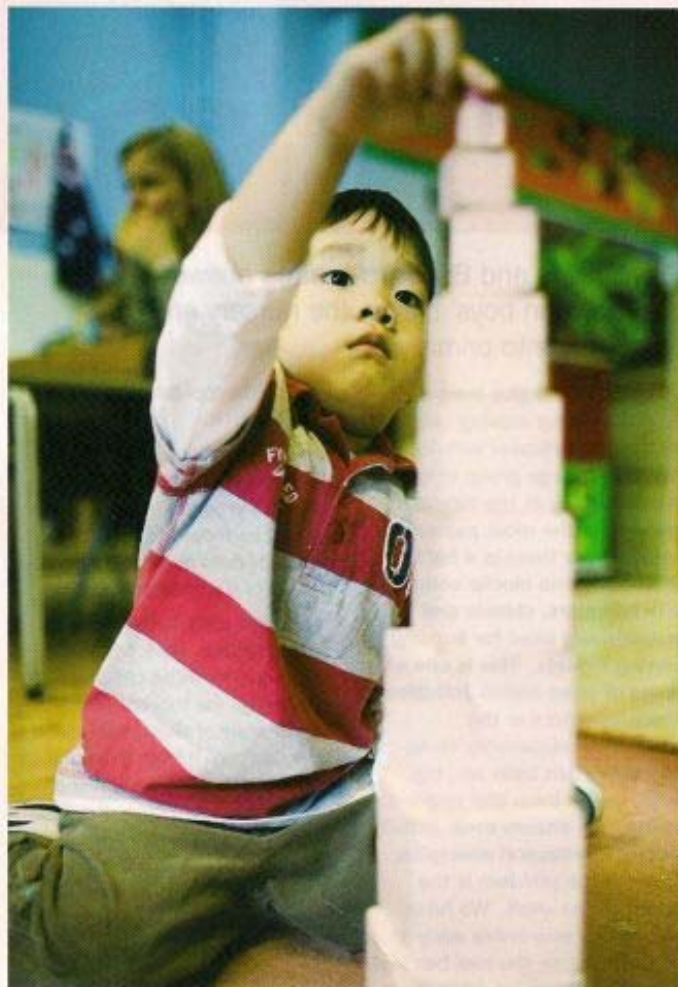


**John Clarkson** highlights the latest research being carried out in the field of Montessori education.

**At the 2007** Swedish Montessori Centenary Conference, organized by the Teacher's College in Stockholm with support from the Universities of Göteborg, Lund, Malmö and Kristianstad, a network of Montessori researchers was set up. MORE (Montessori Research Europe) has as its primary aim the improvement of communication between universities and other academic institutions in Europe which are involved in research in the field of Montessori pedagogy. At the moment this is being carried out by informal networking, an electronic newsletter and annual meetings in concert with the Montessori Europe conference - which this year will be in Cracow starting on Friday 16th October. The MORE newsletter contains details of ongoing research projects from around Europe. These include the 2004 study by Dr Wilhelm Suffenplan of Cologne University which was based on, comparative test of pupils in primary fourth grade classes across seven states. The study included 663 Montessori pupils from 12 different schools. The schools were classified into four context groups, based on data on

there being good organisation of free activity time, with enhanced learning possibilities. *Nicole Hanewinkel* carried out a study into the processes of learning fractions using the Montessori materials. She looked particularly into the way children may arrive at an autonomous construction of mathematical rules. *Sung-Hui Kim* carried out a study into whether Montessori education furthers early childhood creativity. She considered the differing concepts of creativity amongst Montessorians and their critics and, using the TSD-Z test scores (a German test of creative thinking using a geometrical drawing procedure) she concluded that creativity is enhanced, but only if children are able to work independently and they are supported in carrying through their own ideas.

*Professor Hildegard Holtstiege*, formerly at Muenster and now in her 80s, has been researching early education within the context of Montessori education since 1971. Among other areas she has produced verification studies on Montessori's insights into sensitive periods, the absorbent mind, observation, and



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the social conditions of the pupils. In most cases the Montessori pupils showed higher scores, except for two cases, essay writing skills and spelling, where the pupils from 'good' areas did better. However Montessori children from 'poorer' areas were clearly advantaged in these areas.

**There have been** numerous research studies at the Montessori centre at the University of Muenster, under the direction of Professor Harald Ludwig. Examples include the 2007 research by *Esther Grindel* based on case studies of gifted children in Montessori settings. She found that gifted children were generally helped in Montessori settings, and the problem of 'under-challenging' which is widespread in traditional classes was mitigated. However that was critically dependent on

the hand and eye - the tools of intelligence. One of the major results from this enormous corpus of research is the critical importance of the maternal drive and the repercussions of its repression in contemporary society.

**There are also** briefer notes in the newsletters on a range of research studies, including work at the Centre for Montessori Studies at Roma Tre University (which, directed by professor Clara Tornar, focuses on three areas - historical studies, quantitative and qualitative studies of applications of Montessori pedagogy and offering a range of service activities i.e. CPD, a master's degree programme and the publication of scientific abstracts.) Two projects which are currently being piloted are a study into the identity of the Montessori school;

and looking at the 'learning to learn' process.

**There is also** a Montessori Research Centre directed by Nadeshda Grigorjevna at the State University of Belgorod in Russia. Her focus is particularly on the 'cosmic education' aspect of Montessori and they have organised a number of international conferences.

**At the** Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland, *Professor Ryszard Kucha* has just started a major international project which will result in a massive study in two volumes: the first focusing on studies in Montessori's own life and her educational concepts, and the second looking at the implementation of Montessori across six continents.

**The MORE** network currently has 45 members involved in

Montessori research (two of whom are from the UK) and of them 11 hold university professorial chairs or are emeritus professors. Germany heads the list with 13 members and no less than six professors, with Poland, Russia and Sweden having a relatively large representation.

It is perhaps rather too easy for us in the UK to lose sight of the international standing and status of the Montessori movement - to be honest we have a long way to go to catch up. However, with the commencement of a Montessori degree programme last year, and the completion of two major research projects at the Institute of Education, London, perhaps events are beginning to move.

**John Clarkson**

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