UNIJERPS
Unizik Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies VOL.2;
2021 Impact Factor: 5.641; 2020 Impact Factor: 5.355. *January-June, 2021*
Indexing and Impact Factor URL: http://sjifactor.com/passport.php?id=21363

UNDERSTANDING MONTESSORI EDUCATION, ITS IMPLEMENTATION TO REVISED NINE YEAR (9YR) BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM

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BSTRACT
Montessori education is driven by an ambition aim, or aid the Childs development into a complete adult human being, comfortable with himself/herself with his society and with human as a whole. Hence it is education that is geared towards the development of innate potentials. This is because; the basic education curriculum has provided the subjects that will spice up the Montessori education. It is therefore, imperative that the teacher should have a good understanding and what is expected from him/her to implement the 9- year basic education curriculum so that objective leading top the better achievement of curriculum 9 years Basic Education Curriculum objectives will not be denied the intended benefits.

Introduction
Education has remained a social process in capacity building and maintenance of society for decades. It is a weapon for acquiring skills, relevant knowledge and habit for surviving in the changing world. The teacher is a very key factor in curriculum planning, development and implementation. This is because it is the teacher that implements the curriculum at the classroom level; he also has real contact and works with the learners for whom the curriculum has been formulated. Montessori education begins with the understanding that the role of adult is to help the unfolding of the child's inborn developmental power. The child from the earliest moments of life is possessed with great constructive energies that guide the formation of his mind and the coordination of his body. The Montessori approach was developed without preconceived ideas as to how best to aid the child in his journey to adulthood for understanding of the revised 9-years basic education and Montessori education, the following subheadings will be looked at:

- The concept of curriculum
- The Montessori theory

- The objectives of the 9 –years (B.E.C) Basic Education Curriculum
- Montessori environment
- Montessori materials
- Its implication to the teaching and learning process

Concept of curriculum

Curriculum is the planned interaction of learners with instructional content, materials, and resources and process for evaluating the attainment of educational objectives (Armstrong 2010).

Curriculum gives description of all expenses, guidance and various relationship which the learners need to learn through primaries 1-3 and primaries 4-6 and junior secondary 1-3 and even beyond; appropriate methods of teaching activities for both the teacher and the learners that will lead to achievement of the desired objectives as well as the evaluation strategies or techniques to be used by the teacher for the assessment of teaching/learning outcomes (Ukegbu, 2014).

What is basic education?

Basic education refers to the whole range of educational activities taking place in various settings (formal, non formal and informal), that aim to meet basic learning needs. According to the international standard classification of education (ISCED), basic education comprises primary education (first stage of basic education) and lower secondary education (second stage). In countries (developing countries in particular), Basic Education often includes also pre-primary education and/ or adult literacy programs.

The objectives of the 9 years Basic Education Curriculum

The 9 years Basic Education 9 (BEC) was introduced into Nigeria primary and junior secondary schools nationwide in September 2008 in response to the global protocols. Particularly Education for all (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and subsequent declaration of 9-years continues schooling under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme. The 9 years Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) was developed and formulated by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) in response to the aforementioned protocols for effective implementation of the Universal Basic UBE program hence the need for Montessori education to sustain the 9-years Basic Education.

The curriculum was designed to meet the key ideas of the National Economic Empowerment and

Development Strategies (NEEDS) which included: value re-orientation, poverty eradication, job creation and wealth generation. Thus, with Montessori education, the 9-years BEC will ensure the acquisition of functional education and for laying the foundation for technical, vocational and entrepreneurship education in learners (Wiki, 2012).

The Montessori theory

Montessori education is fundamentally a model of human development and an educational approach based on that model. The model has two basic elements. First children and developing adults engage in psychological self-construction by means of interaction with their environment. Second, children, especially under the age of six, have an innate path of psychological development. Based on her observations, Montessori believed that children at liberty to choose and act freely within an environment prepared according to her model would act spontaneously for optimal development (Lillard 2011).

Today, as it was a century ago, education is rightly seen as a means to tackle poverty, inequality, anti-social behaviours and other ills of society. From before birth it is the child that guides its own development. The fundamental problem with traditional education is the lack of faith in the child to continue to guide his own development and to guide the educators in supporting this task. Montessori education begins with the understanding that the role of aduldt is to help the unfolding of the child's inborn developmental powers. The chilkd from the earlist moment of life is possessed with the great constructive energies that guide the formulation of his mind and the coordination of his body. The Montessori approach was developed without preconceived ideas as to how best to aid the child in his journey to adulthood.

Key theories emerged from these observations:

- That there are four key developmental plans in the journey to adulthood 0-6 years old, 6-12 years, 12-18 years and 18-24 years. Each of these plans has its own goals, in the first the development of the self as an individual being in the second the development of the social being in the third the birth of the adult and finding one's sense of self, before consolidating the mature personality and becoming a specialized explorer in the fourth plane. The complete development of

the adult human being requires the specific needs of each of these periods to be satisfied.

- Within each of these plans the child or adolescent has specific "sensitivities" or 'windows of opportunities' to acquire a particular human trait, for example a sensitivity that guides the child to the acquisition of its language in the first place(0-6 years), or that guides the child to the development of a moral 'compass' in the second plane(6-12 years).
- In addition to these age specific sensitivities, human beings have a number of behavioural tendencies that give each child the ability to adapt to its place and time. These human traits for example, to explore, order, manipulate, imagine, repeat, work and communicate have been crucial to human evolution and are active within the child.

Montessori environment

Montessori education method called for free activity within a "prepared environment", meaning an educational environment tailored to basic human characteristics, it the specific characteristics of children at different ages, and to the individual personalities of each child.

According to Lillard, (2011) the function of the environment is to allow the child to develop independence in all areas according to his or her inner psychological directives. In addition to offering access to the Montessori materials appropriate to the age of the children, the environment should exhibit the following characteristics:

- Construction in proportion to the child and his/her needs
- Beauty and harmony, cleanliness of environment
- Order
- An arrangement that facilities movement and activity
- Limitation of materials, so that only material that supports the child's development is included.

Implementation of the revised curriculum/ Montessori education

For the effective implementation of the revised curriculum, Montessori education becomes relevant to guide teachers to harness those innate potentials of a child. Teachers' guide for each of the new integrated or compound subjects or groups have been developed which is an improvement on the old teacher handbook earlier produced by NERDC.

Currently, the Revised Curriculum is being broken into Syllabus, scheme of

work, unit plan so that the teacher can easily prepare his/her lesson plan and adopt the modern teaching approaches / strategies for effective implementation of curriculum at the classroom level.

Montessori materials

The most widespread examples of the Montessori environment prepared for 3-6 years old at that formative age, the child is consolidating the formation of the self as an individual being that began at birth. The environment is set up as a bridge between the home and the wider world. Montessori called this place a casa deiBanbini or children's House.

The first materials the child encounters in this setting are the practical life activities. These are everyday activities familiar to the child from his home, such as pouring, scrubbing and table, polishing or buttoning.

The other areas of the curriculum for the children of this age are the sensorial materials, mathematics, language and culture. The sensorial materials respond to the way the child learns at this age through the senses rather than the intellect. The materials are colour, size, loudness, taste or weight. For example, the materials known as the pink tower is made up of ten cubes of carrying sizes. The 3 years old child constitutes a tower with the largest cube on the bottom and the smallest on top. As the child exploration continues, the materials interrelate and build upon each other. Later, in the primary years, new aspects of some of the materials unfold. When studying volume, for instance, the child may return to the pink tower and discover that its cubes progress incrementally from one cubic centimeter to one cubic decimeter. At the pre-school age when the child is bombarded by sensory information. Though working with the different sensorial materials, the child has refined his discrimination of size to the point where he wants to know how much bigger one object is from another. The maths materials flow naturally from here. When a child reaches the point, he needs to be introduced to the concept of number to sustain their interest.

The cultural materials bring to the child his world and animals, plants and people within it. Like everything offered to the child at this the materials are sensory based and are introduced to the child in an orderly way; first the world, then the plants and animals, then mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish, first the concrete- a real plant, then the more abstract picture or rewarding that may accompany it.

Materials that aid independence

The materials themselves invite activity. There are bright arrays of solid geometric forms, knobbed puzzles maps, colored beads, and various specialized rods and blocks. All the materials in a Montessori environment are designed for maximum independence in the child: Everything, including a dustpan and brush, is child sized; activities ate laid out in an orderly way on easily accessible open shelves; and the design of the materials make it easy for the child to identify, and gradually correct error.

Mixed age grouping

In the family, in the workplace and society as a whole we are in constant interaction with those that are older younger. Children in traditional schools are the only members of society aggregated by age. A mixed- age environment is an important feature of Montessori education. Since the children needs different environment at different stages in their development. Since the children need different environment at different stages in their development, classes are mixed within bands, for example, 0-3 years, 3-6 years, 6-12 years or 12- 15 years. The young child in each band is surrounded by role models a little more developed than himself. Similarly, the order child finds herself in a position of responsibility, and by showing younger children what he knows, affirms to herself, more surely than any test, the extent of her learning

Freedom and discipline

Just as important as the physical environment and its contents, is the functioning of the environment. The Montessori environment gives the children the tools they need but they must also have the freedom to use them and to manifest their tendencies to repeat, to explore or manipulate.

Each child is given the freedom of choice. The child interaction with the environment is most productive in terms of the individual's development when it is self-chosen and founded on individual interest from the moment the child enters the class in the morning that are free to choose their activities for themselves. One will choose to start the day with a drink and a chat before washing up some cups. He may then choose to sit and do nothing-quietly watching his friends, before choosing to join a singing group. Another may arrive and immediately start to trace some of the sand papers letter with his fingers and then write on a chalkboard. This is to trace some of the sand paper letter with his finger, and then write on chalkboard. This auto-

Education- the child has the freedom to respond to the teacher within him, and has access to materials in the environment that can satisfy each development needs.

Each child is given the freedom of time. He is free to work with an activity for as long as he chooses, free to repeat it as many times as he needs, or simply take his time. A4 years-old child might spend $1^1/_2$ hours washing some 50 or more small cloths that have been used during the morning. He is left undisturbed and finishes when the force that compelled her to concentrate for that time is satisfied. Long periods of concentration of this types are frequently observed in Montessori environments in children as young as 3 years old. Paradoxically, it is this freedom that leads to discipline. The traditional approach to discipline holds that children are inherently disorderly, and that their willfulness and impulses must be inhibited by an external discipline.

A Guide to Montessori Programs for Different Ages:

Montessori education builds on the continuing self-construction of the child—daily, weekly, yearly—for the duration of the program. Although Montessori schools are divided into multiage classrooms—parent infant (ages 0 to 3), pre-school (ages 3 to 6), primary (ages 6 to 12), and senior school (12-18) -—the prepared environments introduce an uninterrupted series of learning passages, a continuum. The prepared environments described below will each reflect the natural learning characteristics of the child at each stage of development Montessori education for children aged 0-12 years is widespread around the world. More recently there has been a concerted effort to develop the senior school programme for 12-18-yearolds.

The Parent/infant Class (0-3 years)

The Montessori infant-toddler program has several components that offer a wide variety of options and opportunities for involvement by parents. The most widely found is the Parent/Infant Class., The Parent-Infant Class provides an environment in which parents and children interact alongside a Montessori-prepared adult who uses the environment to facilitate their interaction. Caregivers are taught how to observe what their babies do in order to know what to offer them. Once walking the, children engage in the practical activities of everyday life such as pegging, folding, preparing a snack, washing or sweeping and a language area including miniature objects, language nomenclature cards

and books, as well as art, singing and other musical experiences.

Children's House (3-6 years)

The Montessori pre-school classroom is a 'living room' for children. Children choose their activities from among the self-correcting materials displayed on open shelves that allow the child to learn through their senses. The pre-school environment unifies the psycho-social, physical, and academic functioning of the child. Its important task is to provide children with an early and general foundation that includes a positive attitude toward school, inner security and a sense of order, pride in the physical environment, abiding curiosity, a habit of concentration, habits of initiative and persistence, the ability to make decisions, self-discipline, and a sense of responsibility to other members of the class, school, and community. This foundation will enable them to acquire more specialised knowledge and skills throughout their school career. The activities in the Children's House are described in more detail in the section 'Montessori materials' above.

The Montessori Primary Program (6-12 years)

As in the pre-school, the Montessori materials are a means to an end. They are intended to evoke the imagination, to aid abstraction, 'to generate a world-view about the human task and purpose. The child works within a philosophical system asking questions about the origins of the universe, the nature of life, people and their differences, and so on. On a factual basis, interdisciplinary studies combine the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic with geological, biological, and anthropological science in the study of natural history and world ecology.

The program is made up of connective narratives that provide an inspiring overview of the universe and the place of humans within it These narratives or 'Great Lessons' span the history of the universe from the origin of the solar system, earth, and life forms to the emergence of human cultures and the rise of civilizations. Aided by impressionistic charts, timelines and, in some cases, scientific experiments, the child's study of detail in reference to the 'Great Lessons' leads to awe and respect for the totality of knowledge.

Studies are integrated not only in terms of subject matter but in terms of moral learning as well, resulting in appreciation and respect for life, moral empathy, and a fundamental belief in progress, the contribution of the individual, the universality of the human condition, and the meaning of true

justice. There is an emphasis on research and in-depth study using primary and secondary sources (no textbooks or worksheets) as well as other materials. This involves the children planning their own trips to 'go out' to make use of community resources beyond the four walls of the classroom.

The Montessori-trained adults leading the program are 'enlightened generalists', guides who are able to integrate the teaching of all subjects, not as isolated disciplines, but as part of a whole intellectual tradition.

Secondary Education (12-1 years)

Secondary Montessori education is not available in the UK at present. Where it is practised, for example in the USA, , the adolescent programme is centred on real economic participation in society. Until this age the childrenhave experienced only the mediated societies both the 'Children's House' (3-6 years) and primary settings (6-12), but once the child reaches adolescence it is important for his sense of self, and sense of place in the world, to contribute to his community. Learning is based around a project — a farm or other small business — which gives the adolescent the opportunity to explore how society really works. Mental and physical work are linked and the areas of cultural knowledge — traditionally separated into abstract 'subjects' - are integrated and linked to real world experiences.

The adolescent is undergoing profound physical and emotional changes and needs to be nurtured at this vulnerable time. Within the Montessori programme he is given the time and space to understand the changes he is experiencing without the pressure of testing and exams. These can come in the senior secondary years (16-19) when the individual is more secure in himself.

Implications of the revised curriculum to teaching/ learning process

The revised curriculum which the teachers are expected to implement makes some demand from you- the teacher. These demands are collared implications of the revised curriculum to teaching and learning process.

Simply put, how can the teacher implement the revised curriculum effectively? The following limits should be noted:

You must teach only the compound/ integrated subjects as approved by NERDC to your pupils/ students. Address the subject by their various compound names for example religious and National values (RNV), Basic Science and Technology (BST). Their

components are known as curriculum themes (CT) and not as subjects.

Bear in mind that the revised curriculum is a coactivity based and this call for the employing of modern teaching approaches in your class which is in line with 21st century active learning instruments strategies (ACIS).

Prepare all your lessons ahead of time with the required instructional resources.

Involve the students/ pupils in sourcing for instructional materials from their homes (this is part of learning through activities)

Organize regular visit, field trips, excursion to relevant places and communities

Pupils/ students should be encouraged to role play, dramatize, display and demonstrate some concept

The objective of your lesson should be in line with the performance objective of the curriculum

Use the ejaculation guide to help you write good questions

Knowledge is dynamic and new information, concept and things are coming up on daily basis; you should look out for current method to be adopted in teaching your students. A visit to the internet will yield a lot of information to help you. Do not skip any topic that appears difficult rather engage the service of experts

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