

Designing a teacher training program for character education using design-based implementation research.

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Running head: Teacher training for character education

Abstract

There is a need of innovative teacher training programs for character education. This paper addresses 3 research questions: what challenges the teacher training program for character education should address? What learning outcomes should it address? What program structure would support 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. The results include six domains of learning outcomes and a flexible program structure adaptable to different educational context.

Key words: character education, teacher training, learning outcomes, instructional design.

Elaboración de un programa de formación del profesorado sobre educación del carácter usando investigación aplicada basada en proyecto

Resumen

Hay necesidad de programas innovadores de formación docente sobre la educación del carácter. Este estudio aborda 3 preguntas de investigación: ¿a qué desafíos debería enfrentarse dicho programa? ¿Qué resultados de aprendizaje debe abordar? ¿Qué estructura del programa apoyaría el logro de esos resultados de aprendizaje? Dos autoridades regionales, tres escuelas, tres universidades y un centro de formación docente de Letonia, Estonia y España crearon un partenariado estratégico para responder a estas preguntas, utilizando la investigación aplicada basada en proyecto. Los resultados incluyen seis dominios de resultados de aprendizaje y una estructura de programa flexible adaptable a diferentes contextos educativos.

Palabras claves: educación del carácter, formación del profesorado, resultados de aprendizaje, diseño de programas

Introduction

The purpose of education is not only to cultivate knowledge, but to enhance the personal development of young people (Campbell, 2008; Osguthorpe, 2013; Sanger, 2012). To fulfil this broader purpose of education, in addition to subject knowledge, skills and competences, the 'good' teacher is required to be of good character, and ought to be guided by their good sense (Arthur, Davison and Lewis, 2005; Carr, 2007; Rosenberg, 2018). However, teachers in general education schools in all Europe are facing the challenge of "overloaded" school curriculum focused on knowledge and skills, and lack of time for developing transversal competences and virtues (moral education, ethical development, socio-emotional learning etc.), and lack of time for soft skills development (communicative skills, empathy, cooperation, critical thinking, social responsibility).

Teacher training influences and shapes the professional practice of teachers and their understanding of their role. Teachers expect to engage with the ethical dimensions of the profession in their training (Jubilee Centre, 2015). Training based on competences alone may not adequately prepare teachers for the ethical demands of the role (Arthur, Davison and Lewis, 2005), but insufficient attention has been paid to character during a teacher's Initial Teacher Education (Arthur, Fullard, Watts, & Moller, 2018). In a recent investigation involving 369 student teachers in UK, more than 80% of respondents considered character education to be 'important' or 'very important', but only a minority (7.7%) of stated that they were familiar with the term and knew what it meant, and less than 25% of respondents reported that they felt 'Very Prepared' or 'Prepared', to develop the character of the pupils in their classrooms (Arthur, Fullard, Watts, & Moller, 2018).

There is a need of innovative teacher training programs for character education which contain innovative approaches and methods and meet the needs of today's schools and society. Teachers' need to be empowered for initiating programs and elaborating materials for character education at school that are cultural-sensitive, adapted to the concrete educational spaces, school-environment sensitive and family inclusive. Schools need teachers who are able to initiate innovative practices of transversal competence and character education. And families increasingly need support from school to transmit values to youngsters in a sustainable way.

Qualitative teacher training in character and virtue education may have a direct positive impact in students. Within a context of overloaded school curriculum which focusses on the competitive acquisition of knowledge and skills, pupils need sound education in values and character development (honesty, commitment, and grit for personal flourishing). Moreover, there is a need of enhancing pupils' transversal skills that underpin innovative behaviour (Chell & Athayde, 2011), such as self-efficacy (e.g., self-belief, self-assurance, self-awareness) and energy (e.g., drive, motivation, hard work, persistence and commitment).

International initiatives in teacher training for character education

Nowadays many international and national projects address students' character education from different perspectives (Fernández González, 2018). Efforts have been done also in the field of teacher training for character education. In the UK, there are a number of initiatives for teachers' professional competence development in the field of character education. For example, in 2016, the School of Education at the University of Birmingham introduced the world's first online MA programme in Character Education¹, which is taught by expert members of the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues. There are also short free online courses, such as 'Building Character through Youth Social Action'² and 'What is Character? Virtue Ethics in Education'³. In the USA there are also a multiplicity of courses for teachers' professional competence development in the field of character education. For example, Character.org⁴ offers multiple support and training opportunities for K-12 schools, districts, and state-wide initiatives, which range from one day to multi-year assistance.

Personality development has often been addressed from the lens of ‘philosophy for children’ (P4C) and mindfulness, and there is a number of teacher training initiatives in these fields. For example, DialogueWorks⁵ (UK) encourages students to focus on carefully chosen personal and social virtues that will help them most in their learning and their lives. The practical training for teachers includes a two-day foundations course, a two-day advanced training in philosophical teaching and a one-day course showing teachers how to build student skills in the metacognitive framework. The program SAPERE⁶ (UK) trains teachers in P4C in order to encourage children to think critically, creatively, collaboratively and caringly in order to become lifelong learners. The teacher training includes a foundation course and several advanced courses of 2 or 3 days for examining the nature, purpose and methods of philosophical enquiry, showing how to choose and create materials to stimulate deeper thinking, explaining how P4C can impact the school’s standards and values, and showing how to plan a progress in P4C across curriculum. The program Akademie Kinder Philosophieren⁷ (Germany) offers courses for teachers and parents. The foundations course for teachers is consisting of four-two-days module (all together eight days and 64 hours), focussing on different questions: who am I? Me and others; What is the world? What are values? The program Akademie Philosophieren mit Kindern und Jugendlichen⁸ (Austria) focus on philosophizing with big groups of pupils, with a team, colleagues or parents. However, there is a lack of programs focussed on training teachers for implementing character education at school.

A new program for teacher training on character education: “Arete catalyst”

For addressing this challenge, in 2017 two regional authorities, three schools (two of them as associated partners), three universities and a centre of teacher training from Latvia, Estonia and Spain created a strategic partnership in the frame of an Erasmus+ project (KA2) for empowering school teachers in the development of students’ intrapersonal competencies and virtuous character. The joint project was named “Arete catalyst”. Arete in Greek means “virtue” or “character excellence”. A catalyst is an activator or facilitator of changes and transformations. The program “Arete Catalyst” aims at empowering school teachers for enriching the educational culture of their institution with a focus on character education. The topic, relevant in all the three countries, was addressed through an innovative multifaceted perspective, integrating the fields of expertise of each partner in closely related fields, such as philosophy for children, education for coexistence and citizenship, and virtues ethics.

The project “Arete Catalyst” aimed at supporting teachers who wish to enrich the educational project of their school by paying a sounder attention to pupils’ character education. During the project, an innovative research-based training program for these catalyst or facilitator teachers was created, in order to provide them with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote character education initiatives adapted to needs of their school and embracing the whole school culture and all educational actors: municipalities, school staff, teachers, parents and students. The creators and primary target group of the program were professionals working in the field of school education: local and regional educational authorities, educational researchers, school teachers and staff, and parents.

Theoretical background

For the elaboration of a teacher training program that supports teachers who wish to involve in character education, the initial theoretical framework used in this project was based on the work of the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues of the university of Birmingham (Jubilee Centre, 2015; 2017). During the preliminary research, this approach was enriched with contributions of participants regarding philosophy for children (P4C) and support for positive behaviour. Philosophising with children in school age leads to growth in learners’ self-esteem and has a positive impact on cognitive and reasoning abilities (Sharp, Reed, & Lipman, 2010). Recent studies that have investigated the implementation of P4C in Estonia (Roos, 2016; Säre, 2002;

Säre, 2018, in press). In the field of support for positive behaviour (Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 1998; Dreikurs, Cassel, & Ferguson, 2004), the implementation of a common system for promoting positive behaviour at school has been proved to facilitate students' positive behaviour and personality development, and to decrease of behaviour breaches at school (Ogden & Sørli, 2009; Daniela, Nimante, & Kraße, 2014).

One of the main concerns addressed during the elaboration of this program was that the target group of the program were adult teachers. The design of training courses and material for adult teachers is challenging. For a successful program design, several principles of adult learning should be taken into account (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005): teachers are professional leaders of teaching processes, who can bring their experience and knowledge to the program. In the program design, students should be given place for sharing their ideas, opinions, and knowledge, which will enrich the overall quality of the learning process. In addition, adults often are decision-makers and self-directed learners. Therefore, in teacher training program design, the trainer should be conceived as a "guide on the side" rather than a "sage on the stage". Adult learners need also flexibility in the delivery of the training. Adults are particularly motivated by their own 'generative themes, i.e., the concerns and issues that are most important in a person's life. The teacher training program should address clearly this specificity.

Considering the importance in adult learning of personal motivation and emotional wellbeing, five principles for instructional design that promote adaptive student motivation and emotion (Linnenbrink-Garcia, Patall, & Pekrun, 2016) were taken into account, namely: supporting students' feelings of competence, enhancing autonomy, using personally relevant and active tasks, emphasizing learning over social comparison, and encouraging feelings of belonging. These five principles were embedded in the program design.

Design-based implementation research

Educational design is wide field of research (e.g., McKenney, & Reeves, 2018; Kelly, Lesh, & Baek, 2014). Moreover, the process of designing a new educational program itself can be characterized as a research process. Recent scientific literature on instructional design adopt a problem-solving approach close to the research process (Romiszowski, 2016). In this perspective, the process of program design is conceptualized as a path from a training problem to a training solution (Van Merriënboer, & Kirschner, 2017), and the research questions are formulated in terms of which instructional design will better address the educational problems detected in a preliminary research. In this paper we adopt this perspective, presenting the process of the elaboration of the teacher training program as a research process that uses a specific methodology for answering the research questions.

For the elaboration of the program, design-based implementation research (DBIR) (Fishman, Penuel, Allen, Cheng, & Sabelli, 2013) was used. DBIR is an emerging user-centred research model for the design of educational interventions which emphasizes the ethical values of direct and indirect stakeholders throughout an iterative design process. The principle is that researchers and practitioners meet in presence or virtually for sharing knowledge and generating context-sensitive new knowledge about how to integrate values in future practice. A feature of this approach, which made it most appropriate for the design of the teacher training program, is the continuous engagement of practitioners and researchers at all the parts of the process: in the definition of the research design, the formulation of research questions, gathering and analysing data and interpreting the research results.

Research questions

The focus of this paper was on the research process leading to the elaboration of the learning outcomes and the basic structure of the program. The elaboration of the learning activities, and assessment procedures are out of the scope of this work. The research questions guiding our inquiry were:

1. What are the challenges that a teacher training program for character education should address, taking into consideration international experiences and national contexts?
2. What are the learning outcomes which will be useful for addressing those challenges?
3. What is the most appropriate structure of the program for reaching those learning outcomes?

Methodology

Participants

35 experts (educational researchers, program developers, school teachers and headmasters, policy makers, educational supervisors) from 7 institutions joined their efforts in order to elaborate an innovative training program for supporting teachers who will act as “catalyst” for introducing innovative character education practices at their schools. Concretely, the participants were: Education, Culture and Sports Department of Riga City (LV), University of Latvia (LV), Universidad de Oviedo (SP), University of Tartu (EE), Teacher and Resources Centre of Oviedo (SP), Advisory Board of Education and Culture of Asturias (SP), MTÜ Tartu Luterlik Peetri Kool (EE), and two associated partners: the Catholic Gymnasium of Riga (LV) and the Secondary school Alfonso II (SP).

The selection of partners was based on the capacity of partners to influence education, their experience of working with schools, their ability to engage other relevant stakeholders, and their experience in the field of character education. The partnership was well balanced, participants presenting both common characteristics and diversity. As regards the similarities, the 3 partner countries/region were similar in their size and the number of inhabitants, the 3 regional authorities involved were the leading national/regional authorities in the field of school education and had a high number of schools under their responsibility, the three universities had a well-developed research profile and work in the field of teacher training, and the schools were institutionally committed to pupils’ personality development. The differences between the partners enriched the research process. Three different type of institutions from 3 different countries were included in the project (3 universities, 3 local authorities and 3 schools), and each partner provided specific professional experience, and represented diverse cultural environments (from Mediterranean to the Baltic Sea). The schools represented the public and private educational sectors. The schools also brought their direct experience of character and virtues education through different perspectives: philosophy for children in Estonia, support for positive behaviour in Riga, educating for coexistence in Asturias (Spain). Through their strategic role at local level, the local authorities brought their experience of partnership management and stakeholder engagement. The Universities brought into the process their different academic cultures.

The selection of participants in each organization took place on voluntary bases taking into consideration of the aims of the project. The City of Riga involved three general education specialists of Education Board. From each school, the headmasters and two or three other teachers participated in the joint seminars aimed at elaborating the contents of the teacher training program. Each university provided two or three researchers specialised in need analysis and educational research for the elaboration of the preliminary research, and two to four members of their teacher education department experts in design and elaboration of teacher training programs. A key staff member was a postdoctoral scientific advisor from the University of Latvia specialized in character education, who collaborated with the research team during the whole process.

Chronology of the elaboration

The University of Latvia led the setting of the project. The preparatory phase included extensive communication between partners to refine the project’s aims and work plan, using telephone conversations, email exchange, and on-line video-conferences with all partners. Two

face-to-face meetings were also organized in Spain (November 2016) and in Tartu (December 2016). During this preparatory phase the key roles and responsibilities of the partners involved were defined.

For the elaboration of the program, at the beginning of the project (December 2017) a kick-off meeting was held in Riga with the participation of all the 7 partners, for enhancing synergy, mutual knowledge and defining collaboration channels and responsibilities. In January 2018, a 3-days long technical workshop was held in Oviedo (Spain) where academic partners and regional authorities decided the methodology of the preliminary research, which was implemented from January till June 2018. The main goal of the preliminary research was to gain knowledge about the national and international contexts of character education and benchmarking the initiatives of teacher training already existing around the world. In June 2018, a second technical workshop took place in Riga with the participation of all partners, for discussion of the results of the preliminary research and setting up the process of designing the teacher training program. From July 2018 till December 2018 the learning outcomes and general structure of the program were finalized.

Methodology used for the design of the program

The methodology used in the project included three steps: preliminary research, definition of the learning outcomes and decision of the program structure (Hamza, 2012). The first step for the program design was a preliminary research implemented by academic partners in close collaboration with regional authorities in each country. It addressed the contexts of character education in the partner countries and included information about the different understandings of character education, the existing initiatives (programs, teaching methodologies and teacher training) and a SWOT analysis of character education in each country. A joint benchmarking of teacher training initiatives worldwide was also performed, and case studies of the best practices in each partner country were performed.

The methodology used during the preliminary research included web-based desk-research of character education programs and teaching methodologies; desk-analysis of existing teacher training programs in each country; and web-based benchmarking of best practices on character education. For investigating the case studies, in-site visits and interviews with headmasters, teachers and students of the schools were organized. The preliminary research ended with a synthesis about the desirable general features of a teacher training program for character education at school. An expert seminar was also organized at the beginning of the technical workshop in Riga in June 2018, during which the results of the preliminary research were discussed with participants, teachers, career consultants and school directors.

For defining the program learning outcomes and aligning the structure of the program with them, the following methodology was used: based on the initial ideas discussed during the preparatory phase and on the results of the preliminary research, an initial set of intended learning outcomes and a provisory program structure aligned with them was proposed as starting point for discussion during the second technical workshop in Riga in June 2018. The 30 participants (teachers, academics, educational experts, external advisors, regional authorities) from the three countries were divided in three groups, which explored independently the initial proposal and elaborated suggestions for improving the formulation of the learning outcomes and the general structure of the program. After that, during a general session, each group presented their vision about the learning outcomes and the related program structure, which were jointly discussed. A consensus on six main domains of learning outcomes was reached, and several formulations for the learning outcomes relating to each domain were proposed and discussed. A consensus was also reached regarding the main modules of the program and the kind of activities that could be included in each module. At the end of the technical workshop the scientific adviser of the project summarized all the accepted proposals and elaborated a final version of the learning

outcomes and of the program structure, which was sent the next week to all participants for refining the final formulation during the summer.

Results

In this section we present first the results of the preliminary research that supported the elaboration of the program, and then we present more in detail the learning outcomes and the structure and main features of the program.

Inputs from the preliminary research about the teacher training program

Regarding the first research question ('what the challenges that a teacher training program for character education should address?'), three kinds of inputs were obtained during the preliminary research: the gaps that the teacher training program should address were clarified, good practices discovered during international benchmarking were integrated in the program, and recommendations from the experts' seminar were considered.

Gaps in teacher training initiatives to be addressed by the program

Several gaps were detected in the participant countries regarding the initiatives for teacher training in the field of character education. Overall, the teacher training initiatives in Latvia address only partially the different aspects of the field of character education: some of them are theory oriented, other are oriented to the classroom work or focusses on concrete subject matters (e.g., literature), some focus on a concrete kind of virtue (e.g., civic virtues, patriotism), others – on the integration of values in the school life or on interdisciplinary aspects of character education. There is a need for a teacher professional development programme that integrates the four teacher training aspects to which the Latvian Education Law⁹ refers: improvement of teachers' self-experience in the field, enhancement of communicative competence for creating a school culture, elaboration of methodical and didactic materials, and school and class management. Several teacher training programs are proposed in the field of virtue education, but they have an episodic character: for example, the seminars 'Improvement of a teachers' professional competence on the issues of national and virtue education'¹⁰, 'Improvement of virtues in the upbringing process'¹¹, and 'Basic principles of successful upbringing within the aspect of value and virtue education'¹², implemented in 2018, lasted only 6 hours or less.

In Asturias (Spain), teacher training for character education is done mostly from the perspective of the development of students' respect and tolerance, but subjects related to education for coexistence and education in values remain an optional subject in many teacher training curricula. The regional 'continuous teacher training plan', intended to improve the scientific, didactic and professional preparation of teachers, includes several priority lines related to character education, such as teachers' preparation for enhancing coexistence in the educational centres and preventing bullying, and enhancing teachers' ability of developing didactic materials in this field. Some concrete teacher training methodologies, such as the 'pedagogical gatherings' at school level, and working groups of methodological innovation at municipality level, are put forward, but have not reached a wide dissemination.

At University of Tartu, in Estonia, teacher training related to character education adopts the perspective of 'philosophy for children' and 'teacher ethics and value education'. The Estonian programme 'Value development of Estonian society' (Eesti ühiskonna väärtusarendus), which was initially implemented in 2009-2013 and then continued for 2015–2020, included several teacher training activities: for example, a game for teachers for discussing values was developed, introduced and practiced in the teacher training sessions, and a book describing four active learning methods promoting value education for different ages in educational organisations was published. Numerous value education in-service training courses were developed through an annual in-service training programme. And in the frame of the program 'Development of

teachers' value education competencies in teacher training' (Õpetajate väärtuskasvatuse alase pädevuse arendamine õpetajakoolituses), materials for addressing value education in teacher education was elaborated. However, this offer is not enough to prepare adequately the future teachers (Schihalejev, 2011).

Good practices revealed during the international benchmarking

The programs analysed during the benchmarking were mentioned in the introduction. The following good practices retained for the design of the program 'Arete catalyst' could be mentioned: the programme DialogueWorks has set a strong theoretical and philosophical foundations for their course, which is a good example to be followed developing our teacher training program. The SAPERE programme offers a very clear structure for the courses, focusing on the learner becoming an expert in the field. This program is also clear about the importance of practice for acquiring understanding of character growth. The mindfulness courses analysed provided insights about the importance of including different levels of expertise in the teacher training program for character education, and also offer examples of exercises and the content of courses. The P4C courses from Germany and Austria are a good example of how the course structure should be developed and what to take into account when deciding about the content. An important idea used in this course is that there should always be 3-4 weeks gap time between meetings, so that teachers are able to practice the lessons learnt and to discuss their experience with other teacher-students. Organizing meetings over a longer period of time helps to transform practice into a consistent professional habit. Another important aspect is the practical approach of the teacher training course: teachers have to be able to take part in philosophical discussions and should experience in themselves the influence of the discussions. Another useful idea was that at the end of course each participant carried out a planned discussion with other participants (as an examination).

Recommendations of the experts' seminar

A seminar with educational experts was organized in June 2018 in Riga during the technical workshop. The work done during the first months of the project was presented to them and a joint discussion about the design of the 'Arete catalyst' teacher training program took place together with project participants. We summarize below the main suggestions received during this seminar.

- About contents of the programme: Teachers need to acquire personal experience and understanding of their own values and virtues, obtained through personal and group reflection. A multicultural perspective is necessary. Mindfulness exercises, which enhance awareness and open (non-judgemental) attitude, would be desirable to work on teachers' self-knowledge and own values.
- About materials: Teachers need concrete support materials to implement character education in the classroom. Many materials are available online, so the programme should teach catalyst teachers where these resources are and should include practical work about how to adapt them to their local and classroom contexts.
- About programme methodology and assessment: School teachers often feel saturated. The programme should be built on the materials teachers have already elaborated for their own lessons, upgrading them by including in their worksheets or presentations some questions related to character education. The delivering of the program should be flexible, and the methodology should be innovative, including blended learning and use of virtual spaces, collaboration and peer assessment. The programme should be very practical.
- About the school community: A priority of the program should be to involve the educational community as a whole. To be sustainable, the administration of the school should support strongly the introduction of character education. Parents and students should also be involved in the design of the programme at school level and the choice of values/virtues to focus on.

- About terminology: Values and virtues are similar concepts but not identical. Clarification of the meaning of these terms should be included in the programme. Regarding country specificities, in Latvia it might be better to use the term “education of moral habits” instead of “character education” or “virtue education”. In Estonia the term value education is widely accepted and, with the appropriate explanations, could cover also virtue education. In addition, the term “vaikuseminutid” is being used as a synonym of mindfulness. In Asturias (Spain), the most appropriate would be to use the perspective of “education for coexistence” for addressing character education at school.
- The teacher training program should include common transnational elements, but also should take into account country specificities. For example, in Latvia a new professional development programme is needed to integrate the 4 aspects included in the Latvian Educational Law mentioned above: teachers’ general competencies, teachers’ self-experience (including teacher personality development), methods and didactics (e.g., elaboration of teaching/learning materials for use in the classroom), and school and class management (including school culture creation). In Asturias (Spain), the programme should be in line with the priorities of the Regional Board of Education and Culture (improvement of coexistence). It should be holistic, not only about specific aspects, and aimed at prevention, not at reacting to inappropriate behaviour. Regarding the contents, it would be desirable to include such topics as ‘communicating in the classroom’, ‘teaching styles’, ‘practical resources’ and ‘attention to students’ diversity’. In Estonia, the programme could build on the existing good expertise on ‘philosophy for children’ and on the work of the association Vaikuseminutid (Minutes of stillness¹³), using the application for smartphones and the published materials to support teachers.

These three inputs strengthened the rationale for the formulation of the learning outcomes and the choice of the program structure, which are presented below.

The learning outcomes of the program

We address now the answer to the second research question. The learning outcomes of the program were defined based on the preliminary research and following the process explained in the methodology section. Six compulsory domains were defined, and 1 or 2 learning outcomes were formulated for each domain:

Domain 1: Advanced disciplinary knowledge and practices. Graduates will have acquired advanced knowledge and skills in the fields of value and virtue education and development of transversal competences, and an ability to evaluate them critically in the context of their country and school. Students should be able to: 1.1. Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the body of knowledge of the field; and 1.2. Critically evaluate international and intercultural perspectives in the field.

Domain 2: Self-awareness and cognitive skills. Graduates will have developed advanced awareness of, and critical thinking about, their own values and virtues, and those of their educational community. Students should be able to: 2.1. Recognize, formulate and evaluate their own value attitudes and virtues; and 2.2. Develop shared awareness of values in their own classroom and school.

Domain 3: Methodological and didactic skills. Graduates will have acquired the knowledge and skills necessary for selecting/elaborating materials for the classroom, for a lesson or for integrating value/virtue education transversally through their subject. They will be able to use them in the classroom and evaluate them. Students should be able to: 3.1. Choose/adapt or elaborate classroom materials (inside a subject or for an independent lesson) for enhancing a concrete aspect of pupils’ personality (a value, a virtue or set of virtues, etc.); and 3.2. Pilot some of the chosen/elaborated materials in their classroom and evaluate their experience.

Domain 4: Communication, adaptive and interactional skills. Graduates will be able to communicate effectively to a range of audiences (school administration, other teachers, parents, pupils). Students should be able to: 4.1 Communicate complex ideas related to education of values, virtues and transversal competences in a variety of formats, including new technologies, to a variety of school-related audiences.

Domain 5: Practising values. Graduates will have developed an understanding of the importance of practising values inside a community for developing character skills and good habits. They will be able to demonstrate this knowledge together with others during a project with a social dimension. Students should be able to: 5.1. Plan and conduct an external social project as a practical implementation of their (or their community or classroom) values, which enhances the development of participants' values and virtues; and 5.2. Demonstrate an understanding of, and the ability to apply, the principles of teamwork and collaboration during the implementation of the project.

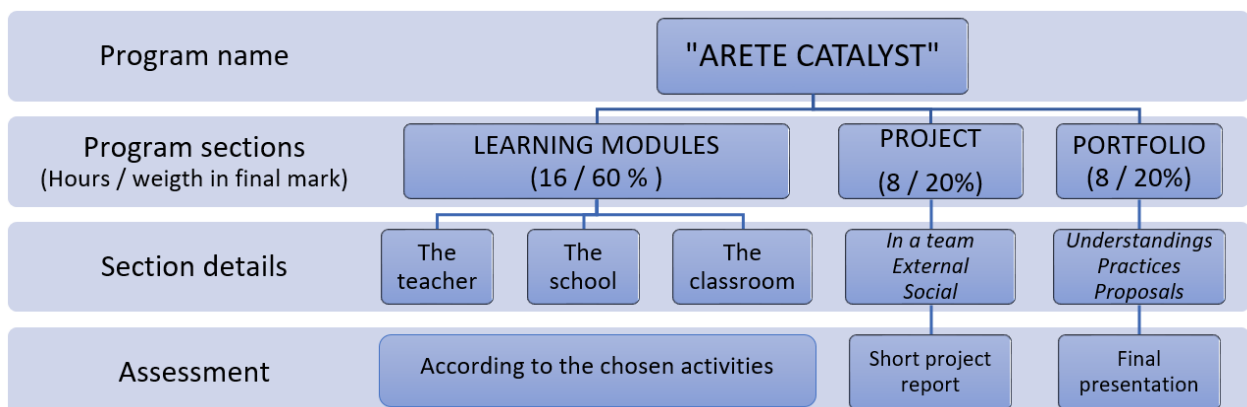
Domain 6: Transformative skills. Graduates will have developed the ability of conceptualizing and formulating a proposal adapted to their school situation for the creation of a school culture that supports value and virtue education, involving all educational actors. Students should be able to: 6.1. Make a concrete proposal for their own school in order to create/develop a school culture that supports the development of students' values, virtues and intrapersonal competences, based on the knowledge and skills acquired in the program; and 6.2. Involve in their proposal all educational actors (school administration, other teachers, parents, students) for the creation of such a school culture.

It was also decided that these 6 domains should be covered by the program and are non-negotiable, but the formulation of the learning outcomes is negotiable. At the beginning of the implementation of each course they can be discussed with the participants, and emerging learning outcomes can be added at the beginning or during the implementation of the program.

Program structure and features

The third research question addressed the structure of a teacher training program oriented to the acquisition of those learning outcomes. We present below the results obtained using the methodology explained above, and the main features of the program.

The program includes 3 learning modules, an external project and a final assignment (see Figure 1). The 3 learning modules address 3 levels of educational ecosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979): the teacher (module one), the school community as a whole (module 2), and the classroom level (module 3).



Source: *The Authors*

Figure 1: Structure of the teacher training program

The first module (*The teacher – personal “arete” for becoming a catalyst*) aims at the enhancement of teacher’s theoretical and applied knowledge of the field, and of teacher self-awareness about own values and virtues. The second module (*The school – catalysts teachers for the whole school community*) aims at the enhancement of teacher’s communicative skills for transformation of the school culture: definition of school values, work with parents, teachers and administration. The third module (*The classroom – teachers as catalysts of pupils’ “arete”*) aims at the enhancement of teachers’ methodological competence by designing activities and materials and piloting them in the classroom.

The external project is a practical implementation of the values of the school, the classroom or the catalyst teacher, which will enhance the development of participants’ virtues and/or intrapersonal competences. The project should fulfil 3 conditions: 1) it should be implemented in a team (together with other catalyst teachers from the program, or teachers and/parents of their school, or with pupils); 2) it should have an external dimension (it should be implemented out of the settings where the group comes from); and 3) it should have a social dimension: it should be addresses to people with different needs (loneliness, illness, ageing, migrants, vulnerable youngsters, people with different dependences, etc.).

For the final assignment, students will create a digital portfolio collecting/summarizing the contents of the course, which will have a practical utility for the teacher. It should include a section “action proposal for my school”. As an orientation, it could have the following sections:

- a) *Understandings of virtues and values*. It can include several sub-sections: my values and virtues; my school values and virtues; international perspectives; theoretical bases (academic papers).
- b) *Practical materials*. It can include several sections: materials for classroom hours; teaching values and virtues through subjects; description of social projects; materials for working with families and school administration, etc.
- c) *“Action proposal for my school”*: A practical and realistic proposal for transforming the teachers’ whole school culture. It can have several sections: general aims, context analysis (opportunities, difficulties at school), steps to implement, necessary resources, etc.

The 3 learning modules demand 16 hours (including individual work and contact-hours) and accounts for 60% of the mark. The distribution of hours per module is decided in each program implementation. The project demands 8 hours and accounts for 20% of the mark, the same as the digital portfolio.

The program includes common (fixed) elements conferring a unitarian identity to the program, and flexible elements for implementation in different countries (see Table 1).

Table 1: Common and flexible elements of the teacher training program education

Aspects	Common elements	Flexible elements in each country or implementation
Name of the program	“Arete catalyst”	Can have “national subtitles”
Target	In-service teachers (catalyst teachers)	Can be implemented within a teacher training institution for different teachers, or as workplace learning within a school
Number of hours	32 hours (includes contact hours and independent work)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program timeline (distribution of the 32 hours into weeks and months) can be different • The distribution of contact hours / independent work can vary
Learning outcomes	The 6 domains of ILOs to be covered by the program and are non-negotiable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The formulation of the LOs of the course can be discussed with the participants. • Emerging ILOs can be added

Structure of the program	Three learning modules, an external project and a final assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the 3 modules can be implemented in different order • The duration (number of hours) of each module can be different
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4. Discussion

In this discussion we address the benefits obtained during the program elaboration and its expected impact of the program, as well as the limits of the program and recommendations for future work.

Benefits obtained during the program elaboration and expected impact

The joint elaboration of the project had a positive impact on participants' professional development: it enhanced their motivation and satisfaction in daily work, and enhanced their own transversal competences, such as their ability to use practically foreign languages. The methodology used also helped participants to develop collaborative skills. It also provided them a better understanding of practices, policies and systems in education across countries.

The project had also positive effects on the participating organisations, which increased their capacity to work at international level. Participant institutions reinforced their professionalism in cooperating with other countries and increased their capacity of addressing institutional target groups (teachers, school staff, parents) through the offer of an attractive teacher training programme in line with their concrete needs and expectations. Participant schools developed a school culture sensitive to character education and improved their school networking.

This process also reinforced the interaction between practitioners, researchers and policy makers. The process of elaboration of the program "Arete catalyst" was a good example both of integration of research and design of educational programs, and of interdisciplinarity approach, integrating different branches of science, such as Educational sciences, Psychology, Philosophy, Ethics and Religion. The transnational character of the elaboration process enhanced a joint reflection and a novel cultural sensitive approach to transversal competence and character education development.

In the future, the implementation of the teacher training program "Arete catalyst" would strengthen the professional profiles of teachers, enhancing their continuing professional development in the field of pupils' transversal competence and personality development. The learning outcomes of the program include also knowledge and skills that will strengthen school teachers' leadership. In the long term, the work of catalyst teachers graduating the program "Arete catalyst", who will be 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.

Limits of the study and suggestions for further work

The study did not address the process of elaboration of the teaching learning activities of the program and the assessment procedures. For implementing this work, it is suggested to use the constructive alignment approach. In constructive alignment theory (Biggs, 2011), the learning outcomes (what students should learn or be able to do) guide the elaboration of teaching and learning activities (how the learner will acquire these learning outcomes) and the assessment tasks (how the learners will come to evaluate and reflect on their own progress). Learning activities and assessment tasks should be 'aligned' with the learning outcomes: the learning outcomes define the assessment criteria which are used to design the aligned assessment. Individual students are guided both by the learning outcomes and the assessment activities and construct their learning through appropriate learning activities that are designed to produce the

intended learning outcomes and that are supported by the aligned assessment (Biggs, 2014; Biggs & Tang, 2007).

Once the activities and assessment are elaborated, the next steps would be piloting, delivering and assessment of the program (Hamza, 2012). A further challenge will be the program dissemination. Materials should be translated in national languages for facilitating local implementation and dissemination. A strong institutional commitment will be necessary for ensuring a sustainable impact of the program.

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End notes

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