Views on the informal note on Action for Climate Empowerment

Submission by Wellington College Education
In response to FCCC/SBI/2026/L.4, paragraph 5
September 2026

Wellington College Education (WCE) welcomes the opportunity to contribute views on the informal note prepared by the co-facilitators as part of the midterm review of the Glasgow work programme on Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE).

As an international family of schools, our interest is particularly in the relationship between climate education and meaningful participation. From our experience, these two areas are often approached separately. Young people may receive good climate education without developing an understanding of how climate decisions are made or how they can participate in them. Equally, opportunities for youth participation can be offered without sufficient preparation to enable young people to engage confidently and meaningfully.

The new ACE action plan provides an opportunity to strengthen this connection.

We offer five suggestions for consideration.

1. Build a clearer pathway from climate education to participation

Relevant activities: A.1.6, C.2.1, C.2.3 and C.4.4

We strongly support the attention given in A.1.6 to education systems as vehicles for climate action. We also welcome the proposals under C.2 to strengthen the participation of children and young people, including opportunities to present at ACE Dialogues and Climate Weeks and potentially to co-design activities.

We suggest making the relationship between these areas more explicit.

Climate education should of course develop knowledge and understanding. But it can also prepare young people to participate: to understand climate governance, interpret evidence, listen to different perspectives, deliberate, negotiate, communicate their views and engage constructively with decision-makers.

We therefore suggest that the new action plan encourage a progression from:

education and information → skills and capacity → dialogue and participation → action → reflection and continued learning.

This would help connect several of the six ACE elements rather than implementing them as separate strands.

2. Recognise educational institutions and networks as partners in ACE implementation

Relevant activities: A.1.6, A.3, B.3 and C.2

Schools and other educational institutions are mentioned in different parts of the informal note, but their potential role across ACE could be developed further.

Schools are not only places where climate knowledge is taught. They can provide sustained spaces in which young people learn how to discuss complex issues, encounter different perspectives, work collaboratively, develop projects and engage with their communities.

School networks can add another dimension. Collaboration between schools in different countries gives young people direct experience of how climate priorities, impacts and perspectives differ between places. This can make international cooperation tangible rather than theoretical.

We therefore suggest recognising educational institutions and education networks, alongside other relevant stakeholders, as potential implementation partners for ACE according to national circumstances.

This does not mean placing additional responsibilities on schools without appropriate capacity or support. Rather, it recognises an existing infrastructure that can connect education, training, participation, public awareness and international cooperation.

3. Strengthen the meaning of meaningful youth participation

Relevant activities: C.2.1, C.2.3 and C.2.4

We welcome the emphasis on meaningful youth engagement in the informal note, particularly the possibility for young people to co-design activities.

There is an important difference between providing young people with a platform and enabling them to participate meaningfully.

The new action plan could draw on the UN Core Principles for Meaningful Youth Participation, including sustained engagement, intergenerational collaboration, participation across different stages of a process and feedback on how youth contributions have been considered. For ACE, this could mean moving beyond measuring participation primarily through attendance, representation or the number of youth speakers.

Where appropriate, young people could contribute to the design of activities, participate in substantive dialogue, develop recommendations and receive feedback about what happened to their contributions.

The last point is particularly important. Young people are frequently asked for their views, but the educational and participatory value is considerably greater when there is a feedback loop: What was heard? What was considered? What influenced the process? What could not be taken forward, and why?

Intergenerational dialogue can be particularly valuable in creating this relationship between young people and decision-makers.

4. Give greater recognition to experiential climate education

Relevant activities: A.1.6, C.2 and C.4.4

Curriculum development, teacher training and access to reliable climate information remain fundamental. We suggest complementing these approaches with greater recognition of experiential climate education.

If young people are expected eventually to participate in climate decisions, there is value in giving them opportunities to practise the skills involved.

This might include climate negotiation simulations, structured debates, engagement with policymakers and practitioners, community projects, international school collaboration and other opportunities that allow students to encounter the complexity of real climate decision-making.

Within Wellington College Education, for example, we are developing a pathway called From MUN to COP. Students move from studying sustainability and international climate politics to climate diplomacy training, simulated negotiations and collaboration with students from other countries. They then develop collective perspectives intended to inform a Youth Climate Declaration and engagement with relevant stakeholders around COP31.

We mention this not as a model that should simply be replicated elsewhere, but because it has highlighted something important in our own practice: young people need opportunities to practise participation before we expect them to participate meaningfully.

Different versions of this approach could look very different according to age, culture, educational setting and available resources. The new action plan could encourage the exchange of such practice across regions, including accessible models that do not depend on international travel or participation at COPs.

5. Evaluate what changes, not only what happens

Relevant activities: D.1 and D.2

We support the stronger emphasis on monitoring, evaluation and learning in the informal note.

One challenge in education and youth engagement is that the easiest things to measure are often activities: numbers of students involved, events held, resources produced or participants attending.

These measures are useful, but they tell us relatively little about empowerment.

The new action plan could encourage practical approaches to understanding what changes as a result of ACE activities. Depending on context, this could include changes in climate knowledge, ability to evaluate information, understanding of climate governance, confidence in discussing climate issues, capacity to engage with different perspectives, collaboration and deliberation skills, and continued participation or action.

For youth participation specifically, evaluation could also ask whether young people's contributions reached relevant decision-making processes and whether participants received feedback.

Young people themselves should have opportunities to help define what successful empowerment looks like and to contribute to evaluation.

This would help move ACE monitoring from recording what was delivered towards understanding what difference it made.

Conclusion

The informal note already contains many of the elements needed for a strong new ACE action plan. Our main suggestion is therefore not to add another separate strand of activity, but to strengthen the connections between those already proposed.

In particular, we see an opportunity to connect climate education more deliberately with capacity-building and meaningful participation.

A young person who understands climate change is better equipped to act. A young person who also understands how decisions are made, has practised dialogue and deliberation, can work across different perspectives and knows how to make their voice heard is better equipped to participate.

ACE provides a framework in which those things can come together.

We therefore encourage the new action plan to strengthen the pathway between learning, participation and action, and to recognise the role that educational institutions, youth organisations, communities and other partners can play in making that pathway possible.

Wellington College Education
United Kingdom
Ana Romero
Global Climate Education Advisor
Email: axr@wellingtoncollege.org.uk
September 2026