

Political Education for Muhammadiyah Youth Cadres in Batu City

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Abstrak

Kesadaran politik di kalangan pemuda sering kali rendah, yang berdampak pada partisipasi mereka dalam proses demokrasi. Pemuda memiliki potensi besar untuk berkontribusi dalam pembangunan politik, namun kurangnya pengetahuan dan keterampilan sering kali menghambat partisipasi mereka. Mengambil objek generasi muhammadiyah yang direpresentasikan dengan Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah di Kota Batu, pengabdian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pemahaman pemuda tentang proses politik dan demokrasi yang berdampak pada partisipasi aktif dalam “politik adiluhung”. Melalui pendidikan ini terjadi proses *transfer of knowledge* dan partisipasi politik secara aktif, khususnya bagi kelompok pemilih muda dalam Pilkada di tahun-tahun yang akan datang dan politik secara universal. Pengabdian ini telah kami lakukan dan mendapat kesan positif dari para peserta. Peserta berdiskusi berkaitan dengan dinamika politik nasional saat ini dan keresahan kelompok pemuda untuk ikut terjun dalam politik praktis dengan nilai-nilai adiluhur.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Politik, Partisipasi Politik, Pilkada, Pemuda Muhammadiyah

Abstract

Political awareness among youth is often low, which impacts their participation in the democratic process. Youth have great potential to contribute to political development, but a lack of knowledge and skills often hinders their participation. Taking the object of the Muhammadiyah generation represented by the Muhammadiyah Student Association in Batu City, this service aims to improve youth understanding of the political and democratic process which has an impact on active participation in “adiluhung politics”. Through this education there is a process of transfer of knowledge and active political participation, especially for groups of young voters in the 2024 elections and politics universally. We have done this service and received a positive impression from the participants. Participants discussed the dynamics of current national politics and the unrest of youth groups to participate in practical politics with just noble values.

Keywords: Political Education, Political Participation, Local Elections, Muhammadiyah Youth

INTRODUCTION

The year 2024 has garnered significant attention from the Indonesian populace, as the quinquennial democratic elections are once again conducted, characterized by political passion, contestation, and competition for legitimacy in this third democratic nation (Nansi, 2024; Zamhasari, 2024). The 2024 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections will be held in 37 provinces and 508 regencies/cities, and are planned to take place on November 27, 2024 (Romadhan et al., 2024). With the momentum of the regional elections, all levels of society are preparing themselves to examine and critique the vision, mission, development programs, and strategies offered by the candidates, which will undoubtedly determine the fate of the region for the next five years (Hutabarat et al., 2024). Including in Batu City, East Java Province, where there are three pairs of candidates for mayor and deputy mayor, this has certainly increased the enthusiasm of the local community.

In implementation of elections, the Batu City General Election Commission has determined 166,942 permanent voter lists spread across 302 polling stations (Pradana, 2024; Septiana, 2024). The political situation surrounding the mayoral election is expected to attract widespread public attention, including among young voters in the city. Batu City is one of the areas dominated by young voters in the 2024 simultaneous regional elections. According to Prasetyo Lanang, (2024), the population of Batu City consists of Generation Y, or millennials, constitutes the largest group, at 53,708 voters, which represents 32% of the electorate. Subsequently, Generation X comprises 48,139 votes, accounting for 29%, while Generation Z consists of 37,197 voters, representing 22%. Consequently, the aggregate of the latter two cohorts, Millennials and Gen Z, amounts to 54%, equating to almost 90,800 voters. This designates the younger generation as the principal political force influencing the future evolution of Batu City.

In light of the rising number of young voters in the regional elections, the Batu City KPU has implemented different initiatives to enhance and stabilize youth political involvement through socialization events, workshops, discussion forums, and outreach programs in schools (Alra, 2024). Persuasion is essential to uphold the integrity of the general election, particularly for young individuals unfamiliar with national politics. For Generation X voters, active political engagement in regional elections is familiar; however, for Generations Y and Z, it may represent their inaugural experience. If stakeholders neglect this assumption, the likelihood of abstention and non-participation in political activities will escalate. According to the summary results of the parliamentary elections in the same year, voter turnout was 89.71

percent of the entire population of Batu City (KPU Kota Batu, 2024). This percentage is relatively high compared to participation in previous periods. Nevertheless, we need to continuously monitor political participation, especially among young voters.

The involvement of youth in politics holds significant importance in ensuring the sustainability of democracy and national development (Bellani & Hidalgo-Hidalgo, 2025). The younger generation, as the productive demographic, embodies the future and acts as catalysts for change, capable of introducing novel concepts in the political arena (Frazer, 1999). By engaging actively, youth can express goals that address the requirements of the next generation and promote the formulation of public policies that are more attuned to current difficulties, encompassing education, technology, environmental concerns, and social justice.

Public participation demonstrates the sovereignty of the populace through voter engagement in democratic elections. Increased participation signifies that individuals are monitoring, comprehending, and engaging in governmental actions. Minimal political engagement is evidenced by the abstention of specific groups in elections. To address this issue, it is essential to implement systematic awareness-raising initiatives aimed at young voters or individuals lacking experience in active political engagement to foster political participation (Krall McCrary, 2024). One of strategies is through political education (Aisyah, 2023). Political education plays essential role for fostering a more democratic and equitable society. (Huda & Jamil, 2023). In this context, political education aims to increase citizens' awareness and knowledge of their rights and obligations, the prevailing political system, and the decision-making process in government.

A comprehensive understanding of politics enables individuals to engage effectively in the political process, ensuring their opinions are acknowledged and considered in public policy formulation. This can also inhibit the misuse of authority by the political elite, since an informed electorate is generally more discerning and capable of demanding accountability from its leaders. According to Surbakti (2010), political education can fortify the foundations of democracy by cultivating political awareness among citizens, so promoting the establishment of a more transparent government that is attuned to the needs of the populace. Consequently, political education is essential not only for individual advancement but also for the progress and stability of the nation collectively. The Muhammadiyah Charity Service Program, an autonomous entity of Muhammadiyah, seeks to deliver comprehensive support and raise awareness to enhance political engagement.

METHODS

This community service was conducted in Batu City, where the partners in this community service activity were 30 young people or young voters from Muhammadiyah Batu City who were affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Student Association (IMM) and aged between 18 and 20 years old. IMM was chosen because it represents a group of young people who can become cadres for value-based and noble political change in the future. In addition, the problems faced by the partners are low political awareness as an effort to build a national life, threats to social cohesion due to political activities, and low levels of youth political participation. Even though they are cadres, not a few of them only interpret politics as general elections. Therefore, it is important to carry out this community service continuously to interpret politics more broadly and nobly.

The method of this community service activity was a participatory-based approach. The implementation steps were: (1) Activity Preparation; (2) Political Education Workshop for the Younger Generation, group discussions on the importance of political participation and critical analysis of the challenges of idealism in contemporary political practice in Indonesia, presented by Ach. Apriyanto Romadhan, S.IP., M.Si, who has expertise, interest, and studies in local politics and political dynamics among young people. This is evidenced by his contributions in research, writing, and the development of local political studies, such as increasing youth participation in politics in Batu City, as well as studies on local strongmen, bossism, and rent-seeking in Malang City; (3) Monitoring and evaluation were conducted by comparing participants' interests, preferences, and understanding of politics using pre-tests and post-tests as measurement tools before and after participating in political education activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The increasing prominence of the younger generation in anticipation of the 2024 concurrent regional elections has emerged as a new worry. This may create opportunities for the younger generation to serve as social capital for certain politicians seeking legitimacy and ascendant power. Conversely, the younger generation's indifference towards politics may be leveraged by those in authority through informal resources and networks to sustain their dominance. Consequently, the stance of the younger generation in Indonesia's present political landscape is susceptible to the polarization of power and interests. Moreover, democratization in Indonesia appears to emphasize procedural elements rather than substantive ones. If

unaddressed, this will perpetuate the decline of the democratic process and the comprehension of the rights and responsibilities of free and accountable citizens. Consequently, political education for the youth is vital, particularly in preparation for the five-yearly political event, as a method of equipping young individuals to confront diverse challenges through an objective comprehension of politics.

By providing political education that emphasizes the principles of politics, governmental structures, and the democratic process, it is anticipated that youth engaging in regional elections will possess a definitive framework for fostering a productive political trajectory that yields extensive advantages. Young individuals are anticipated to exercise their voting rights in accordance with ideals of engagement, while also comprehending the distinctions in political goals and aims. The distinctions mentioned pertain to idealistic versus pragmatic politics. Idealistic politicians often succumb to pragmatism owing to external forces after they attain power. Multiple causes contribute to this phenomenon, one being the substantial political cost that compels politicians to prioritize the acquisition of gains and the avoidance of losses, particularly financial, resulting in the degradation and neglect of idealistic political ideals.

The team facilitated a forum that included 30 young Muhammadiyah members alongside political specialists. This was executed to promote a discourse on politics and its associated elements. It also sought to foster critical thinking in the younger generation prior to their engagement in the regional elections. The issue at hand is how young individuals evaluate the competencies of regional leader candidates, their vision and mission, and the political parties that support them as advocates of the candidates' interests. Furthermore, the constellation addressed in the discourse is anticipated to cultivate in young individuals the understanding that their political rights extend beyond voting to encompass oversight, public engagement, and advocacy.

1. Implementation of activities

This community service held at The Weekend Cafe, frequented predominantly by Muhammadiyah cadres, primarily students associated with IMM. The Muhammadiyah youth from IMM were selected as the target group due to the alignment of the community service theme with the IMM organization's objective of cultivating Muslim scholars of virtuous character, engaging in da'wah, and contributing to national development. Moreover, IMM envisions fostering intellectual development and enhancing the community's quality of life

through the roles, actions, and tangible contributions of Muhammadiyah youth. Consequently, the issue of community service in political education for youth is highly pertinent for IMM as young individuals or participants in social initiatives. This community service featured a resource individual who is an authority in his domain, specifically Ach. Apriyanto Romadhan. He has always been interested in and has undertaken research on local politics and the political dynamics among youth. His contributions to research, writing, and the advancement of local political studies are proven by initiatives aimed at enhancing young participation in politics in Batu City, alongside investigations into local strongmen, bossism, and rent-seeking in Malang City. Approximately 30 young individuals attended the political education event, which initiated a debate between the speaker and attendees concerning younger voter engagement in politics, particularly in anticipation of the 2024 simultaneous regional elections.

The speaker delivered a critical examination of the issues posed by idealism in modern political practice in Indonesia. He asserts that sustaining idealism over the long term, particularly in the next 20 to 30 years, will become progressively challenging as the younger generation engages in practical politics. This phenomena pertains to the processes of political socialization and adaptation, when political players encounter structural forces and pragmatic incentives that promote a transition from idealism to opportunism. The speaker referenced various public figures; Rocky Gerung exemplifies ideological consistency and serves as a critical public intellectual, whereas Ruhut Sitompul represents party switching or political opportunism, characterized by changing parties for personal advantage or strategic positioning. This discourse emphasizes the significance of value resilience for the younger generation to prevent their only entrapment in political pragmatism.

A participant in the discussion articulated that the transformation of idealism in politics could be averted if a political actor adheres to value politics, specifically a dedication to moral principles and substantive objectives in the equitable acquisition and distribution of power for the public good. Political principles serve as an ethical foundation that can direct consistent political conduct despite the fluctuations of power. The speaker highlighted that this is exactly where the difficulty resides. Upholding political norms in practice frequently clashes with rational-instrumental reasoning, wherein strategic, calculative, and interest-driven factors prevail. He emphasized the influence of oligarchic institutions and monopolistic control inside the Indonesian political system, which often compels political actors to adopt a pragmatic approach. Under such circumstances, the decision to maintain idealism frequently results in

political isolation or marginalization, whereas the compromise of values serves as a strategy for adaptation. The source describes this dynamic as a succession towards pragmatism, specifically a gradual shift from idealism to political opportunism, influenced not only by individual agency but also by systemic pressures from the political networks and power structures surrounding these actors.



Figure 1. Implementation of Political Education Workshop for Young People

The speaker highlighted that critical dialogue in this community service activity serves as a strategic platform for fostering shared awareness and collective consciousness regarding the intricate and compromise-driven nature of Indonesian politics. The speaker aimed to highlight that the transition from idealism to opportunism is an inherent aspect of the sociological reality within the national political process. Consequently, the younger generation must possess a thoughtful comprehension of politics to avoid becoming oblivious to the objective circumstances confronting the nation. The goal is that this awareness would empower the younger generation to deliberately decide whether to succumb to political pragmatism or to rise as catalysts for change dedicated to repairing a corrupt and broken system. Noble ideals in politics, including integrity, fairness, and dedication to the public interest, must be stressed in overarching political procedures. Moreover, the predominance of youth, particularly in regions like Batu City, represents a possible demographic dividend that could facilitate political upheaval. The role of youth extends beyond being direct political actors, such as legislative candidates or public officials, to include participation as interest groups, pressure groups, or through advocacy efforts that can influence and hold policymakers accountable to public interests.

To facilitate political education, we have assembled a pocketbook intended to enhance the younger generation's comprehension of fundamental political concepts, the intricacies of the Indonesian political system, and the significance of ethical and participatory values in national and state affairs. This pocketbook is succinct yet thorough, employing a contextual approach and clear language, rendering it accessible to a diverse audience of young individuals, including those with prior political experience and those lacking familiarity. The material addresses strategic subjects including the involvement of youth in politics, evidenced by the rising demographic of young individuals in Indonesia; the significance of political education in enhancing the political framework in Indonesia; the participation of Muhammadiyah youth in politics; and the quantity of political parties in Indonesia along with the regulations that oversee them. This pocketbook aims to ensure that political education initiatives are not merely transient discussions but are also sustainable and repeatable in various future forums or comparable endeavors.

2. Monitoring dan Evaluation

2.1 Participation level

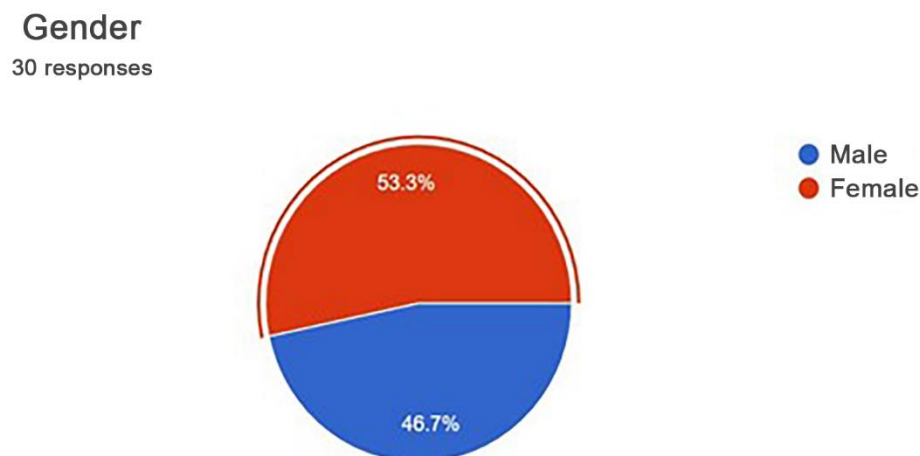


Figure 2. Number of Participants in Political Education Workshops for Young People

As an indicator of success in terms of participation in community service activities, this political education program aimed at young people successfully attracted the attention and involvement of 30 participants aged 18 to 20 years. In terms of participant distribution based on gender, this activity was dominated by female participants, who comprised 53.3% or 16 people, while the remaining 46.7% or 14 people were male participants. This composition reflects a significant diversity of gender participation, with women showing greater interest in participating in political education activities than men. This success not only reflects the high

level of participation but also provides an overview of youth involvement in political and democratic issues, which is an important part of strengthening the political participation system among the younger generation.

2.2 Pretest on participants' interest in political issues

Before taking political education, are you interested in political issues?

30 responses

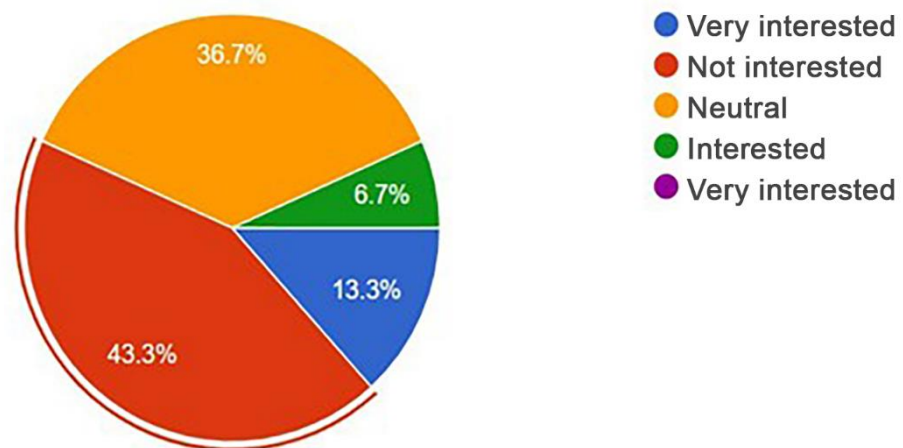


Figure 3. Pretest results on participants' interest in political issues

As part of the initial assessment of participants' level of understanding and preferences regarding political issues, this activity also included a pre-test aimed at measuring the extent to which participants were engaged with politics. The results of the pre-test showed that the majority of participants, namely 43.3%, expressed a lack of interest in politics, reflecting their low level of interest or understanding of existing political issues. Furthermore, 36.7% of participants showed a neutral attitude towards politics, indicating uncertainty or indecisiveness in their political views. Meanwhile, only 6.7% of participants expressed interest in politics, and 13.3% of participants expressed a deeper level of disinterest. No participants categorized themselves as very interested in politics (0%), indicating that interest in political issues is still relatively low among young people in this group. The pre-test results indicate significant obstacles in enhancing political knowledge and participation among youth, particularly Muhammadiyah cadres in Batu City. Limited interest in political matters may stem from various factors, including the belief that politics is rife with conflict and pragmatism, insufficient political literacy, and minimal direct engagement in the democratic process. The neutral disposition exhibited by the majority of participants suggests an absence of a definitive

political orientation, rendering them susceptible to external influences. This circumstance underscores the necessity of political education as a strategic tool to cultivate critical awareness, stimulate concern, and motivate young individuals to eschew apathy in favor of active participation in healthy and ethical political dynamics.

2.3 Posttest about participants' interest in political issues

After taking political education, are you interested in political issues?

30 responses

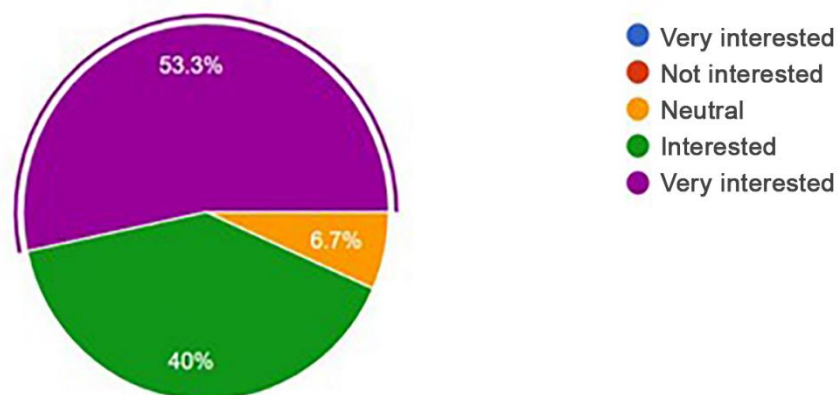


Figure 4. Posttest results on participants' interest in political issues

Following engagement in a series of political education activities, participants then completed a post-test to assess alterations in their attitudes and comprehension of political subjects. Figure 4. indicated a substantial rise in participants' interest in politics. A total of 53.3% of participants now demonstrate significant interest in political concerns, a notable shift from the starting conditions prior to the implementation of the course. Furthermore, 40% of participants demonstrated an interest in politics, signifying an enhanced awareness and engagement in the significance of political participation. Only 6.7% of interviewees indicated neutrality, while no participants, or 0%, conveyed apathy or minimal interest in politics. This figure demonstrates that the political education program effectively altered the perspectives of participants who were previously indifferent or neutral, enhancing their enthusiasm and knowledge regarding political topics.

2.4 Pretest results on participants' opinions regarding the importance of political roles

Before taking political education, how important do you think politics is in life?

30 responses

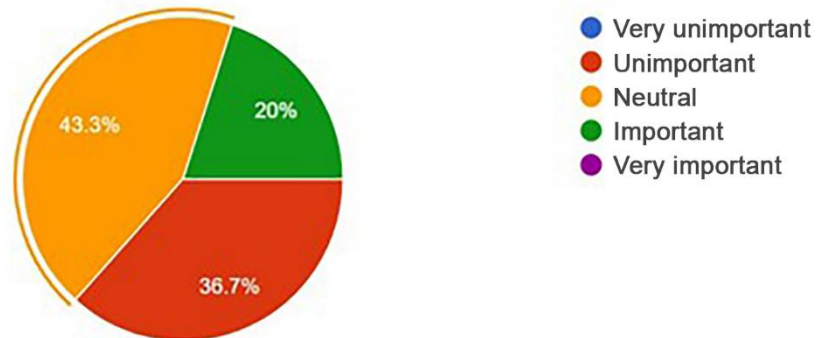


Figure 5. Pretest results on participants' opinions regarding the importance of political roles

Likewise, the pre-test concerning participants' conceptions of political roles revealed a trend analogous to their overall interest in political topics. 43.3% of participants conveyed a neutral perspective on the significance of political roles in their lives, suggesting confusion or a superficial comprehension of politics' impact on their daily existence. Moreover, 36.7% of participants deemed the political role insignificant, indicating their little awareness of the influence that political activities exert on their social, economic, and cultural life. Conversely, merely 20% of individuals deemed the political role significant, whilst 0% regarded it as really important, and 0% perceived it as extremely unimportant. The data indicate that the majority of participants lack a comprehensive understanding of the significance of politics within the democratic framework, underscoring the necessity for political education initiatives that can enhance awareness and deepen comprehension of individual political roles and responsibilities.

2.5 Posttest on participants' opinions regarding the importance of political roles

After participating in political education, how important do you think politics is in life?

30 responses

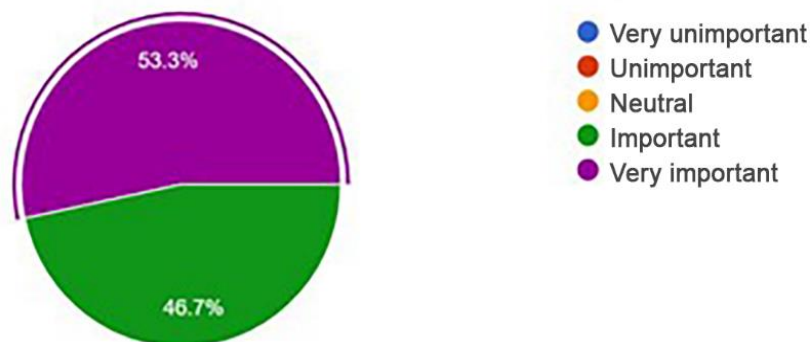


Figure 6. Posttest results on participants' opinions regarding the importance of political roles

Participants' perspectives on the function of politics underwent a substantial transformation following their engagement in political education activities. Currently, 53.3% of participants assert that the role of politics is highly significant, indicating a notable and dramatic shift in their perception of politics' relevance in their lives. Moreover, 46.7% of other participants deemed the function of politics significant, reflecting a considerable knowledge of its worth and effect in social life and democracy. Notably, no participants articulated neutral, unimportant, or very unimportant perspectives regarding the role of politics (0%). This indicates that the political education imparted has effectively cultivated a knowledge and appreciation for the significance of engagement in political life, encompassing not only general elections but also many types of participation in societal decision-making.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This community service program aims to serve as a representative platform that substantially enhances awareness and political engagement among youth, while also providing them with the knowledge and skills required to become catalysts for positive societal change. By enhancing the comprehension of the significance of political involvement, it is anticipated that individuals will engage more actively in democratization, not just as voters but also as proactive contributors to the enhancement of their social and political environments. The success of this program relies not only on the execution of the activities but also on robust support and collaboration from multiple stakeholders, including educational institutions, the

government, and community organizations. Consequently, synergy and collaboration among pertinent stakeholders are crucial to ensure the continued growth and sustainable impact of this effort. Through steadfast commitment and teamwork, we can cultivate a younger generation that is more politically astute, socially conscious, and adequately equipped to actively contribute to the construction of a better future.

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