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**Leadership Skills Perceptions
in the Alternative Educational Systems**

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Abstract

The perceptions of leadership skills in alternative educational systems have gained significant attention in recent years. This paper provides a concise overview of the perceptions surrounding leadership skills in alternative educational systems, highlighting key findings from existing research and literature. There were four significant leadership skills analysis in the article: self-management, entrepreneurial spirit, focus on results, and power to delegate. Our results show high correlations between these skills. These perceptions highlight the effectiveness of the Montessori approach in preparing students for future success and leadership roles.

Keywords: alternative educational system, leadership, skills, Montessori.

JEL Classification: I21, I26, P46.

1. Introduction

In the ever-evolving world of the 21st century, the demand for effective leaders is higher than ever before. The Montessori educational approach, renowned for its emphasis on independence, self-directed learning, and holistic development, is uniquely positioned to nurture future leaders. This paper explores the essential leadership skills that Montessori students acquire through their educational journey, preparing them to thrive in a dynamic and interconnected world.

The perceptions of leadership skills in alternative educational systems have gained increasing attention as educators and researchers recognise the importance of preparing students for leadership roles in diverse and evolving contexts. Alternative educational systems, such as Montessori, Waldorf, democratic schools, and others,

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offer distinct approaches to education that prioritise holistic development, experiential learning, and student-centred practices. Understanding how these alternative systems are perceived in terms of fostering leadership skills is crucial to shaping educational practices and preparing students for future leadership roles.

Alternative educational systems challenge traditional models of education by emphasising self-directed learning, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. These systems often prioritise the development of not only academic knowledge, but also the essential skills and qualities needed for effective leadership in various domains of life. This includes skills such as self-management, entrepreneurial spirit, focus on results, and the power to delegate.

Exploring the perceptions of leadership skills in alternative educational systems provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of these approaches and their impact on students' leadership development. By examining existing research and the scholarly literature, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of how these alternative systems are perceived and how they contribute to the cultivation of leadership skills.

In this paper we will analyse one of the most important future leadership skills: self-management, entrepreneurial spirit, focus on results, and power to delegate.

I. Self-Management: Alternative educational systems are often perceived as nurturing self-management skills in students. These systems provide students with autonomy and responsibility for their own learning, encouraging them to set goals, manage their time effectively, and take ownership of their actions. The emphasis on self-directed learning in alternative systems fosters self-discipline, self-motivation, and a strong sense of personal accountability, which are vital aspects of effective leadership.

Perceptions of leadership skills in alternative educational systems highlight the development of self-management skills. These systems are often seen to empower students to take responsibility for their own learning and personal growth. The emphasis on self-directed learning and individual autonomy fosters skills such as time management, goal setting, self-discipline, and self-motivation. Students in alternative systems are perceived as capable of managing their tasks, resources, and responsibilities, which are essential for effective leadership.

II. Entrepreneurial Spirit: Perceptions of alternative educational systems often highlight the development of an entrepreneurial spirit in students. These systems encourage creativity, innovation, and independent thinking, nurturing an entrepreneurial mindset that values initiative, risk-taking, and problem-solving. Students are encouraged to explore their passions, identify opportunities, and develop a sense of agency, which are key attributes for entrepreneurial leaders who can navigate ambiguity, seize opportunities, and drive meaningful change.

Alternative educational systems are recognised for nurturing an entrepreneurial spirit in students. These systems foster creativity, independent thinking, and problem-solving skills. Students are encouraged to think outside the box, take

initiative, and explore their passions. The emphasis on innovation, risk-taking, and adaptability prepares students to become entrepreneurial leaders who can identify opportunities, embrace challenges, and drive meaningful change. Perceptions often associate alternative educational systems with cultivating an enterprising mindset that aligns with the demands of the modern world.

III. Focus on Results: Alternative educational systems are recognised as instilling a focus on results in students. These systems emphasise the importance of setting goals, measuring progress, and achieving tangible results. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and demonstrate a commitment to excellence. The focus on results cultivates a strong work ethic, perseverance, and a drive for continuous improvement, all of which are integral to effective leadership.

Perceptions regarding the focus on results in alternative educational systems vary. While some alternative systems prioritise holistic development and process-oriented learning, others are seen as outcomes-oriented. Students in alternative systems may be perceived as driven by a sense of achievement, setting goals, and striving for excellence. The emphasis on tangible outcomes in some alternative systems prepares students to be results-oriented leaders who can set targets, measure progress, and deliver impactful results.

IV. Power to Delegate: Perceptions regarding the power to delegate in alternative educational systems vary. Although some alternative systems emphasise self-directed learning and individual autonomy, others also recognise the importance of collaborative work and shared decision-making. Students in alternative systems may have opportunities to practice delegation within group projects, cooperative learning activities, or student-led initiatives. The ability to delegate tasks, trust others, and effectively distribute responsibilities is a valuable leadership skill, enabling leaders to leverage the strengths of team members and maximise productivity.

The perceptions of the power to delegate in alternative educational systems are influenced by the collaborative nature of these approaches. Alternative systems often emphasise teamwork, cooperation, and shared decision-making. Students are provided with opportunities to work in groups, engage in project-based learning, and practice delegation of tasks and responsibilities. Perceptions suggest that alternative educational systems cultivate the ability to trust others, effectively distribute work, and leverage the strengths of team members. Such skills are crucial for future leaders who must delegate effectively to optimise team performance.

2. Literature Review

The perception of leadership skills has been analysed by many scientists in the past decades. By examining various studies, we aim to gain a comprehensive understanding of the unique qualities and abilities that Montessori education cultivates in students, preparing them for leadership roles in the future.

Research indicates that alternative educational systems promote self-management skills in students. A study by Şimşek and Tuğluk (2021) examined the perceptions of self-management skills in Montessori education and found that students developed a sense of responsibility, self-discipline, and time management abilities. The self-directed nature of alternative educational systems empowers students to take ownership of their learning, fostering self-management skills crucial for effective leadership.

Alternative educational systems are recognised for nurturing an entrepreneurial spirit in students. A study by Khan (2017) explored perceptions of entrepreneurial skills in Montessori education and found that students developed creativity, independent thinking, and problem-solving abilities. The emphasis on innovation, initiative, and risk-taking within alternative systems encourages students to think entrepreneurially, preparing them to lead with creativity and adaptability.

Perceptions regarding the focus on results in alternative educational systems vary. Some studies highlight the outcomes-oriented nature of alternative systems. For example, a study by Graham et al. (2018) investigated the perceptions of results-oriented skills in democratic schools and found that students demonstrated a strong work ethic, goal-setting abilities, and a commitment to achieving results. However, other studies argue that alternative systems prioritise holistic development and process-oriented learning rather than a narrow focus on measurable outcomes (Cadis, Busu, 2022).

Perceptions of the power to delegate in alternative educational systems are limited in the existing literature. However, some studies suggest that collaborative practices within alternative systems provide students with opportunities to practice delegation. For instance, a study by Casquejo Johnston (2019) examined perceptions of delegation skills in project-based learning in alternative schools and found that students developed the ability to trust others, distribute tasks, and effectively work in teams (Cadis, Busu, 2022).

The reviewed literature indicates that alternative educational systems are generally perceived to promote leadership skills such as self-management and entrepreneurial spirit. The self-directed nature of alternative systems empowers students to take responsibility for their learning, while the emphasis on innovation and independent thinking nurtures an entrepreneurial mindset. The perceptions of a results-oriented focus in alternative systems vary, with some highlighting an outcomes-oriented approach, while others prioritising holistic development. Although limited, the literature suggests that alternative systems provide opportunities for students to practice delegation through collaborative activities. Further research is needed to explore and deepen our understanding of leadership skills perceptions in alternative educational systems, specifically in relation to self-management, entrepreneurial spirit, focus on results, and the power to delegate.

3. Research Methods

The analysis of the leadership skills was performed with a quantitative analysis based on the questionnaires. The population is represented by all parents of the students enrolled in the Montessori educational system, and the sample size was calculated with the formula:

$$n = \frac{Z_{\alpha}^2 \cdot p \cdot (1-p)}{E^2} \quad (1)$$

where,

n = sample size

E = margin of error

Z_{α}^2 = standard Z-score

p(1-p) = population variance

The sample size was calculated for a confidence level of 90 % and a margin of error of 5 %, and we get a sample size of 273 respondents. Thus, we have sent the questionnaire to 300 respondents, and we got 280 valid answers, having a rate of responses of 93.3 %. The questionnaires have open and closed responses. For the perception questions, a Likert scale in 7 points was used (1= less important; 7 = very important).

The focus of the questions was on the perceptions of the respondents on the future leadership skills: self-management, entrepreneurial spirit, focus on results, and power to delegate and empowerment for the team.

We have also calculated the correlations between these four factors. For this, we have used the Pearson's correlation coefficient using the following formula:

$$R = \frac{E[X-E(X)(Y-E(Y))]}{\sigma(X)\sigma(Y)} \quad (2)$$

where,

E(X) = expected value of X

E(Y) = expected value of Y

$\sigma(X)$ = standard deviation of X

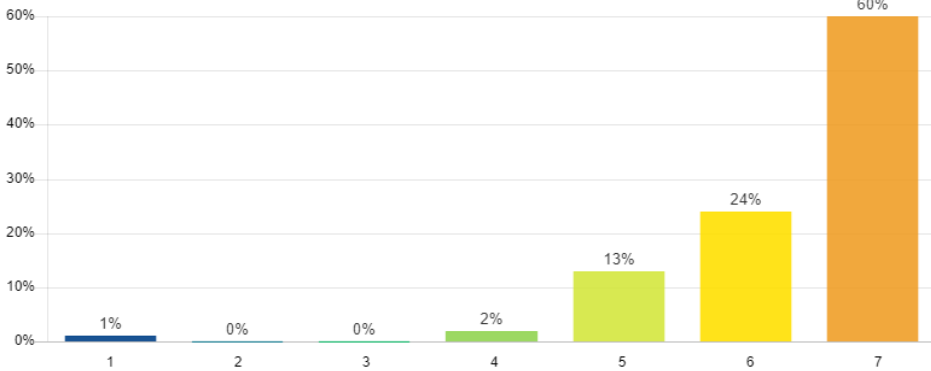
$\sigma(Y)$ = standard deviation of Y

4. Findings

The results of the perceptions regarding future leadership skills can be seen in Figures 1-4.

In Figure 1 are presented the results regarding the perception of the future leadership self-management skill (intrinsic motivation, self-control, understanding one's own qualities and flaws, etc.).

Figure 1. Leadership skills – Self-management (intrinsic motivation, self-control, understanding one's own qualities and flaws, etc.)

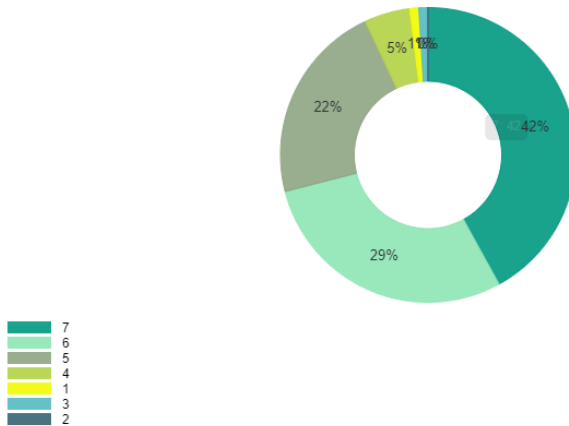


Source: Own calculation.

From the above figure, we could see that most of the respondents (60 %) consider that self-management will be a very important skill in the future. At the same time, 24 % of the respondents consider this skill to be important, and 13 % of them consider that this skill is somehow important.

In Figure 2 we can see the results of the perception regarding the entrepreneurial spirit, explained by courage, risk-taking, energy, passion, optimism, etc.

Figure 2. Leadership skills – Entrepreneurial spirit (courage, risk-taking, energy, passion, optimism, etc.)



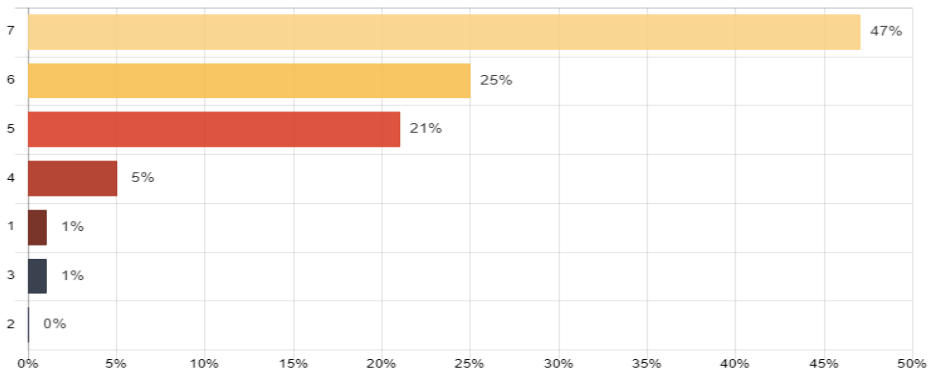
Source: Own calculation.

From this figure, we can see that many of the respondents (42 %) consider that entrepreneurial spirit will be very important in the future. Also, 24 % of the respondents consider that this skill is important, while 22 % consider that this skill

is somehow important. At the same time, only 7 % of the respondents consider that this skill would be less important in the future.

In Figure 3, the perceptions regarding the focus on results as a leadership skill, which is a direct result of responsibility, commitment, assumption, decision-making power, etc. are presented.

Figure 3. Leadership skills - Focus on results (responsibility, commitment, assumption, decision-making power, etc.)

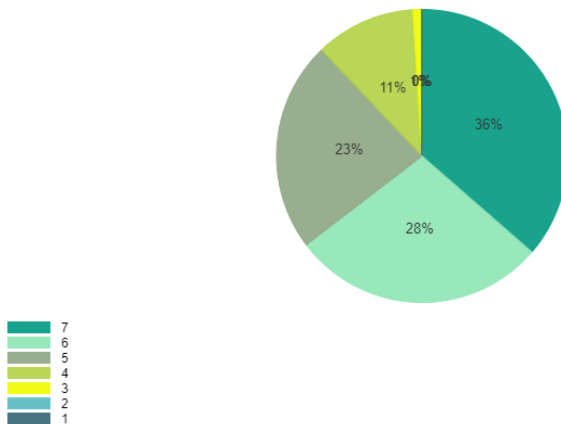


Source: Own calculation.

From Figure 3, we could conclude that most respondents consider that focus on results will be an important skill in the future. Thus, about 47 % of the respondents consider that this skill is of a high importance, while 25 % consider it important, and 21 % somehow important. We could also observe that only 2 % of the respondents consider that this skill is not important.

In Figure 4 we could see the answers regarding the power to delegate and empowerment of the team as a future leadership skill.

Figure 4. Leadership skills - Power to delegate and empowerment for the team



Source: Own calculation.

From the figure above, we could see that the answer was more balanced here. Thus, about 36 % of the respondents consider the power to delegate and the empowerment of the team to be a very important future leadership skill, while 28 % consider that it to be an important future skill, and 23 % consider this skill as a somehow important skill. At the same time, only 11 % of the respondents consider this skill of a low importance.

The correlation matrix was calculated with the Pearson correlation formula, which was described in the Methodology section. The results can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The matrix of correlation

	Self- management	Entrepreneurial spirit	Focus on results	Power to delegate
Self-management	1			
Entrepreneurial spirit	0.845109	1		
Focus on results	0.683015	0.729566	1	
Power to delegate	0.368521	0.815913	0.762925	1

Source: Own calculation.

From the table above, we see that there is a high correlation between these four leadership skills, especially between self-management and entrepreneurial spirit (84.5 %). Also, there is a high correlation between the focus on results and the power to delegate (76.3 %), the focus on results and the entrepreneurial spirit (72.9 %), the entrepreneurial spirit and the power to delegate (81.5 %), the self-management and the focus on results (68.3 %), and the focus on results and the self-management (68.3 %).

5. Conclusions

The Montessori educational approach equips students with a comprehensive set of leadership skills essential for the challenges of the future. Through the cultivation of adaptability, collaboration, empathy, critical thinking, and global awareness, Montessori students are prepared to become leaders who can navigate complexity, inspire others, and drive positive change. The future leaders emerging from Montessori classrooms will possess the qualities necessary to have a significant impact on their communities and contribute to a more inclusive, sustainable, and interconnected world.

The perception of future skills developed in Montessori students is generally positive. Montessori education is widely regarded as effective in nurturing the necessary skills and qualities for future success and leadership. Montessori students are often seen as possessing strong adaptability and resilience. Their exposure to self-directed learning and independent decision-making enables them to embrace change and navigate challenges effectively.

The perception of Montessori students' collaboration and teamwork skills is highly favourable. The emphasis on cooperative learning and the inclusive environment of Montessori classrooms foster the development of effective team players and leaders. Montessori education is associated with the development of empathy and emotional intelligence in students. The focus on social and emotional learning cultivates a sense of compassion, understanding, and ethical decision-making, which are crucial for future leaders.

The perception of Montessori students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills is generally positive. The hands-on, experiential learning approach and the freedom to explore various subjects enable Montessori students to develop strong analytical thinking and innovative problem-solving skills. Montessori students are often recognised for their global awareness and social responsibility. The integration of cultural studies, environmental education, and community engagement nurtures a sense of social consciousness and a commitment to making a positive impact on society.

In conclusion, the perceptions of the future skills developed in Montessori students are largely positive, with recognition of their adaptability, collaboration, empathy, critical thinking, and global awareness. Montessori education is valued for its ability to equip students with the essential qualities and abilities needed to thrive as leaders in a rapidly evolving world. These perceptions highlight the effectiveness of the Montessori approach in preparing students for future success and leadership roles.

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