

Focus group report

Partner institution: Eduteh

Country: Bulgaria

Date and hour: 13.09.2024., 13:00h.

Duration: 1:30h.

Summary of the discussion

Introductory Block: Summary of how the facilitated discussion was conducted. Summary of the profile of the participants.

The focus group was held on the territory of the Private Profiled High School Educational Technologies. 12 teachers got involved. They teach different subjects - languages (Bulgarian, German, English, Spanish), natural sciences (physics, chemistry, biology), history, geography, philosophy, design and entrepreneurship. The duration of the meeting was 1:30 min.

Block 1. How are green competencies currently being integrated into your high school or VET curriculum? Can you provide specific examples?

The green competencies are being integrated in different ways across various subjects in the high school. Specific examples include:

- **Foreign language learning:** Vocabulary related to ecology, as well as reading comprehension, includes texts with environmental topics that are part of the curriculum.
- **Natural and social sciences:** Environmental conservation topics are integrated into the content of these subjects' curricula.
- **Entrepreneurship:** There is a specific focus on "Green Entrepreneurship," where students learn how sustainable practices can be applied in business contexts.
- **Literature:** Environmental themes and issues are explored through the content of the literary works being studied.

These examples show that environmental education and sustainable development are being incorporated into various disciplines, contributing to the development of students' environmental awareness.

Block 2. What specific needs do you have in terms of resources or support to effectively teach green competencies in your educational setting?

The specific needs for effectively teaching green competencies in an educational setting are:

- **Open lessons:** Opportunities for practical, interactive lessons focused on environmental topics.
- **Meetings with experts:** Inviting environmental experts to share their knowledge and experiences with students.
- **Teacher training:** Providing professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their understanding and ability to teach green competencies.
- **Field trips:** Organizing excursions to places related to environmental conservation, allowing students to experience real-world applications of green concepts.
- **Creation of a working group:** Forming a team dedicated to building interdisciplinary connections between subjects to effectively integrate green competencies across the curriculum.

Block 3. What are the main challenges you face when trying to incorporate green competencies into your teaching practices?

The main challenges are:

- ☒ **Lack of student motivation:** Students do not show sufficient interest in topics related to ecology and sustainable development.
- ☒ **Discrepancy between the taught material and reality:** While we teach students how to protect the environment and practice waste separation, in society and nature, they often witness pollution and improper waste management. This gap between theory and reality leads to confusion and decreased motivation to apply what they have learned.

Block 4. How do students typically respond to lessons or activities focused on green competencies? Are there any strategies you have found effective in increasing their engagement?

- **Difficult vocabulary (German, Spanish):** Students find the terminology abstract and foreign, which can make it harder for them to engage.
- **Engagement through projects:** Students are more engaged when working on projects or when they have a personal contribution to the activity.
- **Impressive catastrophic facts:** Students are deeply affected by facts about the destruction of nature, which captures their attention.
- **Interest in documentaries:** They enjoy watching educational documentaries, which helps bring the topic to life.
- **Fascination with new technologies:** Students are interested in learning about new technologies that benefit the environment.
- ☒ **Effective strategy:** Presenting alarming statistics along with information on new technologies tends to spark their interest and keep them engaged.

Block 5. How are you currently assessing students' understanding and application of green competencies? What assessment methods or tools are you using?

The current methods we use to assess students' understanding and application of green competencies are:

- **Projects:** Students are assessed by developing projects related to environmental topics.
- **Discussions:** Assessing their participation in discussions on topics related to sustainable development and environmental protection.
- **Surveys:** Students carry out surveys on environmental issues which are used as a means of assessment.

Block 6. What resources (e.g., materials, training, technology) do you find most lacking when it comes to integrating green competencies into your curriculum?

There is a lack of adequate training that brings together specialists from different subjects. Currently, each teacher prepares their lessons individually, which is not effective for the comprehensive integration of green competencies.

Block 7. What type of professional development or training would be most beneficial for you to better integrate green competencies into your teaching?

Professional development that focuses on science communication and debate skills would be highly beneficial. Such training would help teachers effectively engage students in discussions on environmental topics. Additionally, participating in training courses through teacher mobility programs, such as Erasmus+, would provide opportunities to collaborate with educators from different countries, exchange best practices, and gain new perspectives on integrating green competencies into the curriculum.

Block 8. Can you share any best practices or successful initiatives related to teaching green competencies that you have implemented or observed?

Our best practices are:

- **Organizing debates**, which foster critical thinking and encourage discussions on environmental issues.
- **Hosting exhibitions** and student presentations to showcase environmental projects and ideas.
- **Creating informational posters** to visually communicate key green topics and raise awareness.
- **Organizing educational visits** to organizations such as Eco Bulpack, Sofiyska Voda, and power plants to provide real-world examples of sustainable practices.
- Using visual stimuli, like videos, to maintain student engagement and reinforce green concepts in an engaging way.

Block 9. How supportive is your school's or VET institution's administration in promoting and supporting the integration of green competencies into the curriculum?

We always get support from management when working on topics for green competencies.

Block 10. How would you like an Assessment Tool designed to evaluate and support the integration of green competencies in educational settings to be structured? Suggest a structure.

Proposed Structure of an Assessment Tool for Green Competencies in Educational Settings:

Introduction

- Brief description of the objectives of the assessment.
- Definition of "green competencies" and their significance in the educational context.

Assessment Modules

- **Module 1: Pedagogical Approaches**
Evaluation of teachers' ability to integrate green competencies into curricula and teaching methodology.
- **Module 2: Educational Content**
Evaluation of educational materials, with a focus on whether they include topics related to sustainable development and environmental literacy.
- **Module 3: Student Outcomes and Behavior**
Measurement of the level of student engagement and understanding of green competencies and their application in everyday life.
- **Module 4: School Environment**
Evaluation of the school's infrastructure and sustainability policies, including resource management and waste reduction.
- **Module 5: Partnerships and Community**
Evaluation of relationships with local communities and organizations that promote sustainable practices and participation in green initiatives.

This structure would allow the assessment tool to be comprehensive, covering all key aspects of the process of integrating green competencies in educational settings.