Maria Montessori and Methods of Enhancing Motivation for Learning in the Algerian School

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Abstract
This study examines the Montessori educational approach as one of the most influential pedagogical models in early childhood education, emphasizing its role in fostering independence, self-directed learning, and intrinsic motivation among children. Rooted in the philosophy of Maria Montessori, this approach advocates minimal adult intervention while providing a carefully prepared environment that enables children to explore, choose activities freely, and develop cognitive, sensory, motor, social, and emotional skills. The paper highlights the importance of free play, cooperative activities, and experiential learning in supporting natural child development. It also situates the Montessori method within broader contemporary trends in preschool education, particularly the cultural competence approach and motivation enhancement, which aim to align educational programs with children's developmental needs and social contexts. The findings underscore that investment in early childhood education is not only beneficial for individual development but also represents a long-term societal investment, especially in an era marked by rapid social and technological change.
Keywords: Montessori Method; Early Childhood Education; Self-Directed Learning; Cultural Competence; Learning Motivation

Introduction
There are complex issues related to the details of motivation for learning in the Algerian school due to the complexity of individuals' social life. Therefore, it has become necessary for experts and specialists to focus on the most important distractors and the most effective strategies for enhancing motivation for learning among pupils, who often constitute the core of study, in order to avoid the logic of violating the organizational procedures of daily life. It is not possible to overlook what psychologists and educators have observed, namely that the teaching–learning process is exposed to many problems, and that many of these problems are due to the absence or decline of motivation for learning, in light of a lack of responsibility and the tendency to place blame, each within the limits of his or her specialization.

1. Studying Paradoxes in Algerian Society as Keys to Understanding and Classifying Pupils' Motivation for Learning
Studying all of this and encompassing it helps and enables us to build a model study card that understands and analyzes the roots and origins of the phenomenon and identifies its factors and

their pathways, distinguishing them from one case to another, especially if we provide through this card a scientific academic framework that allows differentiation between appropriate methods and motivation for learning. This card then proceeds to identify models of pupils, their motivation for learning, and those who stand behind them. We speak with certainty that any issue, if not studied within the framework of a project, fails and fades away. Parents justify their children's failure by saying that the teacher did not encourage them to learn, while teachers place the blame on the learner, saying that he is lazy and inactive. Hence, this topic requires further research, especially after the decline in the academic level of most pupils and the dropout of some of them outside the walls of educational institutions, which has become a subject of discussion and debate among all parties involved in the educational process. Thought has been deeply focused on organizing procedures related to motivation for learning in educational institutions, where merely understanding its role is not sufficient or adequate to contribute to creating an engaging and stimulating classroom and school atmosphere, making the classroom and school an exciting environment in which everyone integrates into its activities. Consequently, the school, with its activities, experiences, and situations, becomes a place that pupils enjoy and that attracts them to spend most of their time there. Striving to transform the school into a favorable climate and environment for pupils is considered a worthy goal that the educational institution seeks to achieve and dedicates its activities, practices, curricula, and programs to it. Therefore, the teacher's role in this field becomes more effective through preparing stimulating activities for pupils, which increases their integration and interaction in educational situations and school activities. Accordingly, the official effort to address the nature of the components of sound methods for enhancing motivation for learning has been the focus and concern of actors who aim, through meetings, to impose a unification of visions by institutionalizing pedagogical applications at the level of official educational institutions, and then imposing this across all parallel public sectors in this field. This was a necessity to block the way before certain bodies and groups, as evidenced by the assignment of all education directorates at the national level to this task.

It can be said that developing pupils' motivation cannot be fully achieved except through close cooperation between the family, the school, and all stakeholders. This requires coordination and integration with other educationally related institutions to which the pupil is exposed, such as the media, newspapers and magazines, entertainment media, and interaction with others. Today, the environment and society are a fundamental teacher competing with the school. Therefore, any learning or experience acquired by the child at school cannot achieve its objectives unless there is interaction, cooperation, and coordination between the family and the school.

This situation therefore obliges all specialists in the field of education to adopt an expert scientific vision and an integrated curriculum consisting of a set of skilled tools and techniques, first to identify the existing context and its data, and then to work accordingly to contain and analyze the roots and sources of the educational problems hindering pupils, reduce the severity of their outcomes and developments, which they suffer from since childhood as a result of the

weakness and fragility of the social legacy of marginalized families. Most of their children do not reach the complementary educational stage, forcing them to leave school benches from the early years of primary education. This situation justifies the necessity of thinking about how to formulate and plan integrated scientific programs to support marginalized and out-of-school children and youth lost without a clear social horizon, and to approach the social situation of the families from which they come. From here, the importance of the Montessori project and its relationship to enhancing motivation for learning in Algeria appears strong and significant. We have devoted a full clarification to it in this study, whether through familiarization with the theoretical roots of motivation for learning and identifying its historical milestones, or through examining the nature of the efforts made by Maria Montessori to elevate experience to the level of establishing a new model regarding its contribution to motivating pupils to learn, taking into account the cultural and educational characteristics of the Algerian school reality. We believe that the features of this are clear from the content of the programs and teaching methods used, as applied pedagogical programs during the pre-school education stage vary according to the specified short-term objectives, as well as according to the outcomes of research in developmental and learning psychology. Programs also vary according to the philosophical orientations they adopt. Psychological studies have come to focus on the sources of strength in the human psyche, such as happiness, reassurance, hope, psychological stability, social appreciation, and contentment, with the aim of overcoming pressures that lead individuals to mental health disorders (Slimani, 2016, p. 466).

2. Maria Montessori and the Direction of the Child's Natural Growth

This orientation means that pre-school education programs and curricula should provide the child with the opportunity to grow according to the laws of his or her own natural development and to respect the principle of readiness, so that the child is not forced during this stage into educational experiences for which he or she is not yet prepared. This orientation falls within the framework of child-centered education. Montessori and others who represent this orientation express a kind of objection or reaction to traditional educational teaching centered on the curriculum, which does not pay much attention to differences among learners in educational needs, but rather focuses on learning content.

Proponents of child-centered education reject the traditional approach based on the possibility of teaching the same content in the same way and with the same effectiveness to all children. It focuses on awareness of content and, at the same time, on the learner, and on the best ways to make learning content meaningful to the learner, as well as awareness of the extent of the teacher's success in achieving this. Within this framework, the teacher is also concerned with identifying pupils' educational needs, including their abilities, interests, inclinations, and prior experiences, and then organizing the educational experiences of the curriculum in a manner appropriate to these educational needs (Saadia, 2003, p. 19). Thinker Saeed Ayadi, in this context, refers particularly to the perspective he presented in Malik Bennabi's vision of the complex thing that cannot be grasped in a single image; it is not sufficient to conceive culture

as a set of ideas or things or as a reflection of society to which psychological and subjective factors are added that shape the individual's stance toward the problem of culture and social life. The ineffectiveness that characterizes underdeveloped societies is a reflection of the individual's view of a given culture (Hamed, 2012, p. 160).

If this perspective has importance in progressive education at all stages of education, it has particular importance at the pre-school stage. The direction of the child's natural growth can be historically traced through pioneering experiments. Froebel developed a program of self-activity for children under the supervision of educators, including dancing, singing, acting, drawing, and making clay models. He also emphasized play as a basic means of supporting the child's physical and social development, and he was interested in studying nature, including domestic animals and plants, and the observations they stimulate in children. Froebel's influence extended beyond Germany to other European countries and the United States. As for **Maria Montessori (1870–1952)**, she was a university professor of medicine, an educator, and a pioneer of women's movements. She was disturbed by the phenomenon of child vagrancy in major Italian cities, which made children easy prey to delinquency and crime. Some owners of residential buildings allocated a space for Maria Montessori to establish an institution for young children who lacked parental care during the day. Montessori designed her program based on a number of postulates, the most important of which are:

- **10** – The child has an inherent capacity for self-development.
- **20** – The environment can modify the direction of development, either by supporting or hindering it.
- **30** – The child must first learn through sensory experiences before being exposed to symbolic learning.
- **40** – The teacher's role is that of an observer and learner from the child's behavior, and he or she must support development by providing the child with the educational experiences he or she needs.
- **50** – All education programs and curricula before the age of six should be child-centered (Camp, 1985, p. 11).

3. The Montessori Method System:

This method is attributed to the Italian physician Maria Montessori, and its objective is defined as follows: like the Dalton Plan, it aims to educate the child's personality by encouraging him to learn by himself without relying on anyone else. It calls for refraining as much as possible from interference in his upbringing and education. It teaches the pupil to live with others, to cooperate with them in work and play, and to rely on himself in his tasks.

Among the most prominent features of her educational and instructional approach is that she teaches children what they need to learn in early childhood by enabling them to use all their abilities and talents skillfully in movement and work, and to learn the principles of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Children are left to proceed in their path and work according to their

desires in their own time, but under the supervision of the teacher. They are also given the freedom to choose their activities and to criticize themselves by themselves.

According to the Montessori method, children are not forced to participate in a specific game or a particular activity; rather, they engage in the activities and games toward which they feel inclined. When they become bored or tired of them, they replace them with others. Children are not required to sit on fixed benches; instead, they sit on light, comfortable seats that they can easily move from one place to another, and they also sit on carpets and rugs whenever they wish.

Based on these premises, her program included attention to behavioral issues through the use of various materials as a means of developing the motor coordination required for writing skills in primary school, as well as developing the senses and training children to rely on themselves in simple tasks that children can accomplish without depending on adults. The program also paid attention to the study of nature as a means of helping children perceive causal relationships (Camp, *Design of Educational Programs*, 1987, p. 4). In general, it is noted that these programs fall within the framework of the child's natural growth orientation, which is concerned with free play for children under the teacher's observation, especially group play, as well as music, singing, drawing, and making models from clay. These programs also pay attention to allocating periods for rest, hygiene, eating meals, and working in the school garden. Although this model, which focuses on social and emotional aspects, has now come to be known as the traditional model in the United States, in distinction from the cognitive–academic model.

04 – The Cultural Competence Orientation (Al-Darai, 2005) and Enhancing Motivation for Learning

The totality of educational experiences to which the child is exposed at the pre-compulsory education age in institutions established specifically to nourish all aspects of the child's development—despite the division of this age stage in developed countries with differences in the corresponding age range—focuses on the stage before the age of six, which covers the years immediately preceding formal education. At this stage, orientations vary and differences appear in points of emphasis among different programs. The outcomes of caring for children at this stage do not accrue to them alone, but extend to society as a whole, considering that the sound formation of the individual is an investment in human development, especially at this educational stage known as the pre-school educational stage.

The importance of this stage lies in achieving and organizing the process of social regulation and developing concepts in the child, with awareness of their importance and the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, to know what is permitted and what is forbidden, and to acquire many other concepts in intellectual, cognitive, scientific, and educational fields. These are of great importance in shaping behavioral patterns and normalizing the child's psyche according to the goals and intentions of the group to which he belongs, and in influencing levels of development. At this stage, the child begins to acquire the basics of proper adjustment to the external environment and receives the rules of the social system, especially adaptation to the

contexts of customs and traditions. He begins to form collective habits consistent with the general context and to regulate emotional tendencies toward the social group to which he belongs, which increases his motivation for learning. Given the changes and complexities of life with the emergence of technology, societies possessing the conditions for intellectual revival have thought, in the field of pre-school education, of establishing institutions to help the family raise the child at this age, due to social and economic conditions that have shown a kind of incapacity on the part of the family to fulfill its role. The family alone cannot adequately and appropriately satisfy these needs in a manner that supports healthy development. Therefore, we find ourselves in need of resorting to the development of a specialized educational and instructional program to assist families in caring for their children, given the mother's lack of full availability for this complex function. At this age, children tend toward play and curiosity, and they need programs that provide them with an appropriate environment and beneficial play tools that develop their imagination and help them learn and grow soundly. Our focus on the Montessori method came in order to assimilate what must be assimilated to make the pupil's environment more comfortable and to motivate him to learn. Perhaps the contribution of schools and educational philosophy to creating cumulative content is the best evidence of this. Thus, gradually, the accumulation of information and knowledge helped in the birth of educational theories concerned with the various stages of child development. These theories were closely related to the findings of educational psychology and developmental psychology in terms of applied study results, all of which contributed to the emergence of the nucleus of pre-school educational theories with their practical and academic characteristics and their specialized focus on studying a specific stage of human development from zero to six or seven years, in order to establish safe boundaries and solid foundations that do not disintegrate (Ayadi, 2009, p. 83).

Conclusion

Scientific thinking that comprehends the conditions and factors of social transformation can develop into an effective argumentative force capable of dissecting the studied phenomenon with precise standards. At this level of addressing the phenomenon, it can contribute to achieving understanding and comprehensive insight into the conditions of its existence and methods of its influence, and provide broader scope for a better and wider vision for researchers and specialized experts in studying the most appropriate methods to motivate pupils to learn. This enables their efforts to focus on strengthening the components and limits of scientific argumentation cognitively and technically, and in terms of conceptual construction, and to direct them toward directly dismantling and understanding the conditions surrounding pupils, condition by condition.

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