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January
2024

Chancellor's Update

Maria Montessori and Her Ideas

Before presenting her ideas, let us first deliver an unbiased analysis as presented in *Collier's New Encyclopedia*, volume six, page 291 in 1928.

MONTESORI, MARIA, an Italian doctor and educator; born in 1870, she received the degree of doctor of medicine when she was twenty-four years old, being the first woman in Italy to secure that degree. By her work as a doctor among feeble-minded children she became interested in the subject of their education. Her success in this field turned her attention to the education of normal children. In 1907 the House of Childhood was founded under her direction, and since that time others have followed.

MONTESORI SYSTEM, a method of instruction used by Dr. Maria Montessori and, as yet, used only in the branches of elementary education and with children between the ages of 3 and 10 years.

It is largely the development of the ideas of --allowing the child to learn ideas by its own activity and by following its own inclinations and not by being dictated to or disciplined by the teacher. In the Montessori system there are no classes no lessons. There are no rewards or punishment, the only incentive used is the desire on the child's part to do things well in which he or she is interested. When the child enters the school, he sees groups of children playing games and joins the group which is doing the things he likes best. The games are ones involving the senses of touch, sight, and hearing, and are so arranged and conducted that these senses are soon developed without the child being conscious - of learning a task.

"Touch" for example, is practiced by playing games blindfolded, hearing by playing games in the dark. The interest and attention of the child never wavers as in the conventional school system, since he is always doing what he- likes. Writing comes before reading in the Montessori system and is learned by means of playing with letters, and imitating their shape. It usually takes a child of four years about two months to learn to write. "Reading" is learned by the application of similar methods. The role of the teacher in all this work is radically different from that under the old system. The material itself does the teaching, for it contains the control of errors. The teacher does not impart information; she is a "passive force, a silent presence."

No one can deny the influence of modern Montessori education. As Montessori teacher Elizabeth G. Hainstock observes in *The Essential Montessori*,

By the mid 1960's the Montessori Method was one of the fastest developing and most talked about phenomena on the American educational scene. Over the years it has been closely examined by and has found support from important leaders in the fields of education and child psychology. Its greatest application has been in the preschool and primary grades, and its influence has been great. There are now over 3,000 accredited Montessori schools in the United States, and Maria Montessori's philosophy and materials are used in numerous public - school classrooms, in the field

of special education, and in federally funded programs such as Headstart and day care centers. The method has proved itself adaptable to all social strata and specialties within the educational spectrum serving the objectives of many situations and applications...Her method has become a part of every teacher-training course, and there are several hundred such courses specifically concerned with providing the Montessori credentials.

Maria Montessori was born in 1870. As one concerned with radical reform of "outdated" educational methods, she was deeply influenced by Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), Johann Pestalozzi (a follower of Rousseau) and Friedrich Froebel-all of whom stressed the inner potential of the child and his ability, with proper guidance, to develop along his own natural lines.

In 1887, John Dewey, the leading philosopher of the progressive movement published his textbook, *Psychology* in which he advocated the use of psychological techniques in the classroom. He believed that "...education is growth under favorable conditions; the school is the place where those conditions should be regulated scientifically."

In 1894 Dewey joined the faculty at the University of Chicago as Chairman of the Department of Philosophy, Psychology and Pedagogy. The university, endowed by John D. Rockefeller, had been founded in 1890. As head of the department of pedagogy Dewey began to concentrate on education as the means of bringing about socialism in America. Dewey and his progressive colleagues knew that if socialism was to be achieved, it would have to be through the education of the young who would reject the values of individualism and religion and create a socialist, collectivist utopia. But what kind of curriculum would do the job? Dewey created an experimental school, the Laboratory School, to put his ideas into practice. It would serve as a laboratory for psychology and pedagogy just as labs were used in the physical sciences.

What kind of curriculum was needed to turn America into a socialist society? Dewey decided that the best way was to turn the classroom into a place where these desirable traits could be developed. The radical educator was to find out how to socialize the children to become the selfless egalitarians who would eagerly serve humanity as represented by the socialist state.

In school the individual lives in close contact with others. The school itself is a cooperative society on a small scale. Dewey recommended building the curriculum not around academic subjects but around occupational activities which provided maximum opportunities for peer interactions and socialization. The intellect of the child was denigrated in favor of his motor development.

In 1899 Dewey published his blueprint for socialism via education based on experiments at his school. In 1904 he left Chicago and joined the faculty at Columbia University in New York. He grew in stature as the model interpreter of American progressivism.

Dewey and his colleagues had rejected the religion of their fathers and had become humanists, putting their faith in science, evolution and psychology... Ability "to get along with the group" became the prime measuring stick of a child's educational "progress".

Dewey's disciples, under the pretext of improving teaching *methods*, changed *what was taught* to American children.

And so the teaching of reading has been turned into a political struggle for control of the minds and hearts of American children who hold the key to America's future. Sources: *The Whole Language /OBE Fraud* by Samuel L. Blumenfeld & *None Dare Call It Education* by John A Stormer, *Thieves of Innocence* by John Ankerberg & Craig Branch

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