

Workshop Montessori Institute Prague
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The Adolescent Dilemma – Farm or Urban?

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Overview

1. Maria Montessori's first steps towards Montessori for older students (1920-1930)
2. The Emergence of the Erdkinder Concept (1930-1939)
3. The center for study and work: Erdkinder components and an unusual 'curriculum'
4. Paradigm shift towards Erdkinder and selected implementations today (1995 – today)
5. The essence of the concept and possibilities of a gradual approach

Maria Montessori's Concept for Educating Adolescents

From the early 1920s until 1951 in Rome, Maria Montessori repeatedly addressed the question of an educational approach for adolescents, aged 12 – 18 years. As for the younger children her starting point were the **developmental needs and interests** of these older students:

Montessori's primary concern:

"We should, first of all, better know the child, the child or the adolescent: to know better his needs, to better understand him, but above all to better respond to his needs."

Montessori, Maria: 23rd International Montessori Teacher Training Course 1938, 34th lecture. In: *The Physical and Psychological Development of the Adolescent*, Communications 2011/1-2, p.68

Physical Needs in Adolescence

The years of puberty are a time of *enormous physical changes*, accompanied by deep hormonal changes, susceptibility to disease and a risk of suicide. In this situation doctor Montessori recommended:

- A healthy diet with regional foods
- A renunciation from tobacco and alcohol
- Plenty of time in the fresh air in a rural environment with moderate activities that strengthen the body without overstraining it (hikes, bike rides, swimming, work outside and playing games)
- Take notice of these young people's need for solitude and contemplation

Montessori's conclusion →

Montessori's Conclusion regarding Physical Needs

"During the difficult time of adolescence, it is helpful to leave the accustomed environment of the family in the town and go to quiet surroundings in the country, close to nature. Here, an open-air life, individual care, and a non-toxic diet must be the first considerations in organizing a 'center of study and work'"

Montessori, Maria (2008), *From Childhood to Adolescence*, p.67

Psycho-Mental Needs in Adolescence

The physiological changes lead to *mental and emotional instability*. Adolescents are:

- *in mental unrest and insecurity*
- *weakened in their self-esteem*
- *emotionally vulnerable*
- *sensitive to the judgements of others*
- *reduced in their intellectual capacity and: Very sensitive to creative activities*

Montessori's conclusion →

Comprehensive opportunities for strengthening their personality, especially through possibilities for Self Expression

Adolescents are Weakened in their Self-Esteem

"The adolescent must never be treated as a child, for that is a stage of life that he has surpassed. It is better to treat an adolescent as if he had greater value than he actually shows than as if he had less and let him feel that his merits and self-respect are disregarded."

Montessori, Maria (2008), From Childhood to Adolescence, p.73

Social Needs in Adolescence

- *Adolescents long to be together with peers instead of with the family of origin*
- *They are attracted by great tasks and challenges*
- *They long for real adult work with a wide range of choices which is paid*

Maria Montessori's observation->

"I see the adolescent as a newborn; as a person born into social life, but as yet unprepared to take a role in it."

Montessori, Maria (1939): Die Erziehung des Jugendlichen. In: Von der Kindheit zur Jugend, p.501 (transl. EE)

Social Needs during Adolescence

Adolescents look for opportunities to participate in the adult world, for their new identity and future role. The focus is initially on social life in a small, manageable community.

Maria Montessori's recommendation →

"Therefore, living outside the family of origin in a community of peers can be very helpful for development during this time."

Adolescents long for Adult-like Work that is Paid

"It might seem strange to many, but I intend that the adolescent produces and sells, sells and buys, and that he acquires economic independence at this stage."

Montessori, Maria (1936), *Vorschläge für Versuche während des kommenden Jahres mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des „Erd-Kinder“-Alters*. In: *Von der Kindheit zur Jugend*, p.374–375 (Transl. EE)

What more did she base her concept on?

"...Such being the condition of society, we ought to remember that there is one thing that education can take as a sure guide, and that is the personality of the children who are to be educated. It is necessary that the human personality should be prepared for the unforeseen, not only for the conditions that can be anticipated by prudence and foresight."

Maria Montessori's Recommendations for Educating Adolescents

Her concept for adolescents was **first published in 1939**
under the title:

*'The Erdkinder – A Scheme for a Reform
of Secondary Education'*

Her intention can be summarized as follows:

'Adolescents need a school that isn't a school.'

In: Halfyearly Bulletin of the Association Montessori Internationale, n.1, p.5-23

Maria Montessori's Term for Adolescents: 'Erdkinder'

"We have called these children 'Erdkinder' [children of the soil/ the earth] because they learn about culture from its origins in agriculture."

Montessori, Maria (1939/1948), *Die Erdkinder – Ein Plan für eine Reform der Sekundarerbziehung*, in: *Von der Kindheit zur Jugend*, p.115, Footnote 132

A Center for Study and Work on the Land

An Adequate 'Prepared Environment' for Adolescents

Residential House →	<i>Community living and learning in a protected setting</i>
Farm/ Land →	<i>Production (work with soil, plants, animals)</i>
Shop/ Exchange of goods →	<i>Trade (sales and communication)</i>
Guesthouse/ Bed & Breakfast →	<i>Services</i>
Museum of Machinery →	<i>Using and repairing equipment and machines</i>

Keep in mind:

"The best methods are those that arouse the maximum interest in the student, give him the opportunity to work alone, to experiment by himself, and that permit him to alternate his studies with practical life."

1. Residential House:

Community living and learning in a protected setting

Goal: **Build social organization by managing a house together**

- a) Manage a house together (with boarding, if possible) with all practical tasks (cleaning, doing the laundry, preparing meals, providing coziness, simple repair work) -> Experiences with division of labour!
- b) Experience responsibilities and take consequences
 - a) Learn to deal with one's own strengths and weaknesses, as well as to be considerate of the needs and concerns of others
 - b) Share activities like hiking, swimming, bike rides, music and other creative activities

2. Production:

Work with soil, plants, animals

Goal: Grow, harvest, keep livestock and get insight into the sector of production

- a) Gain experience in growing vegetables and fruits (maybe in keeping a few domestic animals) on a small scale and deal with responsibilities that come along with such work
- b) Acquire scientific background knowledge connected to work processes
- c) Study topics in history, geography and culture related to the farm (the place)
- d) Understand work on the land as an introduction both to nature and civilization

3. Shop/ Exchange of Goods: Sales and Communication

Goal: **Sell products and get insight into the trade sector**

- a) Calculate realistic prices for the products and draw up a business plan
- b) Sell products in a farm store or market nearby
- c) Get feedback from clients on quality of products, compare to other producers, delve into the world of adults who work on a market
- d) Take first steps towards economic independence and discuss ways to re-invest money

4. Guesthouse/ Bed & Breakfast: Services

Goal: Offer an accommodation for visitors and get insight into the services sector

- a) Establish and offer an accommodation for visitors (start off by running a café or similar)
- b) Calculate prices and ensure that the rental process is run on a regular basis
- c) Take care of visitors and make them feel comfortable (field for grace and courtesy)
- d) Take further steps towards economic independence

5. 'Museum of Machinery'

Goal: Get insight into technologies used in the past; repair and re-use some and reflect on the history of civilization

- a) Collect old tools and machines from the area and, if possible, repair and use them
- b) Reflect on how people in the past used to work and live in the area
- c) Develop gratefulness towards accomplishments of past generations – we build on what others explored, invented, worked etc.!

What Adults do you want in an Erdkinder Environment?

- House parents, living at the farm
- A farm manager, who guides the practical work and lives on site
- Teachers, some of whom live on site and others who join from outside
- Craftsmen and experts, who advise and support the adolescents with specialized knowledge

Paradigm Shift

1995

NAMTA-Conference in Chicago

Peter Gebhardt-Seele: **WHY NOT CONSIDER
ERDKINDER?**

- take a new look at Montessori's original considerations and to strive for an authentic implementation.
- Under the leadership of NAMTA founder and long-time director **David Kahn**, a paradigm shift was initiated.

First Authentic ERDKINDER-Implementation

Hershey Farm School Community, Ohio

founded in the year 2000

around 60 adolescents aged 12-15/16

offers all components of Erdkinder

Three Examples of Implementations Today

1. The Abba's Orchard Farm Schools, Philippines
2. The Montessori Campus Vienna Erdkinder Environment, Austria, Grades 7-10
3. The Montessori School Göttingen, Germany, An Urban Compromise Grades 7-10

THE ABBA'S ORCHARD FARM SCHOOLS, PHILIPPINES

Founders and Directors of the Abba's Orchard Montessori Schools,
operating at fourteen locations on the Philippine Archipelago and co-
authors of the Erdkinder book:

Dr. Maria Angelica Paez Barrameda

Joseph Christopher N. Barrameda

The Montessori Campus Vienna, Erdkinder Environment

Head of the Erdkinder Program Team since 2008 and co-author of the Erdkinder book :

Roman Klune



The Montessori School Göttingen, Grades 7-10

An Urban Compromise

Principal of the Montessori School Göttingen from 2005-2020 and co-author of the Erdkinder book:

Wiebe Möller



Core Principles of Erdkinder Components Revisited

1. Residential House: *Experiences with Community living and learning*
Goal: Build social organization by managing a house together
2. Production: *Experiences with soil, plants, animals*
Goal: Grow, harvest, keep livestock and get insight into the sector of production
3. Shop/ Exchange of goods: *Experiences with sales*
Goal: Sell products and get insight into the trade sector
4. Guesthouse/ Bed & Breakfast: *Experiences with services*
Goal: Offer an accommodation for visitors and get insight into the services sector
5. 'Museum of Machinery': *Experiences with equipment from the past*
Goal: Get insight into technologies from the past: Repair, re-use and reflect on the history of civilization

Thanks a lot for your attention!

Spare slides...

What Kind of Work is Appropriate for Adolescents?

"True work is a work in which hand and intellect unite into a single organism."

"That is, we must prepare for the young person a variety of work that invites selection and that belongs to a specially prepared environment."

*"Thus, I would maintain that true, real work for which one must prepare oneself is **chosen work** in a suitable environment and remunerated work."*

Montessori, Maria (1938), Lecture in Amsterdam. In: Von der Kindheit zur Jugend, p.456-458

Maria Montessori

"Therefore work on the land is an introduction both to nature and to civilization and gives a limitless field for scientific and historic studies. If the produce can be used commercially this brings in the fundamental mechanism of society, that of production and exchange, on which economic life is based. This means that there is an opportunity to learn both academically and through actual experience what are the elements of social life."

Montessori, Maria (2008), *From Childhood to Adolescence*, p.68

Work & Studies

are a way of organizing adolescents' learning processes. Starting with practical work **they combine practical experiences and theoretical studies in an interdisciplinary, continuous and close way**, offering adolescents a variety of opportunities to cooperate, but also options for individual work and activities in small teams.

Graduates' Comments on their Time at The ABBA'S ORCHARD:

“What I got from the Abba's Orchard are lessons that you cannot get from sitting on a chair with a built-in desk all day. I learned how to be a significant individual in the building of a community — how to carefully situate my abilities where I see myself being a useful contributor.

The Abba's Orchard has taught us many things but the things that I took with me were the ones that, I thought, count the most: excellence, strength, responsibility, confidence and balance in who I am as a person.

“The biggest lesson I've learned at the Abba's Orchard school is to value and appreciate hard work, especially in farming. Because of the lessons they have taught me, I never leave a single grain of rice on my plate in order to respect the people who have worked hard for it. I have also developed a good sense of responsibility which rewarded me at home and during my studies in college.”

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Plan of Study and Work

- First priority: **Opportunities for personal expression** via arts and music, literature/poetry or drama.
→ Goal: The **Strengthening of character development**
- Second priority: **Moral Education, Mathematics, language(s) and** as 'intrinsic powers'. These must be differentiated and modeled. → Goal: **Becoming able to participate responsibly in an increasingly complex society**
- Third priority: **Preparation for adult life**. This includes:
 1. **The Study of the Earth and Natural Sciences**
 2. **the Study of Human Progress and the Building of Civilization**
 3. **a comprehensive Survey of the History of Humankind**

And the Implementation of the Concept?

- For decades it was considered extraordinarily difficult, even utopian, to put the Erdkinder recommendations into practice because they are so complex.
- Concrete elaborations did not exist, so schools had to rely on their own interpretations of the document for a long time.
- Montessori secondary schools, both in the Netherlands, in Germany and in the U.S. often only put individual facets of the overall concept into practice

What is meant by Work & Studies?

Work & Studies

are a basic access to organize the learning processes of Montessori adolescents (especially those aged twelve to fifteen) in their land-based environment. They offer comprehensive activities that arise from the conditions of the site. They link practical work and theoretical studies in an interdisciplinary, continuous and close way, offering adolescents a variety of aspects that open up possibilities of cooperation and choice for individual work as well as for activities in small teams. They result from:

- one of the components of the setting (for example, the competence to run a 'Bed & Breakfast' accommodation)
- learning and mastering a production process relevant to the learning site from idea to product (for example, keeping chickens for egg production)
- a wide range of topics from the history of mankind with practical and theoretical aspects

The OECD Learning Compass 2030

“To meet the challenges of the 21st century, students need to feel that they can help shape a world where well-being and sustainability – for themselves, for others, and for the planet – is achievable. The OECD Learning Compass 2030 identifies three “transformative competencies” that students need in order to contribute to our world and shape a better future: creating new value, reconciling tensions and dilemmas, and taking responsibility.”

<https://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/teaching-and-learning/learning/>