



Nordic Network for
Lifelong Learning

How to become a teacher that promotes sustainability within adult education?

Recommendations for
teachers and practitioners

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Introduction

Purpose

Are you working with education for sustainable development or wish to do so? Do you have doubts or troubles with how to (better) teach and create transformative education for sustainability? This paper gathers reflections and advice from six Nordic educational organisations with experience in the field.

Background

From 2022 to 2024, six different Nordic institutions have shared and explored pedagogical approaches, dilemmas, barriers and potentials as well as the organisational prerequisites for creating true transformative education for sustainability.

In the first part of the project, [11 recommendations for practitioners](#) were formulated. The second part resulted in [five videos with the participants' advice for school leaders](#), a [policy brief for the Nordic Council of Ministers](#) and this one-pager for practitioners. We highly recommend using this paper as a supplementary part of the total body of products.

The suggestions in this paper follow the recommendations formulated in the policy brief, aiming to promote a paradigm shift towards emphasising diversity, pedagogical freedom and *Bildung* within adult education in the Nordic countries. But how do we do this as practitioners? How do we develop a personal take on sustainability, both personally and professionally? How do we meet the pedagogical challenges that the sustainability agenda evokes? And how do we find or create a supportive tribe that helps us conduct transformative sustainability education?

Point of departure

One way to get started is to initiate a learning process which takes your current teaching and competences as the point of departure:

- Look at your strengths and weaknesses in terms of sustainability education and then integrate new inspirations step by step
- Prioritise time to exchange experiences with colleagues, attend inspiring seminars, in-service training courses, and learning networks

Recommendations



Adopt holistic and innovative teaching/learning approaches

This facilitates a genuine shift in the understanding of how to be part of a sustainable transformation among teachers, students and institutions.

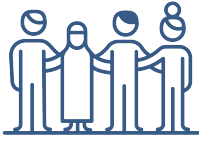
- Adopt cross-sectorial and interdisciplinary methods. Create joint activities with other courses, get out of the house, involve different social groups not as receivers but as suppliers of perspective and knowledge.
- Involve students and co-teachers from diverse backgrounds in the planning, teaching and implementation of the activities. You might be inspired by exploring the [Learning circle methodology](#) applied in this project.
- Incorporate a variety of perspectives (from worldviews and social realities to views on education and knowledge) and be bold to encourage value discussions as these are unavoidable in social transformation.
- Work actively to enhance connectedness, e.g. through projects, documents or traditions in the class/group that give the participants the feeling of belonging to a broader community or purpose and that their actions are meaningful.



Integrate a sustainability aspect into all your courses/study programs

This helps reduce divisions and polarisation and develops stronger collaborative competencies in your students.

- Make sure to explore where the students are in terms of sustainability. What are their background knowledge, expectations, understandings of the relevance of the concept to their field of study and/or profession. In what ways is sustainability meaningful to them? And where and in what ways does it clash?
- Take a holistic perspective on learning: involve cognitive as well as emotional and bodily dimensions and integrate working with values, attitudes, knowledge and skills in your teaching, i.e. try to make visible the links between content knowledge and every-day-choices.
- Incorporate [arts-based](#) teaching/learning methods and [nature-based](#) approaches. This requires slowing down. Despite often having a packed curriculum, it is essential to make time for reflections and aesthetic practices that are fundamental to transformational learning.
- Encourage exploration and experiments with the absence of "right and wrong". Recognising mistakes as places for new discoveries, you can actively use them as pedagogical opportunities to develop courage and action competence. Sustainable transition is a learning process in itself, and an important competence is to be a courageous learner.
- This also frees the teacher from the weight of being "the expert", as we are all in a continuous learning process together. Consider how you can move from the traditionally all-knowing figure to a co-learning facilitator



Find your tribe and help create supportive communities

This supports your own knowledge and skills as well as your engagement, it gives you strength when facing obstacles and makes you an inspirational role model.

- Connect with like-minded colleagues, inside or outside your institution, teachers and staff, to share your experiences, dilemmas, resources and to co-create courses, activities and transformative approaches to teaching/learning.
- Find out what supports your own resources in terms of hope, action competence, resilience and engagement with sustainability issues, e.g. using the [Inner Development Goals](#).
- Connect with colleagues to motivate your organisations to provide space and time for pedagogical innovations, as well as continuous professional development, both practice-based and research-based.
- Connect with existing communities for Education for Sustainable Development to share experiences, collaborate and co-develop new approaches to sustainability teaching/learning. E.g., [NLL](#) (Nordic Network for Lifelong Learning) and [The global RCE-network](#) are good places to start.

Find all the material: nvl.org/vores-arbejde/baeredygtig-udvikling/development-of-educational-models-for-sustainable-lifestyles

Development of Educational Models for Sustainable Lifestyles

Inom Nätverket för Hållbar Utveckling pågår ett projekt (2022-2024) som har om målsättning att utreda och utveckla en nordisk modell för hur man inom vuxnas lärande kan främja hållbara livsstilar. Ni kan läsa mera om projektet på engelska här.

Introduction

Learn about NVL's pilot project exploring educational models for sustainable lifestyles, with key insights and recommendations for creating systemic change.

Articles

Så kan hållbar livsstil bli en självklar del av all utbildning i Norden

Projektkoordinatör Henrika Nordin: "Vi behöver bli förändringsagenter för hållbarhet inom utbildning"

Policy brief

Supporting transformation towards sustainable lifestyles within adult education in the Nordic countries

One-pager

Direct link to the one-pager

Videos

Experiences and reflections from the project participants

Key take-aways from the project researchers

About this publication

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