Module 1 (Sample)
International Montessori Teachers Training Program
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Introduction to Montessori
Dr. Montessori is recognized as the founder of Montessori Method and one of the pioneers in the development of early childhood education. She is also respected and reputed for promoting a substantial number of important educational reforms, which now have become integral components of 21st century’s educational core.

Montessori was born on 31st August 1870 to an educated middle-class family in Ancona, Italy. She was the only child of her parents. Her father’s name was Alessandro Montessori and he was a conservative military man. On the other hand, her mother, Renidle Montessori, was a liberal lady and supported Maria’s educational pursuit. Her father’s frequent transfers gave Maria a chance to have education in big cities throughout Italy.

Almost whole of Europe, in those days, was very conservative in its attitude toward and treatment of women. Italy was no exception but Montessori pursued medical and scientific education. Despite many years of opposition from her father, teachers, and male fellow students, she graduated with highest honors from the Medical School of the University of Rome, becoming the first woman physician in Italy in 1896. Thus, Montessori holds the title of being the first lady doctor in the history of Italy.
Work with Special Children

Montessori was always unwilling to enter education as a career as it was one of the three traditional roles open to women at that time: working with children, homemaking or the convent. But the ironic thing is that she became best known for her contributions in education. As a physician, Montessori specialized in pediatrics and the new field of psychiatry. Her approach was more scientific, rather than the familiar philosophical approach followed by many of the educational innovators who came before and after her.

Montessori taught at the medical school of the University of Rome, and through its free clinics she came into frequent contact with the children of the working class and poor. Her experience with the children of poverty convinced Montessori that intelligence is not rare, although it seemed to present itself in many forms other than those recognized by traditional schools.

In 1900, at the elapse of just a short span of four years after her degree in medicine, Montessori was appointed director of the new Orthophrenic School attached to the University of Rome, formerly a municipal asylum for the "deficient and insane" (special) children of the city, most of whom would be diagnosed in the twenty-first century as autistic* or mentally disabled. One day she inquired from a nurse about their awful condition, to which she replied that they fought for food and threw themselves on the floor to catch bread crumbs… that was how they got dirty. Thus, the children were kept in a prison like room with less food and no hopes of recovery. She and her colleagues started a wave of reform in the
institution. Montessori discovered that her young patients needed purposeful activities, which could stimulate their senses and mind, and add into their self-esteem, and the sense of achievement. Montessori dismissed the nurses and caretakers who treated those children with hatred and contempt. This caused a great scarcity of staff. However, Montessori set out to teach as many as possible of the less-disturbed children to care for themselves and their fellow inmates.

**Inspiration from Itard and Séguin**

For almost a year (from 1900 to 1901), Montessori browsed the medical libraries of Western Europe seeking successful work previously done with the education of children with disabilities. During her hunt she got inspired by the work of two almost forgotten French doctors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: Jean-Marc-Gaspard Itard (1775 - 1838) and Édouard Séguin (1812-1880). Itard is well known even today for his work with the "Wild Boy of Aveyron", a young boy who was found by some hunters wandering naked in the forest.

The boy was, presumably, lost or abandoned as a very young child and thus spent many years of life alone in the forest. The boy could not speak and lacked almost all of the skills of everyday life. This boy had grown up outside of human society without the influence of interaction with his own kind. Itard started a study of the boy in order to shed some light on the age-old debate about what proportion of human intelligence and personality is hereditary (genetic) and what proportion stems from learned behavior (environmental influence).

This experiment was a limited success. Itard found his wild boy uncooperative and unwilling or unable to learn most things. **This led him to postulate the existence of developmental periods in normal human growth.** He formed the hypothesis that, during these "sensitive periods," a child must experience stimulation to develop normally, or he will grow up forever lacking the skills and intellectual concepts not developed at the stage when nature expects them to be readily absorbed. **In simple terms, if appropriate experiences are not available at specific times during development in early years, it may get hindered or does not take place at all.**

Although Itard's efforts to teach the wild boy were barely successful, his work had two important implications:

1) If proper stimulation and experiences are not provided during sensitive periods of development to a child, it may hinder or does not take place at all.

2) Furtherance of handicapped children is possible.
Montessori drew further confirmation of Itard’s ideas from the work of Édouard Séguin, a French psychologist who was a student of Itard and carried on his research. His work, however, was far more specific and organized. He also managed to apply his ideas to the everyday education of children with disabilities. Working primarily with the blind, Séguin developed a methodical approach to breaking skills down into small steps, and was highly successful with a carefully developed collection of hands-on educational materials. Teens and Tens boards, now used as a Montessori material, were also originally designed by Seguin.

**The Orthophrenic School**

From Itard and Seguin, in the real sense, Montessori took the idea of a scientific approach to education, based on observation and experimentation. She belongs to the child study school of thought. She continued her work with the careful practice and objectivity like that of a biologist studying the natural behavior of an animal in the forest.

Montessori studied her mentally disabled patients with utmost zeal. She kept on trying Seguin’s educational method, and carefully noted their response to her attempts as well as their progress in becoming increasingly independent and verbal.

She almost startled the whole world when many of these mentally disabled children, after two years, were able to pass the standardized exams given by the Italian public schools. Gradually the children also learned to perform most of the everyday tasks involved in preparing the meals and maintaining the environment of the residential school.

Just when her work with mentally challenged children got recognition and fame, another question began to haunt her mind… “What kept normal children back” in the exams. Montessori responded by suggesting that newborn human beings normally enter the world with an intellectual potential that was barely being developed by schools in the early years of the twentieth century. She challenged that if she could attain such results with children who were disabled, schools should be able to get dramatically better results with normal children.

Montessori’s work strengthened her humanistic ideals, and people began to regard her as a reformer. She actively supported various social reform movements. She was a highly respected and frequently invited guest speaker throughout Europe on behalf of children’s rights, the women’s movement, peace education, and the importance of the League of Nations. Montessori became well known and highly regarded throughout Europe, which contributed to the publicity that surrounded her schools, started just a little later.

**Casa dei Bambini**

Montessori, now, being intoxicated by the new zest of her life, the desire to implement her
of them were aggressive, impatient and cranky. At this stage, Montessori did not know if her experiment would work under such conditions. However, she, not caring about the odds, began by teaching the older children how to help out with the everyday tasks that needed to be done. She also introduced the hand-on materials of perceptual discrimination and puzzles and eye-hand manipulative exercises that she had used with mentally disabled children.

Montessori must have had some hope of success but the results surprised her. The materials seemed to be working miraculously. Unlike her mentally challenged children who had to be pushed to use her apparatus, the normal children were naturally attracted to the work she introduced. The aimless street wanderers began to settle down. They began to show longer and longer periods of constructive activity. They were fascinated with the puzzles and perceptual training devices.

Montessori introduced exercises of practical day to day living like cleaning, dressing, gardening, etc. and to her amazement, children aging three and four years took the greatest delight in learning practical everyday living skills. She noticed that
such activities made them more independent and added to their self-respect. Their interest was developing day by day and they progressed so rapidly that each day they pleaded Maria to show them more. The older children began to take care of the school. They also assisted their teachers with the preparation and serving of meals and the maintenance of a spotless environment. The discipline problems vanished dramatically. The children running wild in the street had turned to models of grace and courtesy in just a short span of time.

Montessori, when criticized of her method being too structured and academically demanding of young children, laughed out saying, "I followed these children, studying them, studied them closely, and they taught me how to teach them." Talking about the role of the teacher, she argued that the educator’s job is to serve the child, determining what each student needs to make the greatest progress. She believed that children follow their inner strong urges to select their activities and work. These urges are universally similar in all children and are the product of millions of years of evolution. Nature, itself encourages children to select the activities, which are appropriate for development at that stage. To her, a child who fails in school should not be blamed, any more than a doctor should blame a patient who does not get well fast enough. Just as it is the job of the physician to help people find the way to cure themselves, it is the educator’s job to facilitate the natural process of learning.

Montessori’s children showed tremendous progress into academics and each achievement was like a sudden explosion. The children were too young to be sent to public schools, yet they literally begged to be taught how to read and write. They learned to do so quickly and enthusiastically, using special manipulative materials. Montessori just kept on noticing the inclinations of the children and developed manipulatives accordingly. The other area, which fascinated the children, was numbers. To respond to their interest, the mathematically inclined doctor developed a series of concrete math learning materials. These
materials are so comprehensive and yet concrete in nature that they still fascinate many mathematicians and educators to this day. It did not take those three, four and five years old long to start adding and subtracting four-digit numbers. They further progressed on to multiplication, division, skip counting, and increasingly advanced and abstract concepts.

Montessori discovered an unlimited potential in children to learn. They began to show interests in other areas as well. This compelled the already overworked doctor to spend night after night designing new materials to keep pace with the children in geometry, geography, history, and natural science. Montessori discovered that her children showed more interest in academic manipulatives rather than toys. She made this discovery shortly after her first school opened, when a group of well-intentioned women gave the children a collection of lovely and expensive toys. The children took profound interest in those new gifts for a few days, but they soon returned to their learning materials. She also found that children generally preferred work over play, at least during the school day.

"Children read and do advanced mathematics in Montessori schools not because we push them, but because this is what they do when given the correct setting and opportunity. To deny them the right to learn because we, as adults, think that they should not is illogical and typical of the way schools have been run before."

Montessori method wasn’t so perfect since day one. She improved it through trial and error. She continued to observe the children deeply, made educated guesses and finally experimented. For example, one day the teacher arrived late at the center. The children, meanwhile, had crept in through the window and started their work. They even took the material themselves from the cupboard, which normally used to be locked, but was open just by chance. She, instantly, recognized that the children were capable of selecting their own work, and removed the cabinet and replaced it with low open shelves on which the activities were always available to the children. This seems to be a small change, but it actually was against all the educational theories and practices of that time.

Worldwide Response

Maria Montessori’s first Casa dei Bambini became famous in the entire world in a very short span of time. Thousands of visitors went away amazed and enthusiastic. After the success of her first
school, she started the second one and then the third and so on. Her system worked everywhere in so many different settings. Montessori became the interest of leaders and scientists around the world. Even, in America, figures like as Woodrow Wilson, Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas Edison, and Henry Ford supported and praised her work. Numerous publication and articles written about and by Montessori, made her a well-known personality to parents and teachers.

The most incredible thing about Montessori method is that her model center (Casa dei Bambini) got duplicated everywhere, which is a rare attribute, as in this field many others had promoted opinions, philosophies, and models that have not been readily duplicated. The Montessori method is the most systematic system of education that gets applied very well to new settings. In the first thirty years of the twentieth century, the Montessori Method seemed to offer something for everyone. For instance, scholars from conservative school of thought valued the calm, responsible behavior of the little children, along with their love for work. People with liberal approach highly praised the freedom and spontaneity. Many political leaders and educationists saw it as a way to reform the old-fashioned school systems of Europe, North America, and Asia, as well as an approach that they hoped would lead to a more hardworking, peace loving and disciplined population. Scientists of all disciplines praised Maria’s objectivity and the experimental foundation of this method. At one time the wave of support and enthusiastic praise for Maria was so high that many began to anticipate a dramatic change in the face of education, which unfortunately did not happen that fast.

The Decline and Revival of Interest in Montessori Education

The number of Montessori schools soared up to 1000 by 1925 and many tens of thousands more around the world. But things took a dramatic turn by 1940. Montessori movement virtually disappeared from the American scene and declined in many other countries. In America, only a few schools had the courage to pronounce themselves Montessori school, although many continued to operate without using the name. It is hard to find Montessori’s name in education related American textbooks of those times. However, since 1960s, there is a surprising revival and resurgence of Montessori movement in America. During this period, Montessori schools continued to expand in most of the rest of the world. The credit goes to Dr. Nancy McCormick Rambush who “rediscovered” and brought Montessori back to North America. Now there are thousands of schools again and hundreds of Montessori organization working in America. The leading names include American Montessori Society (AMS), Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE), American Montessori Society (AMS) and International Montessori Council (IMC).

Several reasons can be postulated about the decline of Montessori movement in the US, some of which include;
Montessori Prime Time:

During her lifetime we may rank the period from the opening of the first Children’s House in 1907 until the 1930s as her prime productive period. During this time, she continued her study of children, and developed a vastly expanded curriculum and methodology. A wave of support surged throughout Europe and America. Montessori schools started throughout Europe and North America. She even gave up her medical practice and devoted herself to her mission of REGENERATING MANKIND.

Though many so-called modern schools have given different names to the educational systems they used, but the truth is that every modern classroom reflects Montessori’s ideas to a fairly substantial degree. Certainly the current trends about multiple intelligence, the importance of mental health and emotional literacy, the attractiveness of the modern classroom, the use of manipulative materials in instruction, cooperative learning, authentic assessment, and multiage classrooms as a desirable model for classroom
groupings are just a few examples of ideas generally attributed to Maria Montessori. 

During her lifetime, Montessori was acknowledged as one of the world’s leading educators. Now, with development in understanding of child development, many educationists around the world and those seeking reform have rediscovered how clear and sensible her insight was. Most of them, who have studied Montessori, would affirm that Montessori education is definitely the right system of education for all times and for all cultures as children are born on the same nature.

**Highest Recognition & Awards to Montessori:**

Maria Montessori was pictured on the Italian 200 lire coin and through the 1990s on the 1000 lire bill, by far the most common one, replacing Marco Polo, until Italy adopted the Euro. She was also nominated for Nobel Peace Prize thrice.

**Montessori’s Death:**

Maria Montessori left the world in the Netherlands in 1952, but would always stay alive as she lives as an immortal through her method, which has helped and would continue to help children of all times to be better human beings. She lived in old days but was definitely “A WOMAN MUCH AHEAD OF HER TIME”.

*Grave of Maria Montessori in Noordwijk, The Netherlands*
Please encircle the correct answer

1. Dr. Maria Montessori was born in;
   a) Rome, Italy
   b) Noordwijk, The Netherlands
   c) Ancona, Italy

2. Dr. Maria Montessori was born on
   a) 31st August, 1870
   b) 21st July, 1870
   c) 19th Oct, 1870

3. What was Montessori’s Father name?
   a) Alessandro Montessori
   b) Alefandro Montessori
   c) Alando Montessori

4. Montessori’s father was a
   a) pilot
   b) painter
   c) military man
   d) astronaut

5. Montessori’s mother was a conservative lady
   a) true
   b) false

6. Montessori was the lady doctor with her specialization in
   a) neurology
   b) Pediatrics & psychiatry
   c) cardiology

7. Montessori started the first house of children in
   a) 1807
   b) 1907
   c) 1707
   d) 1607

8. Jean Itard was famous for his work with the wild boy of Aveyron.
   a) true
   b) false

9. Maria stressed the use of computers in the classrooms
   a) true
   b) false

10. Maria believed that education should be
    a) According to the laws of development
    b) According to the desires of the parents
    c) According to the wishes of the teachers

12. Maria’s first house of children was named
    a) Case dei Banani
    b) Casa dei Bambini
    c) Coso dei Bambini

13. Maria graduated in medicine as the first lady doctor in Italy in
    a) 1986
    b) 1896
    c) 1907

14. Maria was unwilling to enter education as a career because
    a) there was less earning in it.
    b) she thought she could never be a teacher.
    c) that was one of the three conservative roles open for women.

15. Maria decided to stop her work with mentally challenged children because
    a) she was not granted promotion on her job.
    b) she was fired from her post for terminating caretakers working in the asylum.
    c) she wanted to know if her method and approach could help normal children.

16. Montessori materials should be kept under lock, out of the reach of the students because
    a) they are very expensive and children can damage them.
    b) there is a possibility of choking hazards.
    c) No, the above statement is wrong and the material should be accessible to children and not to be kept under lock.

17. Montessori movement was in its prime time during
    a) 1896 to 1907
    b) 1907 to 1930s
    c) 1930 to 1952

18. Montessori was awarded Noble Peace Price
    a) once
    b) thrice
    c) never
Montitute offers two types of Montessori curriculum and training manuals; Montessori Preschool / Kindergarten (for age 3 to 6 years).

The pre-school curriculum consist of 9 fully coloured manuals, which contain the most up to date Montessori content. The first rated material will be a lifetime teaching resource for you, whether you are a mother, teacher or running your own Montessori house of children. Each module provides a deep insight into the concerned area of Montessori education. All Montessori classroom activities are described in simple language and are supported with examples, illustrations and pictures.

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