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The Montessori Pedagogy in Morocco: State of the Art from a Qualitative Perspective

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Abstract: Alternative pedagogies have become international, and Montessori pedagogy has become widespread throughout the world, as there are Montessori schools in almost every capital city in the world. This pedagogy focuses on the child holistic. It requires a positive, caring attitude from the educator toward the learner/student, making the learning method playful and entertaining, thus yielding better results in terms of performance and teaching. As for our country Morocco, and according to the literature review studied, the existing studies remain limited in this sense, to address this limitation, this article presents a state of play of Montessori pedagogy in Morocco from a qualitative point of view, based on a semi-directive interview conducted with Montessori pedagogy instructors who belong to the following cities: Casablanca, Marrakech, and Tangiers. According to this survey, there are Montessori schools in the cities studied. Educators and mothers have recently become interested in this pedagogy. The instructors provide the training and ensure the transitional post-training phase to better adopt and practice this pedagogy. Several areas need to be adapted to the Moroccan context, including language, culture, and geography.

Keywords: Montessori pedagogy, the state of the art, Morocco.

摩洛哥的蒙特梭利教育学：定性角度的最新技术

摘要：另类教育法已变得国际化，蒙特梭利教育法已在世界范围内广泛传播，因为世界上几乎每个首都城市都有蒙特梭利学校。这种教学法注重儿童的整体性。它需要教育者对学习 者/学生采取积极、关爱的态度，使学习方法变得有趣和有趣，从而在表现和教学方面产生更好的效果。就我国摩洛哥而言，根据文献综述，现有的研究在这个意义上仍然有限，为了解决这一局限性，本文从定性的角度介绍了蒙特梭利教育学在摩洛哥的发展状况，基于来自以下城市的蒙特梭利教育学教师进行半指导性访谈：卡萨布兰卡、马拉喀什和丹吉尔。根据这项调查，所研究的城市都有蒙特梭利学校。教育工作者和母亲最近对这种教学法产生了兴趣。讲师提供培训并确保培训后的过渡阶段，以更好地采用和实践这种教学法。有几个领域需要适应摩洛哥的环境，包括语言、文化和地理。

关键词：摩洛哥最先进的蒙台梭利教育法。

1. Introduction

Alternative pedagogies have been founded by pioneers of education since the nineties, Montessori, Freinet, Neill, Piaget, Claparède, Cousinet; etc. Who have all proposed alternative schools, in particular, Montessori's school is the best known and most widespread throughout the world [1].

It is a pedagogy that puts the child at the center of interests by preparing a special environment carefully adapted to the child [2] and adapted to his needs to stimulate and develop him while respecting his natural laws [3].

It is a pedagogy based on a constructivist approach that has addressed early childhood by developing best practices [4]. While fostering the basic need for autonomy, it is a pedagogy that is "help to live" [5].

Alternative schools have become international since their birth [1] and nowadays there are Montessori schools in almost every continent of the world [6]. As for Morocco, there are Montessori schools that are emerging more and more, however, the literature review lacks writings in this sense, so we do not have a precise idea of the state of this pedagogy here.

This led us to perform a qualitative investigation through a semi-structure interview that allows us to present open and in-depth questions classified by theme, with the possibility of asking new questions if an aspect remains ambiguous, which is not ensured by other data collection tools. It is a survey dedicated to instructors who represent the community that wants to see this pedagogy introduced in Morocco, so they are the closest to information in this sense, training and accompanying the emerging schools, both theoretically and practically, to supervise this adoption. These instructors belong to three different cities: Casablanca, Marrakech, and Tangiers.

Our article then studies the state of play of this pedagogy in Morocco from a qualitative perspective. It is a subject that enriches the literature review because there are no writings that deal with Montessori pedagogy in Morocco.

To do this we will present a theoretical overview of this pedagogy as well as its existence around the world, then we will move on to the methodological part, and then present the results of our interview.

So how can we identify the state of play of pedagogy in Morocco from a qualitative perspective?

1.1. Assumptions

1. There is a Montessorian community that trains, monitors and pilots Montessori schools in Morocco.
2. There are Montessori schools that respect pedagogy and its standards.
3. There is a growing interest among educators to adopt this pedagogy.
4. Young mothers are also interested in this

pedagogy.

2. Who is Montessori?

Maria Montessori was born in Italian commune Chiaravalle [7]. She was fortunate enough to have devoted parents who put the most effort to raise her in an ideal manner [8] despite the moral decay of Italy during that period, which will later pose many challenges throughout her career since she was the first woman in Italy to ever become a physician at the University of Rome [9].

She had a child out of the wed lock with her colleague, doctor Montesano. So, she had to hide the child by giving him away to another family to raise him while she visited him from time to time [9]. She pursued her studies in medicine, specializing in neurology [10].

After obtaining her degree, she chose to embark on a professional experience at the psychiatric clinic of the University of Rome, where she worked as an assistant for two years. During that time, she was in charge of studying the behaviours of a group of children with mental disorders [11].

These children are described as mentally retarded, have a history of insanity, and struggle with their plight [8]. This was the critical point that impacted Montessori and awakened in her a thirst in the field of pedagogy and education [9] in order to improve the circumstances of these poor little ones realizing that they needed a suitable educational environment, and not only medical care [7].

During the time she spent with these children, several observations and findings drew her attention to the child's psychology; their needs, their specificities and especially how and in what environment they would learn [11].

There, she will dedicate herself completely to the field of education by resuming her studies, but this time she will explore the field of philosophy, child psychology as well as anthropology in order to dig and give the best to these little ones [9].

This led her to turn to other researchers and pedagogs who dealt with the same question from different angles such as the French doctors Bourneville, Itard, Séguin, and Pereira [11]. Her thirst to find ways to educate her children led her to study Itard, who tried to civilize the wild child of the forests of Aveyron, especially to develop his senses. So, he conducted his research in this perspective. Montessori was greatly inspired by his work as well as those of his student Edouard Séguin, and she ended up creating an educational material to bring knowledge closer to the children [7].

While observing these children, she realized the deep need of the child to play in addition to the exercises implemented by Seguin in order to stimulate

and refine the sensory functions. Maria Montessori took the decision to focus on these pedagogical issues [11].

Therefore, she became a trainer for educators in 1900 at the Scuola Magistrale Ortofrenica, an institute in charge of training educators in schools for disabled and mentally challenged children [6].

At that time, the poor families lived a great deal of misery to the point that they left to work all day long without bringing their children to school. Thus, the kids remained in the street without any surveillance or protection. Mr. Talamo Edouardo, a real estate developer, tried to construct buildings to accommodate this socially degraded category. At that time, he was shocked by the reality of these little ones, and he decided to build a day care center for them [9].

On hearing about Montessori, he decided to contact her to entrust her with the direction and organization of this institution. Therefore, the first children's home was born on January 6, 1907, named Casa die Bambini, where Montessori began to implement her research for the benefit of normal children. This house will witness a huge success and the little ones give of all their potential in fun circumstances that are adapted to their needs [9].

Thus, the Montessori method was born, and 1909 witnessed the publication of her first book *Scientific Pedagogy*, which was translated into twenty languages, and more than hundred students attended her first training course at the Città di Castello [11].

Italy and Switzerland officially adopted this pedagogy in 1911. Montessori schools have opened worldwide. In 1915, Montessori held the International Exhibition in the United States, which was attended by 18 million visitors. She continued to publish books explaining her pedagogy, which became widespread throughout the world. Meanwhile, she offered training on the same theme and gave herself the task of supervising the opening of new schools [9].

"Education for peace" was the title of her speech made at the Geneva Society in 1926 [9]. In 1929, she and her son Mario created the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), whose purpose was the supervision of emerging schools and the training of pedagogical staff [8].

In the context of the world wars, the Nazis and Mussolini closed most of her schools in Germany and Italy. In 1935, she published her book *The Child*, and immediately afterwards she left Spain, which was colonized at that time by General Franco. So, she settled in the Netherlands, where she created more than 200 Montessorian schools [9].

Then she left for India with her son and stayed there for about seven years and developed the pedagogy for the 0-3 years old. The spiritual atmosphere in India allowed her to be inspired and to develop the cosmic aspect of her pedagogy and the education to peace [7]. This spiritual impact has greatly influenced her

experience and her method from that time based on reflection and meditation [6].

In 1949, she published her book *The Absorbing Mind*. After which she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. In 1952, she died in a village near The Hague, where she liked to rest. In 1982, her son Mario passed away in Amsterdam after having continued to spread the legacy of his mother and a long path of work [9].

3. What is the Montessori Method?

It is "philosophy of life" that focuses on the child. Montessori had a different view of the child, as she took a holistic view by focusing on its multiple dimensions: physical - psychic - cognitive - emotional and social. The design of her perception is based on the principle of helping life [12].

Armed with observation, Maria Montessori noticed that all children in different children's homes, even in different countries and contexts, have common points on which she drew her first foundation: the natural laws of the child. And learning can only take place so easily and harmoniously if we want to respect these laws [3].

It is based on peace education which is about a healthy education in a non-violent environment in order to give a flourishing adult [13]. Therefore, it is essential to accept differences: difference is a richness because everyone is unique, has their own pace of learning which must be respected [12].

In particular, the development of the child is linked to the preparation of an environment that respects his or her well-being and that guarantees the acquisition of his or her learning because the child is endowed with innate capacities such as willpower and continuous progress [2].

Maria Montessori discovered that the child goes through specific sensitive periods during which the child can give of its full potential in a specific area. Thus, all children go through the same sensitive periods but at different times and with different intensities. These sensitive periods are - sensitivity to order - sensitivity to movement - sensitivity to sensory refinement - sensitivity to language - sensitivity to social life [14].

4. Montessori around the World

Immediately after its conception, the Montessori method spread throughout the world, especially in the countries visited by the founder of this educational system, Maria Montessori [6]. This education has been in existence for more than 100 years and is still spreading in an accentuated way today more than before [15].

Moreover, among all the alternative pedagogies, Maria Montessori's method remains unrivaled since it is spreading from one day to the next in all countries of the world. Of course, the exact number of Montessori schools in the world is impossible to determine, but

estimates can be made, for example, in 2009, it was estimated that there were more than 8000 schools worldwide. Just after that, Verdiani in 2012 states that according to an Internet search using the keywords "capital city name + Montessori" there are Montessori kindergartens or schools in almost every major city in the world. In total, there are about 22,000 schools worldwide [16].

In Japan, pre-school is based on an education respecting the conception of the child, education and knowledge as traditional Japanese principles, which is guaranteed by the new education founded by many pedagogues such as Itard, Séguin, Bourneville and above all Maria Montessori who left a prestigious legacy, which was quickly translated into Japanese (since the 19th century) in order to take advantage of it [17].

In the United States, it is estimated that there are more than 5,000 schools, 300 of which are public, in addition to other public schools and high schools that use Montessori in their educational programs which implies that 31,000 children benefit from this educational program [15].

Moving on to Europe, in Switzerland for example, from 1914 onwards, municipalities or individuals received state subsidies if they opened kindergartens. The teachers were trained in Maria Montessori's method, which was based on respect for the child's freedom and all its spontaneous manifestations. Children aged three to six were free to do as they pleased, but had to follow common rules of life, order and tidiness [18].

In the UK there are 604 schools adopting the Montessori curriculum of which 88% of the schools inspected by Ofsted are rated as outstanding or good and the remaining 12% are rated as satisfactory or satisfactory/good which reveals the quality of the education system [19].

In France, there are 200 Montessori schools, 6 colleges and only one lycée, the Lycée International Montessori Athéna in Bailly (Yvelines). The majority of Montessori schools are private, which means that they are not under contract with the state and therefore do not benefit from subsidies, which subsequently leads to a remarkable rise in school fees. For years, many teachers have been inspired by this pedagogy in their practices, which leads to good results often noticed by the parents of the pupils [9].

Regarding the continent of Africa, the Montessori method came to South Africa in 1976 thanks to Mrs. Strilli Oppenheimer who developed the first Montessori school there. In 1980, another Montessori school opened in the Western Cape [6]. With the exception of three of the 55 capitals studied belonging to Africa, namely Mogadishu, Djibouti and Sao Tome, do not contain any Montessori schools or have a website [1].

5. Method

5.1. The Study Type

State of Montessori pedagogy in Morocco in the following cities: Casablanca, Marrakech, and Tangier.

5.2. The Location of the Study

Morocco, a North African country on the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts, is distinguished by its Berber, Arab and European influences. We will focus on the following cities: Casablanca, Marrakech, and Tangier.

5.3. The Study Environment Choice

We chose Morocco because it is our country first and foremost, which makes it easier for us to access information, and the literature review on this subject has not yet been dealt with, so we aim to enrich it.

5.4. The Target Population

$N^* = 4$ (Montessori instructors); * Number of interviewees.

5.5. Selection Criteria

5.5.1. Inclusion Criteria

- The interviewees had credible training.
- Professional experience: our interviewees have between 7 and 10 years of experience.
- We have an instructor who used to work in France.
- The diversity of the cities to which they belong: Casablanca, Tangiers, Marrakech.
- The accompaniment of emerging schools.
- The follow-up of the educators during the post-training period in their adoption of this pedagogy.

5.5.2. Exclusion Criteria

- The instructors who refused to participate in this survey were excluded from this study.

5.5.3. Sample

a. *Method and sample size:* Given the richness of the profiles of existing trainers, it is recommended that nonprobabilistic, nonexhaustive sampling be used in this study.

b. *Data collection methods and instruments:* The semi-structured interview of the present study aimed at Montessori trainers to provide more information on the state of Montessori pedagogy in Morocco: Casablanca, Marrakech, Tangier. Thanks to their experience and proximity to the field through training and the piloting of projects aimed at inserting, exploring, and adopting this pedagogy within teaching and educational establishments. The semi-structured interview was chosen because it allows questions to be asked that are generally expressed and deepened according to themes, in addition to the possibility of asking new questions if an aspect remains abstract or unknown, which is not

ensured by the other data collection tools. In addition, it will ensure the qualitative side of the study.

c. *Methods of analysis of the data collected:* The analysis recommended for the data collected during the interviews is thematic analysis using a thematic analysis grid. This thematic analysis based on content analysis was divided into four phases: (a) Pre-reading of all the responses; (b) Identification of the sections of the texts allowing the identification of the elements put forward by the interviewees; (c) The dominant idea of each section of text was faithfully transcribed on a list while preserving the words and expressions used by the participants; (d) And finally, at the level of each sentence, the recurrent items were subjected to groupings referring to the same concepts.

5.6. Ethical Considerations

- Absolute respect for the anonymity of the participants and the confidentiality of information;
- Informing participants about the research topic;
- The consent of the participants.

6. The Interview Results: the Montessori Education in Morocco

In Morocco, there are no official statistics on Montessori schools, which led us to interview Montessori trainers in order to get an idea of the state of play in this country.

6.1. The Interview Results

The interview is recorded and transcribed, which allows an approach to the representations of the different trainers to the Montessori pedagogy.

The interview included four participants in relation to their geographical location: Casablanca, Marrakech, and Tangiers. The results in question will be presented by theme in accordance with the arrangement provided in the interview grid.

6.1.1. Theme 1: Montessori Schools in Morocco According to the Instructors and Currently

All interviewees confirmed that there are Montessori schools in Morocco where the pedagogy is respected: ED SCHOOL in Oasis, MARIE PARADIS in Sidi Maarouf, PINNACLE in California, LA FERME PEDAGOGIQUE in Bouskoura, INSTITUT MARIA MONTESSORI in Kénitra, LA MAISON DES ENFANTS in Tangier, PLANET MONTESSORI in Marrakech, and UNIVERSIA KIDS in Agadir.

They pointed out that despite the spread of this pedagogy in Morocco, the number of schools that respectfully adopt this method remains low compared to the demand.

6.1.2. Theme 2: The Proportion of Trained Educators and Mothers

They pointed out that most trainees are educators or trainees who wish to become educators, in addition to

mothers and health professionals. In Tangier, it was stressed that Montessori pedagogy is not known to the point of creating the need for training in this pedagogy among mothers, so the trainees are generally educators.

6.1.3. Theme 3: The Adoption of Montessori's Pedagogy by Educators

According to the instructors, the way of behaving with the children changes positively in a spontaneous way in all the trainees of this pedagogy despite the lack of didactic material, which creates a solid link with the child. Most teachers are very attracted by this pedagogy and are involved in it, and only a minority is reluctant. It is obvious to get lost after the training, hence the importance of post-training follow-up to guide and direct this transitional phase, but it is after two, three or four months, depending on the case, that the educators manage to adapt and adopt this pedagogy.

6.1.4. Theme 4: The Adoption of Montessori's Pedagogy by Mothers

According to the interviewees, what is obvious is that mothers in the Moroccan context are becoming increasingly aware of the issue of their children's education, which leads them to seek out and train in Montessori pedagogy, non-violent communication, positive discipline, etc. This makes it possible to have this benevolent posture and has a positive impact on the relationship with their children and subsequently provides a healthy and balanced environment while putting the child first. This allows them to have this posture of benevolence and has a positive impact on their relationship with their children and subsequently provides a healthy and balanced environment while putting the child first.

6.1.5. Theme 5: Eras Requiring Development in the Moroccan Context

The areas according to the interviewees that require contextualization are: language, culture, and geography.

The areas according to the participants that apply in the same way regardless of the context are mathematics and sensory.

They indicated that in the era of practical life one can use materials adapted to the Moroccan context, such as teapots, tea glasses, boxes, and trays.

For language we need to introduce Arabic: Arabic rough letters, Arabic movable letters, nomenclature cards; etc. so we need to develop the material as they have indicated.

For the culture era: work on themes that introduce Moroccan culture, Moroccan cuisine, Moroccan history, introduce Islamic education, and artistic components in relation to religious and national events; etc.

For the geography era: world history, the study of

the African and Maghrebian context, the great narratives; etc.

One trainer stressed that attention must be drawn to the educator who has a certain cultural accumulation within herself that will be passed on implicitly or explicitly during her service, hence the importance of investing in her knowledge, self-knowledge, and know-how.

7. Conclusion

In the end, Maria Montessori took a keen interest in early childhood, studying each child's specificity and peculiarities to create effective and efficient pedagogy. Over time, and thanks to the best contributions she made, this method has spread around the world.

Several authors have studied this issue in various countries around the world, but in Morocco there are no works that address this question, so we have chosen to study it in our own country.

For this, we opted for the interview as a data collection tool in order to allow interviewees a freer margin of expression and to open up the parenthesis of exchange, which thus enriches the survey and confers greater reliability and precision. In addition to gathering more details and raising new avenues of research, this will enable us to better describe the introduction of this pedagogy in Morocco.

Therefore, this study makes an inventory of Montessori pedagogy in Morocco from a qualitative perspective.

In fact, there is a Montessori community that trains, monitors the implementation and piloting of Montessori schools in Morocco.

There are Montessori schools in the cities studied although their number is limited in relation to the density of these cities.

Educators are increasingly interested in this pedagogy and are investing in training and practice. The trainers do a lot of work in the post-training period to help the trainees adopt this pedagogy better.

In general, Moroccan society is undergoing a metamorphosis characterized by a growing awareness among parents and especially mothers, which is reflected in the interest shown in educational methods, peace education, non-violent communication, positive discipline, and alternative pedagogy, all of which are pushing them to train.

The areas that need to be developed and adapted to the Moroccan context are: language, culture and geography, in terms of materials, content and progression.

So how can we adopt Montessori pedagogy to study the Arabic language? How can we develop the material and content and the progressions?

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