

Contemporary Relevance of the Educational Philosophy of Maria Montessori

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ABSTRACT

Education is the most important and powerful instrument invented by mankind to shape and mould he in a desirable manner. Any modification brought about in the behaviour of an individual, as a result of his interaction with the environment, constitutes learning. The history of the world proves that education has been the root cause for any change which takes place in the social, cultural, spiritual, political and economic aspects of human life. It is education, which not only transforms the human animal into a rational human being, but also prepares and develops him to survive and adjust with surrounding so as to lead his personal as well as social life successfully.

Keywords : Contemporary Relevance, Educational Philosophy, Maria Montessori

I. INTRODUCTION

Therefore, we may say that education is anything which the individual acquires through formal or non-formal organizations in the form of certificates or training by which his personality is prepared and developed to undertake any sort of task and adjust himself with the varying environments in order to fulfil his basic necessities and objectives of life. It is discerned from this statement that education has become one of the basic necessities of human life, like food, clothing and shelter. Today, life is education and education is life.

“Education” has been defined by philosophers, thinkers and educationists in different ways according to their philosophy of life gained out of their past experience. Since education is related to time and space, philosophers and thinkers, from Socrates to John Dewey in the West and Yajnavalkya to Jiddu Krishnamurti in the East have defined it differently.

According to Mahatma Gandhi, “By education, I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in the child and man-body, mind and spirit.”

According to Aurobindo, “Education is helping the growing soul to draw out than is in itself.”

According to Socrates, “Education means the bringing out of the ideas of universal validity which are latent in

the mind of every man. It is dispelling error and discovering truth.”

According to John Dewey, “Education is the development of all those capacities in the individual which all enable him to control his environment and fulfill his possibilities.”

Thus, we can say that education is a lifelong process and enable the human beings to live a better life. Etymologically, philosophy is a Greek word, which means love for wisdom. The philosophy relates to the theory and principles underlying a thought and their logical analysis, knowledge, conduct and nature of Universe. All the questions related to educational process are ultimately the questions of philosophy. It is the educational philosophy that resolves the conflicts between educational practices at particular times and sets a direction.

According to Montessori, “Child is a body which grows and a soul which develops- these two forms, physical and psychic have an eternal front, life itself”. She wants each child to develop himself from within and not from without. Education should guide the process of unfolding the hidden powers of child.

According to Montessori, “Education is the active help given to the normal expansion of the life of the child.” Montessori says that every child is different from others, physically as well as mentally. So, the child’s

individuality must be respected and not suppressed through collective teaching. Each child should be bestowed individual attention and allowed to grow at his own pace.

II. REVIEW OF LUERATURE

Besançon, M. & Lubart, T. (2007) examined creativity development in first through fifth graders in four Parisian schools. Two sites used traditional pedagogy and two used alternative pedagogies, specifically Freinet and Montessori. Overall, students who attended a Montessori or Freinet setting performed higher on creativity tests, and Montessori school students achieved higher levels of creativity over the 2-year study period than students in the other three schools.

Blank, J. (2009) explored qualitative case study of two elementary teachers in a public Montessori magnet school focused on the use of scripts, which are defined as “situated ways of speaking” about a teaching practice. The teachers describe their experiences with various scripts, including the Montessori methodology, the passing of No Child Left Behind, and public school traditions.

Bone, J., Cullen, J., & Loveridge, J. (2007). An early childhood Montessori casa in New Zealand was the setting for this qualitative study exploring everyday spirituality, which “recognizes the extraordinary in the ordinary.” The authors capture the key narratives and actions of the preschoolers on the first day back from a two-week break, illustrating the spiritual elements in the Montessori environment.

Capps, D. (2008). Through analysis of Erikson’s work, Capps explains the origins of melancholia and describes humor as an antidote to melancholia. While undergoing psychoanalysis with Anna Freud, publishing early articles, and teaching school, Erikson also studied the Montessori Method.

Cossentino, J. (2005). Through classroom observations, Cossentino explored the “rituals” of a Montessori classroom. She explains the traditional techniques (rituals) used in Montessori pedagogy and describes how these techniques reflect broader Montessori principles, such as independence. Cossentino emphasizes the importance of rituals as related to educational experiences.

Dohrmann, K., Nishida, T., Gartner, A., Lipsky, D., & Grimm, K. (2007). In this quantitative study,

researchers compared the achievement of two groups of Milwaukee high school students—one group having attended a Montessori

III. MARIA MONTESSORI PHILOSOPHY

Maria Montessori is the first woman who entered the world of education through her intimate association with the education and development of the mentally challenged children. Her contribution to the education of early childhood, especially mentally challenged children has revolutionized the world of education. In fact, almost every civilized country feels, in some measure, the impact of her unique method of teaching young children. The world read with astonishment of the almost incredible doing of those slum children in the first children home in Rome. Her efforts and dedication in making the mentally challenged children into normal children in teaching 3 R’s through didactic apparatus have brought imperishable fame to her in the history of education. It was seen at the time of her demise when tributes to her life-long labour on behalf of the child appeared in the press from every part of the world. In fact, her selfless sacrifice and dedication has developed hope and courage in the life of mentally challenged children, which made her to be ranked among the forerunners of great educators. Today, Montessori Method flashes like a comet across the educational horizon.

After graduation in medicine, Montessori was in-charge of the training of mentally challenged children. She taught a number of such children to read and write so efficiently by adopting her special method and her previous experience acquired from the infant schools in Rome. The Montessori system became an ‘education by touch’. Only the methods, which Montessori adopted to educate and train, up the muscles and sense organs of the mentally challenged children known as Montessori Method.

Montessori Method is an outstanding method of education that emerged as an outcome of Montessori’s profound love, affection, keen sensitiveness, artistic imagination and exceptional sympathy for the mentally challenged children. It has given a new touch to the educational theory and practices which are meant for the ordinary child’s education in general and the mentally challenged children’s at the nursery stage in particular.

IV. EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF MARIA MONTESSORI

The purpose of the study is to know the contemporary relevance of the educational philosophy of Maria Montessori. *Today, Maria Montessori impact on educational thoughts and practices is universal. In fact, the Montessori system of education has come to stay in all progressive countries. She ranks among the foremost of the educators who stand for an environment of love, freedom and sympathy for the child. In the opinion of Robert R. Rusk, "The permanent elements of her method are more likely to be practical activities and the exercises subsidiary to the didactic apparatus." Sir John Adams attributes to Montessori, the credit of sounding the death knell to class teaching. The most significant feature of the system is the individualization of instruction. Today, the word, 'Montessori' is freely associated with schools meant for very young children. In modern time didactic apparatus is used to provide sensory training, motor training and teaching language and arithmetic.*

V. CONCLUSION

Montessori Method is an outstanding method of education that emerged as an outcome of Montessori's profound love, affection, keen sensitiveness, artistic imagination and exceptional sympathy for the mentally challenged children. It has given a new touch to the educational theory and practices which are meant for the ordinary child's education in general and the mentally challenged children's at the nursery stage in particular.

Let us bring out the chief educational implications of the study of the Montessori Method.

- Scientific approach to education.
- Psychological approach to education.
- Learning through exercises.
- Special role of teacher.
- Method of teaching writing.
- Emphasis on self or auto-education.
- Reverence for small children.
- Rationalized discipline.
- Training for teachers.
- Free and compulsory education.

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