

European SWOT Analysis on Education for Environmental Citizenship



Edited by
Andreas Ch. Hadjichambis, Pedro Reis & Demetra Paraskeva-Hadjichambi

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European Network for
Environmental Citizenship
Cost Action CA16229



ENEC Cost Action Report

European SWOT Analysis on Education for Environmental Citizenship

Edited by

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List of Main Abbreviations

CE: Citizenship Education
CoP: Community of Practise
DSP: Dominant Social Paradigm
EA: Environmental Attitudes
EB: Environmental Behaviour
EC: Environmental Citizenship
ECn: Environmental Citizen
EE: Environmental Education
EEC: Education for Environmental Citizenship
EfS: Education for Sustainability
ESD: Education for Sustainable Development
FCN: Frequency of Contact with Nature
NC: National Curriculum
NEP: New Environmental Paradigm Scale
PSAs: Public Service Announcements
SE: Science Education
SSIBL: Socio-Scientific Inquiry-Based Learning
STEM: Science Technology Engineering & Mathematics
TPB: Theory of Planned Behaviour
TPD: Teacher Professional Development
VBN: Values Beliefs Norms

Foreword

Environmental citizenship is crucial for the success of any environmental policy. Sustainable development, a circular economy, a low-carbon economy, and a bio-economy require an effective citizen engagement. Citizens are called upon to adopt environmental attitudes and behaviours, make green choices, increase civic participation, and to be aware of and apply their environmental rights and duties. The contemporary environmental crisis with climate change, biodiversity loss, air pollution and all other local and global environmental problems demand an education that is capable of empowering environmental citizens. Education plays a key role in shaping future environmental citizens; nobody is born environmental citizen but anybody can become so by education.

This report presents a SWOT Analysis of an integrated and holistic type of education in Europe “Education for Environmental Citizenship”. The SWOT analysis is presented in two levels. In Part A a synthesis of the results of 157 experts from 28 European countries are presented. In Part B the reader can explore the 23 European country reports.

It is important to clarify that this research regarding SWOT analysis was undertaken before any development on the concept of Education for Environmental Citizenship such as common definition and the pedagogical approach. In this fact it illustrates the experts’ opinion in the different contexts through out Europe.

We hope that European stakeholders will find it useful.

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22. SWOT Analysis of Education for Environmental Citizenship – Short Swedish Report

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Abstract: The two responses altogether do not really see the any major benefits of introducing Education for Environmental Citizenship in Sweden. There are great similarities to Citizenship Education (CE), Environmental Education (EE) and especially to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). One respondent pointed out the benefits of more action-oriented teaching towards the surrounding society as one positive possibility by the implementation of Education for Environmental Citizenship. The other respondent was troubled by the fact that a ‘north’ power perspective/worldview could be disseminated in schools if not a critical internal discussion is raised early in the implementation discussions of Education for Environmental Citizenship. However, there are some positive points about wholeness and action-oriented teaching and a possibility to better enhance teacher collaboration, increased sense of meaningfulness and relevance of education for all stakeholders involved. A raised weakness or concern is perhaps a too normative teaching/activist approach, one that research has shown is not an effective way to involve young people to work on societal changes. To summarise the overall result, there are some positive thoughts about the contribution of Education for Environmental Citizenship by a Swedish professional and researcher context but it seems not a priority on a national level.

Acknowledgments: This chapter is based on work from Cost Action ENEC – European Network for Environmental Citizenship (CA16229) supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology).

22.1 Strengths of Education for Environmental Citizenship in Country

- Education for Environmental Citizenship can contribute to a sense of wholeness and context in education by being a perspective that connects different subject disciplines.

- Education for Environmental Citizenship contributes knowledge and skills that are applicable in social and private life, which can provide a sense of meaningfulness and relevance of education.
- Competencies such as systems thinking and critical thinking can be promoted.
- Knowledge of complex issues and underlying perspectives and agendas of different interests can be developed, which provides a good foundation for informed decision making.
- The possibility of linking different subject disciplines into something that builds capabilities that are applicable to working life as well as everyday life.
- That collaboration among teachers opens up for new opportunities and ideas.

22.2 Weaknesses of Education for Environmental Citizenship in Country

Only two reviewers out of six that were contacted responded to the inquiry (a Decision Maker in Educational Professional Society, and a Researcher – Academic). The issue of concern, Education for Environmental Citizenship, is probably not an issue of concern in a Swedish context. Two of the respondents who did not answer are working on a national level with the implementation of Global Action Programme (GAP) by (UNESCO, 2017) and ESD (Scott & Gough, 2003) at NGO and government level) and their absence in this inquiry is perhaps an answer. It may be interpreted that Education for Environmental Citizenship is concurring with ESD and GAP, or that they actually do not know enough about Education for Environmental Citizenship to have any opinions. This could be the case about the complete lack of answers from school practitioners. The inquiry was not easy to answer from a Swedish perspective.

In Sweden we are not familiar with the discussion of citizenship education or global citizenship education. This could explain why only two out of six respondents actually answered the questions. Citizenship is not a school subject at Swedish schools. Aspects and perspectives of people's citizenship are included as a part of different school subjects such as civics and history. Citizenship is a part of the Swedish school system expressed as 'the Swedish school system's value ground/fundamental values' that is supposed to permeate all activities in the elementary and secondary schools. All subjects on all levels in Sweden have to incorporate the teaching of fundamental values in education. In this case Sweden is unique since none of the other European countries have this mission. Citizenship is especially focused in the subject civics in compulsory schools. The subject of civics is, by nature, interdisciplinary. It is based on political science, sociology and economics along with other social science and humanities disciplines. The subject also has a historical perspective and with the aid of concepts, theories, models and methods from all of these disciplines, complex social issues are understood and explained (Education, 2011)

- There may be a risk of strong normative teaching which could limit the possibilities of Education for Environmental Citizenship. An extensive normative focus in teaching that limits the possibilities for students to develop analytical abilities and critical thinking.

- A low connection to and a low collaboration with the society surrounding schools can face the risk of not creating knowledge that is applicable and does not lead to the development of important capabilities.

- If it relates to Dobson's work (2003) his account perhaps seems to oversimplify North-South relations by presenting the South as only a site for Western forceful dominance or some 'grassroots' resistance.

22.3 Opportunities of Education for Environmental Citizenship in Country

- Increased willingness and capacity for citizens to take part in the development of society.

- Increased democratic competence and participation.

- More awareness of how actions, individual and collective, can contribute to development of society and to sustainability of the environment.

- Increased sense of meaning and relevance to education.

- Increased knowledge about how to think in relation to complex problems and how to apply knowledge from different disciplines.

22.4 Threats of Education for Environmental Citizenship in Country

Threats of the Education for Environmental Citizenship in Country

- A strong and one-sided subject discipline focus.

- Difficulties of finding ways to collaborate and organise collaboration among teachers

- Challenges concerning the inclusion of contents that may have political properties.

- The largest challenge is to propel human existence beyond a single story of progress, development, beyond consumerism, identities and belonging defined by the separation of humans from nature and the totalizing rationality of individualism.

- A lot of material within Global Citizenship Education (GCE) (Pashby, 2012) that is valuable and useful. Not sure that we need a new acronym like EEC (Education for Environmental Citizenship).

- It may be more difficult to organise, structure and carry out Education for Environmental Citizenship in the later stages of education due to stronger disciplinary focus.

- ESD and Education for Environmental Citizenship have many similarities and cannot be easily separated according to two responses.

Education for Environmental Citizenship and EE –
similar according to both responses
Education for Environmental Citizenship and ESD –
similar according to both responses
Education for Environmental Citizenship and SE –
similar according to both responses
Education for Environmental Citizenship and CE –
similar according to both responses

22.5 Conclusion

To summarise the overall result there are some positive thoughts about the contribution of Education for Environmental Citizenship by a Swedish professional and researcher context but it seems not a priority on a national level.

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The European Network for Environmental Citizenship (ENEC) – funded as a COST Action (CA16229-Horizon 2020) – brings together more than 120 experts from 37 countries with the objective to improve the understanding, the practice and the assessment of Environmental Citizenship in Europe and the participating countries.

Environmental Citizenship has been an influential concept in many different arenas such as economy, policy, philosophy, organizational and corporation management and marketing and could be better exploited and established furthermore in the field of education as well.

This report examines the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of Education for Environmental Citizenship in Europe. In the first part of the report, the need for Education for Environmental Citizenship, is examined along with the methodology and results of an extensive research from more than 157 experts in 28 European countries and Israel. In the second part of the report, the country chapters for the 23 European countries and Israel emphasise the similarities, differences and special features of these case studies.

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