

## **Sexualities and Gender**

### **Main activities and events of the SIG in the past year.**

Like many academic organizations, the SIG has been severely limited by the pandemic in what we have been able to plan and achieve this year. However we have been engaging online via BERA networks. Josh Heyes has written a blog for BERA on the impacts of coronavirus on sexuality education provision. This was done in consultation with several RSE external providers, improving our links with practitioners. We also recorded an interview with Anna Carlile from Goldsmiths university as a podcast for the BERA blog, recapping previous work on religion, inclusion and statutory RSE in England. The process of handover from the previous convenors also contributed to slowing down our engagements this year. However we have recently spent substantial time as a convenor team planning a new and increased programme of engagement in the next year.

### **What are the key issues currently affecting your Special Interest Area?**

The rollout of England's statutory RE and RSHE curricula is being heavily affected by coronavirus restrictions. Many sexuality educators are having to find creative new ways of working. This is a potentially fertile field for research and engagement to analyse and report on the impact of expanding digitalization on the sexuality education sector. Similar radical changes are affecting the development of the forthcoming Relationships and Sexuality Education in Wales as well as existing programmes in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Schools will be prioritizing 'catch-up' on core subjects, potentially jeopardizing provision of sexuality education. An important field of research will be to see how schools are using small amounts of time and resources to meet their responsibilities and sharing best practice on how to operate in a radically changed landscape. While there have been many recent steps forward in expanding and deepening sexuality education provision, reform continues to produce tension and push-back both politically and in communities. There is further work needed in the wake of high-profile protests to build bridges between isolated and marginalized communities and to frame sexuality education as a collaborative endeavour rather than an imposition.

### **Are there any particular developments for your SIG on the horizon, e.g. newsletters, publications, blogs, events, projects?**

We are organizing a free online event on Friday 19th February 2021 (1830 – 2000 EST), titled 'What's SIGnificant for you?' focusing on how the BERA SIG can help support the UK sexualities and gender research communities. We invite members and non-members to:

- come and find out what the BERA gender and Sexualities SIG is all about.
- share what they are currently working on in a 3 minute slot (e.g. this could be a live research project, a paper, a grant proposal, a participation event - talk, share a video, show a ppt slide, sing, dance ...)
- shape what the SIG can do for them in by participating in a bespoke creative activity that will help us plan forward how the SIG can enhance its SIGnificance in the year ahead.

The aim of this initial event is to gather a range of perspectives from researchers that will help set the agenda for the SIG for the year ahead and will also create a sense of ownership and investment in the activities of the SIG that will increase our numbers and provide an opportunity to advertise official paid BERA events such as the annual conference. We hope to run a similar online zoom meeting for gender and sexuality education practitioners in April, and we are planning a mixed-economy BERA event in late summer which will be shaped around the information we gather from this event. As a result of these events, we hope to see a substantial increase in numbers submitting to and attending the annual conference. We will set up a SIG twitter account to connect with our members and promote our activities more widely.

### **What other organizations does your SIG collaborate with?**

In previous projects we have collaborated with the Religion Values and Education SIG and the Race Ethnicity and Education SIG and plan to continue working with these groups and extending to other BERA SIGs.

**How has your SIG worked to encourage diversity amongst your membership? How do you plan to encourage diversity in the future?**

nations in the future? As previously mentioned, the 'What's SIGnificant' event will engage all 4 nations and beyond. In developing our communications networks going forward (e.g. social media) we will direct our efforts towards increasing connections with Irish Scottish and Welsh organizations and institutions.

Issues around race and ethnicity are often absent from sexuality education discourses so we are planning on creating specific space to address this during our engagements this year.