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A BERA
RESEARCH
COMMISSION

EDUCATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

A MANIFESTO

POLICY BRIEF
JUNE 2021

2021



UNIVERSITY
of York



Centre for Alternative Technology
Canolfan y Dechnoleg Amgen



University of
Strathclyde
Glasgow



Humanity faces a climate crisis. Education is needed to help the next generation to adapt and respond to challenges associated with the changing climate. Education is not currently meeting the environmental sustainability needs of most young people. The British Educational Research Association (BERA) Research Commission 2021 brings together teachers and young people from across the UK to create a manifesto for change. This brief communicates headline messages for policy-makers. The manifesto produced will be launched to coincide with COP26 the UN Climate Change Conference in 2021.



ABOUT THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to analyse where we are now with education for environmental sustainability, what change is needed, and the barriers to this change. In May and June 2021, nine 2-hour online workshops were held with 64 young people aged 16-18 years (15 with declared additional educational needs), 38 teachers, 18 teacher educators from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.



KEY QUESTIONS

The questions the research commission set out to answer were:

- What is the current context for education for environmental sustainability, and what do we need?
- What can we learn from others' experiences of education for environmental sustainability?
- What could the future of education for environmental sustainability look like?

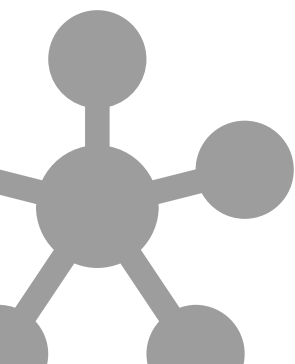


SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In relation to policy, young people and teachers identified barriers to change being power imbalances, not being heard, lack of funding and leadership from government, public discourse which individualises environmental action, and a curriculum and assessment system which does not value (and crowds out) environmental sustainability.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Young people and teachers saw education for environmental sustainability as learning to live differently to protect, preserve and mend the environment for current and future generations.



Young people and teachers identified solutions at different scales including those for the classroom, our schools, our local communities and at policy level, calling on policy makers to:

REVIEW

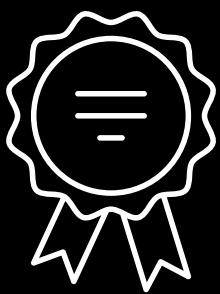


Initiate a co-ordinated review of the secondary school national curriculum in each of the four jurisdictions which has teacher and student involvement. This will identify ways to foreground and value sustainability within a whole school approach regardless of the subjects students elect to study.



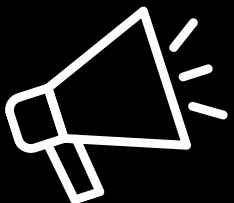
HOLD TO ACCOUNT

Identify ways that environmental sustainability can feature in existing accountability regimes (e.g. inspection frameworks, professional standards for teachers) and policies to value sustainability work in schools.



AWARD

Create an external, accredited award for students which has an environmental sustainability focus (similar to existing schemes such as Duke of Edinburgh, John Muir, CREST award), valuing individual and collective efforts and environmental leadership.



MOBILISE

Enlist the endorsement of respected public figures including politicians, celebrities, organisations and social media influencers to promote education for environmental sustainability.



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NEXT STEPS

- Production of an illustrated manifesto. Artist Maisy Summer will work with teachers and young people to co-create this in June 2021.
- Manifesto launch in November 2021 to coincide with COP26. We encourage policy makers to sign a pledge to:
 - Recognise the importance of young people's and teachers' perspectives in making decisions about education for environmental sustainability
 - Commit to review the place and future of education for environmental sustainability within their own organisations' vision and strategy in the year following COP26.



For commission homepage scan QR code.

ABOUT

BERA Research Commissions identify and address issues of current importance to the study and practice of education – specifically those likely to prove consequential to the future of the discipline and its research communities. Generating new empirical evidence and theoretically rigorous analysis, they make recommendations for how educational research, and BERA in particular, can respond to the challenges and opportunities arising from the changing nature of education across the four nations of the UK.

COMMISSION CO-LEADS

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University of York

Dr Elizabeth Rushton

Lecturer in Geography Education
King's College London

VISIT

- www.york.ac.uk/education/research/uyseg/research-projects/manifesto-efes/
- routesjournal.org/projects/bera/

To attend the launch of the manifesto 17:00-18:00 on 1st November 2021 contact lynda.dunlop@york.ac.uk.

COMMISSION PRINCIPAL PARTNERS

- Jacquie Ayre, Liverpool World Centre
- Dr Andrea Bullivant, Liverpool World Centre, TEESNet
- Dr Jane Essex, Senior Lecturer in Chemistry Education, Strathclyde University,
- Faye Laverick and Alister Talbot, Huntington Research School
- Dr Cyrus Nayeri, Geography Teacher and Editor in Chief, Routes – the Journal for Student Geographers
- Michelle Ryan, Association for Science Education Northern Ireland Field Officer
- Smriti Safaya, University of York
- Amanda Smith, Education and Training Manager, Centre for Alternative Technology, Wales
- Judy Ling Wong, Honorary President, Black Environment Network



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