

Youth Scan

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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. 6,500 University Graduates Heading West as Volunteers

Xin Dingding(China Daily), April 2006

A nationwide project will send 6,500 university graduates to serve the poor western countryside as volunteers this year.

The volunteers will work in poverty-stricken counties for one or two years to help develop education, health care, agriculture, culture and other sectors.

The new batch of volunteers will join last year's group, who are midway through their two-year stints, bringing the number of university graduates serving the west during 2006-07 to about 10,000.

Co-sponsored by the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League of China and three ministries, the project aims to introduce talented university graduates to the western regions of the country and alleviate the increasing unemployment problem.

Over the past three years, at least 40,000 university graduates have served the west as volunteers, and 392 poverty-stricken counties have benefited.

The project has provided guidance to university students faced with the decision of where to work whether to stay in urban areas or move to the rural regions, said Yang Yue, deputy director of the project's leading team, yesterday in Beijing .

"It has also fostered a group of young people who understand the country's conditions and acquire the capability of hard work," Yang said.

Using the project as a model, a few provinces and municipalities have kick-started their own projects by sending volunteers to the west.

Official statistics show that, including the 9,000 volunteers sent by local projects, a total of 20,000 young people are working in the country's poor areas, a growth of 4,000 on 2004.

This year, volunteers are expected to work in sectors including education, health care, agriculture, legal aid, grassroots procuratorates, courts and financial development. The latter two sectors are recent additions to the project.

During their service term, the volunteers will receive a 600-yuan (US\$75) monthly allowance, insurance and a health check-up.

The volunteers will also get assistance to land jobs or pursue further study when they finish their service.

The project has helped more than 4,500 of 7,200 volunteers find jobs after their service in western China .

To encourage more university graduates to get involved in the project, the organizers are strengthening their efforts to assist volunteers in finding employment afterwards.

"We will set up a database of these volunteers, gather employment information for them, provide professional training, and set up a fund for those who want to start their own businesses in the west," said Wang Xuefeng, an official with the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League of China.

2. Wilderness Programs and Boot Camps - Are they Effective?

Australian Institute of Criminology, April 2006

Wilderness programs that include adventure activities and 'boot camps' involving military-like discipline are often promoted as effective crime prevention measures for young people in contact with the justice system or those at risk of criminal involvement. However, research reviews show mixed results for such programs.

One recent systematic review of boot camps showed no overall positive effect from the military type and physical activity aspects of these programs when recidivism was used as the measure of success (Wilson & MacKenzie 2006). This review found that camps might be more effective if the primary emphasis is therapeutic rather than militaristic and physical. Other reviews agree that it is the therapeutic elements of such programs that are crucial to success (AIC 2003; Wilson & Lipsey 2000). In a review of the crime prevention effect of wilderness challenge programs with delinquent youth, Wilson and Lipsey (2000) found the recidivism rate was eight percent lower for program participants (29%) than for control subjects (37%). In particular they found that established programs were more effective, indicating the need for ongoing core funding to assist programs to be more effective.

The following components are likely to increase successful outcomes for programs:

- thorough assessment and ongoing monitoring of participants
- a risk management assessment of activities and screening of program staff
- multi-modal treatments with a cognitive-behavioural orientation, e.g. behaviour modification techniques, drug and alcohol programs (Lipsey & Wilson 1998; Singh & White 2000)
- addressing specific criminogenic needs, e.g. attitudes supporting offending, peer groups, family problems, drug and alcohol use, anger and violence problems (Singh & White 2000)
- meaningful and substantial contact between participants and treatment personnel, and
- inclusion of an aftercare component (AIC 2003).

Programs for Indigenous or culturally and linguistically diverse youth should engage significant others, be culturally appropriate, and have staff who can relate to the clients (Singh & White 2000).

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3. Community-Based Learning: Engaging Students for Success and Citizenship

Coalition for Community Schools, March 2006

The Coalition for Community Schools announced the release of its new paper, *Community-Based Learning: Engaging Students for Success and Citizenship*. It highlights the value of the community-based learning approach to improving academic outcomes, including test scores, attendance rates, and graduation rates, as well as civic, moral, personal, social, and work-related outcomes. It is not news that students are bored, no matter their background.

According to Johns Hopkins researcher Robert Blum, 40% to 60% of students from all economic backgrounds are chronically disengaged from learning. Another study, just released by Civic Enterprises and funded by the Gates Foundation, highlights disengagement as a key factor in the dropout rate. That study found that 47% of dropouts left school because classes weren't interesting, and 81% of dropouts called for more "real-world" learning opportunities.

The good news is that research affirms that community-based learning has profound impact on the problems of boredom and disengagement—by involving students in "real-world" problem solving that makes learning relevant and meaningful. This approach brings together under one roof a collection of teaching and learning strategies that have heretofore been seen as different programs: service learning; place-based education; environment-based education; civic education; work-based learning; academically-based community service. Community-based learning unites these approaches to teaching and learning through a set of common characteristics.

The Coalition for Community Schools, in collaboration with leaders in these different arenas, identified these five core characteristics:

1. Learning occurs in places outside the standard classroom, and focuses on issues that have meaning for students.
2. Learning is active and provides students a role in decision making.
3. Learning goals connect personal achievement to public purpose.
4. Ongoing assessment gives students the opportunity to learn from their successes and failures.
5. Community partnerships increase the resources and relationships available for student learning.

Ira Harkavy, Chair of the Coalition for Community Schools, says, "Community-based learning is at the heart of a community school. Schools that partner with their communities to create real world learning opportunities improve student performance, improve their communities, and increase community support for education."

"If we are to meet our nation's goals, education leaders can no longer ignore the hard realities of student disengagement," says Martin Blank, Staff Director of the Coalition for Community Schools. "Educators and community leaders must ignite the imagination and the intellect of our young people. Community-based learning can spark students' passion for learning and prepares them for success and citizenship."

This study was supported by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. Located in Flint Michigan , the Foundation supports "efforts that promote a just, equitable and sustainable society."

4. Accepted Wisdom keeps 'Elite Ladies' Single

Shanghai Daily, February 2006

Traditional thinking is making it difficult for well-educated women with a high income to find a husband, a survey conducted by the Shanghai Women's Federation suggests.

Tall women are also having trouble finding a husband, the survey indicated.

Traditionally, Chinese men have insisted on marrying a woman with a lower education, and smaller income than themselves. They also prefer women who are younger and shorter than they are.

According to Shanghai Jinguoyuan Matchmaking Agency, one of the largest agencies of its kind in the city, about seven women sign up for help finding a husband for every three men who seek the agency's help.

The federation surveyed 996 people with university education between the ages of 27 and 37, to find out why educated, wealthy women can't find a mate. About 21 % of the respondents are single, 78 % are married and the others are divorced or widowed.

The survey indicated that married people are more satisfied with just about every aspect of life than singles with a similar education and income.

"This indicates not many young people will accept staying single," said Lu Jianmin, who was in charge of the survey. "The real reason for the current situation for these excellent women is the traditional thinking that a man must excel a woman."

The survey suggests that 85% of men and 75% of women think a husband should be at least three years older than his wife. Only 7.6% of male respondents said they would consider marrying a woman with a postgraduate degree, while 40% of women said they hope to marry a man with a Master's or Doctorate.

None of the female respondents are willing to marry a man who makes less than 3,000 yuan (US\$370) a month.

5. Young Hungarians: A Short Overview of the Main Results of Youth2004

Mobilitas Youth Research Centre, 2005

Youth2004 is the second social scientific and sociological study by the National Youth Research Centre to attempt a description of the generational changes that resulted from the social and economic transformations of a changing regime. One of the aims of reproducing the previous Youth2000 study, and acquiring comparable longitudinal data, was to record the extent and ways in which social factors affecting education, employment, careers, becoming more self-sustaining and acceding to financial opportunities have changed. Furthermore, the study seeks to record how these changes have impacted on the lifestyles, leisure activities and cultural consumption of young people.

Some highlighted results from Youth2004:

1. Family's role in the development of values

In 2004 a majority of respondents found that the principles by which their parents lived were suitable (54%). This contrasted with the 38% of those who answered likewise in 2000, thus denoting an increase in young people's satisfaction with their parents' value systems. While four years ago 42% of young people had ambivalent attitudes towards their parents' values, this figure has decreased to 31%.

Younger respondents, both in 2000 and 2004, are more accepting of their parents' conduct and principles than their older counterparts. 62% of teenagers claimed their parent's lives to be in accordance with their own views and ideals, while the same holds true for only 54% of young people aged 20-24 and 49% of 25-29 year olds. Furthermore, alongside the dynamic of young people growing older, and the influence of their families giving way to that of their friends, the proportion of young people rejecting or ambivalent towards their parents' values increases.

2. General opinion

Analysing the young people's satisfaction on several factors, it seems that they are particularly satisfied with two factors which most impact their lives: relationships and friendships. Only the value of employment opportunities remains below average with young people being somewhat sceptical: 35% are rather unsatisfied, a third are rather satisfied, and 32% are uncertain about the issue. There are significant differences between the opinions of those young people who are employed or studying, in relation to those who are unemployed. Those "most satisfied" are the employed, while the least satisfied are the unemployed. It is worth mentioning that students' satisfaction level with employment opportunities is also rather unfavourable. This might be related to low social prestige, poor financial rewards, and lack of student and seasonal work. Analysing general satisfaction, the opinion climate has fundamentally changed since 2000. The proportion of youths who claim dissatisfaction has decreased by 13%, and ambivalence by 10%. In other words, young people's assessment of their present situation has, over the last four years, shifted positively.

3. Personal plans and expectations

Personal expectations influence how a youth perceives his/her future. 90% of young people who responded to this question reported having already developed concrete expectations concerning their future. The successful completion of one's education ranks on top of the expectations list. The second most important personal expectation pertains to building a house or buying a flat. Starting a family is also an important expectation for the Hungarian youth. However, since 2000, willingness to have children has slipped back four places on the list.

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