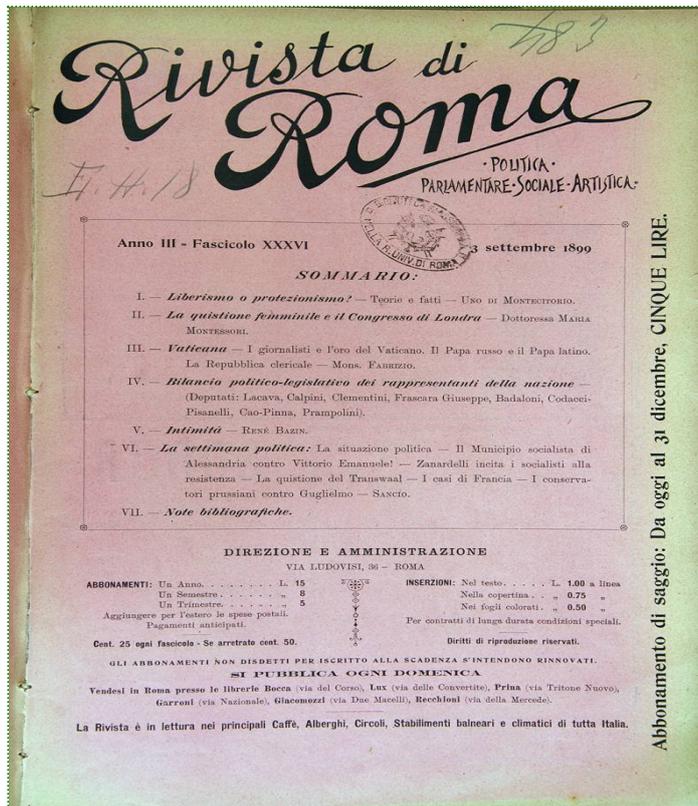


MoRE - Montessori Research Europe Newsletter

2

December 2012



Rivista di Roma, 3 (1899), fasc. 36

In the index: M. Montessori, *La questione femminile e il Congresso di Londra*

Full-text available in the Montessori Digital Library

www.montessori.uniroma3.it

Contents

Editorial

Contributions

- The transition from primary to secondary schools within the context of Montessori education (Patricia Eck)
- How open are Polish teachers and parents for Maria Montessori's pedagogy? (Barbara Lulek)

Abstracts

- Variation and invariance in Maria Montessori's sensory training materials (Kerstin Signert)

New publications

- Maria Montessori, *Psychogeometrie*

New members

Editorial Clara Tornar

Dear members of MoRE,

this issue of our newsletter - the last of year 2012 - presents some interesting research reports and important information.

In particular:

- four new members from Germany, Italy and Poland are welcomed in the MoRE Network. You will find their brief self-presentations inside this number.

- I would like to point out that, starting from this issue, a code for international recognition (ISSN = International Standard Serial Number) has been attributed to our newsletter. It has been given, upon our request, by the Italian Centre for ISSN under the

ISO 3297:2007 rule. The code will allow our publication to be better identified and indexed at an international level by libraries, publishers, distributors and users. You will find the code on the back cover, within the editorial notes.

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

With kindest regards,

Clara Tornar
Italy, University of Roma Tre
Department of Education
Centre for Montessori Studies

Contact: tornar@uniroma3.it

Contributions

The transition from primary to secondary schools within the context of Montessori education

Patricia Eck
(Germany, Department for Educational Science,
Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz)

Montessori method of education in Germany

Montessori education is, apart from the Waldorf pedagogy, one of the most popular concepts practiced aside of the mainstream schools in Germany. Since its development in the early 20th century, the amount of schools working with the principles of Maria Montessori has continuously increased. In the meantime, there are more than 1.000 schools and kindergartens working with the principles developed by Maria Montessori (cf. Montessori Dachverband Deutschland). At first, the development of Montessori schools concentrated at the foundation of primary schools. The structure of most primary schools in Germany depends on the federal state and can comprise four to six years. In addition, there are a lot of schools, especially secondary schools, that offer only Montessori classes or branches. It is difficult to precisely name the amount of Montessori schools in Germany. Furthermore there is no standardised or clearly defined model or guideline for the implementation of Montessori principles. For detailed information about the development in Germany and the actual terms and conditions see Meisterjahn-Knebel's overview (cf. Meisterjahn-Knebel 2012).

A brief overview of the empirical transition research

Today, it has been well established that transition processes during lifetime are extraordinary incidents, as they offer chances and risks at the same time (see Bellenberg et al. 2011, Frommelt 2010). Since PISA, most German studies, concerning the transition from primary to secondary school, have concentrated on problems of academic achievement based on social disparity and the effects of teacher recommendation or parental wish for secondary school choice¹ (for further information see: Ditton / Krüsken 2006; Koch 2008).

¹ As Germany has a tripartite school system consisting of lower (graduation after 9th grade), middle (graduation after 10th grade) and higher (graduation after 12th or 13th grade) school education, children and parents have to decide at the end of primary school which school qualification they aspire.

Helsper et al. focused on a different aspect in trying to reconstruct the child's individual framework of dealing with the different and new situation at the secondary school (Helsper et al. 2007). Krüger concentrates on children's point of view regarding the impact of transition on their friendships in school (Krüger, 2007). A focus on the children's and their parents' point of view of the transition as such is described in Büchner and Koch (2001).

A reconstruction of how children experience the transition in Montessori schools

As commonly known, the transition from primary to secondary school has a great impact on children. This holds true especially within the Montessori context, since there is a fundamental change in the principles (see *Erdkinder*, as described in Meisterjahn-Knebel 2003). In my qualitative research project, I am going to document and reconstruct the children's point of view and how they deal with difficulties after the transition from primary to secondary school and the possible effects on the children's learning process. Therefore, I observed children from two different schools before and after their transition to secondary school. Additionally, I interviewed the participating children only a few weeks after their transition. Both schools already start with the children's house and continue the implementation of Montessori principles throughout primary and secondary education.

The first school has age-mixed groups from 1st throughout 3rd and from 4th throughout 6th grade during primary school. After this period, the children go on to secondary school, which consists of age-mixed groups from 7th throughout 10th grade. The children can choose between a middle or higher school education qualification at the end of 9th or 10th grade. Otherwise they continue with their school education in order to take the highest school examination to obtain the general university entrance qualification. The second school I visited consists of a primary school encompassing four years, which is common in German mainstream schools, with age-mixed groups from 2nd throughout 4th grade. In this secondary school, there is only one Montessori class in every year group without age-mixed groups. All children opt for the higher school education directly.

As a consequence, teachers and parents decide together to which school the child will go. Here again, several different options are possible depending on the exact law valid in the respective federal state: parental choice or teacher recommendation or an agreement between both parties tips the scales.

In general, in secondary schools the implementation of Montessori principles often seems to undergo a change because of the special private school regulations in Germany².

A brief overview of the empirical Montessori education research

Although research projects in Montessori pedagogy have been known for long and even Maria Montessori herself performed empirical studies (Ludwig 2008), the amount of research studies is scarce (cf. Idel / Ullrich 2008; Ludwig 2006, 2008; Peters 2010, Eck 2012). Furthermore, careful examination reveals that most of the existing empirical studies are based in primary schools and focus either on essential forms of Montessori praxis (Fähmel 1981, Fischer 1982, Henry 2001, Hellwig 2010), student performance (Rindskopf Dohrmann 2006, Suffenplan 2006) or biographical reconstruction (Meyer 2001). Only a few studies focus on other aspects, such as children with high abilities (Grindel 2007), Montessori therapy (Christl 2010) and the correlation between the polarization of attention and the flow-effect (Csikszentmihalyi 1993, Schmiderer 2010). With my research project, I will try to fill in two different but linked research deficits. The results of my research project could make a contribution not only to the ongoing Montessori research, but also to research focusing on the transition from primary to secondary school and also on the development of different transition models.

The children's point of view of the transition from primary to secondary school is an important aspect, as it affects their social and their academic school life.

First results of my study will be presented soon.

References

Bellenberg, G.; Höhmann, K.; Röbe, E. (Hg.) (2011): *Übergänge*. Seelze: Friedrich Verlag (Friedrich Jahresheft).

Büchner, P.; Koch, K. (2001): *Von der Grundschule in die Sekundarstufe (Band 1). Der Übergang aus Kinder- und Elternsicht*. Leske + Budrich, Opladen.

Christl, E. (2009): *Theoretische und praktische Grundlagen der Montessori-Therapie im Schulalter*. München. URL: <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn/resolver.pl?urn=urn:nbn:de:bvb:19-103869>, , Letzer Zugriff: 01.06.2011.

Csikszentmihalyi, M.; Schiefele, U. (1993) *Die Qualität des Erlebens und der Prozeß des Lernens*. *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* (39).

Deutsche Montessori Gesellschaft e.V. (Hg.) (2010): *Mathematik und empirische Studien in der Montessori-Pädagogik. Das Kind* (47/48). Wiesbaden.

Ditton, H.; Krüsken, J. (2006) *Der Übergang von der Grundschule in die Sekundarstufe I*. In: *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft* 9 (3), S. 348-372.

Eck, P. (2012) *Montessori-Schulen*. In: Heiner Ullrich, Susanne Strunck (Hg.): *Private Schulen in Deutschland. Entwicklungen – Profile – Kontroversen*. Wiesbaden: VS Verl. für Sozialwiss, S. 79–97.

Fähmel, I. (1981): *Zur Struktur schulischen Unterrichts nach Maria Montessori. Beschreibung einer Montessori-Grundschule in Düsseldorf*. Frankfurt am Main: Lang (Studien zur Pädagogik der Schule, 6).

Fischer, R. (1982): *Lernen im non-direktiven Unterricht. Eine Felduntersuchung im Primärbereich am Beispiel der Montessori-Pädagogik*. Frankfurt am Main: Lang (Studien zur Pädagogik der Schule, 4).

Frommelt, B. (Hg.) (2010): *Bildungsentscheidungen: Übergänge*. Dresden: Schulverwaltung spezial.

Grindel, E. (2007): *Lernprozesse hochbegabter Kinder in der Freiarbeit der Montessori-Pädagogik. Eine empirische Analyse auf der Basis von Einzelfallstudien in Montessori-Grundschulen*. Münster: Lit (Impulse der Reformpädagogik, 17).

Hellwig, N. (2010): *Selbsterziehung des Kindes oder geschicktes pädagogisches Handeln? Eine Analyse der Theorie Montessoris und der Erziehungswirklichkeit an Montessorischulen anhand der operativen Pädagogik Klaus Pranges*. Eichstätt-Ingolstadt. URL: <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn/resolver.pl?urn=urn:nbn:de:bvb:824-opus-754>, Letzer Zugriff: 02.06.2011.

Helsper, W.; Kramer, R.-T.; Brademann, S.; Ziem, C. (2007) *Der individuelle Orientierungsrahmen von Kindern und der Übergang in die Sekundarstufe. Erste Ergebnisse eines qualitativen Langsschnitts*. In: *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* 53 (4), S. 477-490.

Henry, W. (2001): *Sachunterrichtliches Lernen in der Montessori-Pädagogik. Eine Fallstudie über die Integrative Montessori-Schule Borken*. Münster: Lit (Impulse der Reformpädagogik, 6).

Idel, S.; Ullrich, H. (2008): *Reform- und Alternativschulen*. In: Werner Helsper (Hg.): *Handbuch der Schulforschung*. Wiesbaden: VS Verl. für Sozialwiss, S. 363–383.

² In Germany, private schools have to follow a certain set of regulations to be accepted by state government to obtain federal funding and to be able to hand out school qualifications.

Ludwig, H. (2006): Empirische Forschung bei Maria Montessori - Zur Einführung. In: *Montessori* 44 (1/2), S. 5–14.

Koch, K. (2008): Von der Grundschule zur Sekundarstufe. In: Werner Helsper (Hg.): *Handbuch der Schulforschung*. Wiesbaden: VS Verl. für Sozialwiss, S. 577–592.

Krüger, H.-H.; Köhler, S.-M.; Pfaff, N; Zschach, M. (2007) Die Bedeutung des Übergangs von der Grundschule in die Sekundarstufe I für Freundschaftsbeziehungen von Kindern. In: *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* 53 (4), S. 509-521.

Ludwig, H. (2008): Montessori-Pädagogik im Spiegel aktueller empirischer Forschung. Vortrag beim Kongress der DGfE. DGfE. Dresden, 18.03.2008.

Meisterjahn-Knebel, G. (2003): Montessori-Pädagogik in der weiterführenden Schule. Der "Erdkinderplan" in der Praxis. Freiburg im Breisgau, Basel, Wien: Herder.

Meisterjahn-Knebel, G. (2012) Montessori-Schulen. In: Heiner Ullrich, Susanne Strunck (Hg.): *Private Schulen in Deutschland. Entwicklungen – Profile - Kontroversen*. Wiesbaden: VS Verl. für Sozialwiss, S. 79–97.

Meyer, A. (2001): Die Montessori-Hauptschule Ferdinandstraße aus der Perspektive ihrer Schülerinnen und Schüler. Eine Hauptschule im Spannungsfeld zwischen Restschule und Reformschule. Osnabrück: Der Andere Verlag.

Montessori Dachverband Deutschland. URL: <http://www.montessori-deutschland.de>, Letzer Zugriff: 11.01.2013.

Peters, J.: Empirische Forschung im Bereich der Montessori Pädagogik. In: *Research on Steiner Education* Vol 1 (No 2) 2010 URL: <http://rosejournal.com/index.php/rose/issue/current/showToc>, Letzer Zugriff: 15.06.2011.

Rindskopf Dohrmann, K. (2006): Schülerleistungen in einem Montessori-Programm - Eine Längsschnittstudie zu den Erfahrungen in den Milwaukee Public Schools. In: *Montessori* 44 (1/2), S. 61–68.

Schmiderer, S. (2010): Flow oder Show? Der Flow-Effekt nach Csikszentmihalyi im Zusammenhang mit der entspannten Lernumgebung nach Montessori. In: Deutsche Montessori Gesellschaft e.V. (Hg.): *Mathematik und empirische Studien in der Montessori-Pädagogik*. Das Kind (47/48). Wiesbaden, S. 140–153.

Suffenplan, W. (1977): Die sensiblen Perioden im Lichte neuerer Untersuchungen zur Aktivitätentfaltung in freier Spiel- und Arbeitssituation. In: *Montessori-Werkbrief* (47/48), S. 25–44.

Suffenplan, W. (2006): Die Lernstandsergebnisse von VERA 2004 bei Montessori-Schulen und

Montessori-Schulzweigen Nordrhein-Westfalens. In: *Montessori* 44 (1/2), S. 18–60.



How open are Polish teachers and parents for Maria Montessori's pedagogy?

(Based on research carried out in Podkarpackie province)

Barbara Lulek

(Poland, Pedagogic Institute, University of Rzeszów)

Key words: *Maria Montessori pedagogy, Teachers and parents openness for Maria Montessori's system.*

Summary

Social, cultural and political changes happening in Poland after 1989 influenced educational system. These changes made people think differently about education, as well as constituted basis for new ways of upbringing children and introducing numerous system and organizational solutions. After applying the solutions, Head teachers became autonomous and parents became fully responsible for their children's education. Parents were granted numerous rights, such as co-deciding about their children's educational and upbringing process at school, as well as choosing type of school for their children, which favored creating educational offers meeting parental expectations. There were new, often innovative propositions, which also included institutions based on guidelines of Maria Montessori pedagogy. This state conditioned numerous scientific as well as social factors. There are many scientific publications as well as popular science publications presenting advantages of Italian scientist's system, as well as parents and teachers, who are interested in a specific look at children – treating them as an independent persons, spontaneous and full of energy. Schools also turn to this concept while searching for new ways of overcoming difficulties, which are common in educational process of children and youths. According to this concept, classroom becomes a place for studying, exploratory learning, determined by children's individual rhythm and to measure their individual capabilities (Badura-Strzelczyk, 1998, p. 5). Presented article aims in answering the following question: How open are parents and teachers to systemic solutions proposed by Maria Montessori?

Searching for new solutions for Polish schools. Why Maria Montessori's concept?

Comprehensive look at children development, from their birth to adulthood, presented in this article, makes us see that Maria Montessori's pedagogy supplies us with tools, which can also be widely used during rapid social changes, school crisis and sometimes family dysfunction. Acknowledging the significance of pedagogical activity in "help in life", "helping human being to gain independence", "supporting child's psychic and spiritual development from its birth" (Kucha, 2004, pp. 268-274; Kucha, 2005, pp. 82-87; Kucha, 2006, p. 332) lets us to gain distance from extensively criticized authoritarian solutions applied in many educational institutions. From this point, Maria Montessori's pedagogy should be viewed in terms of significant levels, application of which would enable reforming modern schools to institutions supporting children in their development – which is obvious for Maria Montessori's attitude.

1. Freedom of experiencing is a basic mainstay of children's upbringing. It also constitutes a significant factor in their development. However, freedom is comprehended as a state, which exists on its rights, possibilities and choice guarantee. According to M. Montessori, freedom allows for „doing something". Its boundaries are appointed by surrounding environment; it means to be responsible for choosing activity goals and also to be self-master (Badura-Strzelczyk, 1998, p. 45). The described system sets freedom in the context of fixed order and means attributing the right to choose work, free movement, choosing a place to do certain things to a child. Thanks to it this person is allowed to want something, is able to act and open to harmonious existence with other persons (Lulek, 1999, p. 22). Liberty of choice frees child from adults and helps to develop child's autonomy. The child is not only choosing to act but it is also acting, which means planning, thinking through planned actions, taking responsibility for accomplished work, getting to know its consequences as well as experiencing success or failure. Therefore, child knows the sense of choice and influence, which is very important, according to S. Guz, for creating child's subjectivity (Guz, 2002, p. 516).

Applying above solutions, teachers create friendly environment favoring children's learning and deprived of forbidden areas or places. In the process of learning, the teacher basis its work on students' free work, daily or

weekly flexible didactic schedule, free individual work, cooperating and mutual help. Teachers and students common work is synonymously accepted by learning children with individual developmental potential, their work is accompanied by trust and mutual openness, clear decisions (rules, agreements, settlements or educational contracts), advising and help.

2. Children are „constructing themselves" by gaining experience in their environment. Perceived didactic material plays a very important role in children's development of body and spirit. It favors creating deep and long-term interest with one item or activity, staying with it or coming back to it in order to discover on the path of children's deep personal experience. In this situation, child's effort put into the task makes the child happy for it does not cause any weariness (Fisgus and Kraft, 2001, p. 46). It creates a bond between child and an item forming polarization of attention phenomenon. Therefore, it means that the concentration of child's attention (preparation degree, "phase of great work", "peace and rest") on one item, chosen by the very child, weakens in the moment of solving individually chosen issue. Working in fixed environment bases on some regularly repeated actions, which create rhythm of the day. These activities are: greeting, work, tidying up and meetings in a circle. In the course of everyday conversations with teacher, during greeting, the whole cycle of children's individual work, taking responsibility for classroom order, as well as reporting the daily schedule, children acquire certain academic and social competences, which enable children to demonstrate their own capabilities (Zdybel, 2000, p. 261).

Appealing to didactic material in educational process and children attention polarization phenomenon let children experience the feeling of joy, as well as feel pleased when they solve chosen issues individually and grow enthusiasm for further work (Bednarczuk, 2001, p. 55). All of the mentioned factors create positive feelings of children towards school and realized didactic process. Children have the desire to learn, investigate and understand the processes, for these activities are accompanied by joy and satisfaction.

3. „Periods of particular sensitivity" in children's life. Parents and teachers should know that during children's development, there are optimal, the most advantageous periods, during which learning and upbringing is the

most affective (Adamek, 2000, p. 148). At the beginning, from birth to 6th year of age, children are sensitive to oral and written language, movement, social behaviors and order. During the next period children desire to widen their activity space, practice their imagination, gaining cultural techniques, investigating natural phenomena and orientate moral and social problems (Stein, 2003, p. 19). Subsequently, children between 7 and 12 years of age are more and more conscious. They are generally more sensitive to morality, justice, good and bad, as well as various scientific domains. Moreover, child recognizes rules, values and social standards and grows interest in the world of plants and animals. The child also is more susceptible to acquiring knowledge; therefore „studying the whole by examining details” ability appears (Kucha, 2006, p 332). On the other hand, in period between 13th and 18th years of age, young person creates sensitivity to personal dignity, responsibility and self-confidence. During this period, youths turn away from parents in search for their own values and standards.

4. Children are made to take up various social roles while functioning in multi-aged group. First, the child is the youngest in the group, and then grows to become the oldest and the most competent member. Changeable position gives child an opportunity to play different roles and absorb various abilities. Social roles in multi-aged groups favor developing empathy, protectiveness and sense of self-value among older students, whereas younger ones do not feel lonely, they are given support and assistance from older mates. Moreover, younger students learn to express favors and not to disturb others work while mimicking more experienced group mates (Guz, 2002, p. 515). Mentioned values are especially emphasized by parents and they are main motif of choosing Montessori’s schools.

A few remarks about the idea of research

The idea of diagnostic research devoted to teachers, parents and students’ styles of thinking about Maria Montessori system was born during scientific practice at Roma Tre University in Rome. The research was to determine how open mentioned groups to Italian scientist’s concept are. The research was carried out in Podkarpacie province, south-east Poland. Main goal of the research was to recognize, how much do kindergarten and primary school teachers, students of early school and kindergarten education, as well as parents, whose children

attend kindergarten and early school, know about Maria Montessori’s system assumption data. These groups were also to point out presented method values and indicate possible applications of this method in their work. Therefore, this article’s attempt is to show certain styles of thinking about Italian scientist’s pedagogy, presented by teachers, parents and students attending teaching specialties, i.e. subjects deciding about educational process in the greatest extent. By the term “style”, the author thinks about typical perceiving, remembering, thinking and solving problems. That is why, among many questions to answer, interviewees were asked to point the matter of this method, show its key elements, which can be used in a traditional class of integrated teaching and pre-school education, and to define how much the teachers are prepared to apply M. Montessori’s system assumption data. Author assumed that Maria Montessori system might be inspiring (Śliwerski, 2002, pp. 7-9), for new creative methodological solutions, especially in changing society, for parents presenting expanded educational aspirations, often reaching for alternative ways of educating their children. Research material presented in this paper is just a piece of wider research on how much are teachers, parents and students from Podkarpacie province ready for Maria Montessori system, and if they are open to its assumptions. Presented study introduces opinions of 84 teachers working in kindergartens and primary schools (classes I to III), showing their knowledge about M. Montessori’s system and self-assessment considering teachers’ preparation for putting M. Montessori method’s selected elements into practice. Moreover, the study shows declarations and expectations of 150 interviewed parents, connected to sending their children to M. Montessori-type institution. The research was made as a questionnaire and it was carried out during two academic years: 2011/2012 and 2012/2013.

Maria Montessori’s system assumption data perceived by teachers from Podkarpacie province. From multi-aged group classes to sensitive phases during children’s development

Undertaking research, which will determine the degree of openness and readiness of teachers, parents and students – future early school and kindergarten teachers, to Maria Montessori’s system, the author agreed that pedagogues working daily with children could popularize Italian scientist’s assumptions in the greatest extend. Not only are they the most discerning observers of educational process, with regard to direct

commitment, but most of all, their view may lead to initiating indispensable corrections in practice, which will perfect education and upbringing processes, leading solutions expected by parents and the whole society. These premises constituted basis for questionnaire, which included 20 sentences concerning M. Montessori's educational system, teachers had to definitely agree, quite agree, and say they don't know or have no opinion about, not agree or definitely not agree. They were also asked to substantiate their opinions shortly. Six propositions out of all presented to teachers were definitely accepted by 80,9% of respondents. The propositions were as follows:

1. M. Montessori pedagogy's main assumption is expressed by the phrase: „help me do it by myself“.
2. Upbringing children means to support them while they aim at their independence.
3. Children develop according to their inner plan.
4. Children are educated in multi-aged groups.
5. For correct development children need fixed environment.
6. There are sensitive phases during child development.

And 80 teachers out of 84 interviewed agreed with the first statement. Respondents definitely recognized main educational concept of M. Montessori's pedagogy, which is directed to children, concerning their inner needs, activity, self-determination and independence.

Over 80% of interviewed teachers also agreed with M. Montessori's pedagogy that upbringing children is to support them in gaining independence. The teachers are convinced that traditional forming and shaping according to goals fixed in advance, which is so common in schools, need to be replaced by teachers and parents' help and support shown to children. At the same time, interviewed teachers agree to tasks concerning developing students' individual abilities, which M. Montessori's system imposes to all institutions working in this system. One of the teachers says that *“the most important matter of this method is children, and we should treat them as full-value human being, as well as create the most favorable conditions for their development”*. An outlined place of a child in the process of education puts also teacher in a proper place, who observes, supports and helps student with respects, deprived of pride, arrogance and anger.

Another sentence explaining that children development runs according to inner plan was accepted by a little smaller group of teachers (64,3% of respondents). Perhaps interviewed

realizing traditional solutions in school practice i.e. teaching all students the same subject at the same time, have difficulties understanding obvious issue in Montessori pedagogy, which is “when one child seems particularly interested in numbers, other is in the phase of reading and writing” (Esser, Wilde, 1989, p. 68).

The next two sentences got a high index of acceptance. Giving classes in Montessori's system in multi-aged group (85, 7% of interviewees) in a fixed environment (95,5% of respondents). Polish pedagogues interviewed by the questionnaire, associate Montessori system with didactic material used during the process of education, simplicity of the items, plurality of propositions for children and at the same time linking teaching aids in a system. One of the teachers writes: *“didactic aid is simple and suggestive and at the same time children have the opportunity to control carried out tasks”*. The fact that teachers notice functioning of children in a fixed environment indicates that they are acknowledged with the most significant M. Montessori method's assumption data.

Finally, the last sentence uttering about sensitive phases in children's development is shared by 61,9% of respondents. This group of interviewees included teachers, who emphasized in their statements that according to Italian scientist children development include periods of readiness favoring learning and acquiring certain competences. Teachers' explanations were rather general in this matter, which means that interviewees' knowledge about sensitive phases, as well as polarization phenomenon, needs widening.

Generally speaking, respondents have some knowledge about Maria Montessori's system. It is more extensive when basic assumptions of the system are concerned and little less certain concerning detailed solutions. Undoubtedly, making Maria Montessori's system common in Polish schools requires extending teachers' knowledge.

Teachers' self-assessment in terms of introducing Montessori's solutions. Heading for innovation

As S. Guz writes (Guz, 1998, p.12), tendentious and wrong knowledge about idea, assumption data and work methods in Maria Montessori's system, is a barrier in spreading this educational system. Thus, it seems justified to form a question directed to teachers, which will enable to determine how they assess their preparation in terms of putting Italian scientist's solutions into

practice. Teachers assessed their preparations in five-grade scale, which were as follows: definitely prepared, quite prepared, partially prepared, not prepared, definitely not prepared. Interviewees were obliged to justify their opinion. Empirical data obtained from the questionnaire suggest that interviewed teachers assumed conservative attitude. Most of the interviewees (80,9%) answered that they are partially prepared to putting Maria Montessori's solutions into practice. This group of respondents emphasized that they know some of the methodical solutions proposed by the system and use them in practice, i.e. they use some of teaching aid, including everyday-life aid, aid for learning to read and write, mathematical and biological aid. They stated to be growing plants together with students in their classroom, organize hobby corners and pay attention to order in the classroom. According to this study's author, this situation suggests that teachers refer to M. Montessori's tradition by unimpeded use of selected elements of the system, which enables for developing children-students' skills and independence. However, teachers do not refer in their statements to children's individual learning and activity based on inner motivation.

Only 16,7% of respondents claim critically that they feel quite unprepared to realize Montessori's solutions in scholar practice. Additionally, they claim their self-assessment is conditioned with having mainly historical knowledge about described solutions, which was obtained during studies. Therefore, their knowledge is fragmentary and often inadequate for contemporary solutions. Only minute percentage of interviewees, two respondents out of 84, assessed they have enough knowledge to introduce Montessori's solutions. These people are ready to put Montessori's education into practice. They declare to know methodological solutions, drawn from either subject literature or observing specific activities in practice. These matters require further studying.

Parental interests versus parental expectations towards institutions with Maria Montessori system

In the first few decades of 21st century, Polish parents had to face new challenges, hopes and worries connected with their children's education. With regard to increased criticism towards traditional school, they often search for solutions which would meet their educational aspirations but most of all they try to find schools accepting certain values and attitudes of learners. In this context, Maria Montessori's system and all

institutions led by her guidelines seem a solution meeting all parental expectations. Parents see their children's education guided by Maria Montessori's method as a very interesting. Research shows, that parents, although rarely holding pedagogical education, often present knowledge about the studied method. Parents are able to present main assumption data of the system, indicating their interest with Montessori's solutions was in relation to treating children-students as the most important educational elements and adjusting educational process to their possibilities and needs. There were two categories distinguished among parental statements supporting above assumptions. First, interviewees' opinions are noticeably touched with chagrin towards traditional methods applied at schools. There were two opinions, among many others in this group, which stated that Montessori institution *"after a long time of searching for a good school or kindergarten would be meeting their expectations"*, and emphasizing that *"children would be allowed to develop in such an institution and they would decide about themselves as opposed to typical kindergarten group"*. The second group of opinions concentrates around the fact that searching for institutions which would practice at least Montessori system's elements, is the effect of their own persistent acting and commitment and in relation to achievements children could get in such a system. This group of parents is fascinated with the fact that children can read and count in pre-school age. The author believes, that educating children in Montessori's system would mean for these parents their children are educationally successful and that they have great basis for further school career. Moreover, Montessori education also reflects accomplishing parental aspirations and meeting expectations. Parents from the second group, look for information about Maria Montessori's system by themselves, using scientific literature, popular scientific literature, as well as internet sources. The following statement confirms it: *"the first time I heard Montessori name was at the pedagogical course, where I've also seen fascinating didactic aid. Later on I tried to find some more information myself. I signed up my kid to kindergarten defined as Montessori kindergarten, although there are no real Montessori kindergartens in Podkarpacie province"*. *"I'd love to sign up my child to Montessori kindergarten but there are no such institutions in Podkarpacie province, at least, I haven't heard of any of such kindergartens"*. Moreover, parents accept organizational solutions, i.e. multi-aged groups, teaching aid, children's individual work and those children themselves decide about their activity. Eight out of

ten parents, asked if they would send their children to institution with Maria Montessori system, answered yes.

To sum up, interviewed parents are open to methods proposed by Maria Montessori. In their statements they bring out main premises of this system. Some of them, however, treat Montessori's pedagogical system not as one of the ideas of upbringing but as a mean to their children's successful life. Nevertheless, the scale of interests with Montessori's pedagogy suggests the idea must be spread by organizing lectures, talks for parents and presenting exemplary solutions.

Conclusions

Discussion and research presented in this study only expend the whole of problems connected with openness and readiness of three basic groups involved into children education, i.e. teachers, parents and students – teachers in the future. After gathering the research material, the author formed the following conclusions:

1. The fact that most of the interviewed teachers from Podkarpacie province identify Montessori system's main premises correctly is satisfactory. Not only the respondents point out to solutions used in this method but also they are able to present their advantageous character. Unfortunately, it is a general knowledge and according to interviewed teachers and this study's author, lack of skills unable putting this knowledge into practice. Thus, most of the questioned teachers claim they are only partially prepared for introducing Montessori's methods to their educational activity. By acknowledging M. Montessori's system as a new thought on Polish educational ground which needs popularizing, respondents assumed conservative attitude.
2. Group of questioned parents shows strong verbal support for M. Montessori pedagogy. Parents' declarations resulted from disappointment with traditional school and search for new alternative education for their children. On the other hand, M. Montessori pedagogy is the effect of searching for method favoring their children, in terms of acquired competence, as well as fulfilling parental ambitions. Nevertheless, over 80% of parents would be interested in sending their children to kindergarten or primary school with M. Montessori's system.

References

- Adamek I. (2000), Basis of early-school education, Krakow.
- Badura-Strzelczyk G. (1998), Help me do it myself. Introducing Maria Montessori ideas to contemporary world. Impuls Publishing, Krakow.
- Bednarczyk B. (2001), Organizing students' work by Maria Montessori method. „Everyday Education”, 4-5, pp. 53-55.
- Bednarczyk B. (2001), Epistemological basis of education by Maria Montessori Method, „School life”, 1, p. 9.
- Fisgus Ch., Kraft G. (2011), Help me do it myself! Montessori's pedagogy in primary schools.
- Guz S. (1998), Educating in Montessori system. Textbook for teachers and students, Lublin.
- Guz S. (2002), Montessori method vs. children's social behaviors, „Education in Kindergarten”, 9, pp. 517-518.
- Kucha R. (2004), Maria Montessori – growing up to educational challenges, „Education in kindergarten”, 5, pp. 268-274.
- Kucha R. (2005), Maria Montessori – a way to her success, „Education in kindergarten”, 2, pp. 82-87.
- Kucha R. (2006), Maria Montessori pedagogy, in: Z. Kwieciński, B. Śliwerski, Pedagogy, Warsaw, p. 332.
- Lulek B. (1999), Love, freedom, and openness, „Wychowawca” („Tutor”), 9, pp. 22.
- Lulek B. (2002), Freedom in education, vol. 1, „Wychowawca” („Tutor”), 2, pp. 16-17.
- Miksza M. (2009), Understand Montessori, i.e. Maria Montessori about children education, Krakow.
- Polnik-Klajn A. (2002), Maria Montessori pedagogy in contemporary kindergarten institutions, in: W. Korzeniowska, Changes in educational studies. Ideas, concepts and educational reality, Krakow, pp. 277-278.
- Stein B. (2003), Theory and practice of Maria Montessori pedagogy in primary school, Kielce.
- Śliwerski B. (2002), Maria Montessori's pedagogy in Poland, „Everyday education”, 12, pp. 7-9.
- Centro di Studi Montessoriani (ed.) (2004), Annuario 2003. Attualità di Maria Montessori, FrancoAngeli, Milan.
- Zdybel D. (2000), Montessori school in the light of American research studies, in: J. Piekarski, B. Śliwerski, Alternative education. New theories, research models and reorganization, Krakow, p. 261.

Abstracts

Variation and invariance in Maria Montessori's sensory training materials [doctoral thesis]

Kerstin Signert
(Sweden, Faculty of Education, University of Gothenburg)

The purpose of this study was to analyse the Montessori pedagogy with the objective to theoretically describe and explain the Montessori pedagogical method. The aim has been to find an answer to what still makes the Montessori pedagogy, after more than one hundred years, successfully spread to schools all over the world. Using older and newer theory formations, primarily a number of variation theoretical concepts, empirical data of small children using Montessori material were analysed.

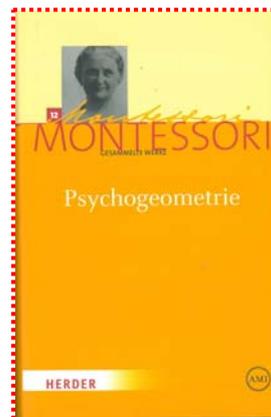
The study shows that nothing will come from nothing. Maria Montessori was a child of her time, and not alone in her aspirations. She made use of many of the current events and ideas, and transformed them into her own. The pedagogical methods that Montessori developed, when she met intellectually challenged, under stimulated children in the hospital, came about at a time when measures for these children were discussed from a medical and educational perspective.

Later, when the education in the regular school was debated throughout society, she turned to these children to develop the methods that she had been inspired to by the two doctors Jean Itard and Edouard Séguin. The common characteristics of their method were variation and invariance, a method that they in turn were inspired to use by Jacob Rodriguez Pereira.

The results show that Montessori too made a system of variation and invariance in the training with the sensorial material, which also shows that the method Montessori used for sensorial education can also be appreciated within the scope of variation theory. The Montessori pedagogy is based on a carefully thought-out principle on learning that also proves to be built in to the sensorial material. This is not an antiquated and vague theory but processed though and practices that corresponds with current science. The materials one can literally touch, allows the theory and method to live on relatively unchanged over time and space.

ISBN: 978-91-7346-729-2
<http://hdl.handle.net/2077/30158>

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 12

Psychogeometrie

Edited, introduced, critically
revised and annotated
by Harald Ludwig and Martin
Winter

[Freiburg etc.] : Herder, 2012
ISBN 978-3-451-32523-6

New members

GERMANY

CICHY, Svea

I am a German Ph.D. student at the University of Bonn and I am writing my thesis about Montessori pedagogy in secondary schools. My supervisor is Prof. Ladenthin, who works together with Prof. Ludwig at the new edition of Maria Montessori's complete works.

Before I began my research I have studied German and Art to become a teacher for these subjects in secondary schools. During my teacher training I have participated in a Montessori diploma course which was offered from the German Montessori organization and got the diploma 2011. At the moment I participate in another Montessori course to get a certificate for Montessori pedagogy especially in secondary schools which is again offered from the German Montessori organization. I would like to join the network to come in contact with the leading scholars in Montessori research and to get

inspiration for my thesis. Therefore I would be very glad to become a new member of MoRE.

Contact: svea.cichy@gmail.com

ITALY

CLIGNON, Giulia

I graduated in Educational Sciences from the University of Udine and got a specialization as special needs teacher. I attended the e-learning Master "Instructional design and educational research" organized by the University of Macerata. I had the opportunity to have international and European experiences: I took part as a volunteer in a cooperation project aiming at educating indigenous communities of Chiapas (Mexico), I studied at the Universidad Autonoma de Barcelona (Spain) within the Socrates Erasmus Program and I worked as Comenius Assistantship in Helsinki (Finland). For the last few years I have been working in preschools area in Italy providing support activities to children with disabilities. I have been continuously attending workshops on intercultural curriculum and recently I designed and conducted a course for the teaching of Italian as L2 in kindergarten. Since 2012 I am member of Montessori Europe and I have participated with great enthusiasm at the conference organized in Rome. I would like to deepen the educational method developed by Maria Montessori, specifically its theoretical and research approach. I am interested mainly in intercultural pedagogy, anthropology and childhood, child psychology and mindfulness.

Contact: gclignon@gmail.com

POLAND

JENDZA, Jaroslaw

Junior lecturer at Gdańsk University (Poland) – Social Sciences Faculty, Institute of Pedagogy, Didactics Department. My scientific interests include: the institution of University; qualitative and critical methodology and Montessori method in early education.

Contact: j.jendza@ug.edu.pl

LULEK, Barbara

Ph.D., scientific worker of the Pedagogic Institute at the University of Rzeszów. Research interests: focused on social pedagogic issues, mainly partnership, cooperation and co-acting of basic educational environments. She is an author of

monograph devoted to connections of school, family and wider social environment ("Family and school in the view of child's personality development", Impuls Publishing House, Kraków 2000; "Cooperation of school, family and environment", University of Rzeszów's Publishing House, Rzeszów 2008; "Selected issues of family pedagogic", University of Rzeszów's Publishing House, Rzeszów 2010), and around dozen articles placed in local, all-Poland and foreign magazines.

Contact: trabka@wp.pl

Next issue: **June 2013**

Deadline for contributions: **May 15th, 2013**

ISSN 2281-8375



Editorial board

Clara Tornar, Monica Salassa
University of Roma Tre
Department of Education
Centre for Montessori Studies
csm@uniroma3.it
www.montessori.uniroma3.it

In this issue: cover picture from the Italian historical journal "Rivista di Roma" (1897-1899 Roma. Rivista politica parlamentare / 1899-1932 Rivista di Roma - politica-parlamentare-sociale-artistica).

Weekly, comes out on Sundays. From August 1899, the title of the journal becomes: "Rivista di Roma - politica-parlamentare-sociale-artistica". It was a journal which, as stated in the presentation of the first issue, wanted to carry out the aim of the defense of civil liberties practically supporting: "freedom and fairness in the administration, full independence in justice, freedom of international relations, freedom of progressive development of political thought in the country, a general liberal conception of the public life of the nation".

Full-texts available in the *Montessori Digital Library*, www.montessori.uniroma3.it