

Youth Scan

December 2005

From the National Youth Council
"Developing a Vibrant, Highly-Connected,
and Self-Sustaining Youth Sector, and Nurturing World-Ready Youth"

Bringing you snippets of youth trends and issues compiled from diverse sources such as news reports, journals and press releases, Youth Scan aims to help you stay in touch with the constantly evolving youth scene.

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1. Youth and Child Development Strategy Launched Bangkok Post. *1 December 2005*

A project for children and a youth council in every province are part of the Thai government's latest national youth and child development strategy. The youth councils would have a similar structure to an adult council, comprising various subcommittees such as music, culture, science and technology and art. The government would allocate subcommittees funding for projects in their communities and provinces. Young people would be active players, with an opportunity to think for themselves what they want to do rather than waiting for generous adults to do it for them.

The "one province, one children's project" scheme would be supported by the government in a similar way to the SML village project, in which each village receives developmental funding according to its size. But the children's project would focus on something useful for young people.

Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who launched the new strategy, said children in the digital era needed to be challenged in a constructive way in the area of sports, science and technology, music and art. He was concerned about the impact of the media on young people and wanted more programmes suitable for children on television. More edutainment programmes should be offered to young viewers. The

introduction of "triple-play" technology - combining television, internet and telephone services - would give children the option to select what they wanted to view or learn. South Korea had introduced triple-play to support its education system in combination with e-libraries and e-books.

Mr Thaksin said the government would also help fortify children against succumbing to the four addictions - illegal drugs, alcohol, gambling and sex. Thai children were now weak and prone to such addictions, which led many of them to commit suicide.

"We now live in a shame-on-you society in which nobody dares to fail. When we win, we receive flowers; when we fail, we get buckets of stones instead," he said. Children needed to be supported even when they failed, or they would not dare to do anything.

2. Beacon Street Girls and Girls Incorporated Partner to Help Girls Explore Contemporary Adolescent Themes through Literature

U.S. Newswire. 30 November 2005.

B'tween Productions Inc., creator of the award-winning Beacon Street Girls book series, are joining forces with Girls Inc., a non-profit organisation dedicated to inspiring all girls to be strong, smart, and bold, to launch a nationwide initiative that will help adolescent girls use literature to explore contemporary social themes that can impact their self-esteem and development. The programme will support their similar missions to provide healthy and age-appropriate messages for girls.

The two organisations have developed a Reading and Activity Kit, which will be offered online, free to the general public and to all Girls Inc. affiliates in the U.S. and Canada. Girls Inc. affiliates deliver programmes through a network of sites including Girls Inc. centres, schools, and community centres. B'tween Productions will also donate copies of the best-selling Worst Enemies/Best Friends, the first volume in the Beacon Street Girls book series to Girls Inc. affiliates. The kit offers a series of educational activities based on the key themes in the book: new friendships, fitting in, civic engagement, and first impressions.

In addition to the Reading and Activity kit, girls will be invited to participate in an online forum (<http://www.girlsinc.org>), where they can communicate with other girls their age about topics in the Beacon Street Girls books, including friendship, family, and the complications and pressures of middle school life.

Expressly designed for Girls Inc. affiliates, the guide will also be available online at no charge to the public at both <http://www.girlsinc.org> and <http://www.beaconstreetgirls.com>. The two organisations plan to continue the collaboration with additional books in the series.

About Girls Incorporated

Girls Incorporated(r) is a non-profit organisation that inspires all girls to be strong, smart, and bold. With local roots dating to 1864 and national status since 1945, Girls Inc. has responded to the changing needs of girls through research-based programmes and public education efforts that empower girls to understand, value, and assert their rights. In 2004, Girls Inc. reached nearly 800,000 girls through Girls Inc. affiliates, its website, and educational publications.

About B'tween Productions

Through the Beacon Street Girls' book series and website, B'tween Productions, Inc., is committed to reaching girls with age-appropriate media that delivers positive role models and health affirming messages.

3. Teen Content Creators and Consumers

Pew Internet & American Life Project. 2 November 2005.

American teenagers (aged 12-17) today are utilising the interactive capabilities of the Internet as they create and share their own media creations. Some 57% of online teens create content for the Internet. That amounts to half of all teens, or about 12 million youths. These Content Creators have created a blog or webpage; shared original artwork, photos, stories or videos online; or remixed content found online into their own new creations.

Teens are often much more enthusiastic authors and readers of blogs than their adult counterparts. Teen bloggers, led by older girls, are a major part of this tech-savvy cohort. Bloggers and to a lesser extent teens who read blogs have more technological tools such as cell phones and PDAs and are more likely to use them to go online. They are more likely than non-bloggers to engage in everyday online activities such as getting news, using IM or making online purchases, but content creating and sharing activities are the areas where bloggers are far ahead of non-bloggers.

Teens continue to actively download music and video from the internet and have used multiple sources to get their files. Teens who get music files online believe it is unrealistic to expect people to self-regulate and avoid free downloading and file-sharing altogether.

Summary of Findings at a Glance

- 33% of online teens share their own creations online such as artwork, photos, stories or videos.
- 22% report keeping their own personal webpage.
- 19% have created their own online journal or blog, and 38% say they read blogs. In comparison, 7% of adult Internet users say they have created their own blog, and 27% say they read blogs.
- Teens who go online frequently are more than twice as likely to blog: 27% of daily users have their own blog, compared with 11% of those who go online several times a week, and 10% of those who go online less often.
- 31% of online teens say they currently download video files to their computer so they can play them at any time, while just 14% of online adults reported the same.
- 51% of online teens say they download music files from the Internet compared with 18% of online adults.
- About half of the 622 teens in the survey who say they have tried music downloading think free downloading and file-sharing copyrighted content without permission is generally wrong, yet roughly the same number say they do not care about the copyright on the music files that they download.
- Equal portions of music downloading teens admit to current use of peer-to-peer (30%) and current use of online music services such as iTunes (30%) to get their music files. However, three times as many teens report peer-to-peer use in the past (28%) as those who report use of paid services in the past (9%).

4. Young blog their way to a publishing revolution

The Guardian. 7 October 2005.

The extent of the personal publishing revolution has been revealed by a Guardian/ ICM poll showing that a third of all young people online have launched their own blog or website. Millions of young people who have grown up with the Internet and mobile phones are no longer content with the one-way traffic of traditional media and are publishing and aggregating their own content, according to the exclusive survey of those aged between 14 and 21.

On average, people between 14 and 21 spend almost eight hours a week online, but it is far from a solitary activity. There are signs of a significant generation gap, and rather than using the Internet as their parents do - as an information source, to shop or to read newspapers online - most young people are using it to communicate with one another. About half of that time is spent chatting to friends in online communities or using messaging services, while another hour is spent emailing. The Internet may be a window into their personal realm, but it is not a window on the world for young people: only one in 10 say they use it to keep up with news and current affairs.

Among those with a web connection at home, 31% said that they had launched their own personal site or blog. Those aged 16 to 17 have taken most avidly to personal online publishing, with a female bias. Some will have started personal sites with rudimentary personal information or centred around music or sport, while others have become mini publishing magnates before leaving school. Earlier this year, the tracking site Technorati revealed that a new blog was created every second.

The results also lay bare the bewildering pace of change in media consumption among young people and outline the challenge faced by traditional publishers and broadcasters to remain relevant. In an attempt to reach new and young audiences, advertising is rapidly migrating online. Jupiter Research has forecast that the online advertising market will reach \$18.9bn (£11bn) by 2010, compared with \$9.3bn at the end of 2004, at the expense of traditional media.

But newspaper publishers and news broadcasters will take some comfort from the Guardian/ ICM poll's findings. Six in 10 said they "like to keep up with the news", rising to more than seven in 10 among 20 and 21-year-olds. Contrary to the prevailing wisdom that young people are turning to the Internet for news, television and newspapers remain by far the most popular means of accessing information.

Only one in 10 said they used the Internet to read the news, with most preferring to use it as a means of expression and communication. More than half said they read a newspaper at least once a week, rising to seven in 10 by the age of 21. Their preference, presumably often influenced by their parents' choice of paper, was for the Sun, followed by the Daily Mirror and Daily Mail.

The survey also showed 96% of those questioned owned a mobile phone, and two-thirds had a games console. They spend an average of £27 a month on their mobile phones, downloading three ringtones during that time, and spend an average of five hours a week playing on their games console.

5. 'No such thing' as terrible teens

BBC News. 23 September 2005.

Professor Philip Graham says it is a myth that teenagers are confused about their identity and frequently argue with their parents. The child psychiatrist from London's

Institute of Child Health said numerous surveys over the last 40 years showed 80% do not show such characteristics.

Moody Myth

Professor Graham believes that the social attitudes towards the "adolescent stereotype" are having a negative effect on the mental health of young people.

"There is a widespread belief among the public, often shared and, sometimes, at least in the past, regrettably fostered by mental health professionals, that young people aged between 14 and 19 show various undesirable characteristics that are specific and 'natural' to this phase of life."

He said people often attributed extreme moodiness and high rates of suicide, risk taking, and sexual promiscuity to the raised levels of sex hormones surging around the bodies of young adults. He warned that stereotyping could in itself lead to undesired behaviour. For example, low expectations of behaviour are often shared by teenagers themselves, leading to low self-esteem.

Dangers of Stereotyping

The legal position of young people, including the ages of criminal responsibility and eligibility to vote, smoke and drink alcohol, is wildly inconsistent, he said, and results both in injustice and in inadequate preparation for adult life.

A BBC survey of 16,000 teenagers in 2002 found many adolescents agreed they get "a bad press" - with only 13% agreeing that society values teenagers. Almost one in five felt that this stereotyping was the hardest thing - above exam pressures and boyfriend/girlfriend relationships.

Andy Hamflett, Chief Executive of UK Youth Parliament, said: "Sadly, young people are easy targets for criticism. Sure, there are lots of voices calling for young people to be more respectful, but that needs to work the other way as well - so young people can be respected as citizens and not just lazily labelled as troublesome or moody."

He said a culture change was needed to make negative stereotyping unacceptable. He hoped the government's "respect" agenda would tackle both sides of the issue.

"One way UKYP is tackling the issue is to counter the constant stream of negative images of young people in the press," he added.

6. Youth Development Approaches in Adolescent Family Life Demonstration Projects *Urban Institute. 22 September 2005.*

How can adolescents be better connected to their families and schools, and will these connections result in decreased sexual activity? What effective practices can [we] use to assist adolescents and young adults in sexual decision-making?

Youth development (YD) strategies in conjunction with appropriate age-graded sexuality and family life education programmes/curricula may have an important role to play in formulating convincing answers to these questions. YD approaches help youth enhance their assets rather than concentrating on their difficulties. They focus on where youth are going, helping them develop a belief in a viable future and in their ability to take actions that will bring that future about. The commitment to a future that would be disrupted by a pregnancy during adolescence is about the only thing that Zabin and her colleagues (1986) found to differentiate among Baltimore adolescents

using teen clinics who did and did not get pregnant. Teens without a strong reason to avoid pregnancy got pregnant at the same rate as those who wanted to get pregnant; the only teens who were successful at avoiding pregnancy were those who had a future goal that a pregnancy would disrupt. Youth with concrete plans for the future are less likely to choose risky sexual or other behaviour that might jeopardise the plans, and those with high self-esteem will have enough confidence not to need sex to tell themselves they are all right.

The most commonly targeted YD objectives of programmes by Adolescent Family Life grantees were promoting school/community bonding, promoting parent/child communication and bonding, fostering resilience, fostering self-efficacy, and fostering cognitive competencies. The least commonly mentioned objective was fostering spirituality. Two primary approaches to deliver abstinence and YD messages were curriculum-based activities and enrichment activities.

Curriculum-based activities included discussion, role plays, films and movies, while enrichment activities spanned many forms, including peer and adult activities, camps, and etc. Many enrichment activities offered opportunities to serve the community through volunteer work, clean-up, construction, arts, and other activities. The objective was to provide opportunities for youth to set goals and achieve them, thereby building both skills and self-confidence. Programmes often used some of the time spent in enrichment activities to discuss future plans, risky behaviours, and the likelihood that engaging in risky behaviours would jeopardise future plans.

For five of the seven programmes that the researchers visited, their YD focus preceded abstinence education by many years. Two of these five had a teen pregnancy prevention/sexuality focus during those years, but approached their task largely through future-oriented YD activities.

In all seven programmes, the YD and abstinence education activities are so integrated that it would be impossible for an evaluation to determine their separate effects. Even in the four programmes with an identifiable time period devoted to abstinence education, the approaches used to convey the abstinence message are YD approaches.

The programmes are faithful mostly to the messages, not to the curriculum on paper. They are all trying not to feel like school, and the way they accomplish that is to avoid approaches that stress books, lessons, paper exercises, and similar school-like components.

Five of the seven programmes encouraged youth involvement over several years -- some as long as six or seven years for youth first recruited during middle school. One programme targets only 9th graders for one school year. The last programme is very short - only 12 weeks.

Schools are primary collaborative partners for six of the seven programmes, and serve as major points of contact with youth and in some instances also as the venue for activities. One programme is based in public housing projects and has significant collaborative interactions with the local department of health.

7. Life Satisfaction of Young Australians: Relationships between further education, training and employment and general and career satisfaction (LSAY Research Report No 43)

Australian Council for Educational Research. September 2005.

This report is based upon new research that brings together two streams of previous investigation in the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) programme -- that of emotional well-being, and that of transitions to further education, training and work. In particular, it explores how young people's self-reported life satisfaction is related to educational activities and various labour market outcomes during the early post-school years.

Two aspects of young people's life satisfaction were examined: satisfaction with their careers and satisfaction with their lives in general. The investigation of the longitudinal relationship between life satisfaction and post-school activity pathways found that, though findings relating to the relationship between increases in the time allocated to study and/or work and increased satisfaction levels were mixed, the results suggested that decreasing the amount of time allocated to study and/or work led to decreased satisfaction levels.

Other factors, not examined in this study, may contribute to young people's life satisfaction to a greater degree. The relationship between post-school pathways and career satisfaction was stronger than that between post-school pathways and general satisfaction. The relationship reported here between general satisfaction and post-school pathways is important though, and warrants attention, as it suggests involvement in part-time work, unemployment or withdrawal from the labour force may have a negative impact on young people's levels of satisfaction with broader, non-economic aspects of their lives. Rather than simply becoming dissatisfied with their income, future career direction or the work they do (as measured by career satisfaction), young people who are in these less desirable situations also report decreased satisfaction with their social lives, their use of spare time, their independence and their lives as a whole (general satisfaction).

The results of the analyses reported here have implications for those involved in developing and implementing policies aimed at young people, as well as those who are involved in working directly with young people. Engagement in some form of purposeful activity may have benefits for the healthy functioning of young people that go beyond having sufficient income or a future career, extending to how they see their lives in general. Other research has suggested that young people who are underemployed or unemployed are at greater risk of developing problems with mental health, including depression and anxiety (Argyle 1999; Diener et al 1999). It is imperative that future policies and intervention recognise the effects that post-school activities can have on the emotional well-being of young Australians.

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