REALITY TV ENCOURAGING ‘LOTTERY MENTALITY’ IN YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people urged not to leave education or training without qualifications by taking control of their lives

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The downfall of reality TV stars Jo O’Meara and Jade Goody has failed to deter young people from seeking reality TV fame, according to new research from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

Over one in ten (11 per cent) young people still say they would drop out of learning to be on reality television – a similar figure to previous 2005 research. And the lure of fame is so great among teenagers that close to half (49 per cent) of 16-19 year olds aspire to be a celebrity.

According to research from the Learning and Skills Council more than one in six (16 per cent) teens believe it is easy to become a star – and only a fifth (21 per cent) of these fame-seeking youngsters plan to rely on their talent.

Given the chance, 42 per cent of these wannabes would drop out of education or training to become a celebrity and 17 per cent think it’s easy to get a job and be successful without qualifications.
But according to official statistics, leaving education or training without the minimum set of qualifications, such as five good GCSEs or a Level 2 diploma, will leave young people with a greater chance of unemployment and earning less than their peers who have these essential qualifications\(^{ii}\).

It would seem that today’s teens have unrealistic expectations and lottery-style programmes such as Big Brother and the X Factor have contributed to this mentality.

Media coverage of reality TV stars such as Jade Goody (Big Brother) and Lizzy Bardsley (Wife Swap) further exacerbate young people’s desires for celebrity status, with more than 170 column inches, the equivalent of over a page, in every national newspaper dedicated to these ‘stars’ in one weekend\(^{iii}\).

More than one in 10 (12 per cent) 16 year olds have fallen in to this lottery mentality and believe they will actually win the jackpot – despite the odds of this happening being one in 13 million\(^{iv}\).

Further to this, close to one in five (17 per cent) teenage boys think their success will be down to luck and 10 per cent of teenage girls plan on marrying someone rich to fund their superstar lifestyles.

Julia Dowd, Director of Young People’s Learning at the LSC, said, “It’s surprising that so many youngsters still want to be a part of the fickle world of fame. The downfall of such high profile celebrities such as Jade Goody and Jo O’Meara should serve as a warning that fame and fortune can disappear as quickly as it arrives and you will always need qualifications and skills to fall back on.
“Reality TV can be tempting for young people but often this success is short-lived and that’s why it is imperative for all young people to take control of their future by gaining essential qualifications, such as five GCSEs (A*-C) or the vocational equivalent such as a Level 2 diploma and realise that their future really is in their hands.”

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Notes to editors:
This press release applies to England only.

Research was conducted online between 11th and 18th May 2007 by YouGov Plc who interviewed a sample of 555 16-19 year olds. YouGov is a member of the British Polling Council.

Learning and Skills Council:
The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England’s young people and adults to world class standards. Our vision is that young people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. We work nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.

Visit www.lsc.gov.uk/inourhands or call 0800 011 30 30 for more information.

Apprenticeships
- There are currently 255,500 young people aged 16-24 undertaking an Apprenticeship. They can choose from over 180 career paths in 80 different sectors of industry and commerce
- Apprenticeships provide 16-24 year-olds with a mixture of on and off-the-job training while they
are being paid. For employers, Apprenticeships offer the opportunity to improve their businesses bottom line through the tailored, relevant training of highly motivated young people.

- There are two levels of Apprenticeships:
  - ‘Apprenticeships’, equivalent to GCSE level, incorporate a National Vocational Qualification to Level 2; key skills and in some cases a technical certificate
  - ‘Advanced Apprenticeships’, equivalent to A-levels, incorporate a National Vocational Qualification to Level 3, key skills and a technical certificate

**Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)**

All 16-year-olds in England from a household with an annual income of up to £30,810 who stay on at college or school are eligible for the EMA. The scheme allows payments of £10, £20 or £30 a week in return for a commitment to study. Additional benefits of up to £500 over two years are also available for meeting certain targets.

For advice and information on how to apply for the EMA call 080 810 16219 or visit the web-site [www.direct.gov.uk/ema](http://www.direct.gov.uk/ema) for application packs. For people with speech and hearing difficulties who use textphone, please call 0800 056 5344.

Separate EMA and Apprenticeship schemes are operated by the administrations for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

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1. Previous research was conducted online between 16th – 21st December 2005. YouGov interviewed a sample of 777 respondents aged between 16 and 19. Of one in 10 (11 per cent) young people would drop out of education or training to be on TV

2. ‘Employment rate and gross weekly earnings by highest qualification.’ Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics, spring 2003 – the latest figures available. People with a highest qualification of A-levels or equivalent earn £397.94 per week, on average (multiplied by 52 gives an average annual salary of 20,692.88). The gap between the average annual salaries of someone with FE (Level 3) qualifications and someone who leaves school without Level 2 qualifications is £3953.56. Assuming a person who leaves school after GCSEs will work until 65, £3953.56 multiplied by the number of working years (47 – 49, minus the two additional years someone who leaves education at 16 will work compared to someone who leaves at 18) equals a lifetime salary difference £185,817.32 on average. 51 per cent of people without Level 2 qualifications are unemployed, compared to 25 per cent with Level 2 (based on sample of Males aged 16 to 64, females aged 16 to 59. Full-time employees only based upon respondents self assessment. Respondents who did not report an hourly wage or who reported hourly pay greater than £100 are excluded).

3. Column inches are based on analysis of the news pages of all national weekend newspapers on the weekend 26th-27th May 2007.

4. Source: [www.national-lottery.co.uk](http://www.national-lottery.co.uk)