

Climate Education - five uneasy steps

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[His article in ET 1.4](#) helped set the scene for Tide's current work.

It is a mantra beloved of environmental educators that young people should **experience education about, in and for the environment**. These obviously relate to awareness, knowledge and understanding, first-hand practical experience, and the development of attitudes and values, and the capacity to act. This secular trinity is of long standing and remains a useful way of thinking about how to realise a curriculum.

This was brought to mind when I read [Tim Brighouse's article](#) in the last ET.

When it comes to climate change education, this mantra obviously does not work. Education for climate change anyone? And education in (during) climate change? Well, although that's what we're failing miserably to do now, it doesn't work as an idea.

A different way of thinking about all this is needed, and [NAEE](#) [National Association for Environmental Education] has made a start on this

NAEE argues that there needs to be a focus on five aspects ...

1. What is climate?
2. What's the evidence for global heating and the changing climate?
3. Looking ahead: what might happen if we carry on as we are?
4. Looking around: what are we already doing?
5. Looking forward: what might (or should) we be doing?

- 1 is the easy bit and it goes on already. It's uncontroversial, and there is a great deal of teacher experience and expertise.
- 2 is more complex and challenging. There is less teacher experience and expertise, and it's not in the national curriculum. There are good resources, and it's now largely uncontroversial.
- 3 is even more complex in both its nature, and in terms of how to help students learn. It's a difficult mix of clear science and scenario modelling – some of which suggest awful futures. It's not in the national curriculum at all.
- 4-5 bring new levels of difficulty, because they are inherently political, and values are in play. Although [4] might be thought of as factual, it will be impossible to focus sensibly on it without evaluating what is being done (and hence not done). Exploring this carries risk for a school but it's what groups of young people say they want. The national curriculum is silent.

These five might be seen as broadly sequential. [1] is needed for a study of [2], and this is what the national curriculum sets out. [3] certainly needs [1] and [2] to be in place before it is tackled.

Logically, [4] should then come before [5] but it might make more sense, pedagogically, to integrate them.

But how should these play out across the key stages? And which subject(s) should get to teach about which aspects? If ever guidance is generated, it will always need be left to individual schools and/or trusts to determine operational matters.

One thing is clear, however, going from [1] to [5] sees an increase in the number of subjects that will have to contribute if students are to learn most effectively.

