

MONTESSORI METHOD – TIMELESS POSTULATE OF EDUCATION

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Abstract. *The Montessori educational method represents a timeless pedagogical value. It is recognizable to everyone whose goals is directed towards freedom and complete development and self-development of the child. One of the most powerful arguments and indicators of the quality of the Montessori system is its persistence for more than a century, and its worldwide distribution. The idea of a child as an absorbing mind, whose hands should be occupied and stimulated by play, learning, creative materials in a special environment, is globally accepted and implemented through the programs and work of numerous Montessori kindergartens, schools, associations and associations in the world. Maria Montessori's pedagogical conception is shown through her life and work, and then structured through three basic elements of Montessori education: 1) Montessori environment, 2) Didactic Montessori materials, and 3) Education of Montessori teachers. In the research part of the work, the teachers' attitudes were examined with the aim of creating an insight into the knowledge of the Montessori Method and determining the respondents' agreement with the basic Montessori principles. The expressed interest of the teachers in this research in the Montessori Method, as well as the existence of organizations and associations that develop Montessori ideas, represent fertile ground for the formation of accredited Montessori institutions in Serbia, which is currently not the case. The results of this research can be helpful in the development and application of the Montessori Method in our area, and represent guidelines for new research, especially in the field of student education and professional development of teachers about the importance and impacts of Montessori education on changes in the traditional system. The practical implications of the work are reflected in the encouragement of new research and ideas in theory and practice, which opens up new possibilities for developing Montessori education in Serbia.*

Key words: *Maria Montessori, Montessori environment, Montessori materials, Montessori teachers*

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1. INTRODUCTION

“Education is a natural process carried out by the child and is not acquired by listening to words, but by experiences in the environment”.

Maria Montessori

Assertion of Standing' (1959) that the Montessori principle is as powerful today as ever it was, in education of the 21st century is even more significantly confirmed. An extraordinary series of professional roles can be attributed to Maria Montessori's character and work: doctor, physicist, teacher, educator, parent advisor, teacher advisor, supervisor in educational activities, university professor, guest lecturer, as well as a large number of personal qualities that forever marked her as a philanthropist, a peacemaker, a fighter for peace and equality, equal treatment, the rights of the weak and frail, and an educational enlightener.

Maria Montessori was educated at the end of the 19th century, at a time when the profession of doctor belonged exclusively to men. She was not allowed to enroll in the medical faculty due to her gender; she first enrolled and successfully completed two-year studies in physics and mathematics, which were the path to the Faculty of Medicine. After that, with personal persistence and dedication, she became the first female doctor, opening new personal and social opportunities. The medical profession determined her beginnings, after her studies she worked at a psychiatric hospital in Rome, with children who were categorized as children with developmental disabilities. Deeply moved by the bad treatment of these children, inadequate care, and conditions that resembled an asylum, she decided to change the environment of that group of children and provide them all possible support. Working with children who were rejected by others, she started her career and gained world fame. "It was obvious to her that mental disability was a pedagogical problem rather than a medical one. She realized that children with a mental deficit could not be cured in hospitals, but trained in schools" (Kramer 1988, p. 61). Children's play with bread crumbs under the table, separated from the real world, led Maria to the conclusion that they are trying to understand the environment with their hands, which according to her are the basis for brain development. In two years, she achieved impressive success, taught them to read, write and even pass the exam for public schools. She gained great knowledge through direct work with children, and then turned her experiences into theory and lectures.

In an effort to teach as successfully as possible, she studied pedagogy and psychology, anthropology, biology, daily participated in direct work in the classroom, observing children, and adapting materials and work methods to them....it is not true that I 'invented' what is called the Montessori method. I have studied the child; I have taken what the child has given me and expressed it, and that is what is called the Montessori Method." (Montessori, 1961/2007, cited in: Lillard & McHugh, 2019, p. 1). She was invited and gave a large number of lectures, while she worked intensively on designing methods, activities and didactic materials for working with children. Beside the children, she devoted herself training parents and teachers. She was also a lecturer at the Faculty of Education and those lectures were well attended. "She lectured at the University of Rome's Pedagogical School, on the application of anthropology and biology to education. Montessori's movement into the field of physiological anthropology was part of a general development that was taking place at the time in science and social science in Italy" (Montessori & Gutek, 2004, p. 13).

She opened the first Children's House (Casa dei Bambini, 1907). Her first pupils were fifty children, from ages three to seven, whose families resided in the tenement (Montessori & Gutek, 2004, p. 14). Casa dei Bambini was the prototype of all later Montessori schools (p. 16). As the first Children's House was a great success, five more were opened in the following year, four in Rome and one in Milan. At that time, the majority of the Italian population was illiterate, children who read at the age of six were an exceptional success, so groups were opened for older children as well. Children's homes were opened in England and America, which only confirmed the world fame of Maria Montessori, along with the opening of Montessori societies, courses and schools.

Illegitimate son of Maria, "over time, Mario Montessori would become his mother's closest associate in publicizing and implementing the Montessori Method and in founding and administering the Association Montessori Internationale-AMI" (Montessori & Gutek, 2004, p. 10). "To control and supervise Montessori activities, including training programs, throughout the world. Montessori sought to unite all the Montessori movements throughout the world in a single international organization" (p. 37). According to the data of Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) it has affiliate societies in 24 countries over four continents and 62 training centers worldwide. Association Montessori Internationale empowers teachers and communities with Montessori education, helping children develop their potential to become truly capable individuals who make a difference in the world. AMI is the steward of the Montessori educational approach developed over 100 years ago. Today, this association supports Montessori training in four areas: Montessori Education, Montessori for Dementia and Aging, Montessori Administrators and Montessori Sports (Association Montessori Internationale - AMI). Maria is a holder of the French Legion of Honor, while she has been nominated three times for the Nobel Peace Prize. She lived with the idea not only of better education, but also of a society without war.

„Believing that she had developed a truly global method of education, Montessori was an international presence who traveled the world to promote her method of education. She conducted training classes and addressed conferences in Italy, the United States, the Netherlands, Spain, France, the United Kingdom, Ireland, India, and other countries. Living through two world wars, she argued that the true way to peace would come as children were educated in the ways of peace“ (Montessori & Gutek, 2004, p. 38). She died in 1952, and the epitaph according to her personal wish reads: I beg the dear, all-powerful children to join me in creating peace in man and in the world. And with the epitaph, she left the idea that she cherished during her life about faith in children and their abilities and building a world in peace and among all people, but also a strong and deeply expressed belief about children as initiators and builders of a different, better and more beautiful world. Her books are mostly compilations of her lectures; in addition to other talks, almost every year from 1914 to 1951 she gave at least one teacher-training course (Lillard & McHugh, 2019). They have been translated into numerous languages, among the most important are: *The Absorbing Mind* (La mente del bambino - *Mente assorbente*), *From Childhood to Adolescence* (Dell'Infanzia all'Adolescenza), *The Discovery of the Child* (La scoperta del bambino), *The Child: The Secret of Childhood* (Il Segreto Dell'Infanzia), *Spontaneous Activity in Education*, *The Montessori Method*, *The Advanced Montessori Method I - Spontaneous Activity in Education*, *The Montessori Elementary Material* (The Advanced Montessori Method II)" (Parezanović, 2016, p. 20).

Some authors (Lillard & McHugh, 2019) pointed that overarching goal of their work is to provide researchers, policy makers, administrators, teachers, and parents with a

benchmark from which to measure and evaluate variations from the education method Dr Montessori bequeathed at the end of her life. In agreement with the mentioned authors about the importance of spreading ideas and the great work of Maria Montessori, the aim of this paper is to consider and analyze the Montessori educational method and the views of teachers from a part of Serbia on certain postulates of this method. The author's note is that such a huge pedagogic opus is not possible to see in detail through one work, but that the presentation of a part of Maria Montessori's creativity represents a certain modest form of pedagogical encouragement to learn about and use the Montessori Method in Serbia. On the territory of Serbia, this year, the formed Montessori cabinet at the Faculty of Education in Vranje deserves attention¹. The first Montessori cabinet at the university level in our country was opened with the aim of promoting and applying the Montessori Method with the students of the Faculty and all other interested subjects². During the summer semester, a series of classes were held for students from 1st to 4th grade³, as well as certain activities intended for kindergarten children.

1.1. Pedagogical conception of Maria Montessori

The entire work and activities of Maria Montessori were aimed at improving the position, freedom and self-development of children, creating incentives in an environment organized by adults through activities and special materials. Daily contact with children and work with them became a pedagogical weapon, with which she daily innovated her own practice, as well as the teaching work of all those interested. Fully nurturing the individuality of each child, she considered them as equal adults and respected the special periods of sensitivity they go through, their absorbing mind, stimulated by play, learning, creative environment and materials, which she specially designed for each developmental period, individually, and each child.

She develops her personal view on teaching by supporting Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel's views of the child. "The individual child would become the focus, the center of education; and the teacher, a director, who unobtrusively guided the child's own self-learning" (Montessori & Gutek, 2004, p. 3). "Help me to do it alone is base of this pedagogical approaches and environment adapted to children's needs. In Montessori theory, the essential elements of education for human development comprise setting children free in a prepared environment with a specially trained teacher; these three features constitute a Montessori trinity"(Lillard & McHugh, 2019, 2). Montessori Method has five areas, principles and key areas in Montessori Curriculum.

The five areas of Montessori Method are: 1. Practical Life. 2. Sensorial. 3. Language. 4. Mathematics. 5. Cultural. According to that the Montessori Curriculum is divided into five key areas of learning: Practical Life, Sensorial, Mathematics, Language and Culture. A principle is a master key which opens a thousand locks (Standing, 1959, XII), and five principles of Montessori Method are:

1. Respect for the Child.
2. The Absorbent Mind.
3. Sensitive Periods
4. The Prepared Environment.
5. Auto education.

¹ https://www.okradio.rs/vesti/lokalne/na-pedagoskom-fakultetu-jedini-montesori-kabinet-na-jugu_88357.html

² <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=365375312248114>

³ <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=371126591672986>

The first use of term sensitive period in development was used by famous biologist Hugo de Vries, after that it was used by Maria Montessori in human development (Standing, 1959). Based on her theory of sensitive periods, Montessori, through observation and experimentation, designed a curriculum that sought to develop children's competencies in three areas: practical life skills, motor and sensory training, and more formal literary and computational skills and subjects (Montessori & Gutek, 2004, p.17).

Montessori education, children's mental development and learning come not from a teacher but from directly interacting with Montessori materials: "Place everything necessary in the environment, and then leave the children free to function according to the laws of nature" (Montessori, 2012, p. 186). The three basic elements of Maria Montessori's pedagogical concept are: 1) Prepared Montessori environment, 2) Didactic Montessori materials, and 3) Educated Montessori teachers. Through these basic elements that contain individual requirements and aspects, the conditions for the realization of the Montessori Method and principles of Montessori education were created.

1.1.1. Montessori environment

Maria required a special work environment in her institutions, an environment that adapts to the needs and interests of the child, and encourages all aspects of development. In relation to the existing pedagogies of the 20th century, the difference of the Montessori concept is also in the stimulating environment, which is specific for different subject areas: language, mathematics, nature and society (history, geography, biology, physics, chemistry, astronomy, art).

Montessori classrooms are specific and adapted according to the needs of children. Montessori classrooms are typically set up in 3-year age ranges. Learning younger than older, cooperative learning without competition and pressure is the Montessori climate for work. Adapted spatially, visually with stimulating materials and activities for children's development. During the time in which they were created Montessori space was certainly one step ahead of many in that time. Materials that deeply occupy children's attention, in a peaceful atmosphere through group and individual activities, are part of the Montessori classroom. Learning Montessori environment (including teachers, experiences and the physical environment) are very important, and it's connected with outcomes. Classrooms are calm and quiet and walls are painted in natural colors. There are special corners for different learning area. Living plants are part of classroom and every child is free to move around.

1.1.2. Montessori materials

Specific materials in the environment, which is adapted to the needs of the child and his age characteristics, represent the starting point of Montessori work. The materials are appropriate for the age of the children, but not all materials are applicable for every age. On the basis of the mentioned areas, the materials are classified into the same categories: material for exercises from practical life, for the development of the senses, mathematics, language and cosmic education. They are mostly made of natural materials, and depending on the so-called center to which they belong, they can be various boxes, boards, containers, sandpaper, beads, cards, atlases, pictures, books and other things. They must be available to the child, encourage action, and be appropriate to the child's needs and abilities, always in the same place, arranged in the same order.

Certain activities of children are related to age. The exercises of Practical Life, in which children engage hand and mind in purposeful activities like cleaning a table, arranging flowers to decorate the classroom, or cutting carrots to serve as snacks, are also only for the Primary classroom. Older children, although they do still care for their environments, no longer need a special arrangement of such activities (Lillard & McHugh, 2019, 5).

Maria believed that the number of children in the class should be 30-40, supporting mutual learning at different age levels. „Larger class sizes better support children’s learning. One possible explanation is that because Montessori children learn in part via observation and imitation, in larger classes they can learn more because there are more examples to learn from“ (Lillard & McHugh, 2019, 5). The materials are intended for students, they are not intended as auxiliary tools for the teacher, but their purpose is to improve and advance student development. All materials are self-correcting; students can correct their own mistakes.

1.1.3. Montessori teachers

Maria Montessori wrote extensively about the preparation of the teacher, the fundamental role the teacher plays, and the dispositions required of teachers to implement her approach (Montessori, 1914, 1936, 1948b, 1949b, cited in: Sutton, 2018). She recognized the critical role of the teacher/guide plays in creating the learning environment she considered necessary for cultivating a child’s full potential (Sutton, 2018, p. 26). Montessori renamed her “teacher a directress who was to guide children as they taught themselves to learn” (Montessori & Gutek, 2004, p. 17). Montessori education sees the role of teacher as a guide who helps development of every child in classroom. The role of lecturer does not exist, but he becomes the center of experience and demonstration while respecting sensitive periods.

Montessori teachers are not from traditional schools system, they are guides which supports independence and freedom of every child. Montessori teachers do not insist that mistakes should be corrected. A teacher in a Montessori school must first complete basic studies at the state pedagogical faculty, after which they will continue their education as a Montessori teacher. A future Montessori teacher goes through training for a year and a half at a special institute licensed by the Montessori Association (Jagrović, 2007, p. 73).

The teacher education programs require approximately 300 to 500 classroom instruction hours (depending on the instructional level) and a number of observation hours. These teacher education programs usually occur over a period of two to three summers or a full school year. In addition to the classroom hours, some Montessori affiliates require a full-year practicum and a yearlong research project before a credential is granted. Others require several weeks of observation and practice in a classroom before a diploma is awarded (Sutton, 2018, p. 25). In Montessori schools, the traditional role of the teacher has no place. Montessori teacher listens more, observes, activates, prepares materials, gives tasks, creates and creates conditions and atmosphere. The teacher is the guide through the world of science, practical life situations, creativity and a strong model of encouragement and identification.

Maria distinguishes her teachers according to the vivid imagination they possess, they must have a preconceived notion that "the child standing in front of her will reveal his true nature when he discovers an activity that attracts him (Montessori, 2016, p. 374), "he must be like a flame whose warmth, moves, enlivens and beckons" (2016, p. 376). In this regard, she particularly emphasized the advice: *Do not interfere in any way, emphasizing the independence and autonomy of the child in that process and the specific role of the Montessori teacher.*

2. METHOD

In the research part of the work, the teachers' attitudes were examined with the aim of creating an insight into the knowledge of the Montessori Method and determining the respondents' agreement with the basic Montessori principles. The goal was made concrete through certain research questions:

1. To what degree were the respondents familiar with Maria Montessori's work methods, and how did they acquire knowledge about it?
2. To analyze the degree of agreement of teachers with the postulates of the Montessori Method?

The methodological part of the work is based on research conducted with 104 class teachers⁴ and subject teachers⁵ of elementary schools from the territory of the city of Pirot (Чубић, 2020). The sample was made by the method of simple random selection. A five-point scale of Likert-type judgments (Bandov, 2017) was used to examine respondents' attitudes, consisting of 17 items that include certain postulates of the Montessori Method. The instrument was adapted and specified according to the needs and purpose of the research.

Respondents had the opportunity to express their degree of agreement with the offered postulates of the Montessori Method, starting from strong disagreement to complete agreement. (1- I do not agree at all, 2 - I mostly disagree, 3- I am undecided, 4 - I mostly agree, 5 - I completely agree). The research was conducted in elementary schools in Pirot, October 2020.

Table 1 Structure of the sample

N = 104	
Length of work experience, n (%)	
0-5 years	10 (11.6%)
5-10 years	18 (7.3%)
10-20 years	28 (2.9%)
More than 20	47 (45.2%)
Gender, n (%)	
M	26 (25%)
F	78 (75%)
Professional qualifications, n (%)	
Basic academic studies	42 (40.4%)
Specialist studies	19 (18.3%)
Master studies	30 (28.8%)
Pedagogical Academy	13 (12.5%)
Type of teaching, n(%)	
Subject teachers	58 (55.8%)
Class teachers	46 (44.2%)

⁴ Teaching the same class of children from 1-4th grade

⁵ Teaching the same subject to children from 5-8th grade

3. RESULTS

Respondents were offered the opportunity to state their level of knowledge of the Montessori Method, as well as the methods and sources of knowledge for those teachers who answered positively. Their responses are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Distribution of respondents' answers about knowledge of the Montessori Method and ways of learning

Degree of familiarity with the Montessori method	Yes	No
	64 (61.5 %)	40 (38.5 %)
Σ	104 (100.00%)	
Ways to learn about the Montessori method		
During education	25 (39.06%)	
By own interest and research	33 (51.56%)	
At professional seminars	5 (7.82%)	
Some other way	1 (1.56%)	
Σ	64 (100.00%)	

Out of a total of 104 respondents who participated in the research, when asked whether they were familiar with the Montessori Method, 64 (61.5%) of the respondents answered that they were familiar, while 40 (38.5%) answered that they were not. Respondents who answered negatively to the question about knowledge of the Montessori Method were offered an additional question, whether they would like to learn about this method. All 40 respondents answered in the affirmative. Such attitudes of teachers indicate the existence of positive elements, such as: motivation to get to know the Montessori Method and orientation towards learning new facts, and therefore for a certain type of improvement in this area.

Table 3 shows the degree of agreement of respondents' views with certain postulates of the Montessori Method.

Of the 17 items offered, the highest number of agreements with the following three: (1) In raising children, it is necessary to respect the developmental stages of children's sensitivity 60.6%; (2) The teacher's task is to create an environment suitable for the developmental needs of children and young people 57.7%; (3) The teacher must teach children what is good and what is not 51.9%. By analyzing the answers, it can be determined that the teachers included in the sample fully agree with the given items in a significant percentage, while the percentage of answers referring to complete disagreement is extremely low, almost negligible. Such answers show that at the level of this sample of teachers, the Montessori Method is highly valued and accepted through the expressed attitudes. It can also be noted that the respondents least agree with the statement: nothing should be imposed on the child, only 22.1% of the sample fully agree with this idea, as well as with the item: the child should be free to act and decide 33.7% of teachers. According to the answers given in this way, the respondents of this research express a significant preference for traditional approaches to teaching. The teachers assessed the child's freedom and non-imposition as more of a problem than a need, so the conclusion that stands out is that although through most of their positions they emphasize a clear agreement with the Montessori Method, on an implicit level, through agreement with certain statements, they are still advocates of traditional approaches to the child.

Table 3 Distribution of respondents' answers on agreement with certain postulates of the Montessori Method

	F/%	1	2	3	4	5	\bar{X}
1. The goal of educational efforts is to encourage the child's independence through self-activity	f %	1 1%	9 8.7%	10 9.6%	34 32.7%	50 48.1%	4.18
2. In raising children, it is necessary to respect the developmental stages of children's sensitivity.	f %	1 1%	2 1.9%	17 16.3%	21 20.2%	63 60.6%	4.37
3. The teacher's task is to create an environment suitable for the developmental needs of children and young people.	f %	1 1%	6 5.8%	13 12.5%	24 23.1%	60 57.7%	4.31
4. The teacher should carefully organize the child's independent and free activities.	f %	1 1%	9 8.7%	16 15.3%	26 25%	52 50%	4.20
5. The child should be free to act and make decisions.	f %	1 1%	12 11.5%	21 20.2%	35 33.7%	35 33.7%	3.87
6. The child's discipline must come from freedom.	f %	/	11 10.6%	23 22.1%	39 37.5%	31 29.8%	3.86
7. The child's environment should be a pedagogically shaped environment with self-didactic material.	f %	/	7 6.7%	18 17.3%	37 35.6%	42 40.4%	4.1
8. In education, the most important thing is to develop the child's independence	f %	1 1%	4 3.8%	15 14.4%	32 30.8%	52 50%	4.25
9. Children must be taught disciplined behavior and respect for authority	f %	/	10 9.6%	11 10.6%	35 33.7%	48 46.2%	4.16
10. The teacher must teach the children what is good and what is not.	f %	1 1%	9 8.7%	12 11.5%	28 26.9%	54 51.9%	4.20
11. It is good to develop a competitive spirit in a child.	f %	1 1%	9 8.7%	15 14.4%	34 32.7%	45 43.3%	4.09
12. The real reward for a child is the satisfaction of knowing and solving a task or problem.	f %	3 2.9%	6 5.8%	9 8.7%	34 32.7%	52 50%	4.21
13. The teacher's task is not to teach, but to guide the child in seeking knowledge, facts and new experiences.	f %	2 1.9%	6 5.8%	15 14.4%	31 29.8%	50 48.1%	4.16
14. Play is the best and most effective way of learning.	f %	2 1.9%	9 8.7%	11 10.6%	35 33.7%	47 45.2%	4.11
15. The authority of the teacher is necessary for the effective upbringing of children.	f %	1 1%	8 7.7%	12 11.5%	39 37.5%	44 42.3%	4.12
16. Children must be brought up so that one day they fit into the existing social order as well as possible.	f %	2 1.9%	13 12.5%	13 12.5%	27 26%	49 47.1%	4.04
17. Nothing should be imposed on the child	f %	6 5.8%	20 19.2%	22 21.2%	33 31.7%	23 22.1%	3.45

3.1. Discussion of results

In relation to most of the variables (gender of the teacher, work experience and level of teaching-subject/class), no statistical significance was obtained in the respondents' answers. Statistical significance was obtained for five items in relation to the variable of

the respondent's professional education. In the case of the first item, which states that the goal of the educational effort is to encourage the child's independence through self-activity, the obtained values of the chi-square test $\chi^2 (12, N = 104) = 35.628, p = 0.00$ indicate that there are statistically significant differences in the attitudes of teachers in relation to their Level of Education. Teachers who have completed basic studies significantly more fully agree with this statement than teachers who have completed pedagogical academy, specialist, and master's studies.

In the second item, which reads in the education of children, it is necessary to respect the developmental stages of children's sensitivity, the obtained values of the chi-square test $\chi^2 (12, N = 104) = 31.454, p = 0.02$ indicate that there are statistically significant differences in the attitudes of teachers in relation to their level of education in evaluating this claim. In the third item, which reads that the teacher's task is to create an environment suitable for the developmental needs of children and young people, the obtained values of the chi-square test $\chi^2 (12, N = 104) = 38.248, p = 0.00$ indicate that there are statistically significant differences in the attitudes of teachers in relation to on their level of education in evaluating this claim. In the case of the item claiming that the most important thing in education is to develop the child's independence, the obtained values of the chi-square test $\chi^2 (12, N = 104) = 33.401, p = 0.01$ indicate that there are statistically significant differences in the attitudes of teachers in relation to their level of education in evaluate these claims. In the case of the item claiming that the real reward for a child is the satisfaction of knowing and solving a task or problem, the obtained values of the chi-square test $\chi^2 (12, N = 104) = 33.401, p = 0.01$ indicate that there are statistically significant differences in the attitudes of teachers in relation to their level of education in evaluating this claim.

Applying the chi-square test and analyzing the obtained levels of significance in relation to the set variables (gender of the teacher, work experience, level of teaching-subject/class, vocational education), it can be determined that differences in attitudes occur only in five of the seventeen offered items about Montessori Method and that in relation to the teacher's professional qualification. The obtained statistically significant differences in the attitudes of the respondents in relation to the teacher's professional qualification, may be an indicator that the causes of the differences are also found in teacher education, and as such represents the potential for the development of ideas about alternative forms of education in our schools.

It is important to notice that the lowest values of the arithmetic averages were obtained for the question about the child's freedom, i.e. the teachers least agree with the items, which refer to the possibilities of the child's freedom in the educational process: Nothing should be imposed on the child 3.45; The child's discipline must come from freedom. 3.86; the child should be free to act and make decisions 3.87. More significantly, they agree with the statements about the appreciation of the developmental stages of sensitivity to the environment, encouraging the child's independence through self-activity. It seems that there is a wrong pattern of belief in teaching practice, and also among the respondents of our research, that, for example, the freedom of movement inherent in the Montessori Method is associated with the child's indiscipline and disobedience, and not with the natural need for movement, because Maria Montessori points out that "through one's own activity, it becomes consciously and builds the future man" (Montessori, 2016, 45). Research results (Brown, 2014) showed that children from Montessori kindergartens show a higher degree of self-control compared to children from state kindergartens, while the argument is that such a degree of self-control is conditioned by a high degree of freedom.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Maria Montessori was remarkable person, pedagogue, scientist, and her whole life was dedicated to children and benefits in education. Her life was fruitful and remarkable, such as been her work. Standing (1958, p. 68) concludes that Maria Montessori was herself the personification of what her own ideal teacher should be one who combines the self-sacrificing spirit of the scientist with the love of the disciple of Christ. Parezanović indicates that "Maria Montessori is one of the first scientists in the field of experimental pedagogy of the twentieth century" (2016, p. 67), with which there is general agreement because she researched educational practice, created conditions for teaching, applied them, corrected them according to needs and in order to improve teaching, with experimental application in their schools. She enriched the experiments with her knowledge and knowledge of medicine, psychology, anthropology, physics, mathematics and pedagogy. In giving an account of the Montessori system it is difficult to know where to begin, because it is hard to single out one principle as more important than the others (Standing, 1958, p. 87). Today, Montessori pedagogy and education "live" and what is even more important are being developed in new directions by Maria's "successors", which are numerous practitioners, scientists, and everyone dedicated to her pedagogy. The Montessori for Dementia and Ageing is one of the program that are developed recently, and which make group of health professionals have developed a philosophy of care based on Montessori principles, for those living with dementia and dealing with ageing. That's only one of many new directions of Montessori pedagogy (AMI).

In the area of Croatia and Serbia (Milutinović & Zuković, 2013; Sablić, Rački & Lesandrić, 2015, Rajić, 2008) there is agreement among authors who research alternative forms of education that it is important to develop pedagogical and educational pluralism, through: empirical studies of parents according to private and alternative upbringing and education (Milutinović & Zuković, 2013); investing effort in informing parents about the work of alternative kindergartens/schools (Rajić, 2008); introducing the content of alternative pedagogical ideas into the study programs of all teaching faculties in Croatia, as well as into the lifelong training of teachers (Sablić, Rački & Lesandrić, 2015).

Research data (Čubić, 2020) show that teachers in Serbia are familiar with the Montessori method, more than 60% of the examinee and the remaining percentage of respondents expressed an interest in getting to know the principles of work. Based on these data and the current situation in the education system in our country, it can be concluded that there are positive attitudes toward Montessori Method. It is necessary to direct educational policies in the direction of building opportunities for opening Montessori institutions according to the World standards. Also, it is necessary to promote more Montessori education, through research, professional development of teachers and implementation in teaching practice in our country. The expressed interest of the teachers in this research for the Montessori Method, as well as the existing organizations and associations, are indicators of the existence of good soil for accreditation institutions in Serbia, which include certified teachers and the mentioned conditions. The data on the obtained statistically significant differences in the attitudes of our respondents in relation to the professional training of teachers, may be an indicator that the causes of the differences are also found in teacher education, and as such represents a field of potential development of ideas about the possibilities of applying alternative forms of education in our schools, specifically Montessori methods.

The results of this research can be helpful in the development and application of the Montessori Method in our area, and represent guidelines for new research, especially in the field of student education and professional development of teachers about the importance and impacts of Montessori education on changes in the traditional system. The implementation of some ideas of the Montessori Method in individual subjects or classrooms would greatly contribute to the restructuring of the current education system. Future research certainly should be directed towards even more precise empirical research on the possibilities of development and contribution to Montessori education, by examining students, teachers and parents.

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MONTESSORI METOD – SVEVREMENSKI POSTULAT OBRAZOVANJA

Montesori obrazovni metod predstavlja neprolaznu pedagošku vrednost. Prepoznatljiv je svima čiji su ciljevi usmereni ka slobodi i potpunom razvoju i samorazvoju deteta. Jedan od najsnažnijih argumenata i pokazatelja kvaliteta Montesori sistema, jeste njegova postojanost duža od jednog veka, i

rasprostranjenost širom sveta. Ideja o detetu kao upijajući umu, čije ruke treba zaposliti i podstaći igrom, učenjem, kreativnim materijalima u posebnom okruženju, globalno je prihvaćena i implementirana kroz programe i rad brojnih Montessori vrtića, škola, udruženja i asocijacija u svetu. Pedagoška koncepcija Marije Montessori, započeta je prikazom života i rada, a potom strukturirana kroz tri osnovna elementa Montessori obrazovanja: 1) Montessori okruženje, 2) Didaktički Montessori materijali i 3) Obrazovanje Montessori nastavnika. U istraživačkom delu rada ispitivani su stavovi nastavnika sa ciljem sačinjavanja uvida u poznavanje Montessori metode i utvrđivanja saglasnosti ispitanika sa osnovnim Montessori odrednicama. Iskazano interesovanje nastavnika u ovom istraživanju za Montessori metodu, kao i postojanje organizacija i udruženja koje razvijaju Montessori ideje, predstavljaju plodno tlo za formiranje akreditovanih Montessori ustanova na području Srbije, što zasada nije slučaj. Neophodno je više promovisati Montessori obrazovanje, kroz istraživanje, profesionalno usavršavanje nastavnika i implementaciju u nastavnoj praksi u našoj zemlji. Rezultati ovog istraživanja mogu biti od pomoći u razvoju i primeni Montessori metode na našem području, i predstavljaju smernice za nova istraživanja, posebno u oblasti obrazovanja studenata i profesionalnog razvoja nastavnika o značaju i uticajima Montessori obrazovanja na promene tradicionalnog sistema. Praktične implikacije rada ogledaju se u podsticanju novih istraživanja i ideja u teoriji i praksi, čime se otvaraju nove mogućnosti razvoja Montessori obrazovanja u Srbiji.

Ključne reči: Marija Montessori, montessori okruženje, montessori materijali, montessori nastavnici