

Notes

Introduction

This presentation aims to compare the Montessori curriculum with the foundation stage curriculum in England. The definition of the term “curriculum” refers to academic content and lessons that are taught in a school or specific course. (Education Reform, 2015) although, Stauffer, (2020) believes that “ ‘curriculum’ can mean a lot of different things to different people involved in education.”

During the centenary of the Montessori education in 2007, there were over 16,00 schools internationally that were identified as committed to the Montessori ethos and pedagogy. (Isaacs, 2012) Montessori schools and nurseries are most often privately run, but there are several state/governments run schools in America and an interest in England that is growing. (Isaacs, 2015)

This presentation will continue to show why the Montessori approach to teaching is growing and will aim to provide both the positives and negatives of different aspects of this curriculum. The two different aspects chosen to discuss are, the pedagogy of the Montessori method and also assessments.

Pedagogy

The Montessori method of teaching is, as described by Orem (1965) cited in Schilling (2011) a “spontaneous, expansive educational system designed to afford the child liberty to move and act in a prepared environment encouraging self-development.” The Montessori method believes the child must be at the center of education, without a prescribed curriculum or the teacher being the center of attention. (Schilling, 2011) This method of teaching was also believed by other influential educators such as Rousseau, Froebel and Steiner. (Issacs, 2012)

There are, according to Isaacs (2008) three key components to the Montessori method of education, these are

The child

The favorable environment

The teacher

The Child – The Montessori Academy (2019) believe that the Montessori method of teaching is a hands-on learning experience that uses a child centered approach and focuses on self-directed activities. “The EYFS also places emphasis on “active learning” and “learning through experience” and this is also very much in line with Montessori practice.” (Walker, 2019)

In a Montessori classroom, children are given the freedom to choose what work they do, who they work with, where they work and how long they work for. (Marshall, 2017) Similarly, there are many sections in the EYFS that state the importance of a child’s decision making – in what they do and how they do it. (Gueterbock, n.d.) While independence can be a good thing, it can be considered not to have many benefits in the long term, this is because it may be harder for these children to work with others as part of team in any future jobs. (Founders Guide, 2019) although Vasandani (n.d.) believes that the Montessori approach is more beneficial to a child and their learning as the process is more interactive, fun and engaging.

The environment – A quote from Maria Montessori cited in Montessori children's center (2020) states that "Education is a natural process carried out by the human individual, and is acquired not by listening to words, but by experiences in the environment."

The Montessori classroom has a lot of thought put into its preparation – The classrooms allow for independent work and movement with comforting soundscapes and lighting. "Montessori learning environments are prepared to allow children to be socially and intellectually independent." (Feez, 2010) Montessori classrooms, are, as stated by Williams and McNabb (2020) "designed to offer lessons, activities and tools that match the developmental needs and interests of each individual child." This is similar to the EYFS as stated by the Department for Education (2017) the classrooms that children are in should be enabling and their experiences in the environment should respond to individual needs.

Williams and McNabb (2020) also say that the environment is all child sized and accessible for children, with child sized furniture, tools, fixtures and utensils, this is to minimise the need for any adult assistance while completing activities.

There are 6 principles to a Montessori classroom, these principles are

1. Freedom
2. Structure and order
3. Beauty
4. Nature and reality
5. Social Environment
6. Intellectual Environment.

There are 5 areas of learning in a Montessori classroom, these areas are Sensorial, Mathematics, Culture and practical life. (Rennet, 2013) The EYFS have similar areas of learning but there are 7 altogether not 5. (DfE) All 7 areas of learning in the EYFS are interconnected and important. (DfE, 2017)

One criticism of a Montessori classroom, believed to be, by Meinke (2011) is the open-ended structure of the classroom, this may feel intimidating to some children as children like the routine and structure and this can provide an environment that feels safe and ordered. Cowley (2020) states that "a key element of an effective early years setting is a sense of routine and order, because with a clear set of structures in place, children are safe to learn." although Rennie (2015) argues that order and routine is the foundation of a Montessori learning environment.

The Teacher – In a Montessori classroom, "the teachers are not the center of attention in the classroom." (Irinzi, 2007) According to Kolkman (2014) "Teachers in Montessori schools are important but should try not to disturb the natural learning process and be as discreet as possible." A Montessori teacher will, most often work beside individuals or in small groups of children instead of at the front of the classroom teaching the whole class. (Scala, 2019) Scala (2019) states that a large part of the role of a Montessori teacher is to create a learning environment that is appropriate for development and changing the environment in small ways to keep up with new and evolving needs. A Montessori teacher will spend time to create structures that allow children to trust themselves and become independent learners. (Scala, 2019) Montessori teachers have, as well as their teaching degree, a recognised

Montessori credential, this means that they are highly trained in the Montessori method of teaching. (Scala, 2019)

One criticism found with a Montessori teacher is, because these teachers are only in the classroom to guide, not instruct, some children may not have any interest in certain subjects and choose not to do that activity. (Founders Guide, 2019)

Maria Montessori once said, “The greatest sign of success for a teacher is to be able to say, ‘the children are now working as if I did not exist’” (Montessori, cited in Scala, 2019)

Assessments

“Montessori education is an education that is development focused – it does not put any importance on exams, grades or anything that may be competitive and put pressure on students. (Founders Guide, 2019) It is believed by Brooks (2008) cited in Callaghan (2014) that “Montessori educators do not grade children with letters, numbers, categorical labels or dichotomous pass/fail assignments. The goal of a Montessori education is to allow the optimal development of a child, this goal is different to the goals of most education systems today, their goal is to focus on the academic attainments in subjects such as mathematics and literacy. (Marshall, 2017)

These educators use observations of the whole child as they complete work and engage in activities to assess their learning. (ISMS, 2020) The foundation stage in England also uses observation of children in the classroom to assess their learning although these observations are completed to understand the level of achievement, learning styles and interests of children to then be able to create learning experiences for them. (DfE, 2017)

While observing, the Montessori teacher is able to observe the whole child, not just intellectually but also socially and emotionally. (ISMS, 2020) Using these detailed observations can give educators a personalised, detailed picture of each individual child working at their own pace. (CMS, 2020) Scientists have found that this method of education produces more mature, creative and socially adept children – this is because they focus more on personal development than exams. (The Guardian, 2006)

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear to see that the Montessori method of teaching has survived after all this time. (Explore your mind, 2018) and there are a lot more positives than negatives to this method.

Thanks for Listening.

Reference List

2017. *Statutory Framework For The Early Years Foundation Stage*. Department for Education.

2017. *Statutory Framework For The Early Years Foundation Stage*. [ebook] Department of Education. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/596629/EYFS_STATUTORY_FRAMEWORK_2017.pdf> [Accessed 18 October 2020].

2020. *Assessment And Evaluation At Canberra Montessori*. [online] Available at: <<https://cms.act.edu.au/assessment-and-evaluation-at-canberra-montessori/>> [Accessed 16 October 2020].

Callaghan, V., 2014. *Assessment Practices In The Montessori Setting*. [online] Academia.edu. Available at: <https://www.academia.edu/12310210/Assessment_Practices_in_the_Montessori_Setting> [Accessed 15 October 2020].

Cowley, S., 2020. *How Structure And Routine Support Good Behaviour In The Early Years | Positive Relationships | Teach Early Years*. [online] Teach Early Years. Available at: <<https://www.teachearlyyears.com/positive-relationships/view/best-behaviour-structure-routine>> [Accessed 17 October 2020].

Exploring your mind. 2018. *The Influence Of The Montessori Method Today - Exploring Your Mind*. [online] Available at: <<https://exploringyourmind.com/the-influence-of-the-montessori-method-today/>> [Accessed 18 October 2020].

FEEZ, S., 2010. *Montessori and Early Childhood : A Guide for Students*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Gueterbock, R., n.d. *Montessori Society AMI (UK) - Montessori And The EYFS*. [online] Montessorisociety.org.uk. Available at: <<https://www.montessorisociety.org.uk/Articles/4441929>> [Accessed 17 October 2020].

Guide, F., 2019. *The Pros & Cons Of Montessori Education*. [online] Founder's Guide. Available at: <<https://foundersguide.com/the-pros-cons-of-montessori-education/>> [Accessed 17 October 2020].

how we montessori. 2016. *The Five Key Learning Areas Of Montessori*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.howwemontessori.com/how-we-montessori/2016/07/the-five-curriculum-areas-of-montessori-.html>> [Accessed 17 October 2020].

Isaacs, B., 2012. *Learning And Teaching In Montessori Nurseries*. [ebook] Available at: <<https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2013/12/Teaching-and-Learning-in-Montessori-nurseries-for-Foundations-website.pdf>> [Accessed 16 October 2020].

Isaacs, B., 2012. *Understanding The Montessori Approach*. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Isaacs, B., 2007. *Bringing The Montessori Approach To Your Early Years Practice*. London: Routledge.

Isms.nsw.edu.au. 2020. *Assessment Of Learning | Inner Sydney Montessori School*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.isms.nsw.edu.au/montessori-learning/the-montessori-method/assessment-of-learning/#:~:text=In%20a%20Montessori%20method%20of,engage%20in%20activities%20each%20day.&text=Assessment%20is%20not%20simply%20based,or%20marks%20for%20their%20work.>> [Accessed 15 October 2020].

Irinyi, M., 2007. *The Montessori Teacher And Her Role: Learning More About The Method*. [online] Montessoritraining.blogspot.com. Available at: <<https://montessoritraining.blogspot.com/2007/09/montessori-teacher-and-her-role.html>> [Accessed 17 October 2020].

Kolkman, M., 2014. *The Montessori Method And Teaching English As A Second Language (LANSAD)*. [online] Academia.edu. Available at: <https://www.academia.edu/6916689/The_Montessori_Method_and_Teaching_English_as_a_Second_Language_LANSAD_?auto=download> [Accessed 16 October 2020].

Marshall, C., 2017. Montessori education: a review of the evidence base. *npj Science of Learning*, 2(1).

Meinke, H., 2011. *Exploring The Pros And Cons Of Montessori Education*. [online] Rasmussen.edu. Available at: <https://www.rasmussen.edu/degrees/education/blog/pros_cons_montessori_education/> [Accessed 17 October 2020].

Medium. 2020. *Six Principles Of A Prepared Montessori Environment*. [online] Available at: <<https://medium.com/@KingsleyMontessori/six-principles-of-a-prepared-montessori-environment-abb667d197a8>> [Accessed 17 October 2020].

Montessori Academy. 2019. [online] Available at: <<https://montessoriacademy.com.au/montessori-education/introduction-montessori-education/#:~:text=The%20Montessori%20Method%20takes%20a,activity%20and%20hands%20Don%20learning.&text=As%20Doctor%20Maria%20Montessori%20states,by%20experiences%20in%20the%20environment.%E2%80%9D>> [Accessed 17 October 2020].

Montessorichildrensctr.com. 2020. *Montessori Children's Center · Montessori Principles*. [online] Available at: <<https://montessorichildrensctr.com/montessori-principles/>> [Accessed 16 October 2020].

Rennie, D., 2015. *Order And Routine Is At The Foundation Of The Montessori Program - Shawnigan Lake Montessori*. [online] Shawnigan Lake Montessori. Available at: <<http://shawniganlakemontessori.com/2015/10/27/order-and-routine-is-at-the-foundation-of-the-montessori-program/#:~:text=In%20the%20Montessori%20learning%20environment,the%20child's%20need%20for%20order.&text=On%20the%20other%20hand%2C%20within,children%20choose%20is%20very%20ordered.>>> [Accessed 17 October 2020].

Scala, D., 2019. *Making A Difference - The Role Of A Montessori Teacher*. [online] Forestville Montessori School. Available at: <<https://www.forestvillemontessori.nsw.edu.au/role-of-the-montessori-teacher/>> [Accessed 18 October 2020].

Schilling, K., 2011. *Montessori Approach To Teaching/Learning And Use Of Didactic Materials*. [ebook] Manitoba. Available at: <<http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/education/media/Schilling-11.pdf>> [Accessed 16 October 2020].

Stauffer, B., 2020. *What Is A Curriculum And How Do You Make One?*. [online] Aeseducation.com. Available at: <<https://www.aeseducation.com/blog/what-is-a-curriculum>> [Accessed 14 October 2020].

The Glossary of Education Reform. 2015. *Curriculum Definition*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.edglossary.org/curriculum/>> [Accessed 14 October 2020].

The Guardian, 2006. Research shows benefits of Montessori education. [online] Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2006/sep/29/schools.uk#:~:text=A%20method%20of%20schooling%20that,adept%20children%2C%20scientists%20have%20found.>>> [Accessed 17 October 2020].

Vasandani, S., n.d. *Criticism Of The Montessori Method - Behind The Criticisms*. [online] Sunshine Teachers Training. Available at: <<https://sunshineteacherstraining.id/criticism-of-montessori-method/#:~:text=Criticism%20%233%20%E2%80%93%20The%20Montessori%20Method,natural%20development%20of%20a%20child.&text=Ages%201%20to%206%20are,able%20to%20enjoy%20their%20childhood>> [Accessed 17 October 2020].

Walker, E., 2019. *The Montessori Approach | Croner-I*. [online] App.croneri.co.uk. Available at: <<https://app.croneri.co.uk/feature-articles/montessori-approach>> [Accessed 16 October 2020].

Williams, J. and McNabb, N., 2020. *The Ten Secrets Of Montessori-#6 The Prepared Environment | Montessori Teacher Training And Parent Resources*. [online] Montessori Teacher Training and Parent Resources. Available at: <<http://ageofmontessori.org/the-ten-secrets-of-montessori-6-the-prepared-environment/>> [Accessed 17 October 2020].