Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work Study Guide

Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work by E. M. Standing

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work Study Guide....1

Contents....2

Plot Summary....3

Book 1, Part One : Chapter 1, Introductory Materials, Preparations & Discovery....4

Book 1, Part One : Chapter 2, Development &....7

Book 2, Part Two : Chapter 1, Exploration, Development &....10

Book 2, Part Two : Chapter 1, The Explorer, Development &....11

Book 2, Part Two : Chapter 2, Work, Sensorial, Normalcy....14

Book 3, Part Three : Chapter 1, Size, Movement, Instinct, Reason....17

Book 3, Part Three : Chapter 2, Practical Life & Mental Processes....18

Book 4, Part 4 : Chapter 1, XV & XVI: The Fundamental Problem & Prepared Environment....20

Book 4, Part 4 : Chapter 2, Liberty in Education & the Montessori Directress....22

Book 5, Part 5 : Chapter 1, Montessori & Froebel....24

Characters....27

Objects/Places....30

Themes....34

Style....36

Quotes....38

Topics for Discussion....39

Plot Summary

This is the autobiography of one of the most powerful women in the world of modern education. Her lifetime crossed the threshold of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Montessori schools and educational system are a well known alternative and supplement standardized teaching methods currently in use throughout the world. It has been found to be more enjoyable for many hands on oriented learners, and thereby more effective. The teaching method which will be explained throughout the autobiography has also been famed for helping many children learn despite learning disabilities, thus bringing into full functionality what might otherwise have been lost.

Maria Montessori provides a real life example of the challenges that women face as mothers when driven by a passionate sense of personal destiny that, awkwardly, is not motherhood itself. Through her women and men can discover more about what this woman's limitations and strengths really were. The importance of fatherhood should not be underrated. Even so, the pressure upon a woman to make mothering a top priority for many years continues to be more demanding of her time. There is apt to be some sense of poignancy associated with the fact that Maria Montessori was faced with a great challenge—being forced to make tough choices regarding motherhood because of what she had to offer the world.

The author spent decades as an intimate colleague of Maria Montessori's. E.M. Standing is assuredly the most qualified man or woman other than Maria herself to write about her life and her work. Within the book, not only does he provide an explanation for himself but he goes further, elucidating the whole of the Montessori system. For those readers interested in becoming fully trained in the Montessori method of education, the contents of this book are a valuable first step. The work is by no means extensive enough to serve as a full education in the subject but does give readers an excellent grounding in the discoveries of "the Child" and the means of nurturing the child with the learning process.

Book 1, Part One : Chapter 1, Introductory Materials, Preparations & Discovery

Book 1, Part One : Chapter 1, Introductory Materials, Preparations & Discovery Summary and Analysis

This first section of the summary covers all of the book's introductions and the first two chapters of the biography.

During the introduction, Lee Harvis explains to readers forty of the most recent fifty years in Montessori educational organizations. These include administrative, training, research and support aspects of Montessori educational systems worldwide. This greatly benefits readers in the proper contextualization of the entire work.

During the author's Preface, readers are informed of the prejudice against poor children that existed and the degree of amazement at what they were able to accomplish once they had adult supervision, better funding and the Montessori approach to education.

E.M. Standing clarifies for readers what the rest of the book does and does not do. He says that its strength is in the way that it explains the underlying principles of Montessori education and also how true it is that they must be used together in order for the method to work. The author makes it clear that there are numerous details which are left out of the text but that are available through currently existing Montessori educational system organizations.

The next segment of the work is labeled Part One in the Table of Contents and covers the first two chapters: Preparation & Discovery. The first chapter is dedicated to the author's personal history, mainly in early life. She was very fortunate in that educational opportunities for girls and women had greatly improved when compared with many preceding centuries and that her parents were quite interested in her welfare. They moved to the great city of Rome where there were better schools in order to be able to provide this for their children, including their daughter Maria. She did well, but not "alarmingly so."

It became clear that it was later in her adolescence that Maria Montessori's intellectual power combined with a mighty spirit and strong heart led her to pursue an education in professional medicine. She had her mother's full support, and had to make some unusual moves in order to be able to do this as there was no female precedent known to her or to anyone else in the recent past. This did effect how she was able to proceed but luckily she was not prevented from doing so.

Once a physician, the work opportunities were the next challenge. She found work in a Rome insane asylum. At that time, right at the turn of the century the standard was that the mentally handicapped, "idiots" and the mentally retarded were often put into the insane asylums. Treatment for this groups of people was rather bad. Often enough, the general consensus in the society was that people really were not sure how to deal with them, but had decided against killing them off. The result was that a lot of people just got locked up where they were sort of attended to, often by people such as nuns. During this era in another country, it was Freud and Jung who were making great efforts to make some headway towards being able to actively heal the mentally ill. Maria Montessori took great pity on the mentally retarded she found and determined to actually help them. She began by making extensive observations. The author points out that the difference was that she cared and that they were now being observed by a genius.

Ultimately, Maria made great progress. Her main discovery was that they were decipherable. This enabled her to provide them with equipment, albeit limited, with which to further their development. She found amongst the developmentally disabled what she would make more discoveries about later; she "discovered the child." The "idiots" who responded best to her efforts became able to perform as well as normal children being given standard education in some areas.

Years later, Maria Montessori was able to work with "normal" children for the first time. She did this by being willing to work with children who were living in slums areas of Rome. There was the introduction of a public child care service for some working parents' young children. Maria ended up with 60 young children, two women assistants, some funding, and lots of time with these youngsters.

She drastically reduced free play, and set out providing them with structured activities and education. They grew by leaps and bounds as a direct consequence of these changes. What began as a small but meaningful project leaked to the press in a way that drew the attention of prosperous and high status people around the world. This greatly facilitated the awareness and spread of Montessori's discoveries.

Maria Montessori discovered the child in the children. She did this through careful observation. Many times, she found that children were often misunderstood at first, either due to adult bias or because of errors made during the adult's own upbringing. Once this was overcome, it became clearer and clearer that there are a number of essential qualities of children of which she had been unaware or of which there was no pre-established recorded and disseminated knowledge or understanding. The characteristics that appeared ranged from excellent concentration and minimal need for either rewards or punishments beyond the work itself through to emergent self-discipline even amongst children who had been viewed as unruly. There was even a preference in young children to obediently engage in "work" activities such as making things or learning math or literacy over free play the vast majority of the time. Lastly, she defines "explosion": this is when a new skill is suddenly present and applicable, whether fitting shapes into their proper holes, using scissors or being able to read or to write. There is the ecstasy of success at such times for each child who suddenly acquires a skill

The Montessori method is a system which uses an adult having a precise attitude towards the children within a carefully prepared environment that is designed to make the most of those very principles that naturally exist in children. One of the advantageous and charming attributes of children is that, given the opportunity they will function as a harmonious whole group. The discovery of this and many other qualities that occur in children and changes that coincide with their ages are the crux of Maria Montessori's major breakthroughs in the education of children.

Book 1, Part One : Chapter 2, Development &

Book 1, Part One : Chapter 2, Development & Summary and Analysis

The rooms where the children had adult guidance, direction and yet also still some freedom multiplied and became known as "Children's Houses." Whoever came to visit them was typically impressed. Here the focus is not about Maria Montessori herself but rather upon what she discovered about children. E. M. Standing introduces another set of qualities that Montessori was able to nourish in children. They are of such import and have been set forth so concisely that they are presented as a list, from page 57, where there is a quote from a Catholic Priest who wrote them: humility & patience of the mistress of the classroom, valuing deeds over words, viewing the sensorial realm as the beginning of "the life of the soul," silence and recollection from the children, the freedom for the children within the Montessorial atmosphere to patiently and diligently strive for perfection and to correct their own errors and to help the other children, obedience towards the adult, the means to control error, respect for the inner life of each child.

In 1909 a Baron friend insisted that Maria write a book about her work. Within one month she had a manuscript and within a year the book was published. She received thanks for having done this from places as far afield as China. The chapter includes a brief translated remark from a Chinese woman who simply says that treating children with great respect and encouraging them to do things for themselves is excellent for them. Montessori education clearly encourages rather than inhibits this.

The author then traces the intellectual history of Maria Montessori, noting that she was a trained physician not teacher. However, she had been an instructor at a women's training college thereby gaining experience as a professor—a teacher of adults, but a teacher nonetheless. Her intellectual historical lineage was: Pereira (1715-1780: Spaniard), Itard (1775-1838: French), Seguin (1812-1880: French). It is often assumed that she had the advantage of not having been trained, even, indoctrinated into the standard educational methodology for children of her time.

Maria Montessori claimed outright that teaching methods found to be helpful to the mentally handicapped or learning disabled were often also of use with normal children; others might remark that they could even be useful when when applied to gifted children. This point, made by Maria Montessori was often contentious, perhaps solely to the stigma associated with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities. Montessori discovered that little children who are making progress working on something will often refuse or resist proceeding from a point of process that outside interference, usually called "help," brings them to. Typically, once the child escapes the interference, then he or she will go back to where he or she left off before the interruption occurred and will resume working away from that point onwards with the

additional knowledge of the interference. It is for this reason that the directress of the Montessori classroom needs to be attentive and timely yet minimalistic in how she assists children during their learning process.

Maria Montessori reached a crossroads in her life. She gave very careful consideration to the financial situation and decided to bravely move forward despite some trepidation. She gave up her lectureships and her small private medical practice to devote herself fully to her own Montessorial work. By this time she had published several works and had royalties coming in from these. She was able to find sufficient funding to supply herself and a staff of teachers trained in her methods. The Queen Mother of Italy was one of her financial sponsors.

During this time period, Maria Montessori was given more than one offer to venture to America. One was presented which included more money but a severe limitation on her ability to move freely; the other was far humbler in itself but was compatible with her willingness to develop her work internationally. The other main change that came through her life at this stage was that her popularity grew to a great height even as she realized that her ideas regarding growth and education could be extended past the early childhood years all the way up through to university age.

Finally the author explains that the Association Montessori Internationale is the one and only association that is presently guaranteed to represent and to promote the definitive principles, research and methods. The rest may be viewed as fakes, or imitations or extensions of the work which cannot all be confirmed or denied by those of the Association Montessori Internationale.

The next chapter involves the discovery and introduction of another new and important concept. The first stage of the next chapter provides a description of Maria's training procedures at the international training centers founded to foster her new discoveries and methods for educating young children.

The tone of the book is intermingled praise and objectivity. The author is known to have been a work colleague of Maria's for over thirty years. He flows easily from the topic of Maria's life beyond the work itself back into expositions of the work: of the truth about what she calls "the Child." The Child offers profound insights into the truths of human nature, of abilities and of learning. The book could be used as a textbook for university coursework despite its label as biography.

The author then proceeds to express to readers the truth that Maria Montessori has given a fantastic model, a living representation of the Zeitgeist of her age. He also says that she refers to the 1900s as "the Century of the Child." Perhaps this is a good time to point out one other feature of children that Maria noticed: adults learn a tremendous amount when instead of running rough shod over a young person's apparently unruly behavior they seek the real motive with an open mind. A closed mind has too often been wrong; at first Montessori herself misread the natural desire for order in very young children as a kind of pestering or as disregard of authority.

Next, E.M. Standing goes on to express to readers that Maria Montessori was also a champion of peace. She gave some speeches to this end to the United Nations. Whether or not the causes were related or not, Maria Montessori and her schools were designed to nurture strong and free personalities and, as a result, were persecuted under the Fascists. Many of her locations were shut down; there were effigies and books of hers burned in public. Ultimately, she left Italy for Spain where it was easier for her to work without being suppressed by the local government.

The author makes a personal remark in this chapter. He tells readers, affectionately enough that Maria Montessori operated rather intuitively even though she had a highly developed rational mind. This did not always appear to be logical to others.

The author concludes by asserting that Maria Montessori had a lovely spirit, her mind had developed in a scientific atmosphere and whenever she preached it was clear that her life was rooted in spirit and that her intention was to nurture spirit in each of those children who benefited from Montessorial education.

Book 2, Part Two : Chapter 1, Exploration, Development &

Book 2, Part Two : Chapter 1, Exploration, Development & Summary and Analysis

The number one characteristic of a Montessori School when properly prepared and staffed is that children pursue their own interests in an atmosphere that nurtures their independent development with a great deal of support and a minimum of interference. This way, children can be together without anyone being either held back by others but also without the distress that can be caused by holding back the other children if one has an unusual difficulty with something that others in general find easier.

The arrangement does of course influence the types of group work that can be done in Montessori Schools. The author insists that this quality of "spontaneous and voluntary effort" on the parts of children is consistently found in such schools. Fearlessly, the author informs readers that they can check this themselves by visitation and observation of such a place. This point cannot be under-emphasized as it serves as a definitive justification for the high value of the Montessori system. Little children engrossed in learning and cheerfully, spontaneously working away at a line of inquiry is claimed to be observable in every properly run Montessori School during class times. The author claims that coercion is entirely absent. How this compares to the scene in standard education is not so certain. While corporal punishment no longer is practiced in public schools in America, yet children often still suffer a great deal from the feeling that they are being coerced a great deal of the time into many aspects—from having to sit so much of the day, to having to ask permission to get water, or to perform some assignments and even the simple effort of paying attention when they are not really interested. These same complaints or conditions are often also found in adults during part of the discipline of their work day when fear of loss of income is the real stimulus for sticking to task.

Book 2, Part Two : Chapter 1, The Explorer, Development &

Book 2, Part Two : Chapter 1, The Explorer, Development & Summary and Analysis

There is one famous characteristic of every properly run Montessori School during open class times: the children in them are both content and busy doing their work. This quality is actually the one that most interests those who visit Montessori Schools. Disbelief, the author explains, has frequently occurred with the observation made by first time visitors.

This involves the discovery that young children will "work" at learning oriented tasks that are also of interest to them. E.M. Standing explains to readers that this is vital to understanding the Montessori system. Options for learning are presented to children. Maria Montessori liked mixed age classrooms so that the younger and the older might better help one another. This also means that learning opportunities range significantly within the environment and that advancement within a given area could go on for a long time, far beyond norms for the child's age. This way, there is still structure and guidance but not the limitations of one "grade" or the supplies and lessons associated with just one level of achievable goals. This increases the children's freedom to explore and to pursue in accord with their sometimes changing interests.

A great deal of this chapter is devoted to a survey of some of the main characteristics of babes and very young children. She begins by noting how different the situation is for the newborn. After the time in the womb, a newborn is able to process a tremendous amount of information but the extent of the work that is required to do this makes it an all consuming task for years. Everyone who has become a parent or who has closely cared for and observed a new born rediscovers how rudimentary some of the knowledge that has been acquired really is. For instance, through prolonged and careful observation, experience and thought, every reader has figured out that those appendages appearing in the peripheral vision are one's own hands and that, with concentration one can cultivate the mental cooperation between the tactile sensations of one's limbs, and the appearances crossing your vision. This is just one example of Montessori's reminders of how different the world view for infants really is.

The second chapter works further with this same information. Here she describes the difference between the unconscious and the conscious mind. Her analogy may come as somewhat surprising. She says that there is an incredibly high level of activity during the infant's first year and that everything learned during this time period is destined for the unconscious mind. This she says, is like taking a photo in the dark where it is also developed. The information becomes 'fixed' and then the conscious mind emerges. The two are related but Maria Montessori claims that the connection is more like that of the

connection point between a tree branch and a bud than a more linear growth of the branch.

In the second chapter of the book, Maria Montessori sets out the various main subdivisions of childhood and describes basic qualities of development at each stage.

Montessori did not have the understanding how growth continues within adults and has concentrated legitimately upon the far more obvious, transformative growth of healthy childhood. She calls birth to age six "Epoch One" and separates these at the three year mark. After age three the development is far more conscious. It shows in her work that she has not performed an extensive survey to find out at what age and how vivid personal memory is. The norm seems to range from just a few months of age out to a few years. The Second Epoch is from age six years out to age twelve. This time span is more stable than the one preceding it. The reality is that the extent of the transformation during this period is less extreme than during the preceding years. The Third Epoch is Adolescence. The author expresses that parents need to realize that the pervasive transformations during this lengthy phase of development may make the individual quite delicate and in need of more attentive care rather than less. This has been a matter of some complication and confusion since Montessori's day in some cultures since the presentation of "spiking" maturation compiled along with definitive periods of "sensitivity" at least as acute in the First Epoch of childhood combine to provide very different challenges to both parents and their offspring. It is during this period, Montessori claimed, that children come to understand themselves in relation to and as part of society. This is a level of awareness that goes beyond the "herd instinct." She readily admits that heightened "sensitivity" to issues relating to attractiveness also take on a whole new depth of meaning during this stage.

Many psychological difficulties emerge during the Third Epoch that are more served by Jungian theory than by Freudian. E.M. Standing explains that problems such as the inferiority complex, or superiority complex are simple examples of the kinds of social maladjustments that can occur amongst people during this age. As usual, her most recommended therapy is to provide an excellent atmosphere within which children can grow and thrive. Maria Montessori has made it clear in no uncertain terms that economic independence is the characteristic that parents and other teachers are meant to facilitate in their adolescent children. E.M. Standing explains that there are too many details to be covered in the chapter, but that this is a major goal. Complexities emerging from gender roles, social status, economic class and personal preferences all come into play regarding how this is achieved and how well it is done. The interdependence pertaining to marriage, offspring and the management of those dependencies, inheritance and work-for-pay are all samples from ways that this can be achieved. To some degree adolescence means learning to shift the dependency from the parents onto others, be it an employer or a spousal type of person or anything resembling these. The nurturing of well-justified self-confidence through experience as an adolescent is a key and necessary element for this period of development. Montessori tells readers through E.M. Standing that this is twofold: "...faith in God and faith in himself," (Standing, p. 118).

Chapter 7 is a further elucidation of the discoveries and applications of Maria Montessori's work. Adult guidance and intervention for the children within a Montessori "prepared environment" are very important. For those used to an excess of attention and interference, the directress will seem to be very "hands offish." At the same time, those who had been neglected will discover to their great joy that the directress of the school or classroom is both present and attentive to the situation and needs of the children who are there.

This chapter also contains some further description of the sensitive periods of childhood and how they work. The purpose is to help readers understand that all education will be more successful at nurturing the child's potential when these "sensitive periods" are made the most of. This goes better when the "sensitive periods" are fully understood and well prepared for. In such cases, the school atmosphere can empower a child to pursue what their nature is during a given phase, which is best for them and will yield the best adults.

Lastly, the author touches on something sad. Many an adult has unfortunately "missed a sensitive period." That is, the individual has proceeded through a developmental stage when a great deal of development of a particular type could have taken place but did not. In such cases, E.M. Standing explains that the individual has "missed the bus" and that nothing can ever be done to maximize an ability that is rooted in one of childhood's "sensitive periods."

The author poses that the efforts of children have for their aim, some inner transformation. This is contrasted to the work of adults which is posited to have an external aim, where some alteration of the environment is really what is intended. The hypothesis is presented that the boy or girl, through the growing up process, makes the man or woman. In this sense every adult is in part a natural confluence of life experiences and education, but also a creation of the child who the adult was.

Book 2, Part Two : Chapter 2, Work, Sensorial, Normalcy

Book 2, Part Two : Chapter 2, Work, Sensorial, Normalcy Summary and Analysis

In this chapter the author again reviews the difference between adult work and the work of children. E.M. Standing explains that for adults the intention is to effect external changes upon the environment whereas for children the purpose is to create and further changes in their interior perceptual landscape that coordinate with the biological transformations occurring in their bodies. The author explains that the work of children, especially in a Montessori environment is motivated from within the child whereas adult work is much more motivated by external factors. This is information for a great in-depth discussion about internal motivations for adults.

The author introduces pacing into the matter. The work of healthy growth, whether in a "sensitive period" or not, involves living at a different pace. At work, the author tells readers, for adults there is always the pressure to move faster; efficiency is maximized; there is no "stopping to smell the roses" unless that is specifically part of one's job. For children, every moment of the learning process is important. The author provides an account of a little girl working steadily and thoroughly with the numbers 1-100. The teacher drew the wrong conclusion that the most important factor for the girl was to reach the outcome, to arrive at 100. She attempted to help by encouraging her to leave out some numbers and to perform manipulations. The child cooperated until at last she asked for the teacher to please cease with her interference. The instructor did so, and E.M. Standing explicitly states that the girl went back to where she had been in the process prior to being "helped" and resumed her steady and thorough process.

Standing continues to inform readers about principles that are of great relevance in understanding Montessori's system. He reminds readers about repetition. Repetition occurs quite naturally amongst children as part of the learning process. The number of repetitions that it takes to attain mastery can vary. Just as it can seem to not make much sense when a child does the same thing over again 40 times, 12 times or even 100 times, it apparently matters a great deal. Upon completion, or satisfaction of the built-in cause of doing something over again, any given child will just as suddenly stop.

There may be no further interest at all, but from then on a higher level of mastery of the activity may well be shown. The rest of the valuable points of the chapter must be found by reading the book.

The following chapter focuses on another aspect of the Montessori system. In this portion E.M. Standing explores and discusses how the Montessori environment is intended to take into account the needs of each child with respect to the powerful significance and relation of the intellectual and unintellectual natures of the entity. This

contributes extensively to determining what the best way to arrange and prepare the learning environment based upon a proper understanding of the being in question. Awareness of the sensual needs of children have given rise to types of objects designed to work with specific qualities of items that coincide with particular learning strategies and aim to enhance a specific skill or set of skills. Examples are colored rods or shapes: one is meant to facilitate the teaching of length, another of size or of color. The author refers to the importance of the power of generalization in terms of the learning devices created, arranged and used.

E.M. Standing goes on to recognize two "streams" of development. The physical and the mental, the author emphasizes, must be viewed as a unity. Whenever there has been a disruption during infancy or childhood of the coordinated functioning of the entity then this will show clearly to those able to correctly "read" the individual. There follows an analysis of deviations and of normalcy in persons. The author lists causes of troubling deviations

noting that difficulties of the body are typically easier to perceive than are those of the mind. There are three causes given for such deviations: 1) inhibition of movement despite the will to take action during infancy and early childhood; 2) "invasion" and substitution by the will of an interfering or imposing adult or adults; 3) failure on the part of children to create or to select activities that will cultivate the unison of healthy development of their physical and psychological processes.

Careful observation has revealed that regardless of how much any given child may have suffered from "disordering experiences" sufficient time along with the right amount of firmness without cruelty, persistent support for finding opportunities, and the continuous exposure to various activities along with the freedom to pursue these as briefly as the child wishes will eventually trigger a transformation towards normalization. The first sign of normalization in a child is the onset of concentration—of prolonged interest. The author notes that often when such a child first begins to normalize it is highly likely that he or she will take to something that has been lightly toyed with many times before but quickly left.

There is a concise list of the characteristics of normalcy in children which have been observed to occur irrespective of the race of the children. On some level funding must be an issue if only because Montessori does not describe how to make a Montessori School set of learning options that rely exclusively upon objects garnered directly from a natural or urban atmosphere. That limitation acknowledged, the author shares that everywhere, when obstacles are removed from children's paths, their learning increases with built in enthusiasm. These are: love of work; love of order; intense and prolonged concentration without "required training"; attachment to reality (the sensorial world); individual focused behavior; sublimation of possessiveness (to use, not to possess with respect to objects); the power to act from genuine choice rather than from the whimsy of "mere curiosity"; obedience (this is not submission from fear, nor blind obedience nor compulsion but more of the nature of a free and docile sense of yielding cooperativeness); independence and initiative; spontaneous self-discipline; joy (surprising to some, this is a normal and healthy condition).

The tone of the book continues in its clear and instructive manner. The work is informative and objective. It is quite readable. Although the intended audience was adult, unlike some material, this is also quite safe reading for any children who are literate, interested and willing to learn more about Montessori's view on children and how to best educate them.

Book 3, Part Three : Chapter 1, Size, Movement, Instinct, Reason

Book 3, Part Three : Chapter 1, Size, Movement, Instinct, Reason Summary and Analysis

One of the most fundamental environmental preparations for the children at a Montessori School is something has fortunately grown to be quite common: the furniture is appropriately sized. With items made to their own scale children can relate to the physical elements of the atmosphere in the manner that more closely resembles the way that adults are able to relate to circumstances that are properly sized to them. This basic quality has happily been adopted by numerous schools throughout the world whether they are Montessori or not. This allows for a much more realistic set of learning conditions.

Next in this chapter, the author describes the activity in a Montessori classroom. In this way, many aspects of the situation are shown. The interactions of the children are shown with great pride displayed about the truth that children will help one another in these circumstances. One child is selected as a negotiator by other children in one case; in another incident, the directress is needed and appreciated. E.M. Standing tells readers a little bit about some of the exercises that are available to the children within the Montessori School.

After this, the author goes on to discuss instincts and reason in the human being. The intellect of man, he explains, is different not only in degree when compared with animals, but also in its kind. He does this through a discussion that compares the great difficulties that the human baby finds compared to the relative ease with which the babies of many species of animals develop. This turns out to be a springboard for a further explanation of how the Montessori method is designed to make the most of this precious, specifically human intelligence.

There follows a greater discussion of the development of the human intelligence in relation to bodily growth. The chapter concludes with a further discussion of the unity of the mind and body. Sensitivity about this occurs in relation to mental powers that seem separate from the physical and difficulties regarding the detailed relationships between the mind, the spirit and questions concerning life after death as resurrection and as the spirit as separate from the body. The author concedes that the views of the philosopher Aristotle have been corroborated by the extensive observations made in Montessori's research. The indivisibility of the immortal soul and of the living physical body is argued with terrific force.

Book 3, Part Three : Chapter 2, Practical Life & Mental Processes

Book 3, Part Three : Chapter 2, Practical Life & Mental Processes Summary and Analysis

The next section of the summary covers two chapters of the book. He begins by showing how in Montessori Schools there are many junior sized tools and domestic equipment items which allow the children to perform functional household tasks. This frees them from the trouble of only being able to pretend to perform such tasks and also releases them from the problem of doing these things with unrealistically awkward tools that have been built for adults. This brilliant Montessori discovery has been proliferated by toy manufacturers during the decades that have followed. It has become more common for juvenile sized real tools to be made and sold. The author informs readers that there is an even more profound significance to these tasks which allow the children to perform functionally within their own environment. This involves the attachment to reality; E.M. Standing assures readers that there will be more about this later in the book.

Lessons in courtesy and the freedom to express such good behavior are provided for in chapter 13. These are teachings that relate to the practical life on the social level whereas the others are about another aspect of life. There is a "sensitive period" for perfecting muscular coordination and it takes place during the first years and completes itself at age 7. There is a need to analyze actions, both physical movements and social graces that go along with much of the education for this phase. The author then notes the great importance for young children of balancing exercises. The relatively large size of the head makes it an activity well worthy of focused concentration. All good schools, and every proper Montessori School helps children by creating and offering exercises that are opportunities to help them to improve their balance. When these are available, it turns out that children will do them readily but if they are not provided by adults, the children will not consistently come up with them on their own within those environments in which they find themselves. There is then the comment that games played spontaneously reveal the true needs of those children who are playing them.

One of these is "silence." E.M. Standing goes on to help readers see how much there is for children to learn about how to make silence, what it is and how it operates within a group atmosphere.

The next chapter is devoted to movement and mental assimilation. The first thing the author does is explain to readers how the Montessori students seem to be learning without being taught. After that Mr. Standing indicates to readers what is really going on and how the experienced observer will be able to tell how learning is transpiring. There are two stages of teaching & learning here. The first involves an introduction to the material: concepts, physical objects, activities, whereas the second is a matter of free

and spontaneous usage under guidance. Help from the instructor is available and the work can only be done while at the school. Beyond that, the child is allowed to work with the material as extensively as they desire.

Standing points out again how important it is that the children are able to move freely while doing their work. This enables them to develop their physical coordination more naturally along with their minds. Sports and eurhythmics are two powerful means for improving the character and morale of a given individual. Educational movement, according to the author has specific aims: it is designed either to improve a person's control over his or her voluntary muscular system or helps to improve a particular mental capacity or both of these.

To precisely recount the full contents of the remainder of the chapter is not possible within the space limits. Several more important principles follow and are listed here. Most of these have a heading with a few paragraphs that come after them: the successful directress and the periphery; the point of contact-precision; other related concerns; "keys to the universe"; movement and concentration; repetition & discovery in relation to movement; Montessori explosions; the materials as gateways to learning; movement perfects observation.

With that the author has completed this third part of the book. Another set of meaningful principles have been explicated in conjunction with Montessori educational methodology. Thanks to this readers now have a much richer understanding of what children are really like and how the Montessori system works.

Book 4, Part 4 : Chapter 1, XV & XVI: The Fundamental Problem & Prepared Environment

Book 4, Part 4 : Chapter 1, XV & XVI: The Fundamental Problem & Prepared Environment Summary and Analysis

Readers will be very happy about a basic principle found in the first of these two chapters. Most schools in North America and Europe are built with the size of the students in mind and catered to. The Montessori method emphasizes that a correctly prepared environment for learning includes in its structure, design, and equipment the proper order for the best developmental opportunities for the children.

There is a short anecdote provided in the book that clarifies the distinction between adult tastes and those of children. Fancy marble tables, and excellent sophisticated healthy meals are often deeply appreciated by adults. Children, however, need light colored tables as they are better for teaching the difference between dirty and clean. Children will often honestly scoff at or reject a $500 ornate lunch in favor of a grilled cheese sandwich without any spicing. Their palate would only be confused, overstimulated or offended by what for adults would be preferable.

The parts of a prepared environment are: 1) those items needed for carrying out the tasks of practical life and activities closely related to it; 2) the sensorial materials; 3) the materials for teaching culture—history, literacy, basic mathematics, geography, art, handiwork; 4) items designed to prepare an individual for religious life.

The author then describes for readers the best number of children for there to be in a Montessori class. One would have tended to imagine that smaller class sizes would be superior, with perhaps twelve to a class being the best number. It turns out that this is not the case. The better number of students is actually 30 with up to 40 being acceptable. There is a very specific reason for this, and it is quite simple. The reason is because the children learn from one another a great deal. For this reason, there are more people to both learn from and to teach when the classes are both big enough and small enough.

E.M. Standing goes so far as to mention a few different types of children clearly expressing that each needs to be allowed to operate in his or her own manner. This facilitates both the teaching and the learning process for the entire group. Some children quietly observe from outside the direct activities—Standing assures readers that these children are often making very valuable observations and that the teachers and the children can definitely trust this process.

The chapter concludes with a synopsis of the best way for the teachers to function and to relate to their students. The instructors must be responsive to those children who seek out their assistance. These same individuals need to be able to keep out of the way of those children who are enthusiastically engaged with their work, and to leave space for the children to help one another. At the same time, the teacher needs to repeatedly show some subject matter to children who have shown little or no interest in a given set of subjects. This being the case, readers will see that in reality there is some conforming pressure placed upon the children to pursue work in several subject areas.

There is one more truth brought forth in this chapter. This is the importance of pursuit and error. Children are self-correcting and self-disciplined by nature. Unless they ask for help they should not be stopped even when they are making mistakes; for some this will be incredibly difficult to take. One can only hope that the reason is that there is some learning going on even through the error-making and that it is a problem that will be corrected when the child has grown receptive to doing so.

Book 4, Part 4 : Chapter 2, Liberty in Education & the Montessori Directress

Book 4, Part 4 : Chapter 2, Liberty in Education & the Montessori Directress Summary and Analysis

Freedom and the prepared environment comes up again early on in this next chapter. The type of liberty fostered by the atmosphere is not the freedom to do right or wrong but is in fact the freedom to select from amongst behaviors and activities all of which are right. Hence, wrongdoing is eliminated except for the form of it known as error; the result is that there is no morality involved. This is an incredibly important point.

One of the first and most vital aspects of Montessori education pertains to the sensitivity of children about their work. Correction and encouragement both have to be distributed very carefully. The author explains that little people are so sensitive that in many cases even a phrase of encouragement can have a deleterious affect. For this reason, teachers need to be well versed in nonintervention as a policy towards the children. Repeatedly, it is explained during this work on Montessori that the behavior of the directress is extremely important with respect to the effectiveness of the school and the progress that the students are able to make. The Montessori School seeks to differentiate itself from other educational systems by enabling students to genuinely develop their own personality and to pursue what truly interests them. The style of the guidance provided is always supposed to be to move the child towards independence. The timing must be right for this as actions done too soon that were intended to nurture independence may fail to do so because they were done prematurely. Likewise, excessive and lingering provisions may undercut and undermine healthy independence by fostering dependencies even after they have been outgrown.

E.M. Standing explains that interest only develops with knowledge of something, and it comes after any examinations that were sparked by curiosity. This serves to distinguish the first and second stages of learning. The first stage is when a teacher provides a child with a safe introduction to an item with explanation of how it works. The second stage comes when the child knows how to use the device to do work and therefore is actually in a position to choose this one from amongst many that might be selected. This is one necessary requisite for making free choices. Another of these is for the child to be free to choose what interests him or her rather than only making such choices as a side effect of the influence of the teacher, or due to the domination of another personality. This latter really is a problem as it constitutes a very artificial "warping" of a child's personality to regularly force them to pursue activities that are not of genuine interest to him or her. The Montessori system of education seeks to prevent this. For many who have lived through the other methods, reclaiming their own real personalities after having become adults may become part of their work. Built-in impulses will lead each child toward certain activities and items and away from others.

There is another facet to the child's growth. This involves the relationship between the teacher and the student. What follows from this is also the author's concise discussion of the importance of obtaining a child's actual consent prior to even attempting to teach them something. True teaching only functions when the student actually wants what is being taught. As such, the freedom in the Montessori environment heavily involves this. Nothing is taught to the child without consent, but much will be shown, especially to a disrupted child so that he or she can make some discoveries and perhaps eventually find something of real interest to himself or herself. "Where there is consent all that is given falls on prepared soil," (p. 315).

With this, the author completes the chapter. For the summary, two of the book's chapters have been covered. Readers can find these as the second half of the fourth book. These chapters have been devoted to elucidating the interrelated roles of the teacher and the students. The way this empowers the students to pursue their own interests in a protected, free environment is of great value.

How to achieve this within the carefully produced Montessori educational environment and the significance of the directress are both foci of these chapters. The discourse leaves readers with a superior understanding of what the system is and how it strives to cultivate the underlying potentials within every child.

Book 5, Part 5 : Chapter 1, Montessori & Froebel

Book 5, Part 5 : Chapter 1, Montessori & Froebel Summary and Analysis

This is the final sub-book of the entire work. It is shorter than the others, and therefore there is only one summary chapter devoted to it. Here for the first time, the author makes an analysis of the subject of education within the greater context of the field and other "Masters" in the subject. For the benefit of those readers who may not have already thoroughly studied the subject, the educational methodological beliefs of Montessori are shown in their relation to Froebel.

The author explains that there is a very fundamental problem. While the Montessori system does exist, which is good, the Froebel system has disappeared, which makes comparing the two strange indeed. Even so, E.M. Standing does what he can. He informs readers that both have deep affinities that produce great unity, such as loving respect for the child in education, and that there coexist very real differences of belief regarding the best way to educate children between the two systems. The author continues in the clear and objective tone he has used so far. He provides greater exposition on this particular matter.

He gives an account of an event from Froebel's life. A friend had turned Froebel toward teaching. After trying it, he discovered that he loved teaching. Later he served in war. When he returned, he found that he was restless until he discovered a boy in a field of lilies. The look of genuine trust with which the child gazed upon him made a powerful impact upon the man.

For the first time, E.M. Standing refers to himself in the book. As many know, when writing objectively self-referencing is strongly discouraged. Even when it does pertain to the matter under discussion the means of being objective and of furthering the appearance of objectivity as found in the written word normally proscribes this. However, it is striking and feels like a charming moment in which the author and the readers have suddenly become more personally engaged.

The purpose of the teacher is to direct the natural energies of the child. This is not meant to subvert the free will of the child but rather to assist the young into productive knowledge and activity rather than randomized restlessness. The experience of learning and of getting results increases the young person's sense of confidence and competence in a way that cannot ever be substituted.

The author explains another point of difference between Froebel & Montessori. The former began from a point of metaphysics and theology and moved towards education, whereas the work of Montessori had the approach of physiology and psychology—both

sourced in her natural work as a physician. One can readily see that the two together offer a completeness that would not otherwise be possible, by virtue of the range of specialized areas that come together when they do.

Montessori diverges from Froebel about the best means for normalizing a child. While the two agree that the exploratory behavior of young children is beneficial and ought to be made the most of, Montessori believes that it is only through the activity of work that a child will be able to shed disruptive behaviors. On the contrary, Froebel believes that play holds the cure for this trouble.

The second to last chapter of the entire biography is dedicated to further differentiating between the systems of Froebel and Montessori. The first difference, according to the author, is that Montessori's belief in the value of a child's spontaneity is greater or runs deeper than Froebel's. The two also differ in that Froebel's followers believe that the apex of achievement and expression for children is play, whereas Montessori believes it is work.

Montessori takes it further and explains that work is something which children are able to do when provided with the proper environment and the guidance of a teacher. Behavior that children choose to pursue which increases their knowledge and skills is "work." The value of the teacher is simply that it is far easier to learn fishing and mathematics thanks to a teacher's introduction, guidance and noninterference than it is to only learn these should one discover them in nature on one's own, and figure out what it is and how to do it. One is perhaps more likely to learn such a thing than to discover and invent it.

Finally, the author poses a warning. This involves the difficulties surrounding sorting out the truth from intentional and accidental falsehoods. There are ages in a growing child's life when their sensitivity to what is true and what is not is very vulnerable. It is crucial to not lie to young children, for to do so can really hamper their mental development. The truth can be a hard enough thing to determine even with intuition, keen senses, the scientific method and an adult logically trained mind. It is a far more difficult thing for an innocent babe who is depending so much on receiving true information from others, especially from parents. For this reason, Montessori tells readers that while fairy tales are okay, they are not to be introduced until the child has been rigorously taught from a place of honesty and until the child is old enough to have received real education on making distinctions between what is true and what is false, and what is imaginary and what is real. Philosophers, theologians and scientist adults can assure that even when people are doing their best to be thoroughly honest this is challenging.

Ultimately, a conclusion is provided. Froebel and Montessori viewed the world differently. One was more oriented to play and viewed wild usage of the fantastic imagination as a good. In the latter case, this was seen as rather a bad thing, but not without its place in life; the imagination can facilitate productive activity in real life and can alleviate stress and free up the mind for new insights into reality and truth. Of course, the problem is that fantasy can undermine finding real solutions—this happened to the little match girl who needed to be taken in by strangers but instead just fantasized

as she watched a match. Had she been truly helpless this would have made sense, but instead it may have prevented her from saving herself which is not good. Too much fantasizing can also be conducive to self-deception; a lot of self-deception is not necessarily helpful to a person. When taken too far it can harm a person's ability to be himself or herself and to function in society. The final chapter of the book reiterates these with a few further notes of comparison.

Characters

Maria Montessori

This woman is the subject of this biography. She was born in 1870, the first year that Italy existed as a united nation. Her parents took such an interest in her education that they relocated to Rome where there were superior schools.

Since the biography is about her and her educational discoveries and systems, most of the details are left to the chapter summary. Maria had a strong spirit and some important support within her family. Her major work was in making discoveries about specific qualities about children.

Developmental qualities that occur in every child were, once discovered, integrated into the educational environment. Maria Montessori figured out that educational environments could be prepared to make the most of the stage of development of each child. This included the discovery that children actually do best in groups of mixed ages specifically because this makes the most of the mutual assistance that can come from the particular virtues of any given age and stage of growth.

The Montessori educational system has been shown to be more effective than what was at the time considered "normal" methodology. This educational program is currently available but still has not become the dominant means of educating children. The Montessori system is available in many parts of the world.

She died in 1952.

E.M. Standing

This is the author of the biography. He was a longstanding colleague and assistant to Maria Montessori. For thirty years he worked alongside her on valuable educational projects. He also assisted by helping to record the work that Maria led in ways that fell outside the realm of academia. Like the author he spent much of his life in Rome.

Lee Havis

This gentleman is listed as the Executive Director of the International Montessori Society. His contribution to this work was done for the 1998 edition of the biography originally published in 1957.

The contents of the introduction he provides to the work updates readers on the state of Montessori education organizations in the more current world.

Pythagoras

This ancient Grecian mathematician and musician is mentioned in the second chapter of the third part of the work. The author is pointing out that everything should be learned with movement, whether this is the Pythagorean theorem or something else. It is not only ballet that should be learned in this way.

Queen Elizabeth

She comes up in specific reference to a ship, and a collection of names of boats in Part Three, Chapter XI of the book. She is the Queen of England.

Elroy Flecker

This name comes up in the middle of the book. He is referred to with respect to a literary work that he produced called Hassan. His poem is used as a metaphor for dealing with young children working away at the large task of counting to 1000.

giants

These are mentioned during a generalized conversation. They are referred to with respect to the problem of proper and incorrect proportions. To young childen, adult dimensions and furnishings force them to spend a lot of their time in a realm built for giants. This is one of the reason why furniture built to scale is so strongly advocated as part of the Montessori system.

Johnny

This is the name of a little boy who attends a Montessori School. He is written of as smiling and happy rather than grudgingly dragging himself to school. During the place in the book where he is mentioned he is working away and spelling out words with letters on a little rug on the floor.

Bridget

This is a young girl. She comes up during the same scenes of Montessori School activity as Johnny. The concern is the manner in which she is using a numbers frame. The system includes that no child has permission to use a device until after he or she has received proper education and introduction into how it works. For this reason, Bridget is not allowed to use the numbers frame.

When this comes up in the book, there is one other factor worth noting. The directress leads the girl to the piece of equipment that she can use which is closest to the work

that would involve the number frame- and thereby goes to work with the rods, for which she is ready. This shows that the teacher is not trying to cruelly deny her anything, but rather only that she wants Bridget to work within what she is allowed to use.

Gulliver

This is the main character in Gulliver's Travels. He is an adult male. Some of his journeys are obliquely referred to in different places during the book. One reason is their discussion of size. Proportion and disproportion are entirely relevant to early childhood development. The powers unleashed safely by children who have a properly proportioned environment are repeatedly touted by Montessori and her teaching method.

Coleridge

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the poet is referred to late in the book. His poem Kubla Khan is mentioned. He is known to have produced fantastic poetry; he is a deceased Englishman.

Froebel

This is a man famed for his research and written work in the field of education. He was a predecessor of Montessori's. They shared an intense desire to protect and to nurture children, and they respected the little people a great deal. Froebel did not have a sense of "work" as part of childrens' lives the way Montessori did. He was known to have also served as a soldier in the Napoleonic Wars.

Objects/Places

Montessori School

A school or classroom that follows the underlying principles and methods of Maria Montessori's educational system and operated by her followers under the auspices and guidelines of the Association Montessori International. These include a specially prepared environment, and a carefully trained directress/teacher as part of the conditions that must be met in order for a school to qualify as a real Montessori School. The original schools were focused on the education of young children; within this context the atmosphere was of "mixed ages."

Rome

This city was the site of the majority of Maria Montessori's life and work. She did have a universal approach and a willingness to embrace opportunities that involved traveling and sharing her discoveries with interested people of other nationalities. Rome is the background to the majority of the contents of the book as the location of great deal of Maria's research occurred at the end of the 1800s and early part of the 1900s.

Women's Training College

This is one of the institutions of higher education available to females in the city of Rome at the end of the nineteenth century. This is one of the locations where Maria Montessori practiced as a professor, a university lecturer for many young women in the city. Her students were fortunate because she was quite gifted in this way, and as one of the most highly educated women in the city and in Italy, they were able to gain access to superior education for themselves by having her as an instructor. This is referred to early in the book, more than once, near the end of Part One and into Part Two.

Chiaravalle

This is the birthplace of Maria Montessori. It is located in the province of Ancona in Italy. This location appears at the very beginning of the text, after the introductory material. The only points of significance referred to are that the educational opportunities there were inferior to those available in the city of Rome.

the Child

This is a vital principle to understanding the work of Maria Montessori. The work of Montessori is about discovering the true nature of a human child and doing so through very conscientious behavior. This includes an attitude of tremendous love and respect,

even reverence towards "the Child" and every child as a dynamic example of what the true nature is. This is required in order for any teacher to have a chance of nurturing the Child to full potential and in the best possible manner. Numerous principles of the behavior, motivations and ways of operating have been divined through the work of Maria Montessori and her followers making loving and careful observations of children. This is explained during the second chapter of the book but remains significant and recurs throughout the entire work.

Noordwijk-on-Sea

This is a location in the nation of Holland, also called the Netherlands. It appears at the tail end of chapter three. The author explains that it is where Maria Montessori died in 1952 at the age of 81.

International Training Courses

These are brought up as the main focus of the book in chapter 4, where there is a heading named for them. The Montessori system enjoyed international development throughout, and Maria took steps to preserve this reality when it was threatened by a very tempting offer.

She devised a 6 month course that led to a certification that someone had received special instruction in the Montessori method. In cases where this was followed up by two years of teaching within a high quality, correct Montessori School context, then the coursework would lead to a diploma.

Doctor of Philosophy

This is also referred to at the end of chapter 3. This degree is intended to indicate that an individual has cultivated knowledge in a given area to such a high or intense extent as to be an expert, a specialist knowledgeable enough to philosophize with respect to the subject rather than only to recognize to use some of the knowledge of the topic. The University of Amsterdam granted Maria Montessori an honorary Doctor of Philosophy for her obviously rigorous work in the field of early childhood development and education. They simply acknowledged that even though she had not done this at a university as a program of doctoral study, the work that she did was this good and had brought her to that level of knowledge and understanding and ability to transmit this learning to others.

garden

This comes up during chapter 5, as part of a discussion about the development of understanding and interpreting perception in young children. There are two young children, one is significantly older and bigger than the other. Montessori does not give

their ages but the impression is that one of them is less than three years old but able to walk and wears shoes but the older one may be as old as seven years old. The older one invites the littler one to his garden. The younger one, named Tony, attempts to reciprocate but it does not work as his garden is so much smaller. Tony is not able to conclude that this is the real cause of the problem until he tries exchanging shoes with his older friend and finds out that the bigger kid also cannot wear his little friend's shoes. This is apparently a size difference problem.

coat

This seemingly unimportant item holds sway in chapter 7 of the book. It is used as part of an experience which models the sense of order. The principle of orderliness is strongest as a 'sensitive period' of children on both sides of three years old.

The child had learned what coats are and the way they are worn or put away. His mother was out in public with him and hung the thing over her arm as she was a bit warm. Her child threw a fit until another, who successfully delved into the matter and the child's actual motivations, put the coat back on the mother. The child was instantly content now that this proper order had been re-established.

numbers frame

This is a device for Montessori students to use to help them learn certain types of mathematics.

number rods

These are a learning tool to be used with mathematics for Montessori methodology. It is for young children. These can be used to work on learning several things about numbers and math.

useless aid

There is a phrase associated with Montessori education that "every useless aid arrests development." However, the right kind of guidance at the proper time is extremely helpful. Any excessive interference that pretends itself to be actually helping is mistaken. Montessori directresses learn nonintervention: it must be understood that this protects against both neglect and overindulgence.

school room

This is the hub of activity within a school. The school room is referred to in many places throughout the book. Children learn through their own activities, through guidance and

introduction to the objects used for learning and the children within the school room also learn a tremendous amount through their interactions with one another.

Themes

the Child

One of the main themes of Maria Montessori's efforts was to rediscover the natural child, the essence of children. Her work was founded upon a love and respect for children; she harbored and espoused an attitude that approached reverence for children.

Her original work, having become the first woman physician in Italy, was a job in an asylum caring for the mentally handicapped. Many would have felt unhappy or as though they had been placed in a bad situation. Always a woman to persevere, however, Maria Montessori saw that her situation had great potential. She observed those in her charge very carefully. As the author noted, for possibly the first time, the mentally disabled had a genius looking into their circumstances. Montessori, also a very compassionate woman, soon decided that she pitied the poor children who had been relegated to such a sorry condition within institutions and set about endeavoring to improve their lot. She was effective in doing so.

Her work only grew from there. Many years later, she was able to work with normal children by again welcoming an opportunity that many may have found to be unappealing. She worked with very poor children who lived in Roman slums. They had been forced to live without day care as their parents had to work and could not afford care.

From then on, in the biography, Maria Montessori fades into the background. The principles of the child, however, are set out. Each is explained with care and awareness for the readers. These discoveries of the true nature of children and how they change and develop are part and parcel of the system that is devised to serve their needs. The educational system is then able to design itself around the needs of children with special attention given to cultivate their sensitivities at the right time. This has been a major triumph in the whole of Maria Montessori's research and stands in good stead with respect to the further research that has taken place during the later years of her life and since her death in 1952.

Maria Montessori—Champion of Women's Progress

Maria Montessori is a testament to some of what women can do in addition to being mothers. Readers should be aware, that while her efforts were worthwhile, they did undercut her powers to mother. She did have one son, who although he was not able to have the preferred amount of her attention, he did grow up to inherit the entire Association Montessori Internationale.

Maria was very fortunate in that her own parents were highly supportive of her efforts. Thanks to them, she received most of her education in Rome. Her mother continued to

support her interests and efforts even when her daughter wanted to break new ground for women by becoming a physician. There are so many women doctors nowadays, especially in pediatrics, that it may be all too easy to overlook this feat.

Maria audited courses at a men's school and bravely met with a top official in order to be admitted into the medical course. She was teased by many, and isolated from the others in certain ways for being a female in the midst of the medical school.

Maria, once this was achieved, taught at higher education institutions for women. Also, she devoted her life to helping children, simply in a different and more removed way than by being a hands on mother of many.

Maria Montessori is one source of inspiration for the aspirations of women and girls. She wrote much and was published many times. She lectured. She discovered the child: she found and articulated numerous underlying principles of children which facilitated the ability of parents, teachers and other care givers to create superior opportunities for young people to grow up and to succeed while children, hoping to make more powerful, able, happy adults through doing so.

Sensorial

The entire Montessori System is based upon making observations about children, and properly designing an entire educational methodology surrounding a realistic assessment of the child's needs. This is rooted in some spiritual and philosophical beliefs. Maria Montessori believed in God, and she was able to somehow both make this very clear without offending others with her faith. Her beliefs also tended to follow Aristotle, for whom the spirit of an entity and the body of it are a constant living unity.

Once the above is understood then readers will see why it is that Maria Montessori believes that the proper development of each child will integrate his or her use of the physical body. The word that is used to describe this is "sensorial." From the discovery on the part of Maria Montessori, classrooms were devised to make the most of how the entire being functions as a natural unity.

Part Three of the book is devoted most strongly to this aspect of the situation of the child in relation to his or her education and upbringing. How movement and environment come together is important. The mind does associate itself with movement of various kinds. How physical movement and psychological and intellectual development coincide required some study in itself. Once done, adults can design the physical objects within a Montessori School to meet the physical demands of children at a certain stage of development. This is something that cannot be said of many schools. The Montessori School has made an effort to provide not only chairs and tables of suitable size, but also objects to use in relation to a wide variety of subjects about which they are going to learn, so that their minds are developed as part of the same whole as their minds with a design intended to create a unity.

Style

Perspective

This book is written by a man who was one of Maria Montessori's most intimate and long term work colleagues. Although her organization's leadership was handed down to her son, the author of the book is Mr. E.M. Standing.

The author is very well versed in the Montessori system of education and in the organizations designed to support it. Late in the book, he does inform readers that before he met Maria Montessori and became involved in her work he had taken up the study of Froebel.

The book is written objectively, but is most definitely supportive of Montessori education.

Tone

The book is written predominantly for the purposes of education. It must be understood what this does and does not mean. The work is not an advanced textbook of any kind. However, it can serve as an introduction to additional material. That being the case, one can certainly use it as a textbook at the university level.

The exposition is clear and to the point. For a biography there is very little information about the subject. It is most probable that the reason it is labeled a biography is because compared to a work that is only about the Montessori system there is in fact a great deal about Maria Montessori. Part One of the book is dedicated to her life. The rest is devoted almost exclusively to her work—the Montessori system of education itself.

The tone is objective, and the author was able to produce the work in the English language. Maria Montessori was Italian and may not have been able to do this.

The writing style is accessible to university students without presenting any difficulty. Many high school students, particularly the advanced ones would also be able to handle the material.

Structure

The book is structured quite neatly. There are five parts to the book, which can be considered "sub books." Each has a major heading followed by chapters.

There are between 3 and 6 chapters per Part. Each one leads sequentially into the next. By the middle of the contents the readers will have begun to grasp the flow of what Maria Montessori's life was like and how this played into her work decisions.

The majority of the book is an exposition of the Montessori System from the beginning. The first step is introducing the subject, Maria Montessori. After that, the most important underlying principles of "the child," which are the basis of the system are described. Then, the work of Maria Montessori and the way that it, in Italy, led directly into the research and advances, which turn led to the development of the Montessori System itself.

The overall presentation is clear, concise and easy to read. By the end readers will cheerfully have a much better sense of Maria Montessori and the educational methodology that she has developed. Although her labors have not resulted in her methods replacing those of standard education, the good news is that her work has been influential internationally and throughout the field of education. Schools are typically built with environments sized to fit the student body,a fact which has greatly benefited the comfort of the children during the different periods of their growth. Montessori Schools are available to people on an international basis. Even public school systems in some locations have integrated Montessori education into their school systems to better meet the varying needs and views of those who attend school.

Quotes

"Again it is this same gift of the intellect which enables us to do what no animal has achieved...to self-consciousness, to the knowledge that 'I am I' and 'You are you,'" p. 205.

"When an entire personality is thus acting in a favorable environment then we call it 'work'," p. 234.

"...which is an expression of choice," p. 236.

"...this is the work of the centre," p. 237.

"These materials facilitate the child's spontaneous mental research," p. 237.

"...possesses both mechanisms," p. 237.

"When this principle of preserving the order in environment is understood and regularly practiced by the children and directress, there springs up what Montessori calls a rapport between the children and their environment," p. 272.

"It goes without saying that one does not explain this to the children," p. 273.

"Next, there is the order to be found in the sensorial materials," p. 273.

Topics for Discussion

Do you tend more towards Froebel's idea that the apex of childhood is play or Montessori's, that the ultimate is work? Explain your answer.

Discuss the statement, "Every unnecessary aid arrests development," (p. 322).

Discuss the Absorbent Mind, the Second Epoch, and the Third Epoch of childhood based upon their descriptions in the book.

Explain how and why it is that "the child's work is not useless."

What do you think about Maria Montessori giving her top executive position to her son? Support your answer with a thorough discussion of the issues you think are involved.

Discuss deviation and the normalization process in the Montessori method.

Describe the elements needed for a prepared environment in a Montessori classroom.

What do you think about the idea that even very young children can express personal preferences and abilities?

Briefly describe the love of order in young children.