

ON A PATHWAY TOWARDS A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO VIRTUE EDUCATION: A CASE OF THE E-TAP CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT

A holistic approach is becoming increasingly significant in 21st century education. To address the cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects of morality, the holistic approach to character (virtue) education as part of 21st century school education is essential. For the purpose of this research, the virtue education curriculum launched in Latvia in 2021 within the research project “e-TAP” was chosen. This article aimed to analyse the e-TAP curriculum (fall 2022 version), corresponding to the requirements for a well-designed character education programme. To address the research goal, the following research questions were put forward: Does the e-TAP curriculum meet all the criteria proposed for a character education programme prototype? Has the holistic learning approach been incorporated into the e-TAP curriculum at various design levels? For this empirical study, an explanatory sequential research design was implemented. To address the first research question, a 19-item questionnaire with a 4-point Likert scale was used involving three independent experts to evaluate the e-TAP curriculum according to the criteria and indicators for a character education programme prototype. To address the second research question, the Excel data matrix was used as an evaluation form to analyse the e-TAP curriculum at different design levels. Employing deductive content analysis, two independent experts collaborated while coding the e-TAP curriculum activities ($n = 574$), which were combined in 124 lessons grouped into 17 topics within five modules. According to the experts’ consolidated evaluation results, the e-TAP curriculum fully corresponded to the requirements of a well-designed character education programme: it met all the proposed criteria for a character education programme prototype and addressed the holistic learning approach on all its design levels (activity, lesson, topic, and module). Some implications for researchers and practitioners were proposed.

Keywords: case study, character education, curriculum design, holistic approach, virtue education

Introduction

The holistic approach to education includes a broad range of philosophical directions and pedagogical practices; its focus is on the wholeness, inclusion, connectedness, and

balance between different aspects of life, for instance, individual and collective, internal and external, analytic and intuitive, spiritual and material (Mahmoudi et al., 2012; Miller, 2019). In the holistic approach, a person is viewed as a whole, if a person can live a harmonious life, being in cooperation with the surrounding world, and has equally developed all areas of life: spiritual, intellectual, physical, social, and emotional. This approach is becoming more and more popular and relevant in 21st century education (Badjanova & Iliško, 2015; Cedefop, 2019; Drew, 2022; Gazibara, 2013; Lieģeniece, 2013; Mahmoudi et al., 2012; Miseliunaite et al., 2022; Van Kuyk, 2009), considerably expanding the idea of what education is, what effective curricula should be like, what the efficient learning, teaching, and upbringing process ought to be and what the role of educational institutions (including the teacher) is required to be.

It is possible to implement the holistic approach at all levels of education, including preschool, lower-secondary, upper-secondary, and higher education. In the model developed by Lieģeniece (1999) “A holistic approach to raising 5–7-year-old children”, the development of all areas of the child’s personality is emphasised for the advancement of self-regulation, which occurs in everyday situations and deliberately organised interactions with adults. Self-regulation is one of the most essential resources of a child’s internal development, which affects both readiness for school, achievement at school and success in social situations, helping people to realise themselves throughout their lives (Lieģeniece, 2013, Van Kuyk, 2009). Van Kuyk (2009) believes that the holistic approach is the best choice for developing an effective curriculum in preschool to promote connections between different areas of children’s development, because an effective curriculum must ensure a good balance between promoting children’s self-regulation and optimising their development on the part of the teacher.

Badjanova and Iliško (2015) concluded in their study that the holistic approach to education can considerably affect the quality of the teaching and learning process at school. Thus, to improve a conceptual framework for an effective teaching and learning process based on a holistic approach, it is essential to evaluate not only the structure of teaching and learning, but also the content and procedural aspects of teaching and learning (e.g., students’ interaction with the teacher and other students).

In higher education, the holistic approach to teaching and learning advances students’ determination to be critical, confident, and independent; aims to make learning a process of self-improvement that explicitly recognises the self and the social context of learning and teaching and recognising the needs of the individual learner in the interaction (Patel, 2003).

The holistic approach has been actualised in 21st century education (Bruhlmeier, 2010; Gazibara, 2013) based on the beliefs of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi regarding the necessity to develop the powers of ‘head, heart, and hands’ through education. It integrates the affective (emotional), psychomotor (practical), and cognitive (intellectual) domains of learning, acknowledging the culture of ‘head, heart, and hands’ learning (hereinafter: the 3H learning). This approach is oriented to satisfying individual’s intellectual, emotional, and practical needs and interests, which is one of the main objectives of contemporary education.

Figure 1 illustrates the transition from a single learning domain to the triple learning domain model that encompasses three domains of learning (the 3H learning) as the focus of this study.

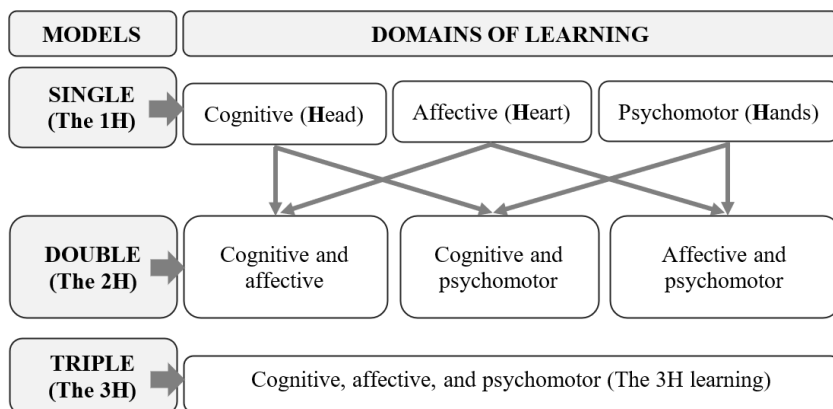


Figure 1 Learning domain models (developed by the authors)

The single learning domain model (i.e. the 1H learning model) is based on implementing one learning domain (e.g., cognitive, affective or psychomotor). The double learning domain model (i.e. the 2H learning model) is based on implementing various pairs of learning domains (e.g., cognitive and affective or cognitive and psychomotor or affective and psychomotor). The triple learning domain model (i.e. the 3H learning model) is based on the holistic approach implementing all three learning domains (i.e., cognitive, affective, and psychomotor).

Character education as an essential part of 21st century school education embraces the explicit and implicit educational activities that help students to develop virtues as stable traits of character with the aim of promoting human flourishing through implementing ‘caught’, ‘taught’, and ‘sought’ approaches (Arthur et al., 2022; Harrison et al., 2015; The Jubilee Centre, 2022). These three approaches put an emphasis on various domains of learning. For instance, the ‘taught’ approach stresses the cognitive aspects and the development of the mind (the head), the ‘caught’ approach emphasises the emotional aspects, the inspiration through examples (the heart) and the ‘sought’ approach highlights the practical involvement (the hands). Despite this emphasis, all three learning domains should be addressed in each approach implemented in holistic character education. According to Lickona (1999), “Character must be broadly conceived to encompass the cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects of morality: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Good character consists of knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of behaviour” (p. 78). In order to advance character in all its dimensions and address the previously mentioned aspects of morality, a holistic approach to character education is needed, therefore the holistic character education must be based on the 3H learning model in which ‘caught’, ‘taught’, and ‘sought’ approaches are embedded (see Figure 2).

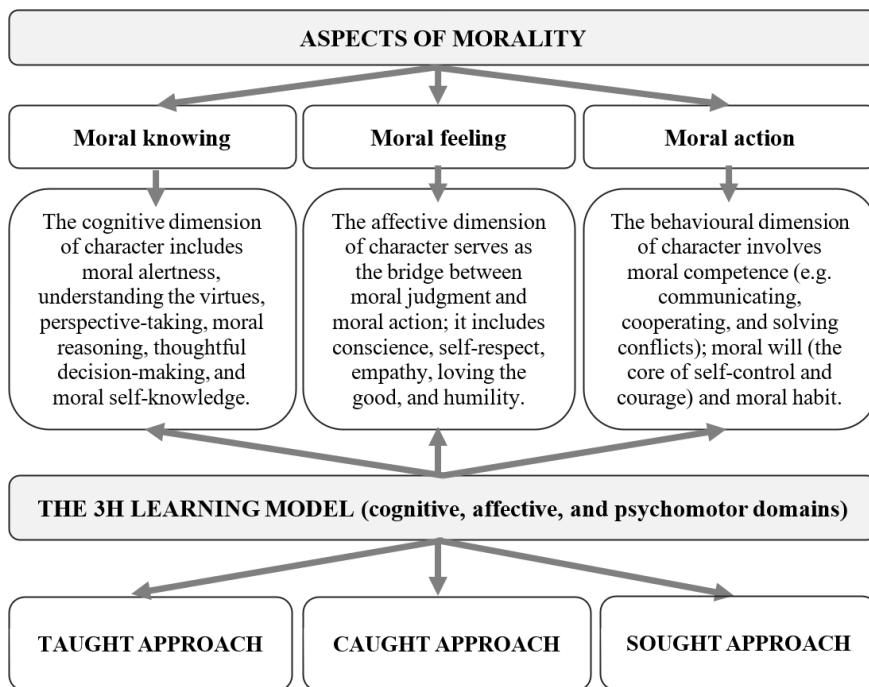


Figure 2 The holistic learning approach to character education (developed by the authors based on previous research (Lickona, 1999; Arthur et al., 2022; Harrison et al., 2015; The Jubilee Centre, 2022))

McGrath (2018) proposed the criteria for elaborating and assessing a character education programme prototype, i.e., it is school-based, structured, it addresses specific positive psychological attributes, it addresses identity, moral growth, holistic growth, and the development of practical wisdom (p. 26). In broader contexts, according to Miseliunaite et al. (2022), “[...] there has been a lack of analysis of holistic educational curricula to reveal how the balance among the different dimensions of human development (intellectual, physical, social, aesthetic, spiritual, and emotional) is maintained in the educational curriculum design” (p. 17).

The current needs for the holistic approach to character education in Latvian schools were revealed by several recent need analysis studies (Fernández González, 2019; Surikova & Pigozne, 2018). There are various initiatives (including programmes) to address one or more character education aspects in Latvia. For example, the programme “Support for positive behaviour” is a systemic prevention and intervention programme for reducing violence in schools, creating a positive, supportive, and safe learning environment, promoting the positive behaviour of students (Daniela & Nīmante, 2016). “MOT” is a motivational programme for teenagers, the concept of which is based on the desire to create a safer society by strengthening young people’s understanding and courage – the courage to live, care and say no. “Leader in me” is a change programme for the whole

school, based on the principles and actions of personal, interpersonal and organisational efficiency, including the assumption that every child and young person has strengths and the ability to take responsibility for their future or be a leader in their life. “PROMEHS” is a mental health promotion programme aimed at promoting social-emotional learning, encouraging vitality, and reducing social, emotional, and behavioural problems at school and in the family (Martinsons et al., 2022).

The authors of this article have selected the virtue education curriculum launched in Latvia in 2021 within the research project “e-TAP”. This curriculum is distinctive because it addresses issues within the curriculum through the perspective of character development. The curriculum was developed, approved, and improved by practising teachers in cooperation with the research team. It is based on research conducted in Latvia and abroad and a deep philosophical basis – personalist virtue ethics (Akrivou & Fernández González, 2021).

It was created in a five-module system which was interconnected through the curriculum’s moral values and virtues, which are its learning outcomes (see Figure 3).

The e-TAP curriculum (fall 2022 version) offers 124 detailed lesson plans accompanying PowerPoint slides and printable resources for each lesson to shape 5–15-year-olds’ character. The curriculum also includes an introductory module (“Toolbox” for grades 1–3, grades 4–6 and grades 7–9) on virtue ethics, which is the philosophical approach of the curriculum. The introductory module introduces students to the concepts related to virtues and provides an understanding of the process of virtue development.

This article aimed at analysing the e-TAP curriculum congruence, e.g., correspondence to the requirements to a well-designed character education programme. To address

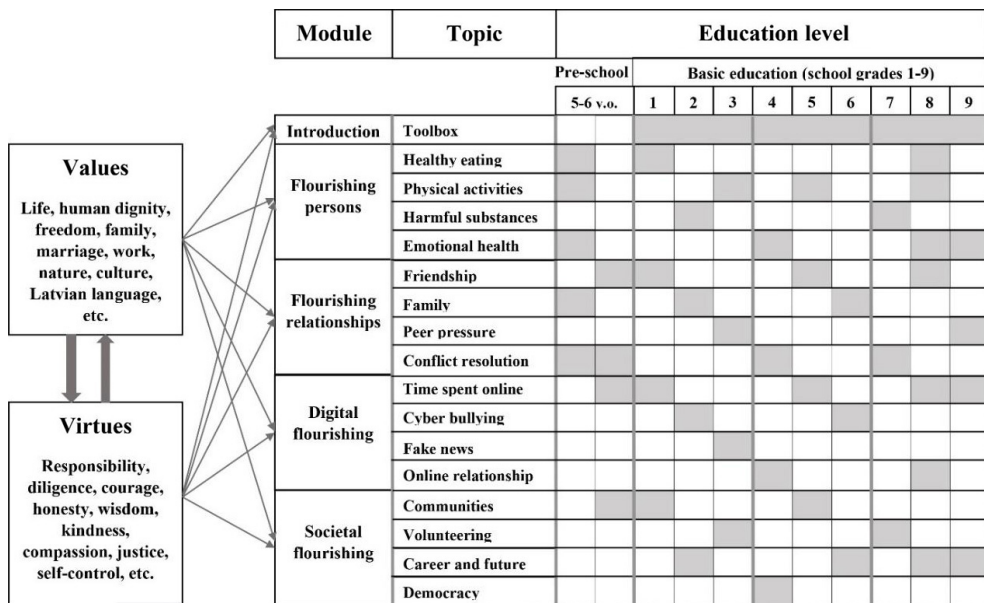


Figure 3 A structure of the e-TAP curriculum (fall 2022 version)

the research goal, the following research questions were put forward: Research question 1 (RQ1): Does the e-TAP curriculum (fall 2022 version) meet all the criteria proposed for a character education programme prototype? Research question 2 (RQ2): Has the holistic learning approach been incorporated into the e-TAP curriculum (fall 2022 version) at various design levels (activity, lesson, topic, and module)?

Methodology

Research design

For this empirical study, the explanatory sequential research design was implemented, in which the quantitative data were collected and analysed to identify results for follow-up, followed by qualitative data collection and analysis to explain quantitative data gathered initially.

Research instruments and methods

Data collection instruments and methods

With a focus on addressing the RQ1, a 19-item questionnaire with a 4-point Likert scale (1 = absent; 2 = unsure; 3 = probably present; 4 = definitely present) was used involving three independent experts to evaluate the e-TAP curriculum according to the criteria and indicators for a character education programme prototype proposed by McGrath (2018).

To examine the RQ2, the Excel data matrix was used as an evaluation form to analyse the e-TAP curriculum at different design levels from the perspective of implementing affective, psychomotor, and cognitive domains of learning (based on Gazibara, 2013) and encompassing the cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects of morality (based on Lickona, 1999).

Data processing and analysis methods

Cohen's kappa (IRR) and intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC) were calculated to estimate reliability between two or three independent experts' ratings assuming that IRR and ICC values of .40 to .74 are considered poor to moderate agreement and values of $\geq .75$ represent good to excellent agreement. There was poor agreement between Expert 1 and Expert 2 (IRR = .275), between Expert 2 and Expert 3 (IRR = -.015), between all three experts (ICC = .305) and moderate agreement between Expert 1 and Expert 3 (IRR = .683). Descriptive statistics were computed per each independent expert and per each evaluation indicator. The consolidated evaluation was proposed based on mode (M_o) values.

The e-TAP curriculum activities ($n = 574$) combined in 124 lessons which have been grouped in 17 topics within five modules were coded by two experts employing deductive content analysis while searching concrete domains of learning implemented or aspects of morality encompassed (see Table 1).

Firstly, each expert coded independently, then the coding results of both experts were compared, discussed, and consolidated regarding each curriculum activity. Based on

the consolidated results, the learning domain models implemented on different design levels of the e-TAP curriculum were analysed. The assessment criteria for each design level of the curriculum were specified, considering that the evaluation results of the highest design levels are based on the assessment results of the lowest ones with some modifications (Table 2).

Table 1 The deductive content analysis aspects

Analysis aspect	Aspects of activity potential		
	Cognitive	Affective	Psychomotor
Learning domain (keywords)	Cognitive (<i>intellectual activity, students analyse, compare, define, summarise, group, provide examples, answer questions, discuss, etc.</i>)	Affective (<i>emotional activity, students share their feelings, sympathise, become emotionally involved, remember their emotions and feelings, emotional experience, etc.</i>)	Psychomotor (<i>practical activity, students draw, glue, dance, sing, write, play theatre, work in pairs/groups, watch videos, etc.</i>)
Aspects of morality (keywords)	Cognitive (<i>moral knowing, understanding, perspective-taking, moral reasoning, etc.</i>)	Affective (<i>moral feeling, empathy, compassion, loving the good, fairness, joy, satisfaction, etc.</i>)	Behavioural (<i>moral action, communicating, cooperating, solving conflicts, etc.</i>)

Table 2 The assessment criteria for each design level of the curriculum

Design level	The assessment criteria		Learning domain model (rank)
	A main criterion	An additional criterion	
Activity	Encompasses one aspect of morality (e.g., cognitive) (Table 1).	Addresses one related learning domain (e.g., cognitive) (Table 1).	Single (1)
	Encompasses two aspects of morality (e.g., cognitive and affective) (Table 1).	Addresses two related learning domains (e.g., cognitive and affective) (Table 1).	Double (2)
	Encompasses all three aspects of morality (cognitive, affective, and behavioural) (Table 1).	Addresses all three learning domains (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor) (Table 1).	Triple (3)
Lesson*	$M \leq 1.2$	–	Single (1)
	$1.3 \leq M \leq 1.9$	There are at least two activities of the lesson with a rank 2.	Double (2)
	$2.0 \leq M$	There are at least two activities of the lesson with a rank 3.	Triple (3)
Topic**	$M \leq 1.2$	–	Single (1)
	$1.3 \leq M \leq 2.3$	–	Double (2)
	$2.4 \leq M$	–	Triple (3)
Module***	$M \leq 1.2$	–	Single (1)
	$1.3 \leq M \leq 2.5$	–	Double (2)
	$2.6 \leq M$	–	Triple (3)

Note. * Mean (M) of lesson is a sum of the ranks of activities of the lesson divided by the number of activities.

** Mean (M) of topic is a sum of the ranks of lessons within the topic divided by the number of lessons.

*** Mean (M) of module is a sum of the ranks of topics within the module divided by the number of topics.

Results

RQ1: Does the e-TAP curriculum (fall 2022 version) meet all the criteria proposed for a character education programme prototype?

According to experts' consolidated evaluation results (Table 3), the e-TAP curriculum (fall 2022 version) fully corresponds to the requirements to a well-designed character education programme ($M_o = 4$ for fifteen indicators, $M_o = 3$ for four indicators). The e-TAP curriculum is structured ($M_o = 4$ for all indicators), addresses specific positive psychological attributes, moral and holistic growth ($M_o = 4$ for all indicators), school-based ($M_o = 4$ for two indicators, $M_o = 3$ for one indicator), addresses identity ($M_o = 4$ for three indicators, $M_o = 3$ for two indicators) and practical wisdom ($M_o = 4$ for one indicator, $M_o = 3$ for one indicator).

Table 3 The e-TAP curriculum correspondence to the criteria proposed for a character education programme prototype: The results of experts' evaluation

Criteria	Indicators	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	<i>M</i>	<i>Me</i>	<i>Mo</i>	<i>SD</i>	Consolidated
School-based	Takes place on school premises	4	3	4	3.67	4.00	4	.577	4
	In-school time used	4	4	4	4.00	4.00	4	.000	4
	Compulsory for all students	3	3	3	3.00	3.00	3	.000	3
Structured	A formal curriculum is available	4	4	4	4.00	4.00	4	.000	4
	The curriculum lists lesson plans and activities	4	4	4	4.00	4.00	4	.000	4
Specific positive psychological attributes	Positive attributes are targeted (attach a list of target attributes)	4	3	4	3.67	4.00	4	.577	4
Identity	Strengths spotting in self and others	3	4	3	3.33	3.00	3	.577	3
	Encourages self-statement about strengths	4	4	4	4.00	4.00	4	.000	4
	Discusses character	4	4	4	4.00	4.00	4	.000	4
	In programs for adolescents and adults, addresses the future person	4	4	4	4.00	4.00	4	.000	4
	Focuses on ideal self	3	4	3	3.33	3.00	3	.577	3

Criteria	Indicators	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	<i>M</i>	<i>Me</i>	<i>Mo</i>	<i>SD</i>	Consolidated
Moral growth	Discusses moral role models	4	4	4	4.00	4.00	4	.000	4
	Discusses moral decision-making	4	4	4	4.00	4.00	4	.000	4
	Discusses moral dilemmas	4	4	4	4.00	4.00	4	.000	4
	Focuses on moral issues	4	4	4	4.00	4.00	4	.000	4
Holistic growth	Addresses strengths or virtues in combination	4	4	3	3.67	4.00	4	.577	4
	Addresses conflicts among strengths or virtues	4	3	4	3.67	4.00	4	.577	4
Practical wisdom	Addresses practical problems in using strengths or virtues	4	4	4	4.00	4.00	4	.000	4
	Discusses overuse and underuse of strengths or virtues	3	3	4	3.33	3.00	3	.577	3
	Mean (<i>M</i>)	3.79	3.74	3.79					3.79
	Std. Error of Mean	.096	.104	.096					.096
	Median (<i>Me</i>)	4.00	4.00	4.00					4.00
	Mode (<i>Mo</i>)	4	4	4					4
	Std. Deviation (<i>SD</i>)	.419	.452	.419					.419

RQ2: Has the holistic learning approach been incorporated into the e-TAP curriculum (fall 2022 version) at various design levels (activity, lesson, topic, and module)?

Taking into consideration both independent experts' evaluation results regarding the e-TAP curriculum activities (see Table 4), it has been established that the first expert (E1) has most seen the cognitive potential of the curriculum activities in all stages of education (98–100%), less – affective and psychomotor potential (46–71%). A similar trend can be observed in the evaluations of the second expert (E2), except for affective potential at pre-school (87%). The evaluation results of the second expert are higher in all indicators except the activity cognitive (77%) and psychomotor (96%) potential at pre-school as well as activity cognitive potential in grades 1–3 (46%). According to the experts' consolidated evaluation results, the holistic learning approach has been embedded on curriculum activity level including cognitive (99%), affective (83%), and psychomotor (65%) aspects.

Table 4 Summarising the coding results regarding potential aspects applied at the activity design level of the e-TAP curriculum (by education levels)

Education level (age)	Aspects of activity potential								
	Cognitive			Affective			Psychomotor		
	E1	E2	Cons	E1	E2	Cons	E1	E2	Cons
Pre-school (5–6 y.o.)	98%	77%	99%	46%	87%	90%	54%	46%	59%
Grades 1–3 (7–9 y.o.)	100%	96%	99%	47%	70%	71%	62%	73%	68%
Grades 4–6 (10–12 y.o.)	100%	100%	100%	70%	74%	86%	65%	75%	66%
Grades 7–9 (13–15 y.o.)	100%	100%	100%	71%	75%	84%	66%	79%	67%
The e-TAP curriculum	99%	93%	99%	60%	77%	83%	62%	68%	65%

Note. E1 – results of the coding conducted by the Expect 1; E2 – results of the coding conducted by the Expect 2; Cons – consolidated results discussed and agreed by both experts.

Table 5 Learning domain models implemented at different education and design levels of the e-TAP curriculum (based on the experts' consolidated evaluation results)

Education level (age)	Design level	Learning domain model			Total
		Single a	Double b	Triple c	
Pre-school (5–6 y.o.)	Activity	3% (n = 3)	47% (n = 46)	50% (n = 50)	100% (n = 99)
	Lesson	–	29% (n = 7)	71% (n = 17)	100% (n = 24)
	Topic	–	25% (n = 2)	75% (n = 6)	100% (n = 8)
	Module	–	25% (n = 1)	75% (n = 3)	100% (n = 4)
Grades 1–3 (7–9 y.o.)	Activity	16% (n = 26)	30% (n = 48)	54% (n = 88)	100% (n = 162)
	Lesson	2% (n = 1)	28% (n = 11)	70% (n = 28)	100% (n = 40)
	Topic	–	31% (n = 4)	69% (n = 9)	100% (n = 13)
	Module	–	20% (n = 1)	80% (n = 4)	100% (n = 5)
Grades 4–6 (10–12 y.o.)	Activity	6% (n = 9)	36% (n = 53)	58% (n = 85)	100% (n = 147)
	Lesson	–	7% (n = 2)	93% (n = 27)	100% (n = 29)
	Topic	–	–	100% (n = 12)	100% (n = 12)
	Module	–	–	100% (n = 5)	100% (n = 5)
Grades 7–9 (13–15 y.o.)	Activity	9% (n = 14)	31% (n = 52)	60% (n = 100)	100% (n = 166)
	Lesson	–	10% (n = 3)	90% (n = 28)	100% (n = 31)
	Topic	–	8% (n = 1)	92% (n = 12)	100% (n = 13)
	Module	–	–	100% (n = 5)	100% (n = 5)
The e-TAP curriculum	Activity	9% (n = 52)	35% (n = 199)	56% (n = 323)	100% (n = 574)
	Lesson	1% (n = 1)	18% (n = 23)	81% (n = 100)	100% (n = 124)
	Topic	–	12% (n = 2)	88% (n = 15)	100% (n = 17)
	Module	–	20% (n = 1)	80% (n = 4)	100% (n = 5)

Note. ^a The single learning domain model is based on implementing one learning domain (e.g., cognitive, affective or psychomotor) within the virtue education curriculum design level.

^b The double learning domain model is based on implementing various pairs of learning domains (e.g., cognitive and affective, cognitive and psychomotor, affective and psychomotor) within the virtue education curriculum design level.

^c The triple learning domain model is based on the holistic approach to virtue education by implementing all three learning domains (i.e., cognitive, affective, and psychomotor) within any design level of the virtue education curriculum.

Based on both experts' consolidated evaluation results, the learning domain models implemented on different design levels of the e-TAP curriculum were analysed (see Table 5).

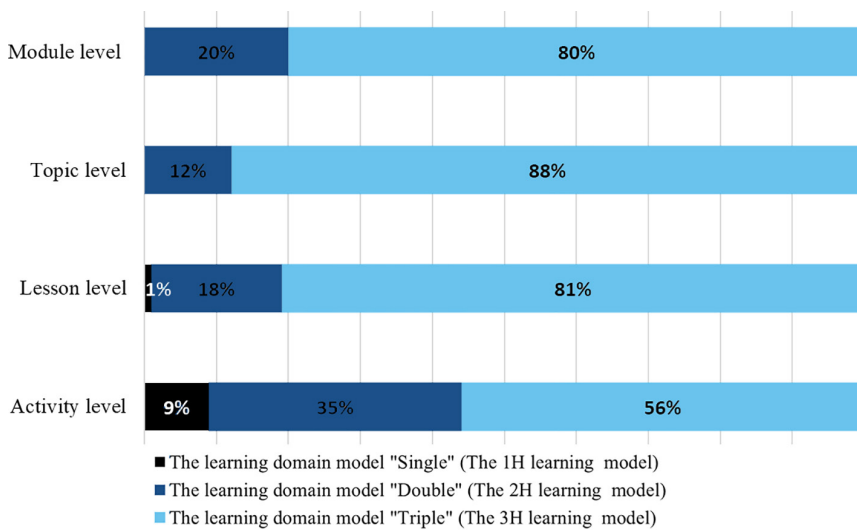


Figure 4 Learning domain models implemented at different design levels of the e-TAP curriculum (based on the experts' consolidated evaluation results)

All types of learning domain models (single, double, and triple) were identified to all education levels within the activity design level as well as in grades 1–3 and on the curriculum level within the lesson design level. Two types of learning domain models (double and triple) were identified on three education levels (pre-school, grades 4–6, and grades 7–9) within the lesson design level. Only the triple learning domain model was identified within topic design level in grades 4–6 as well as within module design level in grades 4–6 and 7–9.

According to experts' consolidated evaluation results (see Figure 4), the holistic learning approach has been incorporated in the e-TAP curriculum on all design levels: the triple learning domain model is implemented in 56% of activities, 81% of lessons, 88% of topics and 80% of modules. These results are in line with the findings identified during previous research activities to address the RQ1. Answers to both RQ1 and RQ2 provided the evidence regarding the e-TAP curriculum well-designed and comprehensive structure, addressing moral and holistic growth including cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects of morality and embedding the holistic approach to the character education based on implementing the triple (the 3H learning) model.

Discussion

The results of this study are encouraging for those interested in elaborating on and evaluating a curriculum for promoting children's and youth's moral and holistic growth. According to the experts' consolidated evaluation results, the e-TAP curriculum fully corresponds to the requirements of a well-designed character education programme: it meets all the proposed criteria for a character education programme prototype and addresses the holistic learning approach on all its design levels (activity, lesson, topic, and

module) with possible further improvements regarding strengthening the psychomotor (practical) potential of the activities at all education stages, especially for pre-schoolers.

The research results align with recent theoretical and empirical research findings (McGrath et al., 2022; Miller, 2019; Miseliunaite et al., 2022; Niehues, 2020). According to the article's authors, the concepts of holistic education and character (virtue) education are interrelated because character encompasses the cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects of morality. Therefore, character education should be holistic to address all three aspects. Miseliunaite et al. (2022) stressed that "[...] holistic education is a type of spiritual education that uses reflection" and other activities "to create an inner connection with oneself and nature" (p. 13). According to character education experts (McGrath et al., 2022), the term "holistic" is one of the keywords describing character education features. Holistic education (particularly holistic character education) could be implemented using an integrated, interdisciplinary, and contextual curriculum (Miller, 2019; Miseliunaite et al., 2022; Niehues, 2020; White & Shin, 2017).

Well-designed, comprehensive curricula based on implementing holistic learning models might help address the "knowing and doing" gap in character education (Harrison et al., 2020) by integrating knowledge, feelings, and actions into the learning process. Furthermore, Arthur et al. (2022) noted,

Belonging to a school community is a deeply formative experience: it shapes pupils' character. Character education, both implicit and explicit, can permeate all subjects as well as the general school ethos. Underpinning the focus on a school's ethos is the belief that a school's approach to character education should be holistic. (p. 8)

On the one hand, authentically implemented character education can improve the school climate (Pulgarin, 2022); on the other hand, school ethos, climate, and the environment might be an enabler or disabler for implementing character education.

Finally, it should be stressed that well-designed character education curricula are not guarantees of success without considering the quality of the environment, relationships, and human resources involved in their implementation. Berkowitz (2021) emphasised that humans are organic wholes engaged in various interacting social systems; therefore, human learning is better seen through an organic framework than looking for a set of lessons, a curriculum, or another event to develop character. This organic approach is not only about ways of knowing, feeling, and doing, but also about ways of being. Being proactive, comprehensive, and collaborative about moral and holistic growth will make character education more effective and more prone to success (Berkowitz, 2021).

Conclusions

During the elaboration of this research, the main conclusions were drawn, and some implications for researchers and practitioners were crystallised:

- The e-TAP curriculum is a step forward in the pathway towards holistic character education in Latvia.

- The more detailed the curriculum is, the more extensively and objectively its design can be evaluated at all levels, and the easier it is for teachers to implement it.
- When planning the development of a holistic curriculum, all its design levels (curriculum, module, topic, lesson, and activity) should be considered, beginning with the general and ending with the specific. The more holistic a curriculum is at the activity level, the more holistic it is at all other levels.
- The younger the children are, the more holistic the curriculum should be. Curriculum developers must ensure that all aspects of learning (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor) are included, at least at the lesson level.
- During the implementation of the curriculum, teachers can promote its effectiveness by compensating its weaknesses with their strengths and making it even more holistic. Conversely, teachers can reduce the effectiveness of the curriculum by neutralising its strengths with their weaknesses.

Authors' note

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