# EmpowerED

Redesigning Education to Map to Global Sustainability

January 2024

# Post-Summit Report

## AI Synthesis and Summary

Please be advised that the accompanying document is an AI-generated synthesis of the Youth Climate Summit. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy and comprehensiveness, it is important to acknowledge that the AI technology may not have captured every nuance and critical context of the discussions. As such, certain intricate details or perspectives might have been inadvertently omitted.

For a complete and immersive understanding of the summit's proceedings, we recommend viewing the full recording of the event. This will provide a more holistic experience and ensure access to all the insights and discussions that took place. The recording can be accessed via the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_w56klGMckI

World Systems Solutions™

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# Results from the Questionnaire Submissions: Redesigning Education to Map to Global Sustainability

## Descriptive Summary

In preparation for and during the Youth Climate Summit, participants were invited to share their insights and ideas through a questionnaire. This initiative aimed to ensure that the perspectives of each participant were considered in the collaborative outcomes. The responses collected were processed using AI technology to create the report below. This report serves as a foundational resource for discussions during the summit, reflecting the diverse input received. The collaborative learning and insights gathered from the questions set the stage for the dynamic and informed discussions that unfolded at the Summit.

## Demographics of Questionnaire Participants:

### Category

NGO Leaders (30)
Youth (21)
Climate Experts (9)
University Students (12)

### Location

South Dakota: 1
Kenya: 4
Pakistan: 1
Namibia: 1
Philippines: 1
Goleta, California: 1
United States of America: 2
Dr Congo: 1
Waterloo, Canada: 1
Colombo, Sri Lanka: 1
Nairobi: 2
Ghana: 2
Maputo, Mozambique: 1
Ghana Accra: 2
Cameroon: 1
London: 1
Egypt: 1
Tunisia: 1
Dracut, Massachusetts, USA: 1
Miami, Florida: 2
Detroit: 1
Arizona: 1
Grosse Pointe Woods: 1
Ojai, CA: 1

# AI Synthesis of Summit Questionnaire Submissions

**Question 1:**
***Do you feel that the educational system is currently meeting the current and future generations' needs in regard to solving the climate crisis and preparing children of today for the challenges that climate, environmental and poly crisis will likely bring in the future? If yes, in what ways? If no, in what ways?***

- **Neglect of Critical Thinking in Traditional Curriculums:** Traditional curriculums are criticized for neglecting critical thinking skills, hindering the development of creative abilities necessary for addressing complex challenges. Furthermore, the education system is perceived as inadequately preparing students for emerging fields related to climate and environmental challenges.

- **Positive Aspects and Growing Awareness:** Despite these criticisms, positive aspects include a growing awareness of the need for change. Initiatives like project-based learning and interdisciplinary approaches are gaining traction. Efforts are underway to integrate climate change into the curriculum, with a focus on environmental science courses and extracurricular activities.

- **Global Perspective and Equity Concerns:** A global perspective highlights concerns about the educational process not keeping pace with the urgent need to address the climate crisis on a global scale. Issues of equity and the role of technology in granting global access to education are emphasized. The crucial link between climate change and poverty is underscored, advocating for addressing climate change to reduce poverty.

- **Suggestions for Improvement:** Suggestions for improvement include breaking down information in local languages, recognizing the importance of linguistic diversity in effectively communicating climate change concepts. There is a call for a paradigm shift in the education system, empowering youth with indigenous and local solutions. The IDEC 2023 Resolution is shared as an opportunity for additional insights into global perspectives on environmental education.

- **Youth Perspectives and Local Climate Action:** Youth perspectives highlight the pivotal role of education in addressing the climate crisis and raising awareness. The need for more education on climate change and indigenous knowledge, especially in Africa, is emphasized. Local climate action is deemed significant for practical engagement, with efforts towards integrating climate change and environmental sustainability into the educational system.

In summary, while criticisms exist regarding the current state of climate change education, there are promising initiatives and efforts aimed at improvement. The diverse perspectives presented highlight the global nature of the challenge and the importance of comprehensive and inclusive approaches in education to address environmental crises effectively.

**Question 2:**
***How would you improve or suggest transforming the educational system to help solve the climate crisis or the poly crisis? Can you give us suggestions on how you would want it changed to meet your needs as a young person or your understood needs?***

- **Comprehensive Integration:** The educational system should integrate environmental education across various subjects such as social studies, science, history, and math. This ensures a holistic understanding of the challenges and solutions related to climate change and the broader poly crisis.

- **Practical Experience**s: Emphasis is placed on incorporating practical experiences into the curriculum. This includes community projects, eco-friendly initiatives, and hands-on solutions to engage students actively in addressing environmental issues.

- **Global Citizenship Education:** Fostering a sense of global citizenship and responsibility is crucial. Educational campaigns are suggested to highlight the urgency of sustainable practices and their impact on marginalized communities, promoting a commitment to addressing the poly crisis.

- **Localized and Participatory Learning: Education** should be more localized and practical, involving students in local projects and engaging with stakeholders. The curriculum should reflect the realities of the global south, and participation in local projects should be part of academic evaluation.

- **Interdisciplinary Approach:** Suggestions include integrating comprehensive environmental education across subjects and grade levels, promoting critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Interdisciplinary approaches and project-based learning are emphasized.

- **International Student Exchange Programs:** Increasing international student exchange programs is recommended to expose students to different perspectives on the climate crisis and inspire innovative solutions.

- **Multidisciplinary and Experiential Learning:** A multidisciplinary approach and experiential learning are highlighted, with a focus on real-world problem-solving. Education should involve participation in local projects, engaging with stakeholders, and international collaborations.

- **Active and Inclusive Learning Environments:** The transformation involves active learning methods, technology as a tool, empowering educators, creating inclusive learning environments, and encouraging community partnerships.

- **Advocacy and Awareness: Advocacy** for policy changes, storytelling, and communication strategies are suggested to raise awareness about the urgency of climate and poly crises. Community involvement, partnerships, and campaigns are vital for creating a groundswell of support for sustainable education.

- **Continuous Professional Development:** Teachers should undergo continuous professional development to stay updated on the latest developments in environmental science, technology, and teaching methodologies.

- **Service-Learning Opportunities:** Encouraging students to work together in interactive projects, providing service opportunities, and incorporating service credits in the curriculum are suggested to foster critical thinking and creativity.

- **Incorporation of Environmental Science:** There's a call for the incorporation of environmental science or climate science in education requirements, starting as early as grade 5.

- **Transformation from Within:** Educators and facilitators are encouraged to advocate for changes from within the system. This involves developing interdisciplinary courses, creating partnerships, and utilizing technology for engaging and impactful learning experiences.

In summary, the recommendations emphasize a shift towards practical, experiential, and interdisciplinary learning, fostering a global perspective, and actively engaging students in addressing the challenges posed by the climate crisis and the broader poly crisis. .

**Question 3:**
***What are the greatest challenges you perceive in terms of transforming the educational system and how do you feel they could be transcended optimally, efficiently and effectively?***

*Respondents noted that the greatest challenges in transforming the educational system include resistance to change, inadequate funding, curriculum reform, and teacher training. Overcoming these challenges requires collaborative efforts, strategic investment, and innovative approaches. Here are key points:*

- **Financial Constraints:** Redesigning curricula and establishing new institutions demands significant financial investments. Collaborative efforts involving government bodies, private sectors, and philanthropic organizations are crucial for optimal resource utilization.

- **Resistance to Change:** Resistance from stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, and parents, is a significant hurdle. Building consensus through open dialogues, pilot programs, and scalable solutions can overcome resistance and demonstrate the benefits of change.

- **Inadequate Resources:** Limited funds reaching grassroots organizations hamper climate action efforts. Calls for government sharing funds to grassroots organizations for climate mitigation and food security and exploring creative funding models are suggested solutions.

- **Political Will for Curriculum Reform:** The government's willingness to transform curricula is a challenge. Pressure, demand, and advocacy for reform, along with showcasing the urgency of updating educational material, are proposed solutions.

- **Outdated Infrastructure and Resources:** Resource constraints and outdated infrastructure pose challenges. Solutions include strategic investment, partnerships with industries and communities, and adapting curricula to be more flexible and interdisciplinary.

- **Assessment and Measurement:** Traditional assessment methods may not capture the full impact of transformative education. Developing new assessment frameworks focusing on holistic student development and long-term outcomes is suggested.

- **Teacher Training: Equipping** educators with the necessary knowledge and skills requires robust training and ongoing support. Investing in teacher training and building support networks are proposed solutions.

- **Equity and Access:** Ensuring equitable access to quality education is a challenge. Addressing systemic inequities, promoting diversity and inclusion, and creating an inclusive learning environment are recommended solutions.

- **Governmental Point of View**: Influencing the government's perspective on climate change education is identified as a challenge. Advocacy and raising awareness about the youth's role in driving positive change are proposed solutions.

- **International Perspectives**: International perspectives highlight challenges in Cameroon and other African countries, emphasizing the need for financial support for educational and research facilities. Establishing specialized academies and addressing financial constraints are suggested solutions.

- **Cultural Conservatism:** Cultural conservatism in Ghana is seen as a challenge. Enlightening the masses, government interest in climate change, and gradual but revolutionary changes are proposed solutions.

- **Rigidity of Educational System:** The rigidity of educational systems, especially in Ghana, is identified as a challenge. Incremental changes, testing and rolling out reforms slowly, and adapting quickly, similar to responses during COVID-19, are suggested solutions.

- **Relevance of Education:** The perception that everyone needs to go to school is seen as a challenge. Alternative education models, such as homeschool cohorts, online learning, student-led learning, and field learning, are proposed solutions.

In summary, addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted and collaborative approach involving various stakeholders, strategic investments, innovative solutions, and a commitment to transforming education for a sustainable future.

**Question 4:**
***Do you feel that the education that you received through traditional educational systems has prepared you to solve the climate crisis? If yes, how?***

*The responses on whether traditional education has prepared individuals to solve the climate crisis vary. Here are the key points:*

- **Yes, Through Practical Action:**
  - One respondent feels prepared because their education was action-based, emphasizing practicality.
  - Another mentions gaining knowledge through a relationship with organizations focused on climate action.

- **Partly Prepared, But Room for Improvement:**
  - While scientific knowledge provides a theoretical background, there's acknowledgment that education falls short in addressing key aspects like global water and food economics, human roles, and societal impacts.
  - The need for an educational system update and reform is emphasized, with existing material and skills available for inclusion.
- **Not Prepared or Partially Prepared:**
  - Several respondents feel that traditional education has not adequately prepared them for the climate crisis.
  - Reasons include a theoretical focus, lack of insights into opportunities, and a need for personal learning.
  - One respondent emphasizes that further education was necessary to tackle climate-related issues.
- **Mixed Views on Traditional Education:**
  - Some acknowledge that traditional education has historically focused on academic subjects and may not fully prepare students for the climate crisis.
  - There's recognition of a growing emphasis on environmental education across the curriculum to better equip students.
- **Holistic Approach Needed:**
  - Traditional education is criticized for its focus on subject-specific silos, rote memorization, and a lack of interdisciplinary understanding.
  - The emphasis on ecological literacy and experiential learning is highlighted as crucial for addressing the complex challenges of climate change.
- **Personal Responsibility and Collaboration:**
  - Respondents acknowledge their responsibility to bridge the gap by seeking out climate-related knowledge actively.
  - Collaboration and meaningful partnerships are mentioned as key for supporting existing nature-based solutions and grassroots knowledge.
- **Cultural and Indigenous Wisdom:**
  - Cultural upbringing and values, including indigenous practices, are seen as contributing to environmental consciousness and responsibility.
  - Traditional wisdom and practices are considered valuable resources for sustainable living and potential solutions to address climate change.
- **Region-Specific Sustainability:**
  - Some express the need for education that considers region-specific sustainability, recognizing that sweeping statements about sustainability may not apply internationally.
- **Call for Research and Problem-Solving Skills:**
  - A respondent suggests that education could be more effective if it emphasized research on real-world problems and practical problem-solving skills.

In summary, while some individuals feel prepared or partly prepared through traditional education, there is a consensus that improvements, updates, and a more holistic approach are needed. The importance of personal responsibility, collaboration, and considering indigenous wisdom in addressing the climate crisis is emphasized. Additionally, there's a call for education to be region-specific and focused on practical problem-solving skills.

**Question 5:**
***If you were going to offer suggestions to the current educational system on how we can best change, in what ways what those suggestions be?***

*The suggestions for improving the current educational system to better address climate change and prepare students for the poly-crisis include:*

- **Incorporate Practical Experiences:**
  - Integrate hands-on experiences, field trips, and interactive projects for practical insights.
  - Make learning fun, creative, and incentivize participation through gamified elements.
- **Promote Indigenous Knowledge and Cultural Diversity:**
  - Valorize indigenous practices and traditional wisdom.
  - Foster appreciation for cultural diversity and environmental stewardship.
- **Incorporate Climate Change into Curriculum:**
  - Integrate climate change topics from basic school levels.
  - Include compulsory or elective climate-related courses.
- **Interdisciplinary Approach and Critical Thinking:**
  - Integrate climate change studies across subjects for interdisciplinary learning.
  - Emphasize critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- **Engage Technology Thoughtfully:**
  - Use technology as a tool, incorporating virtual reality and online platforms.
  - Avoid overreliance, maintain face-to-face interaction, and critical analysis.
- **Community Partnerships:**
  - Collaborate with local communities, organizations, and experts for real-world experiences.
  - Create partnerships for interactive projects, connecting students globally.
- **Promote Experiential and Project-Based Learning:**
  - Make learning experiential rather than theoretical.
  - Implement project-based learning on real-world environmental issues.
- **Inclusive and Diverse Learning Environments:**
  - Create inclusive classrooms encouraging diverse voices and perspectives.
  - Encourage open dialogue, respect for different viewpoints, and collaboration.
- **Holistic Assessment Frameworks:**
  - Develop holistic assessment frameworks beyond traditional tests.
  - Assess critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, collaboration, and civic engagement skills.
- **Early Exposure and Regular Updates:**
  - Start early with basic climate information classes.
  - Provide regular updates on the status of climate change.
- **Align Curriculum with Developmental Phases:**
  - Align curriculum with children's developmental phases.
  - Foster emotional intelligence and financial literacy.
- **Flexible School Schedules:**
  - Consider flexible schedules to accommodate developmental phases.
  - Allow students to lead their lives with guidance and protection.
- **Financial Support for Sustainable Actions:**
  - Provide climate funds for schools, rewarding innovation.
  - Transfer funds to schools actively engaged in climate-based activities.

- **Global Collaboration:**
  - Promote global collaboration through climate programs in schools.
  - Connect learners globally for shared perspectives and solutions.
- **Focus on Sustainable Actions:**
  - Incorporate sustainable actions into daily school life.
  - Establish norms of sustainable behavior.
- **Educational System Redesign Suggestions:**
  - Rethink the purpose of education for holistic design.
  - Shift focus to exploring and creating together, valuing young people's ideas.
- **Outdoor Experiential Opportunities:**
  - Provide more outdoor experiential opportunities.
  - Include sustainability training.
- **Design for Change:**
  - Create a system designed for change.
  - Plan for change.
- **Personal Development as Educator:**
  - Start with personal development as an educator.
  - Integrate diverse learning experiences, encourage creativity, and see learners as problem solvers.
- **Shared Values System:**
  - Bring everything back to a shared values system.
  - Build trust models and show the ripple effect of actions.
- **Origins of Education:**
  - Reflect on the Latin root 'educare' meaning 'to lead out or bring forth.'
  - Redefine education as a life process, away from teacher-centered learning.
- **AI in Education:**
  - Utilize AI to adapt education to individuals and places.
- **Agile Approaches in Education:**
  - Become more agile in connecting diverse systems and communities.
  - Develop new approaches to compensate for institutional rigidity.
- **Teacher Exchange Programs:**
  - Partner for teacher exchange programs locally, regionally, and nationally.
- **Resource Scarcity:**
  - Acknowledge and address the scarcity of resources.
- **Teacher Role Transformation:**
  - Transform the teacher role into a cheerleader and supporter.
- **Collective Wellbeing and Creativity:**
  - Develop educational systems promoting collective wellbeing, continuous improvement, creativity, and critical reasoning.
- **Meaningful Learning:**
  - Emphasize that meaningful learning begins when individuals learn about things that matter to them.

The suggestions for improving the education system revolve around a holistic approach, incorporating practical experiences, cultural diversity, and climate change education. Emphasis is placed on interdisciplinary learning, critical thinking, and global collaboration. The recommendations span diverse areas, including technology integration, community partnerships, and financial support for sustainable actions. The summary underscores the collective desire for a dynamic, purpose-driven education system that fosters creativity, inclusivity, and prepares learners for a global perspective.

**Question 6:**
***What do you feel are the most important things to solve for in regard to the climate crisis? (I.e. carbon, food, economic challenges, solving for war or disharmony between nations, etc.)***

*The responses about the most important aspects to address in regard to the climate crisis include:*

- **Carbon Emissions:**
  - Drastically reduce carbon emissions through the use of clean energy, energy efficiency, and reforestation.
  - Transition from fossil fuels to green energy sources.
- **Sustainable Food Systems:**
  - Transform food systems towards sustainability by promoting plant-based diets, sustainable agriculture, and reducing food waste.
  - Implement climate-smart agriculture practices to reduce the environmental impact of food production.
- **Economic Challenges:**
  - Incentivize green technologies and invest in renewable infrastructure to address economic challenges.
  - Ensure a just transition towards a sustainable economy, prioritizing equity and leaving no one behind.
- **Global Collaboration:**
  - Foster international cooperation and resolve geopolitical tensions to address climate change collectively.
  - Share knowledge, resources, and technology globally to tackle the climate crisis collaboratively.
- **Innovation and Resilience:**
  - Enable innovation through research and development, fostering entrepreneurship, and building adaptable social and ecological systems.
  - Enhance resilience against the impacts of climate change through adaptive strategies.
- **Social Equalities and Good Governance:**
  - Address social inequalities and promote good governance for effective climate mitigation and adaptation.
  - Involve marginalized communities and ensure genuine sustainable development.
- **Waste Management and Circular Economy:**
  - Solve waste-related issues by creating a circular economy that minimizes waste and maximizes resource efficiency.
  - Implement strategies for waste reduction and sustainable waste management practices.
- **Cultural Relevance and Community Priorities:**
  - Tailor solutions to the cultural, community, and environmental context.
  - Consider localized priorities, such as improving waste management, promoting socio-economic development, and enhancing infrastructure.
- **Awareness and Balance:**
  - Cultivate awareness and balance with body, mind, and emotions.
  - Empower individuals with the understanding of their impact and the potential for positive change.

- **Decentralized Power and People-Power:**
  - Promote decentralized power and people-power as tools for effective climate action.
  - Encourage grassroots initiatives and collaboration for impactful solutions.
- **Circular Economy and Waste Management:**
  - Prioritize waste management and circular economy solutions to create a sustainable resource cycle.
  - Focus on creating a balance between resource use and conservation.

In summary, the multifaceted approach to solving the climate crisis involves reducing carbon emissions, transforming food systems, addressing economic challenges, fostering global collaboration, enabling innovation and resilience, promoting social equalities, implementing waste management strategies, considering cultural relevance, and cultivating awareness and balance. Localized priorities and empowering individuals with the understanding of their impact are also emphasized.

**Question 7:**
***In order to empower you and / or your children in the future, what is the most empowering form of education or educational offering you feel could be built into the system that would empower you or your children to solve the climate crisis most effectively?***

*Responses regarding the most empowering forms of education to address the climate crisis include:*

- **Community Involvement and Monthly Earth Events:**
  - Shift from relying solely on schools and involve communities, cities, and states in educational initiatives.
  - Organize monthly Earth events to sustain awareness and engagement.
- **Hands-on Experiences in Sustainability:**
  - Develop a curriculum focused on practical, hands-on experiences in sustainability and environmental stewardship.
  - Integrate real-world projects, eco-initiatives, and collaboration with local communities to apply theoretical knowledge to tangible solutions.
- **Action-Based Education:**
  - Prioritize education based on actions rather than theories.
  - Implement learner-centered, solution-based educational systems.
- **Green Skills and Self-Reliance:**
  - Include green skills that promote nature regeneration and self-reliance.
  - Incorporate practical and theoretical skills in sustainability and collaboration.
- **Holistic Approach to Climate Education:**
  - Teach sustainability and environmental stewardship across subjects.
  - Provide hands-on learning experiences, foster critical thinking, and encourage civic engagement.
- **Recognition of Student Work and Ideas:**
  - Recognize and utilize students' work and ideas beyond the confines of the classroom.
  - Provide opportunities for students to make a real impact with their ideas.

- **Youth Speakers and Climate Advocacy:**
  - Integrate youth speakers and passionate climate experts into the educational system.
  - Facilitate learning through personal experiences, difficulties, and passion for climate action.
  - Use climate advocacy as a form of education, allowing children to inform and teach others.
- **Practical Climate Education:**
  - Implement basic climate education covering causes, impacts, and mitigation.
  - Encourage students and parents to take proactive steps based on this education.
- **Climate-Smart Agriculture and Advocacy:**
  - Incorporate climate-smart agriculture practices into education.
  - Use climate advocacy as a teaching tool, allowing children to teach others.
- **Art, Indigenous Knowledge, and Local Cosmogonies:**
  - Include art and indigenous knowledge in climate education.
  - Base education on local cosmogonies, fostering a "Know Thyself" approach.
- **Interdisciplinary and Comprehensive Approach:**
  - Integrate climate change and sustainability across subjects.
  - Focus on transdisciplinary problem-solving, action-oriented learning, critical thinking, and systems thinking.
- **Emotional Intelligence and Resilience:**
  - Cultivate emotional intelligence and resilience in students to navigate the challenges of the climate crisis.
- **Active and Collaborative Learning:**
  - Embrace active and collaborative learning methods.
  - Utilize technology as a tool for empowerment but prioritize face-to-face interaction.
- **Outdoor Learning and Connection to Nature:**
  - Foster a deep connection with nature through outdoor learning experiences.
- **Safe and Inclusive Classrooms:**
  - Create safe and inclusive classrooms where diverse voices are heard and valued.
- **Student Agency and Leadership:**
  - Empower students to take ownership of their learning and lead initiatives.
- **Lifelong Learning Mindset:**
  - Instill a lifelong learning mindset in students.
- **Creative, Digital, Traditional, and Market-Based Solutions-Oriented Education:**
  - Adopt a multifaceted educational approach that includes creative, digital, traditional, and market-based solutions-oriented education.
- **Compulsory Courses in Climate Change:**
  - Implement compulsory courses in climate change.
- **Sustainable Actions as Social Norms:**
  - Make sustainable actions a social norm through positive peer pressure.
- **Mindfulness Practices:**
  - Incorporate meditation, breathwork, and conscious relating into education.

In summary, the most empowering education for addressing the climate crisis involves a holistic, interdisciplinary, and action-oriented approach that integrates diverse skills, experiences, and perspectives. It should empower individuals to understand, act, collaborate, and lead in creating a sustainable and resilient future.

# Youth Climate Summit Presentations and Discussion Summaries

### Overview

The second EmpowerED Youth Climate Summit encompassed a diverse range of discussions centered around empowering marginalized communities to address the climate crisis through education. Participants arrived from over 30 countries. The summit explored themes such as transformative education, global collaboration, sustainability, and the intersection of environmental and racial justice.

### Empowering Marginalized Groups

*John Jones – CEO of World Systems Solutions*

John Jones, opened the Summit by emphasizing that empowering marginalized groups through education represents a pivotal strategy for addressing the climate crisis.

### Transforming Education

*Sadie Adams– A Member of the Board of Directors at World System Solutions*

Sadie opened by thanking the donors who made the Youth Climate Summit possible. She highlighted education's pivotal role in addressing equity, inclusion, and quality within the context of the climate crisis. Sadie also referenced the triple crisis of equity, inclusion, and quality and the need to address literacy, gender inequality, and alignment of the education system to solve the climate crisis. She noted that the Summit participants arrived from various countries, including Kenya, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, and the Philippines, and joined with a shared goal of redesigning education globally for a more balanced future.

The presentation emphasized the pivotal role of collaboration as a cornerstone for global transformation, equity, and inclusion. Sadie touched on building a collaborative network and education for sustainability, recognizing the significance of collective efforts in addressing global challenges and promoting a more sustainable future. She highlighted the importance of grassroots efforts meeting global leadership and explained WSS' initiatives to achieve this goal through Climate Emergency Response Forums (CERF) and these EmpowerED programs.

# Redesigning Education to Map to Global Sustainability

### Introduction of the AI Synthesis Method and Open Discussion Time

*Sammi Berwick – Member of WSS Strategic Partnerships*

Sammi explained that a questionnaire was sent to the Summit registrants to gather insights on transforming education for global sustainability. The collected responses were synthesized using AI technology to create an evolving report. Sammi shared that the AI summaries and presentations from the EmpowerED summits have the potential to inform educational leaders globally and contribute to a recursive learning experience to improve learning for the global community over time. She also noted that ideas shared during open discussions in the Summit would be included in a finalized AI report, and those providing insights could maintain anonymity unless they opted out. This document represents the final version of the AI synthesis.

*Speaker 1:*

# Designing a New Future with Equity X Design

## Caroline Hill

### *Founder of 228 Accelerator, Co-Founder Equity X Design*

Caroline's work is rooted in more than 20 years of experience in public education, education innovation, management consulting, and engineering. She has lived the life cycle of school creation and transformation as a teacher, mentor, coach, founding principal, and investor in innovative school models. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering from the University of Virginia, a Master of Education in Learning and Teaching from Harvard Graduate School of Education, and a Master of Science in Administration through New Leaders for New Schools, a principal training fellowship. (introduced by Julie) Caroline founded 228 Accelerator with the intent to redesign the relationships that normalize oppression and to accelerate the journey toward a more inclusive society. She explores innovative organizations and learning models that optimize the role of relationships, leverage technologies, and engage people as agents in their own transformation.

**Key Highlights of Caroline's presentation:**

In the presentation, Caroline explored innovative models for equitable education design, incorporating breathing exercises and storytelling for reflection. The session began with a solidarity message for press freedom worldwide, followed by a collective breath to center participants. Hill emphasized the importance of breathing exercises in promoting creative thought and directed attention to the option to turn on "closed captioning". The discussion delved into holiday traditions, loss, and colorful memories, highlighting the connection between cultural memory and environmental justice.

**Race, Identity and Cultural Preservation**

Caroline Hill explored blood memory, white supremacy, and the role of education in cultural preservation. Reflecting on personal stories and cultural references, Hill emphasized the interconnectedness of racial and environmental justice. Breathing life into collective blood memory, she connected the past to the present, expanded cognition, and reoriented relationships.

**Environmental Justice and Racial Justice**

Caroline discussed the interconnectedness of racial and environmental justice, advocating for classrooms to be spaces for holistic growth. She highlighted the need to evaluate the impact of traditions and suggested that classrooms can become environments fostering holistic development. Hill noted that embracing a new breath requires resetting expectations and building new systems for wellbeing.

**Designing a New Future Through Self-Custody of Learning Credentials**

Caroline underscored the significance of personal transformation and collective action in shaping a new future. She urged listeners to take ownership of their learning and contribute to the creation of new knowledge and economies that prioritize relationships and social wisdom. Hill shared a personal story about her grandmother's wisdom, emphasizing the importance of recognizing change in the present moment. Poetically, she compared the colors of the seasons to the colors of a new democracy, symbolizing the need for balance and acknowledgment of life's diverse hues.

## Q&A with Caroline and Audience

### Design, Trauma, and Equity and Education

In the Q&A discussion section, Caroline Hill shared her transformative journey from engineering to education, highlighting her firsthand encounters with educational disparities and her subsequent decision to join AmeriCorps VISTA. Her reflections on the design of schools brought awareness that schools mirrored the beliefs and biases of those involved and prompted her to center her work on equity by design. Hill emphasized the significance of connecting to "blood memory" as a means of humanizing intelligence and asked, “What it will take to breathe life into collective memory?” She critiqued economic systems that foster division, asserting that racial justice and economic justice are inseparable. Hill advocated for solutions rooted in equity, asserting that change must originate at the bleeding edge rather than the center. Furthermore, she advocated for STEM education geared towards generating solutions rather than achieving status. Caroline Hill underscored the critical need to address collective and cultural trauma for the empowerment of all individuals. She proposed privileging indigenous healing knowledge and practices in cultural redesign to prevent the perpetuation of harmful ideas. Hill placed emphasis on acknowledging trauma and creating spaces for healing, particularly within the realm of racial justice. Lastly, she suggested intentional curriculum decisions toward altering people's relationships with the environment, encouraging children to cultivate and observe the growth of living things, fostering a deeper connection with the land. Through her insights, Hill advocated for a holistic and inclusive approach to education that prioritizes equity, healing, and a transformative relationship with the world.

### Balancing Education and Cultural Knowledge for Climate Action

As the Q&A session with Caroline continued, a Kenyan youth climate leader emphasized the crucial balance between technology and cultural knowledge for effective climate action during a discussion. The leader, representing both Kenyan and African perspectives, underscored the significance of self-awareness and community understanding in addressing climate change. They advocated for an approach that involves reconnecting with ancestral histories to inform culturally appropriate and effective climate solutions on the African continent. In particular, the participant stressed the importance of integrating technology with contextual knowledge and fostering human relationships when designing solutions for marginalized communities. Caroline Hill echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the need for designers to acknowledge their privilege and power, prioritizing humanizing relationships and trust in the design process.

### Sustainable Development, Climate Change, and Education

During a discussion on sustainable development, climate change, and education, Caroline emphasized the significance of creating community-specific sustainable development toolkits tailored to address local challenges. A participant built on this idea by suggesting a paradigm shift in the understood purpose STEM education, valuing it as a means of generating solutions rather than a step on the pathway to professional success. This prompted a deeper exploration into the evaluation methods of education, with a recognition that current approaches may not align with the evolving narrative of STEM education focusing on problem-solving.

## Q&A with Caroline and Audience *(continued)*

The participant and Caroline Hill engaged in a conversation about the imperative to redistribute power in education, advocating for the creation of new systems that value alternative forms of learning and credentialing rather than relying solely on elite institutions. They proposed a proactive approach where individuals can be empowered to act through their learning and credentialing by establishing organizations that generate new knowledge and validate learning. This approach challenges the conventional notion of waiting for permission from elite institutions and encourages a more decentralized and accessible model of education and credentialing.

**Designing Curriculum for Optimal Wellbeing.**
In a conversation on designing curriculum for optimal wellbeing, a participant from Namibia engaged with Caroline Hill in a discussion about the importance of redesigning curriculum with a localized perspective and emphasized the need to avoid personal biases. The focus was on crafting curriculum designs that prioritized optimal wellbeing for marginalized communities, with an emphasis on starting the process by understanding and addressing their specific needs and conditions. This dialogue underscored the significance of tailoring educational approaches to the unique contexts and requirements of marginalized communities, aiming for an inclusive and culturally sensitive curriculum that promotes the overall wellbeing of individuals within these communities.

*Speaker 2:*

# Educating for a Sustainable Future: Learning to Move from Ideas to Actions

## Heidi Gibson

Heidi Gibson is the Manager of the Global Sustainability Series in the Curriculum, Digital Media, and Communications Division. Heidi joined SSEC in 2020 to support the development of the Smithsonian Science for Global Goals community research guides. This followed her prior work as an SSEC Research Fellow helping to develop the structure of the guides and aligning it to ideas from socio-scientific, place-based, participatory action, civic, and global learning research. Heidi is passionate about engaging young people to realize their own power to transform the world. She published a book, From Ideas to Action: Transforming Learning to Inspire Action on Critical Global Issues and has co-authored articles exploring the supports and educational shifts needed to help young people become a more central part of global sustainability efforts.

Heidi has a MA in International Education and has held roles researching and directing global education programs. Diverse perspectives and experiences are exemplified by Heidi's background which includes serving as a US Foreign Service Officer in China and Fiji, teaching experiential civics to middle and high school students in Washington, DC and Hawaii, and conducting lab research in Berlin and Baltimore while completing her bachelor's degree in biology. She loves to travel to new places, grapple with new ideas, and learn new skills.

### Shaping a Shared Future Through Education

Gibson initiated her presentation by asking for group input on transforming education for a sustainable future. She began with a question asking participants what they want our future to look like.

A few of the responses included:

- *"Equality, justice, shared co-creative collaborative design that includes all."*
- *"I want it to be a place where everybody has access to information that makes them grow and understand the purpose of life better."*
- *"Interconnected communities and economies of well-being that work with nature rather than against it."*

### Education and Sustainability for a Shared Future

Heidi Gibson highlighted the aspirations of young people for a sustainable future, encompassing goals such as poverty reduction, minimizing food waste, promoting green energy, ensuring education access, clean rivers, and mental health assistance. Gibson mentioned that she sees the UN Sustainable Development Goals as a catalyst for global cooperation and change, urging listeners to reflect on their roles in shaping the future. Emphasizing the pivotal role of education, she asserted it as the space where collective reimagination and experiences of personal, societal, and planetary growth occur. Education, according to Gibson, not only creates careers and roles but fosters communal learning interactions. Furthermore, she discussed the Smithsonian Institution's commitment to increase and disseminating knowledge, with a particular focus on environmental conservation and equity. The conversation underscored the transformative potential of education in cultivating a shared future aligned with sustainability goals.

The discussion emphasized the vital importance of collaboration, inclusion, technology, and communication skills in the transformative journey of education and addressing the challenges of the future. These elements were identified as essential components for creating an educational landscape that is responsive to evolving needs and future demands. Additionally, the conversation underscored that collaboration, reflection, and respect for diverse perspectives play key roles in fostering sustainability due to the interconnected nature of these principles in shaping a more effective and inclusive educational framework.

### A Focus on Student-Led Learning

Gibson discussed integrating various educational approaches for a sustainable future. She also highlighted the importance of blending systems thinking, inquiry-based science, civic engagement, and global citizenship education. Gibson introduced the Global Goals Action Progression, a tool she co-developed, which was designed to guide education for sustainable development by incorporating common themes from diverse educational research strands.

She also underscored the significance of respecting individuals' knowledge and identity in sustainability education, urging consideration of local context and cultural background. To explore sustainability, she recommended a range of approaches, including Western scientific methods, participatory action research, and traditional sources of knowledge. The conversation encouraged a holistic and inclusive approach to education for a sustainable future, with an emphasis on student-led learning.

### Localizing Global Sustainability Efforts in Education

The discussion revolved around localizing global sustainability efforts in education, outlining a process for students to engage with global issues at a local level. It included guides for students to investigate, act on, and share findings about local sustainability issues. The presentation highlighted a structured approach to making global issues relevant and actionable within a local context, providing students with the tools to explore and address sustainability challenges specific to their communities.

### Sustainability Action Research with Students

Another focus of Gibson’s presentation was on translating knowledge gained through research into actionable steps. The discussion addressed the importance of not only acquiring information but actively using it to initiate positive changes. Additionally, inclusivity in sustainability research was highlighted, emphasizing the involvement of students in the sustainability initiatives undertaken by the Smithsonian. The conversation advocated for a collaborative and participatory approach, ensuring that diverse perspectives contribute to and benefit from sustainability research efforts.

## Q&A with Heidi and Audience

### Sustainability Education Innovation

In the Q&A portion of Gibson’s presentation, a conversation on sustainability education innovation featured insights from a youth climate leader in Kenya. The discussion revolved around environmental education, hands-on activities, and the concept of developing a "Duolingo for sustainability." The emphasis was on providing creative and innovative tools to enhance sustainability education, showcasing a commitment to engaging and effective approaches in environmental learning.

### Sustainable Education and Climate Change

As the Q&A continued, a participant from Benin and Heidi Gibson discussed education approaches for sustainability and climate change, particularly in rural communities. The conversation emphasized the significance of establishing a platform for collective impact and systemic transformation. The conversation featured the need for tailored educational strategies to address sustainability and climate change in rural settings while recognizing the importance of a collaborative platform for fostering collective impact and driving systemic change.

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*Speaker 3:*

## Bridging Knowledge and Action for Transformative Change: The UNESCO-MOST BRIDGES Coalition

## Steven Hartman

***Executive Director of the BRIDGES Sustainability Science Coalition, UNESCO***

Dr. Harman currently holds Senior faculty positions at universities including Uppsala University, Stockholm University, and KTH Royal Institute of Technology. He is Founding Executive Director of the BRIDGES Sustainability Science Coalition, UNESCO. Is a Visiting Professor at the University of Iceland. Was Elected fellow of the World Academy of Art and Science in 2023

In a presentation by Dr. Steven Hartman, the UNESCO-MOST Bridges Coalition was highlighted, exploring the crucial link between knowledge and action for transformative change. The conversation delved into UNESCO's ambitious two-year project aimed at optimizing sustainability science.

### Integration of Humanities into Sustainability Science

A critical theme emerged around the integration of humanities into sustainability science, emphasizing the importance of blending diverse disciplines. The discussion highlighted the formation and goals of the Bridges Coalition, underlining its commitment to creating new structures for addressing climate and environmental crises.

### Proposal for a New Instrument and Global Expansion

Dr. Hartman explains that the Bridges Coalition proposed a new instrument designed to unite diverse stakeholders in the pursuit of sustainability solutions. With global expansion plans in the pipeline, the coalition seeks partners to bridge different communities and knowledge areas, fostering co-creation with local networks.

### Advancements in Sustainability Science and Climate Action

Advancements in sustainability science through interdisciplinary approaches were explored, with specific projects focusing on local knowledge, gender, youth, and the 10 Must Haves Initiative. The conversation also touched upon climate action, education, and informal learning, emphasizing the exploration of indigenous knowledge and futures thinking in preparation for upcoming landmark events.

### Bridges Coalition and UNESCO-MOST Program

In collaboration with the UNESCO-MOST program, the Bridges Coalition aims to address climate and environmental crises through co-creation with local networks, establishing hubs globally for environmental management and sustainability. The inclusion of humanities in sustainability science remains a central tenet of their approach, reflecting a holistic and collaborative vision for a sustainable future.

## Q&A with Steven and Audience

### Using Media to Raise Awareness for Global Issues

A participant from the U.S. and Dr. Hartman discussed the media's role in raising awareness about social and environmental issues. The participant highlighted her use of media for awareness, engaging in multimedia events and collaborations with influential individuals to support various causes.

### Community Led Sustainability Initiatives

The conversation delved into amplifying community-led sustainability efforts through partnerships, primarily led by the BRIDGES Coalition. There was a focus on fundraising and collaborations to enhance the impact of community initiatives dedicated to sustainability. Additionally, discussions revolved around the potential organization of a global event aimed at promoting world peace and unity, showcasing the commitment of the BRIDGES Coalition to address global challenges through collective and inclusive efforts.

### Intergenerational Learning

Importance of intergenerational learning and partnerships for effective knowledge transmission. The conversation highlighted the significance of intergenerational learning in the context of climate action. Dr. Steven Hartman underscored the importance of learning across different generations. Furthermore, a participant shared practical experiences from Cameroon, discussing the use of arts, media, and sports as effective tools for environmental education, showcasing diverse and engaging approaches to address climate-related issues.

*Final Speakers:*

# Mobilizing Youth Visions of Climate Futures

## Dr. Iveta Silova

Dr. Iveta Silova, Ph.D. is the Professor and Associate Dean of Global Engagement at Arizona State University's Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College. Dr. Silova's research focuses on building transcultural and transdisciplinary foundations for re-envisioning education futures toward planetary sustainability. She is especially interested in exploring childhood memories, ecofeminism, and environmental sustainability. Since 2020, Dr. Silova has co-led a socially engaged art initiative "Turn it Around!", mobilizing youth visions of climate futures for policy action. Dr. Silova is a Past President of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) and an elected member of World Academy of Art and Science (WAAS).

## Elizabeth Quigley

Elizabeth Quigley is a Program Manager for Co-curricular and Community Initiatives at Ohio State University, and the Youth Education & Policy Advisor with the Turn it Around! Project. She completed her undergraduate degrees in Sustainability – International Development and Supply Chain Management at Arizona State University, where she discovered her passion for creating sustainable impact, and helping others do the same. During her time at Arizona State she worked with groups such as The Rob & Melani Walton National Sustainability Teachers' Academies, Fridays for Future – Phoenix, the Regional Center of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development – Greater Phoenix, Changemaker Central, and the Sustainability Alliance at ASU. Liz currently works with experiential learning and engagement efforts for sustainability as the Program Manager for Co-curricular and Community Initiatives at the Sustainability Institute at Ohio State University.

Iveta Smith and Liz Quigley presented the "Turn It Around" project, a collaboration on socially engaged art initiatives focused on amplifying global efforts in education, particularly regarding climate action and sustainability. The project, initiated approximately three years ago, was conceived as a response to the major issues observed in the role of education in the ongoing climate crisis.

**Project Goals and Methodology**

Named "Turn It Around," the project sought to mobilize youth visions of education futures through art, paralleling UNESCO's Futures of Education initiative. Social media served as a platform for crowdsourcing youth contributions, receiving over 1000 submissions from 60 countries, particularly from the global south. The project integrated art as a central feature, using flashcards as teaching tools to engage policymakers effectively. A policy report was developed, analyzing submissions, linking them with scientific data, and providing concrete suggestions for policymakers.

**Key Turning Points Identified**

The project identified four key turning points essential for reshaping education: Intergenerational, Decolonial, Methodological, and Pedagogical turns. These turns aimed at challenging established hierarchies of knowledge, redefining the purpose of education, and centering pedagogies on interdependence and interconnectedness.

### Education Metaphors Critiqued through Art

Examining common metaphors used in education, such as progress, arrow of time, machine, and universality, youth artists challenged these metaphors through powerful imagery and messages. The artwork questioned assumptions about education, particularly its impact on the environment, emphasizing the need for deep unlearning of dominant models.

### Project Impact and Future Direction

The "Turn It Around" project was showcased at global events, including COP 26, UN transforming education pre-summit, and COP 28. It was shared with policymakers, influencing sustainability education programs and engaging with classrooms. The impact extended globally and locally, encouraging continuous contributions through the project's website. Resources for educators were provided to incorporate the project into classrooms, fostering a global conversation about the future of education. "Turn It Around" effectively combines youth artwork, analysis, and policy recommendations to address the urgent need for a paradigm shift in education towards sustainability. The ongoing nature of the project allows continuous engagement and contributions, fostering a global conversation about the future of education.

## Q&A with Iveta, Elizabeth and Audience

In the Q&A session, Elizabeth Quigley facilitated a discussion on the use of cards as a tool for sparking conversations about transforming education for climate futures. Participants were encouraged to share insights on specific cards. One participant expressed interest in a card shared by Dr. Silova depicting a torso with open hands, that symbolized the interconnectedness of humans and nature. Another participant searched for the specific card mentioned and described it as possibly representing the connection between humans and nature. Another participant contributed, noting that the card is about the pulse of life in the body.

A participant shared their takeaway, emphasized that the card serves as a reminder of the richness within each person, with many feelings and relationships. The discussion continued with participants sharing their thoughts on various cards, highlighting themes of growth, interconnectedness with nature, and the recognition of humanity's role in preserving the environment.

The presenters invited participants to engage with the "Turn Around" project, emphasizing the inclusion of diverse submissions in multiple languages. They stressed the positive impact of the project as a conversation starter and a creative tool for addressing climate issues.

Participants expressed admiration for the project, praising its potential as a tool for meaningful dialogues with young people. One participant commended the project for its inclusion of both positive and negative scenarios, making it a versatile tool for initiating discussions about challenges and positive futures.

The session concluded with participants expressing gratitude and admiration for the project's creativity and activism. The presenters highlighted the importance of connecting efforts, bridging knowledge, and working collaboratively for transformative change in education and environmental awareness.

## Final Collaboration Session

Sammi posed a question to the participants asking, “If you were going to offer suggestions to the current educational system on how we can best change, what would those suggestions be?” Suggestions were provided, including advocating for the integration of sustainable education across curricula, developing interdisciplinary courses, instilling environmental responsibility, and establishing partnerships.

A participant emphasized the need to incentivize youth into education and encourage more young people to become teachers. Another participant highlighted the importance of recognizing traditional education and breaking down complex science to the local level.

There was also a participant who emphasized the need for a platform that provides information on opportunities, grants, fellowships, and contests related to environmental education. They suggested creating a global education platform that recognizes the role of teachers and promotes environmental protection in a language accessible to everyone. Another participant shared their perspective, emphasizing curriculum transformation, teacher training and support, policy changes, community engagement, and innovative assessment methods.

The participants expressed optimism, gratitude, and a willingness to collaborate. Recognition was given to the brilliant ideas shared, and there was an emphasis on creating a platform for knowledge and resource opportunities. The participants discussed the challenges faced by less developed countries and the need for inclusivity in environmental education. The conversation ended with a sense of motivation, inspiration, and a call for continued collaboration to bring about meaningful change.

## Closing Summit Statements

In the closing statements, Tracy from the World Systems Solutions team expressed gratitude for everyone's participation, emphasized the importance of collaboration in creating a new educational paradigm, and announced upcoming events including the next EmpowerED summit happening on April 6th, 2024. The closing remarks also included information about the World Systems Solutions’ programs, the Phoenix World Transformation platform, information on how to collaborate. She also announced that the organization is accepting recommendations for speakers to participate in the next summit and mentioned that donations and sponsorships to support the WSS initiatives are welcome and appreciated.

## Key Conclusions

The summit discussions centered around the transformative role of education in empowering marginalized groups and driving effective climate action. Emphasizing the need for a holistic redesign, participants advocated for education models that prioritize equity, inclusion, and quality. Global collaboration, coupled with technological integration through AI, emerged as a catalyst for transformative changes, paving the way for more inclusive and sustainable educational systems. The urgent call for climate education, recognition of the importance of preserving indigenous knowledge, and the balance between technology and contextual knowledge were key themes. Furthermore, discussions highlighted the pivotal role of community-specific sustainability initiatives, the transformative vision of education, and the significance of youth-led learning for a sustainable future. Strategies for localizing global sustainability efforts and the importance of inclusive sustainability action research underscored the comprehensive nature of the summit's conclusions, providing a roadmap for future initiatives in climate education and sustainability.