

A stylized, colorful illustration of a landscape. The foreground features rolling green hills in various shades of green, with a dark brown path winding through them. On the left, there are several plants: a green tree with rounded foliage, a purple flower, and an orange flower. A small red bird is flying in the sky above the tree. The background consists of light blue and white wavy bands, suggesting a sky or water. The overall style is simple and child-friendly.

Developing The Normalized Child

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What Is “Normalization”?

- *Normalization refers to the focus, concentration, and independence of the children, by their own choice. It means they have acquired the internal freedom to initiate work, be independent, and adhere (by choice) to the rules of the environment.*

Origin of the Concept of “Normalization”

- Dr. Maria Montessori, anthropologist, psychologist, neurologist, and pioneer educator approached a study that abnormalities in behavior could be resolved by preparing an ideal environment to foster the needs of a child at every developmental stage.
- She was given charge of “sixty tearful, frightened children” that didn’t even speak, and one untrained aide and began observing what the children needed, what obstacles were in their way and began preparing materials and the environment to remove the obstacles.

- She discovered that in this prepared, free environment and work suited to meet their individual needs, these deprived children began to blossom.
- The children revealed their enormous capacity for intellectual accomplishment.
- A character of sweetness and serenity also emerged from all of the children. They now displayed an uncorrupted spirit, finding joy in the prodigious work they engaged in.
- From these “labors” the children actually were “refreshed” and as they worked, they grew inner discipline and peace.
- Maria Montessori believed that these were the “normal” characteristics of childhood.

The First Environment

- *If we consider the child's very first environment – the womb of the mother – we realize that God has given us a clue to an ideal environment.*
- *Here the child has:*
 - *Warmth*
 - *Nourishment*
 - *Security*
 - *Shelter*
 - *Protection*
 - *Freedom to develop without interference*

The Second Environment

- The second environment a child encounters is the home and for many children, early childhood classrooms are included due to both parents working outside of the home.
- Although our environment isn't perfect, like the womb, we must consider the needs of the developing child just as we would consider the needs of plant we were about to grow:
 - Soil
 - Sunlight
 - Water



What Are the
Needs of Children?

The Need for Movement

- Children need to move, explore, manipulate, and store up impressions to classify.
- Rooms should not be empty, sterile, untouchable – the child's developing mind needs to be “fed”
- Children's movement should not be restrained, as soon as they are able to move about they should be free to do so – restraining devices such as playpens, swings, walkers, exersaucers have their occasional place but should be limited
- Children will not be ready for precise, graceful movements by 3 years of age if they have had restricted opportunities

The Need for Language Development

- Children need to hear spoken language
- Infants watch adults with great intensity, often even touching their mouth.
- Soon, imitation begins. First babbling, then they construct their own language, complete with nouns, verbs, tense structure, intonations, and inflections...all of this without formal instruction.
- Children not only need to hear elementary language concerned with their needs: eating, sleeping, caring for themselves but precise language of area of culture...in detail

- Later, children are offered expanded vocabulary of many areas, and are not afraid of “big” words
- Training children is done through constant communication:
 - Following directions
 - Listening for sounds
 - Use of stories to increase the beauty and power of language

The Need for Independence

- Never do for children that which they have learned or are trying to learn to do for themselves.
- This requires great forbearance, patience, and planning
- If we are teaching a new skill, isolate the difficulty and teach one step at a time
- In infancy, we do a great deal of physical tending, but we must watch for the moment to discontinue, if we don't they may become indolent (lazy) or may actually develop despair of learning to care for themselves and be started on the road to an inferiority complex.

The Need for Love and Security

- Children constantly need the reassurance that they are loved
- Love is perceived by the quantity and quality of time we are willing to give – not gifts, not things

The Need for Discipline

- Children need to be taught to respect the rights of others just as their own rights should be respected
- If children are treated with consideration, they will more readily adopt the attitude of extending the same courtesy to others
- Children are often required to sacrifice their own personal interests, which often yield tantrums – this is no more than a conflict between the child's creative impulses and his love for an adult who fails to understand his needs

- This doesn't mean we foolishly allow children to be disorderly, disruptive, destructive, or inconsiderate.
- Small children should have fewer rules, simple rules
- Rules can be enforced not by coaxing or bribing, but by simply setting certain limits, and by consistently and firmly seeing that these limits are adhered to

The Need for Order

- *A child comes to internal order through external order and internal order is prerequisite to intellectual expansion*
- *Children learn to classify and categorize all objects they see*
- *Create an orderly environment, not constantly moving things about and give them opportunity to keep and care for their own possessions*

The Process of Normalization

When the needs of the child are met, and the development of the child is proceeding normally, there are four characteristics that signal the process of normalization:

- Love of Work
- Concentration
- Self-Discipline
- Sociability

Three Step Work Cycle: Step One

- Preparation for an activity involves gathering necessary materials. The movement and thought involved in the preparation serves to call the attention of the mind to begin to focus on the activity

Three Step Work Cycle: Step Two

- This step involves execution of the chosen activity. The activity is meant and designed to engross the child so that as a result he/she reaches a deep level of concentration. This step is an imperative step to education

Three Step Work Cycle: Step Three

- This third and final step of the child's work cycle is the time in which a child is putting away the materials, preparing the work space for the next child, and perhaps talking with friends. Most importantly to the child's development, he/she is exhibiting an aura of satisfaction with himself/herself and the world. In other words, self-confidence is being refined.

Normalization Is A Process

- *The process of normalization is a journey and begins when the children first enter the classroom and are introduced to Practical Life activities*

Practical Life

- *Practical Life activities respond to the “sensitive periods” or important periods of child development.*
- *Practical Life activities build a foundation on which children will grow and carry over into other areas of the classroom*
- *Practical Life activities respond to the child’s need for:*
 - *Order (sequences, routine, a cycle of an activity)*
 - *Movement (help child’s self-awareness within the environment)*
 - *Sensorial Exploration (sights, sounds, smells, and eventually language)*
 - *Needs and Tendencies (to help children adapt so they can participate)*
 - *A Child’s Love of Work (feed natural desire to work and play)*

Practical Life Lessons Guide Children

- Construction and integrations of the child's personality through their freedom of choice, and through the variety of their choices. Freedom of choice is necessary for the healthy development of the will
- Spontaneous purposeful activity that is only possible when children are allowed to exercise their curiosity through repetition. It is only through repetition that abstraction is possible. Abstraction brings about a feeling of completion for the growing child.

- Development of co-ordination of movement. The child thinks of the activity, wills himself to the activity, and then does the activity.
- Development of the physical, mental, and emotional aspects of the child.
- Purposeful movement that helps the development of the mind, and a sense of achievement. The development of the child's mind, movement, and senses will in turn, develop the will.
- Concentration. The child will concentrate on completing an activity as perfectly as possible; all activities are intelligible, logical, sequential, and exact. Children will internalize this and try to repeat the exercises as perfectly as possible; all exercises have a motive for perfection or completion

- *Orderly work habits.* The children need to internalize presentations in an orderly manner in order to reproduce in an orderly manner.
- *The practical life exercises develop logical thought through the definite logic in the exercises. There is a beginning, middle, and end to each exercise.*
- *Social Development.* All of the practical life exercises teach the children grace, courtesy, patience, and respect. These elements of social development are reinforced through the actions of the other children and through actions of the teacher (modeling).

- *Establish a sense of reality rooted in real activities. Exercises are lucid, logical, and realistic. This helps the children pursue reality. If an activity is not meaningful and purposeful than the mind cannot develop or construct itself*
- *Emotional stability helps the children become familiar with the real world and their environment. It builds self-esteem, and through that, their dignity will flourish. Materials and activities are therapeutic, meaning the mind and body work together.*



Scope and Sequence of Practical Life

Preliminary Exercises
Care of Person
Care of Environment
Graces and Courtesies
Control of Movement

Preliminary Exercises

- Preliminary Exercises Include:
 - Walking, standing, sitting and getting up from the floor or chair
 - Carrying a chair, table, tray, bucket, jug
 - Opening and closing door, drawers, boxes
 - Using tongs, locks and keys, nuts and bolts
 - Wringing and Squeezing
 - Transferring, Pouring, Spooning, Whisking

Care of Person

Care of Person includes exercises in buttoning, zipping, combing, tying, etc.

Care of Person includes self-hygiene exercises in hand washing, nose blowing, brushing, etc.

Care of Person includes exercises in food preparation, cutting, peeling, spreading, juicing, etc

Care of Environment

- Care of Environment includes activities in cleaning, sweeping, gardening, ironing, polishing, window washing, sewing, cutting, folding

Graces and Courtesies

- *Graces and Courtesies develop social relationships through modeling lessons in greeting, serving, accepting, apologizing, thanking, respecting, complimenting, preferring, not interrupting, etc.*
- *Graces and Courtesies also focus on developing other social manners for coughing, sneezing, yawning, etc.*

Movement

- *Movement activities promote and develop balance, walking the line, playing silence game, etc.*

The Normalized Child

After a period of time, with true cooperation of school and home, with a true understanding of how to meet the child's needs, this normalization will appear.



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