



# MMI CONNECT

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## Maria Montessori

The woman who changed Education

### Introduction

Maria Montessori devoted her life to the improvement of education for children based on her beliefs, her studies and her life experiences. As a pioneer in contemporary education, she was at the forefront of efforts to see children as an experimental benchmark of educational methodology and human discoveries. Maria Montessori was a leading thinker in education whose ideas, in many ways, were ahead of her time.



***The only language men ever speak perfectly is the one they learn in babyhood, when no one can teach them anything!***

**Maria Montessori**

### What is Maria Montessori known for?

Dr Maria Montessori was an educator best known for developing the Montessori system of education, named after her. The Montessori method is a child-centred educational approach based on

scientific observations of children from birth to adulthood. Her educational method is still in use today in many public and private schools throughout the world.



### Early life

Maria Montessori was born in Chiaravalle, Italy on August 31, 1870. Her father Alessandro Montessori was a retired army officer. Her mother Renilde Stoppani Montessori was an intelligent, modern-thinking woman. The Montessori family moved to Rome in 1875. The following year the young Maria was enrolled in the local state school on the Via di San Nicolo da Tolentino. As her education progressed, she began to break through the barriers which constrained women's careers. From 1886 to 1890 she continued her studies at the Regio Istituto Tecnico Leonardo da Vinci, which she entered to become an engineer. Upon her graduation, Maria Montessori was determined to

enter medical school and become a doctor. On 10th July 1896, Maria Montessori became one of the first female doctors in Italy and also became known across the country.

### Professional life

Dr Maria Montessori's first appointment was as an assistant doctor in the psychiatric clinic of the University of Rome, where she had her first contact with learning disabled children. She became convinced that the problem of handling these children was the teaching method rather than medical treatment. In 1898 she was appointed a director of the State Orthophrenic School in Rome, whose function was to care for the less fortunate children of the city. She enjoyed success in teaching the children herself while refining and applying her unique methods. In 1901, Dr Maria Montessori left the school to pursue further studies and research



# Maria Montessori

How much she contributed to Montessori?

## Maria Montessori's view of Education

Dr Maria Montessori's medical education exercised an influence on her work in education. Dr Maria Montessori views the nature of the child, on which the Montessori method is based on.

"Education is not what the teacher gives; education is a natural process spontaneously carried out by the human individual. And not acquired by listening to words but by experiences upon the environment. Human teachers can only help the great work that is being done".

Maria Montessori

Dr Maria Montessori believed that to bring about real improvement in education, it is the child we need to look at and empower, not the teachers. During her period, the teacher in a classroom held centre stage and the student was a passive recipient of information. However, Maria Montessori turned this view upside down. She believed the individual child would become the focus, the centre of education and the teacher, a directress, who modestly guided the child's own self-learning.

## Introduction to Montessori

Montessori is a comprehensive approach to education from birth to adulthood. Montessori is a hands-on method of learning that encompasses the use of the five senses, small and large motor skill coordination

### **Montessori Takeaways**

- Children should not be considered as empty vessels that need to be filled with knowledge and experience.
- Every child has his own potential.
- To be able to help a child, observe the child.
- Adults must not be egocentric and authoritative toward children.
- Every child goes through sensitive periods in his stages of growth.
- A child gains knowledge from his environment.



Maria Montessori created "prepared environments" for multi-age groups. She specifically designed materials for development that invited children to engage in learning activities of their own choice. Children cultivated concentration, motivation, self-discipline and a love for learning. The Montessori Method can be described with five constructivist principles. The first principle is, learning to be embedded in a complex, realistic and relevant environment. The second principle is the provision for social negotiation as well as shared responsibility for learning. The third principle is, support for multiple representations of content as Montessori materials are both broad and deep in scope. The fourth principle is, the constructivist learning environment to nurture self-awareness of the construction of knowledge. The fifth principle is, children to be encouraged for taking ownership of their learning.

## Maria Montessori's achievements

Maria Montessori always said her most significant contribution was that she observed children, discovered their true characteristics and the true nature of their work. She found that the work of the child during the early childhood years is the building block of the man and leader of tomorrow. Dr. Montessori published her own books that examined the physical, mental development of the child in the early years of their life, the nature of the child and her methods. Her first school became a great success and soon schools all over Italy began following her method. Her educational approach gained in popularity across the globe and soon Montessori schools were sprouting up everywhere.

## *The gentle revolution in Montessori*

"The power of development lies within the child – not the teacher, not in the curriculum. This power is a force that we often fail to notice or to understand".



Montessori felt it is essential for parents and teachers to understand the child. First, we must realise that the child comes into the world with potentials and that these potentials will reveal itself naturally if we allow freedom within his environment during development.

Second within the child lies a unique 'creative sensitivities' that assist the child in his development. These creative sensitivities give him some power over the environment to help him grow. These sensitivities exist only in childhood

The absorbent mind and sensitive periods are those sensitive powers according to Montessori. The sensitive periods describe the pattern the child follows in gaining knowledge of his environment. The absorbent mind, on the other hand, explains the process by which the child gains knowledge from his environment. When parents and teachers recognize and take advantage of the sensitive periods through which children pass, they can become more effective in supporting their learning and development

Third, she believed parents and adults should reflect on themselves and their attitude towards the child. Parents should aim to lessen their egocentric and authoritative attitude when they work with young children and approach the child positively to assist in his development.

When parents and adult reflect, they can build strong partnerships and gain a better understanding of children. Through reflective parenting, parents deepen their relationship with children.

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