# People's Democratic Republic of Algeria Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research **University of Tlemcen**



## Faculty of Letters and Languages **Department of English Section of English**

Approach Montessori Implementing the Teach to Handwriting Skills at an Early Age: The case of Drici-Tani Education pre-school, Ain- Youcef, Tlemcen.

Dissertation submitted to the department of English as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for Master's degree in Didactics of Foreign Languages.

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**Statement of Originality** 

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Date: 04/05/2023

Signature:

I

#### **Dedication**

I dedicate my dissertation work to my wonderful parents and my supportive husband. A special feeling of gratitude to my lovely mother, who has been a source of strength and inspiration since my birth and her endless sacrifices for me.

Moreover, I will keep this work as a souvenir for my daughter Racha to do better in the future.

To my siblings: Kawther and Hachemi.

Thank you for all the support, guidance, and unconditional love that you have given me.

Bouchra Houyem BENCHAIB...

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#### **Abstract**

The Algerian education system made many reforms to improve the quality of education. However, no one can neglect that at an early stage, children need specific attention in their learning process. Educators try to propose adequate techniques and methods to facilitate the child's physical and mental development. Thus, handwriting skill teaching is one of these processes children face in their primary education, which later affects other skills and may affect their higher education levels. The purpose of this study was to explore the importance and effectiveness of the Montessori approach in teaching handwriting skills at an early age. To reach this end, a case study through an action research was conducted in DT Educaction pre-school (Ainyoucef Tlemcen), relying on several sources and research instruments for data collection. The researcher designed two tests (Pre-test and Post-test) to do a comparative study between the actual approach and the proposed approach, and a participant classroom observation was done. The data collected from these research instruments were analysed qualitatively. The discussion and interpretation of the results revealed that the Montessori approach could successfully be implemented in primary schools to teach handwriting skills because of its effectiveness on pre-school pupils. Then, the Montessori approach lets the students be motivated and interact positively with the teacher while using the approach proposed, and the three-Period lesson, which is the key concept of the Montessori approach, made the course beneficial, easy, and funny at the same time. To conclude, The Montessori approach should be given much more importance, and investigations should be implemented in all Algerian pre-schools and even primary schools.

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General Introduction

#### **General Introduction**

With more public and private schools, education philosophies have been a trend in teaching and parenting circles. The strive for effectiveness is the main reason behind this diversity; teachers or even parents always search for an adequate and successful way of teaching their children quickly. The most important innovation in Algeria's educational system is the decrease of the use of the Traditional way, which was based on « talk and chalk », i.e. the teaching was teacher-centred with the use of books only. 'MONTESSORI' is among those philosophies that have become a word often thrown around in teaching and parenting. However, while it is widely known as an alternative childhood educational model, it is still a mystery.

Montessori can be hard to define even for those who have applied its principles at home or have kids attending it. Nonetheless, by delving into the various aspects of the Montessori method, this study will attempt to demystify it. The Montessori approach can be used in teaching all skills and subjects. This research deals with teaching writing skills at pre-school level using the Montessori approach to overcome obstacles that children face while learning how to write their first letters, which later on affects other skills.

Thus, this research explores how the Montessori approach can make teaching-learning an easy and effective task for pre-school language teachers and learners. In other words, this work could contribute to implement the Montessori approach in Algerian pre-schools to overcome the problems teachers face during their teaching handwriting process. In addition, the Montessori approach could motivate children to write and read without any effort and in a funny way.

This study aims to assess the effectiveness of the Montessori approach in early years language learners in Algerian private pre-schools in order to be implemented in Public primary schools. The study encourages work through a motivational and

emotional teaching-learning process. This work aims to make handwriting teaching an easy and funny task for young learners to reach the reading skill effortlessly.

Consequently, the researcher tries to answer the following questions:

- 1. Does the Montessori approach fit the language teaching-learning process in the Algerian pre-school system?
- 2. How could the Montessori approach help young learners to acquire a new language?
- 3. How could the Montessori didactic materials facilitate the teaching—learning process of handwriting for pre-school language learners?

The questions mentioned above led to the formulation of three hypotheses:

- 1. If the Montessori approach is implemented in pre-school, the language teaching-learning process will be improved.
- 2. The process will be motivational when the Montessori approach is used in early years language classrooms.
- 3. The use of specific Montessori didactic materials in languages classrooms will facilitate the teaching and learning process of handwriting to preschool students of varying ages and abilities.

In fact, the enthusiasm to reach the previously set objectives drives the researcher to design an experimental case study methodology through an action research dealing with children of "Drici-Tani Education" private pre-school (Ain-Youcef Tlemcen). This case study will collect qualitative data from different sources relying on research instruments: tests (pre-test and post-test) and classroom observation through pictures, videos and notes taking.

The present work is purposefully divided into two chapters to conduct this case study research. The first one reviews the literature on the Montessori approach, explaining its concept and highlighting the main elements related to it. After that, dealing with handwriting provides the theoretical background for the issue under investigation. The second chapter consists of two parts. The first part is a historical introduction to this research's context. Then, the data was collected through different instruments. To conclude, the chapter provides some suggestions and recommendations for the study.

# Chapter One Literature Review

- 1.1. Intoduction
- 1.2. Montessori's Early Life and Study
- 1.3. Montessori Approach
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#### 1.1. Introduction

This chapter is an attempt to present the Montessori Approach's philosophy, its main principles and a short biography of its founder Maria Montessori. Then, the chapter gives a definition, importance, and the development of the handwriting skill from an early age.

#### 1.2. MARIA MONTESSORI'S EARLY LIFE and STUDY

Maria MONTESSORI was born and raised in Italy in the town of Chiaravalle in the province of Ancona on August 31, 1870. It was the year when Italy witnessed political, social, and economic changes due to the unification of Italy. The political change also led to social and economic change. However, the process was slow as it was sustainable in a country with a male-dominated electoral minority, significant levels of illiteracy and driven by the Catholic Church. The economic and social status of the population contributed to the continued conflict within Italian society. The division between the small group of wealthy and educated people and the large rustic population continued to undermine the political movement and ultimately led to the emergence of the fascist state led by Benito Mussolini.

Maria was the only child of Alessandro Montessori and Renilde Stoppani. Maria MONTESSORI's parents were different in their thinking; Alessandro was patriotic and somehow conservative, contrasted with the progressive and liberal Renilde. Maria's family moved home many times until 1875; when Maria was five years old, Alessandro and his family finally decided to live in Rome.

In 1876, Maria entered the public school in Via de San Nicola da Tolentino at the age of six, the year before primary education became obligatory in Italy. Maria's parents encouraged her to be a teacher, but Maria contrasted them because of her love for mathematics; as a result, Maria decided on a career in engineering. Maria studied in classes in a technical school for boys. Then, she turned her interest to biology and was finally determined to enter medical school. Although Maria's father was against her choice, Maria followed her career; therefore, she needed to be financially independent to continue her studies.

Maria MONTESSORI was the first woman to graduate from the University of Rome Medical school and joined the university's Psychiatric Clinic staff. While working, Maria visited the children committed to the general insane asylums ( mentally deficient children) in Rome and was convinced that these children have the right to benefit from special education. Then, she travelled to London and Paris to study and do research on Jean-Marc Itard(born 1775) and his student Edouard Séguin (born 1812), the first pioneers in this field. Itard developed his methods to promote language skills based on sensorial experiences and matching, pairing and sortingactivities. Maria Montessori used and developed these teaching tools and methods a hundred years after becoming a teacher in the first Casa dei Bambini in the San Lorenzo district of Rome.

In the 1800s, Dr Édouard Seguin used the scientific approach of self-directed materials to make mentally challenged children learnquickly. Dr Seguin declared that the mentally challenged children successfully used materials that let them be autonomous. Thus, The success of Dr Seguin fluffed Dr Maria Montessori.

Finally, based on observations, experiments with the children living in Rome and the study of previous research of the two first pioneers, Jean Itard and Edward Seguin. Maria Montessori created her scientific approach, known today as The Montessori Method, and then she used it with normal children and had the same results. Although Maria did not prefer to consider teaching as a career and had no passion for teaching, she succeeded in becoming one of the most-known pedagogues in the world, and her method is still shining in the current time.

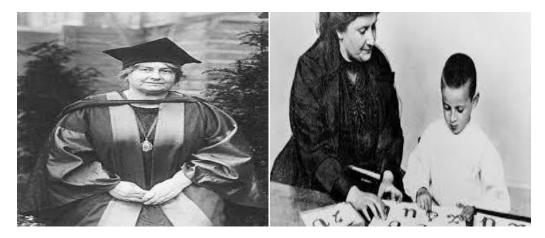


Figure 1.1. Dr. Maria Montessori

#### 1.3. What is The Montessori Approach?

The Montessori Approach or The Montessorian method is referred to by the founder's name Dr.Maria MONTESSORI. Montessori is a method of education based on learner-centred activities, hands-on learning, group work, and play. In Montessori classrooms, children can choose whatever activity and way of learning they want to work with to feel free, autonomous, and motivated to learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Montessori classrooms are beautifully crafted environments designed to meet the needs of children in a specific age range.

Montessori classroom materials are designed to meet the natural curiosities of all children and let them learn by experiencing, observing, touching, trying and knowing how to solve their problems without any interference from the teacher. Because the teacher in the Montessorian method is here to guide, observe and know how to make the child do it by himself and give judgements, punishment is forbidden in Maria MONTESSORI's approach.

Montessori classrooms are flipped classrooms children can learn at a table as they can sit on the floor, and a child is free to move to take the toy he wants and then put it in its place after finishing. Montessori classrooms generally are coloured white or black, and the materials are wood. The children can cook and dance as they can learn a language on the same day. Thus, every tool in a Montessori classroom helps children develop their life skills and educational outcomes.

Montessori practitioners can work with children from birth to age twelve, as some parents prefer to use the Montessori method to raise and educate their newborns.

#### 1.4. The Montessori Philosophy (1949)

The Montessori method works on the following:

- Providing a safe, engaging and nurturing environment for children.
- Let the children be confident and trust the world.
- Montessori activities develop gross motor coordination, fine motor skills, and language skills.
- Make the children independent in their daily tasks.

Paula Polk Lilard (1972) stated that a new educational philosophy was developed by Montessori using her intuitive monitoring of children. This philosophy was introduced in Jean Jacques Rousseau, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, and Friedrich Froebel, who had confirmed the inborn powers and abilities of the child to improve in environmental conditions of love and freedom.

In The other hand, previous educational philosophies did not give much importance to the childhood existence as an entity in itself, crucial to the construction of human life nor did they study the inhabitual self-construction of the child that Montessori had witnessed in her classrooms. "Montessori believed that childhood is not merely a stage to be passed through on the way to adulthood, but is 'the other pole of humanity'. She considered the adult to be dependent on the child, even as the child is dependent on the adult "Lilard, 1972,p.151).

Based on Montessori's observations the child possesses an intrinsic motivation toward his own self-construction which means the whole development of the later is done through his unique and main goal in life by understanding his environment. However, these transient aids exist just in childhood and can change after the age of six. Therefore, Montessori (1949) pointed out that the child's psychic development is not by chance but rather by a desgin and she recognized two internal faculties to the child's development: the Sensitive Periods and the Absorbent Mind.

#### 1.4.1. The Sensitive Periods

According to the Montessori educational philosophy, children are more prepared to master specific abilities at particular times. They are referred to as sensitive periods, and they only persist for as long as the child needs to learn the skills. Each child experiences these times differently, both in terms of timing and order for example, a sensitive period for writing. Observing their children, Montessori teachers must spot their students' vulnerable times and give them the resources they need.

These are the different sensitive periods from birth to six years:

- Movement (birth to one year) the baby's random movements become coordinated so that he can grasp, touch, walk, etc.
- Language (birth to six years) the baby start to murmur, produce sounds, then she progresses from babble to words, phrases, and then sentences.
- Order (six months to four years) in this period the child prefer to have a routine and to put everything in its place.
- Small objects (one to four years) the child prefers to play with small objects and observe the tiny details as eye-hand coordination becomes refined.
- Senses (two to six years) sensory education starts at birth, from two the child will be absorbed by sensorial experiences (sights, sounds, tactiles, and scents).
- Writing (three to four years) based on Montesori's theory writing precedes reading and begins with attempts to reproduce letters and numbers with a pencil and paper.

- Reading (three to five years) at this level the child becomes intrested by symbols and the sounds they represent.
- Mathematics (four to six years) Montessori had brought ways to give children the concrete experience of math in the period od sensitivity for numbers and quantities.

#### 1.4.2 The Absorbent Mind

The absorbent mind is a phase of strong mental activity that occurs in young children from birth until around age six and enables them to "absorb" information from their surroundings freely and spontaneously. The characteristics of his family and community are also absorbed by the child along with the language. He learns how to act in specific circumstances as well as how and what to consume. A child's mind may easily absorb a lot of material, even when some of it is intentionally taught to them.

The child's inquisitive mind might be likened to a camera that records what it sees via the lens or to a sponge that takes in everything around it.

At the period of the absorbent mind, a child absorbs information readily, and it forms the basis of his or her personality. The unconscious stage and the conscious stage are two divisions that Dr. Montessori made for the absorbent mind.

#### 1.4.2.1 The Unconscious Stage (from 0-3 years of age)

The child picks up knowledge throughout this period inadvertently or unintentionally. Without conscious effort, he (or she) learns to sit, stand, walk, and speak. A baby will observe everything carefully and without judgment or preference. Throughout this time, children often imitate what they observe. Unconscious forces have no goals or objectives; for instance, a baby resting on his back is developing his muscles and spine without awareness. He conducts himself simply under natural rules. The youngster picks up a language from the surroundings at this time. He develops mental fluency in that language. He takes in the practices around him, which subsequently ingrain themselves in him.

#### 1.4.2.2. The Conscious Stage (from 3-6 years of age)

The emergence of consciousness, which denotes the onset of memory and conscious awareness, occurs at three. The child's mind is still like a sponge, soaking in information readily, but she will now actively seek out particular experiences. In this stage, a youngster develops her newly acquired faculties and skills. She is naturally inclined to pick up concepts like sequential order, music, numbers, and letter sounds, ultimately translating into maths, reading, and writing abilities. The young youngster starts to express a strong desire to live independently of adult supervision. She aspires to take control of her surroundings, body, and mind. The youngster faces obstacles when an adult provides unneeded assistance or fosters reliance.

#### 1.5. The Favourable Environment

Like Piaget (1962), Montessori believed that the environment had a significant role in children's impulsive learning. She thought it should support a child's natural growth and provide chances.to help each person reach their full potential. When Montessori spoke about the ideal environment, she viewed the child as an active creator and the teacher as a supporter of the child's growth and learning. It is the instructor's responsibility to ensure that each student has an environment that supports their developmental requirements. The primary method for identifying these developmental requirements is observation.

The child's behaviour is under the sensitive phases and stage of development as the child responds to the stimuli in a specific setting, whether at home, school, or nursery. In order to promote, scaffold, and expand the child's learning possibilities, they should ensure that the activities, materials, objects, and vocations in the environment are brought to their attention. Adults and the child's peers accelerate the maturation process, and the learning process is supported by the environment's resources, objects, and activities. (See the work of Bruner (1960) and Vygotsky (1978) for more detail about scaffolding).

#### 1.5.1. Qualities of the Favourable Environment

Several guidelines characterise a favourable environment; from Montessori's perspective, these are the main characteristics of a safe and suitable environment:

- Availability and accessibility
- Freedom of movement and choice
- Personal responsibility
- Reality and nature

#### 1.5.1.1. Availability and Accessibility

The first children's house was created with children in mind. Therefore, every aspect of the space was planned with them in mind. Several elements of the setting that were groundbreaking in Montessori's day, including the absence of desks and a teacher's table and the child-friendly size of the furniture, have now become standard elements of all high-quality early childhood programmes. It is also acknowledged that since many young children do not particularly appreciate sitting at a table, many children of this age benefit from vast floor space that may be utilised for many individual or group activities.

In order to offer children the opportunity to be inside or outdoors in any weather, Montessori also suggested that the garden or outside space should have a covered terrace. This was her contribution to the currently popular outdoor classroom concept.

Another element of the supportive environment that promotes availability and accessibility is the organisation of the resources, activities, and occupations on open shelving by the areas of learning and representing the areas defined by the Montessori early years curriculum. Typically, the order in which these things are presented outlines a potential sequence that the child may or may not decide to follow. This order supports the child's learning by reflecting the activities' increasing complexity and the steady development of particular abilities. Each activity is complete and available in a self-contained package on a tray, basket, or

box. If a child chooses anything off the shelf, they need everything they need to do that activity. After the chosen task, its completeness enables focused work and a lack of distractions. In the standard method, every activity in the classroom has a particular area to support the child's freedom of choice and the sensitive period for order. This helps the environment become consistent and predictable. The instructor's role is to keep the atmosphere predictable and consistent.





Figure 1.2. Montessori Shelves

Figure 1.3. Montessori Classroom

#### 1.5.1.2. Freedom of Movement and Choice

Children's demand for independence will be supported by a supportive atmosphere that offers them a wide variety of easily accessible and available activities tailored to their specific requirements. Teachers must appreciate the child and have faith in them to promote freedom. The children can only have genuine freedom of movement and choice—which are inseparably linked freedoms—if this trust and respect are ingrained in their daily routines. Children can only make good decisions if they can explore the space and find what they require to satisfy their inner needs.

Children also have the liberty to speak their minds, strongly related to the period when language is most vulnerable. Considering the phases of language development, the capacity of the child to express and convey thoughts and ideas is seen as a vital component of all preschool programmes.

Children's communication skills grow substantially in a Montessori classroom because of the serene, purposeful environment.

#### 1.5.1.3. Personal Responsibility

The children are not free in the nursery to act whatever they choose. According to the widespread belief that personal responsibility comes with freedom, peers and adults have certain expectations of kids who use the freedoms provided by a supportive environment. Valuing the group's interests will help prevent children from engaging in risky or harmful behaviour that might endanger them or others.

While speaking and engaging in the classroom's activities, instructors and other kids set an excellent example of acceptable behaviour. When finished and prepared for use by another person, or in other words, exactly how they were found, children are required to return their selected activities to the place where they were kept. It may take a lot of modelling and constancy in expectation to return objects to the shelf. The children, who may first find it difficult to recall what is expected of them, will benefit from the adults' patience and creativity and the excellent example provided by older children.

#### 1.5.1.4. Reality and Nature

Rather than being two-dimensional graphical representations, the materials and activities that are readily available must reflect the children's interests as well as their evolving developmental demands. For instance, it is important to have genuine examples of the materials we discuss in class, such as shells, plants, skeletons, or stethoscopes, to encourage students to explore them with their senses and to expand their vocabulary.





Figure 1.4. Montessori Classroom Material

Another illustration would be the selection of solid (such as a cube, cone, or pyramid) and flat (such as a triangle, square, and circle) wooden forms in the Montessori sensory materials that the child may use to investigate and learn about the characteristics of these shapes. These resources provide a jumping-off point for the investigation of commonplace items having these characteristics, both found in the classroom, at home and in the surrounding environment



As it is the teacher's responsibility to take care of the environment, they do this by finding ways to incorporate fresh flowers into the classroom, providing opportunities for students to observe nature both inside and outside the classroom, and making sure that the nature table reflects not only the seasons but also the children's interests; it should be vibrant, alive, and alluring. The nature table, or the project table, should allow kids to participate in the

school's regular activities. Gardening and nature walks should be frequent chances for kids to learn about nature, and the "outdoor classroom" should incorporate these activities into its curriculum.

#### 1.6. The Handwriting

Failing to develop handwriting skill throughout the school years frequently has far-reaching negative consequences for both academic performance and self-esteem. Several underlying component abilities may interfere with handwriting performance in this challenging occupational activity. Some of the component abilities found are fine motor control, bilateral and visual-motor integration, motor planning, in-hand manipulation, proprioception, visual perception, sustained attention, and sensory awareness of the fingers.

Bad handwriting can be caused by intrinsic factors (the child's natural handwriting ability), extrinsic causes (environmental or biomechanical components), or both. Handwriting performance should be evaluated using a valid, reliable, standardised instrument in conjunction with informal classroom observation and teacher interaction. Handwriting remediation studies indicate that intervention is beneficial. According to studies, handwriting issues affect between 10% and 30% of school-aged children and do not resolve without help. Despite extensive computer usage, legible handwriting is a vital life skill that demands more attention from schools and health professionals.

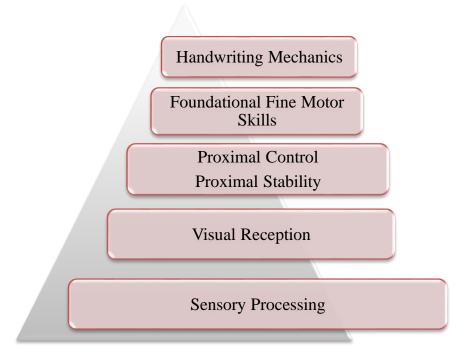


Figure 1.5. Foundational Skills needed for HandwritingMechanics by Heather Greutman (2019)

#### 1.6.1. The Importance of Handwriting

Writing skill development is not only vital for a child's self-esteem, but it is also regarded as an essential factor for academic achievement. Handwriting and other fine motor skills take 31 to 60% of a child's school day, and difficulties in this area might interfere with academic progress. Other higher-order abilities, such as spelling and narrative production, might need to be improved by illegible handwriting. Handwriting is a crucial developmental skill for a youngster to acquire, despite using computers. Handwriting is both a medium of communication and a vital life skill in modern culture, as in writing a letter or phone message, filling out an application form, or writing a cheque. Handwriting is still the most direct method of graphic communication.

#### 1.6.2. Handwriting Development

Handwriting development begins with doodling, which becomes increasingly purposeful with time. Design patterns emerge into more accurate forms and, ultimately, letters as the youngster grows. Letter forms are frequently observed in children's drawings, which may be considered a training ground for writing. A child

learns to print letters by first imitating geometric shapes beginning with vertical strokes at age two years, then horizontal strokes at age two years and six months and circles at age three years. Imitation and copying of a cross typically occur at four years; copying of a square occurs at 5, and a triangle at five years and six months. Since it entails crossing the body midline and has been linked to numerous reversal issues, the ability to replicate geometric shapes, particularly the oblique cross, is considered a sign of writing readiness in the young child. Weil and Amundson conducted research in which 60 typically developing kindergarten children were tested for printing ability and performance on the Developmental Test of Visual-Motor Integration (VMI). The results showed that youngsters who could replicate the first nine VMI forms, including the oblique cross, could copy much more letters than those who could not. Marr and Cermak concluded that the VMI could not be used to identify kindergarten students at risk for handwriting issues. VMI scores, including the oblique cross, did not predict handwriting success as a group in grade one in this study of 101 children; however, VMI scores were significantly associated with handwriting for females.

Handwriting studies of typically developing children in grades one to five (ages 6–11 years typically) have found that the quality of handwriting develops quickly during grade one (ages 6–7 years typically) and reaches a plateau by grade two (age 7-8 years typically). Handwriting becomes automatic, organised, and available as a tool to facilitate the development of ideas by grade three (typically ages 8-9 years). Speed of writing develops in a somewhat linear fashion throughout primary school, and overall development of handwriting continues during the middle school years.

#### 1.7. Conclusion

This chapter was an attempt to clarify the key concepts of the topic and its main principles. The reseracher tried to collect different information from different souces in order to let the reader understand the research topic and can follow the research procedures. Finally, the Montessori approach is a vast space however addressing all the corners was impossible for the researcher that is why the approach was linked to the handwriting and how they work together.

# Chapter Two Research Methodology

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- 2.2. The History of Kindergarten
- 2.2.1. Kindergartens in Algeria
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- 2.4. Data Analysis
- 2.5. Interpretation and Discussion
- 2.6. Recommendations and Suggestions
- 2.7. Conclusion

#### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to explore the Montessori Approach at the private Kindergarten of Ain-Youcef -Tlemcen. The first part represents a general background of the appearance of Kindergartens in the world and Algeria precisely. Then, what and how are kids learning there? After that, the second part deals with the research design, the informants under investigation and the research instruments. The gathered data were analysed qualitatively.

#### 2.2. The History of Kindergarten

Friedrich Froebel, a German educator, opened the first kindergarten in Blankenburg, Germany, in 1837. He developed his vision for kindergarten based on the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and later Swiss educator Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi. This progressive education reformer introduced the concept that children were naturally good and active learners, a radical idea at the time. The play was seen as a waste of time and proof that children should be taught to be more productive. Froebel advocated using music, nature study, stories, dramatic play, crafts, and circle time to teach children and opened a training school for women. Because he believed women had the best sensitivity and qualities to work with young children in developing their emotional skills. 'The word kindergarten means "garden of children," a beautiful metaphor for what happens there—children growing like flowers and plants, nurtured by a positive environment with good soil, rain, and sun, and an attentive gardener'.( Angele Sancho Passe, 2010: 42).

#### 2.2.1. Kindergartens in Algeria

In Algeria, preschool education is critical in building the groundwork for lifelong learning. Pre-primary education typically lasts two years, after which the kid is entitled to enter primary school. The government pays most of the expenditures of nurseries, kindergartens, and community-based centres, with the remainder paid by parents. However, in private centres, parents are expected to cover all costs and fees.

Early childhood development of cognitive, verbal, physical, and socio-emotional abilities lays the groundwork for children to reach their maximum potential in school and life.

Algeria's pre-primary curriculum emphasises a range of basic disciplines such as Languages, Numeracy, Creative Arts, Socio-Emotional, Sciences, and Motor Skills. Workbooks, flashcards, worksheets, toys, and other learning aids can also be used. Students are taught mostly via play, music, rhymes, and other activities.

Table 2.1 The Pre-primary Education in Algeria

Ages	Duration	Primary languages	Terms	Admission Term	School Types in Algeria
3_5 years	2years	<ul><li>Arabic</li><li>French</li><li>English</li></ul>	Two terms	At the beginning of the term	<ul><li>Crèche</li><li>Nursery</li><li>Kindergarten</li></ul>

#### 2.2.2. Examples of Pre-schools in Algeria

#### 2.2.2.1. Willow Early Education and Preschool

This well-known school was the first in Algeria to provide the International Preschool Curriculum (IPC) and a complete International Montessori Programme. The school aims to create a dynamic, engaging, and safe environment in which children may discover, communicate, and learn to express themselves on various levels in various languages. The school educates children ranging in age from 18 months to 5 years.

• Address: ResidenceAymen 136 logements, Bloc E, N° 30 Tixeraine, Said Hamdine, Algiers

- Ages: 18 months to 5 years
- Language of instruction: English
- **Curriculum**: Language Arts, Numeracy, Creative Arts, Socio-Emotional, Sciences, and Motor Skills are among the subjects covered by the school's curriculum. The IPC curriculum employs several learning aids, such as student workbooks, flashcards, worksheets, and other materials. Parental engagement is also an essential aspect of IPC schools. Students at this school learn via play, which helps them to grasp complex topics related to real-life events thoroughly. In addition, the school provides a comprehensive Montessori programme and an expanded Pearson Edexcel British curriculum.

The Montessori programme offers education in five mainareas:

**Practical Life:** Students engage in familiar and meaningful activities such as sweeping, mopping, watering, cleaning tables and windows, Self Care (pouring a drink, washing oneself, dressing, and food preparation), and are allowed to learn about socialisation through Grace and Courtesy exercises.

Grace and Courtesy lessons teach the children what it means to be polite and how to communicate appropriately or her feelings. These lessons are often demonstrated at circle time through role-play demonstrations given by the teacher and students willing to demonstrate their etiquette (the children are always very entertained by these lessons). Some examples of "Grace and Courtesy lessons" might be: Pushing in a chair, standing in Line, washing hands, and rolling a rug.



Figure 2.1. Pushing in a chair



Figure 2.3. Washing hands



Figure 2.2.Standing in Line



Figure 2.4. Rolling a rug

Language: Language development is essential to all classroom activities and encompasses all aspects of the environment. Spoken language is the foundation for the child's written work and subsequent comprehension of what has been written. It lays the groundwork for literacy. Sandpaper letters, which enhance a child's fine motor and writing abilities, are used to introduce phonetic sounds.



Figure 2.5. How to present Montessori Sandpaper



Figure 2.6. Sandpaper Letters

- **Mathematics:** The program lays the foundation for maths concepts.
- Cultural Studies: To name a few, the study of Culture includes Art, History, Geography, Biology, Zoology, Botany, and Physical Sciences. Music, dance, food, language, and customs from many nations are studied to expose youngsters to different cultures.

The school encourages respect and justice by providing a trilingual atmosphere (English, Arabic, and French).

#### 2.2.2.2. The Kindergarten Les Bambini

It is an Algiers-based private school that provides high-quality preschool education in a family structure tailored to child development in a multicultural setting. It has a nursery, a preschool, a creche and a children's entertainment centre. It caters to children from 12 months to 6 years.

- address: 19 chemin de la Vallée, El-Mouradia Quartier Golf, Algeria
- ages: 12 months- 6 years
- Languages: French, Arabic, English
- The school provides learning in the following areas of learning:
- Languages: French, Arabic, and English
- **Mathematics**
- Writing or Graphics
- Visual arts
- Reading

Children are educated in various disciplines contributing to their growth, such as living together and growing autonomy, theatre, computer science, music, and sports. They are learning to live together and become a selfsufficient student. To name a few: using proper language, discovering the world, discovering writing, acting and expressing themselves with their body, perceiving, experiencing, envisioning, and creating.

## 2.3. Research Design and Procedures

The research work is primarily based on qualitative experimental case study. The study's primary aim is to investigate the effectiveness of the Montessori approach in teaching and learning handwriting skill in the early language classroom. The study design is based on qualitative data collection and content analysis methods, which provide rich and detailed accounts of participants' experiences and perspectives. The research is expected to provide valuable insights into the potential benefits and drawbacks of using the Montessori approach in early language education and contribute to the existing literature on teaching and learning handwriting skills in early childhood.

### 2.3.1. Sampling

To give more reliability to this research proposal, one target population was considered: students of DTEduc school. The students' profile was the only sample of this study.

### 2.3.1.1. The Sample's Profile

Accordingly, the target population of this research was purposefully selected. However, the researcher chose the preschool student of DTEduc school aged between (4,5-5 years old) in order to do action research and teach them handwriting skills through the Montessori approach using its didactic material to see and assess their reactions, attitudes and the effect it leaves on them. The students had an Arabic background but needed to learn English and French. Furthermore, they were aware of the Arabic Alphabet and how to write and spell them.

#### 2.3.2. Instrumentation

The researcher designs two instruments to collect the data needed to answer the research questions. To reply to the first research question, the investigator uses two types of tests; a pre-test using the traditional method and assesses the students' outcomes after implementing the Montessori methods using a post-test. Moreover, the researcher undertook a classroom observation through pictures, videos, and notes taking to answer the second and the third research questions.

### **2.3.2.1.** The Pre-test (Traditional Method)

Throughout the experience, the realisation of these sessions was carried out according to a specific sequence. This sequence has been expressed in a progress sheet; the latter is as follows:

# **Session Progress**

**Activity:** Handwriting

**Target competency:** To master the visual system of the language.

**Learning objectives:** Get the student to write the graphemes: a-c-m in upper and lower case.

Getting learners to master writing standards.

**Didactic material:** board- writing board-sheets- skateboard

**Activity procedures:** 

**Prerequisites:** Ask the students to reproduce on the slate boards the studied phonemes a-c-m.

I write: the teacher writes the first morpheme a on the board, respecting the writing standards, and the students observe attentively.

**Air application:** The students are invited by the teacher to write the morpheme **a** in lower case and then in upper case in the air.

**Table application:** The teacher asks the students to write the morpheme a on the table using their hands.

**Board application:** The teacher invites the students to write the first morpheme a on the board.

**Slate board application**: The teacher asks one more time students to write the same morpheme on the slate board.

**Application on sheet:** Finally, the teacher invites the students to write on sheets

At the end of the experiment, the teacher picked up the sheets to be corrected and observed.

## 2.3.2.2. The post-test (Montessori approach)

For the sake of success and the well-functioning of the experimentation, the researcher had undertaken different class organisations. The research started by dividing the principle time, which was three hours from (8:30 to 11:30) onto four parts. First, from (8:30 to 9:45) the lecture was done sitting on the floor, starting with an attractive motor skills activity (The Pink Tower).



Figure 2.7. The Pink Tower

Then the teacher presents three morphemes, a-c-m, insisting on the first letter passing through the **Three-Period** lesson.

### . What is the Three-Period Lesson?

The Three-Period lesson is a lesson divided into three parts. The lesson aims to make the student move from an introductory level of understanding to mastery of any concept or object. The Three-Period lesson consists of Introduction, Recognition/ Association, and Recall.

**Period One:** Introduction (This is...)

At this level, the teacher names the item or the concept to be learned, allowing the pupil to explore. It is different from the time of explaining details or expecting outcomes.

For example, the teacher showed the learner the three morphemes a-c-m, pointing to the first morpheme to be learned and saying, "This is 'a' ». Then, I allowed him to move his fingers over it and say something about it. When it was done, the teacher said, « Well, that is a, » and moved on to another lesson.

### **Period Two:** Association/ Recognition (Show me!)

This is the most exciting and funniest period of learning. However, this period should never be rushed, it is essential to take as long as possible for a learner to grasp the new concept or item thoroughly, and it can extend through weeks and even months until to be sure that the learner has moved beyond 'period one'. This period often includes games, handson activities, and projects to help the pupil understand the concept profoundly. It allows him to make connections between the new concept and others that can be already mastered or still need to be mastered.

For example, the teacher provides the pupil with the three morphemes ac-m and asks the pupil, «Show me the letter 'a' » After the pupil is done then, the teacher asks him « Pick up the letter 'a' », Then the teacher can ask the learner « hide the letter 'a' », « give your friend the letter 'a' », and son on.

### **Period Three:** Recall (what is this ...?)

It is the first time the pupil is asked to name the concept himself. Moreover, it is done until the teacher is sure the learner will succeed. Generally, learners enjoy this part because although it is a test, it does not feel like it at all.

Finally, the researcher moved to a specific part of the study: handwriting. After learner has grasped the letter 'a', he is asked to write it.

## **Activity:**

Presentation 1: 1st Period experience

- 1-The teacher Invites a kid to come and work with him.
- 2-The teacher makes the kid and himself sensitize their fingers.
- 3-Choose three letters.
- 4-The teacher brings them over to the table and sits with the learner.
- 5-Conversationally the teacher introduces one letter, and if there is a personal connection to the letter, the teacher says it.
- 6- The teacher says, « Do you remember when we were saying our names? Your name is 'Adam'. Adam starts with 'A'. Well, I will show you what the sound 'A' looks like ».
- 7- The teacher uses the sandpaper letter to show the 'A' letter.
- 8-Then, the teacher says, « Now, I am going to show you how to write it » The teacher picks up the sandpaper letter with her left hand. Using her right index and middle finger, she starts tracing the letter and saying the

sound.

- 9- The teacher should trace and say the sound two or more times, then ask the child to trace the letter three times, saying the sound after each trace.
- 10- Then, the teacher places the tablet face up in the left corner of the table.
- 11- The teacher introduces the second letter similarly to the first. Furthermore, trace the letter as with the first.
- 12- The teacher repeats the same steps as the first table for the second and third letters.
- 13- The teacher should continue with the Three Period Lesson and be sure to include the tracing of each letter.

# **Research Design and Procedures**

#### **Extensions:**

- 1- The teacher traces the letter in the air and has the child say its sound.
- 2- The teacher can take the letter on the child's back and have them say its sound.
- 3- Th teacher traces the letter on the child's palm and asks him to get that specific letter from the box.

# **Purposes:**

- To intensify the child's awareness of the sounds in words.
- To unify these sounds using muscular and visual memory to the appropriate symbol.
- Preparation for writing and reading.

# Presentation2:2<sup>nd</sup> Period Experience

- 1- The teacher starts the presentation as in presentation 1.
- 2- The teacher places the three letters in front of the learner.
- 3- The teacher asks the child to pick up one letter and put it in the sand tray.
- 4- The teacher starts tracing the letter on the sand tray using the index, repeating the sound of the letter at the end of each tracing.
- 5- The teacher does the task with all students following the same steps.

## **Presentation 3:** 3rd Period Experience

- 1- The teacher starts the presentation as in presentation 2.
- 2- The teacher traces the letters on the whiteboard in a large format and asks the learners to reproduce it on their slates using a large pen for the first time. The task should be done three times with each letter.
- 3- The teacher invites the kids to write the letters on the paper using a pencil, with the same preceding steps to be followed.

#### 2.3.2.3. Classroom Observation

Classroom observation as a methodology has its detractors. This criticism varies from epistemological reasons to validity concerns about its contentious use as a measure of teacher effectiveness. When classroom observation is employed in both educational research and teacher assessment, there are major reliability and validity challenges.

« Observers have some choices about what sort of record should be kept of a Lesson, and some may choose to keep none. Most will at least keep notes, but there are several other possibilities. Small compact video cameras and sound cassettes offer further options beyond written notes, though teachers and pupils who are not used to being video recorded may be inhibited ».( Wragg, 1999, p.16)

Accordingly, as this research study is done through action research, the classroom observation was participant observation, i.e. the researcher was a participant observer. Moreover, « The participant observation is a qualitative research methodology in which the researcher studies a group through observation and participating in its activities. In this qualitative observation methodology, the researcher immerses himself in the daily

activities of the participants in order to record the behaviour in as many scenarios as possible »(Villegas, 2023)

The purpose and the reasons behind the choice of the researcher to use classroom observation as a primary gathering data instrument are: to give clear insights into the pre-school languages classroom, to note different behaviours and attitudes of students towards the proposed approach to teaching and learning handwriting skill at such early ages. Moreover, to observe the extent of the student's motivation to learn using the Montessori approach.

The classroom observation occurred from February 9th, 2023, to March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, with DT Education pre-school Ain-Youcef students. The investigator planned four sessions of 3 hours, and the researcher conducted all the sessions. The class contained 15 students.

The first time of observation, the researcher showed the learners the alphabet to see if they knew them. It was observed that no one was aware of the alphabet or the English language, although nowadays, it is becoming familiar to children because of television, tablets, phones, etc. The second observation was that the kids interacted positively with the teacher and quickly learned the words presented by the researcher, like "English", "alphabet", and "Mrs". The researcher notes that the students enjoyed implementing the Montessori material because it was new, Funny and easy to use. Finally, the researcher noticed it was easy to move from one presentation to another following the Three-Period Lesson without telling the learners that we would do this and that.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

Therefore, to give more reliability and validity to this research, the investigator designed a classroom observation checklist in order to do a comparative study between the two approaches (Traditional Approach and Montessori Approach) used in the First instrument, which was the test divided into two parts (Pre-test, i.e. Traditional Method) and the second part which was the (Post-Test, i.e. Montessori Method). The checklist was prepared before experimentation based on specific criteria; the student's role in the teaching/learning process, the didactic material used, motivation, students' test papers, and the environment prepared for them.

**Table 2.2. Classroom Observation Checklist** 

		Pre-Test	Post-Test
Criteria		Traditional	Montessori
		Method	Method
Pedagogy based on	The teacher	1	
	The Learner		1
Students are passive Learners.		1	
Students are active Learners.			1
Didactic material	Limited	1	
	Varied		1
Motivated Students	The majority		✓
	The Minority	1	

	No One		
The nature of the work	Competition	<b>✓</b>	
	Cooperation		✓
Writing errors	should be avoided	1	
	are part of learning		✓
Correction is done by	The teacher	1	
	Autocorrection		✓

## 2.5. Interpretation and Discussion

The interpretation of the main results collected from the Tests and the classroom observation used to study if the Montessori approach can overcome the obstacles that both the teachers and learners face while teaching or learning the handwriting skill at an early age helps to verify and confirm the reliability and validity of the three hypotheses proposed at the beginning of this research.

The first hypothesis stipulates that if the Montessori approach is implemented in primary school, the language teaching/learning process will be improved. The researcher gave such hypothesis because, in the Algerian education system, the teaching of foreign languages starts until the 3rd year of primary school. The researcher did this investigation in the pre-school as a pilot study to verify the effectiveness of implementing the Montessori approach at an early age. The results collected from the tests, which were divided into two parts using the Traditional method, which is the pedagogy followed by the Algerian primary schools, and the Montessori approach proposed by the researcher, confirm the validity and effectiveness of the Montessori approach to teach languages at an early age, unlike the traditional method which was tedious and tiring for the learner. Thus, the first hypothesis is confirmed.

The second hypothesis argues that the Montessori approach makes the teaching/ learning process motivational and emotional, unlike the traditional method, which is strict and inflexible. The results obtained from the participant classroom observation and the checklist followed by the researcher showed the students' positive interactions and motivation while learning, contrasting the traditional method, which forced them to interact and learn. As a result, the second hypothesis is valid.

Accordingly, the third and last hypothesis proposes using the Montessori activities and didactic material in an early-age language classroom to facilitate the writing skill teaching/ learning process to preschool learners of varying ages and abilities. The findings collected from the post-test using the Montessori approach in which the researcher followed the Three-Period lesson containing the Montessori tasks starting from introducing the letters to how to write them in a short period let the researcher agree on that hypothesis. So, the third hypothesis is confirmed.

### 2.6. Recommendations and suggestions

After discussing the main results obtained in this study, the following chapter will address some suggestions and recommendations for a better understanding and implementation of the approach proposed by the researcher. The Montessori approach is a very ancient method used and implemented in schools worldwide from (birth to 16 years old) because of its effectiveness in teaching and learning practices. In contrast, in Algeria, there are just some pre-schools and kindergartens that use this method. Not all of them declare the use of the approach in order to preserve their working secrets. Moreover, the Montessori method can tackle all the subjects (mathematics, geography, history, practical life, motor skills development, and language learning.); it is a flexible method and give more importance to the child and the environment of learning, which is neglected in the traditional methods used, because the teacher is permanently restricted by time management, unlike the Montessori approach which gives the teacher the freedom to decide when to move and how to teach depending on the learner's profile. The researcher gives some topics as suggestions for future research, hoping that the approach be more known and used in Algerian public schools.

### 2.6.1. Montessori courses for pre-service teaching training

Pre-service teaching training is already implemented in Algeria's education system to form and guide would-be teachers for their teaching careers, and nowadays, teaching practices are based on how to make the learner understand faster; however, it does not give much importance to the learner's profile and moral development. Students of didactics can benefit from that, but not as much as the Montessori philosophy gives importance to these details. Implementing the Montessori approach in the Algerian education system will change the teachers' and students' attitudes and perspectives towards learning. In future research, it will be interesting to study how teachers can benefit from Montessori courses and how the government can produce the didactic material, which is expensive.

### 2.6.2. Parenting and schooling

Parenting is something crucial that a child can benefit from when it is well done; today, parents around the world and even in Algeria search for the perfect way of taking care of their children's physical and moral development. The Montessori practitioners encourage parents to use the Montessori approach from birth, and some teachers present free online courses for parents and even teachers interested in the Montessori Method. It will be beneficial to let Algerian parents know more about the approach and how to use it with their children to help teachers accomplish their work.

### 2.7. Conclusion

The Montessori approach is vast and rich in its varied methods and materials used to teach different subjects. Therefore, the child has extraordinary and unknown power, and this power should guide parents and teachers towards a bright future. Education can no longer give just knowledge but must take a different path by considering the personality and human development potentialities. The excellent implementation of this approach at an early age makes a huge difference in the Algerian education system. The proposed recommendations are just 1% from the Montessori approach; the researcher has opened the door to future research to study the Montessori approach from all corners. Hoping that the institution will take into consideration the proposed approach.

**General Conclusion** 

#### **General Conclusion**

The Montessori approach is an educational method that gives more importance to the child, the environment, and the teacher. It is different from the traditional method by its specific ways of teaching and didactic materials; the Montessori approach is based on the child's development stages and has a supportive environment, studied materials, and specific activities for each stage. The Montessori Method is flexible because teachers can decide what and how to teach. In addition, handwriting has become a difficult skill for children. However, the Montessori approach has overcome the obstacles and difficulties the child faces while their first writing experience. Thus, this research sheds light on how the Montessori approach can be used to teach and learn handwriting skills from an early age.

The present study aimed at exploring and describing the importance of the Montessori approach in teaching and learning languages at an early age. This research focuses on making the handwriting process easy and funny for children in the preschool stage of learning.

The dissertation is divided into two chapters. The first chapter is a theoretical part containing the definitions of the primary key concepts and how this approach generally works. The second chapter is the practical part of the research, which presents the methodology followed by the researcher for data collection and analysis, with a discussion of the main findings. It ends up with some recommendations and suggestions for future research.

This study revealed interesting results. The first hypothesis stipulates that the implementation of the Montessori approach in pre-school will make the process of teaching writing skills funny and easy task; the researcher has done a pilot study on pre-school students using tests to compare the actual approach and the Montessori approach in order to test their effectiveness on teaching handwriting skills. The results obtained from the two tests showed that the Montessori approach is much more effective in teaching handwriting at an early age because of its specific methods and

didactic material, unlike the traditional method, which was less supportive. Thus, the first hypothesis was confirmed by this result. The second hypothesis focuses more on the child's moral development by using the Montessori approach; it stipulates that the Montessori approach lets the teaching and learning practices be a motivational and emotional process. The results obtained from the participant classroom observation revealed that children, when studying in a favourable environment which is a principle of the Montessori Method, are more motivated. Then, the second hypothesis is validated by this result. The third hypothesis focuses on the Montessori activities and how they can facilitate the handwriting skills teaching and learning process. The results from the post-test revealed that the Montessori activities had physical and moral benefits on the child, facilitating the handwriting teaching process. Then, the third hypothesis is confirmed by this result.

The investigator faced limitations while working on this research topic, such as bibliographical limits, so the most important articles and books were paid. The lack of schools using the Montessori approach makes the researcher obliged to search for a pre-school that gave her the opportunity and the authorisation to teach in their school using the Montessori approach. Also, the sample's profile had no English or French language background, so the researcher passed through introductory sessions to start studying the stated problem.

The quality of writing and reading expression quality is decreasing daily, and this is due to inadequate instructions from teachers at an early age. The implementation of the Montessori approach can be beneficial for the betterment of these two skills. It could be essential to investigate how Montessori methods and materials can overcome this problem from an early age.

To sum up, the Montessori approach is a rich one neglected in the Algerian education system. It is crucial to consider the quality of teaching a child rather than how much knowledge they get each year. Therefore, Education is something crucial that needs to be studied and innovated in the Algerian education system, especially the primary school, which is the door and the road for a child to be a professional, responsible, and educated future student, teacher, and doctor.

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Appendices

**Appendix 1 :**The Pink Tower (Sensorial activity)









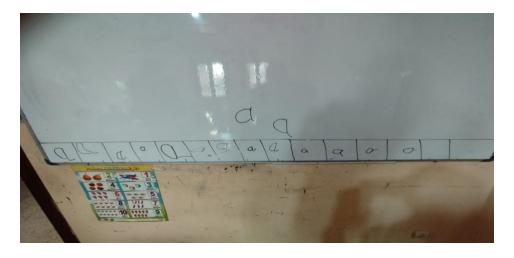
**Appendix 2 : Sandpaper tray** 



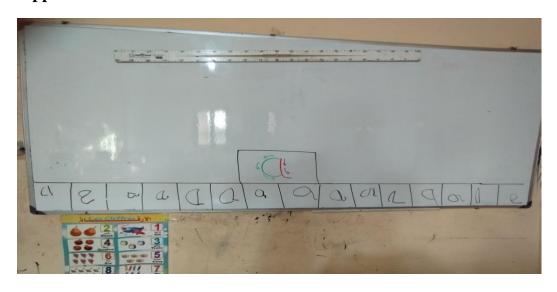




**Appendix 3 : The Pre-Test** 



**Appendix 4 : The Post-Test** 



**Appendix 5 : Application on the slate** 









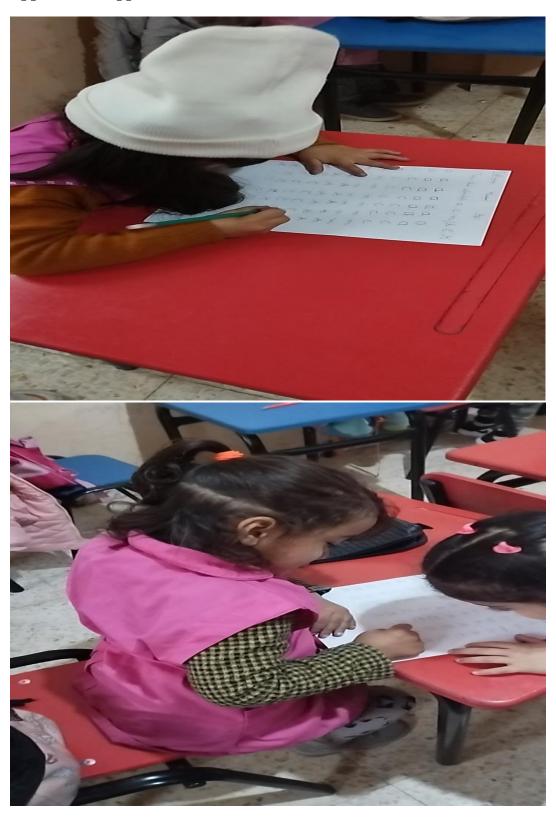








**Appendix 6: Application on sheets** 



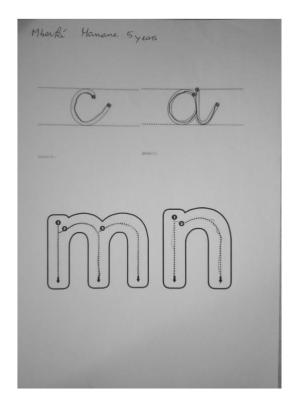
# **Appendix 7 : Post -Test Papers**

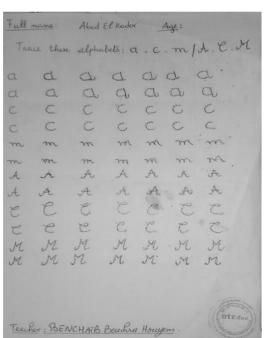


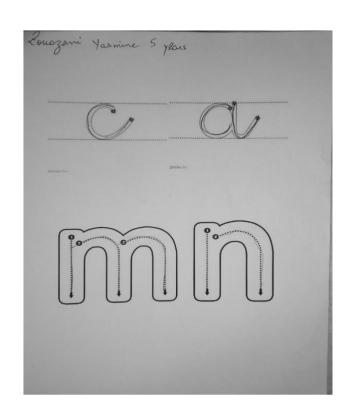












#### **Abstract**

This research aims to explore the imprortance of implementing the Montessori Method in the pre-school as an approach to teach handwriting skill at an early age. Using specific methods and techniques of teaching wich is flexible to the learner's profile and its devlopement based on the Montessori Approach. Moreover, the use of the Montessori didactic material which helps to deliver the lecture effectively and easily. In order to avoid the obstacles that nowadays students are facing in middle school and even in the university which is the bad handwriting that affects other skills.

### الملخص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى استكشاف مدى اهمية تطبيق طريقة مونتيسوري في مرحلة ما قبل التمدرسة كمنهج لتعليم مهارة الكتابة اليدوية في سن مبكر. استخدام أساليب وتقنيات محددة للتدريس تتميز بالمرونة بالنسبة إلى نوع المتعلم وتطويره بناءً على منهج مونتيسوري. علاوة على ذلك ، فإن استخدام ادوات مونتيسوري التعليمية التي تساعد على تقديم الدرس بفاعلية وسهولة. لتفادي الصعوبات التي يواجهها الطلاب اليوم في المرحلة الإعدادية وحتى في الجامعة وهي الكتابة اليدوية السيئة التي تؤثر على المهارات الأخرى.

### Résumé

Cette recherche vise à explorer l'importance de la mise en œuvre de la méthode Montessori à l'école maternelle comme approche pour enseigner l'écriture manuscrite à un âge précoce. En Utilisant des méthodes et des techniques d'enseignement spécifiques flexibles au profit de l'apprenant et à son développement basé sur l'approche Montessori. De plus, l'utilisation du matériel didactique Montessori aide à dispenser éficassement le cours. Afin d'éviter les obstacles auxquels les étudiants sont confrontés de nos jours au collège et même à l'université qui est la mauvaise écriture qui affecte d'autres compétences.