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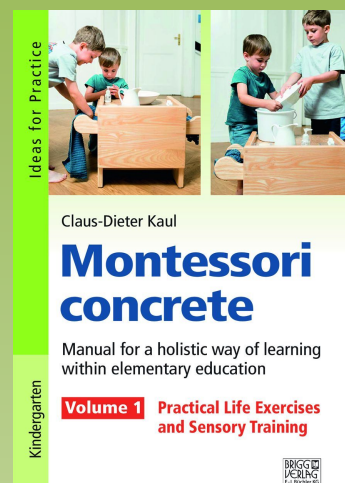
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**Auszug aus:**

*Montessori concrete – Volume 1*

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# Thank you

We would like to thank the many children that we have met in the last 30 years and have given us the opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of the statements of Maria and Mario Montessori. In this open and honest dialogue with the children, we could learn to trust them unconditionally, to accompany them with respect and help them and ourselves to develop a sense of self-esteem.

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# Foreword

Dear reader!

With this series of books we would like to invite and guide you to get to know Maria Montessori's comprehensive, pioneering pedagogy in concrete terms and to learn to apply it „step by step“. This enables you to create a supportive atmosphere in kindergarten and at home, as well as learning situations in which your children can also develop well and optimally according to new standards.

In recent years, the call for a new culture of education has been growing louder. Last but not least, various studies such as PISA or TIMS make us all aware that there is a lot to change in our education system. Certainly, one conclusion is the appearance of new educational plans for the elementary sector. The requirements here are intended to show educators a way to prepare children for the living conditions of today. In many conversations with course participants, we find again and again that many adults have few concrete ideas about how they can adapt to these challenges. They are still imprisoned with the expectations from their most diverse - in some cases long past - training, as well as with their own, not yet processed „parenting experiences“ from their childhood.

It can be observed that Montessori-Pedagogy - in relation to the present time - offers many of these people great help in reflecting on a new job. Why is Montessori-Pedagogy particularly useful? Certainly, this is because this „pedagogy“ emerged from the child's observation, which was carried out by a doctor. So, Maria Montessori did not develop a method of education, but as a doctor observed how the child learns and drew her own conclusions from it. This justifies its topicality in today's time. When creating the learning environment for children, today great importance is attached to incorporating knowledge from neurophysiology and modern psychology. This is completely in line with Maria Montessori's knowledge, especially with regard to didactic structure. Thus, her method, which is based on the material she developed, has not lost its appeal.

From today's point of view, what has to be examined in particular is the role of the educator. Our experience has shown that the implementation of Montessori-Pedagogy requires a large amount of self-reflection and ultimately results in a genuinely new educational culture which - as Jesper Juul describes - gives us the opportunity to assume responsibility from obedience.

We both had to find out that this was a very intensive process of our own, because even in our training courses on Montessori-Pedagogy we still experienced that in theory there was talk of personal responsibility and self-activity - but the way of dealing with us adults was still predominantly characterized by a culture of obedience.

Thus it is not a surprise for us that in many Montessori facilities where all Montessori materials are to hand, the attitude of the educators however is still strongly characterized by the „old educational culture“.

It is therefore an urgent concern for us to use these manuals<sup>1</sup> to offer educators in the elementary area an opportunity to reflect on their work on a daily basis and to develop the three competencies mentioned by Søs Bayer:

- The competence to enter into relationships with children
- The competence to take an important place in the life of children, even if one is not a parent
- The competence to endure that educational reality is like life<sup>2</sup>

An important concern of this series is to show a concrete guide to how the thematic focal points of the “Educational Plan for Elementary Pedagogy” (BEP) are specifically reflected in Montessori Pedagogy.

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<sup>1</sup> We chose the term „educator“ as the name for the accompanying persons of the children, in order to integrate the gender-specific term on the one hand and on the other hand to make it clear that for us this word contains the professional relationship competence, which is characterized by a personal authority and not by role-related authority.

<sup>2</sup> Jesper Juul, „Vom Gehorsam zur Verantwortung“, Page 163

# Practical life exercises

## The meaning of the practical life exercises

The practical life exercises do not only have a practical goal, therefore the emphasis should not be on “practical” but on “life”.

*„The way to enlightenment and salvation follows from exercising mindfulness. One must go with patience and perseverance and preferably under the guidance of an experienced master. You should practice meditation when walking, standing still, sitting and working, when washing your hands, washing up, sweeping and drinking tea, when talking with friends and with everything that you do. You must do each action with mindfulness. Each action is a ritual. Does the word ritual sound too solemn to you? I use it, in order to make it clear, once and for all, that awareness, consciousness is a matter of life and death“.<sup>1</sup>*

It is the vital urge for self-realisation, which works in children during the execution of these activities. Practical life activities include both the care of the environment and the care of self.

The activities must speak for themselves. It should not be the case that the children practice because we do, or in the way we do it and definitely not because we want the work to be done. The exercises practiced by the child should be original work and an expression of self-unfolding life. The educator shows the children the exercise - but then leaves it to the child to implement it in their own way. In a lecture, which Maria Montessori held in London, she expressed it as follows: *„insegnare insegnando - non corrigendo“* (teach by teaching, not correcting!)<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Thich Nathan, *Lächle deinem eigenen Herzen zu*, Freiburg-Breisgau, 1995, P. 35, 45

<sup>2</sup> E.M. Standing, *Maria Montessori - Leben und Werk*, Finkverlag Oberursel P. 128

This is a statement from the former Secretary of Education for Brandenburg, Steffen Reiche: „A good kindergarten shows itself exactly like a good school, a good university, or a good professional training, that is, a good life by possessing the necessary serenity to learn from the mistakes we make over and over again. Thus, if a kindergarten makes it possible to develop skills to strengthen competence, but especially also to allow errors, which one or others can make, to use as a reason for situational learning processes and self education processes, then the requirement and formation of education in kindergartens is fulfilled“<sup>3</sup>

If we correct the child, it feels suppressed and develops feelings of inferiority. The child's feeling of self-esteem will increase if left to discover mistakes for themselves by the self-checks in-built in the materials of the Montessori environment.

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<sup>3</sup> Kindergarten Heute, 1/2005, page 24



## Care of self

### Hand washing



On a small table stands a jug and a bowl made of porcelain or metal, on their left lay two folded guest towels and on the right a small dish with a piece of soap and a small dish with hand cream in it. Next to the table is a bucket and a washing up brush sitting on an unfolded cleaning cloth. Here one should pay particular attention to the aesthetics: All the items should be colour coordinated and look inviting.



First the jug is filled with water and put on the table. Some of the water is poured into the bowl. Special attention is given to the last drop, which remains hanging on the jug. This is carefully removed with the cloth.



Now wet the hands and arms with water and rub them firmly with soap. The soap is then quickly dipped into the water and when it is clean, put back in its dish.

When soaping the hands and arms one takes ones time, in order to evoke different images, e.g. lip-smacking pigs going barefoot in the mud. Each and every finger is paid attention to when soaping them.

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