

## CLIMATE EDUCATION AS THE BASIS OF EXPERTISE AND RESPONSIBLE CITIZENSHIP (6/2015)

Anna Lehtonen, Hannele Cantell

### Abstract

The national core curricula for basic education and general upper secondary education in Finland have undergone revisions. New curricula will be taken into use during autumn 2016. The Finnish Climate Panel project examined how climate change as a multidisciplinary phenomenon and its societal effects were manifested in the national core curricula and in different school subjects. The methods and realization of climate education in other levels of education were also examined

The main findings are:

- It is essential that climate education includes knowledge about the issue, but also behavioral aspects are important, such as peoples' previous experiences, possibilities to act as well as emotions.
- Climate education has previously been organized mainly for children (early childhood, basic education level) and youth (upper secondary level), but its role is increasing also in adult education (workplaces, everyday life, media).
- Eco-social approach to education is a key value in the Finnish national core curriculum for basic and upper secondary education. Sustainable living is an essential goal for education in the curriculum level.
- However, in more detailed examination the concept "climate change" is seldom mentioned. The core curriculum, both in basic and upper secondary level, only advises to teach climate change issues in geography and biology. Because climate change is not specifically mentioned in other subjects, it is up to the teachers and their interest, how much climate change issues are actually dealt with in teaching. Despite this, concepts "sustainable development", "sustainable living" and "environmental perspective" are mentioned in the goals of several school subjects. This opens possibilities also for climate education.
- Climate change issues are neither exposed nor very visible in the structures of higher level education in Finland. Interdisciplinary climate change courses as well as possibilities to share multidisciplinary student/teacher expertise should be added to university courses, too. In addition, climate change understanding should be added to courses in teacher training at all levels of teaching.