

Summary

The contemporariness of Maria Montessori's pedagogical concept

Slavica Bašić
University of Zadar, Croatia
Department of Pedagogy

In recent decades an increasing number of scholars and pedagogues have been showing interest in the educational approach developed by Maria Montessori, applying it in practice and arguing that it is a modern and timely pedagogy that responds to the developmental needs of contemporary children and youth. Numerous surveys show that children educated in Montessori schools, in comparison to children educated in standard schools, demonstrate a greater motivation to learn, have a multiplicity of interests, display independence and a positive stance towards learning, as well as an increased sense of responsibility towards the community. Research in neuroscience and developmental psychology confirms the hypotheses laid down by Montessori pedagogy about the individual development plan as evolving through certain stages (sensitive periods, learning windows) and about the need to have a didactically formulated environment that will support individual development.

Unlike the emancipatory pedagogy and socio-constructivism, Montessori has placed the requirement for freedom, autonomy and self-activity within the bounds of a developmental and moral freedom and clearly defined the conditions of the freedom and the assumptions of the child's autonomy. Freedom interpreted as a development of competencies for action represents the aim, but also the journey a child goes through during the development period when it needs safety, protection, attention and support from the adults.

The contemporariness of Montessori pedagogy is to be found in scientifically-based developmental psychology, in pedagogically formulated teaching and in the pedagogical ethos of the teacher.

Keywords: sensitive periods, didactically formulated environment, freedom of choice, developmental and moral freedom, ethos of the teacher.