👤 **Süleyman SAÇAR**

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9597-2969

Ministry of National Education, Kocaeli / TURKEY

👤 **Murat KARGI**

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1018-1429

Ministry of National Education, Kocaeli / TURKEY

👤 **Aslı ZİNDEREN**

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2160-894X

Ministry of National Education, Kocaeli / TURKEY

TÜRK SINIF ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN MONTESSORI YÖNTEMİNE İLİŞKİN GÖRÜŞLERİNİN İNCELENMESİ

EXAMINATION OF TURKISH PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' VIEWS ON THE MONTESSORI METHOD

ÖZET

Bu çalışmada bir grup sınıf öğretmeninin alternatif eğitim yöntemlerinden biri olan Montessori yöntemine ilişkin görüşleri incelenmiştir. Farklı devlet ve özel okullarda çalışan ve Montessori eğitiminin uygulandığı okullarda istihdam edilen 71 sınıf öğretmeni çalışmanın katılımcılarını oluşturmaktadır. Nicel tarama yöntemi ile tasarlanan çalışmada katılımcılara bir anket uygulanmış ve Montessori eğitim uygulamalarına ilişkin görüşleri elde edilmiştir. Bulgular, katılımcıların genel itibari ile Montessori yöntemine ilişkin görüşlerinin olumlu olduğuna işaret etmekte; öğretmenlerin öğrenme sürecinde değişen rollerine ilişkin farkındalık sahibi olduğu görülmektedir. Ayrıca, Montessori yönteminin uygulanmasına ilişkin sorun olarak görülen iki konu ailelerin bu yönteme ilişkin farkındalığının az olması ve öğretmenlerin geleneksel eğitim yöntemleri ile deneyimleri olarak ifade edilmektedir. Bu çalışma bulguları ile alternatif eğitim uygulamaları alanyazınına katkıda bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Montessori, öğretmen görüşleri, alternatif eğitim

ABSTRACT

The current study aims to examine a group of Turkish primary school teachers' views regarding the Montessori method, which is an alternative education model in primary schools. The research was designed as quantitative descriptive survey research and carried out with the participation of 71 primary school teachers working in public schools and private schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education, where the Montessori method is applied. The findings indicate that the overall attitude towards the Montessori method is quite positive and teachers acknowledge their changing roles in student learning. However, the findings also indicate that parents' negative attitudes or lack of familiarity with the Montessori method of teaching and former experiences in conventional models of schooling may hinder the adoption and functioning of the Montessori educational practices. The study contributes to the literature by presenting first-hand information from a group of Turkish teachers who have experimented with the Montessori model.

Keywords: Montessori, teacher attitudes, alternative education.

1.   INTRODUCTION

Establishing a long-lasting movement to provide enhanced and earlier educational opportunities for children, Maria Montessori contributed greatly to early childhood education and triggered new and comprehensive research and insights into children's nature, their developmental stages, and the role of environment in learning(Montessori, 2004). Changing traditional and obsolete perceptions that the child comes to school as a blank slate, Dr. Maria Montessori adopted a radically different approach which is embedded in close observations of children rather than those that are heavily dependent on misconceptions (Lilliard, 2016).

While the conventional schooling paradigm heavily rests upon efficiency and result in poor learning conditions which dramatically hinder development and innovativeness (Lilliard, 2016), the Montessori method of education is to a large extent founded on the premises of self-directed activities, hand-on experiences and collaborative play, through which students are given the opportunity to make creative choices. Focusing on experiential learning environments where a deeper understanding of school subjects and better social interaction is enabled and reinforced, The Montessori method, which consists of combining philosophical and psychological concepts and pedagogical techniques, includes extremely concrete and practical applications (Poyraz, 2003).

Montessori saw children as they are and established the basis of the method on the child's demand for learning. The system is compatible with children's natural development but prevents them from performing tasks for which they are not ready yet. Therefore, Montessori argued that education cannot be forced upon children and stated that children should live in a free environment that will help them learn (Başal, 2005). The Montessori method suggests that since children can educate themselves, they should be provided with opportunities to do things on their own-and that they should also be independent and self-controlled. The central aspect of The Montessori method of education is the dynamic relationship between the child, teacher, and environment through which teachers are to guide children into a prepared environment and manipulable learning materials and support the child's intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development (Marshall, 2017). All these manipulable materials in a typical Montessori classroom support certain aspects of child development and try to meet the child's natural interests through available activities so that children can learn through experience and at their own pace.

1.1.   Montessori Method as an Alternative Education Approach

A review of the relevant literature indicates that the term alternative education refers to different approaches to teaching and learning apart from formal education provided by the state, or generally includes private schools with an innovative curriculum and a flexible study program based largely on the interests and needs of the student (Foley & Pang, 2006). In its broadest sense, the term alternative education includes all educational programs outside the contemporary school system. There is a wide variety of alternative forms of education available based on different philosophies. Therefore, alternative education environments differ greatly from one another. Alternative education approaches such as Montessori and Waldorf are among the most popular ones. The Montessori approach, first developed in 1907, played an important role in the dissemination of alternative education (Lopata, Wallace & Finn, 2005). Montessori schools follow an educational philosophy and methodology characterized by student-selected studies, including an environment of collaboration with student mentors, absence of exams and grades (Lilliard, 2016).

The Montessori method can be examined in three main aspects: Montessori's early career as a medical doctor, educational theorist, and practitioner; as a method of educational theory and practice, and the third; and for its greater historical and contemporary significance. Although Montessori saw his method as "scientific pedagogy", Montessori's concept of child nature was explained in relation to the spiritual, almost metaphysical. Montessori claimed that every child has a psychic power at birth, an inner and self-teacher that stimulates learning (Gutek, 2004).

According to Montessori, education serves two main purposes. While the biological purpose helps the natural development of the individual, the social part is aimed at preparing the child for life (Lilliard, 2016). For Montessori, the teacher focuses on two important and necessary elements, the child as an individual and the environment. The primary element is the child's physiological and mental development. Secondly, the education of the child requires an environment in which he can develop the

forces given by nature. In that case, education is a process of cooperation with the child's nature and developmental stages (Gutek, 2004).

Montessori education is characterized by

- Game-based learning
- Multi-age classrooms
- Teacher-free game observation.
- Resource-rich and developmentally appropriate classrooms.
- Classrooms filled with many resources that can help a child learn and explore (Gutek, 2004; Lilliard, 2016; Montessori, 2004; Montessori, Hunt, and Valsiner, 2017).

It is also noteworthy to mention the five principles of The Montessori method. The Montessori method basically rests upon these five principles:

- Children should be shown respect
- Children have absorbent minds
- There are sensitive periods critical to learning
- Prepare environments that are best for children to learn
- Children can teach themselves through auto education.

1.2.   Conventional Education vs. Montessori Education

In traditional schools, financial constraints lead to classrooms with rows of students and high student-to-teacher ratios. Therefore, in a majority of classrooms, the teacher is the ultimate source of knowledge. Montessori schools, however, are student-centred in nature. Small sized groups and individual-centred learning enable more learning based on discovery and experiential learning, which often produce deeper and more engaging questions, contributing to curiosity and better learning in traditional schools (Montessori et al., 2017). Students attend a variety of classes around the clock and teachers need to pace their instruction against pre-determined curricula where the focus is on standardized tests. Conversely, Montessori schools emphasize inquiry and are designed in a way that children pursue their own self-paced curriculum individually or as a team. In traditional schools, classes are determined based on grade-level groups and advance one-grade level each year. That is, they are provided education with their peers. Montessori students are provided education in a non-graded environment (Rajan, 2017), where variance in age allows for mentoring, leadership and individual learning. In traditional schools, the one-size-fits-all form of program is delivered, living no room modification based on learning styles and interests. Within the Montessori school, learning is self-directed and crucial elements such as learning styles, interests, talents, preparedness is respected and met.

Another important difference between traditional classes and Montessori classes is that the latter has been designed to allow for more freedom in activities. The immovable standardized desk rows of the traditional classroom are replaced by lightweight, kid-sized tables and chairs that kids can move around. Classrooms have a number of accessible lockers for storing materials that children can easily access. The structure of the classroom is created to encourage students to control their own behaviour (Gutek, 2004).

Montessori classrooms always have a plant and an animal to raise children's nature awareness. If it is not possible to accommodate in the classroom, it should not be somewhere in the school garden. In artistic activities, children in Montessori classrooms engage in activities such as painting to support the development of small muscles (Montessori, 2004). With these activities, children learn to use materials such as clay or mud to form shapes, to paint using different materials, to shape materials with their hands, or by using appropriate tools. Children's use of various musical instruments and sound boxes and singing not only helps them develop their musical ears, but also helps them develop their language skills, and dancing to rhythm helps their big muscles move (Kirkham & Kidd, 2017). Some of the most important activities that support the development of intelligence such as musical/rhythmic, bodily/kinaesthetic and verbal/linguistics are musical activities.

1.3. Background of the Research

While it is acknowledged that the Montessori method of education has led to a radical paradigm shift in our understanding of child learning and educational design and it has been confirmed by many previous studies that the Montessori method has many benefits, there is still a critical gap in the literature. That is, teachers' views and reflection upon the Montessori method of education still deserves scholarly attention considering the pivotal role teachers play in designing and maintaining Montessori schools and classes. Considering the relative novelty of Montessori education in the form of alternative schools and classes to conventional educational settings and the increasing popularity of alternative schools and education, an examination of what teachers think of Montessori education is critical to its further adoption and appropriate maintenance. Therefore, the current study seeks to explore teachers' views on Montessori education in Turkey. While there are several studies carried out to examine pre-service teachers and teachers' perspectives of the Montessori method (see: Sak, 2014; Atlı, Korkmaz, Tastepe, &Akyol, 2016) , this study was carried out with the participation of 71 primary school teachers who are employed in public and private schools where Montessori method is practiced. In that sense, it is thought that the current study will have contributions to the existing literature by revealing the participants' first-hand experience and providing implications for practitioners and policymakers.

2. METHOD

In this part of the study, information about the study model, universe, sample, data collection, and data collections tools has been presented.

2.1. Research Design

One of the research methods frequently utilized in social sciences is the survey method. By its nature, a descriptive study is one that is designed to describe the distribution of one or more variables, without regard to any causal or other hypotheses. In other words, descriptive research is often referred to as a type of research is intended to describe the characteristics of the population or phenomenon studied. This methodology focuses more on the "what" of the research subject rather than addressing why it happens. In this context, the descriptive survey research model is adopted in the current study that is intended to reveal teachers' views on the Montessori method.

2.2. Participants

The universe of the research is the educators (primary school teachers) working in public and private educational institutions in Kocaeli province of Turkey that apply the Montessori method in their schools. The sample group of the research consists of 71 people who work in educational institutions adopting the Montessori method in the 2019-2020 academic year at the primary school level.

The distribution of the participants regarding demographic variables is presented in Table 1.

Tablo 1. Distribution of the participants by age

Participants (Age)	f	%
20-30	25	35,2
31-40	34	47,9
41-50	10	14,1
51 and over	2	2,8
Total	71	100,0

As seen in Table 1., 25 (35%) of the teachers in the study group are in the 20-30 age range, 34 (47%) are in the 41-40 age range, and 10 (14.1%) are in the 41-50 age range. the remaining 2 (2.8%) are in the age range of 51 and over.

Table 2. Distribution of the study group by gender demographic variable

Gender	f	%
Male	23	32,4
Female	48	67,6
Total	71	100,0

As seen in Table 2, 23 (32.4%) of the teachers in the study group were male and 48 (67.6%) were female.

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Data for the study were collected by the Personal Information Form and Teachers' View of Montessori Method Questionnaire, both of which were prepared by the researcher. In the research, in order to reach

the demographic information of the participants, gender, age, etc. a personal information form was created with questions about personal information. This form was sent to participants via Google Forms. Teachers' View of the Montessori Method Questionnaire was also sent to the participants online. The questionnaire includes 19 questions prepared by the researcher based on previous studies and the literature. The questionnaire was applied to teachers working in public and private education institutions in the 2019-2020 academic season. The participants were informed about the scope and objectives of the research beforehand. The data collection procedure took about three months.

The questionnaire that is designed by the researcher to determine the views of primary school teachers on educational activities created with the Montessori method was developed on the scale developed by Gülkanat (2015) in her master's thesis titled "Examination of Preschool Teachers' Views on Educational Practices Using Montessori Method". Items for the scale were created with a 5-point Likert type method. Items can be answered as "I totally disagree", "Partly disagree", "I have no idea", "I partially agree" and "I totally agree" and can be scored from 1 to 5. Instead of using the scale as it is, the researcher chose to select certain items related to key aspects of Montessori practices and revised the items in the scale accordingly. That is, the original scale consisted of 59 items, but in the current study, only 19 of them were used in the questionnaire. Since validity and reliability tests were already conducted by Gülkanat (2015) and the scale was found reliable and valid, the selected items were found appropriate to research purposes. However, reflections and feedback were taken from two experts in the field of educational management for those items that were revised. While the scale designed by Gülkanat (2015) is a noteworthy contribution to the literature and intended to reveal teachers' views on many aspects of the Montessori method including student development, teacher roles, parental issues, in the current research, we only focused on the teacher aspects and therefore limited the number of the items.

3.   FINDINGS

The items in the questionnaire are presented in Table 3. In line with the items in the questionnaire, the frequencies and percentiles of the participant responses are presented below along with analysis and comments on the findings.

Table 3. Items in the questionnaire

1. I think I will have difficulty in applying the Montessori Method by integrating the subjects covered in the National Education curriculum.
2. I think that having to apply both the classical method and the Montessori Method will tire me a lot.
3. I would like to teach using the Montessori Method throughout my teaching life.
4. The Montessori Method allows me to see the child as an individual independent of the adult.
5. The task of the educator in the Montessori Method is to meet the needs of the child by removing the obstacles in front of her.
6. I think that teachers who teach according to the Montessori Method learn to be patient.
7. I am interested to read research about Maria Montessori's view of education.
8. The Montessori method fits with my understanding of education.
9. I would like to teach with a different alternative education model instead of the Montessori Method.
10. With the Montessori method, I started to see myself as learning with children, not teaching them.
11. I think that teachers who teach with the Montessori method have more freedom.
12. I think that teachers who teach according to the Montessori Method are out of control in the classroom.
13. I am very excited that children realize that they can achieve many things on their own thanks to Montessori practices.
14. I prefer the Montessori Method as it provides permanent learning in education.
15. I think that I will have a hard time meeting the expectations of parents who do not understand the purpose and logic of the Montessori Education Method.
16. The cooperation of students, parents and teachers in the Montessori Method supports the development of the child.
17. In the Montessori Method, the teacher's non-intervention with the child increases the child's self-confidence.
18. I think teaching children who have no previous school experience according to the Montessori Method is challenging.
19. Observation, one of the most important features of the Montessori Method, allows me to get to know my students closely.

I think I will have difficulty in applying the Montessori Method by integrating the subjects covered in the National Education curriculum.

Table 4. Frequencies and percentiles of participant responses regarding the first item

Participant responses	f	%
Strongly disagree	18	25,4
Disagree	8	11,3
Neutral	10	14,1
Agree	29	40,8
Strongly agree	6	8,5
Total	71	100,0

As seen in Table 4, 18 (25.4%) of the participants strongly disagree, 8 (11.3%) disagree, 10 (14.1%) are neutral. 29 (40.8%) agree and 6 (8.5%) strongly agree that they will have problems integrating the

Montessori method into the standard curriculum. When the findings are examined, it is seen that participant teachers' views differ. It seems that some participants have concerns about applying the Montessori approach in conventional educational settings.

I think that having to apply both the classical method and the Montessori Method will tire me a lot.

Table 5. Frequencies and percentiles of participant responses regarding the second item

Participant responses	f	%
Strongly disagree	9	12,7
Disagree	17	23,9
Neutral	6	8,5
Agree	32	45,1
Strongly agree	7	9,9
Total	71	100,0

As seen in Table 5, 9 (12,7%) of the participants strongly disagree, 17 (23,9%) disagree, 6 (8,5%) are neutral, 32 (45,1%) agree and 7 (9,9 %) strongly agree that adopting both the conventional and Montessori method at the same time will cause an extra burden for their practices. The findings indicate that there are two groups of participants; those who think that it will be challenging to practice both methods and those who believe that it won't require extra effort.

I would like to teach using the Montessori Method throughout my teaching life.

Table 6. Frequencies and percentiles of participant responses regarding the third item

Participant responses	f	%
Strongly disagree	1	1,4
Disagree	5	7,0
Neutral	10	14,1
Agree	37	52,1
Strongly agree	18	25,4
Total	71	100,0

As seen in Table 6., the majority of the participants agree or strongly agree that they would like to practice the Montessori method in their future teaching profession. The findings indicate that most participants have a positive attitude towards the Montessori method.

The Montessori Method allows me to see the child as an individual independent of the adult.

Table 7. Frequencies and percentiles of participant responses regarding the fourth item

Participant responses	f	%
Strongly disagree	-	-
Disagree	2	2,8
Neutral	9	12,7
Agree	25	35,2
Strongly agree	35	49,3
Total	71	100,0

As seen in Table 7., 0 (0%) of the participants strongly disagree, 2 (2,8%) disagree, 9 (12,7%) are neutral, 25 (35,2%) agree and 35 (49,3%) strongly agree that the Montessori method enables them to see children as an individual enjoying more freedom and depending less on adults. The findings can be seen as evidence that most participants acknowledge the very nature of the Montessori method regarding its implications for children.

The task of the educator in the Montessori Method is to meet the needs of the child by removing the obstacles in front of her.

Table 8. Frequencies and Percentiles of participant responses regarding the fifth item

Participant responses	f	%
Strongly disagree	3	4,2
Disagree	7	9,9
Neutral	7	9,9
Agree	21	29,6
Strongly agree	33	46,5
Total	71	100,0

As seen in Table 8., 3 (4,2%) of the participants strongly disagree, 7 (9,9%) disagree, 7 (9,9%) are neutral, 21 (29,6%) agree and 33 (46,5%) strongly agree that their role as teachers is to facilitate students' learning by eliminating possible hindrances. The findings clearly indicate that most

participants are aware of the fact that in Montessori classes, students are self-directed, and teachers are facilitators.

I think that teachers who teach according to the Montessori Method learn to be patient.

Table 9. Frequencies and Percentiles of participant responses regarding the sixth item

Participant responses	f	%
Strongly disagree	-	-
Disagree	-	-
Neutral	4	5,6
Agree	30	42,3
Strongly agree	37	52,1
Total	71	100,0

When Table 9. is examined, it is clearly seen that almost all the participants are of the opinion that patience is the key to teaching in Montessori classes. A possible explanation for this finding of the study can be that transition from conventional educational practices to Montessori practices may require the formation of new habits and it may take some time for both teachers and students to get used to it.

I am interested to read research about Maria Montessori's view of education.

Table 10. Frequencies and Percentiles of participant responses regarding the seventh item

Participant responses	f	%
Strongly disagree	1	1,4
Disagree	2	2,8
Neutral	8	11,3
Agree	25	35,2
Strongly agree	35	49,3
Total	71	100,0

When the participants are asked whether they are willing to read research about Maria Montessori's life and views, the findings clearly indicate that there is a great deal of willingness to do so. It seems that most participants would like to further their knowledge about Maria Montessori and probably gain a deeper understanding of the Montessori approach as an alternative education model.

As seen in Table 11., 1 (1,4 %) of the participants strongly disagree, 1 (1,4 %) disagree, 7 (9,9%) are neutral, 32 (45,1 %) agree and 30 (42,3 %) strongly agree that their underlying educational philosophies are in accordance with the Montessori method. At first glance, it seems that most participants seem to disagree with the statement. Even though the Montessori method is about 100 years old, its adoption is still limited in many countries including Turkey. Considering that most undergraduate programs do not include or superficially mention alternative education models, it is not surprising that teachers' conventional understanding of education does not correspond with the Montessori approach. It is a significant finding of the study in that it may explain why some teachers find it difficult to change and there are many implications for teacher training programs.

The Montessori method fits with my understanding of education.

Table 11. Frequencies and Percentiles of participant responses regarding the eighth item

Participant responses	f	%
Strongly disagree	1	1,4
Disagree	1	1,4
Neutral	7	9,9
Agree	32	45,1
Strongly agree	30	42,3
Total	71	100,0

I would like to teach with a different alternative education model instead of the Montessori Method.

Table 12. Frequencies and Percentiles of participant responses regarding the ninth item

Participant responses	f	%
Strongly disagree	8	11,3
Disagree	16	22,5
Neutral	24	33,8
Agree	23	32,4
Strongly agree	-	-
Total	71	100,0

When the participants' responses regarding whether they show a willingness to learn about other alternative education models, it is seen that almost half of the participants show unwillingness or take a neutral perspective. The current study, due to its quantitative design and limited scope, may not provide explanations for this situation. Further quantitative or qualitative research may be conducted on teachers' perspectives about other alternative education models.

With the Montessori method, I started to see myself as learning with children, not teaching them.

Table 13. Frequencies and Percentiles of participant responses regarding the tenth item

Participant responses	f	%
Strongly disagree	-	-
Disagree	1	1,4
Neutral	13	18,3
Agree	28	39,4
Strongly agree	29	40,8
Total	71	100,0

An evaluation of participant responses regarding the statement '*With the Montessori method, I started to see myself as learning with children, not teaching them.*' clearly indicates that teachers have altered their role in learning. Instead of being the sole authority and having a central position in teaching, Montessori teachers adopt a more passive stance allowing students to take initiative in a prepared environment.

I think that teachers who teach with the Montessori method have more freedom.

Table 14. Frequencies and Percentiles of participant responses regarding the eleventh item

Participant responses	f	%
Strongly disagree	-	-
Disagree	2	2,8
Neutral	11	15,5
Agree	30	42,3
Strongly agree	28	39,4
Total	71	100,0

Descriptive statistics in Table 14. reveals that most participants think that they have more freedom in the Montessori classes and schools. Compared to conventional educational approaches where standardized curriculum, examinations and grading are of great importance, Montessori classes allow teachers to adopt a more flexible curriculum that can be modified or tailored according to diverse student needs.

I think that teachers who teach according to the Montessori Method are out of control in the classroom.

Table 15. Frequencies and Percentiles of participant responses regarding the twelfth item

Participant responses	f	%
Strongly disagree	24	33,8
Disagree	20	28,2
Neutral	10	14,1
Agree	15	21,1
Strongly agree	2	2,8
Total	71	100,0

The findings are in Table 15. suggest that most teachers are comfortable with the change in their role in the classroom regarding control. In conventional classes, learning is often controlled by teachers while in Montessori classes, students can direct their own learning experience. The findings also indicate that some of the participants (n=15, 21,1%) have concerns about a loss of control in Montessori classes.

I am very excited that children realize that they can achieve many things on their own thanks to Montessori practices.

Table 16. Frequencies and Percentiles of participant responses regarding the thirteenth item

Participant responses	f	%
Strongly disagree	-	-
Disagree	2	2,8
Neutral	3	4,2
Agree	25	35,2
Strongly agree	41	57,7
Total	71	100,0

Almost all the participants agree that Montessori practices can help children achieve many things and see this venue of opportunities as a source of excitement. Considering that the Montessori method goes way beyond the boundaries present in conventional classes, teachers seem to have acknowledged many benefits and opportunities associated with this alternative education model.

I prefer the Montessori Method as it provides permanent learning in education.

Table 17. Frequencies and Percentiles of participant responses regarding the fourteenth item

Participant responses	f	%
Strongly disagree	-	-
Disagree	1	1,4
Neutral	8	11,3
Agree	25	35,2
Strongly agree	37	52,1
Total	71	100,0

When Table 17. is examined, it seems that most participants are confident that the Montessori method results in permanent learning and they prefer it over conventional practices.

I think that I will have a hard time meeting the expectations of parents who do not understand the purpose and logic of the Montessori Education Method.

Table 18. Frequencies and Percentiles of participant responses regarding the fifteenth item

Participant responses	f	%
Strongly disagree	1	1,4
Disagree	3	4,2
Neutral	13	18,3
Agree	33	46,5
Strongly agree	21	29,6
Total	71	100,0

The distribution of the participants' responses regarding the role of parents in the Montessori method indicates that most of the participant teachers think that they will have problems with parents who do not understand the dynamics and central aspects of the Montessori method. It can be claimed that parental attitudes towards conventional educational practices are deeply embedded and teachers may have difficulty convincing parents. This is an important finding of the study and may have significant implications for schools and classes that intend to adopt the Montessori method considering the possible negative attitudes of parents.

The cooperation of students, parents and teachers in the Montessori Method supports the development of the child.

Table 19. Frequencies and Percentiles of participant responses regarding the sixteenth item

Participant responses	f	%
Strongly disagree	-	-
Disagree	-	-
Neutral	6	8,5
Agree	13	18,3
Strongly agree	52	73,2
Total	71	100,0

Closely related to the former item, most participant teachers are of the opinion that cooperation among the student, parents and teacher is welcome in the Montessori method and contributes to the proper development of the child.

In the Montessori Method, the teacher's non-intervention with the child increases the child's self-confidence.

Table 20. Frequencies and Percentiles of participant responses regarding the seventeenth item

Participant responses	f	%
Strongly disagree	-	-
Disagree	2	2,8
Neutral	6	8,5
Agree	25	35,2
Strongly agree	38	53,5
Total	71	100,0

When the participant responses are examined in Table 20., reduced intervention from teachers is thought to increase the child's self-confidence. It seems that most participants are informed about the changing role of teachers in the Montessori method.

I think teaching children who have no previous school experience according to the Montessori Method will be easier.

While the transition from conventional classes to Montessori classes may be challenging, it seems that it may be easier to make a start fresh. The findings are in Table 21. indicates that more than half of the participants believe that it is easier to start with the Montessori method when working with freshmen.

Table 21. Frequencies and Percentiles of participant responses regarding the eighteenth item

Participant responses	f	%
Strongly disagree	4	5,6
Disagree	5	7,0
Neutral	22	31,0
Agree	26	36,6
Strongly agree	14	19,7
Total	71	100,0

Observation, one of the most important features of the Montessori Method, allows me to get to know my students closely.

Table 22. Frequencies and Percentiles of participant responses regarding the nineteenth item

Participant responses	f	%
Strongly disagree	2	2,8
Disagree	7	9,9
Neutral	8	11,3
Agree	18	25,4
Strongly agree	36	50,7
Total	71	100,0

Finally, Table 22., shows that the participant teachers value the role of observation in Montessori classes. Most participants agree that intensive observations of children help them learn more about their interests, talents, desires, and learning styles.

4.   CONCLUSION

The current study was undertaken to reveal the views of Turkish primary school teachers employed in public and private schools within the Ministry of Education on the Montessori method of teaching. The participants of the study were 71 primary school teachers who have experiences regarding the practices in the Montessori alternative education model. The findings indicate that most participants had positive attitudes towards the Montessori practices and acknowledged the advantages and benefits that comes with the adoption of the Montessori model.

One important finding of the study is that the participating teachers understand how their roles in conventional education need to change in the Montessori classes. Instead of adopting a teacher-centred attitude in student learning, they are willing to embrace the new roles inherent in the Montessori model. Furthermore, the teachers in the study also acknowledge that the Montessori model of education presents many opportunities for student learning, enabling them with a classroom environment where students can take initiative and control of their own learning.

Among the possible areas of problems that have been encountered, the participant responses suggest that parents' lack of familiarity with the Montessori model and their lack of cooperation are the most important barriers. Additionally, the findings also indicate that teachers' background and underlying teaching philosophies, which are deeply embedded in conventional schooling practices, may not correspond with the expectations and practices in the Montessori model. Therefore, the transition from conventional practices to the Montessori way of teaching may be a challenging task for teachers.

The current study has some key implications for policymakers and decision-makers. Considering that most teacher training programs at the undergraduate level are based on conventional school practices, teacher candidates can be provided with more content on 21st century skills and alternative education methods so that they will be more prepared to adopt the Montessori education model or integrate its most beneficial aspects into their teaching. Parents can also be given training regarding the expectations, functioning and objectives of the Montessori method. Considering that the Montessori method has many

key insights into children's learning and development (Gutek, 2004; Montessori, 2004; Montessori et al., 2017), all potential barriers to it should be identified with further research.

As for the researchers, they can conduct large-scale quantitative studies to test whether the findings of the current research can be confirmed with larger populations. In-depth qualitative studies can also enhance our understanding of teachers' views on the Montessori method and identify the reasons for their positive/negative attitudes towards alternative education models. It is evident that there is gap in the literature on teachers' perspectives about alternative education models and more research is required

REFERENCES

Atlı, S., Korkmaz, A.M., Tastepe, T. & Akyol, A. K. (2016). Views on Montessori approach by teachers serving at schools applying the Montessori approach. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, *16*(66), 123-138.

Başal, H. A. (2005). *Okul Öncesi Eğitiminin İlke ve Yöntemleri*. Genişletilmiş 2. Baskı, İstanbul: Morpa Kültür Yayınları.

Foley, R. M. & Pang, L. S. (2006). Alternative education programs: Program and student characteristics. *The High School Journal*, *89*(3), 10–21.

Gulkanat, P. (2015). *Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin Montessori Yöntemi ile gerçekleştirilen eğitim uygulamalarına ilişkin görüşlerinin incelenmesi*. Yükseklisans Tezi, Yeditepe Üniversitesi, İstanbul.

Gutek, G. L. (2004). *The Montessori method: the origins of an educational innovation: including an abridged and annotated edition of Maria Montessori's The Montessori method*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Kirkham, J. A. & Kidd, E. (2017). The effect of Steiner, Montessori, and national curriculum education upon children's pretence and creativity. *The Journal of Creative Behavior*, *51*(1), 20–34.

Lilliard, A. S. (2016). *Montessori: The science behind the genius*. Oxford University Press.

Lopata, C., Wallace, N. & Finn, K. (2005). Comparison of academic achievement between Montessori and traditional education programs. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, *20*(1), 5–13.

Marshall, C. (2017). Montessori education: a review of the evidence base. *Npj Science of Learning*, *2*(1), 11. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41539-017-0012-7

Montessori, M. (2004). *The Montessori method: the origins of an educational innovation: including an abridged and annotated edition of Maria Montessori's The Montessori method*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Montessori, M., Hunt, J. M. & Valsiner, J. (2017). *The montessori method*. Routledge.

Poyraz, H. (2003). *Okul Öncesinin Önemi, Okul Öncesi Eğitimin İlke ve Yöntemleri*. 2. Baskı, Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık.

Rajan, R. S. (2017). Music education in Montessori schools: An exploratory study of school directors' perceptions in the United States. *International Journal of Music Education*, *35*(2), 227–238.

Sak, İ. Ş. (2014). Okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının montessori ve reggio emilia yaklaşımları ile ilgili görüşleri. *İnönü Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, *15*(3), 1–20