



Sustainability and education – dossier EPALE NL

LLL Week event: GreenComp – Taking Green Skills One Step Further, 03-12-2020

First, a few words about my background. I worked more than 40 years in different areas of adult education, in the Netherlands, in Latin America and in many European projects related to literacy, learning festivals, education in the rural area and others. Besides that, I own a small organic vineyard that has two missions: 1) of course we want to make the best wine of the region and 2) education: bringing the green message that clean viticulture and agriculture is possible. It is completely unnecessary to use pesticides, fertilizers and copper. This is food for another conference, I suppose....

EPALE NL wanted to know more about what is happening in NL in the field of sustainability & adult education. They asked me to do research and to build a dossier with good practices. During the last months I have been working on that. The result up till now is 12 articles published in an online dossier on EPALE and several other practices and ideas in my desk drawer, waiting to write about them in the near future.

How did I start? It is probably needless to say, but the climate situation is extremely urgent! I am convinced that adult learning/education is decisive for a more sustainable society. Reaching a sustainable society requires rigorous measures initiated and supported by well-informed citizens with green hearts and green competences. In other words, only when politicians and companies feel the hot breath of conscious citizens in their necks, the necessary political measures will be taken *to change the climate situation*.

When starting the dossier, I had two leading questions:

1. How to ensure that sustainability and climate change becomes an important topic for a wide audience, and that it is not only an issue for the usual suspects?
2. In line with this first challenge: how to ensure that sustainability initiatives also find their way to people for whom learning is not obvious, people who experience more pressing issues in daily life, such as debt, unemployment and health?

I selected some good practices to present to you. I present them with certain modesty, feeling grateful for passionate green-heart persons who shared their experiences with me.

1. The Rotterdam Environment Center has been successful in involving a wide group of inhabitants in environmental measures! Since 2011, they have trained 350 Environment Coaches! How did they manage that? The first thing they did is: going to the people, there where they are. That is one of their core assets! They went to the mosques, the Cape Verdean association, to women's groups. They talked to the chairman and in most cases there was interest to join. They also made sure that the locations and times used, suited well to the people they wanted to reach. So, the Rotterdam Environment Center works with already existing neighbourhood networks. These networks approach their own key

persons. The result is that many persons participate who would normally not be concerned about climate change. Of course, the energy & money saving aspect of some climate measures is a good way to motivate people to take action.

The training for Environment Coach takes four sessions. The future Coaches learn how to take sustainable measures themselves and how to share this information in their own network. Once received the certificate of Environment Coach, they organise meetings you can compare with the well-known Tupperware Party's: in their own street, with parents of their children's school, during a religious activity like the slaughter festival or in conversation with fellow tenants. For these meetings, the Coaches use specially developed 'Energy Boxes' that are located in crowded places in the area, like community centres and public libraries. These big boxes contain all kinds of saving materials, a checklist for saving measures, games that increase energy awareness, etc.

Project related to basic skills and green lifestyle

<https://rotterdamsmilieueentrum.nl> <https://winterklaar010.nl/site/>

2. Exercizing.nl (or Oefenen.nl) is an important player in Dutch adult education. This foundation offers online exercise programs for everyone in the Netherlands who needs 'a push to participate better in society'. It is the online place where you can practice language, mathematics and digital skills. In 2018 Oefenen.nl launched the programme Doing Green (Groen Doen). It was launched from the conviction that different lifestyles are needed for a sustainable society and the conviction that we must include the less educated in this development, as they also need the skills to cope with the current environmental challenges.

The online program provides practical green tools for daily life, the preservation of the house, the environment and health. Doing Green challenges you also to think about how you live. Could it be healthier and cheaper? And what is good for the environment?

The target group of the program is broad: it is intended for learners with a low educational level, both Dutch-speaking and foreign-language learners. The required language level for non-native speakers is around A2, for Dutch speakers just below 1F. The program contains a lot of visual material. Written text is supported by spoken text as often as possible. Doing Green proposes small sustainable steps, steps that clearly save money. This link with saving money was a clear choice, as it motivates people directly. The program consists of nine chapters with videos and online exercises. The first chapter is about the house, chapters 2 to 7 about the different spaces in and around the house, chapters 8 and 9 about the neighbourhood and the world. The programme Doing Green is free for individual users at home. Organizations need a license for this program.

Project related to basic skills and green lifestyle

<https://oefenen.nl>

3. In climate activities or green lifestyle campaigns, we mainly see white faces, grey hair and high-educated persons. **Colourful Green (Kleurrijk Groen)** in Nijmegen shows that this can be different. The network wants to broaden the white world of green actors and activists, and reach people from different backgrounds. In this network Sudanese, Chinese, Afghan, Mauretan, Moroccan, Bosnian, Syrian and Surinamese residents of the city of Nijmegen are involved. They participate in excursions, cycling activities for children and workshops about sustainable energy use and waste. Colourful Green wants to connect diversity & sustainability and tries to build bridges between the different worlds. Traditional environmental organizations do struggle to reach people with a migrant background and want to become more colourful. However up till now they are not very successful, amongst others, because they are still operating from old structures. They generally work on a project basis, while involvement of other groups requires a much longer breath, a process.

The network offers a training for Colourful Green Ambassadors. This training provides knowledge and practical tools to convert your green involvement into green influence. The program has three main topics:

1) the urgency to take climate measures now, 2) climate strategies to use, amongst others, advocacy skills and sustainable entrepreneurship and 3) personal development, including managing diversity and role as ambassador. The training consists of a lot of practice, excursions, company visits and guest lecturers. Each participant carries out a self-selected assignment in which theory is converted into practice.

The participants are intermediate or highly educated and have an affinity with green lifestyle and sustainability. They have the ambition to work as a volunteer in green activities and/or to become an entrepreneur in the environmental sector. After the training, the Ambassadors act as a role model and human bridge between their own migrant network and sustainability activities.

Project related to intercultural competences, active citizenship and green lifestyle

<https://www.bureauwijland.nl/index.php/kleurrijk-groen/>

4. Climate Conversations

Climate Conversations offers low-threshold workshops that are useful for anyone who wants to have a good conversation with others about living, eating, consuming, transport or holidays. The goal is that making climate-friendly choices becomes the new normal. Climate conversations are not doom talks full of prohibitions and commandments. Making climate-friendly choices does not have to be that difficult, as they say. The workshops with max. eight persons put you on the trail of carpooling, more plant-based food or purchasing solar panels. In the first meeting, you determine the goals and wishes for the workshops. In six meetings you discover ways to make life more climate friendly and how to involve others in it.

In case you want to do more after the workshops, that's perfectly possible: there is a three-day training to become a climate coach and thus organise climate conversations in your own network.

Project related to communication skills, leadership skills, active citizenship and green lifestyle

<https://www.klimaatgesprekken.nl>

5. Citizens' participation

Many municipalities develop local climate policy. The success of this policy depends on the support of the inhabitants. That is why some municipalities organize climate tables. Every interested citizen can register him/herself and join a climate table. In Renkum, the local government facilitated climate tables where 80 passionate citizens developed projects in 5 areas: sustainable neighbourhoods, sustainable energy, sustainable companies, sustainable consumption and green & water. After 4 months, the result was a local Climate Agreement, which now is the main guideline for the local policy. Another way to involve the citizens is via a Citizens' Assembly. Here you cannot register yourself. Participation in a citizens' assembly takes place by drawing lots, so that a cross-section of the population takes part. Usually, a Citizens' Assembly works in three phases: first, the participants receive information about all aspects of the theme from scientists, experts by experience, NGOs and stakeholders. Then, the participants discuss with each other. Finally, the Citizens' Assembly writes its recommendations. It has been determined in advance, what place the recommendations will have in the political process. Many countries already experienced with these Citizens' Assemblies. It often concerns climate issues (Australia, France), but also, democratic innovation (Germany) or abortion legislation (Ireland). It appears that citizens, who are normally not involved in policy, are very well able to pronounce a balanced judgment.

You can imagine that citizens who participate require a good set of skills, skills they might already have or want to acquire.

Project related to communications skills & competences for active citizenship

<https://renkumverduurzaamtsamen.nl>

Let me share some conclusions with you.

1.

I strongly feel that the sense of urgency is still missing

To save our future as human beings on earth, structural climate measures must be taken now,
But in spite of the extreme urgency, the climate issue is not yet integrated in our education system.
Teachers are not enough equipped to treat this topic well, and there is a lack of good learning materials for adults.

Acquiring green competences does deserve special modules, but ultimately, it is more effective when climate awareness and green competences is integrated in all parts of the curriculum.

I fully agree with the Dutch Climate Envoy to the United Nations, Marcel Beukeboom, who argues: 'If you see the curriculum as a full bookshelf, a chapter about sustainability should be added to every book on that shelf'.

2.

People I interviewed asked me: but what exactly are green skills?

So, we need to define these green skills well.

We need a framework with clear descriptions.

3.

Climate management requires a holistic approach and that holistic approach also applies to green skills.

Green skills are not technical tricks (like how to separate your waste), they lead to a way of life!

As we need to adopt a greener lifestyle and to influence policymakers and companies, it is necessary to link green skills with skills for active citizenship and with skills for a circular economy.

4.

It is urgent to educate the educators and the designers of teaching materials.

Then they will be able, based on solid knowledge & vision and in a holistic way, to incorporate the climate challenges in their lessons and materials.

Finally, we need to educate the providers, the politicians and policy officials responsible for education. They must create the necessary conditions to facilitate climate education.

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<https://epale.ec.europa.eu/nl/blog/dossier-duurzaamheid-en-volwasseneneducatie>