

# MARIA MONTESSORI: PEACE EDUCATION THROUGH DISCIPLINE

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*Averting war is the work of politicians; establishing peace is the work of educators. —Maria Montessori.*

## **Abstract:**

*Maria Montessori, one of the most distinguished educator, philosopher, practitioner and thinker--renowned for her contributions to early childhood education. The main objective of the present study was to examine the concept of peace education through discipline. Montessori Peace Education is the foundation of the Montessori Method, which is a world-changing technique that teaches children to be peaceful and positive members of a developing society. She also argued that the foundation of peace can be established through teaching the children. She emphasized that, it is feasible if children are consciously taught global citizenship, respect for diversity, and personal responsibility, which will provide them with the fortitude to refuse to allow their leaders to engage in conflict. She believed that ignoring the spiritual and moral education of children increases the likelihood of war. Both historical and philosophical methods have been used and primary as well as secondary sources have been employed for the collection of data. The study revealed that educationists and philosophers should develop moral laws and dignity among individuals. In her educational thought Montessori, stressed especially on the importance of discipline. She believed that the main tasks of education are disciplined thinking and imparting moral values among the students. In the present study, an attempt has been made to present an overview of Montessori peace education through discipline and analysing the data related to the theme.*

**Key words:** *Peace education, Values, Discipline, Montessori*

## **Introduction:**

Dr Maria Montessori (1870-1952) an Italian citizen, is regarded as one the great renowned educationists. Professionally, she was a trained doctor, but vocationally she served for the good of the feeble minded children. She was a great scientist and an observer of the real problems and situations of child development. Montessori viewed education as fundamental aspect in the foundation of human being. She is regarded as a pioneer of peace education. Peace education is a broad concept, and it has been employed in the context of teaching pupils peer mediation and conflict resolution skills, curricula about diversity, disarmament, environmentalism, and even lobbying against poverty. The promotion of social and economic justice is a peace-building strategy that requires the globe to confront the different difficulties it is now facing. According to Montessori, peace education equips pupils to deal with similar situations. She is mainly linked with child-led learning because she felt that humans are natural learners and that kids may learn instinctively when immersed in situations filled with puzzles and difficulties to investigate. The teacher should promote the student's learning, but the student's passions and imagination are the most valuable assets, as she clarified in *Education and Peace*. All were astonished by the results of her teaching technique, as youngsters with substantial mental disabilities became successful students. Thousands more Montessori Schools were established in North and South America, Europe, and Asia as a result of Dr. Montessori's unique approach to education and this movement continues to flourish even today.

Montessori is widely recognised as the originator of peace education. Montessori's own works include explicit references to education for peace. She contended vehemently that "education was a method, possibly the only legitimate means of ending conflict for good". Without moral and spiritual instruction, she feared humanity will ultimately return to its warlike ways. Every child's education must incorporate values such as global citizenship, personal responsibility, and respect for diversity, both implicitly and explicitly. These principles are as important in Montessori education as the topics of mathematics, languages, and the sciences. She wrote in *Education and Peace* that peace is a goal that can only be achieved through common accord, and that the means to achieve this unity for peace are twofold: an immediate effort to resolve conflicts without resorting to violence, which refers to war prevention, and the establishment of a lasting peace among people. She argued that teaching global citizenship entails the explicit cultivation of a particular set of knowledge and values in students. The values inculcated should include diversity appreciation and peace.

By allowing children to explore their passions and interests, Montessori's techniques directly supported creativity. The habit of autonomous and critical thought protects democracy, and highlighting the importance of imagination in education can considerably contribute to resolving the common challenges faced by the people. Montessori lamented the absence of

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moral and social instruction in the ordinary public school, which she witnessed. She also stated that any schooling that rejects and represses the moral self's impulses is criminal. It is vital to propose means through which Montessori's pedagogical revolution can be incorporated into the current public school system.

In addition, the disciplinary or classroom management techniques utilised in Montessori education promote good peace. Johann Galtung (1969) formulated a theory describing positive peace as the presence of human ideals including justice, harmony, freedom, and equality. Further, negative peace, which is not negative but the absence of violence, for which Montessori argued that peace cannot be considered solely from a negative perspective, i.e., avoiding war, but via positive constructive societal reform. Peace-building initiatives, such as peace marches, community-building forums, such as inter-religious dialogues, and anti-poverty campaigning, such as the fair trade and debt cancellation movements, should become a vital component of peace education.

For peace education to be effective, the methods employed by teachers and administrators must be congruent with the principles taught to pupils and also modelled by them. Montessori's approaches demonstrate that the implicit and explicit curricula must be compatible. The emphasis is on self-discipline, and students must participate in establishing and maintaining the community's rules. Moreover, when undesirable student behaviour does occur, it must be addressed with respect for the kid's humanity. Most frequently, this feature of Montessori's methods is regarded as idealistic and naive. As a result of pupils' true engagement in their work, Montessori classrooms inherently diminish undesired behaviour. Internal self-discipline development is a crucial effect of Montessori-style of peace education.

Maria Montessori was widely recognised as a pacifist. She advocated for pacifist causes and constantly opposed war. She believed that nonviolence and Montessori education are equivalent. She explained at UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) that a just, peaceful, and egalitarian approach to education is the key to achieving world peace. She also advocated for the rights of children, which were not protected during her period, when children were considered the property of their parents.

Maria Montessori saw that children are the future and that a future free of war and suffering must be built through the education of these children; this is what made the Montessori Method so effective. The Montessori Method's ultimate goal is to create a well-adjusted, well-rounded member of society and a better society as a whole, whereas other methods to education focus on short-term goals such as completing particular milestones, college admittance, or employment. As she continued, she stated, "Education is the key to a sustainable peace; politics can only keep us out of conflict."

Montessori Peace Education commences with the Montessori approach to discipline, classroom management, norms, and relationship development. She centred her efforts on developing a Montessori environment in which children are not commanded like soldiers and rewards and punishments are not used to define their discipline; rather, children are not controlled at all. Montessori encourages children to govern themselves rather than being controlled by other influences. She observed that instructors and parents give orders, maintain order, punish misbehaving children, and then forcibly regulate their learning and behaviour environments in the classroom and at home. Adults who grew raised in a repressive and coercive environment are violent, disrespectful, and inconsiderate. Consequently, the Montessori Method takes a completely different approach to discipline, with Montessori classrooms adhering to the basic ground rules of "Respect for oneself, Respect for others, and Respect for the environment". These guidelines are simple and general for a very particular reason: their significance shifts as a child grows. Respect yourself by doing work that improves the world, not just the job that provides you with wealth and influence. Respect others by advocating for oppressed groups rights. Respect the environment by reversing the effects of climate change. These concepts can be used to instil in children the discipline and good study habits that will define their adulthood.

In addition to reading, writing, and arithmetic, children must also learn crucial life skills, such as Peace Education, as part of the Montessori Method's objective to educate the child as a whole. The values of conflict resolution, communication, relationship development, problem-solving, empathy, independence, interdependence, teamwork, and advocacy are taught to children. These talents are crucial for establishing a better and more peaceful world. Montessori education provides a foundation for children to develop into competent individuals who can handle issues and resolve conflicts without resorting to anger or violence.

Since every component of the Montessori Method teaches peace, respect, and a commitment to making the world a better place to live, the Montessori Method is the ideal educational approach. Children can explore their emotions using the Love Light exercise, which employs light as a metaphor for feelings of happiness, love, and acceptance. When they are sad or unhappy, they can dim the light, but it never fades out. Before they can fully comprehend what it is to be peaceful towards others or in the world, it provides a wonderful opportunity for them to discover inner peace. Other Peace Education activities include yoga, mindfulness exercises, meditations, art and writing prompts, community service, role-playing, etc. Due to the importance of Auto-Education in Montessori's peace education, it is crucial to have peace-related texts in the classroom for children to pursue their own thoughts. Children should constantly participate in Peace Education, as Peace Education is the true Montessori method. Parents and teachers involved in peace education should realise that the work  
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they do at home and at school with their children not only helps them become peaceful, polite, self-motivated, and empathetic individuals, but also contributes to a better world! Every kid who participates in Montessori education advances the future.

### **Concept of Discipline:**

*“The first idea that the child must acquire, in order to be actively disciplined, is that of the difference between good and evil; and the task of the educator lies in seeing that the child does not confound good with immobility, and evil with activity, as often happens in the case of the old-time discipline.” –Maria Montessori*

Dr. Maria Montessori's unique method to teaching, developed more than a century ago, has revolutionised education worldwide. Whether you are a teacher in a Montessori classroom or a parent trying to implement these principles at home, Montessori discipline can aid in the development and education of children. Montessori education addresses discipline by enabling children to contemplate consequences using clear, precise language to affirm a child's emotions and ensuring that they are free to make their own decisions, as long as they are willing to face the consequences of those decisions. The qualitative component of the Montessori Method is to stimulate self-motivated growth in children and adolescents by exposing them to the consequences of their decisions. Montessori's approach to discipline is universally applicable and based on the same guiding principles.

It might be difficult to achieve the precise balance between freedom and respect that the Montessori method of discipline requires. Freedom may appear opposed to discipline, but to promote true discipline, from inside the child and not from external sources, we must foster a knowledge of the freedom of choice and the resulting consequences. Engage in meaningful interactions with children beginning at a young age, using understandable language and vocabulary. Different ages of children will necessitate distinct approaches to discipline in accordance with the Montessori Method, which ultimately aims to create what Maria Montessori termed as joyful obedience. It is the stage at which a child has learned and internalised self-discipline to the point where he or she not only obeys orders but also comprehends the importance of following direction from the authority. This occurs when a child sees people in positions of authority as a model and guidance for self-discipline, to the point where he or she chooses to embrace the norms of classroom conduct. One of the major concepts of Montessori education is encouraging freedom and developing the capacity for independent choice to its maximum extent. Consequently, self-respect is a prerequisite for attaining the highest levels of self-discipline. This ensures that children opt to self-restraint even when the authority is absent.

### **Stages of Discipline:**

#### **Observation:**

Observation is the first step when the child develops interests and acquires new skills. Children under the age of three, i.e., those who have not yet entered preschool, are unable to comply beyond their basic needs. Their personalities have not yet formed, and they are unable to make the crucial judgments necessary for genuine discipline. According to the Montessori Method, this is the initial degree of obedience. Children between 12 and 36 months of age are not usually obedient. They lack the critical thinking skills necessary to comprehend the ramifications of their decisions. Nonetheless, parents and teachers can help toddlers become receptive to Montessori discipline by fostering choice and activity from an early age. Rather than engaging children in activities because parents believe they need to learn anything, they should encourage them to engage in activities the children enjoy. If the child enjoys books and stories, purchase additional picture books. Provide more opportunity for motor skills activities and establish safe settings where they can move about freely if they enjoy being mobile. Encouragement of a child's innate talents will foster self-respect and deference to authority. Instead of viewing the parent or teacher as an impediment to their natural aspirations, they will come to view authority people as facilitators and develop respect for parents, teachers, and other authorities.

In addition, it is essential to view failure as a chance for growth rather than something to be embarrassed of. Instead of scolding or using negative reinforcement, treat the child with respect so that he or she will respect them in return by assisting them in learning from their mistakes.

#### **Internalisation:**

According to the Montessori Method, preschool-aged children are typically in the second level of obedience. Pre-schoolers can comprehend how another person expects them to behave and are able to process and convey this information through their own conduct. At this age, the majority of parents and educators cease instilling discipline in children, as their sole objective is submission to leadership. The Montessori Method requires educators and parents to go beyond this level in order for children to comprehend the distinction between right and wrong and acquire the critical thinking skills necessary to comprehend that actions have consequences. When disciplining a pre-schooler using the Montessori Method, it is time to engage talks with the kid using understandable, straightforward language and vocabulary. Teach children that they have the freedom to choose their actions, but that every action has repercussions. Positive reinforcement is vital at this stage to teach youngsters that good behaviour has positive results. Montessori Method prohibits the use of negative reinforcement. Negative consequences are frequently the result of undesirable behaviour. Negative reinforcement will never be as effective as positive reinforcement; it provides only a temporary remedy to an ongoing issue. Through dialogue, it is

essential to teach children that they have the freedom to select their behaviours and to help them begin to comprehend the implications of their choices.

### **Language Acquisition:**

Kindergartners may or may not be prepared to progress to the third level of obedience, depending on their rate of language acquisition and cognitive growth. Frequently, Kindergarteners are still maturing at the second level, absorbing what people of authority expect and making connections between positive and negative acts and their repercussions. Children in kindergarten will be able to have more in-depth dialogues regarding behaviours and their repercussions due to gains in their language development. It is nevertheless essential to support the child's natural abilities, to provide both positive and negative reinforcement, and to normalise failure as a learning opportunity. Montessori never presumed that a child comprehends what it means to show respect for authority. In this phase of discipline, a great deal of time and effort should be spent demonstrating the behaviours we expect from children. Role-playing and pretend play, which are essential for language acquisition and cognitive development, can be used by educators to model the behaviours they expect. It must be ensured that children are surrounded by adults and older children who respect one other and demonstrate self-respect. Kindergarten is the ideal period to teach and demonstrate the social graces we want our students to emulate. Engage students in role-playing activities, such as practising greetings, conversational etiquette, and conflict resolution. Misbehaviour is usually a result of children feeling unheard, insecure, or powerless. When children misbehave, it is important to have dialogues with them to help them understand their emotions and what is driving the misbehaviour, rather than simply delivering negative reinforcement.

### **Consequences:**

Elementary students who are going into first and second grade should be able to reach the third level of obedience as defined by the Montessori Method so long as they received the proper nurturing and attention to discipline at younger ages. The third level of discipline is when children have internalized self-respect and self-discipline through an understanding of choices and their consequences. Treat elementary students with the respect that you expect them to exhibit and give them freedom to make their own choices. This is one of the basic principles of Montessori education. As children move into elementary school, it is important to continue to talk about choices and consequences often. The goal of discipline, under the Montessori Method, is to produce children who have self-respect and, as a result of that self-respect, they learn self-discipline. If a child is misbehaving in class, perform exercises that will model and get them to display the desired behaviour. Discipline in the Montessori Method is a constant task that requires parents and educators to work together to inform children of their choices, make them aware of consequences, and use model behaviour and lessons to enforce obedience. It is to be ensured that the students understand what they are gaining by being obedient, and what they stand to lose, such as a quality education, if they misbehave.

### **Time-out:**

As a kind of negative reinforcement, timeout is generally discouraged in the Montessori Method. Timeout is a traditional disciplinary measure that requires pupils to sit quietly, away from toys or peers, and reflect on their behaviour. It is an opportunity given to children to reflect on their actions and it is amongst one of the most effective method for them to comprehend what they did wrong. The children must recognise that they have a choice in their activities and then possess the ability to analyse why they decided to engage in the undesired conduct. Using teachings that model excellent behaviour and encourage pupils to practise an alternative is far more effective than using negative reinforcement to promote good behaviour. A timeout is more likely to cause animosity than to promote good behaviour in the child. Instead of punishing a kid for not exhibiting acceptable social behaviour, the Montessori Method urges us to help the child comprehend the consequences of their actions. Discuss with them how it impacts them and their community through dialogues and lessons about what is acceptable and unacceptable social behaviour.

### **Characteristics of Montessori Classroom:**

Educators and institutions employing the Montessori Method construct well-organized rooms that teach students how to behave within the area. Children should be encouraged to explore the space and taught that exploration freedom entails responsibility. The discipline in the majority of Montessori classrooms is governed by two basic rules:

1. Respect: Respect is the foundation of Montessori discipline. The students take care of themselves and others in the environment, and also the material objects in the environment. Respect for oneself and others leads to self-discipline.
2. Self-Discipline: When a child is immersed in an atmosphere where everyone practises the same level of respect, the feelings of disempowerment and insecurity that are at the basis of inappropriate behaviour cannot emerge.

It is essential to remember, however, that we must educate children how to be kind, considerate, and submissive. In accordance with the Montessori Method, it is the responsibility of parents and educators to teach children right from wrong when they exhibit unacceptable behaviour.

### **Characteristics of Montessori Discipline at Home:**

Individuals with self-respect and self-discipline are encouraged to develop in Montessori-based schools. However, it is equally necessary for parents to implement the Montessori Method of discipline at home as it is in the classroom.

1. The initial approach is to prevent behavioural problems before they occur. Children must feel that they have a significant place in the home; therefore, it is essential to encourage their interests rather than impose them. Helping your child feel appreciated involves constructing a garden, instructing him or her in simple domestic activities, and framing mistakes as learning opportunities.
2. Model the behaviours you want your children to exhibit. This can be the most challenging aspect because, as parents, we frequently have unexplored personalities and experiences. These dialogues are vital for both parents' and children's emotional outbursts, as the Montessori Method demands parents to discuss the feelings that lead to undesirable conduct.
3. Natural consequences can often be difficult for children to comprehend, which is why it is vital for parents to both discuss them and offer them in particular situations, without using negative reinforcement but rather via detailed modelling.
4. There is a requirement of being close to children and study their behaviour. Instead of timeouts, the Montessori Method encourages attachment in the classroom and at home. Children who have difficulty in understanding social norms may be expected to remain close to the teacher or parent so that they can participate in the activity while being aware that their activities are being monitored.

### **Fundamentals of Montessori Discipline:**

Every Montessori classroom is unique, and every Montessori teacher has a slightly distinct classroom management style and similar is the case for Montessori parents and educators. The Ground Rules are the foundation of Montessori discipline and are largely responsible for creating a peaceful, focused, and joyous atmosphere. There are three essential Ground Rules in every Montessori environment:

1. Self-respect.
2. Respect for others.
3. Respect for the environment

All three of these rules are simple for children to comprehend and discuss, allowing them to be active participants in classroom or household rule discussions rather than passive subjects. The Ground Rules are also well aligned with Montessori's five basic concepts. They demonstrate Respect for the Child by establishing norms that are not intended to control the child but rather to guide the child. They are designed according to the principle of "The Absorbent Mind," with the understanding that any thinking child may acquire and comprehend these rules. They are designed to work well with the concept of Sensitive Periods because they are broad enough to be accessed at different levels by children of various ages and stages of development. Respect for the environment enables children to participate actively in the Prepared Environment that their teachers and caregivers have worked so hard to establish. And, perhaps most crucially, these regulations are founded on the Auto Education premise. Children learn best when they are self-taught. The Ground Rules are intentionally generic. To completely learn how to behave safely and respectfully, children must investigate the limits of these norms on their own. A teacher or parent cannot just drill the rules into their heads.

### **Conclusions:**

Decades later, progress toward international peace has been minimal. Certainly, there is more to the world's troubles than the way children are educated. Poverty and injustice have a significant impact. There is a need to integrate classrooms with the curriculum for peace education and social justice instruction. Montessori continues to be an important person in the field of peace education. She built a tangible pedagogy for peace that is still functioning today (Duckworth, 2006). Her methodology emphasised the development of a full child and emphasised the need of creative and critical thinking abilities, as well as relational skills, which are essential in men and women who will be inspired and equipped to achieve enduring peace. Nevertheless, it is crucial that we educate our children to be decent global citizens.

Children are more attentive to a few simple rules enforced through connection and natural consequences than the large number of rigorous rules enforced through rewards and punishments. Hence, education is key as children are not born with a perfect understanding of the world; they must learn it. All of these tactics can regulate a child's behaviour and instruct him or her to do or not do specific things, but the child is not learning anything. Instead, they are merely engaging in unintelligent habits that they have learned by rote. In contrast, the Montessori method provides norms and discipline significance and encourages children to comprehend why they exist. As with all children, Montessori students and children raised in Montessori households will test limits and push boundaries, but the Ground Rules and the response to this testing and pushing will help them understand these limits and boundaries and make their own decisions about how they want to behave in the future. This is the distinction between the Montessori technique and traditional discipline: whereas other children may obey out of fear of the consequences, Montessori children obey because they know it is the right thing to do.

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