

## DEVELOPMENT AND INFLUENCE OF THE MONTESSORI METHOD IN TEACHING

### *DESENVOLVIMENTO E INFLUÊNCIA DO MÉTODO MONTESSORIANO NO ENSINO*

### *DESARROLLO Y INFLUENCIA DEL MÉTODO MONTESSORI EN LA ENSEÑANZA*

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**ABSTRACT:** This article has the objective of discussing the importance of Maria Montessori's observational method for children's development regarding education. A comparison between the doctor and educator's biography and her theories about development during childhood was made, taking into consideration her practical experiments, such as the Casa dei Bambini. The core of this study is summarized by the recovery of the innovations of the Montessori method, demonstrating its importance to the transformation of teaching, respecting children's evolutionary phases, all of which has kept her theory present even in current times, with collaborative learning and Montessori schools around the world. The results of this article show the social nature of the transformations made by the Italian researcher, whose life was dedicated to teaching special needs and low-income children.

**KEYWORDS:** Playful learning. Educational theories. Teaching methodology. Childhood. Collaborative learning.

**RESUMO:** Neste artigo, o objetivo é discutir a importância do método de observação para o desenvolvimento infantil de Maria Montessori no âmbito da educação. Partindo do eixo comparativo entre a biografia da médica e pedagoga e suas teorias em torno do desenvolvimento das crianças, buscou-se considerar seus experimentos na Casa dei Bambini. O foco é recuperar as inovações do método montessoriano, destacando a transformação do ensino da criança, respeitando suas fases evolutivas, o que tornou a sua teoria presente até os dias atuais, com a aprendizagem colaborativa e as escolas montessorianas ao redor do mundo. O resultado desta pesquisa mostra o cunho social das transformações feitas pela pesquisadora italiana, cuja vida foi consagrada a ensinar crianças deficientes e de baixa renda.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Lúdico. Teorias educacionais. Metodologia de ensino. Infância. Aprendizagem colaborativa.

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**RESUMEN:** *En este artículo, el objetivo es discutir la importancia del método de observación para el desarrollo infantil de Maria Montessori en el contexto de la educación. Partiendo del eje comparativo entre la biografía de la doctora y pedagoga y sus teorías en torno del desarrollo de los niños, buscamos considerar sus experimentos en la Casa dei Bambini. El enfoque es recuperar las innovaciones del método Montessori, destacando la transformación de la educación infantil, respetando sus fases evolutivas, que hizo presente su teoría hasta la actualidad, con el aprendizaje colaborativo y las escuelas Montessori de todo el mundo. El resultado de esta investigación muestra el carácter social de las transformaciones realizadas por la investigadora italiana, cuya vida estuvo dedicada a la enseñanza de niños discapacitados y de escasos recursos.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Lúdico. Teorías educativas. Metodología de enseñanza. Infancia. Aprendizaje colaborativo.*

## Introduction

In this article, the objective is to present the pedagogical method of the Italian Maria Montessori (1870-1952) and her educational and philosophical principles. At Casa dei Bambini, a school she created to welcome abandoned children from the San Lorenzo neighborhood, the pedagogue developed her concept of moral autonomy (also internal discipline or self-discipline developed by the child), learning using didactic materials of her own authorship, and their own literacy method. Then, his main pedagogical and philosophical ideals about childhood and teaching will be presented, such as the possibility of social transformation through school, his theories about perception, independent activity and the absorbing spirit, as well as teaching as a non-linear process. In addition, when approaching the beginning of her trajectory in the world of Education through his work in the psychiatry clinic of his university, it will be possible to consider Montessori not only in her capacity as a pioneer in the field of Pedagogy, but also as an active area of Medicine. According to Ferrari (2008, w/p, our translation), “the mental evolution of the child accompanies biological growth and can be identified in defined phases, each one more suitable for certain types of content and learning”, which acts as an example of the biological basis of the Montessori method.

The central part of this article is the presentation of the method created by the pedagogue and the importance of the new perspectives brought by her. This includes his criticisms of the scientific pedagogy of his time, teacher formation focused on student observation, student freedom and self-discipline, sensory learning and her proposals about literacy and the school environment. All the innovations introduced by her provided a better understanding of childhood, as well as a transformation of the teacher's and student's role in

learning, crucial concepts for theories such as collaborative learning that we have today and for the maintenance of modern Montessori schools.

### **A little of Maria's life**

On 31 August 1870, Maria Tecla Artemisia Montessori was born in Chiaraville, a commune in the province of Ancona, Italy. Her father, Alessandro Montessori, an employee at the Ministry of Finance, and her mother, Renilde Stoppani, from an educated, upper-middle-class family, defended liberal ideals. Her family raised her with strict rules, once they believed in her extraordinary potential.

At the age of five, little Maria moved with her family to Rome because her father had been transferred, and there she completed her basic and higher education. Until adolescence, the young woman had little interest in studies. Thus, she entered the Technical School focused on Mathematics and Physics (1886). With the lack of resources to hire private lessons related to the Classical Lyceum curriculum, she found it difficult to enter the University of Rome. From 1890 to 1892, the young woman took a preparatory course in several disciplines, which allowed her to enter the Medicine course (1893).

Inside the university, Montessori faced a lot of machismo. She took hours of dissection and anatomy classes separate from her peers, who were all male. However, with much effort and support from her parents (especially her mother), she completed her medical course, being the first Italian woman to do so.

In 1897, the doctor began her work as a volunteer assistant at the psychiatry clinic at the University of Rome. She examined children with intellectual disabilities who would be able to leave the psychiatric clinic and subjected them to didactic activities. It was by observing these children that Montessori concluded that they still showed a desire to play, and what they lacked within the psychiatric institution were adequate stimuli. When looking for ways to educate them, she found the works of Bourneville, Itard, Séguin and Pereira, her great inspirations (in particular, Itard and his student, Séguin). It was seeking to provide new opportunities for these children considered less capable that she decided to study educational and pedagogical problems. In 1898, she had her only child, Mario, who was raised away from his parents in rural Rome. Montessori was not reunited with him until 1912, after the death of her mother.

While following this line of studies, the educator worked from 1900 to 1902 at the *Scuola Magistrale Ortofrenica*, a research and teaching space within the University of Rome

in whose foundation she had participated. This place functioned both as a model school for children with different disabilities and as a training space for educators, doctors, and other specialists with an interest in this area. Seeking to deepen in the area of Pedagogy, she enrolled in the Philosophy course at the University of Rome, the same university where she would teach Pedagogical Anthropology (1906).

Soon after her formation in Pedagogy, Montessori received an invitation to revitalize San Lorenzo, a poor neighborhood in Rome. It was there that she founded *Casa dei Bambini*, a school that welcomed and taught children who were abandoned by the difficult conditions of the neighborhood. In this way, the pedagogue managed, once again, to provide a quality education to marginalized children, promoting education without social restrictions. Based on the observations made by the educator at *Casa dei Bambini*, she created a suitable classroom configuration for the children, giving them access to furniture and materials suitable for their size. However, after two years in São Lourenço and with the opening of more *Casas dei Bambini*, Montessori was banned from returning to the neighborhood by the project developer.

At the same time, she published her book “*O Método da Pedagogia Científica Aplicado à Educação Infantil nas Casas das Crianças*” (The Scientific Pedagogy Method Applied to Early Childhood Education in Children’s Homes), also known as “The Montessori Method”. Was written on a farm loaned by two friends, which became the first formation center for Montessori educators. Because of the book's success, Queen Margaret of Italy funded the first Montessori organization.

With the death of her mother (1912), Montessori went to live with her son Mario, and gave up her position as a researcher at the University of Rome to spread her ideas about childhood and education. The pedagogue led the first international course for the formation of educators in Rome in 1913. With the excellent reception, her perspectives opened up in the United States, where Montessori published “Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook” (1914). The following year, she accepted an invitation from the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco to create a Montessori glass-walled room. In 1919, she traveled around Europe disseminating her method.

Back in Italy, Benito Mussolini recruited her to create the *Opera Montessori*, the body in charge of disseminating her method (1924). The Italian government founded the *Regia Scuola di Metodo Montessori*, aimed at formation teachers in 1928, including a *Casa dei Bambini* as a model. In this school, the curriculum, however, was changed by the Italian government, aiming at a nationalist education. The educator and her son created the

International Montessori Association in 1929, and years later it spread to other countries. To this day there is this association in Amsterdam.

With the Italian government incessantly modifying her work, she resigned from the *Opera Montessori* and the board of the *Regia Scuola*, asking Mussolini to remove her name from these bodies. A year later, after being watched incessantly by the Italian government, Montessori exiled herself to Catalonia, and in 1936 both the *Opera Montessori* and the *Regia Scuola* closed. That same year the Spanish Civil War began, which led to her moving to England and, soon after, to Laren, the Netherlands. It was there that she wrote “Erdkinder”, a book dedicated to the education of teenagers. After three years in the Netherlands, she received an invitation to go to India, but her stay was extended to 6 years because of restrictions on movement caused by the Second World War. After being released and returning to the Netherlands, she still traveled, wrote and studied for many years, dying only at the age of almost 82 on 6 May 1952. (SALOMÃO, 2021) (RÖHRS, 2010).

### Research Center

The *Casas dei Bambini* were the center of research, practice and the establishment of theories about education for Maria Montessori. Salomão claims that “there was, from his point of view, the fabulous achievement of 'socializing the maternal role', freeing women to work, and 'redeeming' the poorest population through education in the *Casa*” (2021, w/p, our translation). The purpose of these establishments was to be entirely adapted for children, from the size and weight of the furniture to the structure of the environment, with vibrant colors, paintings, rugs and teaching materials within their reach. These procedures had the function of leading the children to live and move through these spaces in order to create a sense of responsibility and independence, which also allowed them to participate in the maintenance of the spaces.

Based on Rousseau's concept of 'general will', in which freedom is only possible from the moment we follow the laws that we discover and apply, Montessori hoped that children, when transiting through the spaces of the *Casas dei Bambini* and participating in the functioning of the house and its rules, to develop the concept of moral autonomy, making the discipline come from them, and not from outside. In this way, she developed a program of practical life exercises for children to exercise concentration, patience and meditation, but always applying these concepts to everyday tasks.

The educator developed teaching materials to help children's development. They were created and standardized so that the child could freely choose to engage in a certain activity that would help in the development of his intellect. Children could, for example, choose fitting exercises that had cylinders of different sizes and shapes to be inserted into adapted cavities. Thus, the child would learn from his own mistake, as the only solution is that if the cylinder does not fit, he must try again until he finds which cavity corresponds to it. Another significant strategy is the development of teaching materials that allow children to easily assess their performance. If the teacher asked him to walk in a circle following a drawing on the floor, the child would quickly identify not having been able to follow the indicated path, being able to correct the route. There were several exercises aimed at stimulating each of the senses, which were practiced and discussed in a group. This developed the child's social skills, linking his social life to education. However, the educator, as much as he could make these tasks available and teach them, should not interfere with children's freedom, an orientation given by Montessori since the first *Casa dei Bambini*. He should only show what is necessary and what is superfluous, setting a limit.

As for the literacy method, it was developed at the first *Casa dei Bambini* in San Lorenzo. From the moment the children asked to be taught, Montessori created the Letters of Sandpaper and the Mobile Alphabet, which allowed them to feel and replicate the contours of the letters of the alphabet. As a result, poor and abandoned children were able to reach the same level of literacy as children in traditional schools in record time (SALOMÃO, 2021).

### **Principles of her vision on education**

First of all, Montessori believed that childhood is the building element of adult life, that is, the most important element. Therefore, she approved of the changes in vision that occurred in the society of her time regarding childhood, which opened space for the needs of children, different from those of adults, to be considered. Thinking about it, she wrote the following sentence: “The social problem of childhood makes us penetrate the laws of human formation and helps us to create a new consciousness, leading us, consequently, to an orientation of our social life” (MONTESSORI, n/d, p. 11, our translation)

From this thought, we noticed that the doctor considered education a means of social transformation. She has always had a very scientific look at Pedagogy because of her medical formation. Her method had scientific foundations, starting with the educator's observer role. This one should stay at a distance, watching in silence and only intervening

when necessary. Furthermore, after detailed and rigorous observation, the educator should then interpret the educational processes. However, Röhrs (2010) notes that, although Montessori had a very objective and detailed method of observation, interpretations of it were much more subjective and lacked theoretical and scientific rigor.

Montessori also created her own theory of perception. Regarding her teaching material, she decided that it should not necessarily try to hold the child's attention, allowing generalization and abstraction, but not focusing at all on the child. She also stated that the devaluation of direct perception is a mistake, because what we find in nature and around us can be broadened in a generic way and applied in situations that are strange to us. The quote from the pedagogue brought by Röhrs illustrates this concept perfectly:

As a whole, the world repeats more or less the same elements. If we study, for example, the life of plants or insects in nature, we get a rough idea of the life of plants or insects all over the world. Nobody knows all the plants. But it is enough to see a pine tree to be able to imagine how all pine trees live (MONTESSORI *apud* RÖHRS, 2010, p. 26, our translation).

In this excerpt, the author notes that the observation of nature with the extrapolation of concepts from it brings Montessori's thoughts closer to the ideas of Pestalozzi, who placed great emphasis on direct perception and approved of exposure to everyday tasks and nature.

Another concept of paramount importance to her method is that of independent activity. Röhrs explains it from the concept of freedom: this would need to be renounced, and as the child develops and acquires more autonomy, freedom is regained. This reconquest process is completely conscious, counting on the child recognizing their value and ability and maturing from the activities they perform. Thus, upon regaining freedom, the child achieves independent activity, which would aim at self-education.

Montessori also considers the concept of the absorbing spirit, which is closely related to child development. Children, no matter how intelligent from the beginning, have the physical aspect as predominant. Therefore, their education must be balanced between physical and psychic stimuli during their primary developmental stage. If she focuses only on physical stimuli, children, as absorbing spirits, can internalize impressions and experiences they observe around them that solidify wrong or inappropriate concepts for their development, since this absorbing behavior has no filter. The absorbing spirit is, then, the ability and the will to learn, which are directed to the external environment to extract experiences and knowledge. In other words, as Montessori said, “the child has the creative attitude, the potential energy, to build a psychic world at the expense of the environment”

(n/d, p. 50, our translation). Thus, as the external environment is so important in this process, the organization of the environment in which the child learns is crucial. Röhrs selects the following thought of the author to express this idea:

The first step of education is to provide the child with a means to develop the functions assigned to them by nature. This does not mean that we should be content with it and let the child do whatever pleases her, but that we should be willing to collaborate with the order of nature, with one of its laws, which wants this development to take place through the child's own experiences. (MONTESSORI *apud* RÖHRS, 2010, p. 29, our translation).

According to her, not only must the environment be monitored so that it can develop the child's proper functions, but this must be done so that nature is not disrespected, relying on the child's independent activity.

A central notion refers to Montessori's understanding of education, which considers learning as a non-linear process. In fact, learning would consist of a sequence of “explosions”, also described as “awakenings” or “revelations”, which move the individual's evolution (MONTESSORI, n/d, p. 31). Furthermore, these explosions cannot be predicted in any way.

### **The Montessori method proposal**

Pedagogy at the time when the author began her studies on education, entitled 'scientific pedagogy', had a medical formation, with 'scientific educators' who used physical and anthropological measurements of children for their teaching. Thus, it was difficult to form educators starting from the initiation in experimentation, causing Montessori to propose the following: teacher formation through observation at the same time that the school underwent a major transformation. In this new school proposal, children must be able to be spontaneous and have the freedom to develop their personalities. It is only in this way that educators in formation will be able to observe them and create an individual study of each student. The pedagogue also elaborates on the concept of children's freedom about which she talks so much: freedom is not any disordered activity that the child would do if they were abandoned, but the release of anything that may prevent following one's natural development.

Regarding her method proposal, applied initially to children with special needs and then to the rest of the children she worked with, Montessori first developed the idea that only measurements were not enough to educate, as many of her time imagined, but that education



should change something in the child, with more impactful and permanent results. The following thought by Montessori concisely summarizes what she believed about scientific pedagogy:

As long as the researchers limited themselves to airing 'new problems', there would be no basis for claiming that a 'scientific pedagogy' was emerging: it is the solution to the problems that it must provide, and not just the evidence of difficulties and dangers for so long ignored by those responsible for the education of children (MONTESSORI, 1965, p. 41, our translation).

She also explained why the study of child psychology is not productive when observing the child in a traditional school environment: children would be defensive or tired in the school environment, which has characteristics that are outside the child's daily life. In this way, children would not show their true impulses and personalities at school, making it difficult to discover their psychological laws and their natural character. This explains the need that the educator felt to transform the school into a space whose function was to accommodate the child so that she could exercise her will and develop freely.

When it comes to discipline, Montessori never applied punishments, claiming that they are only necessary for delinquents and inferior people. What she considered as a disciplined individual is also not one who stays still and immobile all the time, but an active individual, master of himself and who knows how to move between the rules of life. This discipline must be applied not only to the school environment, but to the rest of their social life, having the collective interest as a guide: the child must learn to limit their freedom so that their actions do not hurt, harm or offend others. For this to be possible, the notion of good and evil must be internalized by the child, without evil being associated with activity and goodness with immobility, as in traditional teaching. Thus, the educator must discipline the activity, ensuring that it is, in Montessori's words, "useful, intelligent and conscious, without showing any impoliteness" (MONTESSORI, 1965, p. 50, our translation). Finally, she also states that psychic development is necessary for discipline, because the child cannot obey without knowing what it is to obey, or why he is obeying.

Regarding the child's physique, the author states that she is always moving or feeling the need to move. That's why a muscular education of the child must be carried out: as they develop their movement better, they will be able to control and inhibit it when they deem it necessary.

She also considered the development of the senses important, especially for early childhood. This development fits within general education, which has the function of

preparing the individual for his environment, coming before more advanced intellectual operations. For this, children should be introduced to different stimuli gradually, showing how to differentiate each one and how to distinguish small amounts of a certain stimulus, thus fine-tuning the senses. Montessori adds that these skills are necessary for moral education and aesthetic education. Furthermore, touch is especially important and must be properly developed, as we depend on it for a good deal of our daily activities. Tact is also essential for the Montessori literacy method. Another sense to which she attaches enormous importance is hearing, as it is through that an individual perceives movements based on sounds. Hearing also allows for the notion of silence, which the pedagogue intertwines with her concept of discipline:

[Silence] must be understood in a positive way, as a “state superior” to the normal order of things, as an instantaneous inhibition that demands an effort, a tension of the will, which eliminates the noises of everyday life, as if isolating the soul of the outer voices (MONTESSORI, 1965, p. 138, our translation).

Achieving complete silence would then rely not only on a well-developed auditory perception, but also on a sense of self-control and self-awareness. Another important idea for her method is that of lessons. The lessons would be the moments in which the educator presents a new object to the children, explaining its functions and how to use it through words or demonstrations. These lessons should be objective and expressed as concisely and truthfully as possible. If the child does not show interest in the object, the lesson must not be repeated and the educator cannot indicate to the child that he/she did not understand the lesson. Something very important to clarify is the fact that the lessons are not a simple aid for the educator to teach, but they are the didactic means by which children learn. Thus, if the child discovers an interest in the activity presented in the lesson, when performing the task, the object becomes a “means of development” (MONTESSORI, 1965, p. 143).

When it comes to literacy, Montessori considers that it depends on logically organized thinking and an ability to retrieve absent people and objects. This is an advanced stage of development, and if the child does not have these skills consolidated, it is too early to teach the child written language. Still in relation to literacy, the educator says that reading and writing are not processes learned simultaneously:

Writing, while this assertion contradicts a certain prejudice, precedes reading. [...] I call reading the interpretation of a latent idea in graphic signs (MONTESSORI, 1965, p. 214, our translation).

With this in mind, one should first try to teach the formation of words from movable letters and then recognize meanings and interpret ideas from them.

## **New School**

The *Casas dei Bambini* and the entire educational reform proposal behind them made Montessori one of the great figures of the international New School movement. However, she presented great differences in relation to other participants of this movement. The researcher has always attested to having been strongly influenced by Rousseau, especially his treatise on education entitled 'Emile'. Thus, she took on the ideas that the world of adults does not take children into account and that children's nature must be respected, allowing them to develop freely. Furthermore, she never collaborated directly with other names at New School, being only indirectly influenced by some of them, namely Percy Nunn and Ovide Decroly.

In the case of Percy Nunn, Montessori met him while he was giving a lecture series in London. It was there that she discovered his theories of the hormic – or life force, which causes the individual to seek self-fulfillment – and of memory, which inspired her to create her concept of the developing human spirit. According to this theory, the human spirit only acquires its form by interacting with the external environment, being shaped by it. In the case of Ovide Decroly, the inspiration goes deeper, especially because their trajectories and life stories are so similar. The two were one year apart in age, graduated in Medicine and, therefore, had a vision of education and children more focused on science and biology. They also created their own educational establishments in the same year (1907) and studied Itard and Séguin as a basis for their educational practices (RÖHRS, 2010).

## **Collaborative learning**

Collaborative learning, an educational resource, is summarized as follows by Torres and Irala: “In a school context, collaborative learning would be two or more people working in groups with shared goals, helping each other in the construction of knowledge” (2014, p. 65, our translation). The teacher's role, in this case, would be to create learning situations so that favorable exchanges occur between students and between each student and the teacher himself.

This technique integrates several pedagogical trends and theoretical bases, with one of them being the New School itself, a movement of which Montessori was a part. John Dewey, Freinet, Ferrière, in addition to Montessori herself, were some of the members of New School who proposed an education with the student at the center, focusing on their self-development and having their experiences and needs as a priority. The centrality of the student in the educational process allows him to take his knowledge to the world, organizing his own reality and integrating himself into his environment. Torres and Irala complete this thought, saying that “this new approach, with a humanist outline, emphasized the subject as the main creator of human knowledge and prioritized interpersonal relationships for human development” (2014, p. 70, our translation). This idea can be seen in Montessori's concept of freedom, which leaves the student free to choose their activities and to face the difficulties they encounter in different ways, including communicating the problems encountered with their colleagues or with their teacher.

The student as the central axis of learning has, as already noted during the description of the Montessori method, the consequence of taking the role of the teacher as a transmitter of knowledge and holder of the truth. This brings with it a new role for the teacher: that of facilitator. This fact occurs not only with Montessori's theory, but in the New School and in collaborative learning as a whole. The teacher aims to provide activities and conditions in the school environment that promote the individual development of each student, whether through interaction with colleagues, with the teacher or with the environment itself.

Torres and Irala bring a thought by Panitz that further clarifies the collaborative learning process: he characterizes it as “a way of dealing with people that respects and highlights the individual skills and contributions of each member of the group” (PANITZ *apud* TORRES; IRALA, 2014, p. 67, our translation). The student, when placed in a situation that requires collaboration with the other, has his share of responsibility for the process of collaboration and authority of thought and action, as well as other students. This preserves his centrality in the learning process, as he has to monitor and direct his actions, and also introduces him to new ways of thinking and acting from other individuals. In this way, the student learns to interact in a variety of contexts, be they social, cultural, historical or political.

As much as Montessori's method presupposes collaboration, Ferrari states that “[...] [the] most common criticisms of Montessoriism refer to the individualistic approach” (FERRARI, 2008, n/p, our translation). This demonstrates that there is a misunderstanding or application of the method, as Montessori has always preached a school environment

aimed at collective use, teaching materials to be shared and an approach to individual learning that aims to act in the world and in society.

### **Montessori teaching today**

It is currently possible to find strictly Montessori schools around the world. Talita de Almeida, founding president of the Brazilian Association of Montessori Education (ABEM), states that “the great centers of education are found in Mexico, Japan, the United States and India” (1984, p. 10, our translation). Furthermore, even though the educator’s initial method has been tested on children aged between three and six, Carlota Boto, a professor at the Faculty of Education of the University of São Paulo (USP), states that “the development of the human being begins right when it is born and continues until the age of 24”, and therefore, “as a philosophy, it is possible to think about the method [Montessori] also in the phases subsequent to the first stages of life” (BOTO *apud* DISERÓ, 2018, n/p, our translation). Therefore, it is justified that in the second decade of the 21st century, the Montessori method is aimed at pregnant women and there is also an attempt at university education in India.

In Brazil, however, there are many schools based on the Montessori method, which arrived in the country in the 1960s, in the cities of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. However, it did not obtain wide dissemination, either among educators or among the general public. Almeida attributes this lack of knowledge to the following factors: lack of professionals properly formed in the method, few certifications from Montessori International Centers and Courses; the formation of many Montessori sayings can only be done with access to the seven Montessori works translated into Portuguese; and the commercialization of the method, whose popularity around the world causes it to be used as a label to attract new enrollments (ALMEIDA, 1984).

When it comes to the maintenance of the values established by the pedagogue, it is observed that the Montessori method still works as a non-elite method, which values to serve everyone. Their schools welcome all children, regardless of social class, and “their best results are with deprived children, from class C, who need the stimuli that all the instruments offer” (1984, p. 17, our translation), completes Almeida. She adds that, just as the first schools created by Montessori were located in poor neighborhoods such as San Lorenzo, many schools in Europe, the United States and Mexico are created and maintained

by the government or by groups of working-class parents, which seems indicate that the educator's initial idea of accessibility is still alive.

### **Final considerations**

Maria Montessori, based on everyday experiences, understood the importance of stimulating children and improving teaching in order to meet all their educational needs, thus consolidating this search, particularly during her period of work in the psychiatry clinic of the University of Rome. A lifetime dedicated to providing children with disabilities and children from underserved neighborhoods with a quality learning experience. Such a legacy is still seen as innovative, and Montessori schools seek to serve proletarian or low-income populations<sup>3</sup>.

Following this path dedicated to the good of children, the doctor contributed with many innovations to pedagogy and education. Its new classroom model, its new formation proposal for educators based on observation, its so creative form of literacy and its understanding of the child based on freedom and self-knowledge are some of the proposals that understand the deprived child as a human being that deserves all support and formation. In this conception of children, their teaching method is still influential in the world of education, as it identifies with collaborative learning and persists with the maintenance of schools dedicated to its methodology.

Regarding current teaching, covering all ages, Montessori's greatest contributions are certainly her principles of moral autonomy and student freedom. The acquisition of self-discipline and the notion of responsibility that come from the principle of moral autonomy make an individual much more prepared to live in society and to acquire knowledge in any area of education. On the other hand, the student's freedom to choose the subject of his study and the step in which he will develop his knowledge provides a necessary self-knowledge so that the individual reaches his maximum potential and knows how to respect his limits. This enables knowledge beyond academic situations, an essential and scarce element in formal education that would be beneficial to the child.

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<sup>3</sup> Brazil has more than 60 Montessori schools affiliated with the Montessori Organization of Brazil (OMB), such as the Aguai Montessori School in the city of São Paulo (São Paulo), the Aldeia Montessori Education Nucleus in the city of Rio de Janeiro (Rio de Janeiro), and the Maria Montessori School in the city of Cruz das Almas (Bahia).

For the application of these ideals in specific disciplines, especially outside the early stages of the child's development, perhaps a philosophical application, less tied to a strictly Montessori methodology, is more likely and fruitful. Considering the use of the principles of collaboration and freedom in the teaching of Portuguese, for example, it is possible that individuals who come into contact with this area do not view grammar learning in such a normative way because they are collaborating with colleagues and teachers with a different linguistic background in an environment that encourages plurality, as proposed by Montessori. This would facilitate the teaching of linguistic variation, which is not very prevalent in Brazilian schools. In addition, the freedom to choose the subjects on which the student prefers to learn removes the expectation of a compulsory and truncated learning of grammatical structures. This allows the student to seek to learn about the language using strategies that are more suited to their way of knowing the world, escaping from traditional teaching and discovering a taste for the functioning of the language that they would not have discovered in traditional teaching. This adaptability is what makes Montessori's principles and method so accessible and, consequently, so egalitarian.

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### How to reference this article

CAMPOS, M. I. B.; XAVIER, G. N. P. Development and influence of the Montessori method in teaching. **Rev. Sem Aspas**, Araraquara, v. 10, n. 00, e021017, Jan./Dec. 2021. e-ISSN: 2358-4238. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29373/sas.v10i00.15803>

**Submitted:** 07/09/2021

**Required revisions:** 12/10/2021

**Approved:** 15/11/2021

**Published:** 29/12/2021