

OUR WORK 2014

Montessori Europe after 14 years



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Montessori Europe e.V., Seat Bonn
c/o Schloss Hagerhof, Menzenberg 13, 53604 Bad Honnef
VR 8564 Register of Associations Local Court Bonn

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EDITOR: Ivan Juráš

This strategic material was produced by the Executive Committee of Montessori Europe in 2014.

Year 2014 is an important milestone in Montessori Europe's history. The first Montessori Europe president, Gudula Meisterjahn-Knebel will give over her position as Montessori Europe leader to her follower. The first change of the president of an organization is a sign of its viability. Besides that, if there was a collective at the beginning of an organization, another sign of viability is, that the original members are, as time goes, replaced by new members and the organization continues to keep its trajectory. In this respect it is worth to mention that Gudula is the last member of the initiation group who was until this time active on the Montessori Europe board.

Montessori Europe has already come a long way. This material is to outline where Montessori Europe has come to after 14y of "establishing and promoting Montessori pedagogy throughout Europe in an educational, political, social and pedagogical context"

(ME statutes, art.2)

The ambition of the authors is not only to pay attention to history, but to indicate the way for Montessori Europe, its actual and future interests and further development.



The Aims

After WW II the European Unification (EU) clearly has placed two main aims to the fore: securing of peace and economic cooperation of European countries. Educational policy played only a minor role. Beside that, development and spreading of Montessori movement in European countries lead to a need of “higher level of Montessori self-organization”. There was another special situation challenging Montessori movement late 80’s and 90’s: a deep scar created in souls and thinking of the people of Europe by former “Iron Curtain” policy. Therefore east-west European cooperation is a native issue for Montessori Europe from the very beginning.

In year the 2000 people from several European countries thought that for further development of Montessori pedagogy in Europe it would be good to establish a united European Montessori platform.

Initiation Group

Informal group consisted of Gudula Meisterjahn Knebel and Rainer Völkel from Germany, Clare Healy from Norway , Malgorzata Miksza from Poland, Herbert Haberl from Austria, Kristina Wennerstroem and Britta Bring from Sweden, Aileen O’Brian from Ireland, , Christopher Zanon from Switzerland. They started to discuss this idea, met on several meetings throughout Europe, and after some time, in 2003, Montessori Europe was registered. First seat of Montessori Europe was in Switzerland and after some time, in 2005, the registration country was changed to Germany, where it is till today.

The main ideas behind the creation of Montessori Europe were implemented into statues: Montessori Europe (ME) is a movement “establishing and promoting Montessori pedagogy throughout Europe in an educational, political, social and pedagogical context” (ME statues, art.2)

During the existence of Montessori Europe the following members were in the Executive committee :

Executive Committee members at Annual General Meeting of Montessori Europe members (AGM) 2004, Prague, Czech Republic :

Dr. Gudula Meisterjahn-Knebel, Bonn, Germany

Clare Healy, Oslo, Norway

Dr. Herbert Haberl, Vienna, Austria

Rainer Völkel, Wiesbaden, Germany

Britta Bring, Stenkullen, Sweden

Kristina Wennerstroem, Stockholm, Sweden

Dr. Malgorzata Miksza, Lodz, Poland

O’Brien Aileen, Dublin, Ireland

Elections at AGM 15.10.2005, Göteborg, Sweden

Executive Committee members October 2005

Dr. Gudula Meisterjahn-Knebel, Bonn, Germany

Clare Healy, Oslo, Norway

Dr. Herbert Haberl, Vienna, Austria

Rainer Völkel, Wiesbaden, Germany

Britta Bring, Stenkullen, Sweden

Kristina Wennerstroem, Stockholm, Sweden

Dr. Malgorzata Miksza, Lodz, Poland

O'Brien Aileen, Dublin, Ireland

Going out:

Kristina Wennerstroem, Stockholm, Sweden

O'Brien Aileen, Dublin, Ireland

Elected:

Nico van Ewijk, Amsterdam, Holland

Lena Degerman, Boden, Sweden

Elections at AGM 15.10.2006, Vienna, Austria

Executive Committee members October 2006

Dr. Gudula Meisterjahn-Knebel, Bonn, Germany

Clare Healy, Oslo, Norway

Dr. Herbert Haberl, Vienna, Austria

Rainer Völkel Rainer, Wiesbaden, Germany

Nico van Ewijk, Amsterdam, Holland

Britta Bring, Stenkullen, Sweden

Lena Degerman, Boden, Sweden

Malgorzata Miksza, Lodz, Poland

Going out:

Britta Bring, Stenkullen, Sweden

Elected:

Marianne Clarkson, Kent, UK

**Executive Committee members at AGM 28.10.2007,
Amsterdam, Holland, October 2007**

Dr. Gudula Meisterjahn-Knebel, Bonn, Germany

Clare Healy, Oslo, Norway

Dr. Herbert Haberl, Vienna, Austria

Rainer Völkel Wiesbaden, Germany

Nico van Ewijk, Amsterdam, Holland

Lena Degerman, Boden, Sweden

Malgorzata Miksza, Lodz, Poland

Marianne Clarkson, Kent, UK

Elections at AGM 12.10.2008, Oxford, UK

Executive Committee members October 2008

Dr. Gudula Meisterjahn-Knebel, Bonn, Germany

Clare Healy, Oslo, Norway

Dr. Herbert Haberl, Vienna, Austria

Rainer Völkel, Wiesbaden, Germany

Nico van Ewijk, Amsterdam, Holland

Lena Degerman, Boden, Sweden

Malgorzata Miksza, Lodz, Poland

Marianne Clarkson, Kent, UK

Going out:

Clare Healy, Oslo, Norway

Rainer Völkel, Germany

Elected:

Mirjam Stefels, Amsterdam, Holland

Ivan Juras, Bratislava, Slovakia

**Executive Committee members at AGM 17.10.2009,
Cracow, Poland, October 2009**

Dr. Gudula Meisterjahn-Knebel, Bonn, Germany

Dr. Herbert Haberl, Vienna, Austria

Lena Degerman, Boden, Sweden

Nico van Ewijk, Amsterdam, Holland

Marianne Clarkson, Kent, UK

Malgorzata Miksza, Lodz, Poland

Mirjam Stefels, Amsterdam, Holland

Ivan Juras, Bratislava, Slovakia



Elections at AGM 02.10.2010, Bad Honnef, Germany

Executive Committee members October 2010

Dr. Gudula Meisterjahn-Knebel, Bonn, Germany

Dr. Herbert Haberl, Vienna, Austria

Lena Degerman, Boden, Sweden

Nico van Ewijk, Amsterdam, Holland

Mirjam Stefels, Amsterdam, Holland

Marianne Clarkson, Kent, UK

Malgorzata Miksza, Lodz, Poland

Ivan Juras, Bratislava, Slovakia

Going out:

Malgorzata Miksza, Lodz, Poland

Elected:

Beata Bednarczuk, Lublin, Poland

**Executive Committee members at AGM 15.10.2011,
Bratislava, Slovakia, October 2011**

Dr. Gudula Meisterjahn-Knebel, Bonn, Germany

Dr. Herbert Haberl, Vienna, Austria

Lena Degerman, Boden, Sweden

Nico van Ewijk, Amsterdam, Holland

Marianne Clarkson, Kent, UK

Mirjam Stefels, Amsterdam, Holland

Ivan Juras, Bratislava, Slovakia

Beata Bednarczuk, Lublin, Poland

Elections at AGM 27.10.2012, Rome, Italy

Executive Committee members October 2012

Dr. Gudula Meisterjahn-Knebel, Bonn, Germany

Dr. Herbert Haberl, Vienna, Austria

Lena Degerman, Boden, Sweden

Nico van Ewijk, Amsterdam, Holland

Marianne Clarkson, Kent, UK

Mirjam Stefels, Amsterdam, Holland

Ivan Juras, Bratislava, Slovakia

Beata Bednarczuk, Lublin, Poland

Elections at AGM 19.10.2013, Budapest, Hungary

Executive Committee members October 2013

Dr. Gudula Meisterjahn-Knebel, Bonn, Germany

Dr. Herbert Haberl, Vienna, Austria

Lena Degerman, Boden, Sweden

Nico van Ewijk, Amsterdam, Holland

Marianne Clarkson, Kent, UK

Mirjam Stefels, Amsterdam, Holland

Ivan Juras, Bratislava, Slovakia

Beata Bednarczuk, Lublin, Poland

Going out:

Dr. Herbert Haberl, Vienna, Austria

Nico van Ewijk, Amsterdam, Holland

Elected:

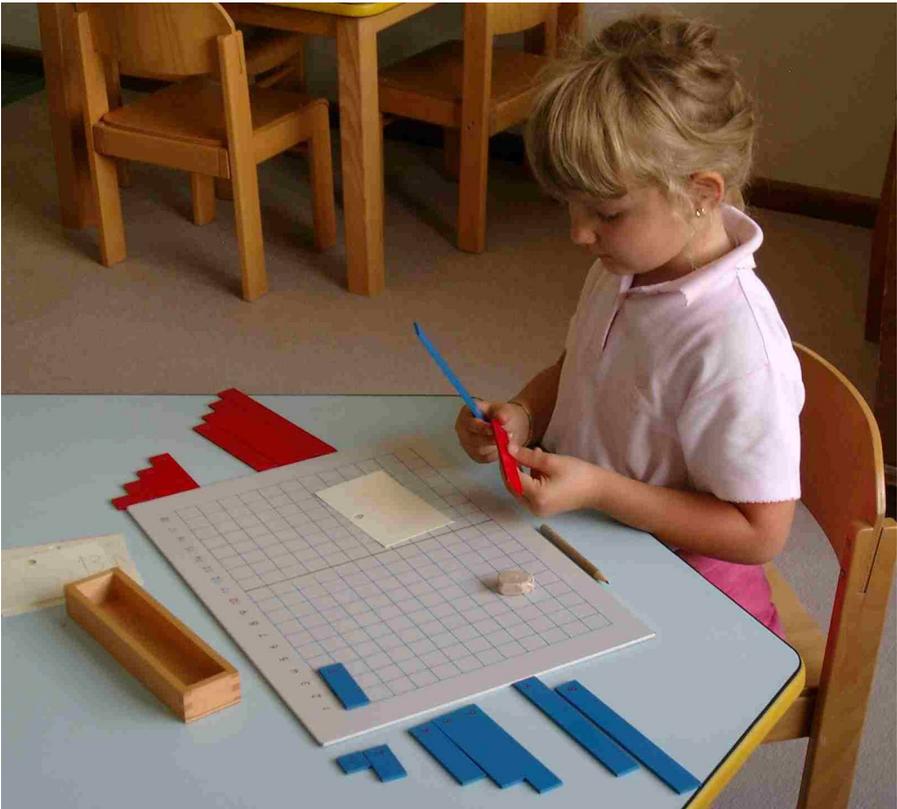
Dr. Monica Salassa, Rome, Italy

Ken Healy, Oslo, Norway (Cork, Ireland)

Montessori Europe for better education and children's rights protection

Montessori Europe is aimed towards the support of development of a real European Community. One within which the question of education is taking a role of paramount importance. Since the beginning of the 20th century Montessori education continues to play a large role in this context, namely because Montessori education is a worldwide education. Since its outset Montessori pedagogy was a pedagogy that surmounted borders because at the centre of it all was the child.

Montessori Europe aims to coordinate the diverse activities that have evolved for children's rights. That means to formulate educational-political policy positions and statements and support their representation throughout Europe, as well as supporting the UN Convention for Children's Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.



Montessori Europe for networking

Another important aim was to promote a European network of Montessori organisations, to promote cooperation and unrestricted exchange of experience and people, and to build a support structure to help Montessori teachers, pupils and parents.

For the people of Montessori Europe it was not enough to be satisfied with the work in their own area of interest. They wanted to discuss and change the situation of the child and the youth, they took their socio-political responsibility by acting. Democracy as a highly complex social form of living needs critical people who actively participate in the society. Montessori's idea of active man forms the basis for the development of personality through education. This is the idea of Montessori pedagogy: allowing a maximum of individuality and at the same time demanding responsibility for the community.

The Montessori pedagogy offers education for life by providing free choice in a structured learning environment. Children of differing ages, abilities and backgrounds are integrated in Montessori environments. This leads to the development of a unique personality that is free, self-motivated and self-responsible.

Therefore Montessori Europe has from the very beginning a very important aim: to promote and facilitate the creation of a European network of Montessori organisations favouring unrestricted exchange of experiences and cooperation amongst Montessori teachers, pupils, parents and all interested people.

To create an important and stable platform for such a networking, Montessori Europe decided to organize from the very beginning of its history yearly big international meetings - Montessori Europe Congresses. In compliance with Europe-wide and East-West European integrating ambitions the place of the congress is changed regularly between Eastern and Western European countries.



Montessori Europe Congress Declarations for spreading

The Montessori Europe Congress Declaration was first issued after the congress in Prague 2004. It was and still is meant to show interaction between the existing Montessori theory and new developments in society and to give new impulses. More and more its function started to be to support further contemplation and innovation within the Montessori movement and its institutions.

In the outside world the declaration is intended to be an instrument to inform local, national and international organizations, establishments and community in general about the latest concerns of Montessori Europe.

On the political level declarations are to function as shaping ideas about better education and protection of children's rights spread to ministries, national and/or local authorities. In order to generate publicity the declarations are to be used as press releases to the media. Published in Montessori magazines where they could find their way to the minds and hearts of members of all kinds of Montessori organizations and foundations.

Declarations can be used during Montessori teachers training as a matter for discussions.

Possibly they could be published complemented by relevant articles on the same subject, in book form or be put on the internet.



During the 14 years history of Montessori Europe the following cities hosted the International Montessori Europe Congress:

- 2000 *Aachen*, Germany
(in cooperation with the German umbrella organization ADMV),
- 2001 (April) *Dublin*, Ireland,
- 2001 (September) *Salzburg*, Austria
(in cooperation with the Bundesverband Montessori Österreich),
- 2002 (November) *Lodz*, Poland (in cooperation with the Polish Montessori Society „Polskie Stowarzyszenie Montessori“),
- 2003 (October) *Dublin* (Dun Laoghaire), Ireland (in cooperation with “Saint Nicholas Montessori Teachers’ Association of Ireland“),
- 2004 *Prague*, the Czech Republic
(in cooperation with the Czech Společnost Montessori o.s.),
- 2005 *Gothenburg*/Sweden (in cooperation with the Swedish Montessori Förbundet)
- 2005 *Belgorod*, Russia (together with the University of Belgorod),
- 2006 *Vienna*, Austria (with Bundesverband Montessori Österreich),
- 2007 *Amsterdam* (together with the Dutch Montessori Association),
- 2008 *Oxford*, United Kingdom
(in cooperation with Montessori UK St. Nicholas Charity),
- 2009 *Krakow*, Poland (in cooperation with „Polskie Stowarzyszenie Montessori“ and the University of Krakow),
- 2010 *Bad Honnef - Bonn*, Germany (in cooperation with the German Montessori associations and Schloss Hagerhof),
- 2011 *Bratislava*, Slovakia (in cooperation with Montessori Association Slovakia),
- 2012 *Rome*, Italy (in cooperation with the University of Rome, Roma Tre, Centro di Studi Montessoriani)
- 2013 *Budapest*, Hungary (in cooperation with the Montessori Association Hungary and the Corvinus University)
- 2014 *Lund*, Sweden (in cooperation with Swedish Montessori Förbundet)

Montessori Europe for freedom, responsibility of a man and peace

In terms of advantages for children, Montessori education provides a child-centred education. The aims and objectives of a Montessori school are based on anthropology. The most important aim of education is to help the child to do it himself and this means becoming independent from adults, which requires a deep trust in the child's potential. Also, this kind of education guarantees the child the freedom he needs to explore. The child is free to choose their own learning tools, and to determine when, where, how long and with whom he or she works. Of course the boundary of this freedom is the freedom of others, so an inner self-discipline is asked of the children. The task of the teacher is to observe the child and to prepare the environment geared to the needs of each individual. It means a shift from personal to environmental authority. All-in-all the individual child's development is at the centre of Montessori education *[it is a certain way of living and learning – not a method!]*.

As regards the benefit to society, the Montessori ideal of 'active man' forms the basis for the development of personality through education. The idea of Montessori pedagogy is to allow maximum individuality while demanding responsibility for the community. Empirical studies have shown the special abilities of Montessori-trained children in mathematics and science, but especially in social behaviour. These children are open-minded, interested in each other and know how to make decisions. In short, they participate in society and are able to change society where necessary. The basis for that is personality which is a result of child centred education. All this leads to the development of a unique personality that is free, self-motivated and self-responsible.





Montessori Europe for establishing guidelines

Maria Montessori gave to the children of the world and their educators work of extreme significance.

Her scientific positions, although created several decades ago, are constantly being confirmed by modern psychology, neuroscience, pedagogy, medicine and sociology.

Scientific studies are confirming again and again, that education based on the principles Maria Montessori defined, is helping children develop their potential to their optimum, creating their personal fundament for happy and meaningful lives and are even able to moderate the impact of unfavourable conditions children are facing (poverty, social exclusion, etc.).

From the very beginning, when Maria Montessori was developing her method of education, it was based on scientific approach, flexibility and openness to impulses constantly coming from real-life experience with children, fields of sciences like developmental psychology, psychiatry, pediatrics and sociology. The openness, as opposite to closeness and defensiveness, flexibility as opposite to rigidity, are, beside the method itself, the most valuable issues of Maria Montessori's legacy.

Maria Montessori's method set then certain features of the approach to the child, education of the child as well as for training of the teachers. The features were incorporated into guidelines.

There are recently many Montessori guidelines created by many institutions.

Montessori Europe, having in mind long term collective knowledge, experience in educating children and teachers, openness and flexibility native to Montessori's approach, prepared the following guidelines for operating Montessori schools and teacher trainings.

The guidelines reflect a recent point of view of Executive Board of Montessori Europe.

Guidelines to operate a Montessori school (age 0-3 years)

Introducing remarks

Montessori attached tremendous importance to the development and provision for the child during the first three years of life. She pointed out that when one considers the development of the child during these years, more goes on than all the other periods of development put together from three years until death. (Montessori 1989).

This period of development begins not at birth, but at the moment of conception, and makes it plain that when the birth takes place already there are profound differences in development. Some who have been well nourished in the womb and enjoy a gentle birth emerge into the world alert and ready for the world ahead of them, others who for example may have contacted infections such as German measles in the first three months of development in the womb, already have physical ailments that will make life more difficult for them. Already at birth children are not equal in their abilities.

Montessori attached great importance to a gentle birth and felt that the situation surrounding the birth and its effects on the later development of the child. She held that it was important that the child should be born into a darkened room, free from bright lights so that a gentle transition could take place. The room should be peaceful, with the baby being placed on the mother's stomach rather than being taken to a baby room, with the mother being encouraged to put the baby to the breast, and the cord joining mother and baby not being cut immediately. Some authors point out that birth is one of three great crises which take place during these first three years through which a child needs to be helped and supported – a second crisis being that of weaning at around 6 – 9 months. Although the child may still enjoy being breast fed for comfort, the main source of nutrition will start to come from solid foods. This crisis needs to be handled carefully so the child does not reject solid food. The third crisis – known as the Crisis of Opposition – does not take place until near the end of the child's second year, at around two and a half to three years. It begins when a child starts to say "No", and simple choices such as "Would you like to wear your coat or this jacket?" should be offered, as the child now begins a battle for his independence.

In the early days of the Montessori movement a child's first encounter with a nursery school situation was at around three years of age when s/he started at a Casa dei Bambini or Children's House, Montessori starting the first provision of this kind in San Lorenzo, Rome in 1907. Due to pressure from parents and a need for mothers to work, gradually a new provision was set up, the Nido and Infant Communities for children from birth to 3 years of age. Here the "teacher" was not a "directress" as in

the Casa dei Bambini but an Assistant to Infancy – someone who assisted the child’s development.

The Nido (from 0 months to walking)

The Nido (literally ‘nest’) is for the youngest babies. It is a place of protection and immediately a child becomes mobile s/he makes the transition from the Nido to the Infant Community area at around 12 months, remaining there until approximately three years. Walking becomes a sign that the child is entering a new phase of development for which the Nido is no longer suitable, as non-mobile babies could be accidentally harmed by those walking around. Here in the Nido there is a parallel between the mother bird who may gently push her baby out of the nest when she knows that s/he is ready to become more independent. Whilst in the ‘nest’ the child, who unlike many animals develops slowly, is in great need of protection. Montessori described the nine months in the womb as the internal womb, and the following nine months as the external womb, indicating that although the child is now in the outside world, s/he still has a great need to be monitored and looked after.

Equipping a Nido

Perhaps the most important presence in the Nido is that of the Assistant to Infancy or Key Person, as the human face is of major importance to a baby. The interaction with this person will not only aid communication and language, but will become an important attachment figure when the birth mother is absent, and contribute to the overall emotional development of the child.

Another essential would be a low mattress and blanket or quilt placed on the floor instead of a cot, so that the child could move freely to a sleep position or move around the room. A long mirror mounted near the floor close to the mattress which the child could use to observe both him/herself and others around, would also be ideal. A sheepskin rug on which to place a child, either on the floor to enable freedom of movement or on the sleep mattress has also been shown to be a useful item and it was noted the rapid development of premature babies who are placed on such a comforting surface. In more recent years controversy over the use of a lambskin, its hygienic qualities and value has arisen. Many people advocate its use provided its hygiene is assured by having been treated before use. Another useful item in these earliest days is a toponcino, which is an almost oval padded item, supplied with a cover almost like a pillow slip. The child may be placed on the toponcino for play activities, or feeding, and can easily put the child on to a mattress without the child being disturbed.

From Montessori’s point of view, a “real” mobile such as a child being placed outside and watching the leaves moving on a tree are the best choice. She suggests placing

a child on a slightly inclined plane, such as a bouncing cradle, so that s/he can take in the whole of his surroundings, and points out the value of him observing real birds and flowers. Where, however, this cannot be achieved a mobile, such as the Stim mobile, is a useful addition. Initially it is fitted on the ceiling hanging down quite close to the baby, with shapes attached to it in black and white, which at this stage of the child's development can be clearly seen by him/her. As the child gets older more complex coloured shapes are added, and the mobile hung further away from the baby as visual skills improve. It is important to introduce mobiles sparingly to avoid over stimulating the child, as there is no substitute for human touch and voice.

Especially calming to the child in the first six months is a rocker or glider, which mimics the sensation of the baby being carried in the womb. The motion of rocking makes blood pressure fall and respiration slow. This physical act taps into a pleasure centre in the brain that produces endorphins, thus creating a therapeutic effect. The motion acts as a natural stimulant to the central nervous system. The value of lullabies and simple rhymes being sung to a child whilst being rocked cannot be over-estimated. Not only is it calming, but it also helps the child to absorb the basic sounds of his/her native language. As the child develops simple board books, especially those containing nursery rhymes, will also aid the child's language development.

As a child starts to prepare the reach out and grasp, a simple rattle or ring with bells can be placed into the baby's hand. Gradually the child will reach out for the item, and it will help the child to become aware of sounds but also cause and effect e.g. when I do a certain action something will happen. Suspended frames from which are hung rings and balls can follow on, which will aid visual tracing and reaching and grasping responses. Teething rings are vital as the milk teeth start to emerge and the baby takes everything to his mouth. Simple rings which can be placed in a refrigerator to cool them are ideal, but it is important to exclude vinyl rings which may contain phthalates which can be harmful to a child.

Other activities for children from approximately 6 months onwards until mobility is achieved is the Treasure Basket. This is a huge collection of everyday objects to be found in any home e.g. combs, dishes, fruit, spoons etc. stored in a basket, which can be selected by a non-mobile child to develop senses of touch, taste, sight, hearing and smell.

At this time the child is now entered a Second Crisis – that of weaning. A weaning table and chair may be moved into the Nido with a small low table, as the child is able to support him/herself. From about 3 months onwards the child would have been encouraged to take tiny spoonfuls of fruit juice, not to quench the thirst, but to introduce tastes other than milk and water. Now as the child becomes able to grasp

s/he is gradually encouraged to drink from a small straight sided cup, and eat dishes prepared from ground rice. Finger foods are offered as the child is able to grip.

Balls for grasping and rolling are useful at this stage as is a Jack in the Box. The child is gradually learning that even when he cannot see his mother or Assistant to Infancy, for example, she is still there. The Jack in the Box helps the child to understand that even when Jack is hidden, Jack is still there. Such a toy as a Jack in the Box and activities such as “Peep Bo” “Hide and Seek” help the child to understand what Piaget meant by “object permanence”. At this stage for example, if a ball is hidden under a cushion, whereas earlier in development the child’s reaction would be that ‘out of sight is out of mind’, now the child actively searches for the item, knowing that although s/he cannot see it it still exists.

Small hand held wooden wheeled toys may be introduced, along with single shape puzzles such as the large and small circles, triangle and square puzzles in baby and toddler range of Montessori material producers. In addition to these materials from the same catalogue where cubes or discs are placed on dowels on wooden stands and be used to aid recognition of solid shapes and develop hand eye co-ordination and fine motor control. The Imbucare Boxes also come into their own. A large ball tracker will help to develop visual tracking skills.

A bar to pull up on and cruise along becomes a valuable piece of equipment as the child starts to take his/her first steps, rather than the type of baby walkers that are used in many mainstream nurseries. It is as the child becomes mobile that s/he is ready to make the transition out of the ‘Nest’ and into the Infant Community, as having toddlers in the same environment as the very youngest babies, may compromise the youngest members safety. However, Montessori did not regard the child’s progression to walking as a safety issue, but as a huge step in development. For as the child begins to walk it is a progression that makes him/her differ from the animal world, and ushers along a new phase of development as a human being.



The Infant Community (from walking to 3 years of age)

During the early days in the Infant Community (from about 12 to 18 months), a small wooden baby-walker often filled with wooden bricks, is an ideal piece of equipment for children in this age group. Gradually from merely pushing the baby walker forwards, or pulling it from behind, the child will learn how to turn and manipulate it. The bricks inside, which are all of the same size, unlike the bricks of the Pink Tower that are introduced in the Children's House, will provide a developmentally appropriate activity in the months to come.

Other useful developmentally appropriate items at this stage include nesting boxes, and many Montessori baby and toddler materials such as the Imbucare box with a knitted ball, object permanence boxes with trays and drawers, putting shapes on a horizontal dowel, supinated wrist movement materials and the four shape box. Push along toys are also appropriate as the child becomes increasingly mobile. Farm animals which can be placed into groups of mummy, daddy and baby e.g. cow, bull and calf are a useful preparation for the grammar activities of the Phonic Farm in the Children's House, as at around 12 – 15 months s/he becomes particularly interested in the sounds that different farm animals make.

An invaluable piece of equipment as the child becomes increasingly mobile is a Mini Staircase, with a handrail to hold, and about three steps up, a platform and three steps down. At first the child may only take the three steps up to the platform, turn around and need assistance coming down. Gradually, however, he goes beyond the platform and comes down the other side.

It is important that the Infant Community has plenty of uncluttered space to allow for freedom of movement, with several child size toilets or potty chairs. Some authors recommend the use of cotton nappies and from 12 months onwards changing a child with the child in a standing position as they are able to maintain this. From an upright position the child is more able to understand the whole process. There is a Sensitive Period to toilet training between 12 and 18 months of age. As the child seems ready s/he is put into cotton pants so that s/he can realise what has happened when at first they make toileting mistakes, as many disposable nappies ensure that a child never feels wet or dirty.

A large low table with chairs for the children to enjoy snacks and lunch is ideal. Children at this stage generally enjoy a snack together rather than engaging in the Individual Snack routine of the Children's House. Small trays with high sides may be used to transport food and implements such as the small straight sided cups and plates to the table. Very low shelves in another area to house items already mentioned with which to work with a carpeted area nearby on which to sit is ideal. Another area which the child can freely access with mattresses (similar to those in

the Nido) and perhaps a little locker to contain the child's belongings is ideal. The child can therefore choose to sleep whenever they wish. An area leading directly into the garden which has large windows and safety glass doors, through which children can be observed from both staff inside and outside, is ideal. Places to plant, use ride on toys and play with sand and water, as the child progresses through the Infant Community are ideal.

Through the time spent in the Infant Community, the child is undergoing a period of sensitivity to language. The most vital 'piece of equipment' is a sensitive assistant to infancy who can stimulate the child's language development. A corner equipped with good quality, realistic books (rather than those full of fantasy at this stage) will help increase the child's vocabulary and language skills. However, it is the skill of the adult in the environment who can help develop the child's language, based on her understanding and training of the linguistic stages through which the child will pass.

An Infant Community may well incorporate the use of Heuristic (Discovery) Bags into the daily routine, which are activities introduced for once a child achieves mobility. Hung on hooks are large canvas bags each containing a variety of the same item e.g. one bag could contain cardboard rolls of very different dimensions, another might contain a variety of empty tins, and yet another wood off-cuts from a carpenter. The adult is essentially a facilitator to the child as s/he explores the possibilities of the items in the bags. Essential to the process is involving the children themselves in the clearing up, which should be unhurried with the children simply copying the adult who puts the items back into the correct bags.

As the child progresses to 18 months onwards simple wooden jigsaws as a preparation for those used in the Cultural area of the Children's House are ideal. As s/he becomes increasingly mobile activities similar to those in the Children's House are ideal, such as hanging out washing on a little stand with dolly pegs, mopping the floor, watering house and garden plants and picking flowers from the garden and arranging them in a vase. A hygiene stand with mirror and tissues for blowing the nose, learning to turn the pages of a book, and being shown how to wash hands and dry them with paper towels in the toilets, are also appropriate.

From 2 years onwards activities more in line with those that the child will meet in the Children's House are introduced such as cleaning windows, hanging outdoor clothes and coats on a simple peg, weeding, scrubbing a potato and washing fruit for snack and lunch, folding small cloths, rolling and unrolling placemats, laying the lunch table and emptying the Green Bin are introduced. Grace and Courtesy exercises such as saying "Thank You" are relevant, as are Baby and Toddler Dressing Frames with velcro and a zip, whisking, taking off footwear and polishing tables.

Towards the end of the child's time in the Infant Community, s/he undergoes the Third Developmental Crisis – known as the Crisis of Opposition. This generally occurs between 30 and 36 months of age and begins with the child saying “No, to almost everything that is proposed to them. Giving the child simple choices at this stage (not too many) e.g. would you like a biscuit or an apple? helps the child to feel independent and in control. This crisis marks a real step on the path to independence.

As the child becomes ready to enter the Children's House, s/he may spend part of the day there and part in the Infant Community, until a full transition can be made. Much has gone on in these first three years in the Nido and Infant Community, or perhaps in a Montessori home, for as Montessori herself points out, “By the age of 3 the child has laid down the foundation of his personality as a human being. The child who goes to school at three, is already a young man.” (M.Montessori: What You Should Know About Your Child, Oxford: Clio Press Ltd., 1989).

Guidelines to operate a Montessori school (age 3-12 years)

The aims and objectives of a Montessori school are based on the anthropology, the pedagogy and the didactic views of Dr. Maria Montessori (1870- 1952). Although all teachers have their own outlook and opinions of our world, they find consensus in the main issues of the Montessori philosophy. The aims and objectives of a Montessori school are set down in this document to inform parents and local authorities.

The core of the Montessori pedagogy and the didactic approach is the cosmic theory and practice, the notion that all non- living and living beings should be viewed in cohesion, each participating and inter-functioning within a system. In the school curriculum it will be described how these basic ideas are implemented in practice.

Montessori teachers are qualified to teach, not only by a state recognized general approved teaching certificate, but also by a Montessori diploma obtained after a Montessori course acknowledged by an international Montessori organization or by a local Montessori society.

The issues and procedures of the school are acknowledged by the authorities and respected by the parents.

Montessori believed and scientifically tried to prove that intrinsic, innate forces are directing the child in his physical and mental growth into adulthood and that the child's development is the result of the interaction between inner potentials within the organism and the environment.

The first two years of a child's life are considered to be an additional (psychic) embryonic phase, during which he is helpless, unable to act independently or to display any conscious reflections. Typical for this extended embryonic period is the absence of a closed system of instincts that short-circuits an animal to his biotope.

Therefore the human being is in principle free. Free to attach himself, as a dynamic link, to different cultures, wherever and whenever. Free to make choices and to exercise his will. Free to absorb the characteristics of his environment and to lay the fundamentals for his further life. Free to be in dialogue with his world but never be determined by it.

From this moment on his impressions of the world, his interpretations and his reflections are the result of the combined activity of his senses, movements and his mind. The language of his environment gives him the tools to anchor his newly obtained concepts. Montessori considered the human being to be an individual, a personality that cannot be divided in separate parts to study.

The characteristic for this personality is the pursuit of independence, the mastering of autonomy. The ultimate aim of education is to help the child to become an autonomous personality characterized by a self-responsible self-determination.

Different functions, marked as integral aspects of the person to be, can be interpreted as developmental fields. Although each field is characterized by a specific developmental progression, each field can only be studied with the integral context in mind, since they are all related in the individual person. In the works of Montessori developmental fields are described and placed in an educational perspective. She distinguishes sensorial, motor, volitional, cognitive, cultural, emotional, social, moral and creative domains. These fields support the decision making process of the personality.

By far the most important aim of education then should be: helping the child to do it himself.

Based on a deeply rooted trust in the child's potentials and the child's eagerness to learn, the Montessori teacher will render the necessary freedom to the child to experiment and discover facts and ways of ordering these facts by itself. Using developmental materials, the child will be able to discover ordering methods, such as classification, seriation, planning in bits of time, strategies to solve problems, flowcharts and algorithms.

Fulfilling his inner program of actions the child selects those environmental stimuli or incentives he needs. The intrinsic forces become manifest as a restless searching, as a longing for discoveries, as self-creativity, as a striving for independence and self-responsibility.

Montessori educators' main concern is to guarantee the child the freedom he needs for his explorations.

Movement is of vital importance to the child. Therefore spontaneous activity is encouraged in the Montessori school.

Learning by doing - especially using his hands-, the child incorporates (incarnates) his findings. By means of language he is anchoring his experiences by naming them (concept building). His body language allows him to express himself, giving form to his thoughts, ideas and feelings.

The child will act spontaneously when he is free to do so. This means: free to choose learning tools, free to determine when, where, how long and with whom to work with the equipment. There is however a clear restriction for all involved: the borderline of freedom is the freedom of others.

In other words: freedom, no licence! This way the child has to control himself, an inner self discipline is asked for. One is only free when freedom's horizons are discovered but also its limitations. This way freedom is both a condition for and a fruit of learning.

The teacher observes the child closely in order to approach the child properly with adequate educational means.

In a teacher's report the results of observation, reflection, evaluation, planning and follow-up actions will be described.

Montessori speaks about sensitive periods. A sensitive period is a span of time during which a child is more able to absorb or to comprehend specific experiences within an environment than ever before or after the time has passed. These periods are critical in the sense that without adequate environmental matching incentives the child will be hampered in his harmonious development. The educator should enable the child to find in his environment matching keys, which the child needs for his individual development.

Monitoring the child's progress in learning, the teacher may focus on two ways of systematic observation: assessment and evaluation of the results of learning, and assessment and evaluation of the process of learning.

Evaluating the results may be done by comparing the outcomes with fixed critical standards or to focus on the individual progression of the child in the framework of his own development. Another way of evaluating might be to find out more about the depth and the flexibility of the child's learning: the way the child demonstrates his ability to apply the just learned matter in a new learning context.

During the process of learning the teacher will observe the depth of attention of the child in action (polarization of attention), the frequency of the child's actions, the level of his inner self-discipline and the amount of social encounters with peers. In doing so, the teacher may decide to introduce the next material, or to skip this step and move into other more favourable direction. On the other hand the teacher might decide to let the child repeat the ongoing actions. By doing this, the child will strengthen his self-confidence, mastering the ordering strategy of the material. In case the child has problems to grasp the meaning of used material, the teacher may introduce materials on the same level, with an alternative approach, to come to the understanding that is asked for.

A Montessori class consists of three groups according to age. In a Montessori school one will find a 3-6 group, a 6-9 group and a 9-12 group.

Since mental age does not coincide with calendar age, it is understood that this way of heterogeneous grouping means that children will be acting in an organized environment for a period of three years on their own level according to their readiness and pace.

All children enter the class as newcomers, then will form a middle group and eventually become the older group.

Newcomers entering an existing group will be provided with a clear and meaningful exhibit of social and intellectual behaviour in the sense that they can easily adapt to

the new situation as a result of their inner striving for new experiences in the nearest zone of their development. In other words: they get the idea what to go for. This constellation makes it possible for the children to work together and help each other.

The teacher is not forced to have a rather large amount of the same learning devices, one for each child to be used at the same time. In this context the older children may become the informal leaders of the group and experience the aspects of that role.



Montessori teachers prepare an environment geared to the needs of each individual child.

Montessorians use the term ‘prepared environment’. This environment can be defined as a unit of a systematically organized set of learning materials which will function as keys to open and to order the world around. The Montessori classroom is adjusted to the child’s proportions and strength. There is ample room, preferably in the centre of the room, to spread rugs on the floor to work on. Some materials ask for a large area to work with.

The identity of Montessori materials can be seen as the totality of its characteristics: a built in control of error, the scientific aspects, the key function, the isolation of the quality, the internal limitations of quantity, and the position in a network of materials. A Montessori teacher has a thorough knowledge of the subject matter to be introduced and the proper use of (Montessori) developmental materials and their instructional techniques.

Montessori teachers know how to create a Montessori prepared environment for the age levels 3-6, 6-9 and 9-12.

In the Montessori 3-6 group one will find materials for practical life exercises, by means of which the child will not only practise and control his larger and finer muscles, but also make him aware of planning and organization in space and time. In the 6-9 group practical life exercises become a vital part in learning to share responsibility for (the care of) the environment.

By means of sensorial materials the child will be able to discover basic ways of ordering (classification; seriation) his impressions, orderings that are considered to be prerequisite before the child will be able to use the advanced materials for reading, writing, arithmetic, science and social studies. In order to detect classification, seriation, rules (rule learning), or the complexity of algorithms and problem solving, the child should use the equipment properly, that is in a specific way, in which the variables are controlled. The child, therefore, should not only stick to the facts but also control the proceedings. This asks for a special attitude: the attitude of a young explorer, the scientist to be.

The Montessori teacher is able to determine what the child needs and to guide the child into the nearest zone of his development.

Arranging and introducing educational means (Montessori materials and other teaching aids suited to the situation) asks for anticipation on educational events to come. In Montessori’s own words on the role of the teacher: ‘We must aim at awakening in the child the dormant mind of the man.’ Still another way to state it is: aiming at the optimal incongruity.

Arranging for educational materials and activities also means anticipation on events that cannot be predicted, but that occur spontaneously to the surprise of everybody involved. So flexibility is asked for. We may consider it to be a basic condition.

Formulating rules for social communication implies securing the rights and duties of each member of the group (including the teaching staff).

It means a shift from personal to environmental authority. Controlling the group setting in the Montessori school means creating a guarantee for an optimal social and intellectual encounter among the members of the group.

A well-trained and well-experienced Montessori teacher knows several techniques to handle the time factor and efficiency dealing with the group.

The teacher will see to it that each child will have a new lesson or get the necessary help or attention in time.

On the other hand it is impossible for the teacher to help the children too often, which will motivate children to help each other, to once more try to solve upcoming or given problems on their own. Children learn this way to look for adequate solutions, e.g. to do some other work in the meantime.

Sometimes a teacher may give a group lesson to children in a common field of interest or at the same level of an aspect of learning. A teacher may work with the group as a whole, introducing an interesting piece of subject matter. In this case the lesson will be short and aims at a wide range of self organized actions by the children at different levels.

Sometimes a teacher may decide to work with a class as a whole, e.g. to read a story, to talk about a topic, to sing together or to perform gym lessons. Several classes may work together at a project or meet each other to organize an exhibition.



Guidelines to operate a Montessori School (age 12-18 years)

„Erdkinder” – l'enfant à la terre (age 12-18) *Essential Criteria for a Montessori Secondary School*

The considerations presented below are the result of thorough literature analysis, thirty years of my own school practice as well as visiting and observing in other countries and the relevant exchange of ideas with my colleagues. Hopefully the focus of thinking is on young people, on a young person who has to function in the 21st century's cultures and nations. At the same time one should be aware of the fact that these are only contemplations, realizing how other nations and cultures will pose very different conditions and needs. Working with children and young people should not lead to giving or selling fixed recipes.

What can or should a pedagogical place of learning for young people look like?

The core of the realization of a Montessori school for adolescents is to create a school for experience in social life, taking into consideration the particular sensibilities of adolescents. Montessori speaks of the development of individual activity and its use in social life. Indisputable is the growing importance of social learning in this day and age. However, appropriate learning fields are still unavailable. The consequences to be drawn from the PISA study are a demand for individual and independent learning in a social framework, this more and more envisioned and required as all-day school.

In view of a self-directing youth society it is optimal when a school for experience in social life could offer a boarding school arrangement or hostels for staying overnight, so the adolescents could live there. The young people should be given an opportunity to find their own way. For this, and not only in Montessori's view, adults are often a hindrance, firstly and unfortunately the parents too. It all comes down to creating a *school as a place for experience*. Another aim is to provide a school for all children and young people, doing justice to the individual abilities and talents of the youth growing into adulthood. In this way well below 20% of each age group cohort will drop out before reaching the final level, as is the case now. A thing no educational politician mentions too often.

Schools that are *true sites of learning* for young people should stop thinking about their students in terms of from the neck up only, but to perceive them as *whole personalities*. Therefore the number of students in such sites of learning will have to be limited, in order to facilitate human interactions. This means for countries with a high population density e.g. Germany, the number of students could go up to 500

young people per school. This way the diversity of programs could be maintained and excessive costs avoided. Countries with lower population have the chance to work with smaller groups of students. Not without reason Montessori advocates the location of such a school to be in the countryside: the students are given completely different chances for a really free development, thanks to the spacious environment of the school. Montessori expressed her opinion about architecture (spacious, human friendly, variable, transparent). This means that the school environment provides a physical and psychological openness. The material and aesthetic design of a school is extremely important, because this design expresses the basic understanding of education.

Apart from the *studies*, mentioned by Montessori in her *Erdkinderplan (l'enfant à la terre)* that are critical of the traditional school, there are those that *make room for practical and social work*. The grave reproach Montessori makes of the secondary schools is their otherworldliness or their insufficient life orientation. Saying this, she does not only refer to subject matter but also to the methods of teaching, both without any relation to real life: “*Scholastic machinery is as estranged from social life as if this and all its problems were outside its compass. The world of education is like an island where people, cut off from the world, are prepared for life by exclusion from it.*” (Maria Montessori 1949) And in her extract about the ‘Erdkind’ she says the following: “*The general decadence of the schools noted in our day does not come from a lessening of the instruction given to the students but from a lack of concordance between the organization of the school and today’s needs. The schools have remained below the level of civilization attained on the outside.*” (Maria Montessori 1948)

These quotations are quite old, but their actuality is alarming, alarming because they make clear, once more, how poor the effects of educational reforms are. From these quotations one can deduce very clear demands or anthropological needs for the pedagogical place of learning for young people:

- a. *Life orientation*
- b. *Analysis of social conditions young people face when are growing up today*
- c. *Description of the impact of these conditions on children and young people*
- d. *Explanation of their actual developmental pedagogical needs*
- e. *Realizing of this learning place according to the specified factors.*

However one thing is clear, that this cannot lead to one model for a Montessori secondary school, because current living conditions are already quite different within even one country, let alone in various countries in other parts of the world. Schools should take care to hold on to their free working-conditions agreed upon with the local authorities, so that one can flexibly react to the current needs of the students. We must take upon ourselves permanent educational reform and not reject it as a something negative. The order in the schools demanded by some politicians leads to their further stagnation. However, the children and young people could very well be engaged in these reforms, because it concerns their own educational institutions.

In such a permanent reform Montessori's pedagogical principles are obviously to be considered e.g. *the principles of individualization, of equivalence, of continuity, of learning autonomy, of preparation, of choice of time, of choice of place of learning.* The laying down of principles/guidelines prevents arbitrariness in the process. Therefore even non-professionals are



able to explicitly identify a Montessori secondary school as a school for experience in social life. Apart from the above mentioned principles, consideration should be given to Montessori's *statements on anthropology: the orientation towards sensitivities of juvenile age, the alternating of study and practical activity, the development of a prepared environment in a manner suitable for adolescents etc.* It must be said quite clearly that a Montessori secondary school is something completely different from an elementary school, because the age difference of young people is of great weightiness: "*Since there is a radical change in the person [of a child, editor], there must be a radical change in his education. [...] One must be never treat adolescents as children: ...*" (Maria Montessori 1948). To this day nothing has changed.

Montessori has been right in her description of adolescence as well as in the aforementioned principles. This we can learn from changes in our school and education system as discussed that time, regardless whether deduced from brain research or a supposedly new theory then called constructivism. It is a pity and again and again mankind fails to learn from his history, even if only from the history of pedagogy where reforming educators developed brilliant ideas for the secondary school at the beginning of the 20th century.

In order to achieve success in education, learning and formation (Bildung), a school must be more than just a place of knowledge transfer. With learning for life one needs an all-encompassing context, manifold experiences, relations and ways of interacting. This means there are a lot of other activities, rituals and offerings in such a secondary school. So called studies (teaching) come forth of the experience of young people gained in other fields, therefore the school is and must be an environment for living for students. Entirely in line with Montessori's philosophy, living will be learned, social responsibility and roles experienced as well as emotional, artistic-esthetical and cognitive learning, while the sensitivity of adolescents is taken in consideration. This way a further condition for the secondary school is formulated: schools should be designed as a polis (Peter Petersen spoke of a *Lebensgemeinschaftsschule* [life community school]). It is a well organized community in which young people learn democracy and its laws just by living together. We ourselves are the aim of education and the most difficult test for our education is the way we live as citizens in our polis. This citizen achieves a high level of individuality and engagement living in such a community. Therefore all education is a political education. This applies to the place of learning too.

What is the essential content of work plans and study plans in the Land Children Plan of Maria Montessori?

Nowadays young people will only embrace the content and the courses of a secondary school, if these *substantiate questions of meaning*. It is only possible to find a satisfactory answer following the road Montessori charted: on the one hand examining the needs of adolescents and on the other hand the demands of the surrounding culture. Partially both areas are covered. Montessori's curriculum for the secondary school is relatively survey-able, but rather complex in detail:

- *Practical activities*
- *Social activities/services*
- *School studies and general framework.*

The above mentioned three components should be held onto and will be summarized as follows:

Practical activities

an essential part of Montessori's observations cover the need of the adolescent to *achieve economic self-sufficiency*. Basically she is thinking of three types of projects to be run by young people independently: *a farmstead, a shop and a guest-house*, these being typical human ways of life, in which many social and cognitive competences are asked for. On a slightly romanticized green wave this has led to the assumption that first of all a farmstead can be understood as a prepared environment for young people, without bearing in mind that this is not typical in Germany any more, for the actual part of the peasantry is lower than 2% of the German population. Therefore we should beware of such a one-sided interpretation of 'Erdkinder'.

This is certainly not only true for the farmstead as a typical way of life in Germany. In foreign countries the situation may be quite different, e.g. in the USA, Australia or New Zealand. Montessori, however, attaches particular importance to the economic self-sufficiency of young people. This should be facilitated to enable such self-sufficiency. This is corroborated by the results of recent research on youth: it is extremely important for young people to earn their own money. In any case it is possible to reach this goal by working in a shop or serving guests. For secondary schools it will be relatively easy to offer such a prepared environment.

Social activities

This term describes an important field of personality development, because man is (from an anthropological point of view) undoubtedly a social being, whose existence is characterized by living in various groups. Nowadays social work and social services, once more are taking on a completely new significance, because isolationistic trends are the main feature of our present-day social development (childhood with a single parent, the 1.3 child family, decrease of honorary engagements, volunteer work in clubs etc.). Children and young people have anyway more difficulties in adjusting to social frames. On the one hand, it is necessary that the schools provide

a framework for acquiring ways of social behavior, but on the other hand, also to give opportunities for actively carrying out social services. For the awareness of social reality can only be achieved through participation in social life and social work. In reality this means the integration of the social activities of young people, firstly in school and community (e.g. boarding school), secondly in the opportunities locally given (technical aid organization, fire brigade, work with immigrant children, reading in primary schools, the caring of the appearance of the town, caring for older people, supporting social organizations, churches etc.). Young people experience the importance of their work, they get direct feedback and through it the strengthening of their own self-esteem and independence.

School studies and general framework

According to Montessori the development of the entire personality means: not only to pay great attention to the intellectual development, but also to the moral and artistic education. This will succeed in individual cases, when the adolescent is given access to opportunities for personal expression (music, rhetoric, visual art works), when the building of the personality through moral education, math and language finds support and when moreover the adolescent succeeds in establishing a relationship with contemporary culture through education (natural sciences, technology, social sciences and history). This way Montessori more or less created a core curriculum for the whole development of a young person. However, instead of this, nowadays one hears mostly mentioned the substantial and formal competences that are to be acquired.

At the moment the discussion about the educational contents is moving from specific contents towards more on an emphasis on the development of competences. Some interesting statements are made already by Dr. Montessori 1948: „ *It is necessary then, to prepare the human personality for unforeseen eventualities and not only to keep in sight the conditions to be foreseen by logic alone. We must develop the possibility of supple and live adaptation without rigid specialization. [...] The faculty of adaptation is essential today. Because if progress continues to open new careers, it also continues to eliminate or to revolutionize traditional employments.*”

In the year 1996, the German Ministry for Education, Research and Technology issued the so called Delphi Study. About 1000 experts indicated the developments anticipated for the education system for two next decades. Environment, globalization, mankind, technology and social order have been emphasized as the areas of knowledge of particular importance. It becomes clear in this study that the issue is dealing with the complexity dilemma but also with ignorance and probabilities.

The following ranking of competences has been listed for the field of school education in the aforementioned study for the year 2020:

- a. competence of learning techniques and methods,*
- b. psycho-social human competence,*
- c. foreign languages competence,*
- d. media competence,*
- e. intercultural competence,*
- f. special subjects competence and*
- g. other competences.*



It is quite clear that the transfer of basic knowledge in school has only a subservient function. At the moment the Delphi Study is subject to updating and the results awaited with high expectations.

In view of Montessori's demand for a special position for the subject history, interesting implementations can be found in other contributions. So, the historical competence will elicit the human ability to remember and to envision Utopias. Just now in the world of accelerated technological development, fast devaluation and revaluation of things, dealing with time structures and with time in many aspects, is another indispensably required competence. This competence relates to time management in the context of the increase of free time and life time. The historical competence consists of the knowledge of history, of the formation of a society, its social structures, its political laws of development and one's own life history. The ability to remember is a prerequisite for the embracing of Utopia.

For a Montessori secondary school requirements for the creation of a new school, could and should be the consideration of the developmental- psychological situation of the young people, as well as the researching and laying down of the basic competences as described above. This includes the introduction of independent learning which is a specific feature of all Montessori institutions, as the principal task of contemporary schools. There is no doubt that the development of core curricula for the secondary school, as currently is the case for the state school system, is a step in the right direction. Learning as a self-activated process will be successful only if this learning is on the one hand useful but also highly significant for the learning person. Attention is then the natural effect. On the other hand, self-evaluation should be possible so that the dignity of young people is not violated and respect is principally maintained.

What principal qualification must be expected in adults who work with adolescents in accordance with 'Erdkinder'?

In order to achieve as wide acceptance in the population as possible and to make it possible to implement the Montessori's pedagogy as the pedagogy for all children, it will remain absolutely essential that the teachers are graduates from officially recognized colleges and universities. The secondary schools deliver

as a rule the highest number of end qualifications (diplomas) to be achieved in a society. Therefore the professional competence of adults employed there should be impeccable. Nowadays there should not be one teacher for as many subject possible areas any more. Specialists are required who will support the adolescents in a highly professional manner. This also means that an adult is accepted by the young people, because they detest nothing as much as dilettantism.

Moreover additional qualifications are in any case important. Facilitating independent lifelong learning requires methods competence on the part of the adult. Basic pedagogical and developmental-psychological knowledge of adolescence as well as of brain and thinking development is absolutely necessary for this age level. In the same way the principle of freedom and independence remains unchanged. It is all about of an age-specific match between guidance and support, to enable the furthering of the extension of the pedagogical relation understood as a support for the enhancement of the personality, tolerance for the seemingly provocative behavior, setting boundaries and rules, and never treating a young person like a child. What did Montessori (1948) say about this? „*Respect for young people is essential. One must never treat adolescents as children. They have passed that stage. [...] The young must be left with sufficient liberty to act according to individual initiative.*” In this context, Montessori also speaks about the necessary familiarization of the adolescent with boundaries and rules, which prevail for the institution as a whole. Certainly not an easy task for the adults involved.

It is therefore clear that although the highest importance is attached to the *personality* of a teacher, whose development is in fact also a self-activated process. The presentation of subject contents is only one side of the coin. The other side consists of the development of the teacher's role in forms of independent and self-determined work. On the one hand this role encompasses a preparatory function and on the other in a moderating and assisting function. Owing to the fact that a teacher-educator in every respect presents the adult model, long lasting presence is expected. On this Montessori says that the teachers should have the possibility of living in the school itself, taking upon themselves a part of the chores and participating in the life of the house. The young teachers -men and women- will also come from outside to teach. They must of course, be qualified to teach in a secondary school. But this does not mean that they will be free teaching by their own methods. On the contrary, they must adopt the methods of the institution in order for their collaboration to be effective. ... On the other hand, they ought not to be present in too great a number: the minimum capable of teaching the material according to the requirements arising from the method of the school.

From these quotations it is clear that obviously an additional training is necessary, if the teacher wants to instigate independent forms of work without just leaving the students alone. The coherence of theory and practice should be understood, otherwise the independent forms of work become a fixed method which will then turn out to be convenient for the teacher. Therefore, it should be mentioned again that the teacher must have the necessary knowledge of anthropology and developmental

psychology of the child and youth as the basis for meaningful methodical didactic decisions. Principally the command of several methods will be expected, for independent learning will not be manifest only in free work. The *skill in observation* is the core competence of a teacher and forms the basis for providing a prepared environment adjusted to the student. Because the principle of independent activity demands an environment with a pre-ordering advisory function. Therefore it is necessary to gain the ability of proper intervention, of control of error as well as expertise and professional competence that increases with the age of the students. The teachers' everyday working life consist of lessons but also moderation. Since individualized learning leads to very diverse levels of learning in the individual students, the teacher should keep track of the learning and performance levels of each student. This however results in intensive bookkeeping also on the teacher's part. The more independent the student's work, the more precisely the monitoring by the teacher must be, not in the form of control, but as the preparation of a network that will catch the young adult in case of an emergency, should he lose his way. This emphasizes the importance of the fundamental attitude of the teacher, which consists of an educational relationship with the young person, characterized by an attitude of love, patience and respect. In order to improve the quality of his work it is necessary to increase the communicating abilities and to extend an inner school teachers' communication network. The cooperation in teams is necessary as well as mutual sitting in on classes and regular conferences. This means the *de-privatization of teaching activity*. Not the closed door of a class room and silence are the features of an open learning atmosphere but an open door inviting visitors to a place where animated and active people are busy.

A further consequence of such type of learning asks for the development of alternative forms of performance rating. The current ways of dealing with the young adults where procedures and social progressing are concerned must be coordinated, the famous teacher's freedom of methods does not exist, most of all this often means pedagogical arbitrariness. In the meantime good training courses are on offer for teachers-educators in secondary schools. (In any case it is correct to separate the training courses for ages 12-18 years from other Montessori training courses, to avoid problems associated with time and content. Undoubtedly it makes sense to agree on minimal standards and end levels for these training courses, so that potential participants can get an orientation.)

Without the construction of solid educational relationships, a *professional relationship competency*, all subsequent acts of the educator-teacher will be meaningless for adolescents, because the improvement demand of integrity of the single individual should be met by the adult with invariable moral and ethical demands on themselves. Authenticity and the forming of personal authority are to be focused upon when both parties want to have sensible working and development conditions (warmly to be recommended in this context are the studies of Jesper Juul, who clearly states that children and adolescents develop optimally when they are together with adults, who are ready and able to take over the leadership, i.e. the ability to plan and to continue

pedagogical processes leading to desired objectives without harming the personal integrity of the children and adolescents and the ability to watch over the process with personal authority. The leadership by the adults consists of the following components: authenticity, interest, appreciation, involvement, decision and conflict. The adolescents have the right to be themselves, they also have the right not to be changed by adults, just because they are adults. The responsibility of adolescents is developed in an optimal manner when they are together with adults who are practicing responsibility instead of preaching it. Furthermore the peer group obviously plays an important part. When youth becomes its own identity group, caused by their complete withdrawal from the adults, a phenomenon which can unfortunately frequently be observed nowadays, this leads to completely different problems, that cannot be dealt with in this article.

How can the essential elements of the ‘Erdkinder’ such personal and economic self-sufficiency, decision making competence and learning in a peers community be incorporated?

The answer to the question presented above is closely connected with the statements in paragraph 2, because they relate to the contents and organization of a secondary school. There are two central aspects of the live in community: *the importance of economic self-sufficiency and the meaning of social service*. Contemporary youth research focuses on both aspects.

The need of the adolescent for economic self-sufficiency through self-responsible work is indisputable. Recent studies indicate that more than one third of all students take their jobs in order to earn money for their expensive hobbies and or to become independent from their parents. Simultaneously there is social interest in introducing adolescents into the world of economy. For some time now there are initiatives from the economy encouraging students to establish and run their own mini-enterprises and supporting them in this effort. That type of mini-enterprises can be realized without much trouble in each secondary school: organization of events, production of post and greeting cards, sale of T-shirts, production of toys or jewelry, IT services, caretaker services, baby-sitting service, guided regional tours, visit cards, youth magazines, music cd's, guided city walks, customer service, party service etc. It is necessary to explain the financial framework, the paperwork concerning taxes, book keeping etc. At the moment about 10.000 mini-enterprises are run by about 120.000 students in Europe; they are even part of networks and compete with others. Certainly the situation must be taken seriously i.e. the young people should be given the opportunity to earn money. It is clear that this comes close to Montessori's idea of a shop and a guesthouse.

The activity in mini-enterprises not only stimulates entrepreneurial thinking and acting in direct relation to the economical reality but also gives an orientation for a future professional life, an aspect not to be underestimated. The young entrepreneurs

mention as their most important experience the opportunity to work in a team, to communicate with others, to take the initiative, to resolve problems on their own, to take over responsibility, to analyze constructively different expectations and viewpoints, to get to know their own strengths and weaknesses, to obtain an insight into the processes and organization of an enterprise as well as into the market economy and its principles. Such self-responsible activity should be more and more expanded from the age of 12/13 on, so that the young people will be given the experience of the usefulness of their activity. It is possible to complete those opportunities with apprenticeships in the companies situated in the vicinity of their school. An optimal solution is to have one's own business on the school premises, perhaps even enabling dual qualifications: leaving school with a diploma for vocational training and one for a general end qualification. Such offers are also available for the same reason in the Waldorf schools and in the schools working in the framework of the 'Landerziehungsheimbewegung' (cabinetmaking, metal work).

The other idea in the reform pedagogy, to learn the social life in action, to implement a school of experience in social life, as Montessori advocated, can be trained through the takeover of social roles in situations of responsibility. Obviously this idea is also partially covered by the economic activities described above. However, the essence of economical situations is not always just earning money but also dealing with people. Furthermore one can think of tasks in social fields that have already proved themselves: homes for the elderly and the disabled, hospitals, fire brigades, technical auxiliary services, lifeguards, Amnesty International, international work camps etc. The value of such experiences should not be underestimated in the process of personality building, because it is responds to the needs of a young person to act in a responsible way, to become engaged and to change the world by the elimination of injustice. The task of a secondary school is not only just to consider the competence in studying and working but also to lead to socially responsible behavior and to create the fields for practice. In the sense of a holistic concept of human development, the focus is on the stimulation of social competence. This competence can lead to the readiness to lower one's own aspirations for the benefit of the weaker, to the development of a sensibility for the impediment of physical, psychological and social freedom and to enforce the intention to improve the quality of human life in our society. This leads us again to the educational concept formulated by Hartmut von Hentig and school democracy, because obviously the young people acting as described above, will have a great impact on their school life. This way education encompasses the process of self-development through experience, understanding and training, but also through taking on responsibility in a social community, the development of people who trust themselves to evaluate and to change the social and political circumstances. The young person must be given the leeway to act in the sense described above.

However, the importance of *project learning* and *simulation game* is not to be underestimated. Both strategies make possible many of the experiences described above in a safe situation. *Project learning* also encompasses learning from real courses of actions. The aim was and is to act in a purposeful and wholehearted manner in a social environment. Project work makes it possible to act in the present and in the future, to define independent project formulations and solutions. Project work is oriented at active learning, as a rule planned together, supported and accounted for by the group interest, its form is often profession and/or society oriented. Project work makes a long term contribution to the humanization and democratization of the school and the society. Therefore its importance must not be ignored.

The *simulation games* are the favorite form of work in the adult education. Their relatively complex structures originating in reality, are reduced to their essential elements. However, the reality should not be falsified. Characteristic for the simulation game is a relatively open political or economical problem situation with several groups of participants with different opinions and interests. The participants get through the simulation game with the possibility to carry out acts in a playful way. Therefore the game contains elements of role playing and case study, however it experiences a confinement in the social and/or political and scientific work field from computer simulated planning processes. The game usually goes on for several days.

The simulation games are characterized by role-playing in groups, social units which come to decisions in a simulated serious situation on a pending issue. Then the various aspects and social assessments of a problem are worked out and presented by various groups of interest. In the forefront are independence and the ability to make decisions, the principal requirements to be met by the young people. Experiences associated with simulation games show that this is a form of learning that is easily accessible for youth and their interests, because said learning and experiences are met affectively and therefore is a very impregnating process. From the point of view of the school, it is also a case of combining knowledge of the subject matter with the ability to use arguments and to adjust one's position if necessary; it is therefore about performance of transfer. Basic competences are indispensable in a democratic society, for instance: communication, cooperation in team work, takeover of responsibility, engagement, negotiation skills as well as a capacity for strategy and finding consensus. In addition, the didactic reduction of a topic in order to create the simulation game leads to an increased imprinting of professional knowledge on the side of the students. This approach is particularly suitable for young people ages 16-18, but it can be also used for young people from age 14.

Final remarks

The young people are to be left in their natural habitat. They need a large public place that gives them room for their own definitions of reality. Studies on youth and violence demonstrate the necessity of protected work places for young individuals without confrontation with sanctioning adults. The experience of dignity, respect and acceptance in a social context cannot be estimated highly enough for the development of self awareness. Such protective frameworks can be provided by a secondary school in the form of all day school or boarding school, because in everyday situations young people are more and more driven to the edge, to a large extent they are even perceived as a threat, which only increases the potential for conflict.

Montessori secondary schools can be pioneers. They can initiate important reform movements for secondary education as cried for by the large number of young people leaving their schools without secondary school qualifications. The challenge of Montessori to be a school of experience in social life for youth has been substantiated with sufficient evidence from youth research results. Such a school is maintained as a central place of learning, today more than ever. The school offers the basic qualifications for vocational education as well as orientation in the society and establishes a framework for citizens acting in a responsible manner in a society, it makes possible creating the experience fields for young people within the school, independent from adults. Therefore the young people may demonstrate their abilities, obtain social approval with direct impact on their self-esteem. The Montessori pedagogues know how to transform the secondary schools and shall have to do so. However these schools could sharpen their profile much more than they are doing now, because the standards to be met now exist, but eventually their fulfillment depends on the will of people working in those institutions.



Montessori Training Courses in Europe

All over the world we find Montessori education for children from 0 – 18 years. Teachers in the Montessori children houses and Montessori schools (elementary and secondary) need a special training in Montessori Education. Most countries have their own courses. There are international courses organized by private organizations. Other courses are organized and accredited by local Montessori associations. They have their own guidelines. In some countries in Europe we find training courses for Montessori education on the level of universities and colleges. They can be offered as a part of the curriculum of the University, or as a minor or a short training. In Germany it is possible to follow a Montessori course on the master level.

Most of the courses are open for parents and teachers (mixed groups). Sometimes courses are organized on special levels. For example courses for teachers in elementary or secondary schools. There are also special courses for parents.

The content of the courses is mostly based on the mixed age's groups as we know them in Montessori education. So we find courses for the ages 0-3, 3-6, 6-9, 9-12 and 12-18 (Secondary Education). But it is possible that the training institute makes a different mix in ages, because of their national education system.

The duration of the Montessori courses is different in most countries. We find courses taking from 10 to 100 hours and more for each age group. Some courses include practical experience (apprenticeships, school visits). A course for parents is given to inform them about Montessori at home and the way of working at school. The students have to develop their basic Montessori skills. They have to master the Montessori theory and the use of the learning materials.



Montessori Europe is not organizing courses in Montessori education. It is a platform for everybody with interest in Montessori Education. Every year, during the congress, Montessori Europe organizes an ‘Ongoing Development Group’ meeting for teacher trainers. There they can discuss the guidelines for courses in Montessori education (content and duration). Montessori Europe doesn’t organize accreditation for Montessori schools, neither for Montessori courses. It would be interesting to discuss the following list as a start off for the assessment of the Montessori Europe guidelines for Montessori courses.

General:

- Dr. Maria Montessori; her theory and her life
- The Montessori teacher / the role of the teacher
- The prepared environment
- Observation
- The Montessori materials
- The teacher-made materials

Theory:

- Montessori's anthropology, pedagogy and didactics
- Research
- The child
- The development of the child
- The conquest of independence in relation to responsibility
- The sensitive periods
- Spontaneous activity
- The (absorbed) mind
- Normalization
- Obedience / Inner discipline
- Imagination
- Periods of development
- Motor skills
- Sensory development
- Development of language
- Cognitive development
- Transformation to adult
- Development of the child in relation to school systems
- Creative development
- Moral development
- Social development
- Cosmic education
- Peace education
- Freedom
- Independence
- Educational practice
- Attitude of the teacher
- Skills of the teacher
- Educational partnership (teachers, parents)
- Organizational conditions (materials, mixed age groups etc.)
- Prepared environment

Practice

The specific Montessori lessons:

- Individual lesson/presentation
- Group lesson
- General lesson
- Observation
- Management of the group
- Registration of the development of the child (child monitoring system)



The People

People to People

From the very beginning was, as described above, the idea of **the people**. This was coming from several European countries and it was about building a united European Montessori platform that is implicitly connected to **the people of Europe**, who should build, maintain and develop a network for sharing, creating and finally benefitting. “People to people” is an inherited idea of Montessori Europe.

The role of **the people** in the executive committee was and still is, among others, to create a favourable “prepared” environment for members to interact.

The Members

Montessori Europe is innovative, dynamic and applies to the „Montessori Open Policy of Access, Exchange and Innovation“ on all its levels. New developments are welcome along with more established and traditional ones.

The information platform serves Montessori Europe members, different cooperating institutions, organisations, schools, universities, educational institutions and any other organisation sharing the MONTESSORI EUROPE interests. Innovative ideas and projects can be shared, improved and further developed. The innovative potential is enormous and saves resources. Discussions and sharing of information within as well as outside of MONTESSORI EUROPE is communication which crosses geographical and cultural distance.

Montessori Europe members are private individuals as single members, kindergartens and schools, training institutes, regional or national associations.

The Statutes of Montessori Europe in article “3.Membership” reads as follows:

“Anyone who is interested in the achievement of the Association’s objectives can become a member. Members on the basis of these statutes are defined as single members, schools, institutions, organisations, establishments and Associations as well as all others interested parties who relate to and support the objectives of the Association and the content of the preamble of these statutes.

Joining the Association occurs by decision of the Executive Committee upon written application of the prospective member.

Members are obliged to promote the Association’s objectives. Membership requires the payment of the yearly membership fee. A Fee Schedule that is approved by the General Meeting which regulates the particulars.

Membership ends by means of:

- a. death
- b. resignation, which can occur at any time. There is no right to a refund of paid-in membership fees. Those who do not pay fees in spite of a reminder are no longer to be regarded as members.
- c. formal expulsion, which can occur by decision of the General Meeting, after
- d. prior hearing of the member, if the member transgresses the statutory regulations of the Association.
- e. Ignores decisions of the General Meeting or disregards the goals and objectives of the Association.

Upon leaving the Association a member has no claim on the Association's assets of any part thereof.”

Membership duration is 12 months after membership fee payment and is automatically renewed for another 12 months unless written cancellation is received latest 3 months before the end of 12 months running membership period. Detailed information are to be found at <https://www.montessori-europe.com/membership-conditions>.

Montessori Europe provides to its institutional members (not available to individual members) a remarkable set of services, which is constantly extending.

Recent (2014) members:

- are automatically listed in worldwide member list at <https://www.montessori-europe.com/competence-network-members-worldwide>
- may use Montessori Europe web site to showcase their own presentation and spread knowledge about themselves by placing on the Montessori Europe website a link to the member's own home website
- can advertise job vacancies on the Montessori Europe Homepage at <https://www.montessori-europe.com/job-advertisement>
- can advertise their interesting events at <https://www.montessori-europe.com/event-calendar>
- who are training centers may place information about their training courses at <https://www.montessori-europe.com/training-courses>
- may publish reports or articles in Montessori Europe eNewsletter published 4 times a year (March, June, September, December)
- may exhibit and/or deliver a live presentation free of charge at the NOCME “Meeting point” during Montessori Europe Congresses
- are eligible to congress fee discount at yearly Montessori Europe Congress

Since Montessori Europe is an innovative and dynamic organization, all communication, including membership application is done via the internet. To find out how to become a Montessori Europe Member there are instructions published at <https://www.montessori-europe.com/membership-registration>.



The Executive Committee continually seeks to receive feedback from the members to tailor the life of Montessori Europe to their needs. The Feedback form is a permanent part of the yearly congress materials portfolio. Members feedback is evaluated and discussed during the spring meeting of the Executive Committee and constructive proposals are implemented.

It is recently estimated that Montessori Europe covers and represents directly, (as members), or indirectly (as members of a national or other organization which is a Montessori Europe member) around 20.000 European teachers, parents, trainers and other professions. Direct membership is stabilized at around 250-300 members (slightly fluctuating between years).

Montessori Europe has members from the following countries:

Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Belgium, Brasil, Bulgaria, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxemburg, Mongolia, Netherlands, North Cyprus, Norway, , Poland, Portugal, , Serbia, Singapur, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UK, Ukraine, USA.

The Partners

Natural partners of Montessori Europe are universities, educational institutions, state organisations, European entities, communities and any other groups interested in expanding and publishing Montessori Europe's ideals to work for the benefit of children and young people.

Market partners are producers of Montessori materials, companies, sponsors, donators and institutions, whose image, goal, business approach and vision identifies with the aims of Montessori Europe.

During the 14 years of its existence awareness spread about Montessori Europe and its work. From this we acquired contact with relevant groups and individuals around the globe.

Beside the continent of Europe, Montessori Europe is connected to Africa, Asia, Australia and the North and South Americas.



The Future

The Influence

The Importance of Research and Further Development

It is necessary to continue researching scientifically Dr. Montessori's theories and objectives and develop them. The relevance of Montessori education in the light of new scientific findings as well as a part of teacher training at universities is needed to be constantly discussed.

Many people express doubts about the scientific basis of Montessori techniques, and often it is accepted as early childhood teaching and nothing more. It is not recognised that in a lot of countries Montessori education is a part of primary and increasingly secondary schooling. University faculties and a multitude of ministries in different countries ignore that fact, unfortunately.

It is our task to remind everyone of the scientific basis of the method. The problem with most existing research is the relatively small number of students involved. Our vision is that students of European universities should be asked to take part in large-scale research, so that the results obtained are more accurate. We would like to ask the European Commission if it is possible to get a grant for such a project.

Awareness about Montessori pedagogy

There is not enough public and political awareness of Montessori pedagogy. Very often there is the problem that Montessori and Waldorf education are confused because the history of both began at around the same time. There is a lot of misunderstanding in terms of public and political awareness. The question is whether a holistic approach to education based on development and observation should be made more mainstream. Most educational legislation works against this, opting instead for a more cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all approach, which is counter to Montessori education entirely. Many controversies are based on incorrect information. A lot of politicians think it is only for very small children or handicapped children, but Montessori wrote about an education up to university level. Or the fact that it is not a factory model of education. Moreover the things that Montessori education fosters (such as love of learning, social skills, creativity and peace) are not readily measurable by testing methods employed by the government. It is difficult to speak to politicians about our aims, but the Montessori Europe congresses are one good way to spread the word.

Common Doubts and Misconceptions, How to Address Them

Montessorians have to realise that they must do more than teach their own groups in their own classrooms. We have to be more political, discussing of our theories and methods with the public and working together with mass media to be part of the reality of our society. It is necessary to document what we do and show whether or not it is effective; evaluation is very important.

There are many problems that need to be surmounted. Different groups and associations within the movement are struggling against each other rather than working together, which is not sustainable.

It is ambition of Montessori Europe to create an accommodative and collaborative environment, where all stakeholders will feel themselves in safety and strengthened, mutually supported in their efforts influencing against government changes regarding school education and Montessori qualifications. We all have to be open, be present in the mass media, develop guidelines, and be transparent in our work under international standards.

To Execute an Influence

Worth of spreading and supporting

In this regards it is necessary to turn back to the roots of Montessori education and Montessori Europe.: *“Power to the Child! Children’s Rights in Our World!”* - was the title of 2005 Montessori Europe Congress in Gothenburg, because this is the main theme of our organization. Montessori organizations all over the world are interested in enforcing children’s rights. It is also a main point in the statutes of Montessori Europe. It is important to fight for children’s rights because with every newborn child mankind has another chance to start again, to start everything from afresh, from the beginning on. Another thought about the future: Each politician is at first a child and only then politician. If we accept children’s rights from their first day of their life, if we live together with children and the youth in respect, patience and love, then we will have normal and intact politicians and a chance to change our societies, to live together in peace one day.

It is in favour of all “Montessori-positive” people around Europe and the world to spread the anthropological, pedagogical and didactical ideas of Dr. Maria Montessori, support the development of new Montessori schools, guide the Montessori teacher training and render information to parents, youth, politicians and of course parents.



Montessori Europe as an International Organization

From the very beginning Dr. Montessori's acting was very international. The same as it is with Montessori Europe. But there is still long way to go.

The Executive Committee in cooperation with its advisory board National Organizations Council of Montessori Europe (NOCME) should collect information and map out the pedagogical uncharted areas in Europe to establish new connections and extend members coverage.

Despite of the fact, that Montessori pedagogy is developing for more than a century there are significant ups and downs in its presence in respective countries, mainly because of political and ideological reasons (fascism, communism in Europe). MONTESSORI EUROPE is willing to accompany national and local developments and support the foundation of Montessori institutions and the change of traditional schools to schools oriented to Montessori principles.

The support that MONTESSORI EUROPE offers is mainly through good practise examples and other means of assistance:

- making connections and networking for training the educational staff in organizational and strategic issues (professional training is provided by national or international training institutes)
- recommending experts from other countries with relevant experiences for information events (lectures, seminars...) for parents, youth organisations, politicians and civil servants responsible for schools. This support is of extreme importance in the case of a new Montessori establishment being planned in a relatively "untouched" environment. The sooner before officially establishing a school that this support is provided the higher is the chance of acceptance by local authorities.

Montessori Europe is working in wide cooperation with many international organizations fighting for freedom and humanity in education either by membership or by exchange of experience and common activities.

Here are some of them (in alphabetical order):

- American Montessori Society (AMS), New York, USA
- Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- Bundesverband Montessori Österreich, Fulpmes, Austria
- European Council of National Associations of Independent Schools (ECNAIS), The Hague, The Netherlands
- European Forum for Freedom in Education (EFFE), Dortmund, Germany
- European Meeting of Independent Education (EMIE), Antwerp, The Netherlands
- Modern Montessori International, London, UK
- Montessori Dachverband Deutschland, Kriftel, Germany
- Montessori St. Nicholas Charity, London, UK
- Nienhuis Montessori, Zelhem, The Netherlands
- Polskie Stowarzyszenie Montessori, Lodz, Poland
- Saint Nicholas Montessori Teachers' Association of Ireland, Dún Laoghaire, Ireland
- Swedish Montessori Förbundet, Eslöv, Sweden



Montessori Europe in Brussels

In the budget of the EU-Commission resources to support educational projects are available. From 2014 a new Programming period (until 2020) starts, perhaps also with new topics.

The Executive Committee should monitor as well as try to influence topics of the new programming period by emphasizing the importance of Montessori education for all fields of education (e.g. free choice in education, independence and self-confidence in learning, individualized teaching and learning, learning in heterogeneous groups, lifelong learning, peace education, rights of children).

To Be Heard and Seen

MONTESSORI EUROPE sets demanding aims for its work and needs to inform about its intentions and activities. Means of work with media are very similar working on local, national or international level.

One of the most effective methods used for work with journalists is if they get the information not only by verbal instructions but also by visiting a typical example of a Montessori institution guided by an expert of Montessori pedagogy. Personal experience is worth of thousands words.

Video presentations or films are also a very impressive way of spreading information. MONTESSORI EUROPE intends to produce a video film as a specific way of presentation in the future.

As was mentioned previously, at every Montessori Europe Congress a “Declaration” is prepared and adopted by the Annual General Meeting of Montessori Europe members. The “Declaration” is prepared by an international group of experts and touches on the main theme of the congress. Declarations are meant to be translated, published and used on a national level. National Montessori organizations may use it in their documents, leaflets, brochures, press releases, in letters to politicians, at their home page etc.



Final remarks:

It is big challenge for MONTESSORI EUROPE to take part in studies on a larger scale answering how to build efficient educational institutions based on Dr Montessori's principles. In our very turbulent times there is a strong need to provide ideas on how to build effective educational institutions, how to deliver peace, how to respect the needs of early childhood, childhood and youth. Montessori pedagogy exists for more than 100 years and is spread around the globe, regardless of faith or life philosophy and perhaps this aspect may indicate that it can help to solve some European problems. Researches could provide necessary facts and insights..

We hope for a tighter network of Montessori organisations and schools. We are ready to work further on a set of guidelines for schools and training institutes. We would like to see increasing political influence of Montessori ideas calming down todays rough world. It is important for all of Montessori establishments to work together with parents and the public.

But the main emphasis is on activities relevant to children's rights. When we founded Montessori Europe we said that the situation of the child in the European Union would be key to our work. Besides supporting specific interest of Montessori pedagogy an important mission is to support the UN Convention for Children's Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Overall, we believe it is necessary in developing a true European community that the question of education takes a position of paramount importance. Without a change in consciousness, we will not be able to achieve all the important aims the European Union set for itself during its existence. Education is the only way to do it, and we are convinced Montessori education has an important role to play because of its international and peaceful nature.

All together we may highlight the ever growing relevance of Montessori philosophy in our world of today.

Montessori Europe will be part of that work.



Working groups

To create ‘Working Group (s)’ inside existing universities / group (s) of scientists, lecturers, researchers is one of challenges Montessori Europe is facing. The aim of establishing and supporting working groups is to create another kind of network - network of experts being in constant co-operation

The first area of interest is to establish a group of 5-6 people, within universities, providing Montessori teacher` trainings or research in Montessori pedagogy; a group of scientists, who are interested in promotion/spreading the idea of Montessori education.

The first important task of a working group seems to be *the spreading of the thoughts of Maria Montessori through exchanging information about conferences or meetings devoted to Montessori pedagogy as well as to education in the broadest sense.* The task can be attained by: placing information about congresses on the the MONTESSORI EUROPE website, sending information to Montessori Europe Board members / MONTESSORI EUROPE members / national Montessori organizations members, to *give them a chance to popularize* their work and special attitude toward child education. It would also be essential to *personally invite* Montessori Europe members / Montessori Europe Board members *to take an active part in conferences*, held at the home universities of working group members (e.g. as main speakers, special guests, supporters of scientific or organizing committee, workshop leaders).

Montessori Europe should have *influence on the educational system and school development in Europe*, so to achieve that mission working group members could *initiate* (with the support of MONTESSORI EUROPE) *a project titled “The*

Montessori System as a Source of Critical Pedagogy”, which means an analytical reflection on issues of contemporary educational systems, from the perspective of education through the Montessori system. The assumptions of contemporary pedagogy and the mode of its realization in the system of mass schools contrasted with Montessori schools (and, of course, selected problems: the position of the child, the student’s activity, etc.), could be addressed. Through open discussion: pedagogy sanctified by tradition and Montessori pedagogy should be established.

University researchers would *initiate and conduct European study on Montessori education*. Results ought to be published for wider circulation. Then, the Montessori education may possibly be the part of official reports, such as EURIDICE, PISA. Besides, studies, evaluations, analyses are to improve the quality and efficiency of education and teachers trainings.

The next crucial task connected with spreading the idea of Montessori pedagogy is to *look for the opportunity to publish Montessori Europe annual reports or/and congress declarations* in national/local press, educational journals, university periodicals (yearbook or annals), making Montessori Europe ideas recognized and well-known.

Working group members/scientists represent a certain kind of educators’ community so, it is possible for them, to find experts / pedagogues within such a community, who can *express their opinion about Montessori pedagogy*. Gathered thoughts, possibly as a form of ‘interview-questionnaire’, would be placed on the Montessori Europe website.

It would be suitable to establish a kind of *media patronage or cooperation with professional publishing houses*, which publish literature for children and educational books etc., to propose to them the preparation of reviews / references, which together with the MONTESSORI EUROPE logo, home page address will be placed on the publishers websites and / or on the cover of the book. In return, the information about certain books could be presented on the Montessori Europe website.

A recommended task of a working group /or university employees willing to do that is to prepare a kind of *scenario/script of a professional recording popularizing Montessori Europe mission and work* (possibly with students, during Montessori courses), as a useful and emotive form of presentation. It is also well-known, that personal influence is valuable and productive, so working group members can visit schools, Educational Councils as well as meet school teachers at universities, to make Montessori pedagogy realistic and living, to popularize Montessori courses or post-graduate studies.

Another available field of interest of Working Group members, as well as of Montessori Europe, is to establish Montessori teacher education and post-graduate education.

To achieve this aim it is necessary *to gather information about colleges/faculties educating future teachers in the Montessori method within the compulsory framework of study*. It is possible then to prepare a national report / international reports (comparative aspect): *Educating and Upgrading Teachers in the Montessori Pedagogy*, including: the employment state and structure of teachers working according to the Montessori method, teachers' qualifications, teacher education at the university level, examples of pedagogical study curricula, non-university forms of teacher education. (A team of experts can be also appointed to undertake such a task at one time). The report should be posted on the Montessori Europe website and sent to national ministries of higher education and selected universities.

It is also important *to gather information about colleges conducting postgraduate studies in the field of Montessori pedagogy*, and to establish cooperation with managers of such studies. A purpose worth thinking about is *publishing a textbook/manual containing the best works of postgraduate studies participants / teachers every 2-3 years*.

It would be vital to *promote examples of good practice in the field of academic education in Montessori pedagogy* and post them on the Montessori Europe websites.

To emphasize the values that flow from the knowledge of work / training in the Montessori method - in a given country's educational system - it seems to be desirable *to prepare and send to deans of universities / faculties of pedagogical departments writings / letters in which ME encourages them to include the Montessori method in teacher education curricula*. Such an intentional letter could also be a kind of invitation to co-operate with European Montessori organizations.

Working group members/researchers being members of ME are also to encourage heads of pedagogical faculties and departments *to sign bilateral agreements* between universities in the field of students' education by the Montessori method, to promote the creation of international programmes / grants, based on Montessori pedagogy. *MONTESSORI EUROPE could be a partner, a participant of such a project*.

As a part of universities co-operation, lectures of 'visiting professors' / Montessori pedagogy experts /MONTESSORI EUROPE members could be organized.

The third area of the working group's tasks is to spread information about Montessori pedagogy and Montessori Europe activities among students (in teacher training programmes, students of educational majors) by the organisation of facultative courses and / or open lectures.

Sharing of information can be achieved *by discourse/discussions, seminars, term papers, thesis papers, reports, reviews, organizations*. The above-mentioned cooperation between universities and between universities and Montessori institutions serves an opportunity *for student exchanges and acceptance of students for practice and research work*. Combined with the ERASMUS / COMENIUS programme it is possible to invite lecturers or workshop leaders to organize Montessori classes for students.

A modern form of exchanging experiences would be *the preparation of thematic inter-cultural projects by student 'task forces' (groups for specific tasks) / jointly by scholars from 2 or 3 countries, with consultations by the members of the working group*. The challenge and the creative task for students would be - for example - to develop the Montessori Europe promotional strategy as a credit for the course of study (history of pedagogical thinking, didactics, alternative education, etc.).

Special fees for students as Montessori Europe members could be established, e.g. as a quarter of the regular fee. This is an investment in new, young staff, who in future will work according to the Montessori method. In return, Montessori Europe and the working group can ask students to do some work, to respond to the problems of Montessori institutions. During the congress time Montessori Europe can offer student-members free admission to lectures, payable participation in workshops.

Montessori Europe professional presentation could be part of a *Science Festival, Science Week*, organized at/by universities of several European countries.



The last suggested task for the working group and Montessori Europe is to spread information about the annual MONTESSORI EUROPE congress.

Several possibilities of sharing of information about the congress and its results can be enumerated, for example: *sending information about the congress* to deans of educational faculties (by post), and to university employees (by e-mail), *placing information about the Montessori Europe congress* on the website of the Institute / Department in which representatives of the working group or the Montessori Europe members work, *placing information about the congress in the bulletins of the national Montessorian organizations* and finally by *word of mouth advertising - dissemination of information about the congress by members of Montessori national associations (in educational institutions, among parents).*

It would be reasonable *to prepare a national/international list of prominent scientists, educators* of children and young people, sending them *personal invitations to the congress.*

To make Montessori Europe organization more recognizable, *the publishing of congress materials* by university publishing house in co-operation with MONTESSORI EUROPE (for example every 2 years), supplemented by articles by interested employees / scientists is essential.

The last recommended at this point mean of popularizing Montessori Europe is a news release (for example MONTESSORI EUROPE Newsletter, President Report, declaration), sent to editors, journalists, central and local educational authorities, local media.

