

### **Carbon Literacy at CBS PRME**

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## **CARBON DEBARDON ATANAN DEBS PRNE**

**CBS PRME** - RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT EDUCATION **InFocus Report Series Short Report No. 4 - June 2020** 

CERS K COPENHAGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL

CBS PRIME PRINCIPLES FOR RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

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# WHAT IS CARBON LITERACY?

SECTION ONE

## INTRODUCTION

In many ways, humanity is resilient, coming together to solve the most difficult human and planetary challenges. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>1</sup> is a good example of this, with a set of **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** adopted by all 193 United Nations Member States in 2015. The implications of these 17 SDGs are both far-reaching and interconnected, and the importance of achieving these goals is paramount. For example, with relation to **Goal 13- Climate Action**, the United Nations writes:

"Climate change is now affecting every country on every continent. It is disrupting national economies and affecting lives, costing people, communities and countries dearly today and even more tomorrow. Weather patterns are changing, sea levels are rising, weather events are becoming more extreme and greenhouse gas emissions are now at their highest levels in history. Without action, the world's average surface temperature is likely to surpass 3 degrees centigrade this century. The poorest and most vulnerable people are being affected the most." "

Given the importance and urgency of climate action, it is not surprising that governments, organizations and higher education institutions worldwide are seeking solutions that combat climate change and ensure an understanding of carbon emissions and their impacts. Doing this, however, can be quite challenging.

Once the critical decision to tackle climate change has been made, there are a number of issues that begin to arise. One issue relates to the selection of greenhouse gases needing to be reported and reduced, and the relative importance to be placed on the range emissions covered in footprint calculations. In addition, although standards for greenhouse gas accounting are a common resource used for footprint calculations, there is no mandatory provision of footprint verification (Pandey et al., 2011). Another common issue is accountability - who is to be held responsible for emissions and global warming? To what extent should countries, organizations, and individuals be held accountable? Are some countries and organizations more responsible than others? When looking at solutions for a green transition, which should be chosen? Which solutions fit which context, and will they go far enough to achieve important emissions reductions targets?

Although these issues are often complex and multifaceted, a good starting point for addressing them is to be well equipped with a fundamental understanding of the issues at play.

### WHAT IS CARBON LITERACY?

Carbon Literacy is a non-formal education initiative offered through **CBS PRME** (Velazquez et al., 2006). The Carbon Literacy training programme provides participants with a new level of understanding regarding climate change, teaching participants to make feasible changes from an informed position. Upon completion of a written assignment, participants are granted a diploma, namely the **Carbon Literacy Certificate**.

CBS PRME collaborates with faculty as well student organisations at CBS, such as **oikos** and **Climate Club**, in the delivery of the training. It is the ambition of CBS PRME to expand the collaborative network regarding Carbon Literacy. This work supports CBS PRMEs commitment to promote responsible management education. The Carbon Literacy Project is part of the Cooler Projects organisation, with objective of providing "...*An awareness of the carbon dioxide costs and impacts of everyday activities, and the ability and motivation to reduce emissions, on an individual, community and organizational basis."<sup>iii</sup>* 

### THE CARBON LITERACY PROJECT

The **Carbon Literacy Project (CLP)** was founded by Cooler Projects. Cooler Projects create and deliver projects that work towards a low carbon culture. Currently, The CLP is Cooler's biggest project. To date, over 14,000 individuals and 40 organizations have taken part in the training. The CLP aims to make carbon literacy learning accessible to everyone. As the accreditation body, the CLP does not deliver training directly, but rather training is delivered in-house by organizations and education establishments or by external carbon literacy trainers or training organizations.

Originating in Manchester, the CLP has expanded nationwide in the United Kingdom, and is now also being delivered internationally.

In 2017, **Nottingham Business School**, a **PRME Champion School**, became involved in the CLP after a British television production unit asked them to evaluate the effectiveness of carbon literacy training on the television unit's staff, and its impact at an organisational level. Dr. Petra Molthan-Hill, researcher and Academic Lead for PRME at Nottingham Business School, was involved in this evaluation. It was through Dr. Molthan-Hill's affiliation with the PRME Champions group that brought the CLP to the attention of CBS PRME and the wider PRME community.

## **14,000** GITIZENS GERTIFIED

## 28,000 ACTIONS PLEDGED

## 40 GARBON LITERATE ORGANIZATIONS

ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGED

**5-15%** CARBON SAVINGS PER PERSON

<sup>•</sup> Statistics as of May 28, 2020, Carbon Literacy Project

"The PRME initiative was launched to nurture responsible leaders of the future. Never has this task been more important. Bold leadership and innovative thinking are needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals."

#### Antonio Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General

### CBS PRME AND THE CARBON LITERACY PROJECT

A key commitment of PRME is to promote responsible management education. **Copenhagen Business School (CBS)** became an early signatory in 2008, and is part of the select 38-member PRME Champions group that act as role models and pioneers for the other schools. Working with Six Principles <sup>iv</sup>, PRME engages business schools to ensure they provide future leaders with the skills needed to balance social, environmental and economic goals, aligning academic institutions with the SDGs and work of the UN Global Compact.<sup>v</sup>

The PRME community is comprised of twelve regional chapters, nine working groups and the Champions group. CBS PRME is a member of all three entities, namely the Nordic Chapter, the Working Group on Climate Change & Environment and the Champions Group.

Working groups collaborate on issues relevant to corporate sustainability, responsible management, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These working groups comprise of anti-corruption in curriculum change, business and human rights, business for peace, climate change and environment, gender equality, humanistic management, poverty, and sustainability mindset.



### PRME CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP

The PRME Climate and Environment Working Group was established in 2015 at the Global Forum in New York, and has three main objectives:

**Policy/strategies:** This objective provides business schools with policies and strategies pertaining to climate and environment that can be implemented into curriculum and strategic planning.

**Teaching:** Sharing ideas and innovative methods to integrate climate change and sustainability into business education and especially focusing on student engagement and motivation.

**Cooperation:** Strengthening the dialogue between business school and private/public organizations to collaborate on solutions to climate change.

The scope of this Working Group extends beyond business schools, acting as a resource for all organizations who wish to embed climate change and environmental education into their teaching and training.<sup>vi</sup> This aim also aligns with Copenhagen Business School's focus on life-long learning and certification programmes.

One of the initiatives of the Climate and Environment Working Group that fulfills the extended scope of PRME and life-long learning criteria of CBS is the Carbon Literacy Workshop Project. This project has earned wide recognition, being formally acknowledged by the United Nations at the COP21 meeting in Paris in 2015, and awarded a TAP100, as one of 100 Transformative Action Programmes worldwide.

"Responding to climate change is too big a challenge to rely on our default settings. If we fail to embed new thinking in the current concerns and actions of those around us, then we fail." Cooler Projects,

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## THE CARBON LITERACY WORKSHOP

SECTION TWO

## WHAT IS A CARBON LITERACY WORKSHOP?

As previously mentioned, education is a vital tool to mitigate climate change. The Carbon Literacy Workshop provides participants with an understanding of carbon and its effects on the climate by offering a foundation for tackling climate change. Participants are asked to critically reflect on their actions at work and in everyday life and receive knowledge and tools to reduce their carbon footprint.

Carbon Literacy training educates participants about their carbon footprint and the extent to which different activities affect carbon emissions. Carbon Literacy is a term used to describe an awareness of climate change, and the climate impacts of humankind's everyday actions.

Carbon Literacy relies on action-based results from participants. Participants are first educated about the science behind climate change and the actions that can be taken to impact climate change on a personal and organizational level. Next, participants are given the necessary strategies and skills for communicating about action and making educated decisions about necessary changes. The purpose is to understand how the issue of climate change can be addressed. The workshop also looks at carbon emissions from a macro perspective through a discussion of the role of government and the private sector.

### "Relevant climate change learning for everyone"

#### The training workshop gives an understanding of...

- 1) The basic science behind the climate crisis
- 2) The impact different sectors (such as the food sector) have on our climate and vice versa
- 3) Climate change mitigation tools for one's discpline and/or function
- 4) Solutions with the highest impact
- 5) Strategies and skills for communicating and/or teaching climate actions
- 6) Personal possibilities to take action privately and in current/ future roles

Participants who have completed a days' worth of Carbon Literacy training can be certified as 'Carbon Literate'. Organizations that have a Carbon Literate workforce can be accredited by The Project as a 'Carbon Literate Organization' (CLO) and individuals delivering Carbon Literacy training to others can be certified as a Carbon Literacy 'Facilitator' (CLF), 'Trainer' (CLT), or 'Consultant' (CLC). Organizations that have delivered in depth Carbon Literacy training to a wide range of organizations and individuals can be accredited as a 'Carbon Literacy Training Organization' (CLTO).<sup>vii</sup>

Carbon Literacy citizens gain critical thinking and analysis skills and can use their newly attained skills to make educated decisions about how their personal choices affect the environment. Carbon Literacy training can be delivered in the form of workshops, e-learning, and/or self-directed learning.

Learn more about Carbon Literacy here.

'The Carbon Literacy Project provides an awareness of the carbon costs and impacts of everyday activities and the ability and motivation to reduce emissions, on an individual, community and organisational basis.' Q

## **WORKSHOP STEP-BY-STEP**

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Carbon Literacy workshops at CBS start with a presentation and pop quiz to ascertain the participants' current knowledge of carbon. It challenges participants to see if they can select the most carbon light options from two alternatives, while thinking about the entire value chain, as outlined in the book "How Bad Are Bananas? The Carbon Footprint of Everything" (Berners-Lee, 2010). When first published, this book was deemed groundbreaking, as 'carbon footprint' was a rather alien term. Examples from the book are provided to workshop participants, with a wide range of products, goods and services. An example given is the case for carrots. 1 kg of carrots produces 0.25 kg CO2e when grown locally and in season. Carrot production produces 3 kg of CO2e on average and 1 kg of CO2e is produced by shipped baby carrots. So a bag of carrots is similar to a two-mile train ride (Berners-Lee, 2010), acknowledging that there are many different ways to make this calculation and this just one example. Next participants are divided into groups to work on a scenario exploration game. There are two scenario outcomes, one with a negative future scenario and the other with a positive future scenario. Participants are asked to place illustrations in a logical, sequential timeline of events demonstrating the impact of activities upon each other.

A second presentation takes place directly after the scenario exploration game, discussing climate change impacts from a number of perspectives including individual countries and their CO2 emissions. The main CO2 "sinners" are then highlighted, along with a completely different list of countries most likely to suffer the greatest negative impacts. To conclude the training, participants evaluate different situations related to their society, institutions and their individual carbon footprint. Participants are asked to elaborate on three questions related to:

#### 1) Societal actions to become carbon neutral

#### 2) Personal actions impacting CO2 savings

#### 3) Group action that can significantly impact CO2 savings

The exercise is then sent to the carbon literacy organization as an Evidence Form for evaluation and potential feedback. Upon successful completion, the participant receives a carbon literacy certification and is declared carbon literate.



"Today, over 14,000 individuals and more than 40 organizations are Carbon Literate. Are you?"

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With the evergrowing urgency of understanding the impact of CO2 and other greenhouse gasses upon our fragile planet, initiatives such as the Carbon Literacy Project are vital in providing clear, science-based information on carbon emissions.

## CBS AND CARBON LITERACY

To date, CBS has hosted three Carbon Literacy workshops with participants from a diverse range of backgrounds and CBS study programmes. The first training session took place in March 2019, and as of February 2020, 74 people have successfully completed the training at CBS with further workshops in the pipeline. The Carbon Literacy project also offers training to become a Carbon Literacy trainer, consultant, or facilitator. In the future, CBS plans to host more workshops with the possibility to become certified as a trainer, consultant, or facilitator. The carbon Literacy training or parts of the training may also be offered as teaching material or modules intergrated into course and or degree programmes.

## CONCLUSION

Sustainability is undeniably given more attention now than ever before, and is arguably also more important than ever before. This also means that an increasingly wide group of stakeholders is ready to take action, from governments to policymakers to business, and not least individuals within society. However, understanding **HOW to take action** can be considerably more challenging. Which are the most harmful plastic waste products? What are the most efficient ways to conserve energy? Which processes produce the most CO2? These are complicated questions that do not always have straight-forward answers.

With the ever-growing urgency of understanding the impact of CO2 and other greenhouse gasses upon our fragile planet, initiatives such as the Carbon Literacy Project are vital in providing clear, science-based information on carbon emissions. As well as empowering societies and individuals with the tools to understand the impacts of CO2, the **Carbon Literacy Project also provides the necessary information to make informed changes and reduce carbon emissions.** 



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## **ENDNOTES**

<sup>i</sup> https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf

- ii https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/climate-change/
- iii https://carbonliteracy.com
- iv https://www.unprme.org/about-prme/the-six-principles.php
- v https://www.unglobalcompact.org/
- vi https://www.unprme.org/how-to-engage/display-working-group.php?wgid=3379
- vii https://carbonliteracy.com/what-on-earth-is-carbon-literacy/

### PHOTOS

Bjarke MacCarthy (front & back, page 2) Ricardo Esquivel from Pexels (page 5) Philip Ackermann from Pexels (page 7) Liza Dava, CBS PRME (page 10, 11, 12)

