



Analysis of the implementation of the Montessori method in daycare services for children aged 1-3 years

Wemni Kristian^{1✉}, Sri Wulan², Nurbiana Dhieni³

^{1,2,3} Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia
✉ wemnikristian90@gmail.com

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Abstract

Background : Daycare centers provide early childhood education from morning to evening, serving children from six weeks to school age. They are essential for working parents, offering continuous care and supervision. Many daycare centers struggle to provide effective education and care, highlighting the need for better curriculum designs. The Montessori method, known for its child-centered approach, offers a potential solution.

Aim : To analyze the implementation of the Montessori method in daycare services for children aged one to three years, focusing on curriculum design, execution, and evaluation.

Method : This study uses a literature review method, gathering data from primary and secondary sources. Information was collected, organized, and analyzed to understand the effectiveness of the Montessori method in daycare settings.

Result : The Montessori method emphasizes child-centered learning with teachers as observers and facilitators. Key principles include a prepared environment, direct and concrete learning, respect, observation, and mixed-age groups. For children aged one to three, the curriculum focuses on five areas: eye and hand coordination, music and movement, practical life activities, arts and crafts, and language. Continuous evaluation through observation and personalized reports supports holistic child development.

Conclusion : The Montessori method is effective for daycare services for children aged one to three years. It promotes child development through a structured, child-centered approach, with teachers facilitating independent learning. Continuous evaluation helps in understanding and supporting each child's growth, making the Montessori method a valuable approach for early childhood development in daycare settings.

INTRODUCTION

Daycare, also known as Childcare Center, is an early childhood education service that operates its educational program from morning to evening. This program serves children aged six weeks to school age. Daycare plays a role in providing learning experiences in all aspects of child development, including cognitive, language, physical, motor, social-emotional, and fostering responsive and warm relationships between children, teachers, and caregivers (Brebner et al. 2015). This daycare program is a choice for parents who both work because the daycare program offers continuous care, education, and supervision for children, ensuring their growth and development are monitored (Hamer et al. 2020; Muis & Dewi 2022). Several studies reveal that daycare is a suitable option for child care while mothers work (Trianingsih et al. 2020); The play environment in daycare is intentionally designed to stimulate child

development (Wahyuningtyas 2022). The daycare curriculum is designed to create an environment that supports child development and growth. Learning tools/resources must be age-appropriate, and activities must address the children's needs and future challenges (Rizkita 2017). Designing a curriculum in educational institutions is very important because the curriculum is the heart of education that must be developed and implemented contextually to meet the needs of children in the present and future (Rasmani et al. 2021; Nurul & Joko 2017). Consistent with the above opinion, a good and appropriate curriculum is crucial to ensuring that early childhood education can run effectively and efficiently and support the holistic development of children (Dhieni et al. 2019; Ningsih & Fahmi 2022). Based on the existing explanation, it can be interpreted that well-planned curriculum planning is necessary to provide education that optimizes children's growth and development. Ideally, quality daycare should be based on several indicators, including the quality of caregivers, an appropriate curriculum for early childhood, environment and facilities, and cooperative relationships or partnerships with parents (Wahyuningtyas 2022). Unfortunately, the evaluation results conducted by the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) in 2019 found that many daycare centers had not adequately performed their caregiving, supervision, and educational functions (Pranawa 2019). Seeing the existing reality, daycare institutions need to design a curriculum that meets children's needs. One method that can be used as a curriculum in daycare institutions is the Montessori method.

The Montessori curriculum model is based on Piaget and Vygotsky's developmental theories (constructivism) and John Dewey's theory, emphasizing the child's innate potential and ability to develop in a free and loving environment (Lillard 1972). The philosophy of the method developed by Dr. Maria Montessori includes organizing classroom space, helping children learn, and thinking about relationships that can be applied at home, work, and beyond. There are three main principles in applying the Montessori method to early childhood: Montessori as a way of life, the foundation years, and a concept of leadership (Seldin and Mcgrath 2021). The Montessori method is deemed appropriate for designing the curriculum in early childhood education institutions because it emphasizes holistic development and individualized learning based on children's interests. The Montessori curriculum uses didactic materials designed for learning through activities that help develop skills in mathematics, colors, sizes, reading, and writing (Aljabreen 2020).

Several studies indicate that using the Montessori method in the curriculum has positive outcomes in optimizing early childhood development. Research by Shivakumara K et al. (2016) states that children learning with the Montessori concept have better social-emotional and cognitive components compared to children learning with traditional curricula, which are more teacher-centered rather than child-centered. This opinion aligns with research conducted by Dereli, which found that using the Montessori method results in better child development in social competence, behavior, and emotion regulation skills than children not receiving Montessori education (Dereli İman et al. 2019). Another study also revealed that children using the Montessori method have higher IQ levels than those using traditional methods, where teaching is teacher-centered and not child-centered (Ahmadpour & Mujembari 2015). A three-year longitudinal study conducted in Hartford, America, found that schools consistently using the Montessori curriculum were more effective than traditional programs in enhancing children's development achievements, academic achievements, social skills, and creativity (Lillard et al. 2017). Research conducted in kindergartens in Turkey also states that applying the Montessori method in early childhood education positively contributes to children's development in terms of self-discipline and independence (Kiran et al. 2021). Seeing the effectiveness of the Montessori method in optimizing early childhood

development, this article aims to provide readers with an initial overview of how to plan and implement the curriculum in daycare institutions for children aged one to three years.

METHOD

This article uses a literature review method. The research was conducted by gathering primary and secondary literature sources. After collecting the literature sources, they were organized according to research questions. After categorizing, researchers collected data from the literature sources. The collected data were presented as research findings. The presented data were then discussed to reveal facts (Darmalaksana 2020). Data collection using this literature review method utilized various sources such as books and electronic research articles relevant to the topic "Analysis of the Implementation of the Montessori Method in Daycare Services for Children aged 1-3 Years". The collected data were compiled into a discussion according to the research topic. This research was conducted over approximately one month by searching for information from various sources, including main reference books, articles, and other supporting books, and then compiled into a comprehensive reading.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

The results of this study indicate that the Montessori method is a learning method that emphasizes child-centered learning with the teacher acting as an observer and facilitator. The main principles of the Montessori method and the appropriate curriculum design for child development and the learning environment are crucially prepared. Cooperation between schools, teachers, and parents is also very important to support child development. The Montessori method developed by Maria Montessori allows children to choose their activities and follows several main principles such as a prepared environment, a natural desire to learn, direct and concrete learning, individual development, respect, observation, mixed-age groups, unstructured work time, happy and independent children, and trained Montessori teachers. The implementation of this method involves curriculum planning that considers the child's development environment and teacher observations. The five main areas of Montessori for children aged one to three years include eye and hand coordination, music and movement, practical life activities, arts and crafts, and language. Curriculum planning in early childhood education institutions, including daycare, should consider learning themes, activity planning, preparing the learning environment, and evaluation through various methods such as observation, documentation, and collaboration with parents. Further research is expected to delve deeper into the application of the Montessori method in daycare institutions.

B. Discussion

The Montessori method, developed by Maria Montessori, began its first class in Italy in 1907. This method became famous because children were allowed to choose activities they wanted to do independently, enabling them to concentrate and focus (Chen 2021). The Montessori method has several principles in its application, including: 1) Prepared Environment: This means that the environment is carefully arranged before the children arrive, with activities set at the right level for children to offer challenges they need to master; 2) Natural Desire to Learn: Montessori recognizes that children are intrinsically motivated to learn and in a supportive environment. Children can learn to grasp objects, stand, walk, talk, read, write, understand mathematics, and the world around them; 3) Direct and Concrete Learning: Montessori education promotes direct learning with real materials that children can explore and work on, facilitating self-discovery; 4) Individual Development: Each child is

respected for their unique development timeline, energy level, focus, and learning modalities, whether visual, auditory, tactile, or a combination; 5) Respect: Montessori teachers treat children with the same respect as adults, speaking to them politely, asking for permission before physical interaction, and allowing children to develop at their own pace; 6) Observation: Observation is a fundamental aspect of the Montessori approach, where teachers observe children like a “fly on the wall”, recording factual information about children’s movements, language, posture, and actions to understand their interests and developmental stage; 7) Mixed-Age Groups: Montessori classrooms often have mixed-age groups so younger children can learn by observing older ones, and older children can consolidate their learning by helping the younger ones; 8) Unstructured Work Time: Children in a Montessori environment are free to choose their work and are given uninterrupted time for three hours to engage in their chosen activities; 9) Happy and Independent Children: The Montessori environment fosters happiness and independence in children with little to no need for testing because teachers know each child's progress; 10) Trained Montessori Teachers: Montessori teachers must complete a Montessori training program (Davies 2019). The implementation of the Montessori method involves several important aspects such as the prepared environment, focusing on developing aspects of children’s cognitive, language, social-emotional, and physical motor skills, where children work independently according to their age levels, and teachers function as observers during the activities chosen by the children. Montessori divides its learning activities into five areas (Fernanda 2023). The five Montessori areas for children aged one to three years are eye and hand coordination, music and movement, practical life activities, arts and crafts, and language. These areas are provided so that children can choose according to their interests for that day (Simone Davies 2019).

Curriculum Planning for Learning

Determining Themes, in a Montessori class, learning themes are organized based on Montessori method principles. The curriculum is designed to follow children's natural development and interests, allowing them to explore various activities integratively. The Montessori approach emphasizes using direct materials and activities involving children in meaningful learning experiences. Learning themes are often organized based on key areas such as practical life activities, language development, mathematics, sensory exploration, cultural studies, and arts. Practical life activities involve daily tasks that help children develop coordination, concentration, and independence (Maria Montessori 1912). Themes for toddlers should focus more on activities that develop gross motor skills, coordination, and refining fine motor skills and manipulative movements.

Activity planning in a Montessori class should be child-centered and consider the child's sensitive periods. Sensitive periods refer to specific timeframes in a child's development when they are highly receptive to certain types of learning and environmental stimuli. During these periods, children naturally tend to acquire specific skills and knowledge more easily and naturally than at other times (Maria Montessori 1912). The general guidelines for planning Montessori class activities are: (1) Observe the Children: Start by observing the children to understand their current developmental stages, interests, and challenges. Montessori education is child-centered, and observation is key to tailoring learning experiences for each child; (2) Identify Goals: Based on observations, identify developmental goals for each child. These goals should align with Montessori curriculum areas: Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, Mathematics, and Cultural Studies; (3) Prepare the Environment: Ensure the classroom environment is prepared with materials that meet different skill levels and interests. Materials should be accessible, well-maintained, and appealing; (4) Select

Materials and Activities: Choose specific Montessori materials and activities that will help each child achieve their goals. Include materials that will appropriately challenge them and support their natural development; (5) Plan Individual and Small Group Lessons: Decide which children will receive individual lessons and which will benefit from small group lessons. Montessori education often involves individualized instruction where the teacher introduces new materials or concepts to a child; (6) Flexibility: While the teacher has a plan, remain flexible and ready to adapt based on the children's responses and emerging interests. Montessori education is dynamic, and teachers must be ready to follow the children's lead (Paula Polk Lillard 1972).

Preparing the Learning Environment, learning resources in a Montessori class are derived from the surrounding environment, and learning media are designed to stimulate children's development. Learning media used in Montessori classes are often referred to as materials or apparatus. Apparatus are special educational tools designed by Montessori for use in her pedagogical method. These materials are intended to provide children with hands-on learning opportunities and help them develop sensory, cognitive, language, and motor skills (Montessori OWN Handbook 1914). Apparatus in Montessori classes are stored on open shelves for easy access by children and are often designed as activities that can be completed independently. In Montessori classes, the use of apparatus is an integral part of the learning experience. The procedures for using the materials are designed to enhance independence, self-discipline, and practical skills among children.

Implementation of Learning Activities, activities in a Montessori class involve mixed-age groups to allow older children to set examples for younger ones and vice versa. During the implementation of activities in a Montessori class, teachers should consider several things: 1) Use of Work Mats: Work mats define the work area, helping children focus and organize their work; 2) Use of Tool Containers: Some Montessori materials require containers such as boxes, trays, or baskets; 3) Use of Dominant Hand: When demonstrating activities, the facilitator should sit on the side of the child's dominant hand. If the child is right-handed, the facilitator sits on the right, and if left-handed, the facilitator sits on the left (Savitri 2020).

Areas in Montessori Class for Children Aged 1-3 Years, montessori education is designed based on children's developmental needs and reflects a holistic approach to education. In a Montessori class, each area is designed to meet various aspects of children's growth and learning, ensuring comprehensive development. In a Montessori class, five areas are developed to stimulate children aged 1-3 years: practical life skills, sensorial, language, motor skills, and social-emotional development. The classroom for children aged 1-3 years is often referred to as the Young Children's Community (Lillard 2003). To support stimulation for children aged 1-3 years, five essential areas are designed, including: 1) Eye and Hand Coordination Area: In this area, children are stimulated to continuously refine their grasp and practice working with both hands together; 2) Music and Movement Area: In this area, children are stimulated to recognize sounds and make sounds with instruments and perform body movements to develop gross motor skills; 3) Practical Life Area: In this area, children are stimulated to engage in daily activities that encourage independence, enabling them to take care of themselves in the future; 4) Arts and Crafts Area: In this area, children are stimulated to develop fine motor skills and creativity through their activities. Montessori emphasizes the process over the outcome in these activities; 5) Language Area: In this area, children are stimulated to develop language skills, providing them with a rich and accurate vocabulary to help them communicate verbally and in writing (Davies 2019).

Learning Implementation

Learning in a Montessori class is carried out with a child-centered approach, where the classroom environment is prepared by the teacher to facilitate independent learning and exploration. In a Montessori class, the teacher acts as an observer and allows children to choose their activities freely. Teachers should only assist when needed and provide initial guidance. A daily plan in a Montessori class usually includes elements that support the development of children's concentration, coordination, language, and willpower, allowing children to explore and learn through sensory experiences (Lillard 2003). The daily schedule in a Montessori class is organized to ensure children are well-stimulated throughout the day. Activities are designed to allow children to engage in their chosen activities, with teachers observing throughout the day and providing notes to parents about the child's development at the end of the day (Lillard 2003). Activities designed in a Montessori class throughout the day include: 1) Arrival and Preparation, children arrive and prepare for the day. They store their personal belongings and freely choose their initial activities; 2) Independent Work Activity, during this time, children work independently or in small groups on activities they choose. Teachers observe and provide guidance or new challenges as needed, ensuring that activities offer the "right challenge" to support intellectual development through sustained attention. In Montessori classes, particularly for children aged 1-3 years, five areas are available to stimulate development, including cognitive, language, physical motor, and social-emotional skills (Davies 2019); 3) Snack Break and Care Activities, children have a healthy snack and participate in self-care activities such as washing hands and faces, supporting the development of independence; 4) Outdoor Activities, outdoor time allows children to move freely and explore the natural environment, crucial for physical and sensory development; 5) Group Activities, these activities typically involve storytelling, singing, or activities that promote cooperation and social skills; 6) Lunch, children engage in preparing lunch and getting ready to eat; 7) Clean-Up and Rest, children help clean the lunch area and prepare the room for rest. Children rest or nap according to their age and individual needs; 8) Rest/Nap Time, children needing a nap can do so in a quiet and comfortable area. For those not napping, quiet activities such as reading books or puzzles are provided; 9) Wake-Up and Quiet Activities, children gradually wake up from their nap and join quiet activities until all children are ready to continue the day's activities; 10) Independent Work Activity, children return to the independent work block, choosing activities according to their interests and developmental stages. The areas used are the same as those described in the previous independent work activity. Teachers continue to observe and support children's learning; 11) Practical Work or Outdoor Activities, during this period, children engage in practical work designed to develop daily life skills and fine motor coordination. Practical work can include activities such as watering plants, sorting objects, or honing self-care skills; 12) Reflection and Journaling, children are asked to reflect on what they have learned or done throughout the day. They can write or draw in journals about their experiences, helping to consolidate learning and provide teachers with insights into their understanding; 13) Clean-Up and Preparation for Departure Children learn to help clean the classroom, store materials, and prepare the room for the next day. This teaches responsibility and care for the environment; 14) Evaluation Process, montessori educators observe children as they interact with the environment and engage in activities, using these observations to assess each child's development, interests, and needs. This approach allows teachers to tailor learning experiences for each student and provide appropriate support or challenges. Assessment in Montessori education is less about standardized measures and more about understanding each child's growth and development over time. It is an ongoing process that respects each student's individual pace and focuses on

the whole child's development, including cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth (Lillard 1972).

Montessori suggests personalized and non-intrusive assessment strategies aligned with the overall educational philosophy. Creating a child development report involves observation, reflection, and a careful understanding of the child's current developmental stage. Here are step-by-step guidelines on how to create a development report with quotes from available sources: 1) Observation: Take time to observe the child in various situations and during different activities. Make detailed notes about the child's behavior, skills, interactions, and other relevant observations. It is important to observe without bias and be open to what you see, like a scientist; 2) Documentation: Record observations in an organized manner. This can include anecdotal notes, checklists, or even video and audio recordings. Ensure the documentation is factual and objective; 3) Assessment: Assess the child's development according to developmental tasks for their age group. This includes physical, cognitive, language, social, and emotional development. Use observations to determine where the child excels and where they might need additional support or challenges; 4) Reflection: Reflect on the observations and assessments to gain insights into the child's needs, interests, and potential barriers to their development. Consider what the child aims to achieve in their actions and what you can do to support them; 5) Collaboration: If possible, collaborate with the child and involve them in activities appropriate for their developmental stage and interests. This can help you better understand their abilities and preferences; 6) Writing the Report: Write the report starting with an introduction that provides basic information about the child (e.g., age, environment). Then, organize the report into sections corresponding to the developmental areas observed. Summarize the observations for each area, provide examples, and compare the child's development to typical achievements; 7) Recommendations: Based on the observations and assessments, provide recommendations for the child's continued development. This can include suggestions for activities, materials, or interventions tailored to the child's needs and respecting their natural developmental process; 8) Review and Edit: Review the report for clarity, accuracy, and objectivity. Ensure it reflects a comprehensive understanding of the child's development and is free of bias; 9) Share and Discuss: Share the report with relevant stakeholders such as parents and teachers (Davies 2019).

The implementation of the Montessori curriculum will run well with good cooperation between schools, teachers, and parents in supporting child development during learning (Bhulpat 2019; Julita 2021). Based on the conducted research, further researchers are expected to explore more about the application of the Montessori method in daycare institutions, especially for children aged one to three years, to see the implementation in the field accordingly.

The implementation of the Montessori method in daycare services for children aged one to three years has significant **implications** for early childhood education, highlighting the importance of a child-centered approach that respects individual growth and fosters independence, social-emotional skills, and cognitive development. **This research contributes** to the field by providing insights into how the Montessori method can be effectively integrated into daycare settings. It offers a detailed framework for curriculum planning, execution, and continuous evaluation, demonstrating how these elements can enhance the quality of daycare services and support holistic child development. The study's reliance on a literature review poses **limitations**, as it may not fully capture practical implementation challenges or account for the variability of daycare environments. The findings are based on secondary data, which may restrict their applicability to real-world settings. **Future research** should focus on empirical studies to observe the direct impact of the Montessori method in

diverse daycare environments. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into the long-term benefits and potential challenges of this approach, ensuring that findings are robust and applicable across different contexts. Additionally, exploring the integration of Montessori principles with other educational methods could offer valuable perspectives for developing comprehensive early childhood education strategies.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion from this article is that the Montessori method is effective in providing daycare services for children aged one to three years. This method supports child development through child-centered principles in a free and structured learning environment. Montessori teachers play a key role as observers and facilitators, allowing children to choose their activities and learn through sensory experiences. The evaluation process in Montessori education involves observing children in their interactions with the environment and activities and creating personalized child development reports. This helps in understanding the holistic development of children and providing appropriate support. In conclusion, the Montessori method is considered an effective approach in supporting early childhood development in daycare institutions. There are five areas used in Montessori classes for children aged one to three years, including eye and hand coordination, practical life activities, arts and crafts, language, and music or art activities. Learning activities in daycare institutions are conducted throughout the day from morning to evening and have a fixed schedule to develop children's potential. Teachers assess students to understand their development and report the assessment results to parents.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

WK. conceived the research idea and designed the methodology. SW contributed to the literature review and data collection. ND performed the data analysis and interpretation. All authors were involved in the writing and editing of the manuscript. WK drafted the initial manuscript, while SW and ND revised it critically for important intellectual content. Each author provided critical feedback and helped shape the research, analysis, and manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript, ensuring the accuracy and integrity of the work.

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