

24.5

1997

SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST
3 JUN 1995

clouds lives of young

By BILLY WONG WAI-YUK
SCHOOLCHILDREN are looking for short-term satisfaction rather than long-term goals because of their concerns about 1997, a survey has found.

Some 35 per cent of the children interviewed said they doubted the meaning and value of life.

"Schoolchildren are finding it difficult to find a role in a continually changing society," said Cheung Man-kin, chairman of the Learner-Teachers' Association which carried out the poll.

"The heavy academic pressure, worries about 1997, and a lack of in-depth communication with family and friends make them feel helpless."

Analysts discovered youngsters spent most of their leisure time on self-centred activities such as reading comics and playing video games. This weakened their language skills and powers of expression.

The students had poor study methods, despite the intense pressure of examinations.

One-third of the interviewees admitted they day-dreamed during lessons and while doing homework.

Half the students said they had difficulty understanding the contents of textbooks and lessons given in English.

And 40 per cent of interviewees said poor class discipline and a lack of academic ambition among fellow pupils had minimised their interest in their studies.

The survey is carried out every 10 years by the association, a voluntary organisa-

tion whose members are secondary teachers and principals.

The survey aims to discover the problems secondary students face in relation to changes in society.

Interviewers questioned 4,208 junior secondary students from 37 secondary schools, industrial schools and technical institutes over two years. Thirty per cent of the students they spoke to expressed worries about the handover.

The almost daily Sino-British disputes covered by the media added to their worries.

"We plan to do another survey after 1997 to see whether there is any dramatic change in the psychology of youngsters after the handover," Mr Cheung said.

Pollsters found a similar response to questions asked in the 1985 survey.

Thirty per cent of youngsters said they were dissatisfied with their physical well-being, compared to 27 per cent a decade ago.

Another 40 per cent said they had problems with verbal expression and poor memories.

On the question of self-image, 30 per cent filled in "I have nothing better than others", while 40 per cent chose "People always go against me".

"Worries of failure" and "worries about prospects" were the things that most frightened the youngsters. Next came "rumours about voodoo".

The association urged the Government and secondary schools to expand extra-curricular activities and provide special training for teachers so they could help students cope with problems.