

"Together we can do more and better"- How the online learning community of Montessori teachers contributed to the advancement of the educational process

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Rationale

Numerous scientific studies presented in this paper point to positive effects and results of work in schools that apply Montessori pedagogy. Still, there has been insufficient research into how this pedagogy could be implemented in traditional teaching and what changes its implementation brings to traditional educational system.

Theoretical framework

Many authors recognize that it is teachers who drive change, particularly when they engage in learning with enthusiasm and share skills that foster learning with others. Through active participation in such learning communities, critical reflection, and collaboration, they enhance quality of their professional practice. Participation in Montessori teacher learning community aimed to transform and improve educational practices and to enhance student learning. This, in turn, led to more successful achievement of educational outcomes and strengthening of teachers' pedagogical, methodological, and didactic competencies.

Research design

This action research aims to determine the importance of cooperation by creating an online learning community of Montessori teachers and to determine its impact on students' achievement of outcomes. Given set goal of research, following research questions were defined: RQ1: What are recognized advantages and disadvantages of online learning community? RQ2: What is importance of online community of Montessori teachers for educational practice of participants? RQ3: How did online learning community influence achievement of students' educational outcomes? Action research lasted 14 months. Aforementioned community had two groups of participants. One group consisted of 11 teachers who also completed three-year training course for working with children aged 3-12 according to principles of Montessori pedagogy. Second group of participants in this research consisted of 11 critical friends. For this action research, structured interview was selected according to level of formality of interview and structure of questions. Data processing procedure included coding transcripts of interviews.

Results

Research results were categorized based on following themes: Achieving educational outcomes (using Montessori model) and Online community of Montessori teachers. Results show how online learning community of Montessori teachers influenced learning and acquisition of new knowledge related to their educational practice. It enabled development of confidence in application and implementation of Montessori pedagogy in traditional educational system. This resulted in strengthening of connection between use of elements of Montessori pedagogy and achievement of educational outcomes for their students. Strengthening pedagogical, methodological, and didactic competencies, providing professional and emotional support, and promoting and strengthening reflective thinking are recognized advantages of participating in online Montessori teacher learning community. Need for further professional development and networking of Montessori teachers was highlighted as one of conclusions of online Montessori teacher learning community.

Conclusion

This paper contributes to deepening scientific knowledge in the field of alternative pedagogical approaches, i.e. application of Montessori model in traditional educational system of classroom teaching. This represents an important step forward in wider application of this pedagogy, recognizing its value and thereby achieving general well-being for those for whom it is primarily intended, namely students.