

Assessment of Social Economy Content in Nova Scotia Secondary School Curriculum

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Canadian Social Economy Hub

Purpose

- To develop a portrait of Social Economy education in Canada that will help researchers to gain a better understanding of the extent to which senior secondary students are exposed to aspects of the Social Economy.
- To help researchers to understand the knowledge of the Social Economy that secondary school graduates in Canada can be expected to possess.
- To aid in the development of practical tools that are strategically directed at certain aspects of provincial curricula where it is determined that Social Economy content can most easily be integrated into the curriculum.
- To inform a discussion of 'best practices' that can aid in the delivery of education about the Social Economy.

Methodology

Specific Curriculum Outcomes were chosen for analysis because they provide a similar frame of reference to the pilot study in B.C that focused on analysis of the Prescribed Learning Outcomes, and a picture of the expectations and outcomes of Nova Scotia's secondary school students. The outcomes were selected because they are the level of learning outcome that is closest to the students' actual experiences in the classroom. As such, they offer the opportunity for more detailed insight into what students are taught in the classroom than could be uncovered otherwise.

Curriculum reviewed: grade 10-12

Specific Curriculum Outcomes (SCO) were reviewed in: Social Studies, Technology Education, Personal Development and Career Education and, Business and Entrepreneurship Education.

Learning outcomes were coded to identify whether the Social Economy was *directly referenced*, *indirectly referenced*, or *potentially relevant*.

- A **direct reference** was coded when the keyword indicators were directly quoted in the SCO using the same or very similar terminology.
- An **indirect reference** was coded when the keyword indicator was implied or in an instance when the reader would logically assume reference to the particular indicator would be discussed in order to satisfy the learning outcome requirement.
- A **potentially relevant** referred to Curriculum Outcomes that could easily incorporate Social Economy concepts or content in the curriculum. Where a potential reference to the Social Economy has been identified, all keyword indicators that could be discussed in this reference have been listed.

Nova Scotia Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education System

According to the Government of Nova Scotia, "*the primary mandate of the public school system in Nova Scotia is to provide education programs and services for students to enable them to develop their potential and acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy*" and further that, "a sound education provided in partnership with the home and the community forms the basis for students to become healthy and caring persons, having a respect for self and others and a desire to contribute to society as productive citizens." (Government of Nova Scotia, 2003, p. 11). In this paper, we contend that teaching about the Social Economy can play an important role in supporting the goals set out by the Nova Scotia Department of Education.



Sequence	Task
STEP 1	Review Social Economy literature
STEP 2	Identify emerging themes that are indicative of the Social Economy and agree upon keyword indicators with research team
STEP 3	Conduct preliminary review of Specific Curriculum Outcome (SCO) available from the Nova Scotia Department of Education and create a separate working document to use for coding
STEP 4	Code and highlight each SCO according to Social Economy keyword indicators as one of the following: direct, indirect or potential
STEP 5	Identify specific keyword indicators that relate to each SCO
STEP 6	Cross-reference coding of SCOs with research team
STEP 7	Create tables that tally keyword indicators and relate directly to each subject areas
STEP 8	Analyze results using discourse analysis
STEP 9	Examine student enrollment in each course analyzed to determine students potential exposure to Social Economy content

Results and Analysis

Table 2: Summary of Keyword Indicators by Subject

Course	Direct Reference	Indirect Reference	Potentially Relevant	TOTAL
Global History			205	205
Canadian Economy	1	3	194	198
Global Geography		4	191	195
Entrepreneurship		1	193	194
Tourism		3	156	159
African Canadian Studies		8	116	124
Production Technology		1	117	118
Business Management	1	4	95	100
Canadian History			85	85
Electrotechnologies		1	73	75
Energy, Power and Technology		1	65	66
Workplace Health and Safety		7	59	66
Life-Work Transitions		2	59	61
Communications Technology		2	23	24
Canadian Literature			22	22

Recommendations to the Nova Scotia Department of Education

- The Community Economic Development curriculum supplement to grade 9 social studies curriculum should continue to be supported, and its contents included across other courses, grade levels and subject areas:** A study on the impact of this curriculum on graduating students would help other provinces and Social Economy actors.
- Expand opportunities for community-based learning, including community-service learning:** The Department of Education has already pledged support for co-operative and community-based education in the province. The Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet) has developed a community development service learning toolkit that is available to interested officials, community members and educators on the CCEDNet website. Further, a list of Nova Scotia Social Economy organisations that can support students for volunteer work placements, service-learning activities and student projects should be developed for educators.
- Compile a list of existing teaching resources for use in teaching about the Social Economy:** Some of these teaching resources are available from organizations such as CCEDNet, New Dawn Ltd. and the Women's Economic Equality Society. Where there are gaps in resources, new ones should be developed in partnership with local Social Economy organisations.
- The indicators with the strongest degree of representation in the curriculum are those emphasizing Social Economy values such as, social and collective responsibility, active and engaged citizenship and, democratic decision-making. This suggests that students are graduating with a high degree of knowledge about Social Economy values but would benefit from more education about Social Economy initiatives and activities.
- Develop a Social Economy Education Working Group made up of Ministry staff, Social Economy activists, educators, and administrators:** This working group would provide policy and curriculum development advice, support teacher training and engage in public awareness activities toward educating about the Social Economy.
- If not already available, small grants should be made available to schools that are employing for innovative teaching and demonstration projects that can assist in teaching about the Social Economy.**
- A number of small changes could be made to improve the Social Economy content of Nova Scotia courses.** For example, a peoples' history approach to Canadian History could be employed to allow more opportunities to discuss the important role of the peoples' movements that form the backbone of the Social Economy in Nova Scotia.

Recommendations for Researchers and Others in Nova Scotia

- Social Economy actors should build on the existing foundation of partnership in education within Nova Scotia by working with local school boards and educators:** This foundation is evidenced in the Department of Education's Business plans and the strategic document, Learning for Life II, for example.
- While more research is needed, the Options and Opportunities program suggests elements of a Social Economy education model that may be implemented:** The O2 program combines work placement, community partnerships and, specialized training and selected fields and guarantees participants entrance into Nova Scotia Community College. A similar model may be successful for students interested in pursuing further education and a career in the Social Economy.
- Another important element of CED education in Nova Scotia is its explicit focus and connection to the unique local history, culture and issues of communities in Nova Scotia:** Other researchers have noted the importance to students' learning of making connections to local issues of importance to their communities. Cultural and historical factors, appropriately utilized can provide an important site of strength for Social Economy activists interested in curricular change.
- Researchers should seek to widely disseminate the findings of this series of research papers:** They could do this by presenting at upcoming professional development days and, by organizing a workshop with education stakeholders.

