

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION THROUGH THE GLOBAL YOUTH TRENDS FORUM

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Abstract

In a time when young people are most influenced by global issues and are also most effective catalysts for change, education is what will tap their potential. This research explores how Taiwan's Youth Development Administration's Global Youth Trends Forum (GYTF) 2024 educates youth and inspires them through global challenge response and intercultural dialogue. With a rapidly changing global landscape where almost one in four young people are in NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), youth empowerment is critical to building resilient and inclusive societies. The Global Youth Trends Forum (GYTF) 2024, "Connect and Engage: Global Partnership for Youth," brought young leaders from Taiwan and worldwide to exchange in interactive sessions around Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), leadership, and global citizenship. Adopting a qualitative methodology, this study conducted participant observation, taking notes in the field, reflexive journaling, and informal interviews to obtain detailed information about young people's experience and interaction during the forum. Using the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework, the study conceptualizes youth empowerment as a development of core values like competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring that equips young individuals with the capacity for becoming global transformative leaders. Thematic analysis yielded important findings: increased SDG awareness (particularly of Goals 4, 10, and 17), productive intercultural collaboration, and heightened confidence and motivation in participants. Youth learned not only through expert panels but also through discussion with peers at a deep and participatory level. Although there was decent participation from external sources, there were very few activities in this study that facilitated personal reflection and personal development. Applying the Inner Development Goals (IDGs) framework such as mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and resilience is recommended in future forums to empower youth to be more engaged and have a long-term influence. This paper argues that youth forums such as GYTF can be great platforms for global education and youth empowerment. If well designed to build both external knowledge and inner development, they prepare young people to address global challenges but also build inner capacities to be capable of ethical and transformative leadership.

Keywords: Experiential Education, Youth Empowerment, Positive Youth Development (PYD)

INTRODUCTION

With the highly connected, fast-paced world that we live in these days, education has become more necessary than ever to prepare the future generation of the world. Education is not simply learning information off of textbooks or the classroom. It is also learning life skills,

how to get along with others, becoming confident, and an active citizen of society that can benefit society at large, including the world around each one of us. Despite the centrality of education, many young individuals nowadays are still confronted with the huge barriers to accessing quality education. According to the United Nations (2024), nearly one of four young individuals worldwide is not engaged in education, employment, or training. These individuals are referred to as NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). This puts their opportunities to grow, to learn, and to contribute to society at large under huge constraints. Without appropriate education, many young people become left behind or pessimistic regarding the future. As the world is confronted with the severe challenges like climate change, inequality, jobs, conflict, and the dissemination of misinformation. These problems make it even more urgent to empower the younger generation with the skills and mindset needed to deal with such complex challenges. In response, the United Nations and other global organizations have emphasized the importance of building youth capacity through education, especially in areas such as digital skills, green economy, leadership, and global citizenship (United Nations, 2024). Empowering youth through education means helping them to grow into confident, responsible, and capable individuals who can make a difference in the world. It includes giving them access to learning opportunities that are meaningful, inclusive, and participatory. According to UNESCO (2017), youth who are involved in planning and decision-making processes often show stronger leadership, motivation, and commitment to social change. Empowerment through education goes beyond academic knowledge. It should also include real-life learning experiences where youth can express their views, explore their passions, and learn how to work with others from different backgrounds. For example, participating in youth forums, leadership camps, and international events can give young people the chance to gain new perspectives and discover their potential. Empowered youth are more likely to give back to their communities, raise voices to speak up about social problems, and act to change the world around them. Empowerment through educational programs can prevent poverty, foster peace, and facilitate innovation. Empowering the youth, therefore, is not just assisting individuals, but it is crucial to the creation of more resilient, sustainable societies.

Among the world commitments are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the engagement of the young population. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the goals set forward by the United Nations in 2015 to build a superior and more equal world by the year 2030. The 17 goals address the vital questions such as eradicating poverty, protecting the earth, promoting equality between the genders, and assuring all with quality education. Out of all of these, Goal 4 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education, and lifelong learning opportunities, towards all (United Nations, 2015). Young people are not only the significant beneficiaries, but the active agents of the SDGs too. Youth engagement, specifically, is the backbone of the success of this agenda at the world stage. United Nations

calls the government, school, and institutions to involve the young population in deciding the future of the world, not just providing it with voices, but involving it into action that matters (United Nations, 2015). Educational platforms such as forums, seminars, and youth events are some of the ways the SDGs can be made real. These platforms make the world problems understandable to the young generation, introduce them to the experiences, however, small, of others, and make the young work towards the solutions collectively. Connecting education to the SDGs makes the young population realize the part it plays to establish sustainable developments. It also provides the young with the tools, with the confidence to act both locally and globally.

One such platform promoting the empowerment and education of the youth is the Global Youth Trends Forum (GYTF), which is annually hosted by the Youth Development Administration, Ministry of Education, Taiwan, since the year 2013. This forum has brought young leaders from Taiwan and different countries to exchange thoughts, share opinions, and create cross-national bonds since the forum began. The 2024 GYTF, taking place on November 16–17, 2024, was based on the theme of “Connect and Engage: Global Partnership for Youth.” It was centered around the establishment of more collaboration between the young people around the world and the empowerment of the young individuals through education, innovation, and social action. This study is based on participant observation at the 2024 GYTF. It explores how the forum promotes youth empowerment, particularly through educational activities, intercultural dialogue, and participation in discussions related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By joining this forum, youth were given a chance to speak up, connect with peers from around the world, and learn from both experts and each other. This study is intended to examine how the Global Youth Trends Forum (GYTF) empowers the youth through experiential education. It aims to identify the potential of inclusive, participatory, learning environments that connect the world. It further aims to explore how such forums enhance the knowledge of the youth concerning world problems and empower the youth as future changemakers to become self-assured individuals. This paper seeks to explore how the Global Youth Trends Forum (GYTF) 2024 empowers youth through experiential education by addressing the following research questions: How are inclusive and participatory educational experiences designed and implemented during the forum? In what ways does the forum foster intercultural dialogue and empower youth to engage with global issues such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? And finally, how does the structure and flow of the GYTF 2024 sessions contribute to youth engagement and meaningful learning experiences?

In short, empowering young people through education is not only an aspiration, but it is the step that is needed to shape the future positively. If young individuals are provided the proper support, opportunities, and educational settings, then they can become leaders that can implement change positively at the community and the world levels. Forums like the Global Youth Trends Forum (GYTF) prove that education can be extended beyond the

classrooms to impart experiential learning that inspires young individuals to introspect deeply, act with purpose, and work towards something collective. What happens at the Global Youth Trends Forum (GYTF) 2024 has been elaborated at length in the next few chapters, with detailed insights into how experiences like these empower the youth and benefit the world at large. In this age of fast-paced and uncertain realities, never has there been a greater necessity to access effective avenues to empower youths through education. Global concerns such as climate change, conflict, economic turmoil, and even disinformation have a potential to diminish progress and bestow immense psychological and social stress on youths. The conventional education model is incapable of addressing such complexity by itself. There is an urgent need to open wider educational platforms to foster resilience, critical thinking skills, emotional quotient and cross-cultural collaboration. The Global Youth Trends Forum (GYTF), in which a group of university students participate, provides such a platform in providing them with education beyond the confines of a classroom. By engaging with real-world scenarios through intercultural discussions and shared activities, the forum enables them to apply their classroom learning in real-world context, exchange ideas with global counterparts, and become model citizens. Additionally, this study is timely when youth voices are gaining traction but continue to lack organized platforms for long-term interaction and decision-making. While global frameworks such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) acknowledge youth participation in their application, policy and practice remain wide apart. By documenting how GYTF 2024 enables youth to be empowered through inclusive and participation-based education, this study serves to help diminish this gap. It emphasizes supporting school experience to be beyond formal learning but also to incorporate real-world experience in schools in a way that instils confidence and leadership. Emphasizing forums such as GYTF is necessary to help bring about larger-scale emulation of such a model globally to ensure all young people and not merely a privileged minority have access to empowering platforms to help them live their best lives to lead and work towards a good tomorrow.

In order to further analyze the empowerment of young people through education, the current work adopts the Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach. Positive Youth Development (PYD) is based on the strengths and assets of young people, stressing positive outcomes through promoting competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring (the “5 Cs”). The use of Positive Youth Development (PYD) shifts the narrative from youth as problems to be managed to youth as assets to be developed (Lerner et al., 2005). With the use of Positive Youth Development (PYD), the work emphasizes how educational initiatives, such as those presented in the Global Youth Trends Forum (GYTF) 2024, help create these positive development assets in young people from diverse countries. Moreover, Positive Youth Development (PYD) is congruent with the spirit of participation and inclusivity within the forum in which young voices play an active role in shaping their educational paths as well as their future in society. The employment of such an approach enables close scrutiny of how

educational empowerment results in leadership, critical thought, and civic engagement, characteristics young people need for their ability to navigate and shape the rapidly changing global terrain. The theory also acts to reinforce supportive environments such as inclusive youth-friendly schools and youth agencies in facilitating sustainable development goals (SDGs) attainment through youth action and innovation. The use of the PYD framework, therefore, offers an important lens in assessing the outcomes of the forum as well as supporting the larger goals of the current work in exploring how education empowers youth as global change agents. Therefore, this study is crucial to explore how the Global Youth Trends Forum (GYTF) serves as a platform for youth to learn beyond the classroom and engage in experiential education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach, which is appropriate for exploring social phenomena from the perspectives of those directly involved. Qualitative research focuses on understanding how people make sense of their experiences, interactions, and environments in natural settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Since the aim of this study is to explore how youth are empowered through education during the Global Youth Trends Forum (GYTF) 2024, qualitative methods offer flexibility and depth in capturing the richness of human behavior and communication. This approach allows the researcher to go beyond numbers and statistics and instead focus on words, meanings, and observations. It helps to understand how youth empowerment happens, how educational experiences are delivered, and how participants respond to those experiences. Unlike quantitative research that often tests hypotheses or measures variables, qualitative research is more exploratory and open-ended (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The particular approach to this study is participant observation, where the researcher becomes part of the social setting yet at the same time carefully observes it too. Here, the researcher was part of the Global Youth Trends Forum 2024 yet observed the setup, interactions, and learning processes closely. According to Spradley (1980), participant observation allows researchers to gain an insider's view of the social world while maintaining a critical and reflective stance. The Global Youth Trends Forum 2024 was held over two days on November 16–17, in Taipei, Taiwan. Delegates from Taiwan and several other nations attended the forum, which focused primarily on the theme “Connect and Engage: Global Partnership for Youth”. All the prominent sessions and discussions, the researcher attended, engaged actively, and took meticulous notes throughout the forum. This immersion provided an intimate knowledge of the forum setup, the content, and the learning climate. It further facilitated the observation of the manner in which the attendees interacted, the type of knowledge and values that were imparted, and the manner in which the forum attempted to empower the youth through inclusive and participatory learning.

The primary data collection methods employed were reflective journaling, field notes, and informal dialogue. Field notes took place during the sessions to capture significant observations, quotes, body language, participant interaction, and the immediate environment. These were notes on what was happening at the moment, such as how the young people reacted to the learning experiences. Reflective journaling took place at the conclusion of each day. In the journals, the researcher documented personal experiences, insights, emotions, and questions that came up. This facilitated the connection of what was witnessed to deeper thought processes around the meaning of the activities and how this related to the research questions. Journaling is a common method in qualitative research because it encourages the researcher to stay aware of their position and interpretations (Ortlipp, 2008). Casual discussion occurred using the break, group activity, and meals time. Casual inquiries regarding the opinions of the researcher's peers occurred at break time, group activities, and while eating. Even though they were informal interviews, they served to collect varied opinions and experience. Some of the respondents also said that they felt more confident, inspired, or connected to people afterwards as a result of the sessions. They provided individual and emotional depth to the data. These interactions added individual and affective depth to the data. By combining these three techniques, the researcher was able to gather a rich set of data that covered not only what happened, but also how participants experienced and responded to the forum. Using multiple sources of data (also known as triangulation) helps to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the study (Patton, 2015). After the Global Youth Trends Forum (GYTF), the data were organized and analyzed using thematic analysis. This method involves identifying common patterns or themes in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher read through the field notes and journal entries multiple times to look for repeated ideas or significant moments. Codes were assigned to segments of data that related to key topics such as inclusion, participation, cultural exchange, global issues, leadership, and learning. These codes were then grouped into broader themes that related to the three research questions, they are: the design and implementation of inclusive educational experiences, the forum's role in promoting intercultural dialogue and engagement with global issues; and the contribution of the session structure and flow to youth empowerment and learning. This process served to make sense of the data clearly and systematically, and enabled the researcher to interpret the findings meaningfully. Being a participant-observer, the researcher took an active and reflective role. It was necessary to be mindful of personal biases, context, and impact on the research. Being the same generation, the researcher is likewise an individual who is engaged with the theme of global citizenship, specifically education, which made the experience personally relevant. To ensure this, reflexivity was maintained through journaling and open reflection on how the researcher's presence might impact the data and interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Although the forum was a public event, ethical practices were still followed. No personal names or

identifying information are shared in this report. Observations and quotes are reported in a general, respectful way. Participants' privacy and dignity were always respected. The researcher acted honestly, openly, and sensitively throughout the process. Since this study did not involve sensitive information or vulnerable groups, and no formal interviews took place, no official clearance was necessary. Nevertheless, American Psychological Association (2020) guides to responsible research were adhered to, to make the research responsible.

This methodology was chosen not only for its fit with the purpose of this study but also for its capacity to bring to the surface, in a real-time experience, the depth, complexity, and emotional meaning of people's lived experience. Empowerment in education is seldom tangible and quantifiable in solely numerical terms but rather comes to fruition in how people respond, feel, participate, and react. To be present at the Global Youth Trends Forum (GYTF) 2024 provided an occasion to experience this depth in real time through observation and participation. As a participant-observer, it was suitable for the researcher to see for herself how this forum provided platforms for youths to have their say, interact with other individuals, and learn in real time. For instance, observation was made of how youths reacted to plenary addresses in a state of curiosity or interest, how they engaged in workshops, and how their expressions and levels of body language and interaction varied through different activities. Such observations were invaluable in terms of insight into how youth empowerment was indeed being built on the ground, insight unavailable through survey or quantitative measures alone. The employment of three interconnected data collection strategies, field notes, reflective journaling, and informal conversation provided additional rigor and transparency to the investigation. Field notes were employed to record activity in real-time, commenting on observable and audible actions like participant interaction, type of participation, reactions to speakers, and general group functioning. These notes gave a raw account of what went on during the forum. Reflective journaling, however, enabled the researcher to step back a bit from what was being done and critically reflect on it. The researcher documented ideas, impressions, interpretations, and feelings at the end of each day. This helped to establish a connection between the actions seen and underlying meaning, recognize emerging themes, and keep an eye in on themselves. It also assisted in reflexivity so that the researcher was aware of their own positionality as a fellow youth activity participant. In-depth informal conversation supplied another critical element. While informal interviews rather than formal ones, such informal discussion captured genuine people discussing openly and frankly how they reacted and what they felt during and about these sessions, what they thought about the forum overall, and whether they achieved individual development. Discussions were also good at picking out internal shifts like greater confidence, motivation, or a newfound sense of purpose, important signs of empowerment that would be hard to measure in any other way. Thematic analysis was employed to make sense of this rich and varied data set. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) methodology, data were first read numerous times in order to

become familiar with its contents. Codes were subsequently generated through ideas or observations that recurred repeatedly such as phrases like “confidence,” “collaboration,” or “being heard” and were then combined into wider themes in relation to the research questions. These were such themes as learning design in an inclusive way, intercultural exchange, and global engagement and enabling. This systematic but adaptive process helped to ensure analysis was grounded in real experience of the participants while leaving scope for insight and interpretation. Generally this qualitative design approach specifically the adoption of participant observation and a range of data sources was well suited to recording how the GYTF 2024 empowered youth beyond a traditional classroom. It evidenced how learning was accomplished not only through lectures, but also through experience sharing, mutual empathy and through active participation in a purposeful global forum. The methodology enabled a recounting not only of what was accomplished, but also why it was important in a broader context of youth development and education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The 2024 Global Youth Trends Forum (GYTF), themed as “Connect and Engage: Global Partnership for Youth,” presented a multiregional education experience that went beyond the traditional classroom setting. With the inclusion of youth-led activities, intercultural conversations, and hands-on workshops, the forum facilitated in-depth engagement in international contemporary issues partly through the lens of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This chapter briefly captures the overwhelming findings that emerged through field notes, reflection journaling, and conversational interviews in the forum. In elaboration, five overarching themes are highlighted: (1) Global Awareness and SDG Literacy, (2) Collaborative Learning and Peer Empowerment, (3) Intercultural Dialogue and Sense of Community, (4) Structural Design and Participatory Involvement, and (5) Connecting with Inner Development. These themes in aggregate reveal how the GYTF operates as a participatory education arena and critically examines its strengths as well as areas for ongoing improvement. The first theme that emerged was global awareness and SDG literacy. One of the major findings of this study was the marked improvement in the understanding among participants of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly how these goals relate to their own lived realities. The conversation captures the local-global intersectionality of the SDG education: discussants were in a position to realize that although contexts differ, inequality cuts across as a worldwide challenge that must be resolved through cooperation across borders. The setup in the forum made the participants not only understand the SDGs but internalize the same as personal moral obligations. A participant expressed this change in her reflection that we are able to start in our school, in our town, in our community. It is about building into something bigger through everyday actions. This reflection illustrates a core

element of transformative education that entails the ability to bridge individual agency to collective responsibility.

Another general theme was the rise of collaborative learning and peer empowerment. Instead of positioning experts higher than the learner, the GYTF facilitated horizontal knowledge exchange and treated youth as both teachers and students. In most of the design-thinking workshops, teams self-assembled leadership models by interest and skill as opposed to hierarchical. A session by one of the speakers inspired a participant in being part of the campaign to solve education problems using her exposure to a non-governmental organization that the speaker started. Her leadership was neither imposed but arose naturally and the team embraced her vision and added their own insights. Also, a few informal conversations showed that the participants went through a radical change in what the leadership was. This indicates that leadership was not about dominating the conversation or being very loud but that good leaders also listen very well and motivate others to voice out. Such self-realization reflects the building of transformative leadership skills that include humility, collaboration, and emotional intelligence skills that tend to lack in formal curricula. The participants also became more self-assured through the endorsement they received from the peers. One of the participants stated that this was the first for him experiencing to attend a forum of that nature through receiving information from the fellow. He also learns to share views with others. This supports the claim that to share and also confidence increases in the areas in which youth are listened to, valued and supported but not judged. The third theme is intercultural dialogue and sense of community. The Global Youth Trends Forum (GYTF) 2024 was successful in providing a secure, celebratory, and inquiring context for intercultural dialogue. Intercultural engagement transcended shallow exchange; it became a fundamental experience of mutual humanity, to explore differences, and to build solidarity. The exhibition stalls stood out in this context. The Global Youth Trends Forum (GYTF) afforded the space and scaffolding for this competence to develop besides developing the capacity for collaborative work. Crucially, this sense of cross-cultural affiliation established a common identity as global youth changemakers. Little stories do matter, particularly when told. This reflection depicts the forum's potential to raise individual tales to collective wisdom. By foregrounding the tales and the cultural knowledge embedded in them, the Global Youth Trends Forum (GYTF) developed a sense of belonging not in spite of difference but because of it.

The fourth theme was on structural design and participatory involvement. The structure of the forum was instrumental in promoting youth engagement. In contrast to most traditional conferences, the Global Youth Trends Forum (GYTF) merged formal sessions with informal spaces for social learning, achieving a balance between inspiration, engagement, and reflection. Every day started with keynotes by global visionaries followed by workshop-type and interactive panel discussions. The pattern of the series of sessions was a conscious rhythm: absorbing, applying, interacting. This pedagogy facilitated layered learning in which each

session was a continuum of the previous session. What was unique to the Global Youth Trends Forum was the incorporation of embodied and experiential learning activities. Some of the activities that characterized the forum included discussion of the three core topics that face the youth today, that is: participation in international organizations, international volunteering abroad, and gap years. These activities made participants share as well as hear and learn from each other. Involvement in international organizations was emphasized as a tool for the youth to acquire international experience, voice their opinions, and participate in decision-making. During the 2024 edition of the GYTF, the same was topic was taken up in the breakaway sessions in which the participants saw opportunities and challenges to participation in organizations. Many youths revealed that though there was a desire to join the organizations, it was challenged by lack of information about the opportunities, language barriers, as well as lack of institutional support within their countries. This dialogue uncovered two levels of insight: access inequality wherein involvement tends to tip in the direction of youth that are urban or educationally privileged and empowerment through recognition in which the forum was a site whereby participants who were previously uninformed became informed about pathways as well as about mentoring. This falls under SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and captures how access to global participation can serve a double role as a tool for empowerment as well as a site of structural critique. It also showed how experiential education opportunities such as those of the GYTF can serve as gateways to broader international public platforms. Overseas volunteering also became a double-edged sword within the conversations. While it yields transformative moments of cultural exchange and personal transformation, the participants critically examined the ethics and power structures involved in brief-term volunteerism. The most significant insights involved concern for the problem of voluntourism and the need for mutual learning. Young people stressed the value of two-way learning in which volunteers approach with humility and receptivity as opposed to a savior mentality. The forum fostered advanced critical thinking by straying from the mythologization of service and stressing the value of long-term partnerships, local dialogue, and respect for the cultures. Gap year discussion yielded diverse cultural attitudes. In western settings, gap years tend to be encouraged as a phase for self-improvement, travel, work, or volunteering prior to university or employment. In many Asian participants' cultures, however, a gap year tends to have the stigma of being a lazy or a failure. This conversation elicited the following in particular: the worth of nonlinearity: gap year takers or planners spoke of the merit in trying out new areas of interest to see whether or not these might serve as a fit for themselves; cultural pressure or personal growth: others admitted a need for ambivalent society that prefers youth to eschew the pressures of education for a little while in order to discover themselves. GYTF provided the safety to push back against rigid tracks and to explore new directions towards learning and becoming. The focus on learner self-consideration and mental well-being in these kinds of choices also echoes the theme of inner

development. The conversation also reflected the sense of sharing, learning, and connecting that was fostered through a Taiwanese facilitator in each group. Far from passive recipients of the session content, Taiwanese youth session participants picked session topics, facilitated group work, and assessed the results of their activities. This learner autonomy is a core element of participatory pedagogy to enable youth to internalize a sense of responsibility and meaning. Inclusivity and accessibility were also guaranteed through the scholarship-based system for participant selection that gave precedence to motivational and diverse backgrounds and not privilege or merit. This proactive inclusivity guaranteed that a diverse array of voices, the participants' voices, were heard and appreciated. Finally, Taiwanese youth ambassadors in the group made the peer-led nature of the facilitation more effective and added to the welcoming nature. These local youth served as bridges between cultures, assisting foreign participants in navigating language, logistics and social norms as well as getting to hear about their culture.

The fifth theme is the need for inner development. In spite of the many strengths of the forum, one primary weakness was the absence of structured space for inner development. Although the forum affected participants cognitively, socially, and politically, it was lacking in facilitating affective, psychological, and spiritual development that are important to sustainable youth empowerment. There were not many spaces for participants to explore their internal landscape, or link meaningfully to their motivations. This absence mirrors the need to incorporate the Inner Development Goals (IDGs) into youth education. These goals focus on self-awareness, presence, resilience, empathy, and responsible action. Without them, youth may acquire knowledge and networks but not the affective maturity and psychological skills to maintain their efforts or safeguard their well-being. To remedy this, future Global Youth Trends Forum (GYTF) might incorporate mindfulness practice each morning or evening to ground participants, guided reflection or storytelling circles in which youth work through insights, affects, and personal transformation, workshops in emotional intelligence, mental well-being, and self-protection in activism, as well as artistic releases through art, music, or poetry to explore emotions. These activities would guarantee that empowerment is not only outward-oriented but also inwards-based, a balance for lasting impact.

The Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach to understanding how youth can develop in a healthy and significant manner is a useful means of analysis. It deals in a positive approach to building strengths instead of attempting to fix weaknesses. It entails five key elements that are commonly referred to as the 5 Cs: competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring. These five concepts provide an understanding of what the youth need in order to become responsible and caring citizens of society. These five elements are strongly reflected in the findings of this study as presented through the Global Youth Trends Forum (GYTF) 2024. First, the forum established competence among participants as having the skills and information to perform tasks effectively. In group activities and presentations, the youth

participants exchanged ideas, resolved problems, and presented their work. These activities enhanced their skills in communication, leadership, and teamwork, things that are relevant to both school and professional working life. Second, the forum enhanced the confidence of many of the students. Confidence involves believing in yourself and your capabilities. By having the ability to voice opinions, participate in activities as group leaders and share ideas in a public forum, many participants felt empowered. Some international students went as far as to explain that the event made them more valued and welcomed in a multicultural environment. Third, the forum established strong relationships between the participants. Connection involves having positive relationships with others, friends, mentors, and others in the community. During the forum, international and local students conversed, listened to each other, and collaborated. These positive acts of interaction served to bridge the elements of cultures and established friendships that extended beyond the event. Fourth, the participants exhibited character in handling global challenges. Character involves the values of honesty, respectfulness, and responsibility. The conversations revolved around how youth are called to make moral choices and how to act to provide service in their communities and for the world. This indicates that the forum facilitated the formation of strong moral values. Fifth and lastly, the forum promoted caring as a consideration of kindness and concern for others. The youth participants exhibited empathy when discussing worldwide afflictions such as poverty, inequality, and climate change. They demonstrated that they care about the world becoming a better place not only for themselves but for others as well.

In general, the GYTF 2024 was supportive of all five elements of the PYD framework. It provided youth a space for social growth, conceptual growth, and intellectual growth. Applying the lens of the PYD enables us to view the way that youth events such as this have the ability to really make youth into confident, connected, and caring future leaders. This chapter describes how the Global Youth Trends Forum 2024 empowered young people through a pluralistic, interactive, and intercultural process of learning. The forum served to show that education for empowerment works best when it is holistic in nature, linking global knowledge, cooperation among peers, cultural identity, insight into the emotional domain, and personal autonomy. Takeaways include inclusive and participatory forms of education create richer levels of involvement and engagement through depth of understanding and elaboration, cooperation among peers increases confidence, leadership capacity, and the co-production of knowledge, intercultural dialogue develops empathy, curiosity, and a sense of collective purpose, a solidly designed education process facilitates both inspiration and action, and the inclusion of internal development practice remains an area of ongoing development. Overall, the GYTF 2024 was a good example of experiential global citizenship education. However, its potential is only realized when it incorporates both external action and internal transformation, allowing youth not only to change the world but also to know themselves as ethical, strong, and compassionate leaders.

CONCLUSION

The 2024 Global Youth Trends Forum (GYTF) was not just an event; rather, it provided room for contact and collaboration. Held in Taiwan, with an invitation extended not only to local but also international students, GYTF is slowly becoming an influential as well as inclusive forum in which young adults can assemble with the aim of addressing issues from all over the world and seeking solutions founded on values. The event presented an unusual and rich opportunity for university students studying in Taiwan or visiting from overseas to have their voices heard, share knowledge, and be involved in building the discussions that will shape their generation's future. The forum's focus on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was maintained, but room for contemplating personal development and core values cuts through, closing the gap between the goals sought from the outside in and the inner development necessary for achieving them. Perhaps the strongest feature of this forum is its function as an engine for international collaboration. GYTF brought current and invited speakers from numerous countries of diverse cultural backgrounds. These voices provided richness for the discussions as well as the possibility of open, honest discussions of issues confronting young adults in different regions of the world. With an increasing gap in the world, the value of dialogue over boundaries is paramount.

The establishment of GYTF reminded the participants that issues like inequality, environmental degradation, and issues of psychological health are common issues, albeit with different manifestations depending on geography. Achieving the SDGs can only be done when humans are in the mindset of listening, learning, and co-creating over boundaries, and GYTF presented an example of such collaboration in action. This spirit of connection was also felt among the participants. By bringing these students together with their Taiwanese peers, GYTF engaged in an authentically multicultural environment. This diversity created rich, engaged discussions, in which students shared not only from textbooks, but from experience. Taiwanese students were exposed to international views, while international students had room for contribution as well as for deepening their attachment to Taiwan's social as well as its academic environment. The forum demonstrated the potential of universities as centers of global citizenship, where youth learn not only from teachers, but from their peers. GYTF's method of approach in its style of education as well as of participation indicates an intuitive sense of the role young people must play in creating a better world. Using panels and group discussions, participants mapped the connections between their fields of study, their individual values, as well as the global agenda. The SDGs served as the thread that ran through the event, grounding the discussions as well as allowing the participants to set their ideas in the context of specific, globally relevant goals. The forum, however, went beyond the technical or policy-focused nature of the SDGs. It beckoned the students to position themselves as independent agents of change, not merely as receivers of knowledge. They were challenged to bring their own ideas forward, to consider challenges in their home

community, as well as ask how they could contribute from their studies, activism, as well as future careers. One of the main takeaways that surfaced both from the forum as well as from personal reflection is that not only should we be working towards external development goals, but also developing the inner qualities which make such progress attainable. This is where the Inner Development Goals (IDGs) can be such an added value alongside the SDGs. While the SDGs provide us with a blueprint of what we wish to create in the world such as reducing poverty, ending gender inequality, or curbing carbon emissions, the IDGs concern us with the personal and relational abilities that will help us arrive. These are qualities of self-awareness, of empathy, resilience, and reflective leadership. Allowing for reflection space, for emotional resonance as well as value-based discussions is just as necessary as imparting technical knowledge or policy structures. The balance of inner with outer development is what is key for sustainable change. It allows youth not just with facts and stats, but also with the kind of support in becoming reflective, empathetic, as well as strong individuals. During GYTF, several sessions touched on this need whether in the form of mental health discussions, storytelling, or informal peer dialogue. These moments of reflection reminded us that sustainable development begins with people who are themselves grounded, motivated, and emotionally capable of handling complexity. As GYTF expands over subsequent years, the researcher hopes that this focus on the inner aspect of leadership will continue as an integral component of its identity. Another characteristic of the forum is that it is not an annual event, but an ongoing and dynamic programme. Its annual nature generates continuity and facilitates the formation of long-term networks amongst alumni, current students, and supporting institutions. It also enables organisers to monitor progress, adapt themes in response to current global trends, and increase the impact of the forum. By holding GYTF annually, Taiwan not only reconfirms its commitment to youth empowerment as well as global engagement, but also makes itself a regional as well as global convening for SDG-related dialogue and collaboration. The forum is an exemplar of how consistent, youth-driven programming can catalyse sustainable change in institutions of learning as well as in society as a whole. As things go forward, the reflections and insights of GYTF of the year make something loud and clear: young people are not only equipped to make their impact on the world agenda, they already are. To continue the momentum, however, they need supportive environments, inclusive platforms, as well as an opportunity for what is meaningful. For a such as GYTF must continue to open doors for young people from all walks of life, prioritize collaboration over competition, and create the type of personal development that makes change for the collective possible. The takeaways learned here will not stop with the closing of the conference; they will carry over into classrooms, student clubs, scholarship work, and action in the community. The Global Youth Trends Forum of 2024 showed us the deep power of youth collaboration globally on the basis of inclusive learning, shared purpose, and human flourishing. By establishing a platform in which university scholars from Taiwan domestic and

foreign could think globally, work locally, and grow personally, GYTF set an encouraging benchmark for bridging the gap between intent and action. As young people continue to navigate an exponentially complex world, they must be invited in, as much as empowered with the resources and respect necessary to forge the way forward. Further, the Global Youth Trends Forum's results resonate deeply with the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework, which centers around five core areas of competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring. The forum highlighted competence development via skill-build sessions, confidence through youth empowerment activities, as well as connection through intercultural dialogue and collaboration. The forum also developed character through encouraging responsible leadership and purposeful action as well as caring through dialogue in respect of empathy, sustainability, as well as communal well-being. Bringing these PYD dimensions together can enhance efforts in empowering youth not just through external targets such as the SDGs, but also through inner development in line with the IDGs.

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