

VOICES OF AMI TRAINING

Social Cohesion Through Montessori Schools

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It is paradoxical that an educational philosophy that promotes peace and community, such as Montessori, lacks a true sense of unity among the schools and organisations that practice it. This is not only a current reality, but it is also present in the historical evolution of the movement. Should it continue like this? What needs to be done today?

Honouring the Legacy

With the first training, which dates back to 1909, the first schools germinated that would flourish in the coming years in different countries, spreading to all continents in a few years and crowning with the creation of the Association Montessori Internationale in 1929.

Many international personalities have been related to the Montessori movement since its inception: Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas Edison, Jean Piaget, Giovanni Gentile, Rabindranath Tagore, Sigmund Freud, ambassadors and representatives of several countries, among others. A very special example is Gandhi, who in 1915 learned about Montessori schools in India. It is significant that he himself mentioned discrepancies in what he saw of Montessori schools, when he said in 1931 in front of Maria Montessori and her students: "I found no difficulty in finding out at once that this school was not carrying out the spirit of its teaching; the letter was there, but, whilst there was an honest – more or less honest – effort being made, I saw too that there was a great deal of tinsel about it."

Historically, there is a great challenge, to honour the Montessori legacy by living the principles inside and outside the classroom, throughout the school. Here is one of the hopes of social transformation. To this end, every Montessori institution should be the first to reflect this mission, being living communities where the development of humanity is fostered through self-knowledge, embracing the cosmic task and evolving from independence to interdependence to achieve the harmony of living in community.

Montessori considered that education, and particularly when child-centred, is the path to profound social reform. For this process to occur, adults, organisations and governments are required to renounce their immediate interests, leaving behind the traditional model that prioritises standardisation and immediacy over human development. The school must become a laboratory of life, a space of preparation for society in which autonomy, observation and meaningful learning are encouraged. Only in this way can an authentic evolution of humanity be promoted.

Montessori Communities

"We shall walk together on this path of life, for all things are part of the universe, and are connected with each other to form one whole unity."

Maria Montessori, [To Educate the Human Potential](#), p. 6

Why is there so little collaboration between schools that share the same philosophy? One hypothesis would be that Montessori has yet to be embodied in institutional relations. Build a prepared environment of empathy, respect, patience, grace, and courtesy. Here's the big task: how do we make sure that the Montessori philosophy is lived out in every aspect of the school and between schools?

Julie Hasson has a quote that can inspire us: "Schools will not be able to become the best places for students to learn and grow, unless they are first the best places for teachers to learn and grow." Educational transformation requires that communities of teachers also live the process of self-knowledge, growth and reflection that is proposed for students. This is not taught, it is lived, it is modelled and thus inspired.

We must bring about a radical change in the way we see human and inter-school relationships, striving to shape and influence the change we want to see, providing them with new ideals, fighting against indifference and misunderstanding; awakening in the human spirit a sense of gratitude towards others.

Frederic Laloux, in *Reinventing Organizations*, points out that "in the absence of judgment, relationships take on a new quality... We can create a shared space safe from judgment, where our deep listening helps others to find their voice and their truth." This approach resonates with the Montessori spirit, when we share vulnerability and authenticity, true community emerges. As Brené Brown would say, "what makes you vulnerable makes you beautiful". To be transparent and communicate from who we truly are to encourage ourselves to be better. If we hide (pretend) we do not grow, if we share, we advance.

From Reflection to Action

Culture is something that evolves whether you like it or not. It requires observing and acting, generating a conscious change based on a defined vision and strategy. Here we can use Montessori guidelines, applying the same principles, for example:

- Rely on the older ones (with consolidated and supportive institutions assisting new schools).
- Share vulnerabilities and errors.
- Exchange successful experiences.
- Build common projects (inter-institutional and social).
- Open doors for observations and practices.
- Create related training spaces.

The maturity of the Montessori school is evident in the openness of ideas, sharing experiences, projects with other organisations, creating and collaborating on social programs, among many other things.

Cohesion occurs not when group members are smarter, but when they react to clear and constant signs of safe connection. This requires a leader with muscular humility (Daniel Coyle) to guide and inspire in the process.

Only by living Montessori as an integral philosophy – at school, at home, and in relationships between institutions – can we build truly united, supportive, and conscious communities. In the end, the Montessori school is not about perfection in method, but about connecting with one's own philosophy. By understanding this, we can grow together towards meeting every child, every adolescent, every adult, and every organisation... honouring the legacy of Maria Montessori.

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