



Catalysing Positive Youth Development: A Qualitative Evaluation of A Cross-Sector Service-Learning Initiative in Food Rescue

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Abstract. This chapter examines the *Sustaining Love Education and Youth Ambassador Programme*, a transformative service-learning initiative designed to address two intersecting challenges in Hong Kong: food insecurity and youth psychological challenges. Grounded in Social Practice Theory and Positive Psychology, the programme engaged students in structured, reflective food sustainability work through community partnerships. A practice-based qualitative evaluation, drawing on written reflections and semi-structured interviews, explored the programme's impact on student development. Thematic analysis revealed four areas of growth: (1) awakening awareness and empathy toward food justice and marginalised communities; (2) building communicative and professional capacities, particularly in facilitation and teamwork; (3) cultivating self-efficacy and resilience, including greater confidence and emotional strength; and (4) integrating purpose and agency through identity exploration and narrative reflection. These findings affirm the potential of theory-informed, community-based education to cultivate co-constituted growth—empowering both students and communities through reciprocal, emotionally grounded learning. The chapter concludes with implications for service-learning pedagogy, youth programming, and socially engaged education.

Keywords. Positive Youth Development, Service-Learning, Food Rescue, Community Engagement, Psychological Empowerment.

1 Introduction

Hong Kong is often regarded as a prosperous global city, yet beneath its success lie two persistent challenges: food insecurity and youth mental health challenges. It is common for these problems to be studied separately, but in reality, they are deeply interconnected. Seeing them together opens up new possibilities for tackling both at once, while also building stronger and more caring communities.

Food insecurity affects nearly one in five Hong Kong residents, with low-income families and marginalised elderly populations being disproportionately vulnerable (Oxfam HK, 2024; Leung, 2025). The impact is beyond material scarcity. Limited access to food also brings profound psychological consequences, including chronic stress, anxiety, and a diminished sense of agency (Ciciurkaite & Brown, 2022; Jain,

2025). Paradoxically, the city throws away over 3,200 tonnes of food every day (Environmental Protection Department, 2024). This waste highlights serious gaps in how resources are used and distributed (Odoms-Young & Bruce, 2023).

Meanwhile, young people in the city are struggling with growing psychological pressures. Academic competition, social instability, and the relentless pace of digital life contribute to rising anxiety and emotional disengagement (Bernal-Morales et al., 2015; Steare et al., 2023). Surveys show that many members of Generation Z report rising levels of anxiety, emotional disengagement, and declining hope for the future (Breakthrough, 2023; HKSYU, 2025). In addition, they are also shown to have negative self-perceptions, low self-efficacy, as well as difficulty in accessing supportive, emotionally nurturing environments (Soni, 2024).

Food insecurity and youth mental health may seem like separate issues, but exploring their intersection offers an opportunity for more holistic solutions. Engaging young people in tackling real-world challenges such as food waste and inequality can strengthen crucial psychological resources—empathy, purpose, and resilience—while also addressing urgent community needs (Meyers, 2009; Schichtl et al., 2022). Service-learning provides a particularly strong framework for this work. Incorporating hands-on community service with guided reflection promotes civic responsibility, socio-emotional growth, and an increased sense of agency (Barraket, 2005; Mitchell, 2008). More importantly, this process benefits both students and communities, fostering shared growth and lasting social impact.

Building on these conceptual insights, the *Sustaining Love Education and Youth Ambassador Programme* was designed as a theoretically grounded, practice-based response to both food insecurity and youth mental health challenges. Grounded in Social Practice Theory (Bourdieu, 1972), the programme views food rescue as a social practice shaped by everyday habits, shared values, and broader structures. At the same time, Positive Psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) provides a foundation for cultivating empathy, resilience, and purpose. This two-year initiative engages higher education students in sustained, reflective food sustainability work through community partnerships. This chapter focuses on the first cohort of students, drawing on qualitative interviews and thematic analysis to explore their experiences of personal growth, strengthened agency, and transformation across emotional, social, and civic dimensions.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Service-Learning as a Pedagogy for Mutual Empowerment

Service-learning is increasingly recognised as a pedagogy that integrates academic study with community engagement in ways that shape both learning and social outcomes. Students are able to apply the knowledge they acquired in classrooms in real-world contexts, while responding to community needs. In doing so, it contrasts with more traditional, teacher-centred models that emphasise passive knowledge transfer (Vespono, 2023). Service-learning, on the other hand, promotes active and participatory learning based on critical thinking, empathy, and reflection (Barraket, 2005; Pawlowski, 2018).

A defining feature of service-learning is reciprocity. Mitchell (2008) argues that learning and social transformation are interwoven, producing co-constituted growth in which both students and communities benefit together. Based on a strengths-based approach (Wilczenski & Cook, 2009), service-learning has been shown to develop adaptability, collaboration, and civic responsibility—skills that support young people in navigating complex life transitions (Payne & Edwards, 2010; Vosloo, 2021). Empirical studies further highlight improvements in students' confidence, sense of purpose, and social awareness (Zaff & Lerner, 2010).

Specific practices embedded within service-learning can further amplify these benefits. Structured reflection, for example, is consistently identified as central to deepening experiential learning. Guided reflection has been found to improve not only academic performance and emotional growth (Lorenzo Moledo et al., 2021) but also identity development and civic awareness (Kawai, 2021). Mentorship and collaborative work add another layer of support, helping students process challenges while strengthening interpersonal competencies (Gibson et al., 2011). Self-determination theory also sheds light on how these contexts foster autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Students demonstrate stronger intrinsic motivation and civic commitment when they have real agency in shaping their community involvement (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ene & Orlando, 2022).

In summary, the literature positions service-learning as a pedagogy that nurtures individual development while also creating broader social impact. The next section considers how these dynamics intersect with food insecurity.

2.2 Service-Learning and Food Insecurity

Increasingly, service-learning is being used in the context of food justice as a means of integrating academic learning with urgent social concerns. Programmes that involve students in food rescue and redistribution provide hands-on exposure to inequality while also contributing to concrete solutions. In such contexts, students often report growth in empathy, moral reasoning, and long-term civic responsibility (Schichtl et al., 2022).

Case studies illustrate these effects in practice. Kaibosh Food Rescue in New Zealand, for instance, combines food waste reduction with education and community engagement. Students involved not only helped reduce hunger but also reflected on the ethical, environmental, and social dimensions of food systems (Diprose & Lee, 2022). Such initiatives show how service-learning can bridge direct action with the cultivation of critical social awareness.

Beyond raising awareness, service-learning in food justice contexts also leads to psychological benefits. As explained by Eyler and Giles (1999), students who are exposed to real-world challenges are more able to reframe adversity, becoming more resilient and adaptive. Reflection connects community needs to students' own values and lived experiences, fostering a stronger sense of belonging, purpose, and agency. These outcomes are especially significant in emerging adulthood—a stage marked by identity exploration and the search for civic roles (Zaff & Lerner, 2010).

Crucially, these studies also underscore reciprocity. Students' development is shaped through meaningful engagement with communities, and communities, in turn, benefit from students' sustained participation. This mutual process highlights how

transformation occurs at both personal and collective levels. To better explain these dual dynamics, scholars often draw on frameworks such as Social Practice Theory and Positive Psychology.

2.3 Service-Learning and Food Insecurity

To understand how service-learning supports both psychological development and community wellbeing, scholars have drawn on theoretical frameworks that explain its social and individual dynamics. Two perspectives in particular — *Social Practice Theory* and *Positive Psychology* — provide complementary insights into how such interventions foster growth.

As outlined in Bourdieu's Social Practice Theory (Bourdieu, 1972), participation in everyday practices is shaped by three interrelated elements: *habitus* (internalised dispositions), *capital* (resources—social, cultural, and material), and *field* (the wider context of society and institutions). From this lens, food rescue is not simply a logistical activity but a socially embedded practice that reflects and can reshape cultural values, institutional norms, and power relations. Student learning, therefore, develops not only through tasks performed, but also through engagement in the systems of meaning and identity that shape those tasks.

Positive Psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), by contrast, centres attention on human strengths and pathways to flourishing. It emphasises the cultivation of capacities such as resilience, empathy, optimism, and purpose—qualities that are essential for well-being and engaged citizenship. When embedded within service-learning, reflective participation can help students build these psychological resources while making sense of complex community realities (Meyers, 2009; Ruch & Proyer, 2015).

Taken together, Social Practice Theory and Positive Psychology provide complementary insights into the dual dynamics of service-learning. While usually applied separately, both perspectives highlight how young people develop through reciprocal engagement with communities, and how such engagement can simultaneously strengthen individual capacities and collective wellbeing.

3 Programme Design: A Transformative Service-Learning Initiative in Food Rescue

3.1 Responding to a Service Gap in Youth and Community Development

Although Hong Kong is a city of abundant resources and modern infrastructure, it continues to face two pressing social challenges: persistent food insecurity and widespread youth disengagement. Food-assistance programmes still depend mainly on charitable models (Leung, 2025), while education systems often under-address the emotional, civic, and identity needs of young people—especially those studying in non-elite post-secondary pathways. Few interventions connect these two concerns in ways that are sustainable and mutually beneficial.

The *Sustaining Love Education and Youth Ambassador Programme* (hereinafter referred to as *Sustainable Love Programme*) was created to address this gap by fostering conditions for co-constituted growth (Mitchell, 2008). Established through a cross-sector collaboration between **Food Angel by Bo Charity Foundation (Food Angel)**, the **Link Together Initiatives (Link Asset Management)**, and **Hong Kong Metropolitan University LiPACE**, the programme brings together NGO expertise in food rescue, corporate commitment to community wellbeing, and an educational platform that enabled student participation.

Its central aim is to nurture young people's emotional, social, and civic development through meaningful food justice work. At the same time, it leverages youth energy and creativity to benefit communities. This dual focus creates what we describe as a community–youth mutual empowerment cycle: a relational model of change in which student growth and social contribution actively reinforce one another.

3.2 Theoretical Foundation and Pedagogical Approach

The programme design is informed by the dual frameworks outlined in the literature review, the first framework, **Social Practice Theory**, - recognises food rescue as a socially embedded practice that helps students understand the connections between their everyday actions and broader systems of inequality. The second framework, **Positive Psychology**, emphasises the cultivation of empathy, resilience, and purpose through reflective engagement, ensuring that students develop not only cognitive insight but also psychological strengths. Together, these two frameworks inform a pedagogical approach that integrates systemic awareness with personal growth, preparing students to become reflective change-makers capable of advancing sustainable social impact.

3.3 Activating the Mutual-Empowerment Cycle through Programme Design

The Sustainable Love Programme brings the model of community–youth mutual empowerment to life through an integrated set of learning and service experiences. Rather than treating volunteerism and education as separate activities, the programme weaves them together so that action and reflection continually inform one another. This design ensures that student growth and community impact develop in tandem.

As youth ambassadors working with Food Angel, students engage in a diverse range of activities. These include guiding visitors through the *Foodstep Journey* experiential centre, delivering school talks, hosting public education booths, and taking part in the direct recovery, redistribution, and preparation of surplus food. These service opportunities expose them to the realities of food insecurity while also positioning them as active contributors to community solutions. Importantly, service is not undertaken in isolation. Guided reflection sessions and skill-based workshops help participants connect their experiences with broader themes of empathy, resilience, and purpose, encouraging them to see their service not only as helping others, but also as shaping their own civic and personal identities.

Through this balance of experiential action and reflective practice, the programme creates opportunities for students to grow in confidence, responsibility, and agency. In addition, young people enrich communities through their vitality, creativity,

and their sustained involvement. In this way, the programme seeks to activate a cycle of mutual empowerment: one where student development and community wellbeing reinforce and sustain each other.

3.4 Expected Outcomes and Conceptual Framework

The programme anticipates outcomes across three interrelated domains:

- **Positive Youth Development:** Students develop resilience, civic agency, integrated identity, and reflective and communication skills.
- **Community Impact:** Food justice efforts are strengthened through surplus redistribution, public education, and sustainability advocacy.
- **Co-Constituted Growth:** Students and communities experience reciprocal transformation—communities benefit from student energy, while students gain self-efficacy, purpose, and relational awareness.

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework: the dual theoretical foundation (Social Practice Theory and Positive Psychology) anchors the five components, which activate the empowerment cycle and generate outcomes across the three domains, each reinforcing and sustaining the others.

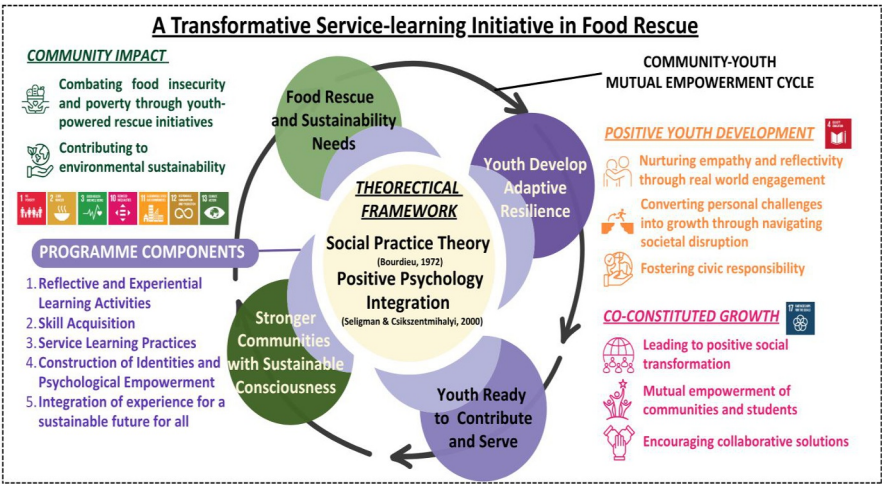


Figure 1: A transformative service-learning model that illustrates the mutual empowerment cycle and outlines the theoretical foundations of the Sustaining Love Education and Youth Ambassador Programme

In summary, these design elements create a holistic service-learning model that integrates systemic awareness with personal growth. To assess how such a model

translated into students' lived experiences and developmental outcomes, the programme was evaluated through a practice-based qualitative design that is going to be outlined in the following section.

4 Programme Evaluation Methodology

4.1 Evaluation Approach

While the programme is designed to foster positive youth development, strengthen community impact, and support co-constituted growth, this manuscript focuses specifically on the student experience. The evaluation explored how students developed emotionally, civically, and personally as they engaged in the Sustainable Love Education and Youth Ambassador Programme. Drawing on the foundations of Social Practice Theory and Positive Psychology, the evaluation examined how key programme activities contributed to shifts in self-awareness, agency, and civic learning.

This practice-based qualitative evaluation was embedded in the programme cycle to capture the nuances of students' lived experiences and to inform future design improvements. Rigorous yet flexible, the approach prioritised depth and context over generalisability. Quantitative outcomes—as well as a more comprehensive intervention analysis including community impact—will be reported separately in future publications.

While not a formal academic study, this systematic evaluation was essential to ensure both accountability and ongoing improvement. Consistent with Bringle and Hatcher (1999), regular assessment helps service-learning programmes remain meaningful and avoid becoming superficial. In a similar manner, Patton (2015) notes that applied evaluation promotes innovation and responsiveness. All procedures were conducted in accordance with ethical safeguards, including informed consent and voluntary participation.

4.2 Participants and Setting

The evaluation focused on the first cohort of 30 psychology higher diploma students at Hong Kong Metropolitan University LiPACE, who participated from November 2024 to April 2025. Each student completed approximately 60 hours of service-learning, reflective training, and outreach work across programme activities. Most participants had limited prior experience with structured service-learning, providing fresh perspectives on growth and development.

4.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Data were gathered through:

- **Semi-structured interviews** (n=5, via Zoom, 45–60 minutes that involve the exploration of identity, resilience, civic learning, and empowerment. Interviews were conducted in Cantonese. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and excerpts were translated into English.
- **Written reflections** documenting student experiences.

Trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation, peer debriefing, and reflexive journaling. The analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic process, combining deductive codes (e.g., identity, resilience, empowerment) with inductive themes from student narratives.

4.4 Evaluation Objectives and Relevance

This study aimed to explore the unique potential of service-learning to cultivate emotional, civic, and personal development among students. The qualitative evaluation provides insight into how reflective pedagogy and hands-on service in food justice contexts build empathy, sense of agency, and civic commitment. In line with service-learning evaluation principles (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999, 2002; Patton, 2015), the findings inform both ongoing programme improvement and broader understanding of how service-learning supports holistic student growth. A more comprehensive report—including quantitative outcome data and community-level effects—will be presented in future papers.

5 Findings

The evaluation highlighted four main areas of student development: (1) awakening awareness and empathy, (2) building communicative and professional capacities, (3) cultivating self-efficacy and resilience, and (4) integrating purpose and agency. These themes trace a student journey from initial awareness of social issues to enhanced confidence, resilience, and civic responsibility. Table 1 offers a synthesis of each theme, its sub-dimensions, illustrative student voices, and connections to relevant literature.

5.1 Awakening Awareness and Empathy

It was revealed that students experienced an awakening to the realities of food insecurity and marginalisation. A notable change is that students have reframed NGOs like Food Angel as communities of care rather than merely charity providers. For example, one student reflected: *"Before joining the programme, I was unaware of food recovery initiatives... now I understand how to support those in need."* Another student noted: *"After participating (in the programme), I realised every meal from Food Angel embodies the effort and love of many individuals."* These reflections illustrate a shift from unawareness to awareness and empathy that is consistent with critical service-learning's emphasis on systemic consciousness (Mitchell & Latta, 2020).

5.2 Building Communicative and Professional Capacities

The analysis shows that the programme has significantly improved students' communication, facilitation, and teamwork skills, with many students reporting increased confidence in public speaking. For instance, one student noted: *"I used to feel anxious speaking in front of others, but now I feel confident co-hosting school talks and leading tours."* Furthermore, strengths-based training has also reshaped their interactions with others: *"Instead of just saying 'you're great', I highlight specific qualities so others can appreciate themselves."* Hence, these gains align with literature

on empowerment-oriented education (Felten & Clayton, 2011; Hefferon & Boniwell, 2019).

5.3 Cultivating Self-Efficacy and Resilience

Students reflected on how they overcome hesitation and self-doubt throughout the programme, developing courage and resilience. One explained: *“Despite my introverted nature and fear of mistakes, I learned to embrace the first step... this empowered me to confront self-doubt and be bolder.”* Others emphasised the value of practical experience beyond academic study. These insights reflect research on applied learning as a catalyst for agency and identity development (Lee et al., 2021).

5.4 Integrating Purpose and Agency

The most advanced theme was the integration of experience into life direction and civic identity. During the interview and in their written reflections, students often used metaphors of growth and resilience: *“Life is like a sapling breaking through the soil... like bamboo rooting before growth, challenges build the foundation for success.”* Apparently, these reflections illustrate how service-learning fosters purpose-driven identity (Bronk & Mitchell, 2021).

5.5 Summary

All in all, students progressed from unaware observers to empowered, reflective contributors to community wellbeing. The findings affirm the programme’s theoretical foundations: Social Practice Theory (Bourdieu, 1972) highlights how learning took place through socially embedded practices, while Positive Psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) explains the development of resilience, confidence, and purpose. To consolidate these insights, Table 1 summarises the four themes, their sub-dimensions, student voices, and literature connections.

6 Discussion

This chapter has presented a practice-based evaluation of a transformative service-learning programme designed to address food insecurity and youth disengagement. The findings demonstrate how intentionally designed, theory-driven service-learning—guided by Social Practice Theory and Positive Psychology—can foster development across emotional, social, and cognitive domains.

Rather than viewing education as the accumulation of knowledge or technical skills, the programme reframed learning as a relational, experiential journey, connecting identity formation with social contribution and personal growth. Through reflective practice, hands-on community engagement, and narrative exploration, students moved beyond traditional roles to become co-creators of knowledge—growing both as individuals and as members of a wider community.

6.1 From Traditional Pedagogy to Participatory, Reflective Learning

Mainstream education often positions students as passive recipients, measuring “success” through standardised outputs. In contrast, the *Sustaining Love Programme* reshaped learning as participatory, reflective, and emotionally grounded. Students did not merely learn about food insecurity—they engaged with it in action, dialogue, and relational contexts. This aligns with calls to reconceptualise pedagogy as identity work and civic preparation (Felten & Clayton, 2011), and illustrates how Social Practice Theory situates learning within social systems, while Positive Psychology helps explain growth in resilience and confidence.

6.2 Rethinking Vulnerability: From Helped to Empowered

Traditional service models often frame vulnerable communities as passive recipients of aid, reinforcing hierarchical dynamics. In contrast, this programme positioned food-insecure individuals, older adults, and children as partners in mutual learning. Through guided tours, school talks, and food recovery initiatives, students came to recognise community members as holders of knowledge, resilience, and insight.

In a similar vein, critical service-learning emphasises on reciprocal transformation rather than charity (Mitchell & Latta, 2020). Students’ reflections demonstrated an awakening of awareness and empathy by recognising vulnerability not as weakness but as a social condition requiring engagement and solidarity. Such a shift in perspective is integral to the cultivation of ethically grounded, emotionally intelligent educators and citizens.

6.3 Integrating Counselling and Narrative into Educational Practice

One distinguished feature of the programme was the integration of narrative-based vocational counselling into service-learning. Students engaged in life-story exploration (McAdams, 2001), strengths-based feedback (Niemiec & Wedding, 2014), as well as personal SWOT analyses. All these activities are crucial for helping them to process experiences, articulating aspirations, as well as developing resilience.

For participating students, this approach offers two distinctive advantages. First, they were given the insights and tools for self-regulation, meaning-making, and self-direction. Second, spaces were also created for them to reflect on failures, fears, and uncertainties that were often been neglected in formal curriculum. All these reaffirm Positive Psychology’s focus on cultivating purpose and well-being, in addition to resonating with scholarship on identity-safe learning environments (Bronk & Mitchell, 2021; McLean & Syed, 2016).

6.4 Redesigning Learning for Holistic Development

The Sustaining Love Programme challenges narrow definitions of education and models a relational, holistic approach. Its outcomes demonstrate that civic agency, emotional maturity, and purpose clarity can be intentionally cultivated through the integration of service, reflection, and psychological support.

Crucially, this development was animated by the role of instructors and mentors, whose genuine care and rapport provided what might be described as *the finishing*

touch—the crucial element that brought the programme design to life. Educators embodied the programme's two core beliefs. First, vulnerable communities are able to become resourceful partners waiting to be recognised. Second, young people flourish when their resilience, empathy, and purpose are nurtured. By living out these commitments, mentors successfully translated theory into lived relationships, affirming that transformative service-learning depends as much on authentic human connection as on curriculum design.

Apparently, this relational dimension aligns with the concept of whole-person education, which positions relevance, wellbeing, and justice as the core educational goals (Lough & Toms, 2018; Noddings, 2012; Hooks, 1994). It highlights that the most innovative curriculum structures are only fully realised when educators model care, empathy, and partnership in practice.

7 Implications, Limitations, and Conclusions

The evaluation demonstrates the potential of theory-driven service-learning, with the framework based on the principles of Social Practice Theory and Positive Psychology, in fostering empowerment, resilience, and civic responsibility among young people. Hence, it is shown that reflective learning, experiential facilitation, and narrative counselling enabled students to connect service with identity, purpose, and emotional growth. Notably, by positioning both students and communities as co-creators of change, the programme reaffirmed two core beliefs: that vulnerable communities are resourceful partners, and that young people flourish when resilience, empathy, and purpose are nurtured. The programme also underscores the value of cross-sector collaboration, bringing together Food Angel's expertise in food rescue with the Link Together Initiatives (Link Asset Management)'s commitment to community investment.

Meanwhile, several limitations have been identified in the study. Given a practice-based evaluation conducted with a single cohort of 30 students at one institution, its findings rely heavily on self-reflection and short-term outcomes. These factors limit generalisability. Moving forward, it is suggested that future research could adopt longitudinal designs, expand to multiple contexts, and incorporate perspectives not only from students but also from peers, facilitators, and community partners.

Overall, the Sustaining Love Programme offers a timely model of values-based, holistic education. By blending service-learning with psychological support and caring mentorship, it illustrates how thoughtfully designed programmes—and the partnerships that sustain them—can empower students and communities alike, providing practical guidance for educators seeking to cultivate civic responsibility, resilience, and social transformation.

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Declaration of Interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest regarding the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Table 1: Summary of Findings from Student Reflections and Interviews

Theme	Sub-Dimensions	Illustrative Quotes	Link to Literature
Awakening Awareness and Empathy	- Awareness of food insecurity & inequality - Recognition of marginalised groups - Sustainable habits - Emotional connection to NGOs/community	<i>"Before joining, I was unaware of food recovery initiatives... My experience deepened my understanding of sustainable food practices and highlighted ways to support those in need."</i> <i>"Before participating (in the programme), I thought Food Angel was simply a food donation initiative. After seeing the process, I realised every meal embodies the effort and love of many individuals."</i>	Service-learning fosters empathy, systemic awareness, and civic obligation (Bruce-Davis et al., 2017; Mitchell & Latta, 2020; Warren & Graff, 2018).
Building Communicative and Professional Capacities	- Communication with diverse audiences - Confidence in public speaking - Facilitation & teamwork - Strengths-based communication	<i>"The programme has significantly improved my interpersonal skills. I used to feel anxious speaking in front of others, but now I feel confident co-hosting school talks and leading tours."</i> <i>"I learned about the 24 Character Strengths... Now I apply them in daily life by highlighting specific qualities that help others appreciate themselves."</i>	Service-learning develops both technical and emotional competencies, while strengths-based approaches enhance empowerment (Felten & Clayton, 2011; Hefferon & Boniwell, 2019; Niemiec & Wedding, 2014).
Cultivating Self-Efficacy and Resilience	- Overcoming self-doubt - Building resilience & courage - Redefining education beyond academics	<i>"Despite my introverted nature and fear of mistakes, I learned to embrace the first step. This empowered me to confront self-doubt and be bolder in pursuing opportunities."</i> <i>"I realised that education is not just about qualifications. Practical experience provides essential insights beyond the classroom."</i>	Applied learning builds resilience, confidence, and identity development (Delano-Oriaran et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2021).

Theme	Sub-Dimensions	Illustrative Quotes	Link to Literature
Integrating Purpose and Agency	- Reflective integration - Life direction - Leadership & inspiration	<i>"Life is like a sapling breaking through the soil... like bamboo rooting before growth, challenges build the foundation for success."</i> <i>"We began as saplings—unaware and inexperienced—but through guidance we grew into resilient trees... discovering our ability to inspire others."</i>	Purpose and narrative identity foster civic direction and resilience (Bronk & Mitchell, 2021; Bruce-Davis, Chancey, & Matthews, 2017; McLean & Syed, 2016, Niemiec & Wedding, 2014).

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