

The Climate Caravan in Denmark – When Climate Education Works

“Couldn’t we just have a green dictator for some years to solve this problem?”

“Listen – if what you told us today really was true (about climate changes) somebody would have done something about it.”

This was said by 14-16 year old pupils after participating in a “Climate Caravan Day”. This is when climate education works!

The purpose of educating is to engage students in developing conscious consumer behavior to ensure that they are able to make choices based on knowledge.

Of course a lot of students react by saying: “this is not our problem - we didn’t decide these things” - but in the age group of 14-16 they do make choices that affect energy consumption and thereby the climate.

The Climate Caravan mixes science with social studies to spark debate, inspiring students to action based on knowledge. Typically, discussion includes the question of whether our democracy has the potential to create the necessary changes or, if not, whether there is a need for a revolt. Young people in our society are aware of the climate issue and, to a certain degree, have developed their own notions about the issue, in keeping with the fundamental human need to explain facts within emergent context. Do our young people actually understand the extremely complicated balance between societal and civic responsibilities as well as the gap between technological and practical problems that delay the solutions to the problem?

A more important point, though, is that they see themselves as part of the solution, not just as innocent bystanders.

It is critical to impress upon them the value of “Don’t” as an action-concept - the conscious choice NOT to do something, made in support of a value system.

This is the underlying context, that the act of choosing addresses an ethical and moral question rather than simply a scientific, practical one; and that is a new development in the science departments around Denmark.

The teachers have reacted surprisingly positively to the notion that their subjects can be viewed from these angles. Subjects that focus more on their own ideas and value systems are extremely popular compared to “old-school” science education.



Climate Caravan Hit the Nail on the Head

The whole project has helped to broaden the view of science to include societal implications rather than treating it as a technical and purely positivistic subject. Climate Caravan is now the chosen tool for placing potential scientific discoveries into the context of solving present and future problems.

Perhaps not since the 1960s have such evident opportunities existed for advances in science that could present as powerful as the moon landing.



Change the Way

The idea behind the project is to change the way the subject of climate change is taught in Danish schools! - Climate was seen earlier solely as a science subject. The new idea was to give the teachers a new entry to the topic, a debate and a political angle, and to let the science be the background and part of the solution.

We believe that we have actually succeeded and if we keep the “steam up” for another 5-10 years, climate will be a permanent integrated subject in the educational system of Denmark - but not with public money. The funding comes from a electricity tax administrated by the association of Danish power companies (Dansk Energi).



The Climate Caravan’s 13 activities:

- Energy & CO₂ Consumption in your Room
- Energy & CO₂ in your Household
- Climate Actions in your School
- Letter to the Local Community
- Climate Summit - Role Play Game
- Climate Journalists
- Energy in your Kitchen
- Debate Meeting Preparations
- CO₂ and the Carbon Cycle
- Technical Solutions
- Renewable Energy in an Integrated System
- Transportation in the Future
- How to Supply yourself with Energy without Fossil Fuels

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The Climate Caravan Facts

- 150 Schools Visited:

The Climate Caravan has brought the message out to every region of Denmark, visiting 150 schools and creating local debate. Three guides help the 13 teachers to carry out each day’s Climate Caravan activities.

- Website (www.klimakaravanen.dk):

It offers all activities on-line, including a lot of video materials enabling schools that do not receive the visit to carry out their own Climate Caravan Day or to deliver the same benefits in other contexts.

- High Quality Material:

The Climate Caravan has become very well known because the members of the core partner team are already known as producers of high-quality materials. Therefore, the teachers already know that irrelevant or poor-quality materials will be filtered out, leaving only accurate, relevant materials in the final programme.

The core team behind the development and project management are the Danish associations: Society for Nature Conservation, the Outdoor Council, Schools’ Energy Forum (SEF), Organisation for Renewable Energy (INFORSE member), and Teachers’ Resource Center.

Find more at the INFORSE School Resource Database in English:

www.inforse.org/europe/schools.htm

Sources in Danish: www.skoleenergi.dk

www.klimakaravanen.dk

OVE is member of INFORSE.

The Target Group:

Students from 14 to 16 years old and their teachers. The very narrow group has been chosen because the message is specifically designed for this group. It is put at a very sharp angle based on the IPCC forecasts further visualised by Marc Lynas in the book “Six degrees more - our future on a hotter planet”. The choice was very conscious to create real anger and aggravation – thereby sparking the need for taking part in the discussions about who has the responsibility and what can be done at every level: local, regional, national and global.