

MoRE - Montessori Research Europe Newsletter

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Double Issue 2013



"Education: Return of Montessori" is the title of the article published in the "Time" magazine, Volume XV, Number 5, February 3rd 1930, which cover was dedicated to "Dottorssa Maria Montessori". It starts as follows «Last week at Rome, in the Via Monte Zebio, a plump little woman in rusty black clothes stood up to receive the approval of Fascist officialdom, the applause of learned contemporaries, the acclaim of 100 disciples from 21 nations. Dottorssa Maria Montessori had come home, after 16 years, to reinaugurate her Theoretical & Practical Training Course on Child Education, under the auspices of the Italian Government».
(further reading at <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,738569,00.html>).

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News

New members

Editorial Clara Tornar

Dear members of MoRE,

I am pleased to present to you this double issue of our Newsletter 2013, in which you will find contributions and research proposals that are very interesting and stimulating for our debate. I believe that the topics discussed, along with the increasing number of membership applications for MoRE (in the present number I am glad to introduce to you two new members from France and Italy) represent a concrete evidence of the growing attention devoted to the applications of Montessori Pedagogy from the perspective (that always inspired Montessori's works) of a constant empirical verification of the results.

This is the third year of my coordinating the MoRE Network: it has been a long journey and I think it is a good time to pass the torch to another member of MoRE. Therefore, I inform you that, as announced in the recent informal Budapest meeting (you will find the report at <https://www.montessori-europe.com/more-meetings>), Dr. Eva-Maria Ahlquist will be taking this position starting in 2014.

Dr. Eva-Maria Ahlquist is lecturer at Stockholm University (Institution of Education), where she also deals with a training course on Montessori education at Master level.

She is one of the initiators of the network M.E.R, related to University teachers interested in Montessori pedagogy in Sweden, and has been one of the promoters of the foundation of MoRE Network. Editor of the journal *MER Montessori*, between 2008-2011, she presented a very interesting doctoral thesis in 2012 on the Montessori school's physical environment.

I thank Eva-Maria very much for accepting to coordinate MoRE Network.

Finally, I sincerely thank all members that, during the last three years, gave their contribution to our Newsletter by sending papers and research reports.

I wish you all a pleasant reading and send you all my best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Clara Tornar
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Contributions

The Montessori Schools Association (UK)

Martin Bradley
(United Kingdom, MSA Chair)

The Montessori Schools Association has established a school accreditation scheme to identify high quality Montessori preschools and primary schools. The information gained also provides an up to date on-going picture of the work of the schools in a way which no other organisation in the United Kingdom is able to deliver. Particularly for private schools, such as Montessori ones, detailed and factual information on such issues as costs, financial viability and staffing has been very hard to come by. There have been several investigations by the Government and by Committees in the UK Parliament, but none have been able to come up with clear statistics. Our use of our Montessori accreditation data provides the first clear insight into some of the ways in which schools are being affected by the wider economic and employment climates.

There are several issues stemming from Government policy in England which have been affecting our members. The Government offers parents 15 hours of 'free' education and care a week. However there has been a long-running dispute about whether the funding meets the actual costs of providing the service. Schools are not allowed to charge parents 'top up' fees to meet the actual costs of their services and so to meet any shortfall, additional hours are being charged at a higher rate to subsidise the 'free' time, and activities, such as ballet and music, are also subject to an extra payment.

The effect of this, which first came to our notice around the start of 2013, has been for attendance to be higher when places are 'free' than at other times – usually the morning sessions are 'free', whilst afternoons have to be paid for by the parents. It is also clear that many schools are working well below their capacity. Of 39 schools visited for accreditation between January and October 2013, 9 had roughly half the number of children attending than they could have taken under their registration with the government. A further 8 were about 2/3 full. Nine were working to capacity for at least part of the day, but some of those showed significant variations, generally with morning attendance being higher than afternoon numbers. In some cases the numbers varied

greatly – one school had a capacity of 40: 24 children attended in the morning of our visit, but only 3 in the afternoon. Elsewhere, a 29 place school had 20 children in the morning and 6 in the afternoon. Clearly this affects the financial viability of the schools, especially when the morning hours are paid for by the Government at below the cost of running the school, and the afternoons are paid for by the parents at a higher cost to offset the financial loss of the morning hours.

But the impact is not only financial. The government policy also states that all children must have a 'key person' – someone who will work with up to about 8 or 10 children, overseeing their activities and planning and supporting their learning. Clearly variations in the number of children attending at different times means that staff cannot be employed full time and so may not always be present at the same time as children for whom they are a 'key person'. Yet Government inspectors can penalise schools which do not operate this system, even threatening their continued existence by judging them to be inadequate.

Another area which we are able to look at is the range of Montessori staff qualifications. There is a clear tension between the Government's desire to keep childcare costs down and its desire for a more highly qualified workforce. Our analysis of accredited Montessori schools shows that they are likely to have staff who are more highly qualified than in comparable non-Montessori private schools. In turn this means that staff costs are higher, and that the funding for 'free' places is more likely to fail to meet the costs of providing the service.

We have been able to present our analyses to the Government as an on-going commentary on the impact of its policies.

Alongside these issues, the English school inspection service changed its approach to inspection judgements in September 2013. Previously a school was placed in one of four categories – outstanding, good, satisfactory, or inadequate. Now 'satisfactory' has been replaced by 'requires improvement'. Such a judgement means that the school will be re-inspected within a year and again a year later. If there has been no improvement by that time, then its license to operate will be revoked. We have been monitoring inspectors' judgements where Montessori settings are said to require improvement. Thus far, no accredited schools have been affected. In most cases the issues are not specifically about Montessori practice – a lack

of secure premises, poor staff induction, not properly recording accidents or a failure to identify risks to the children have been noted. However poor planning and the absence of a key person system also occur frequently. In some cases, staff may not be sufficiently involved in planning and assessment of the children's learning and progress – in other words, the key person system is not being properly used. These concerns clearly affect the capacity of the school to work in a truly Montessorian manner and provide us with issues for staff development and training.

It is clear that this use of information and data provides a most valuable basis for commenting on the impact of Government policy. It also serves to raise Montessori's profile with the government and the wider community. We hope to be able to develop this further with academic research and analysis.



A Request for Help with a Research Project

John Clarkson
(United Kingdom, Kent and Sussex Montessori Centre)

There are many different ways of implementing the Montessori approach. It is hard to say which is the most authentic, even harder to tell which model gives the best results for children. There is very little research on this question (at least in the English language.) This project is designed to try and provide some empirical data, but I need some collaborators.

In a review of Montessori Research in the U.S.A., Chattin-McNichols (1990, 2009) drew attention to several systematic problems with product-research in this field. Among these issues was the concern that "the confusion between programs and the model they supposedly represent has been a major source of confusion in the research on Montessori" (2009:26). (The other issues were small sample sizes, short-term studies, confounding the effects of a model with parent selection effects and the use of measuring instruments which do not relate to the unique Montessori goals.) It is widely known in the Montessori community, but perhaps less so generally, that there are striking contrasts between differing modes of implementation of the Montessori approach. Daoust (2004) studied 66 Montessori pre-schools, using telephone interviews with randomly selected staff members,

to explore their implementation of Montessori practice along 5 dimensions. She found 4 distinct clusters, (which she termed traditional, contemporary, blended and experimental) which conforms with a personal, informal impression based on extensive links within the movement, although the sample base (half the Montessori schools in one county in California) is rather localised. This is the only (Daoust, 2013, pers. comm.) published academic study into this aspect of Montessori education. This variability of implementation was also noted by Sammons & Eliot (n.d.:4) who estimated that around 25% of the variation in children's progress (specifically based on the Marie Clay assessment measure) could be attributed to the "significant differences between schools". Most studies of the effectiveness of the Montessori approach make no such distinction, and thus it is impossible to tell if their data is skewed by this variability.

The initial phase of the research will focus on the analysis of Montessori implementation models, and is basically a replication of Daoust's work with an international data set. The research question will be 'Are there identifiable clusters of modes of implementation in Montessori pre-schools?'. Survey data may be collected from three main sources: firstly from visits to and interviews with personnel in English Montessori pre-schools in an attempt to replicate Daoust's study in a British context and see whether Daoust's clusters are confirmed, and also to compare the delimiting factors; secondly from a questionnaire survey of international settings and thirdly from a survey of the literature describing early (pre-1914) Montessori schools.

On the assumption that clusters will be identifiable, the second research question will be 'Can reliable indicators be identified for each cluster?' Any indicators, to be useful, will need to be reliable but also easy to measure. The identification of such indicators would enable effectiveness research to be more closely focused, thus avoiding the potential bias due to conflation of models. Goldstein (1997) has drawn attention to the inherent limitations of indicators as a measure of effectiveness, and this area will need to be addressed in detail.

The third phase of the research (and possibly the central strand) will be to look at the different effectiveness of the clusters identified, using the indicators to assign settings to clusters. The research question could be 'Does the model of implementation impact on the effectiveness of Montessori pre-schools?' This stage of the research could start with a meta-analysis of

effectiveness studies which included Montessori settings (focussing particularly on the EPPE data), using the identified indicators (subject to the limitations mentioned above), to see if there is any significant link between effectiveness and the assigned cluster. There are many issues with the methodologies of school effectiveness research (SER) and these have been summarised by Sammons (n.d.), particularly focusing on problems around added-value.

There are also issues with this approach in that the usual measures of effectiveness in a main-stream context (frequently used in such studies, e.g. Lillard & Else-Quest, 2006) are not necessarily applicable to a Montessori setting, although many studies, including Sammons & Eliot and Lillard & Else-Quest, have shown a positive effect (Lillard (2012) identified 8 peer-reviewed published studies of Montessori effectiveness in the last 15 years, of which 3 did not show any positive effect.) The few cases where alternative measures have been used have led to inconclusive results. Sammons & Eliot (n.d.:3, 13) found these measures "less clear-cut" and a longitudinal study of the Franciscan Montessori Earth school in Portland (Glen, 2003) also found results, whilst positive, were not conclusive and he suggests the influence of Montessori is 'subtle'. A similar finding (in the context of Belgian Steiner and Freinet schools) was reported by de Bilde et al. (2013) where independence and engagement was greater in mainstream schools. There are unexplored issues here.

Lillard (2012) has recently undertaken a study of the effect of implementation variation on the effectiveness of Montessori education. She studied two types of implementation (which she called classic or high-fidelity and supplemented - which relate to Daoust's traditional and contemporary - and which are particularly promoted by the two major Montessori training organisations in the USA) using a single measure (equipment availability) to differentiate them. She also studied some highly regarded mainstream pre-schools as a control. Lillard used 6 measures of school readiness over a school year and found, in all but one case, that the classic implementation was the most effective. Some differences (e.g. in the measure of executive function, using the HTKS task) were striking. In that example, children in a classic implementation increased their scores by 13.72 points, in supplemented approaches by 7.34 and in the mainstream by 7.85. Other results were less clear cut, and in one case (theory of mind, tested by a false belief task followed by either a hidden emotion or a

perceptual access task) there were no significant differences. Overall, though, the classic approach showed the best results. Interestingly, the marked gains from the classic approach appeared to significantly dissipate over the Summer recess and Lillard, whilst proposing several possible mechanisms, was unable to use her data to choose between them. This is the only study to attempt to elucidate any implementation effect, although it only involved 172 children in 18 classrooms (only 3 of which were 'classic' Montessori.)

Different measures of 'Montessori effectiveness' may then be investigated to see if they could be used in a sample of the settings used in the initial survey. These could include:

- concentration (possibly using the Leuven scale for involvement - although there are contextual issues here);
- executive function (as used by Lillard, 2012);
- independence (possibly using an existing measure of teacher intervention);
- peacefulness (possibly using an existing measure of conflict) or social problem solving (as used by Lillard, 2012);
- freedom (measures to be investigated as the Montessori concept of freedom is closer to Freire's than to many other alternative approaches);
- environmental structure;
- *curriculum* navigation.

The null hypothesis would be that there are no significant differences between the clusters. If this is confirmed then it would suggest that personnel issues are more significant than methodology. This is probably what Montessori herself would have expected. She laid great stress on what she termed the 'spiritual development' of the teacher and less than some of her followers on the minutiae of the presentations. However Lillard (2012) dismisses any effect of teacher experience, on the basis of one quoted research paper. This conflicts with findings from mainstream research, e.g. Sylva et al. (2004). If that is the finding, the whole emphasis of the rest of the programme would have to be re-thought. The research expectation, prior to any empirical study but based on years of visiting Montessori schools, is that the traditional and contemporary clusters would be relatively similar in terms of effectiveness, and considerably better than either the blended or experimental clusters. Lillard (2012) found that the traditional approach produced better results overall.

However she drew attention to the 'fidelity paradox' wherein a more exact reproduction of a model usually produces better results but which tends to result in the approach dying out, whilst amendment tends to ensure longevity. She notes this has been documented in the health sector but is only mentioned in one Montessori text.

If a differential effect of implementation model is confirmed then an instrument to help Montessori settings improve their outcomes could be adapted from the ECERSR, as proposed by Sammons & Eliot (n.d.;5). Rigg (2010) has published an attempt at this project but unfortunately she shows little appreciation of the nature of a rating scale or of the usual norms of validity assessment. This final phase might be based on the question 'Can the identified indicators be used as the basis for a Montessori environmental rating scale?' This would need to be trialled and, presumably, validated by the Montessori community.

At this point in time, I need collaborators who would be prepared to administer the questionnaire (for the first research question) to a selection of pre-schools. The questionnaire is included as Appendix A. The questionnaire may be administered through an interview (e.g. by phone) or by being given to the classroom directress. They can be returned as hardcopy or by email. One thing I would stress is that I need a broad and representative sample, i.e. including weak and also eccentric pre-schools as well as authentic ones.

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Appendix A

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MONTESSORI TYPOLOGY RESEARCH PROJECT

I am currently carrying out a research project into

(a) What different types of Montessori schools there are
(b) Whether any of the different types are more effective
(c) How to identify the features of the best Montessori schools

I am applying to have the research used as part of a Ph.D. project at the University of London. None of the information collected will be used in a way that could identify either the school or setting, or the person providing the information. Only summary figures will be used.

When the research is complete I will send a summary of the findings to all participants. An analysis of a particular school's 'type' can also be furnished on request.
Thank you for your co-operation.

John Clarkson BA, BSc, MEd, AdvMontDip, FLS
Registrar, Kent & Sussex Montessori Centre
Director, Montessori Assessment & Education Ltd

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MONTESSORI TYPOLOGY PROJECT

Director's Questionnaire Document # _____
Date _____

Data from: visit
 telephone
 email
 interview
 seminar

Status of respondent: researcher
 school administrator
 class teacher

Confidential information:
 Name & address of school: _____

 Name of respondent: _____

This page will be detached from the collected data sheets.

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16) Can children work with or explore a material that hasn't been presented to them yet provided this is done in a non-disruptive, safe manner? Yes _____ No _____ To some extent _____

17) Are children permitted to use more than one set of materials in combination (e.g. the broad stair and the knobless cylinders together, etc.)? Yes _____ No _____ To some extent _____

18) Which of the following materials are currently available for use in your classroom?
 _____ knobbed cylinders _____ the metal insets _____
 _____ sand paper letters _____ the golden bead material _____
 dressing frames _____ binomial cube _____ trinomial cube _____
 _____ geometric cabinet _____ moveable alphabet _____
 _____ wood metal polishing _____ stamp game _____
 _____ number rods _____ 3 or more puzzle maps _____

19) Which of the following 3 descriptions best describes how children have been grouped in your classroom?
 _____ Most children are of the same age or year-group
 _____ The children are primarily of two age levels (such as 3 and 4s or 4s and 5s)
 _____ The classroom serves children from 2 ½/3 years to 5/6 years of age (i.e. a 3-year age-span)

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Type of Montessori Implementation

Teachers often modify traditional Montessori practices and principles to better accommodate the needs of the parents and children served by their programs.

20) How would you rate the extent that you have intentionally modified Montessori educational practices on a scale from one to five (with one representing little or no modification and five representing greatly modified)
 little or no modification 1 2 3 4 5 greatly modified

Sometimes situational circumstances prevent teachers from directing their classrooms the way they would in a perfect world. On a scale from one to five, rate the degree that each of the following situational circumstance has impacted your ability to implement the Montessori approach the way you ideally would. Use one to represent to a minimal extent and five to represent to a great extent

21) Limited resources or funding: minimal effect 1 2 3 4 5 greatest effect

22) Children with behaviour problems or special needs: little or no modification 1 2 3 4 5 greatly modified

23) School policies and procedures: little or no modification 1 2 3 4 5 greatly modified

24) Parental concerns and demands: little or no modification 1 2 3 4 5 greatly modified

25) Lack of planning or preparation time: little or no modification 1 2 3 4 5 greatly modified

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MONTESSORI TYPOLOGY PROJECT Document # _____

Questionnaire

Time Scheduling

1) Montessori teachers generally divide the school day into different activity periods. How have you scheduled classroom time during the morning in your program? For example, when do children arrive and leave? When do you have circle time, etc.
 Work period: _____ Circle time(s): _____

2) Do children have a snack at some time during the morning? Is the snack a group or individual activity?
 _____ none _____ group snack _____ individual _____ both

3) During the work period, can children work together or are they encouraged to work individually? _____ mix _____ together _____ individually

4a) Do you have a group circle time? _____ yes _____ no

4b) Do all children participate in circle time? _____ yes _____ no _____ some choice

5) Do children choose the activities they'll work with during the work period? _____ yes _____ no _____ some choice

.....

Materials & Activities

Many teachers provide their children with play or educational activities in addition to traditional Montessori materials and extensions.

6) What percentage of the activities available in your classroom during your work period are traditional Montessori materials and extensions, and what percentage are supplemental activities such as toys, dolls, board games, or non-Montessori educational materials?
 _____ % Montessori (6) _____ % Supplemental

7) Out of the supplemental activities in your classroom, what percentage would you say are make-believe or play-oriented and what percentage are educational?
 _____ % Play _____ % Educational

7a) What percentage (approximately) of the time do children spend on the Montessori materials? _____ On the non-Montessori materials (or toys) _____

8) Are children provided with workbooks or worksheets e.g. bought from an outside supplier? _____ Yes _____ No _____ To some extent

9) Are children permitted to use a material for a different purpose than it was intended provided they do so in a non-disruptive, safe manner? _____ Yes _____ No _____ To some extent

10) Have fragile or breakable materials, such as glass dishes, been made available to the children in your classroom? _____ Yes _____ No _____ To some extent

11) Some Montessori programs provide children with enrichment activities taught by specialists, such as art or movement, during the school day. Do you include these types of activities in your program, and if so, how is this done? _____ interruptions daily _____ other

12 & 13) In your classroom what percentage of Montessori material demonstrations are given to the whole group, to small groups of 2 or 3 children, and to individual children?
 _____ % whole group (12) _____ % small group _____ % individuals (13)

14) Are Montessori materials or extensions, such as the metal insets or matching the colour tablets to a set of objects, introduced during circle time? _____ Yes _____ No _____ To some extent

15) Can children choose whether to participate in an individual presentation or lesson? _____ Yes _____ No _____ To some extent

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How would you rate your agreement with the following practices associated with Montessori education on a scale from one to five with one representing total disagreement and five representing total agreement.

26) Providing children with a 3-hour uninterrupted work period: total disagreement 1 2 3 4 5 total agreement

27) Having a mixed age group of children spanning at least 3 years: total disagreement 1 2 3 4 5 total agreement

28) Giving initial material presentations to individual children: (rather than to the whole group) total disagreement 1 2 3 4 5 total agreement

29) Permitting children to choose whether to work with others, when to have snack, and to participate in lessons and circle time: total disagreement 1 2 3 4 5 total agreement

30) Allowing children to choose their work even if they haven't had a lesson first and how they'll work with a material provided this is done productively: total disagreement 1 2 3 4 5 total agreement

31) Providing children with a full range of Montessori materials, activities, and extensions rather than play or other supplemental activities during the work period: total disagreement 1 2 3 4 5 total agreement

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Dealing with Situations

The next set of questions deal with how comfortable you would be responding in different ways to certain problem situations in your classroom. Read the short scenario of a problem situation followed by 5 possible responses. For each response please indicate how comfortable you'd be reacting in this way on a scale from 1 to 7 with 1 being very uncomfortable, and 7 being very comfortable.

Simon, a 4 year old, has taken six savoury biscuits for his snack when a drawing indicates that only four should be taken.

How comfortable would you feel doing each of the following:

32) Ask Simon to return or throw away the extra biscuits, stating if he doesn't do so he won't be allowed to have snack the following day: very uncomfortable 1 2 3 4 5 very comfortable

33) Have Simon return or throw away the biscuits emphasizing that children in this class are expected to not take more than their share: very uncomfortable 1 2 3 4 5 very comfortable

34) Ignore the situation hoping that another child will point out the mistake: very uncomfortable 1 2 3 4 5 very comfortable

35) Refer to the picture of 4 biscuits and ask Simon how he could make the amount he's taken look like the amount that is on the card: very uncomfortable 1 2 3 4 5 very comfortable

36) Point out that other children haven't taken that many and ask him to make his amount the same as the others: very uncomfortable 1 2 3 4 5 very comfortable

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Two 3-year-old girls have selected the pink tower to work with and are arguing over who was there first.

How comfortable would you be with each of the following responses:

- 37) Discuss possible solutions and have the girls decide which one they will select.
_____ very uncomfortable 1 2 3 4 5 very comfortable
- 38) Explain to the girls that they'll need to take turns and that they should know better than to fight over a material.
_____ very uncomfortable 1 2 3 4 5 very comfortable
- 39) Point out how nicely two other children are sharing an activity and encourage the girls to arrive at their own solution.
_____ very uncomfortable 1 2 3 4 5 very comfortable
- 40) Tell the children that if they don't work together with the material that neither will be allowed to use it.
_____ very uncomfortable 1 2 3 4 5 very comfortable
- 41) Assume the girls will resolve the conflict on their own and go on to something else.
_____ very uncomfortable 1 2 3 4 5 very comfortable

Elena has once again left her rug out and is now completing another activity.

How comfortable would you be responding in each of the following ways:

- 42) Roll the rug up for Elena since she is already engaged in another activity.
_____ very uncomfortable 1 2 3 4 5 very comfortable
- 43) When Elena finishes concentrating on her activity, remind her that she has left a rug out.
_____ very uncomfortable 1 2 3 4 5 very comfortable
- 44) Have Elena roll up her rug pointing out that she is a big girl now and should remember to return the rug before starting another activity.
_____ very uncomfortable 1 2 3 4 5 very comfortable
- 45) Tell Elena that if she doesn't put her rug away she won't be allowed to continue the activity she is currently engaged in.
_____ very uncomfortable 1 2 3 4 5 very comfortable
- 46) Remind Elena that children in the classroom put their rugs away before beginning to work elsewhere.
_____ very uncomfortable 1 2 3 4 5 very comfortable

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Statistical / Demographic Information

- 47) Gender: _____ male _____ female
- 48) How many children are currently enrolled in your group? _____
- 49) How many paid staff members are usually in your classroom at one time, including yourself? _____
- 50) Which best describes your age:
a. 21-30 b. 31-40 c. 41-50 d. 51-60 e. 61 and over
- 51) Which of the following best describes your ethnic or racial background:
a. Asian b. African c. White d. Latino e. Mixed ethnicity f. Other
- 52) How long have you worked in your current job at this school? _____ years _____ months
- 53) What is your highest level of education:
a. Montessori Diploma
b. Foundation or 2 year college degree
c. Bachelors or 3 / 4 year college degree
d. Advanced degree (Masters, Doctorate)
- 54) Do you hold a Montessori *early childhood* certificate? ___ Yes ___ No ___ Will do soon (if yes) 55) What type of Montessori certification do you hold?
a. St. Nicholas b. LMC/MCI c. AMI d. KSMC e. Other: _____
- 56) Where did you receive your Montessori training? _____
- 57) What year was your Montessori certificate granted? _____
- 58) Did you teach prior to your Montessori work?
_____ No
_____ Yes, if so, for how long? _____ yrs

If you have any additional comment you would like to make, please write them on the following sheet.

Thank you so much for completing this questionnaire!

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Inspired by Maria Montessori Anew. Against Heterogeneity of Authenticity

Agata Rzeplińska, Jarosław Jendza
(Poland, University of Gdańsk)

Introduction

The idea of being authentic seems to be fundamental for western modern societies. The imperative of “*being yourself*” is present almost everywhere. “*Be yourself – choose Pepsi!*” says one famous marketing slogan. Positive psychology courses may help us achieve authentic happiness or we might even experience authentic calmbirth having attended carefully designed and trademarked workshops. We can purchase authentic clothes in certain places or an authentic copy (!) of a Dutch painter’s masterpiece. Authenticity is sometimes treated purely as an obsession of the modern era¹.

The aim of the article is to problematize the issue of being an authentic (Montessori) teacher and to present three different - and perhaps opposite - perspectives of authenticity in this very social practice, since it seems to us that a certain consensus of what “authentic Montessori” means has been recently reached and we find this situation undesirable from one side, and dangerous from the other.

Firstly, we will focus on the problem by defining the term “authentic”, paying special attention to one of the existentialistic approaches towards the problem; for this was the first philosophical stream which has given centrality to this essential issue.

Secondly, we will make an attempt to make use of two conceptions concerning teachers’ development in order to present three possible interpretations of being an authentic Montessori teacher.

Thirdly, we will describe the outcomes of an empirical survey which hopefully will show which type of thinking about authentic Montessori practice is verbalized by a group of eighty-four teachers from Poland. The outcomes will later be compared with two randomly chosen Montessori training courses offered from two European countries. This strategy, as we hope, should say more about the tacit knowledge regarding authenticity among various stakeholders in the Montessori community.

¹ M. Warchala, *Autentyczność i nowoczesność* [Authenticity and modernity], Universitas, Kraków 2006, p. 5.

The problem of an authentic definition of 'the authentic'

Authenticity as a philosophical problem is usually associated with the discussion between existentialistic thinkers² especially between Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre for whom the category of the authentic being was a fundamental issue. Although we are after the semiotic shift which severely criticized not only these two great thinkers mentioned above but also existentialism as such, we do believe that we can learn a lesson from what has been said in Heideggerian "Being and Time". "Opening which means searching for the sense of being is a *sine qua non* condition of authentic existence"³ says the Author. "Authentic" is therefore a synonym for searching for the sense. An authentic Montessori teacher would be – in this perspective – a person searching for the sense of their being.

It is therefore only the teachers who may be capable of constituting their authentic professional existence, and that is why the definition itself is of purely idiomatic nature. This way of thinking leads straightforward to the thesis according to which it is pointless to think of any universalistic definition of an authentic Montessori teacher. It is always dependent on the biography of a particular person and their cultural background.

As it was mentioned above, such a strong Subject - according to many - cannot be treated as the only perspective – especially in postmodern times (i.e. after the semiotic turn). Nevertheless, there is still something very vivid in Heideggerian thought, and that is – from one side - the imperative to reject conformism if one wishes to have a chance to be authentic and treating authenticity as a moral obligation from the other.

When referring to linking theory and practice, W. Frankiewicz tried to outline the possibility of an educational dialogue dividing it into three distinct forms and therefore suggested three different ways of thinking about being authentic as educational practitioners:

IMITATION/MIMICKING/REPRODUCTION – There's a strong desire to absorb and internalize the archetype of a specific educational practice. Teacher's actions are "unreflective and

reproductive"⁴ and the aim of his/her performance is to "adapt to a predetermined model".

Universal status is given to "standardized methodical solutions"⁵ without exploring their underlying justifications. The author feels that continuous "repetitive imitation/reproduction" limits the perspective of educational actions, which in turn leads to "a loss of independence and passivity"⁶ on behalf of the teacher. "Pre-prepared, tested and safe schemes"⁷ give rise to the teacher's feeling of unjustified confidence in the quality and effectiveness of actions, resulting in the loss of the critical. Unreflective mimicking approach to theory.

APPLICATION/USEAGE/IMPLEMENTATION – In short this form can be summed up as technological pedagogy/ technique oriented pedagogy/ pedagogy as a technical science. Theory is treated as a tool for achieving specific practical aims. Practice in turn is understood as "a source of knowledge, a criterion of its authenticity and reformation of reality."⁸ Hence, reality is understood as implementing theory in action. Evaluated on the basis of efficiency and efficacy is the technicality of actions.

INSPIRATION - In the current dissent between the relations of theory and practice, humanistic thought resists the notion of pedagogy as a site of theoretical deployment. It rejects its instrumentality for "beginning something anew"⁹ (hence activity/action) is "inherent in all human conditions."¹⁰ Inspiration corresponds to the concept of fascination, which is defined as "an emotional state arousing trust and forming a bond with the object resulting in the birth of the desire to mimic."¹¹ Here, mimicking may be understood in 2 ways: it may be a passive and blind reproduction of ideals independent of changing conditions, or may become an "individualized creative activity harmonized with the new external and internal conditions."¹² The source of inspiration may permeate the recipient if and only if the latter shows a readiness to "receive and experience the signals and become affected by them."¹³ The

² *op. cit.*, p. 8. Nevertheless, it was Jean Jacques Rousseau who had already been very much interested in this matter.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ W. Frankiewicz, *Naśladowanie – stosowanie - inspiracja jako możliwe odmiany dialogu z pedagogiką Celestyna Freineta* in "Ku pedagogii pogranicza", Toruń 1990, p. 278.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1998, p. 9.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹¹ W. Frankiewicz, *op. cit.*

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 288.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

condition for this permeating relation to exist is the recipients' state of readiness and shared values. To be inspired means "entering in a dialogue with the thought and act of the master."¹⁴ The function of an inspirational calling should fascinate one to transcend oneself and the ideal in creative actions.

The other framework is taken from R. Kwasnica's article on the psycho-pedagogical inquiries into teachers' development and education. The terms used to describe the three have been borrowed from L. Kohlberg's stages of moral development.

PRE-CONVENTIONAL – The teacher subconsciously recreates a particular convention, in terms of thinking that the educator is somewhere before the convention (the level of pre-conventional thinking and acting). This implies that his/her ideals are imitated without much understanding. The teacher follows a behavioral pattern of the environment, and imitates interpretational as well as operational solutions, which are to be gratified.

CONVENTIONAL – The educators have fully adapted to their professional role accepting their blueprint, meaning both "obligations and operational aims."¹⁵ Teachers' actions are defined by the professional convention (inscribed in tradition and pedagogical knowledge) that is in the process of "awakening". Effective use of knowledge and skills occurs/happens in a "pre-critical and reproductive"¹⁶ manner. The professional may evince specific non-conformity "rejecting the solutions which are at odds with the institutionally defined profession". S/he may seem to be innovator of methods and means of action, effectively perfecting their dexterity. We have to stress that innovations are limited to the instrumentality of operations.

POST-CONVENTIONAL – This is the level of "creative transcendence" of the teachers' role. Post-conventional forms of understanding and action are closely tied with the critical and creative use of knowledge. The teacher in this level investigates sources and justifications, seeks personal/individual reasons to modify the "ideal-imposed interpretational" standards. S/he seeks new ways of understanding the "methods, principles and means of action"¹⁷ as well as educational situations developing a personal comprehension of reality through creative

application/use of knowledge. Critical understanding of the world, creativity and innovativeness in action, impose a requirement to "fracture"¹⁸ the convention through exploration and inquiry, resulting in personal definitions of teaching as a profession. It's an independent attempt at "translating universal values to commitments and moral license".¹⁹ The post-conventional reasoning cannot be pre-taught, it's a stage that is reached solely through personal effort and inquiry. "Autonomous identity"²⁰ is the new source of our justifications.

Similarities can be drawn from these two approaches to the teachers' educational practice as well as their development. Both imitation/reproduction and pre-conventional level view the teachers' actions as mimicking the ideal in an unreflective way, which in turn prevents dialogue between theory and practice (Frankiewicz), but is additionally gratified (Kwasnica). Teachers' performance is limited to blind following of the "standardized methodical solutions"²¹ without exploring their underlying justifications in a reproductive manner. Educators, at this stage, are unaware of the convention passively and unreflectively conforming to the behavioristic pattern of the environment.

Application/implementation and the conventional level can be unified by J. Dewey's reference to the notion of "efficient workman"²². Reality here is understood as effectively applying/using theory in practice in a "pre-critical and technical way". The technicality/instrumentality of actions is evaluated on the basis of its efficacy, and a restricted to methods and means innovatory practice may be observed.

The last complementary unison between the post-conventional level and inspiration emphasizes the issue of creatively transcending the educators' pre-defined profession. It maintains that teachers' have to go against ("fracture" the convention) in order to re-define the aims of education as well as the teachers' profession. "*Our task remains to integrate and subordinate the theoretical knowledge and technical possibilities of human beings into their 'praxis'. It by no means consists in the transformation of the actual life world, which*

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 289.

¹⁵ R. Kwasnica "Ku pytaniom o psychopedagogiczne kształcenie nauczycieli [in:] *Ku pedagogii pogranicza*, Toruń 1990, p. 303.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 302.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 303.

¹⁸ R. Kwasnica, op. cit., p. 304.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 304.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 304.

²¹ W. Frankiewicz op.cit., p. 278.

²² J. Dewey, *The relation of theory to practice in education*, http://people.ucsc.edu/~ktellez/dewey_relation.pdf p. 2, access date: 07 Dec. 2013.

*is just the world of praxis into a theoretically justified technical construct*²³.

Empirical picture

During one of the most important Montessori conferences in Poland in 2012 the authors conducted a research that aimed at exploring two topics. One of them was connected with the conditions for developing critical competences in Montessori pre-school and primary school groups. The other aim of the research was to gather data for further analysis on the teachers' conceptions concerning possible visions of authentic Montessori practice.

The methodology of the project cannot be described here in detail but it must be said that the project was conducted in the interpretative paradigm of social research. The main data collection technique was group discussion. There were eighty-four Montessori teachers involved in the survey (sample), and they were asked to comment on certain quotes chosen from Montessori literature²⁴. The teachers were divided into two groups. The first group was given all the quotations accompanied by the name of the Author (i.e. M. Montessori), the other group had the same quotations but without the author's name.

The teachers who knew that their statements had been produced by the Famous Italian Pedagogue generally agreed with the quotes and were able to find numerous arguments supporting them.

The other group was very critical about the same statements and proved that most of them were not up to date, had nothing to do with contemporary scientific knowledge of educational processes, some teachers even tried to convince the others that "*these sentences are simply ridiculous*".

Obviously the sample was not representative, so the result cannot be extrapolated but surely this "experiment" may provoke a question of the *locus* of authenticity for the teachers involved in the project.

The awareness of the Author makes it unnecessary to search for the sense. The

²³ H.G. Gadamer, *Hans-Georg Gadamer on Education, Poetry and History. Applied hermeneutics*, State University of New York Press, Albany 1992, p. 216.

²⁴ The quotations were taken from the following books by M. Montessori: - "*Dr. Montessori own Handbook*", "*The Discovery of the Child*", "*The Absorbent Mind*", "*Children's Houses*", "*The Montessori Method*".

teachers seem to think that because it was stated by the "great" Maria Montessori, it must be true, and therefore not only we are not obliged to inquire into the sense (since it is justified by the name), but perhaps we should not do that.

The same phenomenon might occur when teachers attend various Montessori teacher training programs, especially if these courses are focused on the technical aspect of practice. The fetish of materials transferred through many courses may cause an impression that we have finally possessed the key to "proper" Montessori teaching. "Be-yourself-commercial" comes back - this time - in Montessori training.

But is that really the case?

To verify such an unpleasant thesis, we decided to analyze the content of two randomly chosen Montessori courses. We think that by insight into the contents of the course we might say something about the model of the teacher that is implicitly presumed by the organizers of the course. We paid special attention to the operational verbs that describe the effects of the course. In one of the offers we can read that the participants will be able to:

- *define* the phase of the child's development;
- *transfer* the knowledge on Montessori method to parents and clients;
- *assess* the learners knowledge;
- *use* the material in a correct way;
- *build* the materials for their learners.

The other offer advertises the courses' aims in this way:

- *acknowledging* the participants with the theory of M. Montessori;
- full, *practical* preparation to the teachers work in pedagogical system of M. Montessori in kindergarten and in primary schools;
- *presenting* opportunities of dealing with highly talented students and those causing educational difficulties.

The organizations seem to be focused on the practical, instrumental aspect of teacher training. They – in this way – implicitly define the profile of a desired Montessori teacher. This profile (in our interpretation) is corresponding with the first stage of teachers' development described above. It should not, therefore, be surprising that the teachers – even those with long practical experience – seem to long for some kind of heteronomous authenticity, the authenticity

coming from outside – for example from a Great Author.

Note: The authors of the article would very much appreciate any feedback from the Readers, so please do not hesitate to send us your comments, critical remarks and any reflections you might find relevant.



Values in the Upbringing Sciences and Bringing Up to Values in the Pedagogy of Maria Montessori. Freedom, Peace and Love and Primary Values

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Part I. Values in the Upbringing Sciences. The Outline of the Problem.

1. The notion of axiology and pedagogical axiology

The problem of values is important not only in upbringing sciences but also in practice of bringing up a human being. Working with children and teenagers in the pedagogical system of Maria Montessori we have to realize that upbringing, understood as “helping life”, is rooted in the world of values. Axiology deals with the problem of values (Gr. *axios* – having value, valuable, precious, worth + *logos* – science), also called philosophy of value, the study of value. Axiology researches on the nature of value, it fixes norms, criteria of giving the value and the hierarchy of values. It also analyses the norms, criteria of giving the value and the hierarchy of values. It also researches on the essence of moral behavior and beauty and takes up the agreements which kind of behavior is good and which is its contradiction (after: e.g. 3; pp. 14-15, 21; p. 394). From the point of view of pedagogy, as a widely understood science of upbringing – “pedagogical axiology deals with values in socializing and bringing up of a human being” (after: 21; p. 403).

Taking up the consideration concerning pedagogical axiology, that means values which M. Montessori preferred in upbringing, can be an interesting basis for the self-reflection of the pedagogue, the practitioner who every day faces with introducing children and teenagers to understanding and perceiving values.

2. The notion of values, the classification of values

The word “value” stems from the Lat. word *valor* (*valere*) that is “being worth”. “*That means everything that is precious and worth the desire which constitutes the aim of human aims. The approved values constitute the basis of assessment, norms and cultural patterns*” (after: 3; p. 344). The notion of value is defined and considered in many sciences, e.g. philosophy, ethics, psychology, pedagogy. For pedagogy it has a special significance because of strict connection of the process of upbringing with introducing the alumnus to values. Showing the universal values to children and teenagers such as good, truth, beauty, independence is a tangent point in the relation adult – the child. The basic values which have a positive dimension, according to Max Scheler have contradictory negative values: evil, falsehood, ugliness, enslavement which should be steered clear of. Values, according to the Author, are strictly connected with levels of feelings of a human being, especially vital ones, psychic and metaphysical and religious (comp. 23) and this is especially important in the process of upbringing.

There are a lot of classifications of values in literature. Various criteria of division are the basis for the varied classifications. The most popular one in the world literature is the one by Milton Rokeach who distinguished between the final and instrumental values. Janusz Homplewicz divided the values into transcendental and natural, Edward Spranger was dealing with theoretical, economic, aesthetic-artistic, social, political and religious values. The Polish philosopher of upbringing, Karol Kolowski highlighted the meaning of normative values in upbringing, not normative and absolute (more about values and various classifications comp. e.g. 2,3,5, 8, 21, 23). An interesting classification from the point of view of their weight in the today’s upbringing was presented in the book *Z dzieckiem w świat wartości* (With a Child into the World of Values) by Irena Koźmińska and Elżbieta Olszewska (comp. 5 and the text from the workshops which is in this publication). The authors distinguished twelve universal values which, according to them, should systematically be a subject of everyday exercise and which should not only be known but, above all, understood and lived. These are the following values: respect, honesty, responsibility, courage, self-discipline, being peaceful, justice, happiness together with optimism and humor, friendship and love, solidarity, beauty and wisdom (5; p. 47).

Bearing in mind the needs of this summary, I will use the classification of Richard Jedliński, because this division will let us face the values which M. Montessori preferred. R. Jedliński distinguished the following classes of values:

Table no.1 The individual summary on the basis of (2).

The class of value	Examples of values
TRANSCENDENTAL	God, holy thing, faith, salvation
UNIVERSAL	Good, truth
AESTHETIC	beauty
COGNITIVE	Knowledge, wisdom, reflexive nature
MORAL	Courage, dignity, honor, love, friendship, responsibility, justice, modesty, honesty, faithfulness
SOCIAL	Democracy, patriotism, law and order, solidarity, tolerance, family
VITAL	Strength, health, life
PRAGMATIC	Work, cleverness, talent, resourcefulness
PRESTIGIOUS	Career, fame, power, fortune, money
HEDONISTIC	Joy, sex, fun

3. The meaning of values in upbringing

Since upbringing is the peculiar ‘bringing up’ of the human being that has a social and moral dimension, we can agree with the thesis that each upbringing is bringing up to values. Values are a peculiar compass, measure, the direction of the person’s behavior. As Katarzyna Olbrycht stated, in sources we can encounter various positions of the interpretation of upbringing to values. These are didactic and instrumental interpretations or formation and aim (more: 25). In bringing up to values theoreticians, as well as practitioners, pose many open questions which are connected with such matters as:

- a) Values and dangers in today’s world (comp. e.g. 5).
- b) Values and anti-values stemming from brutalizing life (comp. e.g. 28).
- c) Moral relativity connected with cultural, social etc. differences, ideologising of moral upbringing e.g. totalitarian countries (comp. e.g. 29).

- d) The lack of simple relationship between the advancement of mental and moral development which brings problems of interruptions in harmonious moral development from anomie, through heteronomy to autonomy in confrontation with development of moral sensitivity (comp. e.g. 6,9,21).

Referring to the example from point a I. Koźmińska and E. Olszewska, in order to show the meaning of moral values in the life of human being, they presented the vision of the world without values as a counterbalance to value deficiencies of today’s world. The vision of the world without values, according to Authors:

- Computer hackers on the mass scale introduce chaos and cause accidents in airlines and other means of transport, they destroy databases in banks, hospitals, national institutions and so on.
- Terrorists kill people, poison water, food and air. Nobody opposes that...;
- Everyday there are cheating, murdering, raping mugging and stealing;
- Biologists produce weapon killing millions of people;
- Emergency services do not work, because nobody cares about saving lives of others;
- Kidnapping and murders for organ transplants multiply. Doctors without scruples graft organs of people killed on commission;
- No contracts and obligations are binding;
- The world is drowning in junk, there are constant breakdowns and nobody feels responsible for anything;
- Banks, health service, fire brigade, police... do not work” (5; p. 44).

The meaning of values for the personal and social development of the human being is undeniable. Bringing up without values becomes “worthless”. If the world and the human being are to pick oneself up to GOOD, TRUTH AND BEAUTY – universal values, the effort of the adults must be taken with cooperation with children for the sake of mutual, social and moral development.

Part II. Bringing Up to Values in the Pedagogy of Maria Montessori.

1. Impulses/genesis of bringing up to values in the pedagogy of M. Montessori.

Let us depart from the afore presented values according to R. Jedliński. The values written in

capital letters are these (according to the author of the text) which were preferred by Maria Montessori, both in her life, upbringing practice and writing. In the following summary I will refer to the selected values (underlined in the table).

The class of value	Examples of values
TRANSCENDENTAL	GOD, holy thing, FAITH, salvation
UNIVERSAL	GOOD, TRUTH
AESTHETIC	beauty
COGNITIVE	Knowledge, wisdom, reflectiveness
MORAL	Courage, dignity, honour, <u>LOVE</u> , friendship, <u>RESPONSIBILITY</u> , justice, modesty, honesty, faithfulness, <u>PEACE</u>
SOCIAL	Democracy, patriotism, righteousness, <u>SOLIDARITY</u> , tolerance, family, <u>INDEPENDENCE</u> , <u>FREEDOM</u>
VITAL	Power, health, <u>LIFE</u>
PRAGMATIC	<u>WORK</u> , cleverness, talent, resourcefulness
PRESTIGIOUS	Career, fame, power, fortune, money
HEDONISTIC	Joy, sex, fun

**Independence freedom and love were written afterwards because these values were especially appreciated by Montessori.

1.1 Reference to bibliography (GOD, FAITH, LOVE, RESPONSIBILITY, SOLIDARITY)

The values preferred by M. Montessori stemmed from the biography of the Author. It should be reminded in this place that M. Montessori was brought up in the spirit of Christian ethics. Her parents, especially her mother through the precise actions introduced her to values such as faith, good, beauty, responsibility, patience, tolerance, independence. Biographers dealing with Montessori's life point at many facts which can be associated with their influence on her later views. Edward M. Standing called up a situation in which the family came back from long holiday and Maria wanted to eat something instantly. Her mother who did not manage to prepare the meal yet gave

her daughter a piece of bread saying "Ok, if you are not patient enough to wait for the meal eat this!" (after E. Standing, (in): 10; p. 11). To support Maria's introduction to Christian values there is also an example of free help to the needing ones. When she was young, Maria and her mother were taking care of people who were poor, disabled, sewing or knitting clothes for them and also accompanying a disabled girl in walks (10; p. 11).

It should be born in mind that pedagogical work was treated by Maria Montessori as her mission and she planned to start a nunnery. To accomplish this mission together with three friends – A. Fedeli, A. Maccheroni and E. Ballerini – she started on 10th November 1910 private religious vows. It was a sign of her deep conversion bearing in mind her personal experiences connected with the birth of her son out of wedlock (1987) and the impossibility of bringing him up throughout the first years of his life. The fact of this conversion was mentioned by her son, Mario Montessori in his reminiscences of his mother, as well as her friend A. Maccheroni (G. Schulz – Benesch, Montessori, Darmstadt 1980, p. 61, (in): 7; p. 13). In spite of the fact that the nunnery was not started by Maria Montessori, in the end of her life she thought there was such a need. The whole life after the year 1910 she devoted to propagating of the upbringing according to Christian values, but at the end of her life she complained that she did not instill in society the idea of upbringing based on unselfish love and knowledge of psychology of the child. In the year 1950 she wrote: "... All great cultures of the past, including our own were insufficient and unstable because they were building only on <the values of the adults> and did not take into consideration other parts of humanity – the child. Necessity of such nunnery is urgent. For more than 40 years I was teaching and distributing diplomas but nothing got fulfilled, nothing which would answer to great necessity and at the same time the opportunity for the good which is included in it" (7; p. 12).

1.2 Facing with pedagogy and traditional education based on rigor, directive upbringing, the adult person who is "superior to the child" (GOOD, LOVE, RESPONSIBILITY, INDEPENDENCE, AUTONOMY, WORK, SOLIDARITY, FREEDOM, PEACE, LIFE).

In reflections of M. Montessori concerning development and bringing up of the human being there are many remarks of the author concerning

upbringing understood as “*helping the human being in attaining independence...as help given to the child since birth in one’s mental and spiritual development*” (18; p. 16). They refer this view to the contemporary pedagogy, this is a clear reflection of the way upbringing of the human being is seen at least in directive pedagogy (More, comp. 30). Statements by Maria Montessori support a critical statement on the direct and directive (traditional) upbringing. “*According to the most widespread superstition in vernacular upbringing – as Montessori wrote – everything can be achieved by teaching, that means referring to child’s discipline or posing oneself as a pattern to follow... But personality can develop only through individual exercises*”. (M. Montessori, *Das creative Kind*, p. 229, after: 1; p. 65).

In traditional upbringing to values according to M. Montessori the child does not have any opportunity to build one’s personality since upbringing as an adaptive dimension (pedagogical sociologism)-the child has to adjust to society’s demands unconditionally. Thus, it is not a kind of upbringing we should strive for, according to the author.

Montessori claimed that society, i.e. the world of adults cannot undertake the task of upbringing since: the adults are characterized by “pride”, “arrogance”, “towering above” children, the adults do not respect the laws of children. “*It is such an immorality to acknowledge the laws of adults and not children! Respecting the justness of attitudes – yes, but only the ones who can defend themselves and protest; outside of this space one is a barbarian (...) What counts is the right of the stronger one. If we deal with moral upbringing of the child seriously we should look around and look more closely at this world, which we have prepared for children. Do we want them – Montessori asked – to become just like us and kick the weaker ones unconsciously?*” (M. Montessori, *Schule des Kindes*, p. 25, (in): 1; p. 67).

What should be changed according to Montessori?

Above all, M. Montessori aimed her statements at the adults in order to make them change their approaches, the proper “conversion” so that they look at child’s development and understand that upbringing is a dialogue, supporting, “**helping life**”!

2. The conditions of introducing children to values in the perspective of views of M. Montessori.

THE FIRST condition of help in recognition, understanding and interiorizing values by the child concerns THE CONCEPT OF THE CHILD, its development and the concept of upbringing.

In order to make the introduction to values possible, the adults – parents and educators have to accept and put into practice the thesis that the child is “*the constructor of oneself*”. Only then one will feel the value and dignity by oneself. What is helpful in this process is independent learning and experience of “*polarizing the attention*”, the result of which is “*normalization*”. Normalization constitutes in a way an example of acceptance and internalizing such values as: independence, responsibility for oneself, others, for the whole world, self-discipline, moral autonomy, “*love to people, natural and cultural world, loving peace in the world*”. According to M. Montessori a normalized human being is “different, converted” in the sense of being good and acting morally. The child is, as the Author claims, “*hard-working, peaceful, disciplined, wanting to put in practice one’s possessions with love*” (14; p. 31.) What is important here is the knowledge of the educators concerning the developmental rights of the child since birth to adulthood and according to them to give help in the “prepared environment” (More, e.g. 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22 and others).

THE SECOND condition in recognizing, understanding and internalizing values by the child refers to understanding FREEDOM. Freedom as the primary value.

M. Montessori wrote: “... *Freedom and discipline are two sides of the coin since educational freedom leads to self-discipline. Coins have two sides too: one is prettier, engraved in a more precise way, it presents somebody’s likeness or allegorical image, the other is simple, bearing only some inscription or number. The other side can be compared with freedom and the first one, carefully engraved with discipline...*” (19, (in:): 26; p. 257-258).

In many statements concerning upbringing the topic of freedom appeared (comp. e.g.: 13, 15, 17, 18, 19). M. Montessori was trying to prove that freedom and discipline (inner) can be strictly connected with and condition each other. This questions was widely discussed by the pedagogues dealing with the pedagogy of M. Montessori, e.g. E. Mortimer Standing, F.J.J. Buytendijk, Paul Oswald, G. Schulz – Benesch, H. Helming, Hildegard Holstige, Hols Klaus Berg, in Poland A. Sajdak.

Paul Oswald wrote, "*M. Montessori does not present views about the essence of freedom and its connections with upbringing in some systematic study, but it undertakes this problem on the defined occasions; she does it in such a way that it is noticed that she managed to nail the essence and meaning of freedom in any deep sense*" (27: p. 81). Hildegard Holtstiege analyzed Montessori's work in in-depth way and she concluded significantly that her interpretation of freedom is not primarily of theoretical and philosophical nature, statements and views concerning this topic are included in views on upbringing. Hence, freedom in Montessori's conception can be interpreted as freedom being realized (lived) and well-thought freedom (i.e. in theoretical context). Freedom lived was a central problem in Montessori's *oeuvre*. It means that child's freedom is about its liberation (Fraigabe, giving freedom, freedom from) leading the child to liberating oneself (Freiwerden, becoming free, freedom to). "*This liberation is neither an idea, nor utopia but often the experienced fact. It is reality which we are constantly experiencing*" (4, (in:) 26; p. 328). Thus the child reaches freedom through constant activity. "*Freedom is action*" claimed M. Montessori (4, (in:) 26; p. 328).

The thought freedom, the one in theoretical context has to be interpreted as a phenomenon, as a subject of experience. Being free – potentially or discretionarily – becomes the subject of experience as a capability to act freely through the activity or action directed at the precise aim. That is why reflections on freedom as a value are aiming at understanding it as an anthropological phenomenon in categories of "liberation" and "deliverance". In this case we should refer to the concept of child's development especially the pre- and postnatal period because its knowledge shows how burdensome and long is the process of becoming a human being. Analyzing this question H. Holtstiege referred to the views of culture expert Eibl-Eibesfeldt. The view concerns the presence of "free field" in human's existence and it stems from dividing the tasks of brain's hemispheres (dividing the purposeful actions and drive actions); the human being can act thoughtfully and with consideration, one can act according to one's will. The child experiences the limit of freedom: with regard to content (during polarization of attention, the work of senses, during getting to know the world) and spatially (comp. the concept of the prepared environment). Freedom, as it has been mentioned, is a long and burdensome process and active development of a human being to independence and self-discipline.

H. Holtstiege distinguished perspectives of freedom in M. Montessori as liberation and deliverance. These are some dimensions of freedom which overlap making a consistent whole in child development – a human being. We can distinguish here biological, social, pedagogical, moral and methodical freedom which is in fact the holistic freedom. However, in order to show the specific nature of their scopes we should shortly characterize them. Freedom from biological perspective is a condition to the optimal development which is in accordance with needs, inner rights of the child. Here what is highlighted is the necessity of liberating of the spontaneous creative force of a child through the opportunity to choose the activity by the child (through respecting freedom of others). Freedom from social perspective refers to the problem of "liberating" from the primary connection between the child and the adult, because it is known that after birth each child is strongly connected socially with adults. In the process of social development the child has to gradually get independent of the suppressing energy of the adult. However freedom is not dealing with or getting under the influence of force (repression). M. Montessori highlights that "*To leave the child to its own will when it has not developed means the betrayal of the sense of freedom*". Social freedom is causally connected with development of free choices of the will – it is expressed in voluntary submission to social rules and instances, what is also developed is the so called "*phenomenon of spontaneous discipline*" – being obedient the condition of which is inner balance. According to Montessori free children are the ones who control themselves with the simultaneous acceptance that ones own freedom has its limits and it is where the freedom of others begins and the freedom of community (16; p. 23).

What is the freedom of a child? – asked M. Montessori. It is achieved when the child can develop according to one's inner rights and the needs of one's development. The child is free only when it becomes independent of the overwhelming energy of adults. This liberation is neither an idea no utopia but the state which is often experienced. It is reality which we constantly experience. It does not mean that we rule out the necessity of cultural transmission, the indispensable discipline or the need of upbringing. The difference is only in the fact that in such freedom children work with great joy, they acquire culture thanks to their own activity and discipline is born by itself" (16; p. 23, (in:) 1, p. 115.).

What is important in this topic is social upbringing e.g. in groups of various ages which facilitates interaction. In Montessori's statements there is a

lot of place devoted to human solidarity (e.g. through scouting). "Cooperation as the Author wrote, is a result of living in freedom, filled with freedom of choice of activity" (1; p. 70).

Freedom from pedagogical perspective is expressed in the renowned statement: "*Please, help me to do it myself*". It is about keeping the sensible balance between independent activity of the child and the influence of the adults. It should be highlighted that giving help by the adults in attaining independence by the child should be based on oneself. The well prepared environment constitutes an impulse to making a choice as regards the object to work with. Children have an opportunity of free "circulation" between groups and rooms and on the other hand "attaching" to one place. In order to understand Montessori's intention in the right way in this topic to self-reflection we can quote Author's statement: "*When in upbringing we speak about freedom of a child we forget that freedom is not equal with leaving the child to oneself. To let the child free and make one do what he/she wants to does not mean that the child is free. Freedom is always a great and positive quarry. It is not achieved easily. It is not achieved by abolishing tyranny, braking the chains. Freedom is building, we have to build it in the surrounding world, as well as in oneself. This is what the right task is about, the only help we can offer to a child*" (13; p. 9).

Freedom from moral perspective refers to achieving moral autonomy in development (normalization) that is the situation in which the human being does not only know moral norms and understands them but also puts them in practice in one's life. The human being, as Montessori says, becomes "*the master of oneself*" and the responsibility of the human for oneself and the world is realized. M. Montessori claims that then the disciplined behavior becomes the basis. The child chooses, makes decisions, uses skills and knowledge and hence the transfer rule is taken into the moral sphere. The estimation of good and evil is becoming more and more precise, acceptance and respecting moral norms are exemplified. It becomes especially seen in the period of adolescence in which building of one's world of moral values and showing them is particularly characteristic. A young person becomes "*the creator of one's perfection*". This process runs parallel with building strong and balanced will which helps in fulfilling the freedom "to". The will, as Montessori wrote, *does not lead to chaos and violence, these are the sings of aberration and suffering*. (...) The will which supports what the person does goes along the path of conscious choice. Our children choose the

activity spontaneously and repeating the exercise they develop the awareness of their actions. Something which was only a vital impulse in the beginning (horme) becomes acting of will. First the child acts instinctively and then one acts purposefully and consciously. In this way waking up of the spirit takes place. (...) Our task is making the will and not breaking it" (19, (in:) 26; p. 227).

Freedom from methodical perspective is a consequence of respecting the biological, social, pedagogical and moral freedom because they are conditions of free work of the child. Thus here – free work is specification of child's freedom. Free activities in Montessori facilities is in a way an example of freedom from didactic perspective. The teacher who respects the category of freedom will carefully and methodically arrange the prepared environment, ones approach and behavior are a sign of respect the interior freedom of a child. Teacher's task is leading children and students into abiding by the main rule during the optional activities' time, i.e. respecting the rule of free choice of the subject of work, the time and place of doing it. In Montessori facilities children and teachers set the interior rules. These are for example the following rules of optional activities: do not interrupt others in their work, do not speak loud, whispering is enough, lead each work to the end, be conscientious in your self-check, do not interrupt when the teacher is giving a lesson to somebody else, help others in their work, each educational aid should be put back into its place (24; p. 16).

In this topic it is important that crystallization of child's freedom demands measure, borders: it is about keeping the proportion between excess and deficiency of objects and the space. Teachers' and their pupils' task is about learning the respect for child's freedom and directing the spontaneous work of children in relation to their present state of development. Freedom and limitations refer to the teacher as well: one has to respect the limits "*within which one can act pedagogically*" thus the pedagogue experiences freedom through the freedom of the developing human being. This mutual learning of respect towards the freedom has upbringing, social and moral pluses because it become the way to building self-discipline and normalization.

Upbringing to freedom in the concept of M. Montessori is, I guess, upbringing to values in the positive sense that is bringing up to freedom "to". That is to: free, relevant to sensitive phases, to the free choice of the activity which is in accordance with needs and interests, free choice

of values which does not undermine the sake of the others, free, responsible taking the decisions and taking the decisions as a result of moral autonomy. M. Montessori cared about that during the development and getting at normalization the educator and the alumnus realize the aims and ideals which are socially and morally desired and they give a testimony of taking full responsibility for their behavior and directing it in accordance with feeling responsible in a moral way. Similar descriptions of freedom “to” we will find in sources concerning freedom. Among others Z. Matulka wrote that the aim of upbringing to freedom is a capability of making right moral choices by the human being and appreciating other basic values: the capability of seeing the essential rights which are necessary to every person as a person who has one’s dignity. It refers e.g. the right to live, to work, to one’s own convictions, to the personal growth, to establishing family, deciding of one’s own children (comp: 11).

THE THIRD condition of helping in recognition, understanding and interiorizing values by the child: PEACE and upbringing to peace as primary values [1].

Maria Montessori’s views on peace and bringing up to peace stemmed from many signs. We can refer to her experiences in *Casa dei Bambini* in 1907 where the idea of cooperation, team work and pre-ecological upbringing was already deeply-rooted in practice. In her first pedagogical dissertations Montessori frequently wrote about a *child living in peaceful atmosphere*. It was a reference to a widely described prepared environment and the relation between the child and the adult. (More: 31, (in:) 22, p. 167 – 74).

In later life of Maria Montessori it is worth mentioning the situation on 30s of 20th century in Europe and in the world. M. Montessori in her works at congresses or lectures was talking about the dangers of the war, the increasing fascism. It is enough to mention the work entitled “Peace and Upbringing” from 1932 and others, and the collected texts concerning this topic by P. Oswald and G. Schulz-Benesch: “*Peace and Upbringing*” 1973. The meaning of Montessori’s views on peace in the world is included in her inscription, “*Please, dear children, who can do everything, build peace in the world and between people with me*”.

A special views of M. Montessori was rejecting the “negative” notion of “peace”. Peace is not stopping the war, according to the Author. As long as there are the defeated and winters in the world there will not be peace. “*The real peace*

means victory of justice and love between people: it means the better world in which harmony rules” (1; p. 181).

The point of departure in the discussion concerning peace should be analyzed by Montessori relation: the adult – the child. In this place Montessori, referring to inglorious traditions in raising the child, claimed that the sign of our times is an ongoing conflict between the adult and the child, between the stronger and the weaker one. It is a “*fight between the adult and a child*” (1; p. 181).

M. Montessori was convinced that (Thought 1) the war already exists when the child is born and it “*accompanies one during the whole development. It is a conflict between the adult and a child, between the stronger and the weaker one...The adult fights with the child and in the child who becomes adult the signs of the famous peace after war remain, which one the one hand means destruction and on the other hand, painful adjustment*” (1; p. 182). M. Montessori criticized upbringing in those times which was based on powering over the child. Adults’ features such as pride, arrogance and anger cause incessant conflict between the world of children and adults. The result of this conflict is (Thought 2) “*... failed human being, weak, finally a slave, the undeveloped being, this is the consequence of upbringing which is about blind fight between the weak and the strong*” (1; p. 182).

The consequences are very depressing because (Thought 3) “*the child which never learned to do something on their own, to be guided by their own actions and power over one’s will is recognizable in the adult who lets being manipulated and needs support of others*” ... In this way, “*...the path to submission to leaders opens*.” (Thought 4). Montessori underlined that “*in the learner who is constantly discouraged and punished a state of distrust towards oneself and panic appear, which can be defined as shyness. These features can be found in adults in the form of fearfulness, compliance and incapability of moral resistance*”...(Thought 5). “*Compliance to which the child is forced in family and school, compliance which does not allow the existence of reason and justice prepares a human being to throw in coincidence*”... (1; p. 192 – 183). Further (Thought 6) “*Upbringing for which the most important principle is reach new goals, out of necessity confirms readiness to fight and capability of keeping the position as cardinal virtues and strengthens them with all the strength. Other capabilities such as love, the ability to cooperate in this situation disturb and are*

suppressed" (1; 183). The far-reaching result of "the war between adults and children" is bringing up the weak people, "tossed as the fallen leaves" which are influenced by others or full of aggression and capable of unhealthy firmness.

What is then the alternative to the result of upbringing presented in this way and proposed by M. Montessori? The Author claimed that upbringing should be started at child's birth. She claimed that the power is in the child. (Thought 7). "The source of our hope for the future peace are not teachings given to our children by the adults but the normal development of the new human being" (1; p. 184). "The new child" is a normalized child", it is a child which experiences support in one's self-development, in the process of "normalization". "In case of normal development we can state that the feeling of love is experienced not only in relation to things but also all living beings. This love is not a result of teachings...It is a natural consequence of the right form of life. We can state that where love shows itself we are in the sphere of the norm. In the opposite situation it is a sphere of a-normality" (1; p. 185).

If the new idea of upbringing is to be realized in this way, we should pay attention to the fact that, above all, the adult human being should accept the respect and recognition to oneself since this is the foundation of peace.

Bringing up to peace is very strongly connected with the idea of cosmic upbringing. (Thought 9). "A more perfect society will become a fact as long as we allow a human being follow one's own rights, in tune with the interior stages of development (...). The child, a free person should teach us and society peace, order and discipline. If we help the child it will also develop love which we need very much in order to have people close and create happy life" (1; pp. 185 – 186). When she was expressing her views in 30s and 40s of 20th century concerning cosmic upbringing she highlighted that a human being still has problems with moral upbringing.

She was even talking about the lack of moral order in a human being and in the world. (Thought 10). "There has been a great leap in the outer development, the author wrote, and there has not been any progress of humanity on the interior level...Nothing has been done for the spiritual development..." (20, (in:) 22, p. 163). Thus we should first heal humanity and the world. The result of it will be a human being – the king of the universe with wide horizons, self-knowledge, ruling reasonably over the world, educating new

generations to life in peace. Here we can refer to the metaphor. "Let's imagine a prince who has a wonderful castle which is ornamented with great works of art, eastern carpets, precious objects who got married to a simple woman from the crowd. This brave woman enters the palace as a princess but she steps on precious carpets not appreciating their worth, she does not notice and does not admire works of art. The prince understood that it is not enough to get married to a simple woman to make her become a princess: it is necessary to educate her. And so he did. He started to educate her to make her return to the palace as a princess and so that she can admire the objects give to her by the fate to her disposition. Thus the world of civilization is similar to the palace of the prince and humanity to a woman from the folk. You should educate a princess: this is a real problem. Nothing more is needed; there is enough palaces, dignity, titles, the only thing lacking is education. (Thought 11). Presently the meaning of education is great since a human being possess much more than he/she knows and for which one can be happy. One has everything! What is only needed is that one gets to know the worth of the possessed things! To be able to make use of it!" (20, (in:) pp. 165 – 166).

What kind of present conditions should be made for upbringing to peace? At this point we should return to the basic questions that is to indirect upbringing in the prepared environment. Only in such conditions constructing peaceful personality is possible. (Thought 12). "Only when the child starts to develop in the prepared environment and succeeds in free actions independent of the adults harmony will immediately appear, not only between the child and environment but also between the child and the adults" (20, (in:) p. 186). Already in *Casa dei Bambini* M. Montessori noticed that in the prepared environment "children are treated with great kindness" and "environment is peaceful and filled with warm feelings" – children feel that they are respected and the adults give them help, understand them and acknowledge their needs, talents and what each of them does and gives. Children learn to get to know themselves, naming their wishes, feelings, emotions; they learn to recognize the environment as peaceful and full of peace. (Thought 13) "The child lives in a peaceful atmosphere because repression, oppression, uniformity, imposing the will of the stronger to the weaker one, unbridled competition, a fight for possession have been eliminated from the environment and replaced with respect, cooperation and action..." (32, (in:) 22, p. 27).

The condition of bringing up to peace is simultaneously the right peace and education politics. The human being has defeated nature, overcome geographical and technical limitations of human life. The human being should use these achievements in service of renewal of the world in justice and harmony, the world in which there is access to education and culture. That is why (Thought 14) "... pedagogy should face the problem of peace and unity, understood as awareness of being co-dependent, constituting humanity as one, common organism in which "impoverishment of one nation does not decide about enrichment of the other one but about the fall of all of them" (32, (in:) 22; p. 29).

To my mind, this statement is still valid!

THE FOURTH condition of help in recognizing, understanding and interiorizing the values by the child LOVE as a primary value.

The notion of necessity of building the world in love and to love was actually a mission in M. Montessori's life. On the last pages her last book from 1949 she wrote:

"... When we study the child in a more in-depth way than we have been doing it to this moment we discover love in all aspects. It is not poets and prophets who make love the subject of their analyses: reality orders it and each child is a living proof of it. If we read into the words of Saint Paul and later we look at the child we have to say to ourselves: <In the child there is everything which had been described there; here is the impersonated treasure which contains all forms of love>. Thus the treasure is not only in few whom we know thanks to poetry and religion, but it rests in each human being from the very beginning. It is a miracle given to each of us and every step we take we encounter the impersonation of this power. The human being creates the desert of conflict and fight, but God incessantly send the fruitful rain. Thus it is easy to understand that everything that the adult creates, even if the call it progress it leads to nowhere without love. But if love is present in each small child and among us, it will get fulfilled in the potential or in the developed values so our achievements are great now and they will be infinite. The adult has to get connected with the child; has to become humble and learn from the child how to grow up. It is strange that one of the miracles that humanity makes, it did not notice which is a miracle which God created in the very beginning: the child. Love is given to a human being for the special purpose, for realization of the concrete plan – as everything which is received by the living being from the cosmic awareness. This love should be analyzed,

developed and extended to the maximum of its capacity. Human is the only being who can sublime, develop and accumulate it. It is what is human's task because this power connects and maintains the universe. It is thanks to which that a human being can maintain what his hands and intelligence created and without it everything that one created changes into chaos and destruction which we can observe ourselves. Although a human being multiplies one's greatness without love nothing will be maintained and everything will fall..." (19, (in:) 26; pp. 222 – 223).

M. Montessori's statements on love are almost utopian. However we should not ignore them and on the contrary, we should re-read them, interpret and put into upbringing practice. Speaking and writing about values and upbringing will be all for nothing without the fundamental value which is LOVE. Love cumulates FREEDOM, PEACE as primary values and also responsibility, independence and others pointed out in this summary.

Unfortunately, the contemporary education is very often focused on preferring a lifestyle of "having" rather than "being". If we do not focus on values in our reflections and discussions, as M. Montessori preferred, in what way, as pedagogues calling ourselves Montessori pedagogues, we will put into the upbringing practice the leading thought of Polish Days of Montessori:

"The first fundamental rule is helping life"?

[1] The presented content referring to peace and bringing up to peace constituted the presentation material in the time of working in discussion group during the Polish Days of Montessori on 16 March 2013. The numbered quotes (e.g. Thought 1) distributed to the participants were analyzed and discussed. The participants were also talking about their own vision of modesty and bringing up to peace confronting their own views with the ones by Maria Montessori. The participants as a souvenir received the collection of Thoughts of M. Montessori and peace and bringing up to peace.

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Abstracts

Lived Space and the Conditions for Learning – Creating Meaning in the Montessori School’s Physical Environment [doctoral thesis]

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The third doctoral theses in Sweden regarding Montessori pedagogy was presented in late 2012 by Eva-Maria Ahlquist at Stockholm university, with the title *Lived space and the conditions for learning – Creating meaning in the Montessori school’s physical environment*.

The study examines the school’s physical environment as a place of learning, and takes its starting point in the phenomenology movement, inspired both by Merleau-Ponty’s thesis of man’s physical relation to the world and by the existential analysis represented by Heidegger which implies a mutual relationship between man and the world.

Such a view rejects a standpoint, which describes man as being divided between a material body and a thinking soul. Instead, here emerges an embodied self, which engages in meaningful interaction with its surroundings. The choice of this standpoint has implications for the design of the school’s physical environment. Montessori pedagogy is one of the activity-based pedagogies, which have designed the physical environment in line with this theory. The purpose of the study is to understand, but further to visualise, the way in which the conditions for learning for children and adolescents are organized in schools, from pre-

school to lower secondary level, which follow the Montessori pedagogy. The material for the empirical study has been gathered from Europe and the US and from differing social contexts. The reason for this is to discover what distinguishes the prepared environment. The study also discusses the way in which the argument for a form of schooling, which is based on activity, from the early 20th century to the present day, has been addressed through the architectural design of schools.

The thesis shows that the rich array of didactic material in the schools observed offers pupils the opportunity to perform activities, which create meaning. The organisation of the environment provides the pupils with the necessary conditions to concentrate fully on their work and to complete their tasks without interruption. The study illustrates the importance of a didactic continuity from pre-school to the lower secondary school as a prerequisite if the pedagogical activity is to offer meaning and create the conditions for learning in the way demonstrated by the empirical studies.

[The two doctoral theses presented earlier are: Birgitte Malm (2005), *Understanding what it means to be a Montessori teacher. Teachers' reflections on their lives and work*. Lund University; and Kerstin Signert (2012), *Montessori pedagogy; sensorial education; variation theory; variation; invariance; learning*. University of Gothenburg]



Fostering Full Oral Language and Literacy Potential in Pre-Lingual Hearing Impaired Children by Using Montessori Language Materials

[Abstract accepted at the Second International Congress on Family-centred Early Intervention for Children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing (FCEI 2014), that will be held in Bad Ischl, Austria, 11-13 June 2014]

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Although early use of hearing aids and younger cochlear implantation very much improve the acquisition of the oral language and literacy in children with a pre-lingual hearing *deficit*, the acoustic function remains still limited (Spencer, 2004; Holt, Svirsky, Neuburger & Miyamoto, 2004). As a result, such an auditory partial deprivation may lead to severe problems in language development (Ziegler et al., 2005), communication (Gérard et al., 2010), and in

education (Nathan, Goulandris & Snowling, 2004). It has been shown, indeed, that the vocabulary acquisition is an area in which children with hearing impairment show particular weakness (Gilbertson & Kamhi, 1995). Moreover, the acquisition of literacy represents a significant challenge for most children with a pre-lingual hearing loss (Marschark, Lang, & Albertini, 2002). Furthermore, all the communication, educational and emotional challenges these children face may be cause of a significant prevalence of psychological and social maladjustment, such as socio-emotional and behavioral problems (Baltaxe, 2001), poorer social-emotional development, lower self-esteem and social isolation (Greenberg & Kusche, 1993). Therefore, it appears fundamental to ensure them, in early life, appropriate educational tools, in order to effectively empower them achieve age-appropriate language and literacy, that are also prerequisites for psychological wellbeing and successful social integration. The present project is focused on providing 6 year old auditory impaired children with an educational program based on the use of specific Montessori linguistic materials with the aim of fostering their full oral language and literacy potential. To that end, it was necessary to provide a Montessori educational environment, which is child-centred, stimulating, accessible and organized in accordance with scientific international standards. Psychologists and Montessori Educators are involved in this projects which implies that a group of pre-lingual hearing impaired children are exposed to Montessori language tools. The control group is composed by children of the same age with pre-lingual hearing loss learning literacy in a traditional school setting in which a top-down teaching approach is applied. We Decided to use the following Montessori materials:

- Metal insets.
- Sloping stands.
- Colored pencil holders.
- Sandpaper letters (cursive and print).
- Wall charts (cursive and print).
- Movable alphabet (cursive and print).
- Detective adjective game.
- Basic grammar symbols.

In Montessori child-centred approach each child is encouraged to explore both independent and collaborative learning. The language materials isolate elements of language and offer *keys* to *explore* the language. We also provide individualized parental training for a correct domestic use of Montessori language materials, as we believe that fostering active collaboration between families and school is an essential prerequisite for achieving our goals. We expect better learning performances than control group's

ones, as well as better school integration, at the end of the study.



Searching for New solutions in Polish Education. Parents and Teachers about Maria Montessori System

Barbara Lulek
(Poland, University of Rzeszow)
[Outline of the research conducted in South east Poland]

Maria Montessori educational system developed at the beginning of twentieth century on the foundation of multi-theoretical studies as well as experience gained through the work with children, still inspires both teachers and parents in many countries around the world, look for effective ways of working with children. Despite the years that have passed, parents and teachers willingly go back to Montessori materials for exercising practical life, developing the senses, language, math concepts, learning about the natural and social environment. The children themselves, using didactic material with interest, discover regularities, improve observation, compare, classify, as well as manifest and development potential opportunities. They are accompanied by the joy and satisfaction coming from working on their own.

Social interest in practical usage of solutions developed by an Italian researcher in the early twentieth century, stems from the specific perspective on the child, school and parents. According to these assumptions, the child is treated as an independent creature, full of energy and spontaneity. The school becomes a place to learn and exploratory learning at their own rhythm, as far as their individual capabilities allow them (Badura-Strzelczyk, 1998, p. 5).

This method's versatility results from treating children's activity as a natural need, as well as *ratio* and condition of the development. Children's development takes place in a structured environment, which is rich in didactic material tailored to their needs in order to meet them (Guz, 1998, p 18).

Hence the last decade led back to the debate, in Poland as well, on upbringing children in Maria Montessori's system. The scientific discourse aims in reconsidering scientific activities conducted by Maria Montessori, not only on historical level, as well as finding pedagogical

rules underlying the method (Tornar 2003, p. 9) and adapting them to the modern school. In this context, Montessori pedagogy means looking for new space, in order to enrich ways of working with children.

Guided by these premises, the study's author worked out a survey devoted to determining students, active teachers working in kindergartens and primary school, as well as parents' views on Maria Montessori pedagogy. The survey was conducted in 2011- 2013 in south-east Poland (Sub Carpathian Province). The research proceeding were carried out in two stages. The first stage was to establish a cooperation with the Centre for Montessori Studies at Roma Tre University, as well as to do the scientific internship at this university. During this period it was possible to specify the conducted research's framework. The main aim of the research was to recognise the extent to which Maria Montessori system's assumptions are known to teachers working in kindergartens and elementary schools, to students of early childhood and preschool education and parents having children in preschool and early school age living in Sub Carpathian Province. The survey also aimed at identifying the method's advantages and how the surveyed groups would apply them in their work. This stage ended up constructing appropriate research tools, selecting the tested group, conducting pilot and crucial studies. There were 458 people covered by the survey, including 164 first-year MA degree students receiving their education on full-time and extramural studies at the University of Rzeszow, specializing in Early School and Preschool Education, and 84 kindergarten and primary school teachers (classes I-III) from the Sub Carpathian province. The groups evaluated their knowledge about the Montessori's system and their preparation for applying selected elements of Montessori Method into practice. Moreover, the survey covered 150 parents sending their children to public kindergartens and primary schools, to check what are their declarations and expectations towards facilities of this type [1]. To consider M. Montessori system as a whole, especially in the context of determining its advantages, the author felt it important to include parents sending their children to Montessori kindergartens. Therefore, the research covered 60 parents from this type of facilities. The second stage of research contains qualitative and quantitative analysis of the empirical data gathered in the survey.

There were many scientific questions to answer in the course of research. They were defined in the three following spheres:

- A) Learning the way the pedagogy students specializing in early school and preschool education, interpret Maria Montessori system's assumptions, in the context of pointing the method's advantages, as well as applying it to their vocational work. Therefore, some questions directed to this group were asking to determine the studied method's essence, pointing its main assumptions, which can be used in a traditional classroom-lesson system, in integrated teaching and preschool education.
- B) Determining, how open and ready are headmasters and teachers in preschool and primary school facilities, as well as parents sending their children to public facilities, for Maria Montessori's system assumptions. The author focused her research on three levels: M. Montessori's main assumptions, prearranged environment in financial, structural-dynamic and personal aspect, as well as sources of knowledge about the system. One of the conclusions is that pedagogues working with children every day could spread the Italian researcher's assumption in the greatest extend. Being directly involved, they are not only the most acute observers of educational process but they also could introduce some crucial corrections in practice to improve educational and upbringing processes and to enable solutions expected by parents and the whole society.
- C) Montessori's system advantages pointed out by parents who send their children to Montessori facility. This group was assumed competent enough to give their opinions on the subject, since they experienced the implemented method's influence on their children every day.

A compact publishing in print is the effect of conducted research.

[1] The research was carried out in selected kindergartens and primary schools in Rzeszow, Krosno and Sanok districts. The author holds the full list of facilities.

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- Badura-Strzelczyk G., *Help me do it myself. Using Maria Montessori ideas in the present*, Krakow 1998, p. 5.
- Guz S., *Educating in Montessori system. Manual for students and teachers*, Lublin 1998, p. 18.

Tornar C., *Lines of research on Montessori pedagogy. Current news of Maria Montessori*, Milan 2003, p. 9.

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 15

**Durch das Kind zu
einer neuen Welt**

Edited, introduced,
critically revised and
annotated
by Harald Ludwig

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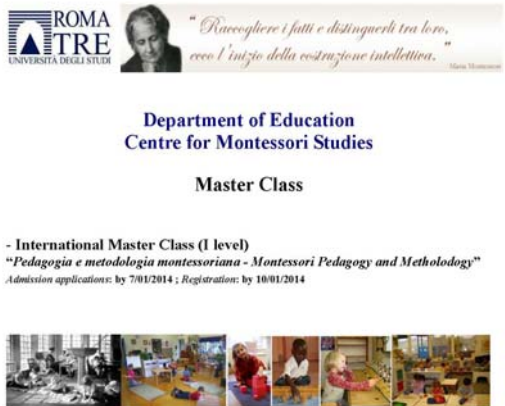
"This work contains a collection of international lectures given by Maria Montessori in the years from 1935 to 1939. Until now this book was only available in Dutch language. In the appendix of the new German academic edition you find some additional texts by Maria Montessori dating back to the years from 1935 to 1951. The book "Through the Child Towards a New World" gives a comprehensive and nuanced introduction into the pedagogy of Maria Montessori based on the more developed version of her late years. In this comprehensive and well-arranged way you don't find this in the other writings by Maria Montessori. The book contains contributions by Maria Montessori on the position of the child in the society (children's rights), on the general ideas of her pedagogy and didactics, on social and peace education, and on the four planes of education from the early years

of the child across the elementary and secondary school up to the university".

News

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For registration use the application form and send it to: info@ave-ik.nl.

New members

FRANCE

SMIRNOVA-HAMWI, Maria

I am Director of the International Montessori School "Beautiful Minds" in Courbevoie, France. My research interests include: cognitive processes, construction of imagination and intelligence in Montessori pedagogy, as well as Montessori leadership.

Contact: contact@beautiful-mins-montessori.fr

ITALY

FRANZESE, Carmen

C. Franzese received her doctoral degree in *Psychological and Pedagogical Sciences* from University of Naples "Federico II", Italy. During her Ph.D. training, she spent one academic year at Yale University, Department of Psychology, USA, working as visiting assistant in research under the supervision of Professor J.F. Dovidio. Her research interests focus on examining the stigmas associated with hearing disabilities and how people might overcome them. Her long-term goal is to use these findings to assist in the development of psychological and pedagogical interventions designed to help students with auditory disabilities deal more effectively with everyday communication and educational challenges. She is currently working with Professor C. Tornar at University of Roma Tre, Centre for Montessori Studies, Italy, with the aim

of providing auditory impaired children with an educational program based on the use of specific Montessori linguistic materials, in order to foster their full oral language and literacy potential.

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[new contact for submissions:
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