



Climate Change - the educational implications?

The effects of Covid-19 have resulted in hopeful messages about responding to climate change with observations, for example, about less pollution ... but it has also highlighted the massive global challenges involved.

In this context it is, we propose, important to revisit the educational implications. 12 years ago a leaflet was used to generate network debate.

[See Propositions opposite]

At the time a series of teacher workshops were set up, and young people involved in **Let's Talk Climate Change** also contributed.

How do you see the propositions it offered?

What progress has been made?

What are the priorities now?

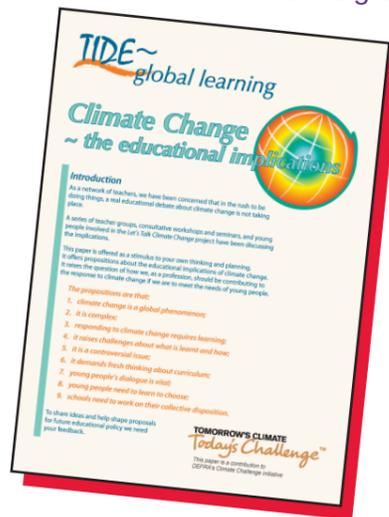
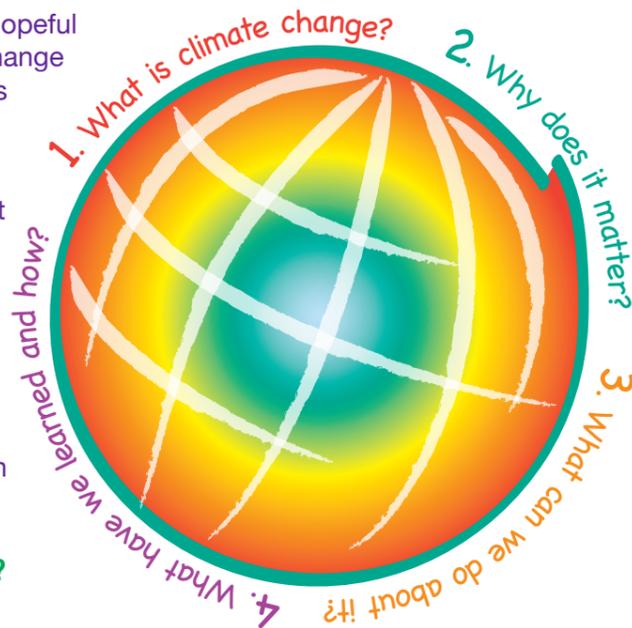
We are proposing to liaise with **West Midlands Sustainable Schools Network** about a response to these questions and to follow up new debate. This group partly evolved from a group set up by Tide~ is chaired by Ben Ballin.

WMSSN have produced a [draft resources list](#) that invites your feedback.

We also hope to learn from **Change the Story**, a project that focuses on work about climate change in primary schools in 5 countries in Europe. Richard Dawson and Ben Ballin have written an NAEF article to introduce this work.

See: [Changing the narrative about climate change education?](#)

We are seeking comments and articles for 'Elephant Times' exploring ideas, sharing what you are doing, reflecting on how you see the priority issues.



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The Elephant Times

12 years on .. How do we respond to the proposition:

that climate change is a global phenomenon?

It will affect us all in many ways. It raises key principles of commonality and interdependence. It connects us with communities all over the world, who are also working on how to respond. There is a real sense that 'we are all in it together'. Perspectives from elsewhere in the world offer us particular insights.

that it is complex?

Climate change is not a single issue. Understanding it calls for joined-up thinking involving different curriculum areas [eg Geography, Science, Citizenship, D& T].

We need to acknowledge that the issues are contested and there is uncertainty. It raises questions about the culture of science and the need for 'scientific literacy'.

that responding to it requires learning?

The seriousness of the issues give us a great deal to think about and act on. Their complexity challenges us to do so in a dynamic way.

Young people should have an entitlement to understand what is happening and engage with the issues about how we respond.

The contribution of learning is often undervalued by those seeking to respond to climate change.

that it raises challenges about both what is learnt and how it is learnt?

Climate change is not simply a subject which can be 'covered'. There will always be new things to learn, or existing understandings to re-evaluate. This is challenging, but offers potential for exciting and meaningful learning.

Learners will require a range of perspectives to get a sense of what is going on. Sensationalist or simplistic approaches may encourage a sense of powerlessness or cynicism. Learners will need space to assess conflicting assertions.

that it is a controversial issue?

Understanding climate change is work in progress, even at the most sophisticated and 'expert' levels.

The idea that the teacher doesn't know 'the answer' offers particular opportunities for student enquiry .

that it needs fresh thinking about curriculum?

Climate change engages the agenda of 'developing a curriculum for the 21st century'* in a real way. Understanding such a complex global issue requires new curriculum models.

Such a curriculum needs to emphasise critical thinking, co-operation and learning to learn.

that young people's dialogue is vital?

We know that climate change is likely to affect young people throughout their lives. They have a stake in its implications for the future, and this goes beyond knowledge. What are their aspirations?

There is a need for mutual learning between teachers and learners, and great potential for young people to learn from each other.

The young people Tide~ consulted challenged the tendency to get them doing things rather than thinking about them.

They also raised the well-intentioned desire to protect young learners from a potentially alarming or depressing vision of the future.

that young people need to learn to choose?

Current received wisdom is unlikely to be adequate when dealing with the needs of the future. We need to be thinking about learning for empowerment rather than compliance.

It is healthy for learners to feel they are making a difference, but not to be unquestioning about what that means. Activity itself can also be a stimulus to learning.

that schools need to develop a disposition?

There is potential to engage learners in school decisions about climate change, where at a minimum they are informed about what is happening, and preferably they are able to offer leadership.

Issues like climate change call for whole school coherence, for dialogue across roles, subjects, phases, and specialisations ... and for this to centre on the learner's experience.

Edited Tide~ leaflet 2008

written by Ben Ballin

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