

ARTs at a glance

An overview of the action research trials conducted by the ENABLES project partners





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ENABLES

ARTs at glance

The overview in this document allows a comparison at-a-glance of the project partners' approaches to the action research trials (ARTs).

The ENABLES (European Arts-Based Development of Distributed Leadership and Innovation in Schools) project aims to strengthen collaborative leadership of innovation in schools by developing and disseminating innovative methods of arts-based and embodied distributed leadership development.

As part of the ENABLES Erasmus+ project, five European partners (from UK, Finland, Latvia, Romania and Austria) have been working together since November 2019 to develop, test and reflect on the use of new approaches in the field of arts-based and embodied (ABE) methods to promote distributed leadership.

In doing so, different aspects are highlighted. We explain:

- which art-based method was used and what this approach refers to
- 2) who was present at the ARTs and which target group the method was piloted with
- 3) the design of the ARTs, which had to be adapted in many cases due to the pandemic
- 4) the different outputs
- 5) similarities in the approaches taken in the ARTs
- 6) differences in the approaches taken in the ARTs.



01 Overview

- Austria
- United Kingdom (UK)
- Finland
- Latvia
- Romania

O1 Overview ARTs



AUSTRIA ART - READING OF VIGNETTES

Method description:

Vignettes are a literary script, which condense participating experience as a thick description. The reading of such vignettes in a group reveals the understanding of the reading of each individual and thus triggers processes of exchange about one's own views of what has been read.

Theoretical background/references:

The Method originates from a group of researchers working for several years at the Innsbruck Department for Teacher Training and School Research and developing the "Vignette research approach" to research learning processes in heterogenous groups (e.g. Schratz, Schwarz, Kiper, 2014; Schratz, Schwarz, Westfall-Greiter, 2014; Agostini, Peterlini, Schratz, 2019).

Link to Distributed Leadership:

The intention of using vignettes in development isn't to give absolute answers in form of explanations, but rather to continuously raise questions. By promoting a specific reading style vignettes provide a rich understanding of leadership experiences by:

- helping to gain new and meaningful insights into leadership actions
- stimulating reflection on the personal understanding of leadership
- functioning as instruments to make implicit assumptions about leadership explicit or more visible
- providing a stimulation to understand and assess realistic scenarios of leadership.





UK ART - COLLAGE AND EMBODIED MOVEMENT

Method description:

Expressive activities (collage creation, embodied exercise and participants' written and verbal accounts of meaning) to stimulate the following processes: surfacing, aesthetic reflexivity and reframing, and thereby enhance participants' aesthetic qualities.

Theoretical background/references:

The UK teams' working paper (see Appendix 1: in UK ARTs Report, Research section of ENABLES website) set out a theoretical framework and the logic and intention of the UK ARTs. It discusses in more detail ideas and defines key terms.

Link to Distributed Leadership:

The developmental purpose of the trials was to enable participants, within an aesthetic environment, to engage in arts-based and embodied (ABE) activities that are intended to:

- help in developing an awareness of the distributed nature of leadership
- stimulate embodied learning, surfacing, aesthetic reflexivity and reframing by participants, believed to have a positive effect on their aesthetic qualities (affective attributes, aesthetic awareness and habits of aesthetic reflexivity that improve and enrich their selves and practice and foster ethical sensibilities)
- nurture capacity for leading change with others in ways that are collaborative.

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O1 Overview ARTs



FINLAND

ART - VISUAL IMAGERY

Method description:

Visual methods are used to facilitate discussions, reflection, and support leadership development within professional development programs. Visual methods are also used to investigate phenomena related to leaders and leadership. Visual imagery and methods include a broad range of tools (e.g., painting, drawing, photography) and products (e.g., paintings, pictures) that connect with visual perception and visual expression. Products are not only static imagery, but they also include videos and other forms of visual expression. Tools and products include both physical and digital objects, the latter making the method an easy and flexible practice to both explore existing and produce new visual products. The method facilitates interaction, reflexivity, and shared knowledge construction.

Theoretical background/references:

We live in a largely visual environment and culture. Visual methods have immersive and sensory qualities that support knowing, reflection and knowledge construction. In part previously overseen, visual methods can be used to complement traditional ways of leadership development (e.g. Brenner, 2012). Small scale artistic inquiries can explore different ways of knowing by expanding interpretations and reflections from personal to social levels leading to transformative insights about individuals and their surroundings (e.g. Brenner, 2012; Steele et al., 2019).

Link to Distributed Leadership:

Using visual methods as complementary and facilitative tools in leadership development enables participants to engage in reflexive discussions and in the creation of shared understanding. Visual methods can convey complex meanings, enable perspective change and broaden understanding through:

- formation of shared knowledge
- illustration of sources and interpretations for varying opinions, ideas, and insights
- making different viewpoints and meanings visible (for leaders) allowing transformative practices and personal development.



FNABLES

LATVIA ART - DRAMA AND IMPROVISATION

Method description:

improvisation as a drama therapy method for promoting self-confidence, initiative, active positioning, fantasy, flexible thinking and acting; using one's voice, facial expressions and body; talking about feelings freely; surfacing emotions; being willing and able to work with others; being able to take the lead and follow others; and being able to ask questions for clarification.

Theoretical background/references:

According to the literature analysis, drama and performance arts as teaching and learning methods are widely used in education to develop a set of skills that have direct implications for students' learning, mutual relationships and living in the community.

Link to Distributed Leadership:

Distributed leadership is a process in which the role of a leader is shared with others. Improvisation as an artsbased and embodied (ABE) practice can support an individual's or a group's leadership development process through enhancing students' distributed leadership skills regarding:

- active integrative engagement into bodily actions
- mind activities
- speaking out their ideas and feelings experienced
- creating and managing emotions
- collaborating with others in decision-making and problem-solving
- leading and when needed also giving space to others to lead processes and express themselves.

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O1 Overview ARTs



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ROMANIA CREATIVE WRITING AND REFLECTION

Method description:

Narrative and creative writing methods *(Tree of Life)* as an interactive narrative exercise orchestrating telling-retelling-re-retelling performance using writing, interviewing and storytelling to create synthetic certificates of intentional identity descriptions related to alternative desirable personal stories of identity, relationships, and life.

Theoretical background/references:

Initially applied to support alternative preferred identity stories of people in situations of hardship and difficulties, Tree of Life (ToL) practice was later presented, in 2008, as a collective narrative practice bypassing what was named by Michael White and David Epston (1990) "problem-saturated stories". Others view in ToL as a "narrative-based expressive arts intervention" (Schweitzer et al., 2014, p. 2) or use the ToL as a metaphor in their expressive art therapies, (Hirschson, Fritz & Kilian, 2018; Gavrilovici & Dronic, 2020).

Link to Distributed Leadership:

Distributed leadership is based on human knowledge, interaction, learning and involvement in the workplace. The narrative approach can enhance participants' skills to:

- increase their capacity for self-knowledge and inter-knowledge
- identify common fears and common joys, professionally speaking
- identify personal and professional values, hence common professional ethos
- identify common elements that give power to the professional community
- Increase expressive skills, verbal or written, and diminish fears about sharing feelings.



Participants



O2 Participants of ARTs

All Participants received an explanation of the planned ART and the intention of the workshop in advance, with the aim of making expectations clear.

A total of 25 people participated in the workshop in Austria, of which 2 were representatives of the school authorities, 3 participants were staff members of the University College of Education, and 20 were school principals (7 middle schools, 2 vocational schools, 1 upper secondary, and 10 primary). Participation in the workshop was mandatory and the ART was an integral part of a large event in the context of a regional school development project that has been running for several years.

Overall, there were 44 participants. The smaller trials (trials 1 to 8) involved 22 participants (18 female / 4 male). The larger trial (trial 9) had 22 participants. Job roles included senior leaders, consultants, classroom teachers, middle teachers, governors, school improvement partners and one Higher Education lecturer. Participants came from a variety of educational sectors.

The ART workshop participants came from a Master's degree (MA) and from a professional development programme (PDP), both arranged by the Institute of Educational Leadership (IEL). In the MA trial, 25 Educational Leadership students took part in the ART activity during autumn 2020. In the PDP trial, conducted in spring 2021, 10 participants from different IEL education programs took part. Most participants were already seasoned professionals seeking advancement and additional proficiencies for their careers. MA students came from several countries and continents and generally had work experience in the educational field.

LATVIA

The ART consisted of nine project team members and 35 secondary students, which contributed 33 reflections (by four male and 29 female students of grade 10 (five students), grade 11 (19 students) and grade 12 (nine students). The information about the opportunity of participating in the improvisation workshops was provided to the students by the project team. The prior leadership experience of the participants varied throughout the workshops.

ROMANIA

In total, 76 participants took part in the ART, consisting of schoolteachers, school principals, school inspectors, school psychologists, MA students in Policy and Management in Education.

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AUSTRIA

KINGDOM

UNITED

FINLAND





03 Detailed Designs

In the following, we will describe the design of the ART sessions, which concerns the preparation of the environment, the planning of the process and the actual implementation. This short summary helps to give a holistic understanding of the ARTs in action.

Detailed designs





Austrian Design

Detailed Information

The planning

The ART was intended to be an integral part of a workshop on new responsibilities for school leaders. In particular, the halfday workshop aimed to collaboratively develop new responsibilities in the area of staff development together with the school leaders. In order to provide an art-based approach within the workshop, the reading of vignettes was selected on behalf of the Austrian team. For this purpose, a suitable vignette had to be selected in advance. The vignette should show a coexperience in which distributed leadership becomes visible.

The preparation

The vignette was printed for all principals and the assignment and necessary materials were added. The school leaders were first asked to read the vignette silently and for themselves and to mark passages in the text that attracted their attention or where they "felt something". Afterwards, they were asked to consider - again silently and for themselves - how. from their point of view, "distributed leadership" is expressed in the vignette, and where in the text this was particularly visible.

In a next step, the school leaders were asked to discuss their reading experiences and insights in small groups and thus share different readings with each other as a team.

The environment

The ART was an in-person event - well before the pandemic. The participants knew each other and the small groups in which the exchange took place were formed on the basis of the participants' familiarity with each other. This created a group dynamic of its own. The participation of the school supervisors brought an extra dynamic to the groups.

"A special group dynamic was created"

The actual implementation During the implementation it became apparent that a silent analysis of the text could not actually be realized. The participants only partially worked with the text (making markings and notes). Often there was a quick consensus on the interpretation of the scene, so no real discussion arose. The moderation therefore accompanied the exchange phase more intensively than originally planned.









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03 Detailed designs





DOING COLLAGES & EMBODIED EXERCISES

UK Design

Detailed Information

The planning

Detailed session plans were created for each trial, outlining different types of activities, indicative times, data collection codes and the activity itself, purpose and underpinning theory. In addition to the session plans, the researchers had the following documentation for each session:

- Checklist
- Interview question schedule
- Stimulus question schedule

The preparation

A short recruitment video was created and shared, to promote the project and to attract potential participants. In the main, participants were recruited via targeted emails, including to gatekeepers, and via social media. For the introduction, two videos were created providing information regarding the ENABLES project and a provocation about distributed leadership.

Participants were free to select a range of items to create a collage; they were provided with guidance in an email prior to the workshop to bring whichever items they liked.

The environment

Internationally, interest in distributed forms of leadership at policy and school levels in the UK has been relatively strong. There has been much research and development of distributed leadership in the UK.

Data suggests there is a relatively high degree of distributed leadership in schools in England; and in Scotland much emphasis is given in educational policy to the importance of leadership at all levels. Because the UK ARTs were undertaken online, participation could be opened up to anyone meeting the eligibility criteria from across the UK. In the event, all but one of the participants were based in England, the remaining participant being based in Scotland.

The actual implementation

Trials were conducted in an online setting via Zoom. Eight trials with up to four participants took place from January to May 2021; a larger ninth trial, with 22 participants, took place in June 2021. Each Action Research Trial consisted of an introduction and a workshop; for some trials these two sessions were blended into one 2-hour session. Follow-up sessions were offered to all participants.

The workshop aspect of the trial was where participants had the opportunity to engage in expressive activities, using ABE approaches. The ABE methods used in the UK trials (1-8) were collage and gesture (just collage in trial 9). Adaptations were made following participant feedback in trial 1, and a gesture response activity was designed from trial 2 onwards.









Detailed designs





Finnish Design

Detailed Information



The planning

The planning for the visual method ARTs followed the objectives and goals of the existing programs from where the participants were recruited.

With students on the Master's degree program (MA), the ART was used as a pedagogical method for their course on educational leadership. They were asked to provide 10minute group videos.

For students on the professional development program (PDP), the ART provided a way of looking into educational leadership as a selective course. They were asked to write individual papers on their application of the method including the visual artefacts used.

The preparation

As both ARTs were conducted within existing programs, we used our mailing lists to get the participants. In preparing, we paid special attention to presenting why and how we used visual imagery in the ARTs and to what benefits the method can offer. In this work, the ENABLES literature review (available in the Research section of the ENABLES website) proved valuable.

For the MA students, the ART was introduced as a method for their course on educational leadership. For the PDP students, the focus was on the ART method as a tool for their own professional development.

The environment

Both ARTs were conducted online. Although the participants had very different backgrounds, we had no major technical difficulties. They were also used to working collaboratively, so could easily work in this way.

Online interaction does not allow overlap and turn-taking must be controlled and supported by the instructors. Also, in two-hour and half-day workshops, extra time needs to be reserved as interaction is slower and technical matters may take time.

The actual enactment

The MA ART consisted of thirteen 90-minute sessions within two months. The PDP ART had two intensive half-day sessions within two weeks.

We initiated both ARTs by introducing the ART method connecting it with the goals of the students' programs. The MA program ART included one session reserved for preparing the group video presentation and another one for presenting them. In the PDP, the first halfday was for presenting the ART and planning for one's learning assignment. In the latter one, students presented their assignments and received feedback from others. Both the videos and the learning assignments were assessed. and students received detailed feedback from the teachers after submitting them.







Detailed designs





Latvian Design

Detailed Information

The planning

This was carried out as follows:

 Elaboration of content and the draft of the action plan.
Discussion of each activity and identification of distributed leadership elements that could be promoted owing to these activities.

3. Observation sheets offering as assessment criteria the previously identified distributed leadership elements designed in a 5-point system.

4. Discussion and finalization of the agenda and a number of organisational, tactical and technical issues related to our work being entirely remote (using Zoom/YouTube). Specification of everybody's responsibilities during the workshop.

The preparation

The preparatory stage for getting ready for improvisation workshops and research took place. The recruitment of the students was a challenging task because of the lack of the enthusiasm of students to participate in an online improvisation workshop.

The environment

The workshops were administered using:

- the Zoom platform for interacting with students and giving them the space for collaboration in Zoom break-out rooms;
- a YouTube channel for delivering a lecture on different theoretical aspects of improvisation and demonstrating how they look in bodily movements, gestures and speech.

The actual implementation

The trial of the method of improvisation/drama with two groups of students from different secondary schools of Latvia took place on 15 January and 23 March 2021. Each improvisation workshop lasted three hours. The number of students participating in the first workshop was 15. In the second improvisation workshop, the number of the students was 20. Accordingly, they worked in either three or five small groups. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdown, the planned face-to-face improvisation workshops were entirely recorded, which led to challenges, yet a new type of people's co-thinking, cofeeling, co-living, co-learning, co-acting, co-creating and coleading was observed in the virtual environment.



ENABLES

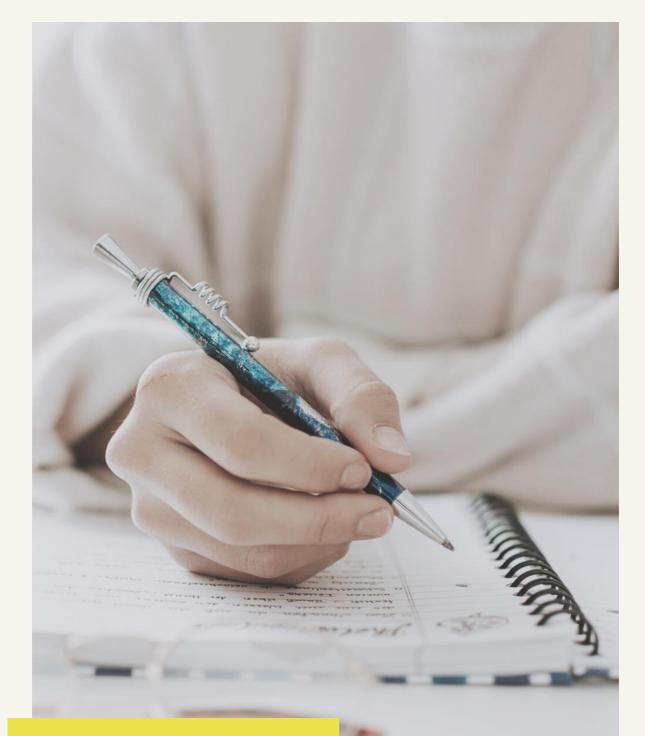






03 Detailed designs





Romanian Design

CREATIVE WRITING AND REFLECTION

Latvian Design

Detailed Information

The planning

Definition of the objectives and the goals of the workshops, establishing possible target group, the agenda, topics, subjects and methods used in order to achieve those predefined objectives; selection of the tools for communication with the participants, before and after the workshop.

The preparation

The facilitators invited acquainted schoolteachers, directors and school psychologists via email to the workshop by providing information regarding the project Enables as well as the ART organized as a result of the project. After receiving the confirmation of participation, the facilitators sent a link to join the meeting.

Before the final participative narrative formative evaluation meeting, each ZOOMparticipant involved was briefed about the scope, the goals, the method and the principles behind its application. A total of 2 to 3 working days were used to prepare, contact, organize and clarify within the team the formative evaluation event.

The environment

The Narrative Approach Workshop had been designed as a face-to-face meeting. In the context of a pandemic, educational institutions in Romania had been closed which led the facilitator to adapt the workshop to online/virtual meetings. Thus, the 3 events took place online, using different application such as zoom meeting, teams or WEBEX Romanian Design platform

The actual implementation

The online meetings took place in the evening, after the working hours. Three events (each lasted about 2 hours) and one reflective final meeting were conducted. At the beginning of each meeting the facilitator tried to provide the necessary framework to create closer relations between the participants. The design incorporated exercises to engage and inspire the participants to get in touch with narrative ideas and practices and tap into their own personal narrative resources and skills. The final reflective meeting was provided as an opportunity for the participants share and celebrate what they have learnt.











04 Outputs

The different approaches of the ARTs were also reflected in the different outputs generated by the ARTs.

In each ART, the resulting artefacts were an opportunity for a reflexive exchange with the other ART participants about their own thoughts. Through these reflexive exchanges, points of view were made more explicit in all ARTs.

ART Artefacts at a Glance







- Written interpretation of the individual of the vignette.
- Oral discussion of plural readings of the vignette from the floor.





- Crafted collage
- Oral explanations of the meaning of individual collages
- Shared discussion of collages
- Video recordings of gesture responses
- Written reflections



FINLAND

- Photos and other visual imagery like animations and videos
- Oral explanation of the photos and other visual imagery
- Analytical discussion and individual written report including the visual products selected by the participant





LATVIA

- Bodily expressions
- Oral reflections on the depicted feelings

ROMANIA

- Drawing and narrative expressions of the tree
- Images of Trees of Life
- Verbal reflection in exchange with others



05 Commonalities

The purpose of this document is to provide a comparative overview of the ARTs and to highlight the commonalities between the different approaches. For this purpose, project partners were brought together into country groups and asked to to discuss their perceptions of the following aspects in a comparative manner:

Success of the ARTs
How participants felt about the ARTs (resonance)
Impact of the ARTs

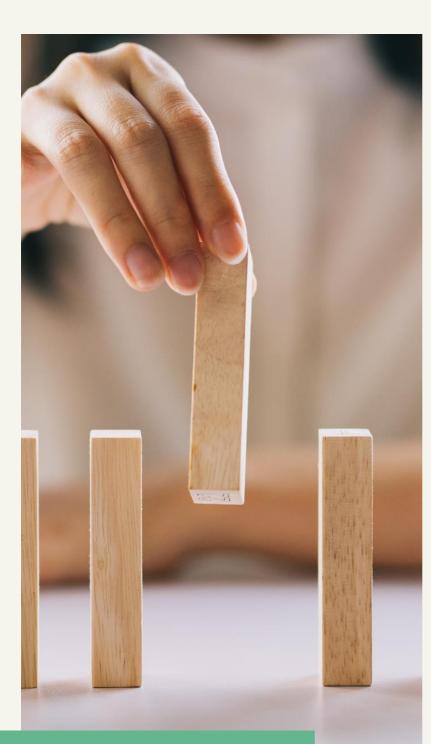
To answer these three points Latvia, Finland and Austria as well as UK and Romania met to discuss them with each other.

In a second round, the partners were reshuffled and UK, Finland and Latvia as well as Romania and Austria discussed general commonalities and differences of their approaches.

In the following, the three aspects are first summarised and then commonalities as well as differences are presented with the help of keywords.



1) Success of the ARTs



Success Factors

Perception 1

Overall, even with the adaptions teams had to make due to the pandemic, each research team was satisfied with the final design of their ART. Technical challenges regarding the implementation were perceived as managed well or at least sufficiently.

Perception 2

Some of the ABE methods were easier to transfer into online workshops (e.g., visual arts) than others (e.g., improvisation/drama).

Perception 3

In teams in which more than one workshop took place, learning experiences from the previous event would be identified and applied to further workshops. In this way, an ART could be optimized, and a good pattern established.

Perceptions 4

The trials were mostly first-time experiences and therefore some of the results differed from expectations. Also, the question occurred if the embodied aspect would present different results in a face-to-face interaction rather than online.



2) Resonance of the participants

Resonance 1 Vignettes

The reading of the vignettes led to irritations on the part of school principals that this form of access (reflection) is of little help to them and that they prefer to hear "hard facts" about leadership.

Resonance 2

Collage & embodied exercises

Whilst creating collages received an overall positive feedback including the experience of a safe, intimate space; the embodied activities were perceived as more unfamiliar, and therefore more challenging.

Resonance 3 Improvisation

Participants had to overcome feelings of embarrassment at first, but nevertheless all were open to the method and confirmed their happiness about participating.

Resonance 4

Creative writing & reflection

Participants engaged intensely and wanted to invest more time into the exercise as well as join the next workshop. They appreciated the sense of community and the opportunity to create and share whatever identity they wished.

Resonance 5 Visual imagery

Since the participants were well informed about the framework and intention of arts-based methods in advance of the workshop, they looked forward to the exercise and felt inspired.



Resonance



3) Impact of the ARTs

Resonance 1

ARTs as an agent to reshape collaborative learning, discussion and friendship and therefore to encourage to think outside the box and approach things differently in school.

Resonance 2

ARTs as a way of transmitting a sense of selfawareness in relation to others (relational sensitivity) and feeling stronger and energized as a result.

Resonance 3

ARTs as a first-time experience that causes controversy due to its novelty of demonstrating a different form of debate and learning opportunity.

Resonance 4

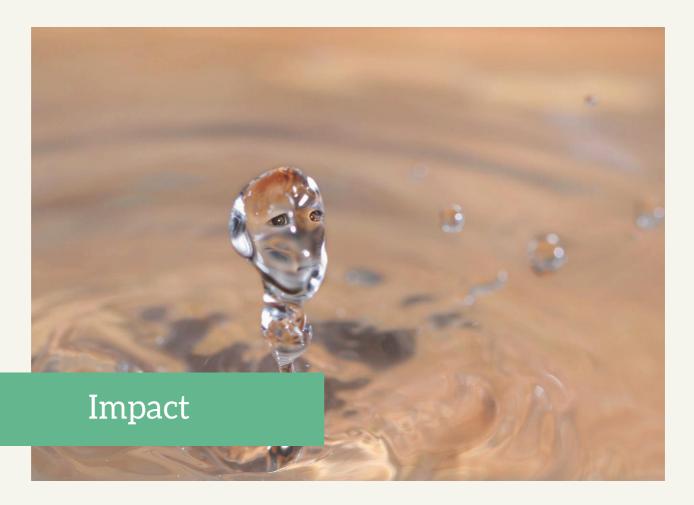
ARTs being perceived as a seemingly banal activity with the potential to present a risk to one's sense of self as a professional.

Resonance 5

ARTs as an appropriate approach for gradual promotion of different aspects of distributed leadership skills. For example, sharing responsibility; taking the initiative; thinking and acting flexibly; listening to others and forming agreements; expressing own ideas in front of others.

Resonance 6

ARTs as an eye-opener to become aware of the energy needed to lead change.





Commonalities at a Glance

Commonalities 1 Importance of preparation

All countries noted how important it was to prepare carefully for the ARTs. Preparations could be summarised in 3 different phases:

- 1. Development and design of session
- 2. Preparation by the facilitators
- 3. Enabling the participants to prepare

Commonalities 2 Multi-stage process

It seemed helpful to structure the task into different phases, for example:

- 1. Reading or thinking phase phase of own silent work
- 2. Sharing in small group
- 3. Reflection in plenary.

Commonalities 3

Role of moderator/facilitator

A crucial factor for success is how the facilitator attunes the group to the method and how s/he is able to communicate it as meaningful for the group. Experience with the method and the process might be necessary to be able to give sufficient instructions, as well as knowledge about the theoretical framework.

The facilitator should be also be acquainted holistically with the planned session by gaining an understanding of the right amount of space for the participants to immerse themselves in the task.

Commonalities 4

Learning from Re-designing as Online-Trials To conduct the ARTs online, a period of redesigning and considering was enacted to develop the pedagogical approach needed, leading to significant learning by all teams regarding the challenges and benefits of online trial designs.

Commonalities 5 Resonance

A common understanding emerged in terms of the "seeding" of future changes in participants' leadership practice. For example, Latvia used the phrase "memories of successful practice" – participants had a positive experience in the sessions, and so they had a memory of doing something successfully. The UK referred to the idea of changing "habits of attention" or "memories of momentum."



05 Differences





Differences at a Glance

Difference 1 Group dynamic

While in the Romanian setting some people didn't know each other beforehand, they still dealt with each other in a very professional way. This was different from Austria where participants knew each other very well and acted more on an informal level while taking the method less seriously. The UK found that opportunities for the group to reflect together led to collaborative learning.

Difference 2

Working professionally in a team The Romanian team expected participants to feel a bit insecure because they were being asked to share a lot of personal content with each other; this proved not to be the case. One possible explanation is the focus on positive experiences. Furthermore, the focus was strongly directed towards professional life and not towards personal life experiences. This allowed participants to work professionally with each other. The experience was similar in the UK workshops.

The situation was different in Austria, where participants had no experience with the method and were visibly uncomfortable with it. This "not being able to engage" became a figure of ridicule and often led to some participants refusing to engage with reflections of other group members.

Difference 3 issue of group size

Austria and Romania had a large group size, with 25 people. In Romania the group was further divided into subgroups (pairs) in online breakout-rooms; in Austria, the subgroup sizes were about 5-6 people, who were all present in one room. This led to a less "safe" space for sharing than e.g. in a virtual setting. In the UK, participants' experience in the larger workshop (with 22 participants) was different from the smaller workshops (four or fewer participants).

Difference 4 Effects of the method

The methods led to the discovery of commonalities in Romania (shared professional experiences) and Austria (a common understanding). In Austria this was a rather unintended effect, because the uniformity of how leadership is understood, hardly allowed room for discussion, while the shared experiences in Romania led to strangers finding themselves sharing a common professional understanding. This may also have to do with the fact that they would like to be part of a professional group and change the status of their profession. In the UK, common issues and areas of learning often emerged from the shared reflections.



Differences at a Glance

Difference 5

Framework determined by literature review The design of the ARTs was influenced for all countries by their review of the literature (see Research section of the ENABLES website). The amount of data and the complexity of the data analysis process differed regarding timelines for the ARTs and points of data collection.

Difference 6

Timeframe and number of sessions

There was variation across the countries both in the length of individual sessions and the number of sessions offered to participants. These differences in the number of occasions participants met and engaged results in variances regarding what could be expected to be covered or achieved in the individual sessions.

Difference 7

The nature of participants' experiences

It was acknowledged that Finland's trial design might have allowed participants to "develop" whereas for Latvia and the UK it was more about "activating" certain qualities or capabilities. The UK refer to the concept of "sensuous learning" which involves enhancing understanding and meaning by activating our mind, body and spirit and attending to what we learn from all aspects of our being.



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