

Blog post

BERA Blog: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/editorial-education-for-our-planet-and-our-future>

Editorial: Education for our planet and our future

Kevin Smith, Cardiff University, 23 January 2020

I am fortunate to serve as one of two members of the BERA Council representing BERA members in Wales. This September, my fellow council members and I joined hundreds of delegates in attending the BERA Annual Conference 2019 in Manchester, England. As usual, the conference provided opportunities to listen, critique and discuss educational research conducted by emerging and established researchers under the broad tent of 'education'. However, something happened at this conference that set it apart from others I've previously attended. On the final day of the event, I attended a new addition called a 'hot topic' session. The title of this session was #FridaysforFuture: The serious side of nature, outdoor learning and play. It was chaired by Dr Mark Leather and included presentations from Dr Tracy Hayes, Professor Tonia Gray and Dr John Quay. During the session, some attendees were disappointed by what Professor Tonia Gray referred to as a paucity of discussions about what she regards as 'the most pressing educational imperative of modern times...'

Climate change.

As presenters and audience members passionately called for collective action to raise the profile of climate change at BERA and in our universities and communities, I thought to myself, 'How can I respond to this call?' This special edition of the BERA Blog is part of that response. After the session, I approached fellow researchers in the field of education (and beyond) asking them if they could contribute submissions to the Blog that address how pupils, educators and educational researchers are currently responding to our climate crisis. The first post is from Professor Tonia Gray, and discusses the importance of engaging with the young people concerned with the future of our planet. The second is from Dr Dylan Adams, who writes about how our current crisis may be exacerbated by a western orientation to time – a concept that resonates strongly with me and my experiences as the fellow in curriculum at the University of the South Pacific. Dr Paul Vare discusses the importance of understanding our current crisis and taking appropriate action, while Drs Rhian Barrance, Jennifer Rudd, and Callum McGregor and Beth Christie each discuss examples of the types of action we can all be involved in as we attempt to understand and respond to climate change.

The latter two blogs will be published as part the second part of this special issue, on Tuesday, 28 January, alongside the contribution from Jack Reed and Catherine Dunn, postgraduate students at the University of Edinburgh, who discuss a different kind of action – involving presentational and propositional knowing as part of a place-responsive approach to understanding climate and ecological crisis. While Earth and its people face dire consequences from our current climate catastrophe, the final post by Dr Richard Millican centres on a hopeful and sustainable perspective as we come to grips with the realities of our changing climate and the means through which educators must understand our practice and the anticipated outcomes for our learners through a lens of sustainable development. I'd like to thank each of our contributors for taking time to share their passion and expertise with us on this incredibly important and timely issue. And I invite you, the reader, to consider as you read each of these blogs the call that is placed before us and to ask yourself (as we all must do), 'How can I take action in educating myself and others for our planet and our future?'