

DEMONSTRATE HOW LEARNING THEORIES CAN SUPPORT EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

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MONTESSORI VS REGGIO EMILIA

MONTESSORI APPROACH

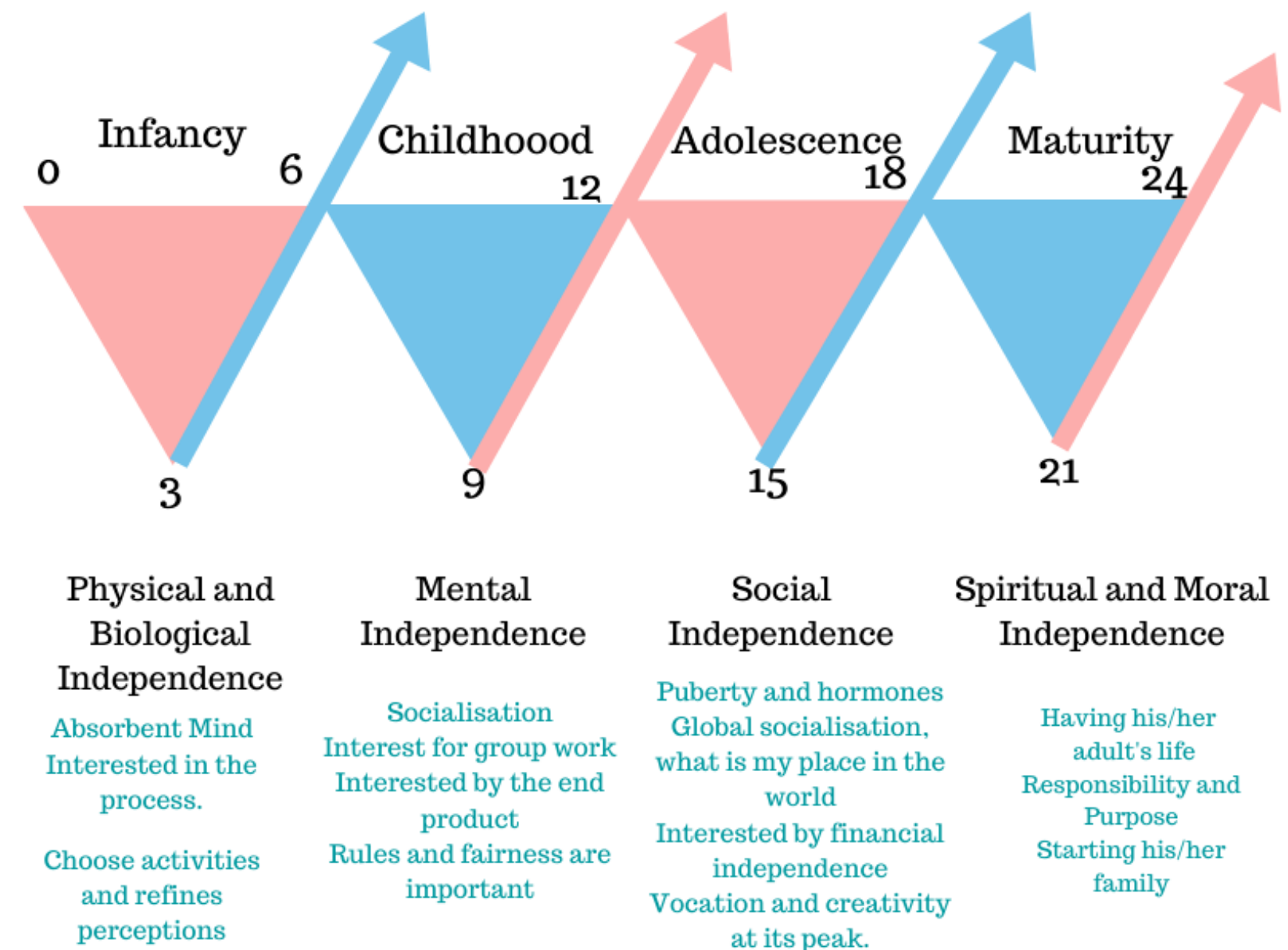
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Montessori, whom is an Italian educator, was commended for their educational method in which children build on learning naturally (American Montessori Society, 2019). Montessori (2007, p.45) placed the child at the centre of the education process, as well as Froebel (1896) and Steiner (1912). Montessori (2007, p.46-47) believed in the child's education unfolding naturally, with the adult to follow the child's lead within the environment. Thus, meaning the child's focus is solely on their individual interests, meanwhile the teacher making sure they incorporate all needs and interests into the curriculum.

Montessori's approach involves the four planes of development. This approach involves the development of infancy up until adolescence (Montessori, 2007).



The 4 planes of Development



Source: The Montessori Family (2020) *The 4 planes of development*

KEY PRINCIPLES

- Respect for the child
- Absorbent mind
- Sensitive periods
- Educating the whole child
- Individualised learning
- Freedom of movement and choice
- Prepared environment
- Intrinsic motivation
- independence
- Auto-education
- Hands-on learning

(Montessori Academy, 2023)

MONTESSORI CLASSROOM FEATURES

Montessori's approach within the classroom holds many key features. The teacher will often act as a guide, offering assistance when necessary. Montessori classrooms are often mixed-age groups, allowing children of different age groups to learn and work together. This is beneficial as the younger children can learn and observe from the older children (Daily Montessori, 2021). Montessori classrooms hold the importance of play, hands on learning and social interaction, which refers with Vygotsky (1978) who also values the importance of social interaction.



The learning environment consists of natural lighting, soft colours, and uncluttered areas to make both the adults and children feel safe. Instead of the walls being filled with lots of colour, work pieces and charts, Montessori children work with naturally made wooden materials at wooden tables or a woven rug on the floor. The wall displays will often be framed images of famous paintings or buildings (Montessori Academy, 2018). In relation to the natural wooden materials, Froebel (1896) also designed gifts and occupations for children to explore, compare and test. Gifts such as wooden cubes and squares helps identify different shapes.

Source: Montessori CHOVF (No date) *Montessori classroom setting*.

PRACTICE WITHIN A MONTESSORI SCHOOL

In recent reports, Estyn (2023, p.6) conducted a thorough report investigating Cardiff Montessori School. Within the report, Estyn (2023, p.6) breaks down the idea of the mixed age categories. Throughout this report, children between the ages of three and six are known as the 'Children's House'. Mixed age classes allow children to respect, create opportunities and to support and work together. Thus meaning, each child respects one another and the environment around them. An example of this shows within the report, pupils in the Childrens House clean paintbrushes for the next user and help others with putting their aprons on. This shows profound respect for each individual and the tools they use around them. This also shows children developing their fine and gross motor skills (Estyn, 2023, p.6). This clearly demonstrates effective teaching and learning, linking back to theory.

REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH

The Reggio Emilia approach was founded by Malaguzzi in 1945. This approach is remarkably like Montessori's approach, in the sense they are both constructivist theories, however there are some key differences to note. In 1945, Malaguzzi collaborated with the local community and parents, in a town called 'Reggio Emilia' in Italy. The importance of relationships with families and the community was prominent within this approach. This approach is based around the concept of 'The Image of the Child' (Hapa, 2021). 'The Image of the Child' sees the child as confident, capable, curious, and active participants in their own learning. This approach also includes the idea of '100 Languages of Children' which is way of describing the many ways children can explore and express themselves. In which, Malaguzzi believed that traditional ways of teaching do not allow children to express their creative ways (Nido Early School, 2021).

KEY PRINCIPLES

- Children's learning is based on their personal interests
- Parents and teachers are co-learners
- The environment is seen as the third teacher
- Outdoor learning
- Emergent curriculum

(Hapa, 2021)

REGGIO EMILIA CLASSROOM FEATURES

- Open floor plan
- Aesthetically calming, natural and minimalist decor within the classroom
- Provocations given to the children
- Loose parts to play with and to explore
- Hanging items and chandeliers from the ceiling

(Hapa, 2021)

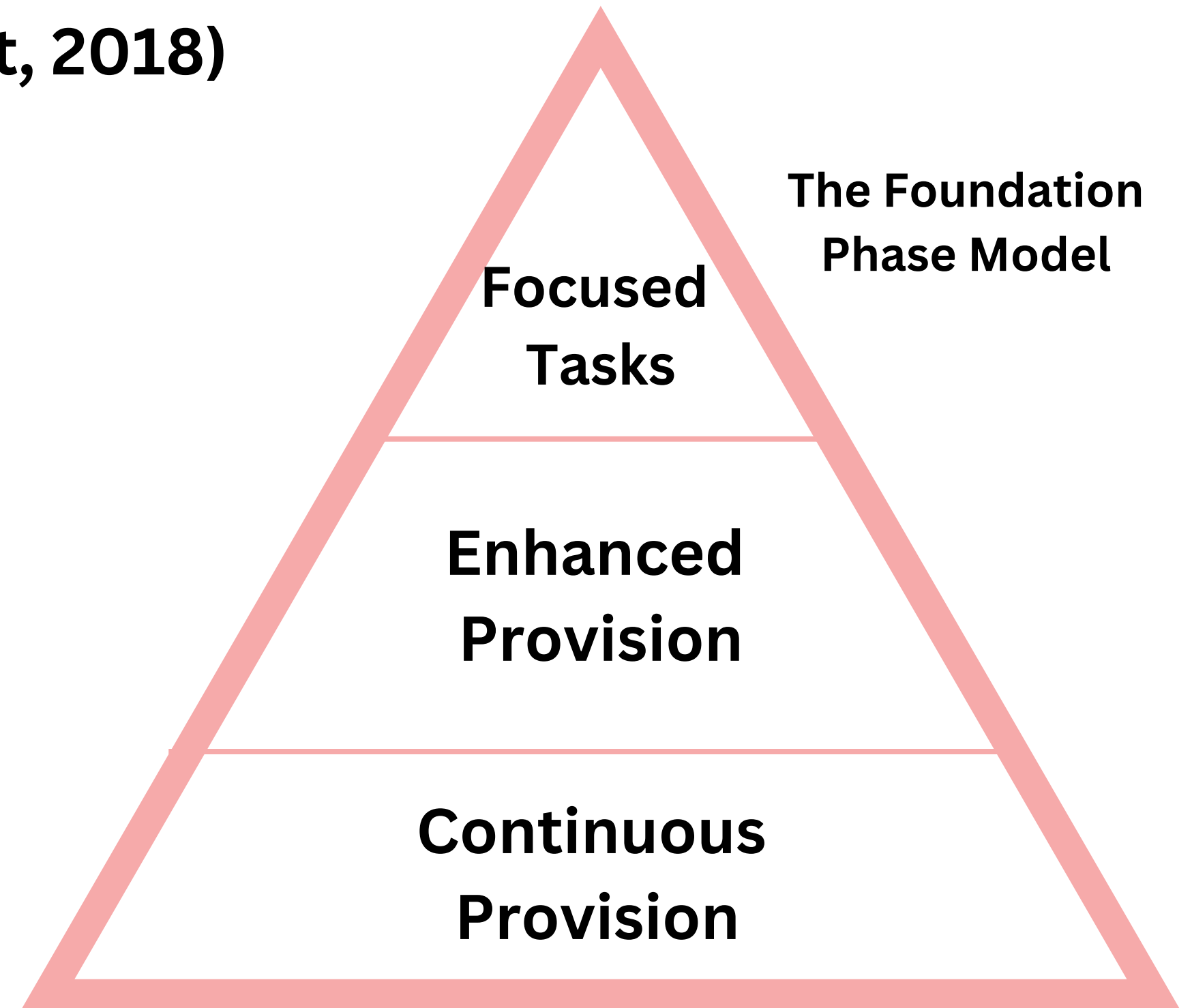


Source: Cleaver (2023) Reggio Emilia classroom setting.

PRACTICE WITHIN A REGGIO EMILIA CLASSROOM

The Foundation Phase in Wales (Welsh Assembly Government, 2018)

The Reggio Emilia approach links heavily with the Foundation Phase in Wales. The Foundation Phase consists of the holistic development of children and their skills and knowledge (Welsh Assembly Government, 2018, p.3). This curriculum allows children to develop through play, experiment, take risks, problem solve and the use of indoor and outdoor learning. Positive relationships are key within this curriculum with parents being the children's first educator (Welsh Assembly Government, 2018, p.3).



There are many key similarities and differences between the Montessori and Reggio Emilia approach:

Similarities

Similarly, both methods approach learning in a holistic and child-centred manner (Hapa, 2021). Both approaches were formed in Italy, however the Montessori approach has been implemented worldwide and still stands within many schools today, whereas the Reggio Emilia approach can only be formed if you live in the 'Reggio Emilia' area in Italy (Reggio Emilia ELC, 2021). Both approaches also implement self-guided learning however they are approached differently, Reggio Emilia focuses highly on collaborative learning, whereas Montessori focuses on independent learning (Hapa, 2021).

Differences

Some differences between these approaches, is that within the Reggio Emilia approach teachers are seen as partners and guides whereas Montessori teachers are seen as directors (Reggio Emilia ELC, 2021). Within the Montessori approach children are mixed into different age groups whereas the Reggio Emilia approach has traditional age groups together.

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