

IA MCE

WHAT REALLY TOOK PLACE?



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REIMAGINING MONTESSORI FOR AFRICAN CLASSROOM

LEARNING, IMPACT AND REFLECTIONS FROM THE
INAUGURAL INSTITUTE OF AFRICAN MONTESSORI AND
COMMUNITY EDUCATION COHORT

African Montessori Hub in Collaboration and partnership with Montessori on Wheels through The Institute of Afrocentric Montessori & Community Education (IAMCE) launched its inaugural Fellowship to cultivate a new generation of educators, practitioners, and community leaders committed to reimagining education for African classrooms.

Rooted in Ubuntu and inspired by Montessori philosophy, the Fellowship sought to bridge theory and practice by equipping participants with child-centred, culturally responsive, and community-grounded approaches to education.

The inaugural IAMCE Fellowship received 59 applications, from which 17 candidates were

selected and 15 enrolled into the programme. Twelve participants successfully completed the Fellowship, representing an 80% completion rate. The graduating cohort reflected a diverse mix of educators, counselors, entrepreneurs, technologists, parents, and community practitioners committed to reimagining education for African classrooms.



This Learning & Impact Report presents evidence from the first cohort, drawing on participant evaluations, instructor reflections, observations, attendance records, and reflective narratives. Rather than measuring activity alone, the report examines how participation influenced professional practice, learning, and educational thinking.

The evaluation found that participants demonstrated meaningful growth in child observation, Montessori practice, community engagement, and Afrocentric educational approaches.

Fellows consistently described a shift from teacher-directed instruction towards facilitation, observation, and trust in the child as an active participant in learning. Many also reported increased use of locally available materials, stronger engagement with families and communities, and greater confidence in applying Montessori principles within African contexts.

Beyond technical competencies, the Fellowship fostered a community of reflective practitioners from diverse professional backgrounds, including educators, counsellors,

entrepreneurs, technologists, community practitioners, and parents. This diversity emerged as one of the Fellowship's defining strengths, enriching dialogue and broadening the application of Montessori principles beyond traditional classroom settings.

The report concludes with key lessons, recommendations for future cohorts, and a proposed pathway for strengthening IAMCE's learning ecosystem while contributing to the broader movement for Afrocentric Montessori education.



THE LETTER FROM COUNTRY DIRECTOR

To every fellow, every facilitator, every person who said, "yes," thank you.

Six weeks ago we made a quiet but serious promise to ourselves and to the communities we serve that we would do the hard work of reimagining education not in theory but together in practice and across differences. You delivered. Teachers brought their classrooms. Social workers brought their communities. Pastors brought their people. Development practitioners brought their systems thinking. And together, we built something the Montessori world in Africa has not yet seen.

To the facilitators and staff the program did not run itself. It ran because of your preparation, your patience, your willingness to hold space for hard conversations and celebrate honest breakthroughs. A job well done is an understatement. This was Cohort 1. The first of its kind. That matters more than most of us will let ourselves feel right now. But let it land; we did this first.

We are Doers of Hard Things.



BRYAN KADYA

AMH Country Director

Foreword

Education has long been measured through attendance registers, examination scores, and completion certificates. While these indicators remain important, they seldom capture the deeper transformation that occurs when educators begin to see children differently, when classrooms become spaces of dignity and curiosity, and when communities rediscover their role in learning.

The inaugural IAMCE Fellowship was founded on the belief that meaningful educational change begins with a transformation in how educators think, observe, and engage with children. Throughout this journey, participants were challenged not only to acquire new knowledge but also to question long-held assumptions about teaching, leadership, and community.

As IAMCE's inaugural Director of Learning & Impact, this report represents more than an evaluation of activities delivered. It is an evidence-based reflection on a learning journey. It documents not only what was taught, but what changed; not only what participants attended, but how they applied their learning; and not only what IAMCE achieved, but what it learned as an institution. The findings presented here affirm that Afrocentric Montessori education has the potential to nurture educators

who are reflective, culturally grounded, and deeply committed to child-centred practice. They also remind us that meaningful innovation requires continuous learning, honest reflection, and the courage to improve.

It is our hope that this report serves not only as a record of the inaugural cohort but also as a foundation upon which future cohorts, partners, and supporters can continue building a stronger movement for African education.



TINO MATENDA

**DIRECTOR OF LEARNING & IMPACT
(IAMCE)**

IAMCE THE BEGINNING OF A MOVEMENT

Housed and coordinated by the African Montessori Hub in partnership with Montessori on Wheels, The Institute of Afrocentric Montessori & Community Education (IAMCE) is a teacher, practitioner and community leaders training and leadership development institute dedicated to reimagining Montessori education for African classrooms. Rooted in Ubuntu and delivered through African Montessori Hub, IAMCE prepares educators to implement child-centred, culturally responsive, and community-driven learning across diverse educational settings.

The Institute exists to bridge the gap between traditional Montessori philosophy and the realities of African classrooms, where multilingual learning,

competency-based curricula, limited resources, and strong community traditions shape the educational experience. IAMCE's approach integrates Montessori principles with African knowledge systems to cultivate educators who value dignity, independence, identity, and community as essential elements of learning.

Participants explored Montessori philosophy alongside African child development, heritage-based education, inclusive practice, leadership, community engagement, observation, policy, innovation, artificial intelligence, reflective practice, and learning and impact. Rather than treating these as isolated disciplines, the Fellowship encouraged participants to understand them as interconnected elements of a

holistic educational ecosystem.

The Fellowship combined expert instruction, dialogue, practical application, collaborative learning, and reflective practice to support participants in translating educational philosophy into action. The inaugural Fellowship was therefore not simply a training programme. It represented the first practical step towards building an African movement of educators committed to child-centred, culturally grounded, and community-responsive learning.

OUR LEARNING & IMPACT PHILOSOPHY

At IAMCE, monitoring and evaluation is not viewed as an administrative requirement or a reporting exercise. It is a process of learning, reflection, and continuous improvement. We believe that while numbers help us understand the scale of change, stories help us understand its meaning. Together, they provide a more complete picture of educational transformation.

Rather than asking only whether the Fellowship was successfully delivered, this evaluation sought to answer broader questions:

- What changed in participants?
- How did the Fellowship influence professional practice?
- What aspects of the programme created the greatest value?
- What can be strengthened for future cohorts?

Our approach was guided by the zeal to teach practitioners while learning and exploring their first hand experience with communities and classrooms. Guided by one simple principle that We do not simply report activities. We document transformation.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

- Evidence presented throughout this report was drawn from multiple complementary sources.
- These included:
 - End-of-programme participant evaluation surveys
 - Faculty evaluation surveys
 - Session observations
 - Attendance records
 - Learning reflections
 - Practical assignments
 - Programme documentation
- Using multiple sources strengthened the credibility of findings while ensuring that participant voices remained central throughout the evaluation.

RESPONSE RATES

Participant feedback formed the primary source of evidence for this report. The evaluation achieved a strong response rate among graduating fellows, providing a comprehensive picture of participant experiences across the Fellowship. Faculty members were also invited to complete an instructor reflection survey. At the time of analysis, responses had been received from two instructors. While this does not represent the perspectives of the entire faculty, the reflections provided valuable qualitative insights into participant engagement, programme delivery, and opportunities for improvement. The findings from faculty reflections should therefore be interpreted as complementary evidence rather than representative of all instructors.

LIMITATIONS

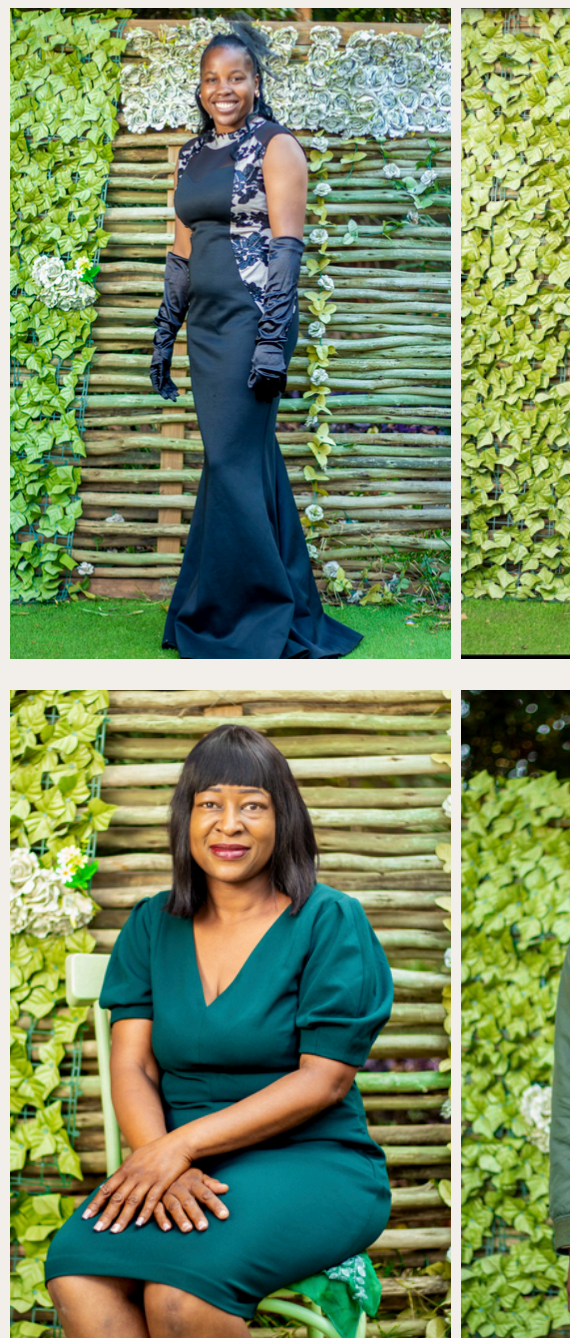
As the inaugural Fellowship, this evaluation represents an important baseline rather than a final assessment of long-term impact. Several outcomes including classroom practice, child development, and community transformation will require follow-up over time to understand their sustained influence. The relatively small cohort also means that findings should be interpreted as reflective of this inaugural group rather than generalised across all future participants. Nevertheless, the mixed-method approach adopted by IAMCE provides a strong foundation for institutional learning and continuous programme improvement.



MEET THE FELLOWS

The fellowship brought together a diverse cohort of professionals representing a wide range of educational institutions, organizations, and community initiatives. Fellows came from Montessori learning environments such as Joyful Montessori School, Bright Daisies Christian Institute, Elevate Tuts & Montessori on Wheels, alongside organizations in media and advocacy, including Matamba Film Labs for Women, specialized education through African Montessori Hub (AMH), and public health administration within the Ministry of Health. The cohort also includes practitioners engaged in social work, peer counseling, faith-based community development through Miracle Family International Church, and youth leadership and diplomacy initiatives such as the Southern African Young Diplomats (SAYD). This diversity of backgrounds enriched the fellowship by fostering interdisciplinary learning, collaboration, and the exchange of innovative ideas across multiple sectors.

This diversity created one of the Fellowship's greatest strengths. Participants consistently noted that learning alongside professionals from different sectors broadened their understanding of Montessori education and demonstrated its relevance beyond traditional classrooms.





Tawanda Dzingayi is animated by two great loves—data and people—and has never seen the point in choosing between them. Technically he works as an AI & Workflow Automation Specialist, professionally as an IT Consultant, and, more rarely, as a young Pan-African diplomat with his sights set firmly on AI Governance and Afrocentric Education. He is intellectually generous, the sort who gives away his best thinking before you've thought to ask, and emotionally astute enough to know when a meeting needs a solution and when it simply needs a cup of tea. What sets him apart is conviction: an unshakeable belief that technology ought to serve communities rather than merely impress them. He leads without clamour, builds across borders and generations, and has a habit of leaving people rather more capable than he found them.



Agnes Chirata is a counselling psychologist with the Ministry of Health. She has worked as a classroom practitioner and school counselor for 26 years . She is passionate about working with children and is proudly an IAMCE fellow.



Patience Geraldine Tseriwa is a creative practitioner whose work spans digital arts, new media, fashion, and creative community building. Drawing from her experience in business support and entrepreneurship development, she is passionate about nurturing talent, fostering innovation, and creating spaces where people can grow. She is inspired by the intersection of creativity, culture, and human connection, and believes that creative expression can be a powerful force for change. She is committed to empowering the next generation of creatives through collaboration, curiosity and a thoughtful approach to leadership. Patience embraces authenticity and encourages others to live, create, and lead with purpose.



Munotida Muropa is a communications strategist, content creator, and startup founder based in Harare, Zimbabwe. He works across African Montessori Hub and Aushe Properties, building brands and narratives that move people to think, invest, and act. At age 25, he has learned that meaningful work doesn't wait, so he builds, creates, and shows up fully across every space he occupies.



Kimberly Wadzanai Pasi is a passionate educator and entrepreneur dedicated to transforming how children experience learning. She is the founder of Elevate Tuts, where she blends creativity, care, and academic excellence. Her work is rooted in joy, connection, and helping young people unlock their full academic potential. In addition to this, Kimberly is the social media strategist for Montessori on Wheels, and is currently training towards becoming a Montessori Directress. With the knowledge she's acquiring, she hopes to create learning spaces that are child-centred, emotionally safe, and not only academics focused.



Molly Fungai Motsi, is a passionate learner. Her Montessori studies have deepened her understanding of child development, literacy, and leadership. She is committed to nurturing independent, confident, and compassionate learners. She believes in serving her community and making a positive impact through education. Her goal is to inspire children to reach their full potential.



Natasha Malunga is an urban planner, researcher, children and youth development advocate based in Zimbabwe. She is passionate about creating inclusive and climate-resilient communities through participatory planning, research, and policy advocacy. As co-founder of Designed for Resilience, she works alongside young professionals and local communities to address challenges related to urban informality, sustainable development and social justice. Her interests include urban governance, community resilience, climate action, quality education and empowering young people to shape the future of their cities.



Brenda is an ever smiling, adventurous and versatile teacher who is able to incorporate Montessori teaching into the HBC education. She believes in both personal and professional growth as the keys to success.



Lorator Chuma is a passionate Montessori educator dedicated to nurturing each child's unique potential. She believes children learn best through hands-on exploration, curiosity, and meaningful experiences. Her role is to guide, inspire, and create an environment where independence and creativity can flourish. She values respect, kindness, and lifelong learning in every interaction. Lorator's mission is to help children discover their strengths and develop a love for learning that lasts a lifetime.



Tapiwa Mandevani is a parent of three. He is passionate about child education and grounding kids in Afrocentric concepts of life.



Amanda Muchena is a passionate early childhood educator dedicated to nurturing young minds. She also refers to herself as a lifelong learner, who's always eager to grow and develop professionally. Amanda is rooted in family values and a strong sense of community. She's a proud mother who leads with warmth, empathy, and purpose. Amanda is also a Christian with a vision of becoming a compassionate global rowth as the key to success.

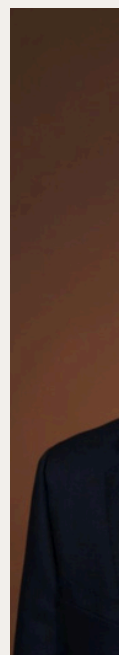


Mitchell Mavhura is a resilient young Montessori educator and social worker who takes mental health screening for children and young people at heart.



MEET THE INSTRUCTORS

The strength of the inaugural IAMCE Fellowship was shaped by a diverse faculty of educators, practitioners, researchers, legal experts, social workers, and international Montessori leaders who brought together deep professional experience and a shared commitment to reimagining education for African classrooms. Drawing from expertise in Montessori education, child development, community engagement, educational leadership, law, innovation, and social transformation, each facilitator contributed a unique perspective that challenged participants to think critically, learn collaboratively, and apply their knowledge in meaningful ways. Together, they created a rich learning environment where theory met practice, global experience met African realities, and every session reinforced IAMCE's vision of nurturing child-centred, culturally responsive, and community-rooted education.





THE LEARNING JOURNEY

The Fellowship combined theory, dialogue, practical application, peer learning, and reflective practice. Fellows engaged with experienced faculty from Zimbabwe and abroad who facilitated learning across multiple disciplines, including child development, heritage-based education, leadership, inclusive education, policy, innovation, learning and impact, and community engagement. As one participant responded in the survey, IAMCE should continue providing professional facilitators. Speaking to the need for expert speakers and facilitators that the fellowship provided.

Throughout the programme, participants were encouraged to observe before judging, reflect before acting, and place the child at the centre of every educational decision. Learning extended beyond classroom sessions through practical activities, discussions, collaborative assignments, and independent reflection.





Snapshots of our IAMCE cohort — learning, unlearning, and growing together through the fellowship journey.

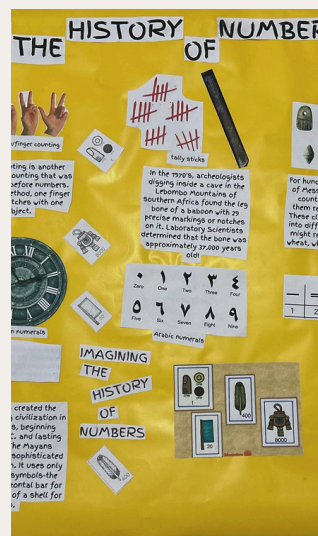


Capstone Project

To conclude the fellowship, IAMCE hosted a Celebration Event at Madam Flavor High Tea on Saturday, 6 June. During this special gathering, fellows presented their Capstone Projects — a powerful reflection of their learning journey, growth, and commitment to impact.



Each presentation captured the essence of the fellowship — Ubuntu, heritage based learning, Afrocentric storytelling, and so much more, bringing together 6 weeks of exploration, collaboration, and purpose-driven work.



THE CHANGE IAMCE ESTABLISHED IN OUR FELLOWS

Overall participant satisfaction with the Fellowship was exceptionally high. Participants consistently described the programme as engaging, practical, reflective, and transformative. Many highlighted the balance between theory and application, while others appreciated the diversity of facilitators and perspectives represented throughout the Fellowship. The inaugural IAMCE Fellowship set out to do more than introduce participants to Montessori principles. It sought to influence how educators, practitioners, parents, and community leaders understand children, design learning environments, and connect education with African realities. Evidence collected through participant surveys, faculty reflections, programme observations, and reflective narratives indicates that meaningful change occurred across several areas of professional practice.

The participant responses and instructor reflections support several clear findings:

- Participants consistently valued the quality of facilitators and the practical learning approach.
- Child observation emerged as one of the strongest areas of professional growth.
- Montessori philosophy was successfully translated into African realities rather than presented as an imported concept.
- Participants reported meaningful changes in classroom practice, especially towards child-centred learning.
- Many participants began using locally available materials more intentionally.
- Community engagement increased, although many felt there was still room for further growth.
- The faculty observed genuine commitment, curiosity, reflective practice and child-centred thinking.
- Both faculty members recommended more practical time, stronger module integration, improved scheduling and greater emphasis on public speaking.

While individual learning journeys differed, common themes consistently emerged across the cohort. Participants reported not only acquiring new knowledge but also changing how they think, observe, teach, and engage with children and communities.

REFRAMING THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATOR

One of the most significant shifts observed throughout the Fellowship was a change in how participants viewed their role as educators and practitioners.

Rather than seeing themselves primarily as instructors responsible for directing learning, many participants described embracing the role of facilitator, observer, and guide. Participants reflected that they had become more intentional about listening to children, creating opportunities for independence, and allowing learning to emerge through exploration rather than instruction alone. Instructor reflections reinforced this finding,

noting that participants demonstrated curiosity, openness to learning, and an increasing appreciation for child-centred educational practice. This shift represents more than a change in teaching technique; it reflects a change in educational philosophy that places dignity, agency, and trust in the child at the centre of learning.

SEEING THE CHILD DIFFERENTLY

Observation emerged as one of the Fellowship's strongest learning outcomes. Participants consistently described becoming more deliberate in observing children's behaviour before intervening. Rather than focusing only on academic achievement, participants reported paying closer attention to children's confidence, curiosity, emotional wellbeing, independence, and social interactions. Many recognised that meaningful learning is often demonstrated through behaviours that traditional assessment systems rarely capture. This strengthened understanding of observation aligns closely with Montessori philosophy while also reinforcing Ubuntu values that recognise every child's unique strengths and potential. The ability to "see before acting" became one of the defining professional competencies developed through the Fellowship.

BRINGING MONTESSORI INTO AFRICAN CLASSROOMS

A recurring theme throughout participant reflections was the realisation that Montessori education does not need to be imported exactly as it was originally developed. Instead, participants increasingly viewed Montessori as an approach that can be authentically adapted to African communities, cultures, languages, and learning environments. Participants reported greater confidence in using locally available materials, integrating indigenous knowledge, and creating culturally meaningful learning experiences. Many appreciated that the Fellowship challenged the misconception that quality Montessori education requires expensive imported resources. Instead, participants recognised that creativity, intentionality, and a deep understanding of children's developmental needs are far more important than the cost of classroom materials. This finding represents an important contribution towards developing an African model of Montessori education that remains faithful to Montessori principles while responding to local realities.

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY-CENTRED PRACTICE

Participants increasingly recognised that education extends beyond the classroom. Many reflected on the importance of involving parents, caregivers, and communities as active partners in children's learning. Participants acknowledged that sustainable educational transformation requires stronger relationships between schools, families, and communities. Several participants described leaving the Fellowship with a

renewed commitment to engage families more intentionally and to create learning environments that reflect community knowledge, culture, and lived experiences. This shift reflects IAMCE's commitment to positioning education as a shared community responsibility rather than the sole responsibility of teachers.

BUILDING PROFESSIONAL CONFIDENCE AND LEADERS



The Fellowship also strengthened participants' confidence in their own professional identities. Participants reported feeling more prepared to lead educational change within their workplaces, mentor colleagues, advocate for child-centred practice, and introduce new approaches to teaching and learning. Beyond technical knowledge, participants described developing greater confidence in their ability to question existing practices, experiment with new ideas, and contribute to conversations about educational transformation. This growing sense of professional agency is particularly significant for a programme seeking to cultivate educators who become catalysts for change within their own communities.

Participants consistently rated the practical nature of the Fellowship as one of its greatest strengths. Rather than relying solely on lectures, the programme combined discussion, demonstrations, reflection, collaborative activities, and practical application. Participants valued opportunities to connect theory with real classroom experiences and appreciated learning from facilitators whose expertise reflected diverse professional backgrounds. Faculty members echoed these observations, highlighting participant engagement, thoughtful discussion, and a genuine willingness to experiment with new ideas throughout the Fellowship. The emphasis on practical learning contributed significantly to participants' confidence in applying concepts beyond the programme itself.

OUR INSTITUTIONAL NOTE BOOK

LESSONS WE LEARNT FROM IAMCE

As the inaugural Fellowship, the programme provided valuable learning not only for participants but also for IAMCE as an institution.

The evaluation demonstrated that there is strong demand for culturally grounded Montessori education that responds to African contexts while maintaining international standards of child-centred practice. The Fellowship also confirmed the value of bringing together participants from diverse professional backgrounds. Teachers, counselors, social workers, entrepreneurs, parents, technologists, and community practitioners each contributed unique perspectives that enriched discussion and expanded the relevance of Montessori principles beyond formal schooling.

At the same time, the evaluation identified opportunities for improvement. Participants requested additional time for practical activities, greater networking opportunities, more structured engagement with mentors, and stronger integration across modules. Faculty similarly recommended strengthening programme scheduling, communication, and opportunities for participants to develop presentation and public speaking skills.

These insights provide a strong foundation for refining future cohorts while preserving the elements that participants consistently valued.



R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S

Programme Design:

Maintain the balance between theory and practice while increasing opportunities for practical classroom application and collaborative learning.

Curriculum:

Strengthen connections between modules to help participants recognise how different aspects of Montessori philosophy, African knowledge systems, leadership, and community engagement reinforce one another.

Learning Experience:

Create additional opportunities for peer networking, mentoring, and alumni engagement beyond scheduled training sessions.

Learning Experience:

Introduce baseline and endline assessments to better measure participant growth over time. Develop a graduate follow-up framework to understand how learning continues to influence classroom practice, community engagement, and professional leadership after programme completion..

Learning Experience:

Continue strengthening collaboration among facilitators through regular reflection meetings and structured feedback processes that encourage continuous improvement across the programme.

CONCLUSION

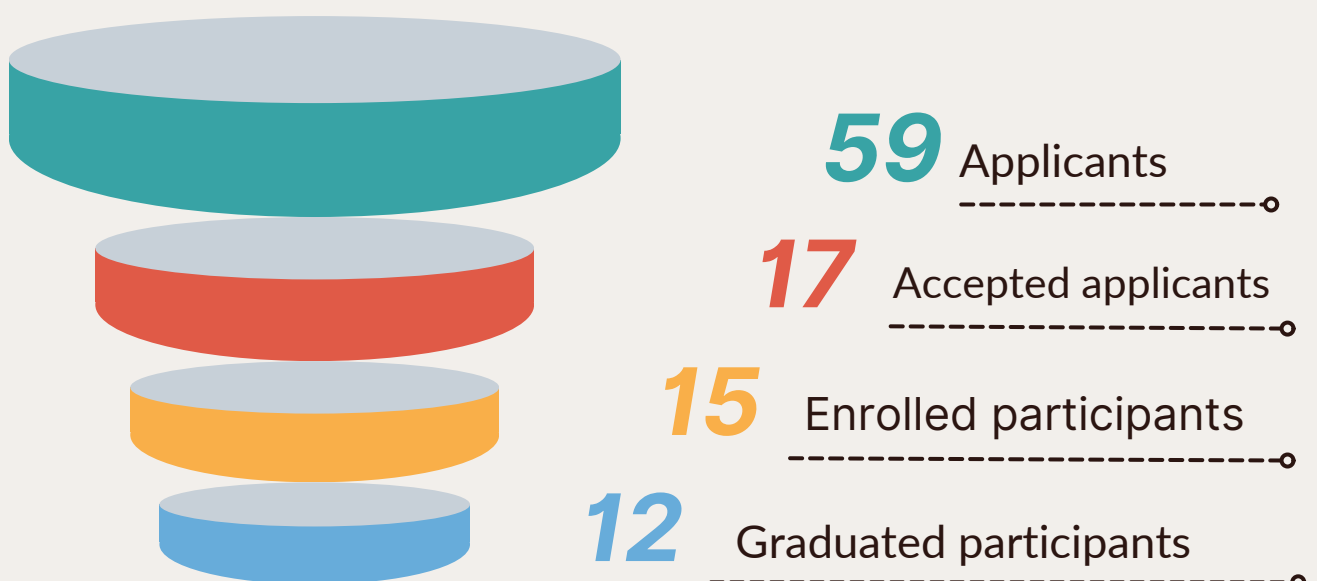
The inaugural IAMCE Fellowship represents far more than the completion of a professional development programme. It marks the beginning of a growing movement to reimagine Montessori education through African perspectives, communities, and lived realities.

The evidence presented in this report demonstrates that participants experienced meaningful growth in professional practice, child-centred thinking, community engagement, and culturally responsive education. Just as importantly, the Fellowship strengthened a community of practitioners committed to learning from one another and contributing to educational transformation beyond their individual classrooms.

As IAMCE prepares for future cohorts, the lessons captured through this evaluation provide both affirmation and direction. They confirm that meaningful educational change is possible when learning is rooted in dignity, reflection, and community, while also highlighting opportunities to strengthen programme delivery and long-term impact.

This report therefore serves not only as a record of the inaugural Fellowship but also as a commitment to continuous learning. At IAMCE, monitoring and evaluation is not an exercise in proving success. It is a discipline of listening carefully, learning continuously, and improving intentionally so that every future cohort builds upon the foundations laid by the last.

Cohort Pipeline Overview



NAME

