

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES IN MONTESSORI SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Teaching learning strategies of Montessori Method can give better result in spite of the traditional approach. Montessori schools are playing a vital role for early childhood education and in the pre-primary section by following the Montessori Method.

Key words

MM method; World Language; Early Childhood; Absorbent mind Children's Houses

Introduction

In different areas of educational history, before last decade of the 19th century, many more English language teaching learning theories have been developed. In that context, early childhood education was in the shadow of other burning issues of education. In the good old days, very young children under the age of six were simply supposed to play and learn by experience. Today the situation has been changed completely. Many people can be found to be very serious about a sound physical and mental development of their children.

The NAEYC (AAEYC) defines early childhood as "birth through age eight" (Bredenkamp & Rosegrant, 1992:10). Early childhood spans the human life from birth to age of 8. Although, early childhood education does not have to occur in the absence of the parent or primary

caregiver, this term is sometimes used to denote education by someone other than the parent or primary caregiver. Both research in the field and early childhood educators view the parents as an integral part of early childhood education process. Early childhood education takes many forms depending on the theoretical and educational beliefs of the educator or parent.

Maria Montessori was born in the town of Chiaravalle in the province of Ancona, Italy in 1870. She was the first woman to become a physician in Italy. At the turn of the twentieth century, this was an amazing accomplishment. However, becoming a medical doctor was only the first step in her long successful career. She began her professional research with observations of mentally retarded children and was greatly influenced by the work of Itard and Seguin.

Maria Montessori was both genius and a visionary. She believed that the child's mind from birth to six years is quite different from the adults and labeled it "an absorbent mind". The child effortlessly soaks in everything in his culture and environment. Modern scientists, almost a century later, find scientific data to support her discoveries. She saw a tremendous need for the child to have respectful and intelligent help during the absorbent mind stage. She saw the child as constantly unfolding and developing himself and saw the adults who were trying to teach him as obstacles to his process. Her life work could be summed up as defining the nature of the child and the role of the adult in helping him, thus easing the tug-of-war, which exists when two completely different natures meet.

Montessori laid stress on the social development of children who learn health habits and social behaviors in their "Children's Houses". Children are trained in clearing rooms and arranging seats for meals. Montessori was aware of children's social needs and their roles in improving the society (Mohanty, 1996:97).

The MM is a scientific approach which has been revived in modern day education. Foundation of childhood knowledge is built on the discovered laws of the development of the body and mind of the child.

ELT strategies in Montessori schools

Language is a system of arbitrary, vocal symbols which permit all people in a given culture, or other people who have learned the system of that culture, to communicate or to interact (Finochiaro, 1964:8).

Language is a voluntary means of human communication. We use language to serve different functions to exchange ideas between people, to give instruction and to express our emotion, thought and feeling for getting some information, asking for a query, for asking someone to do something and so on. We use language in each and every steps of our life.

English Language has been the most widely used language in the world today. Its use has so much spread that it is often referred to as 'Global Language' or 'World Language'. Now, it is taught as a second or foreign language in many countries of the world. It is taught as a foreign and second language in our country also.

Teaching cannot be defined apart from learning. Learning is acquiring or getting of knowledge of a subject or a skill by study, experience or instruction. Teaching is showing or helping someone to learn how to do something, giving instructions, guiding in the study of something, providing with knowledge causing to know or understand (Brown, 1994:7).

Motor skill development is an important part of Montessori education which emphasized the development and believed the efficiency of children. Motor skill development promotes hand eye co-ordination and other activities for motor skill development is given due importance in the early childhood education of Montessori system (Mohanty, 1996:17).

The materials in the classroom area called "practical life" deal with using child's love of movement, concentration and repetition. The activities involve pouring, sweeping, dressing, stacking, folding, wiping, polishing and washing that include care of the environment, care of the self of the environment, care of the self and grace and courtesy. Conversational manners, table manners and courtesy to others are all part of the activities in a Montessori classroom. The reading materials teach both phonetic and sight reading skills at an age when the child absorbs language easily. Many of the reading exercises are handmade and can be supplemented at home. There are also geography, music, art, and science and history materials. The method is adaptable to all subjects. However, this research is related to only the English language.

Children encounter a new language at school; they can call on the same skill to help them

interpret the new sounds, new words and new structures. We want to support and develop this skill. We can do this by making use of gestures, information, demonstration, actions and facial expressions to convey meaning parallel to what we are saying. In the early stages of their mother tongue development, children excel at making a little language to a long way. They are creative with grammatical forms. They are also creative with concepts (Halliwell, 1998: 7:4)

Senses are, according to Montessori, the gate ways of knowledge. They tried to impact education through senses and devised learning materials for children through direct experience. They include pieces of wood with graded colors, bells producing different tones but appearing exactly similar. Montessori gave more importance to the senses of touch and as such her called education by touch (Mohanty, 1996:17).

A child doesn't get engaged in an activity until the teacher or another student has directly demonstrated its proper use .Each activity leads directly to a new level of learning or concept. When a child actively forms a concept, he/she acquires the basis for later concepts. Additionally, repetition of activities are considered an integral part of this learning process and children are allowed to repeat activities as often as they wish. If a child expresses boredom on account of this repetition, then the child is considered to be ready for the next level of learning.

Montessori principles

Montessori principles state that the pre-operation of the environment is the most important aspect of the Montessori school. The preparation of this environment requires the involvement of highly trained teachers. According to Montessori principles, a child will naturally become in harmony with his or her environment during the learning process as long as the environment is properly prepared and maintained. Montessori believed that learning is a natural self-directed

process that follows several fundamental law of human nature. The role of the adult in the child's learning process is simply preparing the environment and to make sure this environment remains in tact. If young people are to meet the challenge of survival that faces them today, it is imperative that they develop themselves to extend their potential for creativity, initiative independence, inner discipline and self confidence. This is the central focus of Montessori education.

Conclusion

Teaching learning strategies of MM can give better result in spite of traditional approach. Montessori schools are playing a vital role for early childhood education and in the pre-primary section by following MM. It is essential for every child to learn everything by new and scientific approach of Montessori system. Almost all schools should follow the Montessori system especially in the pre-primary section, mainly focusing the age group of 2-6 years child. Nepal government should provide well trained teachers, materials and appropriate teacher quota in Pre Schools i.e. Montessori. The government should provide quality education for overall development; after all pre-primary level is the base of knowledge and education.

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