



# **Research on Montessori education and the learning methods in VET in France**

**Materials, numbers and needs**

**The FRENCH National Report**

**By Francis Laveaux**  
**[francislaveaux@yahoo.fr](mailto:francislaveaux@yahoo.fr)**

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## 1) History of Montessori in France

In 1931, under the patronage of Madame Montessori, the Montessori Association of France (AMF) was created, designed to develop the principles of her teaching. In 1950 a group of Montessorians, chaired by Mr Jean-Jacques Bernard, revived the Association Montessori de France, after an interruption due to World War II. Since then, the AMF is affiliated to the International Montessori Association. The AMF organized an international conference in March 1953. In 1957 the Association Montessori de France commemorates the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Montessori school under the chairmanship of Maria Montessori.

In 1970, for the centenary of the birth of Maria Montessori, the AMF organized a demonstration at the National Institute of Education (Unesco)

In 2001, under the leadership of the AMF and the ISMM (Institut Supérieur Maria Montessori) a Montessori International Congress has been held in Paris at the UNESCO.

In 2005 the AMF organized a symposium for its 55th anniversary on the theme: "What education for what society?"

In 2007 in conjunction with the MMSI, the AMF celebrated the centenary of the first Montessori school at the Sorbonne.

The current team of the AMF aims to bring together those interested in the educational ideas of Maria Montessori, to raise awareness of the philosophy for families, health care and education, to defend the Rights of the Child.

The AMF agreed with the sentence pronounced by Maria Montessori.

"The great social mission of ensuring the child justice, harmony and love remains. This important task returns to education. This is our only way to build a new world and build peace."

The Association Montessori de France is the only association existing in France recognized by the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI).

### Understanding the Montessori movement in France:

To understand the history of this movement in France, it is worth remembering that in 1881 there was the creation of kindergarten under the influence of Pauline Kergomard who attached great importance to the training of educators. As Maria Montessori she considered freedom of the child as a basic principle of education.

In Paris, in 1913 Ms. Pujol-Segal opened the first Montessori school. Shortly after the armistice, a U.S. citizen, Ms Cromwell created Montessori classes for children of refugees and war orphans, where wounded soldiers made the sensorial material. Ms. Cromwell then offers educational materials and a copy of Scientific Pedagogy she translated into French to Teacher's schools. Scientific Pedagogy is the first book of the doctor Maria Montessori prefaced by Mr Paul Lapie, Director of Primary Education in France

In 1921 Maria Montessori participated in the first International Congress of New Education. At that time the interest in Montessori theory was growing.

In 1930 a Congress of this movement and a Montessori course has been held in Nice gathering the followers of the New Education Movement.

In 1931, Maria Montessori gave a lecture at the Sorbonne. Following this, she was asked to give a course.

During the interwar Montessori schools that have been important in the history of the movement were opened: the College of Jonchères led by Ms. Bernheim, Happy childhood led by Ms. Riedel, the Joyful school run by Mrs. Niox -Château.

During this period, some Inspectors of Education, as Ms. Lebert Herbinière worked to disseminate the ideas of Maria Montessori.

Maria Montessori estimated it was time to organize a volunteer group in France to disseminate the principles of her teaching.

World War II led to the closing of schools. After the war Ms. JJ Bernard and her daughter, Ms. Gillet revived the Montessori movement, opened a school and in 1947 the first International Montessori Course.

In 1948, the French government wishing to show his admiration for Montessori awarded her a decoration: the Legion of Honor with the rank of officer. Léon Blum will say on that occasion: "You taught me what freedom is. "

In 1951, an honorary committee was organized. Several VIP's accepted to become members including the Minister of Education, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Budget, the Chancellor of the University, the Director of Higher Education

In 1946, thanks to the training center, schools were opened in the Paris region, in Roubaix, Limoges, Rennes and Roanne

In 1969 there were 25 Montessori schools in France but currently the number is over 50.

## 2) Today's Statistics.

- ◆ How many Montessori School are there in France?

53 recognized Montessori schools in France

- ◆ What about the variety of Montessori Schools (kindergarten, primary, secondary).

Till 1955 there were only 3 Montessori schools in France, in Roubaix Paris and Rennes. The first one was created in 1944 and the two others in 48 and 55. 28 schools have been created from 1971 till 1999. The last 22 have been founded between 2000 and 2010. Please note that in 2010 8 Montessori schools have been created and 4 in 2009.

Considering the distribution on the French territory, 10 are located in Paris, and 25 in the Region Ile-de-France. By department the following table shows the distribution

REGION	Department	Per department	Per region
AQUITAINE	33 GIRONDE	1	1
BRETAGNE	35 ILLE ET VILLAIN	1	1
DOM	97 MARTINIQUE	1	1
IDF	75 PARIS	10	25
IDF	78 YVELINES	5	
IDF	91 ESSONNE	4	
IDF	92 HAUTS DE SEINE	2	
IDF	93 SEINE ST DENIS	1	
IDF	94 VAL DE MARNE	2	
IDF	95 VAL D'OISE	1	
LANGUEDOC ROUSSILLON	34 HERAULT	1	
LANGUEDOC ROUSSILLON	66 PYRENEES ORIENTALES	1	
MIDI PYRENEES	31 HAUTE GARONNE	2	2
NORD PAS DE CALAIS	59 NORD	1	1
PACA	06 ALPES MARITIMES	3	5
PACA	83 VAR	1	
PACA	84 VAUCLUSE	1	
PICARDIE	60 OISE	1	1
RHONE ALPES	01 AIN	2	13
RHONE ALPES	26 DROME	1	
RHONE ALPES	38 ISERE	4	
RHONE ALPES	69 RHONE	2	
RHONE ALPES	73 SAVOIE	1	
RHONE ALPES	74 HAUTE SAVOIE	3	

In the following regions there are no Montessori schools: Alsace, Auvergne, Bourgogne, Centre, Champagne-Ardenne, Corse, Franche-Comté, Limousin, Lorraine, Basse-Normandie, Haute-Normandie, Pays-de-la-Loire, Poitou-Charentes. In the Overseas territory (La Réunion, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyana, St-Pierre et Miquelon) there is only one school at La Martinique). There are schools in 24 departments on 96 and in 9 regions on 22 in the Metropolitan France.

Concerning the distribution by target, 2 schools address the category 12-15 years old, 32 the category 6-12, 50 the category 3-6, 24 the category 2-3.

1 school is addressing the 4 categories, 1 both categories 12-15 and 6-12, 13 schools are concerned by three categories 2-3, 3-6 and 6-12.

16 schools address the categories 3-6 and 6-12.

9 schools address the categories 2-3 and 3-6.

11 schools the category 3-6 only and one school the category 2-3 only.

### 3) National and Local contacts for Montessori.

The “Association Montessori de France” is affiliated to the AMI (Association Montessori international. You can find relevant information on their respective websites. Nevertheless we present you one Montessori school, “Le Jardin des Enfants.”

#### ◆ Name and Location

Le Jardin des Enfants

7 Chemin de L'Île

33360 Latresne (Bordeaux Academy)

Direction : Alexia Lefebvre

Tél : +33 556206119 Fax : +33 556206119

[montessori.bordeaux@gmail.com](mailto:montessori.bordeaux@gmail.com)

<http://www.montessori-bordeaux.com/>

#### ◆ How they currently apply the method

##### The educational project

The “Children's Garden” corresponds entirely to the philosophy of Montessori education. Help the child to develop the physical, psychological and social on an individual basis at the pace of the child should be learning at the right time and always involving the notion of pleasure. Make the child independent and responsible, organizer of his projects and his work. Cultivate the natural desire to

learn of the young child. Develop confidence in himself and in the adult. Focusing primarily on successes rather than failures. Mix the ages to give the younger ones an identifying pattern and allow the older children to reinforce their knowledge and confidence in helping younger, respecting them, playing the role of educator.

### Activities

#### English

Learning this language is provided half-time in each group by a native English teacher. The children attend courses in small groups.

They progress by first understanding and then speaking and writing. To acquire fluency and familiarity, they participate in English games, songs, crafts, etc ...

#### Music

A practitioner awakens children's sensitivity to the musical world by the ear, rhythm, instruments. It happens once a month

#### Manual work and art

Handicrafts during the holidays (Christmas decorations, Easter, etc. ...). Developing artistic expression through painting. At least once a week minimum.

#### Sport

Once a week, with an external person, the children have fun practicing sport.

#### Yoga

With a qualified person, 2 times per month.

#### The holidays

Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Mardi Gras, St Patrick's day, Easter, Christmas fathers and mothers ...

#### Other

Going out ...

- ◆ How is it changed and what they are still using

It is obvious they totally apply the Montessori method for children.

- ◆ Application of the Montessori method to adults

According to their presentation, they don't seem to have specific interest in Adult education

as they focus on the categories 2-3, 3-6 and 6-9 years old.

#### 4) National VET situation.

◆ VET, an introduction.

The historical development of the way the educational system is organized has seen three major developments: the birth of a central administration, the setting-up of an administrative National Education organization and the separation of Church and State.

French public education is based on three mainstays:

- Secularism;
- Compulsory education to 16 years of age;
- A free public service.

Education is compulsory and free from the ages of 6 to 16; it includes five years of primary education (in primary school) followed by seven years of secondary education: four years in "college" (lower secondary education) followed by three "lyceum" year (upper secondary education)

The French continuing education system is based on the extremely structured sharing of responsibilities between economic players and public institutions. Regulatory bodies are essential in order to harmonize the issues specific to each group of stakeholders. This original model is well in keeping with the European "life-long learning" concept.

The major orientations of the vocational training system are negotiated by management and labor representatives and subject to inter-branch agreements, which are subsequently translated by the Parliament into French social law, taking into account European recommendations and directives.

In France, adult education and training is provided by various authorities and organizations which are often competing or working together in the field:

- Training organizations under the authority of ministries (Education, agriculture, Health etc.);
- Organizations under the authority of local administrations (health and social);
- Private organizations and associations;
- Organizations under the authority of professional chambers (Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Chambers of Trades, Chambers of Agriculture) and private training centers. They constitute a dense framework of organizations facilitating public access to training throughout the regions. This offer facilitates the access to

training of job seekers and employees affected by reclassification. In addition to find employment for job seekers, the National Employment Agency (ANPE), created in 1967, manages public employment assistance funds, which can be allocated for training. It can therefore provide vocational training actions. The ANPE has 25 regional and 103 departmental delegations.

The merger of two public employment services, ANPE and Assedic, is already effective under the Pôle Emploi banner, which has the legal status of an autonomous contract "Public National Institution". Job seekers can access a one-stop office as of October 2009.

◆ Educational system and place of VET, who is responsible for the design of the qualifications/curricula in VET, e.g. (is the working field involved?)

Each region manages the entire vocational training process for young people and adults.

New approach to the establishment and implementation of the State's budget: definition of objectives and indicators to evaluate the results of public actions. This concerns State resources allocated to training.

Development of life-long professional qualification: the national inter-professional agreement signed in September 2003 by all labor and management representatives includes an increased financial contribution by the companies to the training effort. It creates new employee rights and reinforces negotiation systems.

Law on life-long vocational training: transposition into French law of the national inter-professional agreement signed by labor and management representatives.

Creation of a national Register of professional certifications (RNCP): the idea is to make existing qualifications and diplomas more legible and to facilitate the creation of new professional qualifications adapted to economic requirements.

Development of skill validation: anyone can validate the skills acquired by experience or throughout their professional career with a view to obtain a recognized qualification, diploma or professional title. They must attest to 3 years of activity related to the certification applied for.

## 5) Learning system

- ◆ Learning system used in VET in France

New requirements for training organizations: they must encourage bespoke, personalized, flexible and modular training and professional qualification courses.

The laws and regulations on apprenticeship and continuing education are an integral part of labor law. They are codified in Book I of the Labor Code for apprenticeship and Book IX for continuing education. These texts are complex and constantly evolving in order to introduce methods and procedures adapted to the needs of employees, job seekers and companies. Continuing education concerns anyone economically active or integrated into the labor market. However, access to continuing education in the broad sense of the term depends on the position in relation to work and employment and on the legal status of the professional category involved.

- ◆ Stage / internship

The question is very wide and quite complicated in France, taking into account the diversity of the French system and the multitudes of situations.

- ◆ To get the diploma depends on the status and on the VET process people are involved in.

- ◆ Learning goal of the internship?

Stages are a part of a learning process. It means the goals of the internship are directly linked to the main learning process. There are a lot of possibilities and their achievements are also linked to the personal status of the person, which is the base to enter VET in France.

## 6) Research on target groups.

- ◆ What is needed to involve the target group in education? (Motivation/ own choice for the learning path/ on the job learning instead of school).

According to a survey led by CEGOS about VET in France in 2009, the following elements were considered by the workers to be motivated to start a training:

	<b>VERY IMPORTANT</b>	<b>QUITE IMPORTANT</b>
<b>professional evolution</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>41%</b>
<b>to earn more</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>45%</b>
<b>to adapt oneself to the job</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>to increase one's skills and to get a new job</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>44%</b>
<b>skills recognition in the company</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>48%</b>
<b>personal development</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>52%</b>
<b>to get a diploma</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>40%</b>

## 7) Best practices. Methods/practices applied to train the target group in VET?

### ◆ How are subjects taught through specific methods?

All subjects are concerned. It needs more research to reflect the diversity. Trainers used generally active method based on the participation of the individual and it depends also on the type of VET course.

### ◆ Are the eventual methods used by the choice of the single teacher or are standardized by the Training center?

The vocational training sector is characterized by a very fragmented offer: there were 45,777 training organizations in 2005, only 13,500 of which were primarily focused on vocational training. There are normally three major categories of vocational training organization:

- the private profit-making sector, which represents 38% of the turnover and includes independent training organisations as well as training companies directly or indirectly related to a branch or company;
- the non-profit private sector – popular education or integration associations, associations related to companies and industrial sectors such as ASFOs – representing 35% of the turnover;
- The public and semi-public sector with a turnover of 23% of the sector’s activity and which includes different types of organization: AFPA, CNAM, universities, GRETA, chambers of commerce etc.

Most of these organizations are small-scale. Consequently, the training sector is dominated by a few large-scale operators: organizations with a turnover in excess of €750,000 only represent 12% of the total number of organizations but 73% of the sector’s turnover.

Concretely it means the trainers use very different methods and methodology. They have to respect the Guide lines for the training issued by the decision makers. In France the VET is a market and is no more subject to subventions (subsidies) or conventions but it is a market you had to answer to and to respect the guidelines quoted before.

### ◆ Examples for best practices concerning on the job learning for target groups in VET.

1. A Good Practice is a document called “The Guidelines for Key Competences in Vocational Situation” published by the French National Agency for Fighting Illiteracy. It has been created starting from actual work situation allowing the FNAFI (ANLCI) to

describe tasks and to formalize the necessary key competences. It is available at <http://anlci.fr/?id=editions>

2. There is another practice called “Consolidation of skills of apprentices through their professionalization programs”. It concerns 6 experiences led in the Region PACA in the South of France. These actions are intended to apprentices who have an insufficient command of basic knowledge and are threatened by short-term failure in their training, either due to a breach of contract by their employer . They are incapable of performing the missions assigned to them. To help these young people to have a mastery of basic instrumental skills (reading, writing and arithmetic), training centres are developing various devices. Two approaches have emerged actions in this pack:

- The first approach consists of practices whose purpose is individualized pathways of apprentices identified as needing to consolidate their knowledge base,
- The second approach includes practical learning of basic knowledge in the framework of vocational training.

<http://www.fpp.anlci.fr/index.php?id=entreprise-pratiques>

## 8) Conclusion and proposals

In France, the VET is very fragmented but there is a demand for new methods by teachers and trainers. They always are searching for new ways to allow learners to learn in a more efficient way. Most of VET teachers build up their own material. They adapt them to the aim of the different qualifications to be acquired. As the global approach is competence based it is obvious a new methodology would be warmly welcome by trainers and decision-makers. The conditions of VET have to be respected and the curricula constructed in accordance to the global system of the VET for adults in France, as well as the funding capabilities of the training centre. Current methods are not very far from Montessori principles. What will be difficult is to convince decision-makers to implement it to a large scale because it needs a complex dissemination process of the methodology created involving different levels of decision. It is obvious to involve the state level and specialized agencies like the French National Agency for Fighting Illiteracy and/or decision-makers at the Regional level (the level competent for VET in France). The question of illiteracy is redundant inside companies. It concerns the lowest level of skills required to develop professional skills. A lot of young adults involved in professional learning don't master the Key Competences. Those KC are relevant in the professional field to allow young adults to reach their professional aims and enter the knowledge society.

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