

# *Montessori Educational Thought and Its Implications for Family Education*

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**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to study and analyze Montessori's educational ideas and their implications for family education. Through the study of representative works such as *The Complete Montessori Book of Early Education*, *The Montessori Handbook of Sensitive Periods for Children*, *The Montessori Family Program*, *The Montessori Method of Early Education*, *The Secret of Childhood* and *The Absorbent Mind*, we have come to the following conclusions. Firstly, Montessori's educational philosophy emphasizes the creation of a home environment that matches the child. This includes providing an orderly, quiet, warm and inspiring environment, and parents should be supporters and observers of children's development, respecting their individual interests and needs. Secondly, Montessori emphasized grasping the child's sensitive periods. She observed that children are more sensitive to certain experiences and skills at certain ages and learn best during this period. Finally, Montessori's educational ideas provide theoretical and practical implications for preschool education. She emphasizes the development of children's self-discipline, self-confidence, independent thinking and problem-solving skills. Encouraging children to actively participate in daily life activities, developing good social skills and emotional development, and providing appropriate learning experiences lay a solid foundation for children's preschool education. In summary, Montessori's educational ideas give important insights in the area of family education. Creating a family environment adapted to children, grasping sensitive periods, and developing various abilities are insights that provide theoretical and practical implications for preschool education.

## 1. Introduction

Montessori's unique approach to early education has taken the Western world by storm, profoundly influencing countries around the world, and has been widely disseminated in China, with a profound impact on the Chinese early childhood education community. In 1907, Montessori created the "Children's House" in a Roman ghetto to educate children aged 3-6. After a few years of education, the result is astonishing. The ordinary children are transformed into intelligent, confident,

well-educated and vibrant young talents. Montessori has cultivated the reports of wonderful children throughout Europe through their own unique charm education methods. By 1915, "Children's Homes" were all over the world, and Montessori had caused a revolution in early childhood education. The key to Montessori's approach to education is that she placed great emphasis on the early education of children. She believed that children have an innate "inner potential" that is active, active, developing, and endlessly powerful, and that the task of early education is to stimulate and promote the child's "inner potential" and to make it develop naturally and freely. Development [1]. Her pedagogy encompasses intellectual training, sensory training, and gross motor development, among others.

From Montessori's several monographs, for example, "*The Montessori Early Childhood Program*", "*The Montessori Family Education Complete Book*", "*Montessori Early Education Method*" , "*The Secret of Childhood*", "*The Absorbent Mind* ", the main educational points can be summarized in [2]: Firstly, Children are born with "inner life force" which has infinite power. Educators should let children develop naturally and freely through this power [3]. Secondly, Children's development has embryonic period. "Children between 0 and 3 years old are in this embryonic period [4]. Educators should provide children with an environment suitable for the development of spiritual embryos. So they can develop soundly. Thirdly, Children have sensitive periods, such as the sensitive period of the mouth, the sensitive period of the hand and the sensitive period of order. In the sensitive period, it is easiest to develop children's abilities and education is most effective. Children have an absorptive mind and can learn by unconsciously absorbing things in the environment, which mainly occurs in the mental embryonic period. Montessori refers to children's use of teaching aids as "work" and the development of their body and mind must be accomplished through "work"[5]. Through repeated manipulative education, children can educate, create and build their personalities. Based on the above, Montessori proposed that in the process of educating children, we should give the maximum freedom to engage in independent, common-sense exploration, and achieve physical and mental development in this way [6-7].

## 2. Create a Matching Home Environment

A child's living environment is very important to him. Child can release his energy and gain freedom in an environment that is truly his own. As parents, we prepare all kinds of clothes, household items, toys when children are born. But we ignore the surrounding environment, our furniture, bookcases, closets, dining tables are all adult size, we ignore children's feelings. We naturally think they are still young and do not need adult things, this is environmental dysfunction. Montessori pointed out that the preparation of small furniture in line with the child's body and age, in order to give them a sense of comfort. Usually we always feel that the child is next to add to the mess, but also to grab the labor tools when we are in the work. We are very authoritative to grab from the child's hands. And we said that they are still small, wait until they grow up to help. In fact this education is also wrong. We should let the child participate in the work, so that he will feel that she belongs to the environment.

How does learning happen in a 2 years old child? She is always in a state of high energy and hunting treasures. We are always trying to stop her disorderly behavior. In fact, we should allow this disorderly behavior. Because it is an ability that can exercise their muscle movement. We must give children the opportunity to practice what they think they can do. For example, a 15-month-old child always likes to play with water or even pour the water out of the cup and wash her hands and face. She doesn't just think it's fun to wash her hands and face, but she thinks she can do it herself. Being able to do things on her own in life is fundamental to a child's all abilities' development. What we see as our child's playful messes are actually the perfect time for her to develop her own

learning. Only if she keeps trying and we just need to be there to keep her safe and be her bodyguard and let her have a good time. Now we just have to restrain our impulse to help her, observe quietly from the sidelines, keep a proper distance from her, don't disturb her frequently and don't leave her alone. When a child is doing important something she will seem very calm and enjoy it. And this is why you always suddenly hear child giggling while playing.

While the greatness of motherhood is obvious when a mother carries her baby to term. Montessori reminds us that childbirth is also a difficult time for a newborn baby. Because after birth, babies are completely separated from their mothers which they once depended. Once separated from the mother, they must immediately rely on their underdeveloped organs to sustain their lives. Before birth, babies live in the appropriate amniotic fluid that is specially prepared for them in their mother's body which protects them. They are not exposed to outside viruses or weather changes, and even the faintest light, the slightest sound, is kept out of their bodies by the mother's body, allowing their growth and development to proceed smoothly. However, with the arrival of labor, the child is separated from the mother's warm amniotic and fluid is placed in the air. Mother made every effort to deliver in the unprepared situation, suddenly ushered in a difficult birth, they experienced a long journey to this world. Their weak and tender bodies go through hardships and tribulations that we do not realize.

1-2 year olds child have their own sense of rules, they want things to be placed in their own places and have their own specific way of using. They want everyone to follow this rule, this is called the order sensitive period. I remember that when my child was a few months old baby, she has been able to remember the location of her favorite things. It explains why sometimes the child seems to be very well behaved and sometimes you can't understand the sudden irritability of the child. Perhaps because we are not aware of the disruption to the order in the child's mind.

Be sure to provide children with a colorful living environment that stimulates their keen senses, which is especially important for newborns. The environment leaves a deep impression on the children's mind, and through these experiences they shape themselves. Human personalities are formed in infancy, including language, religion and ethnicity, which are acquired through inner strengths unique to children and will remain with them throughout their lives. In early childhood education, we should understand the concept of freedom in such a way that we make the environment in which young children grow up most conducive to the natural development of their personality and ensure the free development of their brains, both physically and psychologically.

### **3. The Five Magical Potentials of Infants**

Montessori pointed out that the research on the development of infants' potential is still at the forefront of the world, and scientists have made remarkable achievements in this field. Their groundbreaking achievement is to break the traditional concept and habit of treating infants, and constantly update the concept and connotation of early education. It has been found that every little life born has a potential that we can't imagine.

#### **3.1. Imitation Ability**

Eight hours after birth, a newborn baby can imitate his mother's tongue when he sees it. What an amazing picture, a newborn baby has such amazing imitation ability.

#### **3.2. The Ability to Distinguish the Direction of Sound**

In a state where the newborn is not sleeping, at a distance of 10 to 15 centimeters from him, the newborn can hear the sound coming from the small box, and he will also turn his head in the

direction the sound is coming from, or his eyes look at that direction. Newborns like to talk, if parents read to their newborns every day, they will develop an interest in reading, and this interest will have an important impact on their whole life, which will make his concentration and language skills develop ahead of children of the same age.

### **3.3. Gaze and Retrospective Ability**

Newborns often blink their eyes, they like brightly colored things, at first look at black and white cards, and later look at colored cards. They like to look at people's faces, especially like to see the mother's kind smiling face. When we wiggle in front of the baby, their eyes and head also move with us.

### **3.4. Touch, Smell, Taste Ability**

Babies like to be held tightly in their mother's arms. When mother puts her hand on the crying baby's abdomen and gently presses the baby's two arms, he will stop crying. Infants have unpleasant expressions for sweet, sour, bitter, spicy and salty tastes, indicating that infants can identify different tastes. In experiments, it was found that when infants smelled an odor, they showed an increased heart rate and a change in activity. Infants can also distinguish which is their own mother's milk. In a healthy state, infants will stare at you and smile, while enjoying sucking their fingers or going to grab the speaker's fingers.

### **3.5. Motor Ability**

Newborns are born with many motor instincts. For example, they have crawling reflex, walking reflex, swimming reflex, pulling reflex and other instincts. If you put your hands against the feet of the baby lying on the bed, he will take the opportunity to crawl forward. If you put the child upright on the bed, holding his waist, he will take steps forward by himself, walking better as if on a walk. Underwater delivery of the baby can freely swim around in the water without choking themselves. If the index finger for the baby to grasp, we take the opportunity to lift the index finger, the baby will grasp the index finger hanging in the air for a few seconds, just as human ancestors were able to hang from a high branch.

If these five innate abilities are not trained in time, they will automatically disappear after a few months. But conversely, if we seize the critical period for training, this innate ability of the infant will become an acquired skill. The researcher's discovery of the newborn's abilities is another milestone advance in our understanding of ourselves.

## **4. Grasp the Child's Sensitive Period**

Montessori proposed the concept of "sensitive period", which graphically portrays the developmental characteristics of children in intelligence, sense of order, observation, rhythm and so on. So that educators no longer feel strange about certain behaviors of children and cannot understand children, and then cooperate with children and "enjoy" these "sensitive periods" together with children." [8]

### **4.1. The Critical Period for Control Ability**

With the continuous development of the infant cerebral cortex, parents should even cultivate the child's ability to control emotions. We can hug, touch and other comforting actions to moderate the

infant's emotional impulses. At the same time, parents should help the infant play the role of the cerebral cortex to control emotions by making the infant appropriate catharsis, diverting the infant's attention or by talking to the infant, reasoning. However, if this period is missed, it is very difficult to develop the child's ability to control emotions. In terms of the physical and mental development of infants, the spiritual embryonic period should focus on education. Training infants to recognize things around them through their senses and bodies and enabling them to experience pleasant interpersonal interactions are important. Because they can lay a good foundation for their later physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development.

#### **4.2. Walking Sensitive Period**

Humans can stand up need to four stages, the first stage is learning to sit up; The second stage is learning to roll over and crawl; The third stage is able to stand alone; The fourth stage is to walk independently. We need to seize the sensitive period of walking. 1.5-2 years old children can walk a long way and can also perform difficult activities such as climbing slopes and ladders. Of course the needs of children are different from adults, and children in walking wander like a primitive man who has just appeared on the earth. They do not have a purpose, but they wander until they are drawn to a place that interests them or has some meaning. They treat walking as a kind of exploration, walking nonstop and discovering nonstop. We should accompany children, protect their needs, and give up the adults' walking advantages. Of course, for a 15 month old child, it is found that she prefers to walk with support, probably this is related to the strength of the important factor of limb development. She can only walk more smoothly and independently if she feels strong enough and practices more. When a child is able to walk independently, we should not put obstacles in the way, such as keeping her in a walker or in a stroller, and setting up all kinds of "precautions", which Montessori points out are actually obstacles for children to walk. Therefore, it is helpful to take your baby outdoors and let him/her explore different landscapes to improve his ability.

#### **4.3. Language Sensitive Period**

My child called father for the first time when she was 7 months old and occasionally called mother, which proves that she has already developed a sense of language. And gradually, when she was 1 year old, I found that she could understand many words. She could understand when we are talking to her, but she has not yet learned to express herself and sometimes she gets angry when she is anxious to express herself. Montessori believes that the stages of language development in children follow a pattern: first the stage of simple pronunciation, then the stage of using words, and after that the stage of skilled use of grammar and syntax. In the stage of language interaction for babies, we found that picture books, finger rhymes and parental interaction can arouse children's interest and to some extent stimulate babies to speak, so parents and caregivers can make reasonable use of some early learning resources to seize the baby's sensitive language period.

#### **4.4. Imitation Sensitive Period**

According to Montessori, the period when children are 1.5 years old is an intriguing age, a critical turning point in education. Children's limbs begin to prepare themselves for further coordination, their personalities begin to develop, and they begin to make an effort to express their thoughts. In short, this is a special time of constant effort and constructive meaning. We always see children imitating the actions of adults, and we even discipline our own behavior in order to set a good example for children. In fact, when children imitate, they usually surpass their role models, and even do better and more accurately than their role models. However, this period requires a lot

of training for children, just like becoming a good pianist, athlete, and so on. Of course, in addition to passive imitation, we must respect the inner growth of the child, because growth is the inner work of oneself, allowing the child to develop freely, not suppressing the child's nature, giving the child the freedom of education, and truly meeting the child's inner and outer needs.

#### **4.5. Sensitive Period of Language Thinking**

Children's language can have outbursts, they may suddenly issue multiple syllables, and they may make no progress for months. In fact, within the child are developing steadily, this phenomenon usually occurs when the child is 2 years old, by observing this phenomenon in children, we may get a message. We have to be patient enough to wait for the child's development. In the stagnation we expect development, and we know that this development is only a symptom and that something will develop in the future. The stage shortly after children turn 2 is a time of orderly arrangement of vocabulary, in which there are two outbursts, one of vocabulary and one of thought. Of course they have to be well prepared for this explosion and they need to make a great effort if children want to realize the potential within them.

#### **4.6. Maintain the Child's Sense of Order**

The child has both an internal and an external sense of order. The external sense of order is the child's awareness of his or her relationship to the environment. The internal sense of order is the child's awareness of each part of his body and the corresponding position between them, the latter sense we call "internal order", the harmony of internal order can bring the child a sense of security.

#### **4.7. Caring for the Embryo of the Baby's Mind**

At a very young age, children can show their developmental tendencies and certain mental gifts, and one day they will be able to show this ability. If adults intervene inappropriately, they may dissipate the child's efforts and hinder their self-actualization. As a psychic embryo, the child can only rely on his own strength to guard his psychic embryo if he does not have someone to help him get through the difficult developmental period smoothly. In fact, just like the physical embryo, the spiritual embryo also needs the protection of the external environment, the warmth of love and care, and the complete acceptance of the environment in which he lives. Only then can a being become conscious and interested in its surroundings and develop into a sound personality.

A child has a mind that can absorb knowledge and has the ability to learn independently. To give an example of children learning to speak, children gradually master the language spoken by their parents, but it is not easy for adults to learn a language well, while children who are not taught word for word can use nouns, verbs and adjectives extremely well. The most fluent languages that humans use are the ones they learn in infancy. By the age of 2, children can recognize all the people and things around them. Recognizing this allows us to know and thus promotes growth within ourselves. Everything about human beings is formed during the childhood stage, especially during the first 2 years of life.

### **5. Implications for Family Education**

#### **5.1. Cultivate Children's Intelligence**

Montessori believes that "being able to differentiate things" is an important characteristic of intellectual development, and children have the basis of intelligence when they have the ability to

differentiate things [9]. Through the practice of sensory, we can distinguish things for classification, and children can begin to recognize things at the age of one. We can tell children the characteristics of things, size, thickness, shape, color, roughness, sound, taste, etc. to recognize things. Therefore, we can boldly say that promoting the intellectual development of a person is to help him/her to classify the conscious intention in an organized way. How should we cultivate our children's intelligence? We should speak to our children through objects in life, develop their attention with things that interest them, satisfy their inner requirements by giving them space time to play with their imagination, and exercise their motor nerves with appropriate sports.

### **5.2. Cultivate Children's Attention**

Attention is highly valued in psychological research, and it has the most practical value in education. The art of education is to grasp the attention of children, make them look forward to education, and give them the internal force to "open the door" when they "knock". By now, psychologists agree that unstable attention is a characteristic of a three- or four-year-old child, who is attracted to everything he sees and whose attention is constantly shifting from one object to another. In other words, it is difficult for him to fix his attention on a certain object. Freedom is a condition for conducting experimental studies of attention, strong stimulation of attention, and attention to physiological adaptations in sensory aspects. The incomplete physiological development of children requires us to develop such adaptations by following the laws of nature. In the process of developing this adaptation, if an object does not become a useful stimulus for adaptive abilities, it necessarily does not allow the child to maintain attention mentally.

### **5.3. Cultivate Children's Imagination**

Children must have an inner creation in order to express it. We must provide children with what is necessary for their inner life, and then allow them the freedom to create [10]. In cultivating children's imagination, their spontaneous activities must not be prevented, even if such activities are as small as a trickle [11]. Our task is to wait, and we must not deceive ourselves into thinking that we can create intelligence. We must remember: creative imagination, as long as it is not a vain fantasy, illusion or error, will build a golden power supply on a solid rock, and the development of intelligence will have a solid foundation.

### **5.4. Training the Child's Motor Skills**

Exercise the child's motor nerve must be consistent with the child's physiological organism needed to coordinate the requirements of movement, because the process of motor nerve training is very complex. As adults, we do not just stop the child's movement, but let the child bold, brave movement, we carry out the right amount of guidance, so that the effect will be better. Allowing children to grow freely under our guidance will turn them into active, optimistic and open-minded people in the future. Developing children's ability to move is an important reason why Montessori Children's Home looks well-trained. Muscle training includes basic exercises, taking care of himself, doing some chores, doing gardening activities, doing small crafts, participating in sports activities; doing rhythmic exercises.

### **5.5. Alternate Training Children's Brain and Physical Strength**

Humans are an organic whole, the various tissues and organs are interconnected, to complete a movement requires the coordinated work of several organizations. The structure of the human body

consists of three parts: the brain, the sensory organs and muscles. The sensory organs that can collect all kinds of information transmitted to the brain. Humans are good at thinking, but human's ideas can only be realized through physical movement. Scientific studies have shown that in order to establish the necessary exercises with the surrounding environment, a person needs not only the peripheral nervous system to function, but also the coordinated activity of muscles. The brain, nervous system and muscles are called the "relational system" and are responsible for contact with the outside world. Exercise promotes the development of the brain, which is also essential for the development of comprehension in children. Human movement is not only for the purpose of strengthening the body, but should serve the whole body. That is why we should consider not only the child's brain but also the child's body when educating. The body should not be separated from the mind, ignoring any part of it, which will destroy the continuity of the human body function.

### **5.6. Capture the Best Time for Bilingual Learning**

Montessori believes that before the age of three is the best period for children to learn foreign languages. Parents should provide a good learning environment for them to learn foreign languages during this period. Bilingual education needs to start from the following aspects: Firstly, children can listen to English songs, such as the ever-popular super simple songs and Yakedi children's songs. They are easy and happy melodies with easy-to-understand lyrics, with vivid language and exaggerated expressions will attract children's attention. Secondly, children can watch English cartoons, besides sharpening the ears, it can also help children strengthen their learning impressions by using their visual stimulation. It can allow them to naturally enter the virtual learning environment and enhance their listening and speaking skills. Thirdly, we can use English in real life. The best way to learn English is to practice in real life rather than deliberately learning. For example, for learning words such as numbers, fruits, vegetables and so on. We can start with the simplest vocabulary, then move from phrases to sentences, gradually increase the difficulty of learning. Let children master English unconsciously. Fourthly, we can teach and learn with fun. We can combine the learning of English with games, such as fun gopher, police catching thieves and other English games. Fifthly, we can create a situation for English learning. It is also very important for parents to set a good example of English learning and create a learning environment for their children by talking to them in simple English in their daily lives.

## **6. Conclusions**

Summarize the above, Montessori's educational philosophy provides a very scientific and effective guide to the practice of parenting. The early years of childhood, from 0 to 3 years old, are a critical period in the development of children's abilities. Adults should give them the right kind of love. We should respect children and create a space for them to develop freely. We can create a favorable environment for them to grow and stimulate their inner self-growth, give them the initiative to grow. We can guide the correct behavior and moral modeling, the appropriate external environment and training materials and leave the rest to child's choice. Child will develop himself completely from the heart and with all his heart and soul in the direction that society and nature want him to be. Crouch down and accept, with love, a child's perspective, acceptance, tolerance of all that he is, acknowledging his slowness, repetition, twists and turns, stubbornness and all the other behaviors and ideas that adults will never understand. Allow child to learn autonomously, with appropriate guidance, to develop a healthy child with autonomy, self-focus, and a sound mind.



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