

Research Paper

## The Montessori Approach to the Teaching – Learning Process

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### ABSTRACT

In order to build and apply knowledge and abilities, children in a Montessori classroom study and use a variety of distinctive construction and application methods. In the Montessori Method, children are seen as active participants in their own development, powerfully influenced by internal, natural, dynamic, self-correcting forces that pave the path for growth and learning. The children view their instructors as protectors and leaders. As for teaching aid, they rely on carefully planned, aesthetically pleasant, colourful, bright and attractive surroundings and objects. Montessori places a strong emphasis on individual learning, allowing children to develop into responsible global citizens and lifelong learners. Children in a Montessori classroom are placed in multipage classrooms that last three years, encouraging tight peer ties and continuity between adults and children. The present paper is an attempt to look into Montessori Method, its principles and learning environment. We have also tried to look into the dual role of the teacher and assessment pattern as given in the Montessori approach.

**Keywords:** *Maria Montessori, Montessori Method, Education, Personalized Learning, Active Learning, Teaching-learning process*

Quintilian, Comenius, Rousseau, Séguin, Itard, Pestalozzi, and Fröbel, are those prominent educationalists and educational pioneers who had a considerable impact on the creation of Dr. Montessori's Method (Gutek, 2004). She worked on education and because of her excellent work with mentally challenged children up until 1907. She proceeded to run a pre-school nursery in Rome's San Lorenzo neighbourhood (Adhikari & Saha, 2021a). During this time, she discovered two key factors that significantly promote a child's development: sensitive times and the absorbent mind, through observation and experimentation. She also recognised that children exhibit their natural enthusiasm in learning in a setting that is appropriately prepared. A child can learn certain things successfully during these sensitive times and develops particular sensitivities and interests. Children who are in the absorbent-mind stage take in information and sensory impressions from their surroundings. A planned and tidy atmosphere that fosters sensory awareness, independence and self-assurance with the option of choice is referred to as the prepared environment. The teacher's function might shift from being a transmitter of knowledge to a guide or mentor and a diagnostician of a child's educational profile thanks to self-correcting didactic resources that encourage auto-education and intrinsic motivation. The Montessori

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## The Montessori Approach to the Teaching – Learning Process

Approach enables students to progress through the curriculum at their own pace in a supportive environment (Adhikari & Saha, 2021b).

### ***Implemented Principles of Personalized Learning in the Montessori Approach***

It is important to describe the various stages of development in the Montessori approach and the adaptation of the instructional methods to the various developmental stages of students in order to highlight the similarities between personalised instruction and the Montessori method. For instance, the teacher has a different role when working with pre-schoolers than with elementary students and teenagers (Saha & Adhikari, 2023a). The universal principles of the Montessori method that apply to all stages of student development are outlined in order to highlight the aspects of personalised instruction and the Montessori method that are similar. It is very recent that Nel Noddings in her educational theory shows development and personalization of emotions like care, and how it can be incorporated in education to make the teaching learning process more efficient matching Montessori's ideals (Adhikari & Saha, 2021c). There is disagreement among academics regarding the fundamental elements of personalised learning, with some emphasising student-centered teaching before technocentric solutions. Despite Montessori schools' tight restrictions on technology use, Watson and Watson (2016) believed that the inclusion of student choice, student self-regulation, the mastery-learning philosophy, portfolio assessments, and the teacher-as-guide approach made Montessori education personalised.

### ***A Dual Teacher Role***

Keefe and Jenkins (2002) asserted that the Montessori teacher has a dual role as an instructional expert and a knowledge facilitator when presenting various strategies and tactics for personalising education. The instructor is sometimes referred to as a “directress” who introduces the pupil to the proper parts of the school environment in the literature on the Montessori method. The Montessori teacher's job is to watch pupils, set up the environment to best meet their interests and requirements as they develop, and assist them as they go through the process of self-education and knowledge construction (Montessori, 1912/1964). Now that the adult is a part of the child's environment, the adult must adapt to the child's demands in order to avoid impeding the child's development and to avoid taking the place of the child in activities crucial to growth and development. The instructor provides example, instruction, and feedback in both individualised instruction and the Montessori method. Both strategies, which are somewhat comparable to those of the 18<sup>th</sup> century feminist educator Mary Wollstonecraft (Adhikari and Saha, 2022), emphasise independence and self-education. While personalised learning looks for the best approach for each learner's development and learning, which can vary from student to student, Montessori education focuses a lot more emphasis on auto-education.

### ***An Interactive Learning Environment***

Both strategies emphasise the value of an interactive setting with deliberate learning activities that prepare students for real life in order to provide the optimal learning environment for kids (Keefe & Jenkins, 2000): “*Education should not limit itself to seeking new methods for a mostly arid transmission of knowledge: its aim must be to give the necessary aid to human development*” (Montessori, 2007). A major focus of Montessori education is on kids' environment-based development and learning utilising ready-made didactic materials (Guttek, 2004). When preparing the classroom environment, Montessori teachers take into account both the potential individual needs of each kid as well as the shared developmental characteristics of the entire group of children. In personalised learning, a lot greater focus is put on tailoring the entire learning process to the needs of the

## The Montessori Approach to the Teaching – Learning Process

learner, including choosing the best learning environment for each particular student (Adhikari & Saha, 2023). According to the theory of personalised learning, small groups or classes can, “*better support thoughtful conversation, learning by doing, apprenticeship experiences, and authentic student achievement*” (Keefe & Jenkins, 2000), which runs at par with the Montessori classrooms which, “*employ an open concept in which desks are arranged in ‘rafts’ to promote individual and small-group learning and are composed of students across a three-year age range*” (Lopata et al., 2005). According to Darling-Hammond (1997), small schools foster greater postsecondary success by increasing student achievement, attendance, dropout rates, participation in extracurricular activities, feelings of self-worth and school pride, as well as less violence and vandalism. When compared to personalised learning, which is typically still performed throughout standard timetables and age-based classrooms, Montessori education offers far more freedom in timing and age range (e.g., heterogeneous groups, uninterrupted work time). As children travel through the classroom, they are exposed to both older and younger peers, encouraging both imitative learning and peer tutoring. This is made possible by multiage groups in Montessori schools (Lillard, 1988).

### **Active Learning Activities**

Learning or rather Personalised learning, “*encourages curriculum that supports purposeful learning which is similar to Montessori education’s focus on student-developed plans of study and project-based learning*” (Casquejo Johnston, 2019, p. 5). According to Keefe and Jenkins (2002), educators who care about tailoring the educational experience for each student favour teaching through relevant experiences and careful reflection. Both the Montessori method and personalised learning place equal emphasis on active learning; however, Montessori education places more emphasis on “*active sensori-motoric activities... especially in the kindergarten-age,*” while personalised learning places more emphasis on providing real-life learning richness and context in all learning situations (Keefe & Jenkins, 2002).

### **Flexible Scheduling and Pacing**

Students can concentrate on performance rather than time and can participate in worthwhile learning activities with the help of flexible and suitable scheduling (Keefe & Jenkins, 2000). These activities are supported by Montessori education, which also emphasises the value of uninterrupted work cycles: It takes some time for the mind to become engaged, to get going, to warm up to a subject, and to reach a condition of productive labour. If there is a break at this point, not only is a period of productive work wasted, but the break also causes an uncomfortable feeling that is similar to tiredness (Montessori, 1989). The educational philosophy of the school determines how flexible it can be when implementing personalised learning: “*If the philosophy is traditional, the schedule is likely to be very structured, even rigid. If the philosophy is constructivist or learner-centered, the schedule will almost necessarily be personalized or at least very flexible*” (Keefe & Jenkins, 2002).

### **Assessment**

Children, according to Dr. Montessori, are in an environment where they can better themselves for the sake of the process rather than an end goal and obey the law of maximum effort (Lillard, 1972). Teachers in Montessori schools monitor children’s work rather than testing students’ abilities (Lillard, 2016). Because the majority of classes are taught one-on-one or in small groups, teachers can examine each student’s level of comprehension (Roemer, 1999). Montessori instructors use alternative assessment procedures, such as portfolios and anecdotal and nongraded reports, more often than they do traditional

## The Montessori Approach to the Teaching – Learning Process

assessment procedures with older pupils. i.e., those in secondary school and above (Roemer, 1999). Personalised learning emphasises that the main goal of assessment should be to promote student learning rather than categorising or grading (Keefe & Jenkins, 2002), the assessment process itself is emphasised much more. It is already known that most Montessori educators dislike testing (Haines, 1995), personalized instruction is based on stress that testing is just one form of assessment. Assessment “goes beyond testing and includes such activities as demonstrations, oral and written presentations, performances, contests, projects, and problem-solving activities” (Keefe & Jenkins, 2002). The method of assessment is necessary to fit the purpose of instruction. Montessori education “downplays the role of high-stakes assessment” (Block, 2015), which favors assessments for observational and to help students in developing individual goals. Compared to Montessori education, some implementations of personalized learning place far more significance on assessments, as well as on agency and student ownership of learning, both of which support independence (Saha & Adhikari, 2023b).

### CONCLUSION

We have covered the hallmarks of the Montessori method of education in this essay. The Montessori method and individualised instruction both adhere to a constructivist worldview and share a number of theoretical and philosophical tenets. According to research, pupils who attend Montessori schools perform better academically than those who attend other public or charter primary school programmes, especially in the subjects of science and mathematics. In comparison to conventional settings, a Montessori environment provides a better foundation for the development of executive functions. One of the most well-known and widely used methods of education to combine a variety of elements of individualised instruction is Montessori education, which encourages intrinsic motivation, focuses on pupils, and actively involves students. This has been demonstrated by our research, despite the fact that personalised instruction recommends a variety of implementation techniques and diverges significantly from the Montessori methodology. Montessori education is firmly established as a realisation of the several concepts of individualised education. Further investigation might look at whether personalised learning concepts are not effectively reflected in the Montessori approach and how to incorporate some of these principles and strategies, particularly for older pupils, i.e., adolescents.

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## The Montessori Approach to the Teaching – Learning Process

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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