

Alla Durdas

Doctor of Philosophy,
Senior Researcher of the Department
of Pedagogical Source Studies and Biographistics,
V. Sukhomlynskyi State Scientific
and Educational Library of Ukraine,
Kyiv, Ukraine,
e-mail: durdas@ukr.net
ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6456-6108

Tetiana Havrylenko,

Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor,
Senior Researcher of the Department
of Pedagogical Source Studies and Biographistics,
V. Sukhomlynskyi State Scientific
and Educational Library of Ukraine,
Kyiv, Ukraine,
e-mail: leonida13@ukr.net
ORCID ID: 0000-0001-9412-5805

MARIA MONTESSORI'S PEDAGOGICAL LEGACY (1870–1952): LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Abstract. The article analyzes the impact of Maria Montessori's (1870–1952) pedagogical legacy on the development of global education through the lens of intercultural and linguistic diversity. Special attention is paid to how the scientist's ideas are interpreted and implemented in educational practice across various national contexts. The analysis explores how historical circumstances, ideological frameworks and educational traditions shape different images of the pedagogue, influencing both the content and the methods of realization of her approach. In Italy, for example, Montessori has become a national symbol, embodying pedagogical innovation, feminist thought, and civic engagement. In English-speaking contexts, the focus shifts toward the practical effectiveness of her method in fostering independence, creativity and critical thinking. In German-speaking countries, Montessori pedagogy is reflected upon through the lens of philosophical heritage and compared with the concepts of J.-J. Rousseau, J.H. Pestalozzi, and F. Fröbel. Recently, the French-speaking academic community has begun exploring the less known spiritual and anthropological dimensions of her thought. In Ukraine, where Montessori's ideas were excluded from scientific and educational discourse during the soviet era, a revival has been taking place since the 1990s – as a part of a broader process of

reinterpreting the national pedagogical tradition. In Asia, Montessori pedagogy is adapted to local sociocultural conditions and state reforms, particularly in China, India, Japan and South Korea. This comparative analysis reveals that the implementation of Montessori pedagogy is highly dependent on contextual factors. It raises a broader methodological question on how universalist pedagogical concepts are transformed through processes of intercultural reception.

Keywords: Maria Montessori, Montessori pedagogy, educational philosophy, cultural context, cross-cultural education, pedagogy, early childhood education, international introduction.

Problem Statement. The pedagogical legacy of the Italian scientist Maria Montessori (1870-1952) has been widely recognized among educators, psychologists and doctors of the world, but the portrayal of her pedagogical activities varies depending on linguistic and cultural contexts. These variations do not only influence how the pedagogue's educational philosophy is understood, but also impact the way of her legacy implementation in education systems of different countries of the world. Such differences raise important questions about the relationship between pedagogy and cultural narrative, as well as the processes of international knowledge transfer and its interpretation.

Analysis of Key Research and Publications. A lot of researchers in various cultural contexts have studied Montessori's legacy through different lenses. In Italy, scholars like S. Chistolini, V. Bosna and T. Pironi emphasize her national significance. In contrast, English-speaking scholars such as A. Lillard, P. Baligadoo and P. Frierson focus on the practical application of her methods and their global reach. German-language research typically approaches M. Montessori's work philosophically and scientifically, relating her ideas to the ideas of other foundational pedagogues (G. Schäfer). Meanwhile, French scholars have recently begun to investigate the less known aspects of M. Montessori's worldview, including her spiritual beliefs (J. Langlois & A.-S. Richard). In Ukraine, her pedagogy experienced a delayed but intensive revival after gaining independence (L. Berezivska, B. Zhebrovskyi, A. Durdas, T. Pavlenko), while in Asian countries, M. Montessori education is interpreted in the way which blends traditional values with modern pedagogical principles (A. Chen Sh. Guo, M. Yonezu, J. Zhu, J. Zhang, J. Zhu).

Together, these studies testify to the plurality of interpretations shaped by cultural, ideological and historical contexts.

The Purpose of the Article is to study how Maria Montessori's educational legacy is differently represented in various cultural and linguistic contexts; to identify the dominant narratives about Montessori pedagogy in particular countries; to analyze how these interpretations influence the implementation of her pedagogy locally; to explore the socio-cultural, political and historical factors that caused these differences in interpretation.

The Research Results. In Italy, Maria Montessori's homeland, her name is associated not only with innovation in education but also with a woman's struggle for recognition in a predominantly male scientific environment. Her pedagogy is often presented as part of the national intellectual heritage. Italian researchers emphasize her connection to Italian culture, early 20th-century social movements, and her political involvement (Babini, 2000). Specifically, Italian scholar Chistolini S. highlights that M. Montessori was an exceptional woman who obtained a medical degree during a period when it was not only rare for women to pursue higher education but nearly unimaginable for them to enter the male-dominated field of medicine (Chistolini, 2020, p. 163). Similarly, Italian researcher V. Bosna describes M. Montessori as one of the most captivating figures in 20th-century Italian pedagogy, who inspired many academics as the visionary behind the rediscovery of the child (Bosna, 2015, p. 38). Additionally, T. Pironi and M. Gallerani observe that M. Montessori was long regarded by Italy's academic and political institutions as a "troublesome" individual – marked by her nonconformist stance, feminist ideals, and reputation as a "complex pedagogist" (Pironi, Gallerani, 2021, p. 11). Her radical educational philosophy – advocating for a life-oriented approach to learning rather than one rooted in discipline and passivity – emerged from her medical background and was supported by emerging disciplines like psychology and psychoanalysis. However, these ideas encountered significant resistance and barely concealed antagonism from secular Italian academics and educational theorists. This opposition greatly influenced on how M. Montessori's educational approach was received and

implemented in Italian schools after the World War II (Pironi, Gallerani, 2021, p. 11).

The Italian researchers, Cadei, L. and Sità, C., admit that Maria Montessori's pedagogy is an example of an 'armed' science based on systematic observations and aimed at the harmonious development of the individual. Her approach challenged the traditional authoritarian model of education, replacing it with a system that emphasized the independence and dignity of the child (Cadei, L., & Sità, C., 2020).

In the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia, Montessori pedagogy is primarily presented from a practical viewpoint. The emphasis lies in the effectiveness of her approach in development of children's independence, leadership, logical thinking, and creativity. Special attention is paid to the capability of Montessori pedagogy to adapt to modern educational systems. In many English-speaking countries, a private Montessori school movement has emerged, where pedagogy has often been commercialized or simplified into a brand or educational trend (Lillard, 2011). Notably, Baligadoo P., a researcher from the University of Nottingham, United Kingdom, acknowledges that Maria Montessori "explicitly linked peace to education and promoted a kind of learning that deviates from mainstream traditional education" (Baligadoo, P., 2020). Montessori advocated for education as a path to peace, emphasizing that its true purpose extends beyond basic literacy and numeracy, aiming instead to contribute to a broader goal – a "public common good" (Baligadoo, P., 2020). Williams M., a scholar based in London, notes that Maria Montessori "became an authority in education and, unusually for a woman, a public intellectual" (Williams, M., 2022). Meanwhile, American academic Frierson P. explains that the scientist's moral philosophy centers on the ideal of self-improvement through effort and purposeful work, viewing individual character as the foundation for moral values capable of elevating society as a whole (Frierson, P., 2021, p. 134).

In Germany, Austria and Switzerland Montessori's work is viewed through the lens of educational philosophy and developmental psychology. Her method is analyzed within the framework of humanistic pedagogy and in relation to the works of F. Froebel, J.-J. Rousseau and J.H. Pestalozzi. Greater attention is paid to the

theoretical foundations of Maria Montessori's ideas and their comparison with other pedagogical approaches. German-language literature seeks to systematize and academically comprehend the scientist's pedagogical legacy (Schäfer, 2003).

According to the French researchers, Montessori pedagogy, based on a combination of freedom and structure, pupils' autonomy and the development of intrinsic motivation, is now the basis of educational practice in thousands of educational institutions around the world. In recent years, interest in her legacy, particularly in French-speaking countries, has grown significantly. This has contributed not only to a deeper study of her scientific ideas, but also to the discovery of less known aspects of her worldview, including her religious beliefs (Langlois & Richard, 2021).

In Ukraine, Montessori's activities and pedagogical legacy remained on the periphery for a long time due to ideological reasons. Her methodology was viewed as a "bourgeois" alternative to the soviet educational system. Only after Ukraine gained independence in 1991, did an active process of integrating Montessori pedagogy into the educational practice start. After, in the conditions of profound social and political changes in Ukraine, an active search for new approaches to the national education system was launched (Berezivska, 2023). A significant place in the educational revival was occupied by the popularization of the pedagogical heritage of world thinkers, previously silenced during the soviet era, in particular Maria Montessori. Her ideas became the basis for the creation of alternative schools which combined European and Ukrainian pedagogical approaches and the search for an authentic model of national education. In the 1990s–2000s, an extensive network of educational institutions of various levels appeared, university education was renewed and academic autonomy was strengthened. This period contributed to the development of pedagogical pluralism, the revival of ethnopedagogy, and the activation of educational initiatives, including the development of both state and alternative (private) educational institutions (Zhebrovskyi, 2014). Today, there are over 150 institutions operating in Ukraine that use the Montessori system. Among them are kindergartens, schools, centers of early children's development, as well as

institutions for orphans and medical institutions that combine Montessori pedagogy and therapy. A significant majority of such institutions operate in the private sector, with preschool institutions dominating. Schools, as a rule, cover children of primary school age and combine education with additional educational services – courses, clubs, etc. (Zhebrovskyi, 2014).

In Asian countries such as Japan, China, India and South Korea, Montessori pedagogy is often adapted in accordance with local cultural values and traditions. In India, where the scientist lived and worked, her ideas were embraced in the context of a national awakening and the pursuit of self-development. Meanwhile, in China and South Korea, Maria Montessori's pedagogy is viewed as part of Western modernization, though often modified with a stronger emphasis on structure and hierarchy (Zhu & Zhang, 2012).

Montessori pedagogy has become a more influential educational philosophy in mainland China since the 1990s and continues to enjoy significant popularity today (Chen, Amber & Guo, Shu, 2024, p. 34). The landscape of early childhood education in China is closely shaped by ongoing socio-cultural changes and remains reflective of Chinese cultural traditions. According to Zhu Jiaxiong, Chinese educators and policymakers are urged to critically reflect on the educational developments of recent years and to actively foster continued progress in early childhood education (Zhu, Jiaxiong, 2015, p. 51). Nevertheless, the introduction of Maria Montessori's ideas in the system of preschool education aroused considerable interest among educators and parents alike (Chen, Amber & Guo, Shu, 2024, p. 28).

In Japan, Montessori pedagogy was first represented in the *Yorozutyoho* newspaper on January 11, 1912. This innovative approach quickly attracted the attention of Japanese educators and gained rapid popularity in the field of early childhood education. However, the initial momentum of the Montessori movement soon diminished due to the difficulties in realization and widespread criticism. While obvious enthusiasm diminished, the underlying interest in M. Montessori's ideas remained. Approximately two decades later, several educators resumed careful and methodical research into the scientist's pedagogical views. After the World War II,

her legacy regained attention of the Japanese researches and practitioners, and from the mid-1960s, a so-called “Montessori revival” took place. This revival led to a renewed assessment of the approach, both theoretically and practically, strengthening its recognition as an effective model for early childhood education. In general, since its introduction in the 1910s, Montessori pedagogy in Japan has undergone cycles of acclaim and criticism, reflecting a complex and evolving discourse regarding its educational value (Yonezu, Mika, 2018, p. 84). In summary, the introduction of Maria Montessori’s ideas in Asia highlights a dynamic interaction between global pedagogical innovation and deeply rooted cultural values. While countries like India integrated Montessori’s ideas within a broader context of national identity and self-realization, in the countries such as China, South Korea and Japan, Montessori pedagogy was regarded through the lens of modernization and societal structure. Its evolution in these regions illustrates a pattern of selective integration, critical reassessment and cultural reinterpretation. This underscores not only the flexibility of the scientist’s approaches but also its capacity to resonate across diverse educational systems.

Conclusion. This comparative analysis reveals the complex reception and introduction of Maria Montessori’s pedagogical legacy across various cultural and socio-political contexts. In Italy, the scientist’s homeland, she is honored as both an innovative educator and a symbol of intellectual resistance, whose work intersected with political and feminist movements. In the English-speaking world, her pedagogical approaches are largely valued for its practical contributions to the child’s development and education reform, though concerns remain regarding its commercialization. German-speaking countries provide a more theoretical and philosophical engagement with Maria Montessori’s ideas, focusing on developmental psychology and pedagogical tradition. Meanwhile, in Asian contexts, Montessori pedagogy is reconsidered through the lens of modernization and local cultural values, demonstrating both its adaptability and limitations. Ukraine presents a unique case of late reception of Maria Montessori’s ideas due to ideological constraints, reflecting shifts in educational policy. Thus, the global development of Maria Montessori’s

pedagogy testifies not only to its universal educational value but also to its capacity to integrate organically into diverse cultural contexts. This approach continues to challenge traditional educational models by emphasizing the child's autonomy, respect for individuality, self-discipline and holistic development.

Perspectives for Further Research. Future research should delve deeper into how the state's support or restrictions influenced the dissemination of Maria Montessori's ideas. Special attention should be given to examining the transformation of Montessori approach in the digital age. In particular, it is important to analyze how the principles of Montessori pedagogy are being adapted to hybrid and remote learning models, which have become an integral part of the educational landscape following the COVID-19 pandemic. A thorough analysis of these trends will offer deeper insights into the evolution of child-centered practices in the 21st century and help forecast their future directions.

Reference

- Babini, V. (2000). Science, feminism and education: The early work of Maria Montessori. *History Workshop Journal*, 49(1), 44–67. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/2000.49.44>
- Baligadoo, P. D. (2020). Learning for Peace: The Montessori Way. In W. J. Morgan, A. Guilherme (Eds.), *Peace and War*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-48671-6_9
- Berezivska, L. (2023). Pedagogical discourse on the new Ukrainian school 1917–1921: using newly gained independence to reach out to the world's ideas after the fall of the Russian Empire. *History of Education*, 52 (1), 17–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0046760X.2022.2126532>.
- Bosna, V. (2015). Maria Montessori uno sguardo diverso sull'infanzia. *Foro de Educación*, 13 (18), 37–50. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14516/fde.2015.013.018.002>
- Cadei, L., & Sità, C. (2020). Maria Montessori : Penser l'éducation des jeunes enfants. *Revue internationale d'éducation de Sèvres*, (79). <http://journals.openedition.org/ries/7162>. <https://doi.org/10.4000/ries.7162>
- Chen, Amber & Guo, Shu. (2024). The Spread of Montessori Education in Mainland China. *Journal of Montessori Research*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.17161/jomr.v10i2.22573>
- Chistolini, S. (2020). The Turning Point of Italian Scientific Pedagogy in The School of Maria Montessori and Giuseppina Pizzigoni. *European Journal of Educational Sciences*, 7 (3), 160–171. <https://doi.org/10.19044/ejes.v7no3a10>
- Durdas, A. (2023). Educational ideas of Maria Montessori on the pages of foreign periodicals. *Continuing Professional Education: Theory and Practice*, 3 (76), 84–90. <https://doi.org/10.28925/1609-8595.2023.3.8>
- Frierson, P. (2021). The Moral Philosophy of Maria Montessori. *Journal of the American Philosophical Association*, 7 (2), 133–154. <https://doi.org/10.1017/apa.2019.41>
- Langlois, J., & Richard, A.-S. (2021). La face cachée de Maria Montessori. *LeVerbe*. <https://leverbe.com/articles/culture/la-face-cachee-de-maria-montessori>
- Lillard, A. S. (2011). *Montessori: The science behind the genius* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

- Pavlenko, T. (2024). Postat Marii Montessori (1870–1952) u vidkrytykh dovidkovykh elektronnykh vydanniakh [The figure of Maria Montessori (1870–1952) in open-access reference electronic publications]. *Scientific and Pedagogical Studies*, 7 (7), 167–179. <https://doi.org/10.32405/2663-5739-2023-7-167-179> [in Ukrainian].
- Pironi, T., Gallerani, M. (2021). Montessori thought and work between past and present. *Ricerche di Pedagogia e Didattica – Journal of Theories and Research in Education. Special Issue. Intersections between human sciences and natural sciences in Maria Montessori's thought and work*, 16 (2), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1970-2221/13469>
- Schäfer, G. (2003). *Einführung in die Pädagogik der frühen Kindheit*. Beltz.
- Williams M. P. Becoming an international public intellectual: Maria Montessori before the Montessori method, 1882–1912. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 2022, 70 (5), 575–590. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2022.2108757>
- Yonezu, Mika. (2018). History of the Reception of Montessori Education in Japan. *Espacio, Tiempo y Educación*, 5(2), 77–100. <https://espaciotiempoyeducacion.com/ojs/index.php/ete/article/view/176>
- Zhebrovskyi, B. M. (2014). Naisuchasnisha klasyka [The most modern classic]. *Doszkilne Vychovannia*, (8), 2–6. [in Ukrainian].
- Zhu, J., & Zhang, J. (2012). Montessori education in China: Early childhood teachers' perceptions and classroom practices. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 37(4), 72–79.
- Zhu, Jiaxiong. (2015). Early Childhood Education and Relative Policies in China. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 3, 51–60. <https://doi.org/10.1007/2288-6729-3-1-51>

Алла Дурдас,
доктор філософії,
старший науковий співробітник відділу
педагогічного джерелознавства та біографістики
Державної науково-педагогічної бібліотеки України
імені В. О. Сухомлинського,
м. Київ
e-mail: durdas@ukr.net
ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6456-6108

Тетяна Гавриленко
доктор педагогічних наук, професор,
старший науковий співробітник
відділу педагогічного джерелознавства та біографістики
Державної науково-педагогічної бібліотеки України
імені В. О. Сухомлинського,
м. Київ
e-mail: leonida13@ukr.net
ORCID ID: 0000-0001-9412-5805

ПЕДАГОГІЧНА СПАДЩИНА МАРІЇ МОНТЕССОРІ (1870–1952): ЛІНГВІСТИЧНІ ТА КУЛЬТУРНІ КОНТЕКСТИ

У статті аналізується вплив педагогічної спадщини Марії Монтессорі

(1870–1952) на розвиток світової освіти крізь призму міжкультурного та мовного різноманіття. Особливу увагу зосереджено на тому, як ідеї ученої інтерпретуються та впроваджуються в освітню практику в різних національних контекстах. Аналізується, як історичні обставини, ідеологічні приписи та освітні традиції формують різні образи педагогині, впливаючи на зміст і способи реалізації її методу. Зокрема, в Італії її постать набула статусу національного символу, що поєднує педагогічну інноваційність, феміністичну позицію та громадянську активність. В англомовному середовищі акценти зміщуються на практичну ефективність її методу у формуванні самостійності, креативності й критичного мислення. У німецькомовних країнах Монтессорі-педагогіку осмислюють крізь призму філософської спадщини й порівнюють з концепціями Ж.-Ж. Руссо, Й.Г. Песталоцці, Ф. Фребеля. Франкомовна академічна спільнота останнім часом досліджує менш відомі духовно-антропологічні аспекти її поглядів. В Україні, де в радянський період ідеї Марії Монтессорі були витіснені з наукового та освітнього дискурсу, з 1990-х років спостерігається їх активне повернення – як частина процесу реінтерпретації національної педагогічної традиції. В Азії Монтессорі-педагогіка адаптується до локальних соціокультурних умов і державних реформ, зокрема в Китаї, Індії, Японії та Південній Кореї. Компаративний аналіз показав, що реалізація Монтессорі-педагогіки значною мірою залежить від контекстуальних чинників. Це відкриває ширше методологічне питання: яким чином універсалістські педагогічні концепції трансформуються у процесі міжкультурної рецепції.

Ключові слова: Марія Монтессорі, Монтессорі-педагогіка, освітня філософія, культурний контекст, міжкультурна освіта, педагогіка, дошкільна освіта, міжнародне впровадження.