

Views on Montessori Approach by Teachers Serving at Schools Applying the Montessori Approach

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Suggested Citation:

Atli, S., Korkmaz, M., Tastepe, T., & Koksals Aksoy, A. (2016). Views on Montessori approach by teachers serving at schools applying the Montessori Approach. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 66, 123-138
<http://dx.doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2016.66.7>

Abstract

Problem Statement: Further studies on Montessori teachers are required on the grounds that the Montessori approach, which, having been applied throughout the world, holds an important place in the alternative education field. Yet it is novel for Turkey, and there are only a limited number of studies on Montessori teachers in Turkey.

Purpose of Study: The aim was to investigate views on the Montessori approach by the teachers who serve at the schools applying the Montessori approach.

Methods: Research data was collected by the basic qualitative research, one of the qualitative research methods. Descriptive analysis method was used in analysis of the qualitative data. Nine teachers serving at three different schools in Ankara province applying Montessori approach were interviewed.

Findings and Results: Eight main themes were determined upon data analysis; namely, education on Montessori approach, basic qualities required for teachers applying Montessori approach, adequacy of education on Montessori approach, in-service training on the challenges experienced by Montessori teachers, plans of teachers for self-

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development, following existing studies in Turkey on Montessori approach, views on studies on Montessori approach, and views on the criticisms towards Montessori approach.

Conclusions and Recommendations: All teachers confirmed that they internalized the approach upon training in line with Montessori philosophy. They emphasized that they received training covering all the educational fields, yet the implementation dimension was inadequate due to training without the involvement of children. Furthermore, they suggested that all the schools in Turkey were opened by commercial motives, and as such these schools failed to comply with the standards of the institutions providing education on the basis of Montessori approach. They asserted that all criticisms towards Montessori approach would be proved to be groundless upon implementation of the approach. It was seen that experienced supervisors, in-service training, and scientific studies on Montessori approach were required.

Keywords: Alternative education, Montessori approach, Montessori teacher, early childhood education

Introduction

There is a vast body of studies on early childhood education in developed and developing countries. Based on the results of the said studies, several education systems were developed with the purpose of providing quality care and education services beginning from children's birth (Morrow, 2007; Whitehead, 2010). The Montessori approach is one of the aforementioned educational systems. Having first been developed by Maria Montessori in 1907, the so-called Montessori approach has taken an important place in the field of alternative education and has been in many centers throughout the world (Lopata, Wallace, & Finn, 2005). The approach emerged in an attempt to improve the cognitive levels of underdeveloped children focusing on sensorial education and has ensured that children with special needs become more successful than normally developed children educated with other methods (Oguz & Koksal Akyol, 2006; Toran, 2011). Its subsequent implementation with normally developed children and positive advancements obtained therewith constituted the basis for its further development in becoming widespread (Follari, 2007). In that respect, the Montessori approach has been influential in practices of educators for more than a hundred years.

Teacher notion is not meant to describe that of a traditional teacher in the Montessori approach. According to the philosophical basis of the Montessori approach, teachers have to provide children with opportunities allowing them to self-develop their personalities (O'Neil, 1997; Torrence & Chattin-McNichols, 2004) and further the developmental potential of children to higher levels (Hedeem, 2005), which requires Montessori teachers to assume a guidance role.

In order for them to assume a guidance role in the development and education of children, Montessori teachers have to receive a quality educational program. There are activities as introduced by international organizations throughout the world involving Montessori teacher education programs. Some of those organizations engaged in these programs have been accredited by the "Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education-MACTE" (MACTE, n.d.). Activities for Montessori teachers are not only limited to the teachers' education activities by the international organizations. In addition, there are scientific studies on Montessori teachers (Malm, 2004; Santiago 1999; Van Acker, 2013). It was found that there were two studies in Turkey on Montessori teachers. Gulkanat's (2015) study was conducted with teachers serving at preschool education institutions giving education based on Montessori approach. As a result of the study, it was suggested that the teachers who adopted the approach based on their own preference had internalized Montessori approach more compared to the teachers who applied the approach under the instruction of the organization they were serving at. Soydan (2013) interviewed Montessori teachers with the aim of investigating the strategies employed to stimulate the sense of wonder in children. It was concluded that precision observation, prepared environment, free options, special interest, polarization of interest-concentration, and sensitive-period principles were applied by the Montessori teachers to stimulate a sense of wonder in children. A review of literature regarding Montessori approach in Turkey proved that the first study was conducted by Oktay (1987). Further studies on Montessori teachers are required on the grounds that the Montessori approach is novel for Turkey, and there are only a limited number of studies on Montessori teachers in the country.

In light of all the above-stated conditions, the questions below were assessed based on teachers' views in the present study, which aimed to investigate views on Montessori approach by teachers serving at schools applying Montessori approach.

- How are the teachers educated in the Montessori approach in Turkey?
- How should Montessori education and teachers be according to the Montessori teachers?
- How are educational activities and applications of Montessori approach conducted in Turkey?

Method

Research Design

The basic qualitative research method, a qualitative research method, was used in the study. This method is the most commonly used qualitative research method in education, and it allows explanation and interpretation of a phenomenon by collecting observations, interviews, or document analyses (Merriam, 2009). The present study sought to understand the views on Montessori approach by the teachers serving at schools applying the approach in Turkey, based on data collected via interviews. Therefore, the basic qualitative research method was applied.

Research Sample

The study group is comprised of nine teachers serving at schools applying Montessori approach. Teachers were selected by purposive sampling. Purposive sampling allows in-depth investigation of situations with rich information (Patton, 1997). Teachers were enrolled in the study on the conditions that they served at schools applying the approach and that they were voluntarily participating. Entirely composed of female teachers, the participants were aged between 20 and 30 years (n=7) and 30 and 40 years (n=2); four participants served at the special daycare of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies.

It was seen that the teachers had graduated from license programs, associate degree programs, and high schools. Participants with a license degree graduated from child development (n=3), preschool teaching (n=1), psychological counseling and guidance (n=1), and social services (n=1) departments; participants with an associate degree graduated from child development (n=2) departments, and the participant with a high school degree graduated from a child development (n=1) department. Furthermore, three participants had completed master's degree.

The experiences of the participants with Montessori approach were three years (n=4), five years (n=2), ten years (n=1), and one year (n=1). Participants had attended symposia, congresses, or meetings on Montessori approach, namely the Symposium on Early Childhood Montessori Education Applications, 2014 (n=5), Emel Cakiroglu Wilbrandt's⁵ meetings and applications (n=4), and the Binbir Cicek Foundation Montessori Seminar (n=3). Moreover, the participants had read books, including Emel Cakiroglu Wilbrandt's books on Montessori approach (n=5), books authored by Maria Montessori (n=5), and Paul Polk Lillard's "Montessori from the Star" (n=1).

Research Instrument and Procedure

A semi-structured interview form was used in the study. Interviews in qualitative research can be made in structured, semi-structured, or unstructured ways (Punch, 2005). Relevant main titles were generated in developing the interview form, such as "basic qualities required for teachers applying Montessori approach," "adequacy of

⁵ Emel Cakiroglu Wilbrandt: First received Montessori education at Ingolstadt Pedagogic Academy in 1992/1993. Attended a "Montessori Nursery School and School Education" postgraduate course in the scope of alternative educations at the Pedagogy Department of Eichstatt University and conducted research on Montessori school education. Acquired the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) diploma at a seminar held by the International Montessori Institution at Munich Children's Center in 1994/1995. In 1995 was involved in activities in Istanbul, such as an inclusive nursery school and rehabilitation center for "Binbir Cicek Foundation for Children with Mental Disabilities," trainers' trainings, and use of Montessori education in individual inclusive programs. Received training on Montessori therapy from Lore Anderlik, one of the founders of Montessori therapy in Munich. Wrote "Art of Child Education by Maria Montessori Method" in 2009. Currently continues her activities and seminars.

education on Montessori approach," "studies in Turkey on Montessori approach," and "criticisms towards the Montessori approach." The items included in the interview form were adjusted after the views of two academics and an educator serving in the field were collected. In its final form, the interview was composed of eight items covering personal information and six items regarding the approach.

Research data was collected during November and December in 2014, in Ankara. Official permissions were obtained from the authorities for data collection purposes before the interviews. Researchers visited the schools applying Montessori approach and briefed all the teachers in the said schools, upon which teachers, who volunteered to participate in the study were identified. In order to set aside disagreement, all interviews were made by the same researcher. Permission to use a voice recorder was obtained from all the participants to rule out incomplete or wrong data collection. Interviews were made in an appropriate and silent venue in the schools and lasted for 30-60 minutes.

Data Analysis

Voice recordings of the interviews were decoded by a researcher. All the interviews were then read by all the researchers. The word repeating technique was used for data analysis. Items that were included in the interview form were taken as a basis for determining the main themes. Furthermore, additional questions addressed by the participant or the researcher and the answers were also included in the titles. The analysis was based on eight themes, namely:

- Education on the Montessori approach;
- Basic qualities required for teachers applying the Montessori approach;
- Adequacy of education on the Montessori approach;
- In-service training towards the challenges as experienced by Montessori teachers;
- Plans of teachers for self-development;
- Following studies in Turkey on the Montessori approach;
- Views on studies on the Montessori approach; and
- Views on criticisms towards the Montessori approach.

Similar words and word groups were listed for each theme, original statements were noted, and the frequency of such statements was determined. All answers of the participants were included in the study, and all the data was used. As for the reliability of the research, the interviews were interdependently reviewed and coded by three researchers, and the codes were then reviewed by two specialists. The reliability of the coding was calculated using the "Reliability = (Agreement / Agreement + Disagreement) x 100" formulation by Miles and Huberman (1994) and found to be 93.8%. A study is considered reliable if such value is higher than 70% (Miles & Huberman, 1994). One-to-one citations were made from the participant views for the validity of the agreement. The participants were coded as MT1 (Montessori Teacher), MT2, MT3 . . . in order of interview time, and their views were included in the findings section.

Results

Views on Montessori approach by the teachers working at schools applying the approach were listed under subgroups, and the same views were expressed in common sentences. Teachers' views were both supportive of each other and contradictory, suggesting different perspectives.

Education on the Montessori approach. Education on Montessori approach was reviewed in two subtitles as theory and practice. More sub-themes were created for the practice section.

All teachers applying Montessori approach stated that they had training in the said approach. Teachers received training in the scope of a project (n=4), in groups at the organization they were serving (n=3), by attending Binbir Cicek Foundation's 150-hour certificate program (n=1), and at an education institution in the USA as accredited by AMS (n=1), and started to work in schools applying Montessori approach.

Topics of the teachers' theoretical education included the philosophy of Montessori approach (n=9), all branches such as Mathematics, Science etc. related to Montessori education (n=5), Montessori's life (n=2), classroom management in education based on Montessori approach (n=2), historical development of Montessori approach (n=1), and daily life in Montessori education (n=1).

Teachers practiced Montessori education by themselves in Montessori classes without children (n=2). The trainers introduced the Montessori materials (n=6), and the teachers proceeded step by step learning how to use the said materials (n=5). A teacher who studied in the USA said that she had a traineeship period of one year under a certified Montessori teacher and practiced for approximately 840 hours.

Basic qualities required for teachers applying Montessori approach. The teachers asserted that teachers giving or to give education based on Montessori approach should have a personal disposition for the approach (n=1), should be individuals who love, respect, and tolerate children (n=3), who refrain from providing children with correct/wrong feedback and warnings (n=3), and who guide children with an understanding of their potential (n=4). Again, it was stated in general that teachers giving education based on Montessori approach should be patient (n=5).

MT1 clarified being patient as: *"Teacher should act slower in activities. For instance, since I used to conduct an activity in a quick way, I occasionally experience difficulties in Montessori practices."*

MT3 emphasized that the teacher should be a good observer (n=4) and said, *"Unlike the traditional education understanding, the teacher should watch/see/assess what and how the children do things. In my education based on Montessori approach, I expect the child to realize his or her mistakes and make a diagnostic check. Montessori teachers should speak less and watch well."*

Furthermore, participants emphasized that a Montessori teacher should not have compulsory activities to implement (n=2) and like nature and animals (n=1).

Adequacy of education on the Montessori approach. When asked "Do you find your education on Montessori approach adequate?" the teachers replied No (n=2) and Yes (n=7). One of the teachers who found it inadequate (n=2) said that the teachers should improve themselves on a continuous basis, and the other said she failed to complete a part of Montessori materials.

Teachers who found the education adequate (n=7) said that they received a rather comprehensive education (n=2), the education was adequate in both theoretical and practical terms (n=2), and especially the work with Emel Cakiroglu Wilbrandt, who gave education on Montessori approach in Turkey, had created educational awareness (n=2). They added that the education was reinforced by practice (n=4), and they wanted to observe children when they were to use all the materials (n=2).

MT5 said, "*The practice was held in a milieu without children. My adequacy towards Montessori approach might be improved if the practice was held in a venue with children. Unfortunately, there is no opportunity in Turkey to have school observation.*"

The teachers underscored that they saw the adequacy of education in the classroom when they realized that they did not experience any difficulty in presenting and using the materials (n=3), and they referred to the notes they had taken during training in case they experience difficulties (n=2).

MT8 said that she realized the adequacy of her education when "*She implemented the same in her own life.*" MT3 emphasized that the education in Turkey was available for the 3-6 age group (n=3) and that "*I am curious about the 0-3 years age group education; I would like to receive education about the primary education implementation of the approach in the future.*"

In-service training towards the challenges as experienced by Montessori teachers. MT7, who received education in Montessori approach, emphasized that they had no in-service training (n=5) and that "*I wish there was somewhere I could receive (in-service training); I need supervision in certain fields, but there is no opportunity in Turkey in that regard. Currently I am rather engaged with consultancy.*"

Teachers, who confirmed that they had in-service training (n=4) said they have received such training from specialist teachers (n=3) and at symposia (n=3). The topics of in-service training included materials (n=2), children (n=2), budget (n=1), and practices in different institutions (n=1).

Plans of teachers for self-development. Teachers giving education according to Montessori approach stated that they wanted to receive education in foreign countries in the future (n=3), open their own schools (n=2), have a post-graduate degree in this field (n=2), and conduct observation at schools opened by specialists and experienced Montessori teachers (n=2).

MT1 disclosed her prospective plan, "*I also want to open a school of my own. Now, I want to make up for my educational deficiencies and open the school within two years.*"

MT3 said, "I will visit the USA in June for a six-week training aimed at the 0-3 years age group."

Besides such plans, teachers wanted to become members of associations or groups (n=1), specialize in mathematics activities and cosmic education in Montessori education (n=1), and above all fully complete their education in Montessori approach (n=1). One teacher said she was content with following the new publications and videos on the activities and developments outside Turkey.

Following the studies in Turkey on the Montessori approach. Whereas two teachers said they were not following the studies on Montessori approach in Turkey, those who confirmed that they were following the studies (n=7) said that they tried to access the relevant information via books (n=3), educational activities (seminar, course, symposia, etc.) (n=3), and the Internet (n=2).

Participant MT7 said she was interested in the scientific studies on the subject and that "Academic studies generally focus on the comparison between children receiving education based on Montessori approach and children attending other schools. On-site studies are important for the Montessori schools with a rather limited implementation field and even for extending the resources. I follow studies with the said purpose."

Views on studies on the Montessori approach. Teachers stated that they found introductions on Montessori approach insufficient (n=3), that the Ministry of National Education should support this approach (n=2), and that primary schools based on this approach should be opened (n=2).

Having said that, thanks to recent education studies in Turkey, Montessori and Montessori approach have come to be better known (n=2). MT2 emphasized, "Especially, new activities have been conducted in Turkey about Montessori approach. Activities and symposia held in recent years are a good development. Although the number of new schools is not sufficient, these are positive for their development."

Teachers also emphasized that the schools were opened by commercial motives (n=3). MT8 stated: "The new schools do not have all the materials, there is no faucet, space is not sufficient. They hang a Montessori label at their gates, yet when you enter as deceived by the photograph, you encounter educators who even fail to assimilate the philosophy of the education and who have inadequate training. And so we see organizations opened solely by commercial motives."

Views on criticisms of the Montessori approach. The teachers identified the sources of criticism against Montessori approach as lack of knowledge as regards how to conduct education based on the materials (n=4), restriction of children's creativity (n=4), and not allowing imaginary play (n=3). Nevertheless, they affirmed that such criticisms were based on the fact that Montessori approach was a largely unknown system (n=5) and on biases (n=3) and that criticism would fade when people get familiar with the approach, since they were following the Ministry of National Education program (n=4). The teachers expressed their views on the above issue as follows:

MT1; *"I also had biases. Now I can see that a child could engage in an activity for four-five minutes."*

MT5; *"There are many criticisms against this approach in Turkey. They think that children cannot do the activities by themselves. They think that Turkish parents will experience difficulty in this education since they tend to intervene continuously. I think these biases will fade away thanks to the activities."*

MT3: *"I thought during the first workshop activities for Montessori approach that activities based on this approach were not feasible, as so many friends attending the course with me thought the same. I thought that children would not engage in the activities, that it was impossible to show interest in each and every child in a wide group, and that freedom and negative behaviors would increase. However, now I can see in this process that there are materials in which each child can show an independent interest, and that there is no need for extra activities or lack of materials. I have seen that children can learn by themselves, and we can use all our energy to guide the student. I understand the criticism of people who are not present at the practical dimension. This is because of the fact that this is an approach whose value one cannot realize without working on it."*

In light of the findings above, the views of teachers on Montessori approach were discussed below also taking into consideration different studies on the approach.

Discussion and Conclusion

All participants confirmed that they received training on the philosophy of the Montessori approach. Moghni, Zailoni, and Fernando (2010) argued that the most important characteristic of Montessori method was the fact that the method was established on a particular educational philosophy. Therefore, training on the philosophy of Montessori approach should be considered positive for understanding and implementing the approach.

Most of the participants said that they were trained in all the fields. Studies in the relevant literature investigate the effect of the approach on child development based on the five basic activity fields, namely Everyday Living Skills, Sensorial Activities, Mathematics Activities, Language Activities, and Cosmic Education Activities (universal learning activities) (Arslan, 2008; Durakoglu, 2011; Lillard, 1988; Yigit, 2008). It should be thus concluded that the required infrastructure has been established thanks to the teachers' training in basic activity fields and understanding of basic fields.

In Montessori classes, children are allowed to engage in the activities and use other fields in the school that they want (Kayili & Ari, 2011). The necessary environment is made available for children so they can pick the activity they want to engage in (Mutlu, Ergisi, Butun Ayhan, & Aral, 2012). Most of the teachers stated that as for the practical dimension of the education, they have learned how to use the materials step by step under the guidance of trainers. All teachers, except for one, underscored that they received practical training in classrooms without children. This can be considered a disadvantageous situation on the grounds that the teachers

lacked the opportunity to observe how children used and selected the materials and how children used the spaces.

Montessori (1950) emphasized that it was the material and not the teacher that was essential in Montessori schools (as cited in Durakoglu, 2010). In such an approach, the task of the teacher is not easy, although it is limited. Above all, the teacher is expected to be attentive, not in need of verbal communication, having a special skill in observation, assistance, and keeping silent, and additionally being patient, calm, and modest. While defining the required attributes of the teachers, the participants suggested views, as presented in the findings section above, parallel to the relevant literature. Especially, more than half of the teachers agreed that Montessori teachers should be patient, and they focused on such attributes as tolerance, less intervention, and observer attitude. One of the participants also underscored the fact that personal disposition was also required to become a Montessori teacher. It could be considered an important finding that the participants had views parallel to that of Montessori as to the required attributes of a Montessori teacher.

The materials made available to children and the activities they pick in line with their fields of interest suggest that the programming is built on the interests of children rather than those of the adult (Isaacs, 2007). Although the teachers considered their education adequate, almost all the teachers, having understood the said aspect of the practical dimension of the approach, stated the fact that children were not involved in the practical phase during their education in Turkey was a disadvantage. However, they confirmed that practice without children also made an important contribution as they realized during their activities at schools.

The relevant studies agree upon the suggestion that the most important part of the designing and implementation of the in-service training activities is determining the needs (Gokdere & Cepni, 2004). According to the teachers' views, more than half of the teachers said they did not receive any in-service training, and the rest received only a limited number of trainings. The consensus was that there was a need for professional in-service training activities.

For a school can be accepted as a Montessori school, it must be recognized by a Montessori Association. There is no school in Turkey complying with the above requirement. Therefore, there is no formally recognized Montessori school in Turkey. As a matter of fact, the International Montessori Association has not listed Turkey among the countries having Montessori schools (Durakoglu, 2010). The fact that three of the interviewed teachers stated that the schools in Turkey were opened by commercial motives and failed to comply with the standards of the schools giving education based on Montessori approach suggests that activities with an aim to have Turkey listed within the countries with international Montessori schools should be conducted.

Despite the criticisms against the Montessori approach that the approach restricts the creativity of children, relevant studies have suggested the contrary (Brophy & Choquette, 1973). Similarly, four participant teachers received criticisms that the

approach undermined creativity, and three teachers received criticisms that the approach did not allow imaginary play. The major criticism against Montessori program in a study by Katz (1990) was that structured materials and restricted tasks would undermine creativity. Further criticism included that Montessori method impeded the children's social development, that it was an excessively controlled education since the teachers practiced it in line with their own perception, and that children had to use a limited number of materials that needed to be preserved each year. The participant teachers emphasized that they received similar criticisms in Turkey, but felt these would be proved to be groundless after it was practiced.

The present study provided views on the teacher dimension of the Montessori approach and the practical dimension of the Montessori approach in Turkey. In the light of the participant teachers' views, taking into consideration that the alternative approach has been implemented only for the 3-6 years age group in Turkey, an education activity on Montessori approach with world standards of the theoretical and practical dimensions also involving the 0-3 years age group and primary education levels should be considered a requirement moving forward. Such an educational activity in Turkey is important in order to comply with the worldwide Montessori approach standards.

Teachers emphasized the need for experienced supervisors and teachers for the in-service training activities in Montessori approach. Furthermore, the participant teachers asserted that there were only a very limited number of scientific studies on Montessori approach in Turkey. Therefore, it can be said that there is a need for such publications in the form of journals, books, and articles, etc., which would guide the theoretical and practical dimensions of the approach.

It was understood that Montessori approach was criticized in Turkey without any practical experience of it and that claims that the approach was not feasible and undermined creativity could be disproved by the very activities based on Montessori approach.

The Montessori approach requires good guides and supervisor teachers. Based on the fact that the participant teachers expressed their inadequacies on certain points, the qualitative level of the teachers and activities in Turkey can be improved with the support of the International Montessori Association.

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Montessori Yaklaşımını Uygulayan Okullarda Çalışan Öğretmenlerin Montessori Yaklaşımına İlişkin Görüşleri

Atf:

Atli, S., Korkmaz, M., Tastepe, T., & Koksak Akoyol, A. (2016). Views on Montessori approach by teachers serving at schools applying the Montessori Approach. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 66, 123-138
<http://dx.doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2016.66.7>

Özet

Problem Durumu: Alternatif eğitim alanında önemli bir yere sahip olan ve dünyanın birçok yerinde uygulanan Montessori yaklaşımının Türkiye için yeni ve Montessori öğretmenleriyle ilgili araştırmaların sınırlı sayıda olması nedeniyle Montessori öğretmenleriyle ilgili araştırmaların yapılmasına ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır.

Araştırmanın Amacı: Türkiye’de Montessori yaklaşımını uygulayan okullarda çalışan öğretmenlerin, Montessori yaklaşımına ilişkin görüşlerini incelemek amacıyla planlanan araştırmada, aşağıda yer alan sorular öğretmen görüşlerine göre değerlendirilmeye çalışılmıştır.

- Türkiye’de Montessori yaklaşımına yönelik öğretmenler nasıl yetiştirilmektedir?
- Montessori öğretmenlerine göre Montessori eğitimi ve öğretmeni nasıl olmalıdır?
- Türkiye’de Montessori yaklaşımına yönelik eğitim çalışmaları ve uygulamalar nasıl yürütülmektedir?

Araştırmanın Yöntemi: Araştırmaya ilişkin veriler nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden, temel nitel araştırma ile toplanmıştır. Nitel verilerin analiz edilmesinde, betimsel analiz yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Araştırmada, Ankara ilinde bulunan ve Montessori yaklaşımını uygulayan üç farklı okulda çalışan dokuz öğretmenle görüşme yapılmıştır.

Araştırmanın Bulguları: Montessori yaklaşımını uygulayan okullarda çalışan öğretmenlerin, Montessori yaklaşımına ilişkin görüşleri alt başlıklar altında toplanıp aynı görüşler ortak cümleler ile verilmiştir. Öğretmen görüşlerinin, hem birbirini destekler nitelikte olduğu hem de birbiriyle çatışan farklı bakış açılarını ortaya koyan nitelikte olduğu görülmüştür. Veri analizi sonucunda bulgular sekiz başlık altında toplanmıştır;

Montessori yaklaşımına yönelik alınan eğitim. Montessori yaklaşımına yönelik alınan eğitim teori ve uygulama olmak üzere iki alt başlıkta incelenmiştir. Uygulama kısmıyla ilgili daha fazla alt tema oluşturulmuştur.

Montessori yaklaşımını uygulayan öğretmenlerin tümü, bu yaklaşıma yönelik eğitim aldıklarını belirtmiştir. Öğretmenler eğitimlerini; üniversitede proje kapsamında (n=4), çalıştıkları kurumda grup şeklinde (n=3), Binbir Cicek Vakfı'nın 150 saatlik sertifika programı (n=1) ve ABD'de AMS'de-akretide eğitim (n=1) olarak Montessori yaklaşımını uygulayan okullarda çalışmaya başladıklarını ifade etmiştir.

Öğretmenler teorik olarak aldıkları eğitimde; Montessori yaklaşımının felsefesi (n=9), Montessori eğitimiyle ilgili matematik, fen vb. bütün alanlar (n=5), Montessori'nin hayatı (n=2) Montessori yaklaşımına yönelik eğitimde sınıf yönetimi ve sınıftaki çalışma alanları (n=2), Montessori yaklaşımının tarihsel gelişimi (n=1), Montessori eğitiminde günlük yaşam (n=1) konularıyla ilgili bilgi verildiğini belirtmiştir.

Öğretmenler Montessori yaklaşımına yönelik eğitimin uygulamasını, çocukların olmadığı Montessori sınıflarında kendileri uygulamıştır (n=2). Montessori materyallerini eğitimcilerin tanıttığını (n=6) ve materyallerin nasıl kullanıldığını öğrenerek, aşama aşama ilerlediklerini (n=5) belirtmişlerdir. ABD'de eğitim alan bir öğretmen ise sertifikalı Montessori öğretmeni yanında bir yıllık staj aldığını, yaklaşık 840 saat uygulama yaptığını vurgulamıştır.

Montessori yaklaşımını uygulayan öğretmenlerin sahip olması gerektiği özellikler; Montessori yaklaşımı doğrultusunda eğitim yapan/yapacak öğretmenlerin bu yaklaşımı uygulamaya yönelik kişisel yetkinliklerinin olması gerektiği (n=1), çocukları seven, saygı duyan ve hoşgörü gösteren (n=3), çocuklara doğru/yanlış dönütler vermekten ve uyardıktan sakınan (n=3), rehberlik edip çocukların potansiyelinin farkında olan (n=4) bireyler olması gerektiğini belirtmişlerdir. Yine genel olarak, Montessori yaklaşımına göre eğitim yapan öğretmenlerin sabırlı olması gerektiği ifade edilmiştir (n=5).

Montessori yaklaşımı ile ilgili alınan eğitimin yeterliliği. "Montessori yaklaşımıyla ilgili aldığınız eğitim yeterli mi?" sorusuna, hayır (n=2), evet (n=7) yanıtı veren öğretmenlerden; aldıkları eğitimin yetersiz olduğunu düşünenlerden (n=2) biri öğretmenin sürekli kendisini geliştirmesi gerektiğini belirtirken diğeri ise Montessori materyallerinin bir kısmını tamamlayamadığını belirtmiştir.

Alınan eğitimin yeterli olduğunu belirten öğretmenler (n=7); oldukça kapsamlı bir eğitim aldıklarını (n=2), teorik ve uygulama olarak verilen eğitimin yeterli olduğunu (n=2), özellikle Türkiye'de Montessori yaklaşımına yönelik eğitim veren Emel Cakıroglu Wilbrandt ile çalışmanın eğitim açısından farkındalık oluşturduğunu (n=2) belirtmişlerdir. Alınan eğitimin uygulamada pekiştiğini (n=4), bütün materyalleri çocukların olduğu bir ortamda onlar kullanırken gözlemlemek istediklerini (n=2) açıklamışlardır.

Öğretmenler alınan eğitimin yeterliliğini sınıfta çocuklarla çalışırken, materyalleri sunma ve kullanmada problem yaşamadıklarında fark ettiklerini (n=3) zorlandıkları noktalarda ise eğitim sırasında aldıkları notlara başvurduklarını (n=2) ifade etmişlerdir.

Montessori öğretmenlerinin güçlük çektikleri alanlarda aldıkları hizmet içi eğitimler. Öğretmenlerin yarısından fazlası hiçbir şekilde hizmet içi eğitim almadıklarını (n=5)

belirtmişlerdir. Evet, (n=4) hizmet içi eğitim alıyorum yanıtını veren öğretmenler bu eğitimi; uzman öğretmenlerden (n=3) ve sempozyumlarla (n=3) aldıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Hizmet içi eğitimlerde konu olarak, materyaller (n=2), çocuklar (n=2), bütçe (n=1), farklı kurumlardaki uygulamalar (n=1) ile ilgili eğitim aldıklarını ifade etmişlerdir.

Öğretmenlerin kendilerini daha ileriye götürecek planları. Montessori yaklaşımına göre eğitim veren öğretmenler, çalıştıkları alanla ilgili olarak daha ileriye dönük olarak yurt dışı eğitim almak (n=3), kendilerine ait okul açmak (n=2), yüksek lisans eğitimlerini bu alanda yapmak (n=2), uzmanların, deneyimli Montessori öğretmenlerinin açtığı okullarda gözlem yapmak istediklerini (n=2) ifade etmişlerdir.

Türkiye’de Montessori yaklaşımına yönelik yapılan çalışmaların takip edilmesi. Türkiye’de Montessori yaklaşımına yönelik yapılan çalışmaları, iki öğretmen takip etmediklerini belirtirken, takip ediyoruz (n=7) diyen öğretmenler konu ile ilgili bilgiye kitaplardan (n=3), eğitim çalışmalarından (seminer, kurs, sempozyum v.b) (n=3) ve internet üzerinden (n=2), çalıştıklarını belirtmişlerdir.

Montessori yaklaşımına yönelik yapılan çalışmalar hakkındaki düşünceler. Öğretmenler Montessori yaklaşımına yönelik yapılan tanıtımları yeterli bulmadıklarını (n=3), Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı’nın bu yaklaşımı desteklemesi gerektiğini (n=2), ilköğretim boyutunda da bu yaklaşım doğrultusunda okulların açılması gerektiğini (n=2) belirtmişlerdir.

Son yıllarda Türkiye’de yapılan eğitim çalışmalarıyla, Montessori ve Montessori yaklaşımının daha fazla tanınmaya başlandığını (n=2) ifade etmişlerdir. Öğretmenler ayrıca açılan Montessori okullarının ticari kaygıyla açıldığını (n=3) belirtmişlerdir.

Montessori yaklaşımına yapılan eleştiriler hakkındaki düşünceler. Öğretmenler Montessori yaklaşımına yönelik yapılan eleştirilerin kaynağını; materyallerle eğitimin nasıl yapılacağına bilinmemesi (n=4), çocukların yaratıcılıklarını kısıtlaması (n=4) ve hayali oyuna olanak tanımaması (n=3) olarak ifade etmiştir. Fakat bu eleştirilerin bilinmeyen bir sistem olmasından (n=5), ön yargılarından (n=3) ve Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı’nın programını uyguladıkları için yaptıklarını tanıdıkça eleştirilerin azalacağını (n=4) belirtmiştir.

Araştırmanın Sonuçları ve Önerileri: Öğretmenlerin tümü Montessori felsefesine uygun eğitim olarak yaklaşımı içselleştirdiklerini belirtmişlerdir. Bütün eğitim etkinlikleriyle ilgili eğitim aldıklarını fakat uygulama boyutunun çocuksuz ortamlarda yapıldığı için eksik kaldığını ifade etmişlerdir. Ayrıca Türkiye’de açılan okulların ticari kaygıyla açıldığını ve Montessori yaklaşımına göre eğitim yapan kurumların standartlarını taşımadığını vurgulamışlardır. Montessori yaklaşımına yönelik yapılan tüm eleştirilerin uygulamalardan sonra yersiz olduğunun anlaşılacağını belirtmişlerdir. Bu yaklaşıma yönelik deneyimli süpervizyonlara, hizmetiçi eğitime ve bilimsel çalışmalara ihtiyaç duyulduğu görülmüştür.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Alternatif eğitim, Montessori yaklaşımı, Montessori öğretmeni, erken çocukluk eğitimi.