



Scientific monitoring of 'Arete-school' programme piloting

Report

Summarizing the Work Package 4 of the postdoctoral research

“Modernization of school education in Latvia through an innovative research-based programme on 21st century competences and virtue ethics development supported by a virtual campus (ARETE-school)”

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Executive summary

The aim of the postdoctoral research programme ‘ARETE school’ was the modernization of general education in Latvian schools, with a focus on character education, by providing research-grounded basis for modelling the ‘Arete school’ programme and scientifically monitoring its piloting and implementation.

This report includes information about the organization of the scientific monitoring of the ‘Arete school’ programme, which, following the conclusions of the preliminary research and the recommendations of the mid-term report, was implemented in two steps: 1) scientific monitoring of ‘Arete catalyst’ pilot programme (a teacher training programme for character education); and 2) scientific monitoring of ‘Arete leadership’ (a continuous development programme for school leaders).

The scientific monitoring of ‘Arete catalyst’ included the monitoring of the elaboration of an transnational teacher training programme for character education in collaboration with the Erasmus+ programme ‘Supporting teachers for developing intra-personal competencies and character education at school’, as well as of its adaptation to the Latvian socio-cultural environment and its piloting in 2019 by the University of Latvia. The scientific monitoring of ‘Arete leadership’ included the monitoring of the elaboration and the implementation of the programme, which was implemented in early Spring 2020 in close collaboration with the municipalities of Riga and Riga surroundings.

The scientific monitoring of the piloting of ‘Arete school’ programme lead to the conclusion that in the elaboration of teachers’ and principals’ training programmes for character education, the consideration of their needs, expectations and values is absolutely necessary; and that such programmes should give the participants the possibility of creating a true learning community, where they feel respected and listened to, and are co-creators of the knowledge and experience shared in the programme. Moreover, a key to the success of such programmes was to provide participants practical tools ready to use at their school for implementing and assessing the provision of character education. Participants’ answers point almost unanimously to their interest in and general satisfaction with ‘Arete school’ programme. Based on this research, some key recommendations were put forward.

1. Introduction to the scientific monitoring of the ‘Arete school’ programme

The aim of the postdoctoral research programme ‘ARETE school’ was the modernization of general education in Latvian schools, with a focus on character education, by providing research-grounded basis for modelling the ‘Arete school’ programme and scientifically monitoring its piloting and implementation. The programme addressed three educational sectors: pupils (activities in the classroom), teachers (programme ‘Arete catalyst’) and school directors (programme ‘Arete leadership’).

During the programme second activity (WP2), a gap analysis of character education in Latvia was conducted. It was based on the exploration of current character education approaches, on an historical research of character education in Latvia, and on an international benchmarking on character education theory and practices in collaboration with Latvian and foreign experts. Two reports containing the results of this preliminary work were published: the Research report No. 1 ‘Cultural and historical research on character and virtue education in Latvia in an international perspective’ (in English and Latvian) and the Popular scientific report ‘Pupil’s moral education at school in Latvia: opinions of parents, teachers, future teachers, heads of schools and education authorities’ (in Latvian).

As a result of this preliminary research, it was concluded that it was not possible to monitor the implementation of a single character education programme which would be implementable at any Latvian school, given the variability of understanding of character education among teachers and schools, and the diversity of schools in terms of size, academic focus, localization and available resources. Instead, it was considered to focus on teacher training for character education, scientifically monitoring the programme ‘Arete catalyst’, which was conceived as a professional development programme for schoolteachers. This would allow to support teachers with the concrete and diverse character education activities that they will conceive and implement in their classrooms in the frame of this professional development programme. The adequacy of this decision was confirmed in the mid-term report, which, in addition, recommended to work also with school directors and with regional authorities.

Therefore, it was decided that the scientific monitoring of the piloting of the programme ‘Arete school’ will be divided in two stages: piloting of the teacher training programme ‘Arete catalyst’, and piloting of the programme for school directors ‘Arete leadership’. The results of this research are presented below.

2. Scientific monitoring of ‘Arete catalyst’ pilot programme

2.1. Introduction

The scientific monitoring of the teacher training programme ‘Arete catalyst’ was facilitated by the collaboration with the Erasmus+ programme ‘Supporting teachers for developing intra-personal competencies and character education at school’. This programme was conceived by the postdoctoral researcher before the beginning of the postdoctoral project, and was implemented by a team of national and international academics from Latvia, Estonia and Spain in parallel to the postdoctoral research.

2.2. Scientific monitoring activities

Three scientific monitoring activities of the programme ‘Arete catalyst’ were implemented: Scientific monitoring of the elaboration of an international teacher training pilot programme, scientific monitoring of its adaptation to the Latvian context, and scientific monitoring of the implementation of the adapted version in Latvia.

Scientific monitoring of the elaboration of the pilot programme

For more details, see Fernández González at al., (2020). Designing a teacher training programme for character education: An international partnership.

In 2018-2019, a transnational teacher training programme for character education was elaborated within the Erasmus+ project ‘Supporting teachers for developing intra-personal competencies and character education at school – Arete catalyst’, a strategic partnership involving Latvia, Estonia and Spain, under the scientific supervision of the postdoctoral researcher. The scientific monitoring of the elaboration of ‘Arete catalyst’ addressed three research questions: What are the challenges that a teacher training programme for character education should address? What are the learning outcomes that the programme should achieve? How should the programme be structured for supporting the achievement of those learning outcomes? Two regional authorities, three schools, three universities and a centre of teacher training from Latvia, Estonia and Spain created a strategic partnership for answering these research questions, using design-based implementation research.

Regarding the challenges that a teacher training programme for character education should address (the first research question), three inputs were obtained from the preliminary research: the gaps that the teacher training programme should address were clarified; good practices were

discovered during international benchmarking and integrated in the programme; and recommendations from the experts’ seminar were considered.

Regarding the second research question, the learning outcomes of the programme were defined based on the preliminary research and following a specific process (explained in detail in the methodology section of the paper). Six compulsory domains were defined, and one or two learning outcomes were formulated for each domain.

The third research question addressed how the programme should be structured for supporting the achievement of those learning outcomes. It was found that the programme should include 3 learning modules, an external project, and a final assignment (Fig. 1).

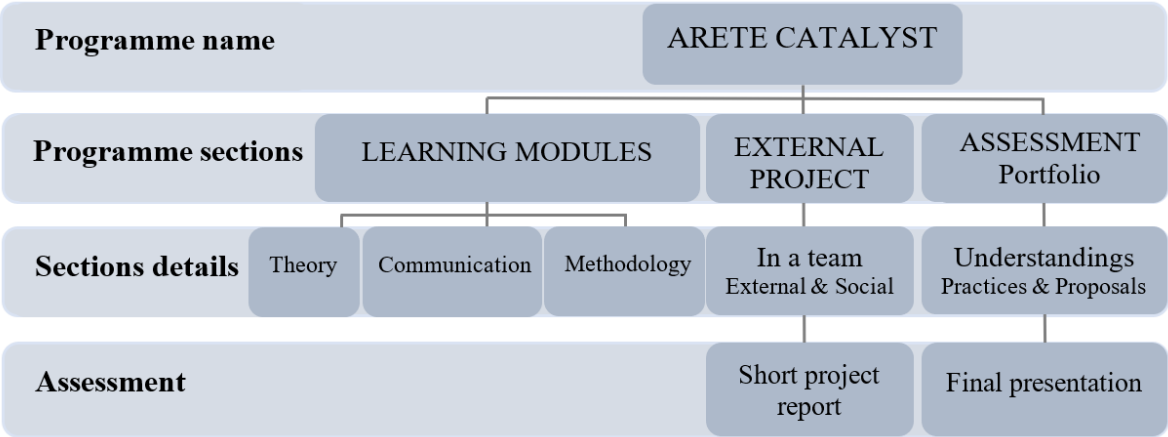


Figure 1 General structure of the programme (Arete Catalyst, 2019, 6)

As a result of the collaboration between the elaboration team and the postdoctoral researcher (scientific monitoring), the international teacher training programme for character education ‘Arete catalyst’ was elaborated. It included six domains of learning outcomes (with flexible formulation of the intended learning outcomes inside each domain) and a programme structure adaptable to different educational context was elaborated. The programme ‘Arete catalyst’ also included an ‘activity bank’, i.e., a number of resources and activities that implementors could use for each of the learning modules.

The monitoring of the elaboration lead to the conclusion that such a teacher training programme would strengthen the professional profile of teachers, enhancing their continuing

professional development in the field of pupils' transversal competences and personality development. The knowledge and skills included in the learning outcomes of the programme would strengthen schoolteachers' leadership. In the long term, the work of catalyst teachers graduating the programme 'Arete catalyst', who will become experts in character education at school, is expected to have also a positive impact at systemic level, by the modernisation and reinforcement of the response of education to the main challenges of today's world: promotion of social, civic and intercultural competences, intercultural dialogue, democratic values and fundamental rights, and active citizenship.

Scientific monitoring of the adaptation of the pilot programme

For more details, see Pīgozne, T., Surikova, S., & Fernández González, M. J. (Submitted). Adapting a teachers' training programme for character education in Latvia.

In 2019, the international teacher training programme 'Arete catalyst' was adapted as a Latvian programme by a team of experts of the University of Latvia under the scientific monitoring of the postdoctoral researcher. The aim of the adaptation was to create a culturally sensitive professional competence development programme, aiming at improving Latvian teachers' transversal competencies to promote students' character growth and excellence.

This work was reported in a scientific paper, which analysed the quality of this adaptation to the socio-cultural context of Latvia, considering needs and requirements at societal level, the policy makers' level, and the institutional level. Based on the theory of cultural adaptation of educational programmes, and on a qualitative analysis of documentary sources, the quality of the adaptation was discussed by comparing the features of the adapted programme with Latvian societal needs and policy makers' guidelines for character education (research question 1), and with the legal and institutional requirement for teacher training (research question 2).

The findings revealed that the adapted Latvian programme responded widely (but not completely) to Latvian societal needs and the needs of the educational sector regarding character and virtue education, offering an in-service teacher training for character education that is appropriate to teachers' availability and is therefore susceptible to improve their understanding of the language of values and virtues, and to enhance their personal flourishing. The programme is based on real situations, and would improve teachers' methodological skills in the field of character education. It also addresses values and virtue education, as foreseen in the governmental guidelines about pupils' upbringing and in the normative documents of the current educational reform. The Latvian programme complies with the orientations and guidelines of educational

policy makers regarding the professional development of teachers, offering a PCD programme fully in line with the Law of Education and the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers, and it also complies with the requirements and procedures for programme development and implementation of the University of Latvia, which is intended to implement the Latvian programme. It can be concluded that the adaptation of the programme ‘Arete catalyst’ to the Latvian socio-cultural context was successfully implemented. Further research directions could include piloting and refining the Latvian programme and completing it with methodological guidelines for facilitating the implementation of character education at school.

Scientific monitoring of the implementation of the pilot programme

For more details, see Surikova, Fernández González, & Pigozne, (Submitted). Piloting a Teachers’ Professional Competence Development Programme for Character Education in Latvia.

In Spring 2019 the adapted Latvian programme was piloted at the University of Latvia under the scientific monitoring of the postdoctoral researcher. Twenty-four in-service teachers and four teacher educators involved in the programme piloting assessed its general aspects (e.g., focus, materials, and methodology) and key components (e.g., learning outcomes, structure, activities, and length), completing a questionnaire.

The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data, which was conducted as a collaborative self-study involving four implementors and two external experts, revealed that the majority of respondents were satisfied with the key components and general aspects of the adapted Latvian programme. In their opinion, the programme sustainability, duration, materials, activities, ILOs, and methodology were appropriate. Therefore, it could be concluded that such programme could be proposed to in-service teachers interested in implementing character education at school. In order to enhance programme feasibility, some improvements should be introduced regarding several aspects such as diversifying participant recruitment, considering their initial motivation, adapting the programme structure to their preferences, using e-environment opportunities, and choosing a better delivery time. Programme flexibility could be a good solution to keep a balance between the programme integrity and feasibility.

2.3. Conclusion of the scientific monitoring

The findings of the scientific monitoring of ‘Arete catalyst’ suggest that the main strengths of the programme ‘Arete catalyst’ were its innovative methodology, the opportunity to enhance self-awareness and to renew their pedagogical resources, the involvement of the whole school team in collaborative activities, and the programme sustainability. Participants mentioned several

strengths and weaknesses of the programme regarding its meaningfulness and applicability to their personal and professional life. The teaching staff mentioned several strengths and weaknesses regarding participants' recruitment, motivation, and participation, learning environment, and programme sustainability. Based on two focus group discussions on the pilot study results, some suggestions about participant recruitment, programme introduction, structure and overall implementation were put forward to improve its design and delivery.

Currently the adapted Latvian programme is being offered as a teacher professional competence development programme by the Centre of Adult Education of the Faculty of Education, Psychology and Art of the University of Latvia. Further work directions could include the refining of the Latvian programme using the findings of this pilot study, especially the identified strengths and weaknesses, as well as the suggestions for improving the programme design and delivery. In further research, it could be useful to explore the effectiveness of the programme in different settings, for example, involving several different schools. The reliability of the study could be enhanced by using other qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews with participants. The long-term impact of the programme could be explored using a longitudinal study.

3. Scientific monitoring of ‘Arete leadership’ pilot programme

3.1. Introduction

Following the recommendations of the mid-term report, part of the fourth activity of the postdoctoral research programme was devoted to the scientific monitoring of the elaboration and the implementation of the programme ‘Arete leadership’. The goal of this programme was to support principals’ leadership for character education in Latvian schools. The programme ‘Arete leadership’ was implemented in collaboration with the educational authorities of Riga and Riga surroundings in February-March 2020.

The scientific monitoring combined the ‘practitioner research’ interpretative paradigm, in which qualitative methods help to grasp participants’ expectations and beliefs, with more classical empirical research, using quantitative data for capturing the perceived influence of the Programme on participants. The results of the scientific monitoring were used for the elaboration of the Master thesis of the postdoctoral researcher in the frame of his MA Character education at the University of Birmingham. The Thesis is available here: <https://dspace.lu.lv/dspace/handle/7/52875>

3.2. Scientific monitoring activities

Two scientific monitoring activities for the programme ‘Arete leadership’ were implemented: Scientific monitoring of the elaboration of programme, and scientific monitoring of its implementation. The monitoring of the elaboration focussed on how this novel professional development programme for school principals, addressing the implementation of character education at school in a cultural-sensitive way, was developed. The goal of the scientific monitoring of the implementation was to assess empirically the programme fit and feasibility and its effectiveness as perceived by participants.

Scientific monitoring of the elaboration of the programme

The elaboration of the programme ‘Arete leadership’, which was scientifically supervised by the postdoctoral researcher, was based on the analysis of school principals’ current needs in Latvia, which helped to define the programme goals, structure, learning outcomes and activities, whose choice was supported by scientific evidence and by the implementer’s intentions and values.

The intended learning outcomes of the programme (ILOs), based on the issues identified in the need analysis and the preliminary interviews, were formulated as follows: At the end of the programme, participants will improve their leadership competence for character education by

acquiring: ILO 1) an enhanced understanding of character education and the language of virtue, and of the importance of school-leaders' role for character education; ILO 2) an improved knowledge about personal and school values and about the way of working on them; ILO 3) the ability of using practical tools for planning, introducing and assessing the provision of character education at their school; ILO 4) the ability of collaborating with partners involved in pupils' character education (parents, teachers, etc.).

The programme was structured in three sessions: the first one addressed theoretical knowledge and participants' self-knowledge about the language of values and virtues. This session was crucial, because "the limits of one's language are the limits of what one might intend and strive for" (Pring, 2004:130). The second session addressed frameworks and practices for character education at school. The third one, more practice-oriented, focussed on concrete materials and tools for the classroom and for school assessment.

The choice of activities was guided by the programme ILOs, following the principle of constructive alignment theory (Biggs, 2011). 16 learning activities were implemented (see details in Table 1). Six of them aimed at improving participants' practical knowledge, presenting tools for implementing and communicating character education at school (ILO 3 and 4), and three activities addressed conceptual knowledge about the language of values and virtues (ILO 1). Five activities addressed principals' knowledge about their school values and self-knowledge about their personal values (ILO 2). Finally, one activity sought to enhance participants' mutual knowledge for enhancing the emergence of a learning community, and three activities provided self-assessment opportunities and allowed data collection for the research.

Each activity included two to four different methods. Overall, 36 methods were used. For reporting them, we used Landøy, Popa, & Repanovici's (2020) classification in three groups of methods: 1) 'student centred or active-participatory methods' were the most often used ones: 23 times, including 'individual reflection' (11 times), 'team reflection' (5 times), 'participants' reading' (4 times), 'classroom reflection' (2 times) and 'peer reflection' (once); 2) Among the 'methods focused on the interaction between teacher and student', the most often used was 'classroom sharing' (8 times); and 3) 'expository methods' were used 6 times, including 'demonstration of materials' (3 times) and lecturing (twice).

Table 1: List and analytic description of Programme activities (by order of implementation)

Activities (source / scientific base)	Topic	Goal	Methods
<i>Day one</i>			
Introduction			
1. ‘Control’, ‘influence’ and ‘non-control’ zones (Covey, 1992)	Leader role	Self-knowledge	Individual reflection / team reflection / classroom sharing
2. Initial questionnaire	Assessment	Self-knowledge / research	Individual reflection
3. “Value list” (www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_85.htm)	Values	Self-knowledge	Individual reflection / team reflection / classroom sharing
4. “School critical events and values” (Jacques <i>et al.</i> , 2009).	Values	Self-knowledge	Individual reflection / team reflection / classroom sharing
5. Language of virtue – “Lost words”	Virtues	Conceptual knowledge	Individual reflection / explanation
6. Exploration of Jubilee centre’s website (www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/)	Tool for school	Practical knowledge	Demonstration
<i>Day two</i>			
7. Sharing week impressions	Non pre-defined	Mutual knowledge	Classroom sharing
8. Framework for character education – analysis (www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/527/character-education/framework)	Tool school	Conceptual knowledge	Reading / team working / classroom sharing
9. Presentation “temperament, character and happiness” (Fernández González <i>et. al.</i> , 2019).	Virtues	Conceptual Knowledge	Lecture / classroom reflection
10. “From temperament to character” (Havard, 2018)	Virtues	Practical knowledge	Lecture / reading / individual reflection / classroom sharing
11. School as a character growth organization (https://www.skola2030.lv/lv/istenosana/macibu-pieejja/macibu-organizacija-skola)	Tool for school	Practical knowledge	Reading / team reflection / classroom sharing
<i>Day three</i>			
12. “The market of materials”	Tool for school	Practical knowledge	Demonstration / reading
13. School assessment with “11 Principle” table (https://exchange.character.org/introduction/)	Tool for school	Practical knowledge	Individual reflection / Classroom reflection
14. “Open thinking” activity	Tool for school	Practical knowledge	Individual reflection / peer sharing (long) / individual reflection
15. Final questionnaire	Assessment	Self-knowledge / research	Individual reflection
16. Final roundtable	Assessment	Research	Individual reflection / classroom sharing

The main programme features presented above were presented to two educational authorities (Riga and Riga surroundings) for implementation. The concept was approved and an official description of the programme, including goals, target public, learning outcomes, structure, activities, and methods, was prepared for starting the implementation.

Scientific monitoring of the implementation of the pilot programme

In late 2019, the two educational authorities from Riga and Riga surroundings offered the programme 'Arete leadership' and 35 participants (13 from the municipality of Riga and 22 from Riga surroundings) signed-up on voluntary basis. The programme was implemented in February-March 2020 in Riga and surroundings under the scientific supervision of the postdoctoral researcher.

Two research questions guided the scientific monitoring of the implementation of the programme: 1) What was the fit and feasibility of the programme? Concretely, what was participants' perception of its usefulness, methods, activities, and materials? and 2) How did participants perceive the influence of the programme on their knowledgeability of the field and their leadership competence for character education? The research instruments included a questionnaire, a reflective journal, and a focus group discussion. They were designed by the author in alignment with the programme activities and the intended learning outcomes of the Programme (Biggs, 2011).

Thirty-five school-leaders participated in this practitioner research, which used mixed methods (questionnaires pre- and post-intervention with rating and open questions, focus group discussion and a reflective journal). The rich data obtained were analysed using SPSS 26, AQUAD 7 and NVivo 11.

For analysing the programme fit to participants' initial expectations, beliefs, values and understandings, two methods were used: participants' rating of a battery of items in the final questionnaire, and open questions. The battery of items captured eight quality criteria that corresponded to possible expectation of participants: clear understanding of programme goals (A); achievement of programme goals (B); use of appropriate methods (C); acquisition of new knowledge and skills (D); possibilities for active participation (E); consideration of participants' needs and experience (F); time availability for implementing the activities (G); and acquisition of useful practical knowledge (H). All the quality criteria were rated very positively (see Table 2) with a Mode of 4 out of 4 in all criteria. The higher rated aspects were the opportunities for active participation offered by the programme (E) ($M=3.96$, $SD=0.18$) and its practical usefulness (H) ($M=3.71$, $SD=0.46$)

Table 2: Rating of the programme according to the quality criteria (4-point scale)

Rank	Quality criteria	Mean	Mode	Std. Deviation
1	E I was given the possibility to participate and use my new knowledge/skills	3.96	4	0.189
2	H I know where how to use my new knowledge/skills in my work	3.71	4	0.460
3	A The goals were clearly understood	3.68	4	0.476
4	C The methods were appropriate	3.61	4	0.567
5	F My needs and experience were considered	3.61	4	0.567
6	D I got new knowledge, understanding, skills	3.57	4	0.573
7	G The time allotted to activities was appropriate	3.57	4	0.690
8	B The goals were reached	3.43	4	0.690

Participants' expectations, believes, values and understandings were also captured in their answers to the open questions of the questionnaires. Overall, 171 unities of meaning were coded. 84 utterances (49%) referred to the quality of the programme itself. Among them, 22 utterances gave an overall positive evaluation of the programme usefulness and expressed gratitude. The most often mentioned positive points were: the quality of the work (18 references), in particular the clarity of the lectures ("*clear and fully understandable contents and ideas*", respondent 8), the novelty of ideas and methods, the practical examples and the time given to reflect; the experiences shared by others and the possibility of sharing one's own experiences and to collaborate (16 references); the resources offered (14 references), including online materials and books; the topicality of the contents (8 references); and the general good atmosphere: as a respondent put it, "*a fantastic feeling of being supported by the colleagues and the lector*" (respondent 11).

Key findings regarding the programme fit and feasibility: summary and reflection. There were six recurrent themes in the data. The key to the success of the programme seems to be the combination of participants' 'reflection' and subsequent 'collaboration' and sharing. Those two themes were already present in the initial beliefs of participants and, as least regarding collaboration, in their expectations; and, as the final evaluation showed, several methods and activities successfully combined those two aspects. Two other recurrent themes were 'professionality' and 'practical tools', which were also present in the initial expectations and beliefs of respondents, and whose provision was highly valued during the assessment of methods

and activities, respectively. The provision of practical tools was also positively highlighted in the overall assessment of the programme. Finally, the themes ‘values’ and ‘atmosphere’ of friendship respect and mutual support were also interwoven through the data, in particular in participants’ initial beliefs, and in their assessment of the lector, the methods and the programme overall. These themes were the most appreciated aspects of the programme and it seems that their combination made it successful.

A reflection on these findings revealed that the six themes were conceptually interconnected (see Figure 5). The programme ‘professionalism’ and ‘practical tools’ provided the necessary material for ‘reflection’ and ‘collaboration’, which in its turn were facilitated by the ‘values’ and the friendly ‘atmosphere’ of the programme. Summarizing, it can be said that the programme fitted participants beliefs and expectations, providing a variety of methods and activities led by a lector who, sharing professional knowledge and practical tools, enhanced participants’ personal reflection and sharing in a friendly context with underlying values of coherence and responsibility.

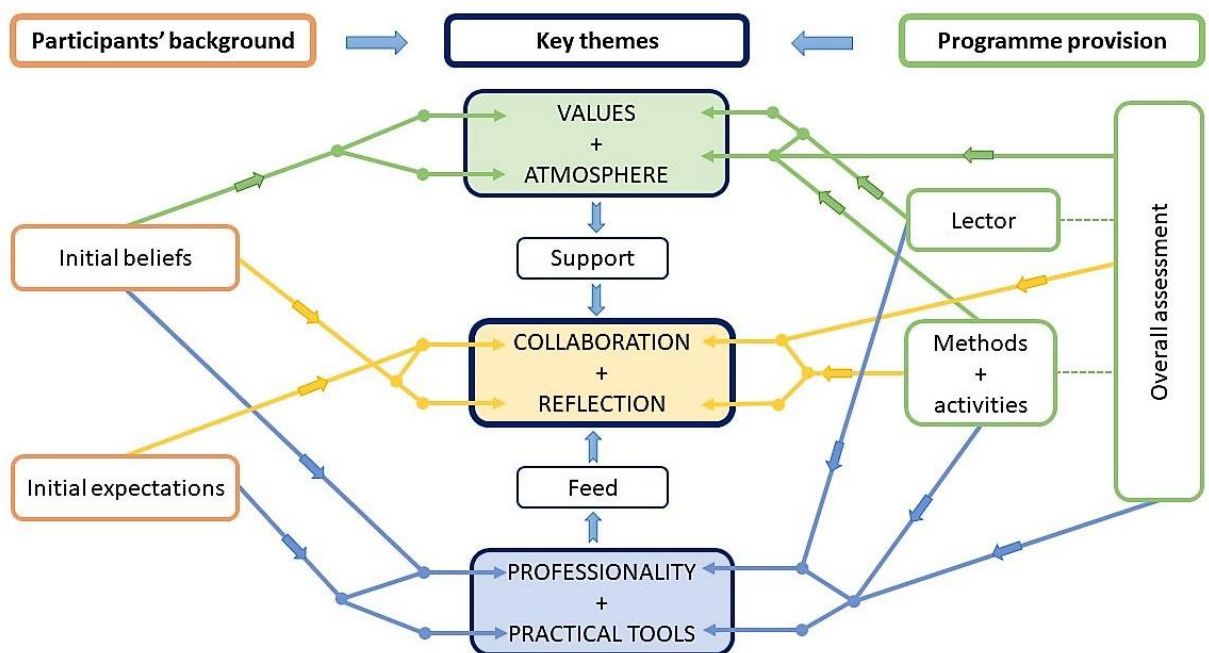


Figure 5: Key themes and their interconnection

3.3. Conclusions of the scientific monitoring

One of the aims of this action-research study was “leveraging good practices through key lessons learned” (OECD, 2017:35). This study had shown that, in the questionnaire, the programme practical usefulness and participatory dimension were highly appreciated by

participants, along with the appropriateness of its goals and contents, the innovative methods used and its general organization. Activities aiming at improving participants' practical knowledge combined with personal reflection and classroom or peer sharing were the most appreciated ones. Those findings were confirmed during the analysis of the reflective journal, in which the positive aspects of participants' reflection and sharing were often recorded. In addition, the lector's attitudes facilitating this reflection and sharing process, such as attentive listening, friendly support and facilitation of reflection and exchanges, were referred to most positively. Finally, regarding the perceived influence of the programme, the results also suggest that, at the end of the programme, most participants had increased their knowledgeability of the basic concepts of moral education and felt more competent leaders for values and virtue education. Given the practitioner action research paradigm of this study, reading those conclusions, one should "be satisfied with small-scale and rather tentative and provisional theoretical positions" (Pring, 2004:128), which can however "illuminate or be suggestive of practice elsewhere ... [because] no one situation is unique in every respect" (p. 133).

4. Conclusions of the piloting of ‘Arete school’ programme

This scientific monitoring of the ‘Arete school’ programme showed that, in the elaboration of teachers’ and principals’ training programmes for character education, the consideration of their needs, expectations and values is absolutely necessary. In addition, such programmes should give the participants the possibility of creating a true learning community, where they feel respected and listened to, and are co-creators of the knowledge and experience shared in the programme. Moreover, a key to the programme success was to provide them practical tools ready to use at their school for implementing and assessing the provision of character education. Participants’ answers point almost unanimously to their interest in and general satisfaction with the programme

The results of the scientific monitoring of the programme ‘Arete school’ confirmed the programme fit and feasibility and highlighted the importance of combining personal reflection and sharing in the programme activities, of offering professional materials practically useful at school, and of creating a friendly atmosphere of mutual trust and support.

Based on this research, some key recommendations could be put forward: In the future implementation of the programme, more space should be given for addressing more in detail the methods for communicating and involve with families, for example, discussing character education contents and tools for parents’ meetings, possible channels of communication, etc. In addition, more methods for enhancing teachers’ self-knowledge and mutual communication could be practised during the programme. Probably one more session should be added in order to have time enough to address those issues.

At the level of education policy in Latvia, during the programme it became clear that the current legislative efforts need to be completed with concrete educational opportunities for principals in this field, and with more financing for translating and adapting existing classroom materials and tools for involving the whole school in the character education initiative. School-leaders need inspiration from policy makers, a clear recognition of the importance of the educational work they do, maybe through an approach to school assessment based not only on academic results, but on the quality of the provision of character education.

The programmes ‘Arete catalyst’ and ‘Arete leadership’ scientifically monitored during this work package could be significant for different educational sectors. Teachers and school principals appreciate the practical usefulness of the programme, including the variety of methods for exploring and explaining values and virtues, materials in Latvian for use in the classroom and for personal reflection, and practical activities. This work is also relevant for character education

researchers, as it represents a pioneer research in Latvia about schoolteachers' and school principals' training using mixed methods, which included innovative methods for research on programme fit and feasibility, such as the reflective journal. The study is also relevant for improving the practice of teachers' and principals' training for character education, as it revealed some key factors of success (combination of reflection and sharing, professionalism, supportive friendly atmosphere), and showed in a practical way how to implement them. It can be expected that the further implementation of 'Arete school', with adequate improvements, may have a positive impact in character and virtue education at school, and subsequently, on the flourishing of individuals and society.

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