

Montessori Education in Nigeria

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Abstract: *The aim of this work was to look into Montessori education in Nigeria. Is Montessori education practiced in Nigeria? What are the differences between Montessori and Traditional methods? Montessori education would be a better method, for this to succeed; it was recommended that for Montessori Method to be accepted in Nigeria government should provide all needed materials in public schools and private schools must be well equipped with the right materials available for use at the right time and right proportion. Enough inspectors of education are made available to monitor, supervise and assist schools to do the right thing at the right time.*

Keywords: *Teaching, Methods, Improvement, Achievement, Development*

I. Introduction

The Montessori Method is a method of education founded by Dr. Maria Montessori who first formulated the method for children with learning and developmental disabilities. She later adapted her method for children with normal cognition and developments. She posited further that Montessori Method creates a well-planned and structured environment where children can pursue areas of study of their interest www.answer.com (2012). Whosoever touches the life of a child touches the most sensitive part of the whole, which has roots in the distant past and climbs towards the infinite future. In other words, the child directs his/her own learning, Wikipedia (2013).

Through these developmental needs, the child develops intelligence as well as physical and psychological abilities. The Montessori Method of education is designed to take full advantage of the children's desire to learn and their unique ability to develop their own capabilities. Children need adults to expose them to the possibilities of their lives, but the children must determine their response to all the possibilities. The Montessori Method (2011).

II. Montessori In Nigeria

The Montessori Method was introduced into Nigeria gradually in small pockets for several decades and recently has grown to become a force to be reckoned with. Recently there has been an explosion of Montessori awareness in Nigeria, and a proliferation of schools and teacher training programs for schools using this method. In other countries there are bodies and organizations that see to the smooth running of Montessori schools, they organize workshops, conferences and retraining courses for teachers, www.montessori.training.net (2013). There is a new trend, especially among the nursery and primary schools, in establishing what they tag "Montessori schools" though very few of these 'Montessori' schools understand what the system is really all about.

Maria Montessori believed that children learned best at their own pace and in their own way, so she advocated a focus on individual progress and development, rather than tests and examinations, as brains with facts, but allowing the child to develop the zeal to learn naturally.

The system is characterized by emphasis on independence, freedom within limits and respect for a child's natural individual psychological development in the society, strongly disagreeing with rote learning, which is how education by other teaching systems.

In a standard Montessori class, a set of special learning materials are introduced to the children and each child is encouraged to choose whatever material he or she wants to work with and can use it for as long as he or she is interested. This directly helps to develop the child's power of concentration and self – discipline. The major function of teacher in a Montessori system is to guide the children on the usage of these materials and not to instruct them, unlike the traditional school where the teacher instructs the pupils on what to do or learn. Some of the materials that should be found in a Montessori classroom are bright arrays of solid geometric forms, knobbed puzzle maps and colored beads and various specialized rods and block, metal insects, sand paper letters and craft projects so on. Other materials that should be available in the classroom are materials for the practical life aspect, which involves the everyday activities children see adults perform, such as sweeping, cleaning, nopping, dusting, pouring water and so on, which parents don't normally allow them do because they are still young. To operate a Montessori system of education effectively, it is very important to have trained teachers. A

teacher in the Montessori system who has not been trained cannot carry out his or her tasks correctly, thus, the desired effects will definitely not be achieved.

In Nigeria, many of the teachers in these so called Montessori schools man their pupils the same way it is done in a traditional school. Many of them do not even know the basic elements of a Montessori teaching system and all of these are a result of lack of training. Meanwhile, the blame cannot be all on the teachers, the schools owner(s) are responsible for the teachers employed in their school. The school owner ultimately responsible for whatever mode of learning is employed by the teachers in any school.

WHAT MAKES MONTESSORI EDUCATIONAL METYHOD UNIQUE?

It should be a personalized approach to learning which recognizes that each child learns with a unique style and pace; and children learn best in a prepared environment which supports and respects their individual development.

It should be based on the premise that the intellectual, physical and social needs of children are inseparable and equally important at all times. Montessori Method is based in how children learn naturally and many believe it is the way every child should have the opportunity to learn.

It should assist students to develop positive attitudes about learning, a positive image of themselves as a learner and a strong sense of independence and responsibility, Montessori experience produces self – motivated, independent learners with characteristics that benefit them throughout their school years and later in life.

Children are to be respected as different from adults and as individuals who differ from each other. Children possess an unusual sensitivity and intellectual ability to absorb and learn from their environment that is unlike that of the adult both in quality and capacity. The most important years of children’s growth are the first six years of life when unconscious learning is gradually brought to the conscious level.

Children have a deep love and need for purposeful work. They work, however, not as an adult for the completion of a job, but the sake of an activity itself. It is the activity which enables them to accomplish their most important goal: the development of their individual selves – their mental, physical and psychological powers, the absorbent mind review (2008).

By allowing a child to lead, you tap into his potential for learning. Just as we find easier to learn about things of interest to us, a child finds it easier to learn about subjects of interest to them. That’s not to say they can’t learn about another subject, it is just harder when his mind is not primed for it.

The primary goal of a Montessori programme is to help each child reach their full potential in all areas of life. Activities promote the development of social skills, emotional growth and physical coordination as well as cognitive preparation for future intellectual academic endeavours. The holistic curriculum, under the direction of a specifically prepared teacher, allows the child to experience the joy of learning, the time to enjoy the process and ensures the development of self-esteem. It provides the experiences from which children create their knowledge, The American Montessori Society (2011).

MONTESSORI EDUCATION BETTER OPTION TO TRADITIONAL METHOD

Traditional

Montessori

Teacher centered and not student	Direct centered; work on activities on interest
Direct instruction given by the teacher	Teacher gets the environment ready and acts as the moderator
From abstract to concrete	From concrete to Abstract
Single grade classrooms	Multi – grade classrooms
What is it to think about	Method to think about it
Teacher decides & in control	Teacher as guide & counsel; Peer assist
Assignments given to them	Work plans and projects is the real thing here

When both system of education were compared it became clear that Montessori education leads children into better social and academic skills. Montessori educational system is made up of multi – age classrooms, with set of special educational materials, student – chosen work in long time blocks/ concrete objects, an environment full of activities with students being supervised by experienced teachers as advisers, though tests and grades are not involved, and each child and group are taught or given directives in academics and social skills, Bharati (2001).

Parents who get their children enrolled into Montessori school are influenced by socio – economic background they belong in the society. This is an important factor because parents generally are the dominant on child choose of school, Seldin (2006)

PROBLEM OF MONTESSORI EDUCATION ON ACHIEEVEMENT

Montessori children have a real a problem adjusting when they must leave the Montessori school and begin going to conventional schooling. They are accustomed to doing things their way and tend not to be able to

become part of the larger group. Montessori school is too rigid; it has an aloof feeling within their structure and interactions. There's lack of imaginative play and a strong emphasis on appropriate ways to work with classroom objects. High cost of Montessori materials thereby leading to academic progress in an area of learning and deficiency in other areas. This also is a big problem especially in African Montessori schools. If this method is to be made popular for the masses, government must come to the aid of the people by providing fund, training personnel and materials, Dahunsi (2010).

Additionally, part of the children's problem with Montessori are their parents, who tend not to put any parameters around the child's behavior believing the teacher does all the job and the child does not understand when to get serious academically.

Montessori Method should work well for above average intelligence children who have parents who are highly involved in their lives and that have no learning difficulties. However more traditional approaches are more successful in teaching average intelligence children, those from impoverished early childhood environments, or children with learning disabilities.

Lack of enough qualified Montessori trained teachers within the system also affects the performance of the pupils. This lack of training of this type of teachers is prevalent mostly in African countries, Nigeria inclusive. This he said is due to the high cost of training teachers for this method and getting the Montessori books. This also leads to an inability to effectively put to use the available materials for learning purposes. This state hinders the effectiveness of implementing the Montessori Method thereby leading to poor academic progress. Divya, Anumeha, Swati, Insha and Ila (2004).

REMEDIES TO PROBLEMS FACING MONTESSORI EDUCATION.

Once a child starts with Montessori Method it must be continuous as much as possible to avoid confusions and for better academic achievement. Kareen (2006) is of the view that Montessori education creates independence in the pupils and should not allowed them to live a world they created for themselves and the children should be taught how to balance their dependency level as in the academic world because they need to get knowledge from a source. That's where the dependency comes.

Government should as a matter of urgency should provide fund for the method, train teachers and employ them provide enough inspectors to monitor and supervise the system adequately. Parent must be made to visit schools and teachers are to be allowed to discuss on the child in all aspect of development. The grading system is an evaluation method where the progress of each child is given to the parent or the child on a weekly, monthly and term basis. The result is not given to avoid competition and enable each child learns at his/her individual pace, Dhillon (2011).

Parents should watch their pupils and know what works for his/her child, if the child fits into the conventional system well it could be fitting for them there. However, Montessori does so well than the conventional system as it pays special attention to children who have one academic challenge or the other and it is even better for those that have no academic challenge also as they would thrive excellently in the system.

Montessori education is such that any teacher interested in teaching in the Montessori schools must have adequate training to avoid wrong methods of teaching Montessori education. The right persons should be engaged to do the job. Therefore Montessori teachers and schools should go back and learn the right way these materials are used to produce the right result.

Montessori shelves are built with the average height of the pupils in that class in mind. However, some pupils could be shorter than others their age so step should be attached to the shelves. Furthermore, the pupils should learn using their books so they don't just come to school thinking it is just all play especially as the materials may seem to look like toys to the children.

Children in the Montessori education are not handled strictly and feels they are pampered and should not be over – pampered like babies all through so that the knowledge would be impacted and not as a baby Centre.

III. Conclusion And Recommendations

When other factors are considered and appreciated like fees, supply of educational inputs, and quality of instruction one will be able to identify the quality characteristics at school level.

To make things work for the mass governments should greatly improve the quality of the educational system if they can increase funding of all levels of education. Higher quality education can be accomplished and cost of education be reduced to promote increased in – takes of pupils. Dahunsi (2010).

Be it a Montessori or conventional school, parents should learn not to enroll their words in schools on hearsay. They should get to visit the classes regularly and interact with teachers and the pupils because this would help assure of the quality of education their children/ward would be receiving from school, most especially when a lot of money factor considered but our children should be giving a strong educational foundation to better future leaders, Dhillon (2011).

Fees reduction for primary education, together with a massive program that will spread widely, reaching everyone wherever you may be residing backup by awareness building and mobilization at the local government level, will be effective in increasing primary schools' education for the poor and eliminating gender discrimination in the access to primary school education. In view of the importance of human capital and its distribution among different ethnic, religious and social groups in the country for an economy's life term growth potential, as well as the way in which the advantages from such growth and development will be distributed among different groups in the country.

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