

2016 Educateurs sans Frontières Assembly – NOTES

Date: 31 July 2016

**Topic: Orientation and Introduction to EsF
Working for Social Change: A Montessori Perspective**

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Lynne:
Good morning everyone!

It is such a pleasure to open the proceedings for the Fifth Assembly of EsF. It is a wonderful moment to have so many parts of the world with different backgrounds and experiences come together here.

One of the most important things for Montessori education and Montessori in general is “How do we find the “other?” How do we open up ourselves to others? To receive their views? Their experiences?

That is the space we will create here with each other. It is your assembly. By the end of it you will see how much of it you created yourselves. There will be some tangible outcomes for children, for adults, and for others.

Philip O'Brien:

We had a nice start off to the Assembly last night.

Muhammad Ali had two grandchildren in Montessori. (Referring to the Assistant Minister for Education in India?) The importance of that must not be underestimated. It is one thing to have our children in Montessori and another to bring it to the world.

When I came to Montessori many years ago, I came over from UNICEF. I learned a lesson slowly and painfully that if we make any one single investment to improve children's lives it is through education, and

even more specifically, women's education. The economic and social evidence is that the more that girls have exposure to education, the better the world will be.

So there were a few shocking things I noticed when I started working with AMI, which has the aim of supporting the rights of the child. It is known for its educational pedagogy, but that is just the top layer of this organization. We need to do to things.

For UNICEF, they have the ability to engage in individuals. It is what they are good at. They raise a billion dollars a year from not just the rich and well-off, but from the pockets of people walking around the streets in not only the wealthy countries. To raise money from these people, you must have a very good reputation. You also need a brand, a name.

When I came to Montessori and found that the name was not protected, I was shocked. How do we protect everything that comes with that name? We need to talk about that. This image has become very important. It has changed over the last few years and André and Lynne need to be recognized for that. That is the first transformation needed.

The second transformation is as an organization changes it needs to develop internal capacity and other important aspects of good business practices, but we need to not stop there. We need to be influential in policy forums, working various ministers of states. When looking at the Child Development Goals, it is disappointing that it does not address the way education is imparted and what makes quality education.

As we go through this next phase, we need to think about ourselves about how we bring what we are good at to the world.

You can't walk into the Ministry of Health and Education and say, "This is the way to do education," without the evidence to say this is why how we do education is better and excellence.. We must be able to demonstrate what is beneficial to the child and to the community.

How do we build partnerships in order to achieve that goal? None of us can do this alone. Renilde said AMI is not the only organization that moves towards children's rights. Who should we partner with?

Let's bring this back to EsF. The vision and the activities are just one element to the many elements. It is about promoting the welfare and rights and education of the child. Those are the things that we have said.

We have also said we are going to work with other organizations and governments. We need policies. We need to be inclusive. Let's not go talk about an apocalyptic world yet, but look at the last few years. There have been terrible acts of violence and horrible situations of discrimination. It is easy to see how important it is to work toward social integration. Maria Montessori has told us that to pull people back together we need to work toward peace, harmony, and the goal of collaboration.

It is this articulation of AMI that we have with EsF. How do we get a bigger bang for our buck? We need to do more. We have to capture the knowledge and bring that out and beyond us to be successful in this work.

Andre:

This is the Fifth Assembly EsF. This is the fourth that I have attended. It is interesting to look back. In 2004, it was an AMI meeting with AMI people sitting around a table together. People who were attending had the job to be there and to listen to the presenters. I was not part of AMI, but just a young and newly retired adult. Renilde asked me to come and shake up the Assembly, so he did. He started with, "You should all be ashamed of yourselves." (Meaning they had not dealt with real world needs in education.) They took it very well, showing that it is a group of really good people.

In 2011, the Assembly was held in Dallas. The Assembly was not just interesting because of those that attended, and also not for it being so hot with temperatures around 110, but another idea. They came with the idea that there is a world of Montessori out of the box, but mostly it was attended by traditional Montessorians.

In 2015, the Assembly was held in Thailand. It was the beginning of changing the balance. There were more people who were non-traditional and out of the box. They were there to take it out of the box.

This group is completely out of the box. We are sitting here as being part of AMI. We are here to listen to you and your experiences. It is not just about how can we support you, but also how can we feed the movement? You are an essential element of the evolution of the Montessori movement. You are leading it. It is still a bit of disorder, with different experiences and different environments. How can we crystallize these concepts?

We are here to challenge ourselves. I am here for curiosity. To discover what you have to tell us. I have already heard many things that make me very excited.

Lynne:

Housekeeping.

Let's get a sense of how the day works in general:

Timing:

As of tomorrow morning, we will have two activities everyday between 6am and 7am in the morning.

Helen will lead a yoga session outside. If you would like to join her doing yoga, meet at the front entrance. She will take you to a beautiful area to do yoga together.

We will also everyday have a walk every morning. Shabnam will lead the walk everyday. On the walk she will name the birds and the plants and the flowers, which are unfamiliar to us. Maybe others from the area could help with their personal knowledge as well.

Breakfast - 7:30am to 9:00am

Session 1 morning – 9:00 am to 10:30 am

Tea - 10:30am to 11:00am

Session 2 Morning – 11:00 12:30

Lunch - 12:30pm – 2:00pm

Session 3 Afternoon – 2:00pm 3:30

Afternoon Tea – 3:30pm to 4:00 pm

Session 4 Afternoon- 4:00pm to 5:00 pm.

Cultural Opportunities – 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Dinner 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

If anyone would like to practice wearing a saree, Helen will give you a lesson on how to wear one.

Cultural Opportunities:

After the formal sessions, sometimes between 5 and 7 the local community wanted to bring their culture to us. Each day between 5:30 and 6:30 there will be children coming in to dance or to sing, there will be mehndi makers that can decorate your hands. The paste is organic and fresh with no artificial ingredients.

We will also have the opportunity to look at how they make the Lac bangles and how to make the garlands with flowers. Also, we will be able to play old-fashioned Indian games. We are losing the games in our life and the way playing games assists us in coming together in community. There are string games. Clothing coming is being brought in. Also, we will have someone come in with the pearls and you can select what pearls you like and then they will sting a set for you. All of this is traditional to Hyderabad.

We have books on sale for you as the days go by. We have the Indian publications. I brought a few along to show you what we have from AMI.

We have toys coming. They are made by hand without automatic machinery coming in.

Capturing the Assembly:

We capture the assembly in different ways. We have the videographer and the photographer and people taking notes. We also have a scroll that is accompanied by the ancient wood blocks for material making. You can make some patterns and then reflect that on the scroll as we go along.

Water – bottles need to be recycled. Don't leave a bit of water in the water bottle. Take great care with the water supply.

Mosquitos – take adequate precautions. If anyone is sick, let Fay know right away.

Wi-Fi codes. Last a week. One per device. When it runs out, go to reception and get another one.

Badges: please where until we know each other's names.

How does the day go? The presentations we have some that are formal, sometimes there will be Q/A following. Have some presentations where you think about what has been said. Please reflect and think about what you take away and want to ask?

The workshops are all open. If you have a presentation, then let us know. It could be one you want to do or things that you need to know.

We also have open space sessions. We need to decide together what we think we should do during those times.

Friday is our day out. We will do three things that day. We will go to Montessori schools, visit a weaver's location, and go to outdoor markets.

Sunday is a free day. If you want to do nothing, that is great. We are organizing a trip to various places. If you want to come, please sign up to get there. Otherwise Sunday is for you to decide.

Work:

We ask that while you are here, to contribute to a reflective endeavor. We are going to use this collective wisdom to develop resources to create a way to get to those who can't come to an assembly, and give them the support they need.

Your work for this Assembly is going to be to provide us with the four areas:

1. A document that identifies the core values and essential principles that anyone and any way that we interact make us EsF. What is it that is EsF. What is it that makes a person in the field able to say that this is how I live my life and how I interact with people? it will influence the way to be with yourself and what to do with others.
2. Look at what we might need for implementation. How do we support people working in the field? How do we support the people we are working with to help them to continue and be sustained?
3. We capture the Assembly. We are filming it, photographs, notes, and we post them, post them. These can go up live so that everyone that can't make it here can see it happening.
4. When you capture something, you have to capture the stories in this room. We want to capture our own stories. We can only tell our own stories from your stories. Then this will go out beyond India and we can capture the others out there practicing to show to the world as well. We need the common thread.

That is going to be the work going on.

Now, 9:48 am. We have tea at around 10:30 am.

What I would like you to do now in threes in the next half-hour or 45 minutes to go away and those three people to find out as much as you can about each other. Then distill what you know in 1 minute. Then you will introduce someone else in that one minute.

Break until 11:00

Back from break.

We will be staying on time.

We are now going to introduce each other.

End of introductions.

We are all working in a humanitarian organization. AMI is a humanitarian organization.

Andre:

If I was coming from outside and listening to all of you. I would think we are a bunch of frustrated .. dreaming of some big dream. We need a group of people who were not satisfied with what they were doing before going to Montessori. We all have come from where we were with the hope that children can bring things to a better world. Montessori is the instrument to help this world. Continue to be unsatisfied.