

My Work and Discoveries in Montessori Teaching

By Lee Havis

Beginning as a classroom teacher in 1969, my work eventually led to training teachers in the 1970's. In this way, while observing a teacher interacting with a child, in 1979, I experienced a sudden moment of unexpected insight – a complete knowing of what is Montessori teaching, and how it functions to bring about the child's true nature, just as Dr. Montessori discovered and described in her original experiment observing children in 1907. Before 1979, however, Montessori teaching was known only as an academic curriculum of various learning materials or, at best, as a vague, uncertain, and incomplete attempt to duplicate Dr. Montessori's original 1907 experiment to bring about well-behaved and obedient children.

In 1979, I found that Montessori teaching is actually a process of controlling the environment, not the child, where the "child" is an unknown spiritual being, and the "environment" is everything around that child, consisting of physical objects, other children, and the adult personality. Controlling the environment here means to remove whatever is detrimental in these three elements until the child's true nature emerges entirely of its own spontaneous accord. So, for example, if a child is abusing some physical object, you control the object by removing its detrimental influence, such as by distracting his attention away from that abuse, towards some other positive activity in the environment.

When I found I could communicate this knowledge to others, I started the International Montessori Society (IMS) to support this work on a global basis, which I referred to as *creating the new education*. Beginning with great hope and energy, I soon discovered that while people could initially perceive the basic idea of this Montessori teaching, they couldn't retain and practice it for long on their own due to many obstacles in their personality, which were often confused and reinforced by their surrounding culture. Sadly, prominent educators and organizations in the Montessori community rejected and opposed this knowledge for reasons I couldn't understand at the time. So, I was left to pursue this work of creating this "new education" on my own through various types of teacher education.

In 1986, I began offering a series of two-day workshops called "*Creating the New Education*", to help practitioners answer their many objections and practical questions about applying this approach with children. In time, I realized that my understanding of Montessori teaching was fundamentally different from the conventional types which were essentially bound by "personality" or "culture." Since the IMS approach brought about the child's true nature, I referred to it as "true natural" Montessori teaching. The key difference here is that "true natural" Montessori teaching is committed to laws of nature, whereas conventional types are committed instead to personality or culture.

Over the years, through many workshops, I gradually devised various practical rules and guidelines to help practitioners follow 'true natural' Montessori teaching. In this way, in 2003, I suddenly realized that I had consolidated a complete practical body of knowledge, consisting of 10 techniques, 20 protocols, three lesson presentations, and a series of safe words. Referring to this knowledge as the "technology of Montessori teaching", I then began focusing all my effort and attention to offering this breakthrough technology to anyone interested in the general public.

With the technology, the whole process of "true natural" Montessori teaching is now so simple and scientific that anyone can follow it in a sure and certain manner. IMS offers the technology in summary form at its website: <http://imsmontessori.org>. In addition, it is presented in concentrated form through the current IMS workshop training and an audio cd and study guide. In addition, IMS provides a formalized teacher education course through distance learning on an individualized, personal basis.



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