

Ridgway, Marian, 1997, *The Montessori Method of Early Childhood Education: A Study of four Montessori schools in the Cork area*

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Chapter One contains the historical background to Maria Montessori's life and the influences which helped to shape her pedagogy. Montessori's philosophy of education is outlined together with the didactic materials used in each area of the curriculum.

Chapter Two contains a review of literature concerning Montessori's philosophy and method of education. Research available into Montessori education has also been reviewed. Very little research has been conducted in Ireland and most of the research cited has been done in the United States.

Chapter Three deals with Montessori education in Ireland. The historical background to the development of Montessori education in Ireland and the reasons why it has never received official recognition by the education authorities has been assessed. Details are given of the courses available to train Montessori teachers together with current fees levied.

Chapter Four outlines the research design of the Study. The schools chosen for the study reflect the different teacher training authorities and also the varied socio-economic strata of Cork city. The research instrument utilised is the Target Child Observation Schedule (Sylva *et al* 1980 modified by Jowett 1981). The purpose of the study and how it was conducted is explained. The Target Child Observation Schedule, together with a Coding Sheet to record the child's behaviour and work, is available at the end of the chapter.

Chapter Five contains the findings of the research. The children's behaviour was coded in accordance with the Schedule and analysed under the following headings: Prepared Environment, Role of the Teacher, Work of the children and their level of interaction within the class and Usage of Montessori materials. The results of the study have also been compared with the research cited in Chapter Two.

Chapter Six contains conclusions and recommendations. It is recommended that a National policy on infant education is required to standardise teacher training and to increase the status of Infant teachers within the teaching profession. Empirical research is required into Montessori education in Ireland and several areas of research are suggested. Some improved school practices are also recommended.