessori schools of Rome.

There will be opportunities to socialize, as the Gala dinner for which has been reserved the Hall of Honour of the National Museum of Art and Popular traditions, an architectural and artistic exceptional context, a suitable frame for the theme of the Congress!

For further details on the three-days programme, and for online registrations (deadline: October 8th) you are invited to check the Montessori Europe website at [www.montessori-europe.com](http://www.montessori-europe.com).



### Master Montessori in Sweden

(Per Gynther, Stockholm University)

Until today courses in Montessori education in Sweden has only been available on first level, despite teachers request for courses also on advanced level. We are therefore happy to announce that this autumn there will be a change. The University of Stockholm will then be the first University in Sweden which will provide a course in Montessori education on advanced level. The course will start in August 2012 and be part of a Master Program in Didactic Science and lead to a Degree of Master of Didactic Science (one year)

with specialization in Montessori education. Until today there is not very much research on Montessori education in Sweden. Our hope is that this course in the long run will contribute to the amount of research produced regarding this issue.



### 2012 Montessori Summer Seminar, Amsterdam, AMI Head office, 26-31 August

The 2012 Montessori summer seminar offers the participants an intellectual and challenging journey through today's Montessori landscape. Taking a very broad perspective of how Montessori principles can be applied in a multitude of situations, the participants will enjoy getting an in depth view of the latest developments in neuropsychiatry (executive functions), the empowerment of communities, and Montessori school settings.

#### Organizers

Association Montessori Internationale; AVE.IK

#### Venue

Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) Head office, Amsterdam.

#### Speakers/presenters

Dr. Steve Hughes, USA.

Prof. Adele Diamond, USA.

Ruben Jongkind, Johan Cruyff Foundation, Netherlands.

Lynne Lawrence, AMI, Netherlands.

Liene Hendriksen, Netherlands.

Fred Kelpin, Netherlands.

Next issue: **December 2012.**

Deadline for contributions: **November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012**



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In this issue, cover picture from H. Helming, Montessori-Pädagogik, Herder 1958.