Abstract

Climate change will take a mammoth toll on our global civilization, and also on our capacity for restitution and sensitivity to the world around us. While many of us have a vague awareness of impending global alteration, much of contemporary society abides to the ‘business as usual’ mode of daily living. This dulling of response to the conditions of our world, I suggest, is partly reflected in the model of selfhood which predominates Western culture. To investigate this point further from an educational standpoint, I review many assumptions about how education is delivered, received and presumed, and how these assumptions are manifested within the framework of individualism and the consciousness they perpetuate. It is the notion of the ‘self’ and its overarching ethos of ontological, ethical and pedagogical ramifications that I explore in this narrative inquiry about modern schooling and climate change. The notion of an individual ‘self’ is for the most part an unquestioned part of our world and daily existence. Not surprisingly, much of contemporary educational theory rests upon the virtue and ideal of individualistic forms of thinking. But what if the common assumptions and practices embedded in a consciousness of separation contribute to the growing trend of social injustice, alienation and ecological problems of today? This dissertation is a sustained contemplation and investigation into this vantage point.

As our planet is facing the brink of crisis, outdated modes of understanding self and earth are slowly being replaced by a new narrative of reunion and reciprocity. In an effort to extend the reimagining of an expansive, ecologically-aware sense of self, I offer a theory of Deep Education founded upon ontology of interrelatedness, self-integration and accompanying relational pedagogy. Tools for developing new conditions and practices in schools are offered to help students develop critical sensitivities, mindfulness and conscious awareness to grow into effective, positive change agents in the world. These proposals are presented as an antidote to prevailing mechanistic and separatist pedagogy, in order to create a flourishing world for all and provide resistance to the mounting ecological problems of today.