

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Youth are the nation's greatest assets. It is on them that the future of the nation depends. It is thus the responsibility of the current generation of leaders, be it the family, the school, the society and the government, to assist and equip young people to enable them to face current and future challenges with full of dynamism and vigour.

However, to play an effective role in assisting young people, it is essential that the nature and characteristics of adolescence be understood. Adolescence is generally considered to be in the age range of 12 to 21 years old.

1.1 Definition of Adolescence

Adolescence is derived from the Latin word "adolescere" meaning "to grow up", to grow into maturity. Thus according to Rogers (1981) adolescence is a process rather than a period, a process of achieving the attitudes and beliefs needed for effective participation in society.

Some authors believe adolescence is a period of physical development, for others it is an age span, while for still others adolescence is thought of merely as a social invention.

Konopka (1973) defines adolescence as that span of a young person's life between the obvious onset of puberty and the completion of bone growth. As a stage of physical development, it comprises several distinct periods of change. Pubescence, sometimes called preadolescence, refers to the two-year period preceding puberty and to the physical changes taking place during that period. The climax of pubescence is called puberty, and is marked by certain indicators of sexual maturity: in girls by menarche, or the first menses, and in boys by a number of signs, the most valid being the presence of live spermatozoa in the urine. Similarly, Flaherty (1969) in his definition of adolescence states that basically, adolescence is a period of time between puberty and maturity; it is marked by the appearance of secondary sexual characteristics. This period is generally between the age range of 12 to 21 years, although it is unique for each individual. The changes in adolescence encompass gonadal maturity and replacement of emotional security in the home for emotional security in the wider society.

Rogers (1981) feels that while early adolescence in the biological sense dates from the beginning of the pubescent growth spurt until a year after puberty, when the biological functions are fairly well established, late adolescence is more difficult to define, lasting until physical growth is relatively complete during the late teens or early twenties.

Muuss (1968) adds that the upper age limit of adolescence is even less clearly marked than the onset of pubescence, since there are no objective physiological phenomena that can be used to define the termination. Observable social phenomena such as financial independence, successful employment and marriage are useful. He argues however, that they do not necessarily indicate psychological independence and maturity. Also, the psychological and even the sociological meanings of such phenomena differ according to the sociocultural environment; how to determine when adulthood, maturity, self-determination, and independence have been reached depends on the definition that these terms have in a given social setting.

Adolescence is sometimes defined by chronological age. As Berger and Hackett (1974) point out, age persists as one of the universal criteria of role allocation and social stratification, and there is no good reason to expect this fact to disappear soon.

In Malaysia, according to the National Youth Policy, youth is defined as those between the ages of 15 to 40. The rationale according to the policy is as follows:

- i. It is the definition used by the Malaysian Youth Council, the main youth body in this country.

- ii. The group between 15 to 40 years old is considered to have achieved satisfactory maturity. They can achieve maximum benefits from all programmes planned.
- iii. The group between 15 to 40 comprises a large percentage of the population of this country. Any effort to develop this group can result in all round benefits.

From the development point of view, such a broad definition allows the government and the youth organisations to reach a large group of the population. However, because of the wide span of the age range, that is 15 to 40, which encompasses middle adolescence to middle adulthood, the developmental programmes undertaken may not be suitable for all in the "youth" category. For example, youth development programmes for students in the age range of 15 to 18 may not be suitable for youths in the age range of 35 to 40, and vice versa. Thus, unless, different programmes are developed for different age groups, such a wide age definition may weaken the impact of any programmes implemented for youths as a single group.

While age is indeed a convenient criteria, Rogers (1981) feels that age is not really a psychological variable. It is simply a measure of time and is only a very rough index of experiences one encounters that are critical to psychological

development. Hence, she adds that age is probably not a good index of the adolescent period because it does not encompass the complete range of important psychological changes that accompany what is meant by adolescence.

Such age distinctions are often unrealistic as neither biological nor psychological maturity is reached all at once. Human development proceeds quite unevenly. For example, a person who may be matured in cognitive development may still be lagging in moral development. Or an individual may be physically mature but may still be unskillful in social relationships. Thus, considerable variation in developmental patterns must not be overlooked. Further, the ending of adolescence is so gradual as to defy identification as a point of time.

Rogers (1981) adds that individuals develop their own ways of evaluating progress over time, related both to social views of ageing and to their own personality and goals. To a certain extent they embrace a social time schedule that varies according to sex, social class and the individual. Accordingly, each individual has some concept of whether he is on time or experiencing time lag.

However, arbitrary age designations have certain benefits. They provide a frame of reference, and they assist in matters of law as well as programme development and implementation, especially youth development programmes. For example a Malaysian may not vote until the age of 21, or have a driving license until

the age of 18. Further, in the Ministry of Youth and Sports, only youths in the age group of 15 to 18 are eligible to apply to the youth vocational training centres while only those in the ages of 16 to 30 may participate in some international youth exchange programmes. Thus without doubt, age definitions are a convenience in the implementation of youth related development programmes. However, even here it is clear that the age range used is not consistent, being different for different purposes and programmes.

Adams and Gullotta (1983) however, feel that adolescence is merely a social invention emerging from industrialisation. Before that, young people lived in an age-mixed social setting of the extended rural family. According to them, industrialisation and urbanisation have had the result that in contemporary Western society, children and adolescents are predominantly socialised in an age-segregated youth-oriented world. They cite longer periods of formal education, changing labour laws and evolving economic conditions as examples that have created a social environment where youth culture is reinforced by being separated from the adult world and the workplace.

Muuss (1968) sums up the definition of adolescence by saying that sociologically, adolescence is the transition period from dependent childhood to self-sufficient adulthood. Psychologically, it is considered a "marginal situation" in which new adjustments have to be made, namely those that distinguish child

behaviour from adult behaviour in a given society. Chronologically, it is the time span from approximately twelve or thirteen to the early twenties, with wide individual and cultural variations.

Adolescence is often portrayed as a bridge linking childhood and adulthood, with no true essence of its own, but Lipsitz (1979) considers the view of adolescence as transitional a myth. Though adolescence is often considered a transition, he feels that adolescence is no more transitional than any other stage in life. Adolescence should be recognised for its own significance, a period of great importance in its own right. The view of adolescence as transitional may cause one to believe that troubled youth will simply grow out of it, or that this period of life deserves no special attention because of its transience.

In the context of the study, adolescence was defined as the age period of 16 - 25 as this was the age range that was allowed to participate in the programme being studied, that is the Premier Youth Award Programme. The effects of this programme on identity development as well as other psychological variables was studied.

1.2 Adolescent Issues and Needs

While the young are often considered the nation's greatest assets, it cannot be denied that adolescents face many issues and problems.

According to Police Reports, there were 1,892 arrests of juvenile delinquents in 1991 (New Straits Times, 12 May 1993). In this report, juveniles were taken to be in the age range of 10 to 18 years. The total population of adolescents in the age range of 10 to 19 in 1991, according to Rusanuar (1992) was 3,760,400.

Further, according to the Anti-Drug Task Force Report, in 1992 there were 17,468 drug addicts in the age range of 20 to 39 years. Further, from the same report, the population of that age group in 1990 was 5,729,900 (Anti-Drug Task Force Report, 1992).

While the overall crime and drug figures appear small, that is, less than one percent of the youth population are involved in drugs or juvenile delinquency, these are only official figures. Without doubt, there are many more youths that are involved in crime but have not been arrested or similarly drug-addicts that have not been detected by the Anti-Drug Task Force. Even so, from these official figures it can be said that less than one percent of adolescents in Malaysia are involved in drugs or crime, or in other words more than 99% of young people are not involved in serious crimes or drugs. Takanishi (1993) contends that while about half of the nation's children (in America) will have smooth sailing through adolescence, one in four teenagers is at great risk. The question she asks is, "How can we prevent more casualties?" She further adds that programmes that simply flood teenagers

with information about risk are far less successful than those that deliver their messages along with more general training in emotional and social skills.

While not having problems with the law or society, it cannot be denied that adolescents face many problems and challenges, for adolescence is a time when extensive changes occur in the physiological and psychological systems. Hamburg (1990) states that in humans, recent events have drastically changed the experience of adolescents, in some ways making it more difficult than ever, in coping with society. Among the new challenges faced by young people, he cites the lengthening period they spend in the formal education system and the inconsistency between biological and social development where although biologically they may not have the capability and the knowledge, they often have to make critical decisions such as career choice and choosing their life partner which may affect their entire life. He further adds that confusion about adult roles especially with the conflicting messages they get through the media, the erosion of family and social support systems especially in urban areas and finally, the easy access by adolescents to potentially life-threatening substances and activities are also problems being faced by young people in the current situation.

In a study on the profile of adolescents in Malaysia, Chiam and Nik Aziz Pa (1982) found that on average 28% of adolescents interviewed were timid and shy, 42.2% were easily embarrassed and 33% lacked self-confidence.

In another study, Chiam (1993) found drug abusers were low in self-reliance. They lacked dependability and were easily influenced by peers and adults. She further found that 70.5% did not know what they really wanted during their adolescent years. Having no clear, long-term goals, these youngsters grew up without much direction and aim in life. Even if they had goals, the lack of self-control would not have permitted them to persist with the attainment of their goals in the face of obstacles.

Lacking self-control and direction, these youngsters were highly susceptible to suggestions, went along with their peers and even if they knew what they were doing was wrong or immoral, they would have little courage and self-reliance to call a halt.

Chiam (1993) felt that adolescence is a period for the young to search for self-identity and the philosophy of life. These are among the main developmental tasks of adolescents because at this stage of their lives, they should have the mental, biological and emotional maturity to prepare for adulthood by setting goals for themselves. Further, she stated that adolescents without self-discipline and self-reliance are unable to resolve the identity crises and become productive citizens.

Reykowski (1988) feels that embarking upon the period of youth involves three very general developmental problems and tasks, namely the achievement of independence, the establishment of relationships with peers and the advancement to

an adult role. Kuhlen (1957) suggests the following seven needs of adolescence; the need for status and acceptance, the need for vocational development, the desire for independence, the adherence to codes and ideals, the need for understanding, the need to feel a sense of wholeness and finally sexual and biological needs.

Lucas and Harrocks (1960) constructed a questionnaire to investigate categories of needs that consisted of ninety items. It was completed by 725 adolescents, aged twelve through eighteen. Through factor analysis five identifiable needs emerged as somewhat independent clusters. They were recognition-acceptance, heterosexual affection and attention, independence-dominance with regard to adults, conformity to adult expectations and academic achievement.

Strang (1957) suggests that one way of building an adolescent's self-esteem and self-confidence is by placing him in situations in which he can succeed. Enabling him to see for himself that he can do the task required or relate himself happily to others is more effective than giving him a pep talk or reassurance. Every experience contributes to the adolescent's evolving picture of himself, which in turn, becomes a guide to future action.

Any intervention to facilitate adolescent development should always take into careful consideration the needs of adolescents. Jones (1980) contends that when working with adolescents it is imperative to understand and respond to their need to

be involved in meaningful, positive relationships with adults and peers. Benedict (1954) states that adolescent development is facilitated by providing adolescents with an increasing amount of responsibility and increasing opportunities to experience equalitarian, nonsubmissive roles. Similarly Rank (1945) emphasises that the central developmental task of adolescence is the striving for independence. He adds that if adults are to assist adolescents in making the transition from dependence to independence desired in late adolescence, they must provide them with opportunities to express themselves and experiment with tools for controlling their own lives.

Further, Scales (1990) contends that the key to preventing problems such as teenage pregnancy, school drop-out, alcohol and drug-abuse and other problems among adolescents is to concentrate not on the problems themselves but on the broad development of cognitive, behavioural and social capabilities among adolescents. Prevention means creating the conditions that promote adolescent well-being. Bentler (1992) who surveyed drug dependents, adds that any intervention efforts should be directed not only towards decreasing drug use, but also towards improving personal maturity, social skills and economic opportunities. In this context, Rosenberg (1985) has demonstrated that there is indeed a strong positive correlation between self-esteem as well as internal locus of control and adolescent well-being.

Adolescent development programmes, whether they aim to prevent problems of delinquency or to build competent youths, must take into account the developmental needs of youths as well as be of a broad nature which can enhance the adolescents' cognitive, behavioural and social capabilities. Only then can these programmes effectively serve not only to prevent delinquency, but also more importantly, to equip youths to face current and future challenges more efficiently and effectively.

1.3 Adolescent Development Programmes

There is thus a need for concrete adolescent development programmes to fulfill two developmental needs; firstly, as preventive programmes against delinquency and other social problems and secondly, to equip adolescents with the right attitude, knowledge and skills to play a more effective role in society.

According to Adams and Gullotta (1983), as early as 1904, Stanley Hall, often considered as the earliest proponent of the study of adolescent development, had suggested that providing appropriate experiences leading to prosocial behaviours would create the potential for internalisation of character traits that were believed to be genetically transmissible to offspring. For example, Hall supported the Boy Scout Movement, believing that the rough-and-tumble activities of the Movement would provide a satisfactory and productive outlet for the aggressive tendencies of the youths.

Adams and Gullotta (1983) suggest four prevention approaches to enhance mental health and prevent mental illness: education, community organisation, competency promotion and natural care giving.

Education is the most frequently used tool in adolescent development. Increasing the group's knowledge through the media, lectures or experiential exercises creates an environment of readiness for positive changes and shows how to develop the skills for confronting and overcoming the obstacles to emotional good health.

Community organisation is a process whereby disadvantaged groups can obtain just political representation in society for prevention specialists believe that illness can occur in groups denied access to the legitimate power structure.

Competency promotion activities can assist people in coping with a life transition point or stage in development. Hansen, Watson-Perczel and Smith-Christopher (1989) state that the development of psychologically healthy individuals appears to be related to the ability to cope adaptively with many transitions and challenges presented during the critical period of adolescence. Competency promotion activities that could assist young people in coping with these life points include programmes that promote feelings of belonging, self-esteem and caring for

others. Examples of such activities include wilderness school training, competency based athletics, scouting and youth groups.

Adams and Gullotta (1983) describe natural care giving as the coming together of people to decide as a group how to solve some problems. The resulting organisation serves as a reference point that provides emotional support and strength for its members. Programmes under this approach have such titles as peer leadership, cross-age tutoring and teen involvement in such diverse settings as schools, youth agencies and churches. These programmes enable young people to care for themselves and others.

Adams and Gullotta (1993) further emphasise that the goal of prevention is not to eliminate all the stresses faced by young people, but to help ensure that stress does not create distress which can contribute to emotional suffering.

Outward Bound Schools (OBS) can be considered as one form of competency promotion activity. In a study undertaken by Kelly and Baer (1971) to compare the rate of recidivism among delinquents who had attended OBS training and those who had not, they compared 120 delinquent males who were sent to Outward Bound School with another group who were institutionalised immediately after having being found guilty. These youths were between 15 1/2 and 17 years, at an age that, according to them, was an ideal age for participation in Outward Bound because

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they were capable of negotiating the challenging experiences but were not yet old enough to have become hardened criminals. Kelly and Baer found that one year later after the experience, 42% of the non-Outward Bound group had been found guilty of another crime. Only, 20% of the teenagers who went to Outward Bound returned to crime. Further, in a study conducted by them five years later, Kelly and Baer found that the advantages of Outward Bound had decreased considerably. Apparently, it is necessary to follow-up on the initial experience in order to maintain the original effectiveness (Dacey, 1982).

In another study, Fertman and Chubb (1992) evaluated the effects of a personal empowerment programme on adolescents. A Personal Empowerment programme was carried out among 52 ninth-grade students aged between 14 to 15 years old, from a school district. Of these, 26 students participated in the programme while 26 other students acted as the control group. The course contents included topics on leadership, communication, assertiveness, stress management, decision-making, team building and goal-setting. The variables measured were participation level in the community and school activities, self-esteem and locus of control.

From the study of those who had completed the programme, self-esteem and locus of control scores were not significantly different. However, activity scores were significantly higher compared to the control group. While there was actually

no increase in the experimental group, there was a decrease of the activity score in the control group. The initial expectation had been that the experimental group's activity participation would increase and the control group's activity participation would remain constant. However, the experiment showed that the programme helped students to maintain their involvement in activities at a time when they might disengage in voluntary activities.

Fertman and Chubb (1992) offer suggestions as to why the personal empowerment programme prevented the decline in involvement in community, family and school activities. The workshop took place at the end of July, a point at which the students had left junior high school and were preparing to move to senior high. They suggest that the workshop might have provided a bridge between the two schools and this, reduced some of the anxiety about the move. The junior and senior high schools' personnel were involved at various times during the programme's implementation. Further, on the last day of the workshop, a luncheon was held to give students an opportunity to be recognised for their participation. This function was attended by the principal of the high-school and might have conveyed the message to these students that despite the fact that they were starting at the bottom of the social hierarchy at the senior high school, they were valued members of the school. Another possible reason was that parents' support had been solicited for the programme. This might have influenced the students to maintain their participation in the voluntary activities compared to the control group.

Social skills training can be considered to be another form of competency building. Cunliffe (1992) suggests that research has demonstrated the effectiveness of social skills training on Grade 10 and 11 students, that is in the age range of 15 to 16 . Students who had undergone this training exhibited higher levels of general social competence than did the control group. In addition, he adds that underachievers significantly improved their academic performance after the training.

Thus, it is clear that competency based programmes maybe useful in enhancing social competency skills in adolescents. One programme that aims to build competency in Malaysian adolescents is the Premier Youth Award, a programme that was introduced in Malaysia in early 1992. The objectives, structure and activities of the programme are described below.

1.4 Premier Youth Award Programme

This section is heavily drawn from the International Award Programme Leader's Training Pack (1990), The International Programme Handbook (1990), *Panduan Penilaian Anugerah Remaja Perdana* (Guidelines for the Evaluation of the Premier Youth Award) and the *Panduan Perlaksanaan Anugerah Remaja Perdana* (Implementation Guidelines for the Premier Youth Award).

1.4.1 Brief History of the Premier Youth Award Programme

The “Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Scheme” was launched in 1956 in the United Kingdom. By 1989, 48 countries operated this Scheme on a national basis and there was considerable global interest in the Programme.

This Programme was introduced in Malaysia in 1992 and was officially launched by the Prime Minister of Malaysia on 16 May 1992 in conjunction with National Youth Day in Ipoh, Perak. In Malaysia, the Scheme was given the name “Premier Youth Award”. Locally, the Programme is referred to as the *Anugerah Remaja Perdana* or ARP programme.

As at 1994, in Malaysia, there were about 140 groups participating in this Scheme with a total of about 2,100 individual members. A youth must be in the age range of 16 to 25 to participate in the Scheme.

1.4.2 Principles of the Premier Youth Award Programme

The Award concept is one of individual challenge. It presents young people with a balanced non-competitive programme of voluntary activities which encourages personal discovery and growth, self-reliance, perseverance, responsibility to themselves and service to the community.

The fundamental principle for gaining this Award is individual improvement through persistence and achievement, taking into account the participant's initial capabilities and without any element of competition between participants.

According to The International Award Programme Leaders' Training Pack (1990) the Award Scheme caters for the following three needs:

The need for responsibility

In preparation for adulthood, young people are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves and others.

The need for new experiences

Young people are rehearsing for maturity, trying on different roles. They have a tremendous amount of learning to do, and need incentives to encourage them to enjoy their successes and learn from their mistakes.

The need for creative expression

Young people need to have many opportunities to express their opinion, beliefs, feelings and thoughts and plenty of time to share ideas with other people in an atmosphere of tolerance and respect.

1.4.3 Developmental Tasks of the Premier Youth Award Programme

Further, to fulfill those needs, The International Award Programme Leaders' Training Pack (1990) suggests these ten developmental tasks which it says form the agenda for young people and which are catered for through participating in this scheme:

Developing competence

Knowing their strengths and weaknesses. Setting realistic goals and managing their lives.

Developing autonomy

Initiating, planning and solving problems on their own. Seeking to fulfill their needs and the needs of others.

Developing values

Forming values, ideals and dreams. Standing up for what they believe. Becoming more informed and experimenting with choices and opinions.

Identity

Seeking answers to questions like "Who am I?", "What do I look like?", "What could I be?" and "How can I change?"

Sexuality

Determining sexual identity and values. Understanding gender stereotypes.

Developing friendships

Developing social skills. Understanding friendship.

Love and relationships

Helping them to be responsible, knowing themselves and what they want, dealing with conflicts and disagreements and making choices.

Work and non-work

Seeking employment and making career choices. Learning new skills.

Being involved in the community and society

Participating, contributing and leading in community development and helping the less fortunate.

Free time and leisure time

How to better spend their free time. How to use what is available effectively.

1.4.4 Aims of the Premier Youth Award Programme

To fulfill the needs of young people through the ten developmental tasks, the International Award Programme Leaders' Training Pack (1990) further explains that the aims of the Award Programme are:

- i. To introduce young people to worthwhile voluntary activities.
- ii. To provide young people with opportunities to learn about responsibility, self-reliance, perseverance, challenge and personal achievement and to widen their horizons.
- iii. To help them help themselves become mature responsible members of society.

The Pack further explains that the Award Programme is about:

i. Personal challenge

Each young person is different: each young person's Award Programme will be different.

ii. Non-competition

The performance of any two young people is not compared, only relative effort.

The programme is of personal challenge and further it is non-competitive in the sense that it starts with the individual's skills and abilities. The goals to be achieved

to qualify for the award are set by the assessor in consultation with the participant. While there are implementation guidelines, the initial skills and capabilities of the participant and his commitment to challenge himself the best he possibly can, is the key to the programme. Thus, in any activity in the four sections (service, recreation and expeditions, skills and innovation and sports and culture), the participant is expected to achieve the best he possibly can. His personal performance is not compared to any other person, only to the goals that he himself sets in consultation with the assessor.

iii. Trust

Young people are trusted to set their own goals and try to achieve them

Trust is needed because the participant records his own log book in terms of attendance as well as the skills learnt or activities undertaken. While the instructor may monitor the schedules set, it is up to the participant to keep the records honestly and correctly.

iv. Voluntary choice

No young person can be forced to participate. Participation should be an active choice.

v. Individuality

The unique individuality of the programme is its strength. It enables the programme to be used by any young person - rich or poor, able-bodied or handicapped, privileged or unprivileged.

1.4.5 Structure of the Premier Youth Award Programme

The Award Scheme is divided into five sections, that is, Service section, Recreation and Expeditions section, Skills and Innovation section, Sports and Culture section and a Residential project.

Through participation in the Service Section it is hoped that young people will become aware that all members of society can and should contribute in whatever way is most appropriate to his ability and situation and further that young people will acquire a lifelong commitment to voluntary help through providing regular service to society. This Section also aims to encourage responsibility and commitment through regular giving of services or through acquiring skills in preparation for giving service. This Section requires young people to give themselves for others.

The Recreation and Expeditions Section is considered the most challenging and can offer the most scope for individual development. This Section aims to give young people a sense of achievement, confidence in meeting new challenges and a spirit of adventure. Further, it encourages teamwork and cooperation through

working in small groups and shared responsibility for the planning and execution of the venture. Further, imagination, effort and determination are needed to successfully execute the venture.

The aim of this Skills and Innovation Section is to stimulate young people to take up and persevere at satisfying and purposeful pursuits and so widen their horizons and interests. This Section requires the longest time commitment and so encourages perseverance, effort, “stickability” and sustained interest. Participants are not required to reach any set standard, but are required to show improvement in competence in relation to their own original capabilities.

The Sports and Cultural Section aims to encourage participation, improvement and enjoyment of cultural and sports activities rather than sporting excellence. Further, this Section aims to build self-discipline and motivation through cultural and physical training. Also, it encourages effort, determination and perseverance through striving to meet physical challenge and achieve one’s personal best.

The Residential Project is only for the attainment of the Gold Award, and not for the Bronze and Silver Award. It provides young people with the opportunity to venture out of their home environment and take part in a worthwhile enterprise with others. The project must be worthwhile and purposeful, placing extra demands on the young people to contribute to the group’s purpose to communicate with others

and to broaden their experience. This Section aims to develop maturity and a sense of responsibility for their actions, by placing young people in an unfamiliar environment.

1.4.6 Operating Principles of the Premier Youth Award Programme

According to The International Programme Handbook (1990) the operating principles of the Award Programme are :

1. Participants must be between the ages of 16 and 25.
2. The basic structure of the Award Programme consists of the four mandatory sections, that is service, recreation and expeditions, skills and innovation and sports and culture.
3. Three levels of the Award are Bronze, Silver and Gold.
4. The minimum period of participation for direct entrants to qualify for an Award is 6 months for Bronze, 12 months for Silver and 18 months for Gold.

For example to achieve a Bronze Award, an ARP participant needs to have participated in all the following activities and programmes:

1. Service Section

Provided service for at least three months for example in an old-folks home.

2. **Recreation and Expeditions Section**

Participated in an expedition or exploration for at least 2 days and one night.

3. **Skills and Innovations Section**

Learnt a skill chosen by the participant, for example computing, for at least 6 months.

4. **Sports and Culture Section**

Followed a regular physical recreation or cultural programme for 3 months, for example learning badminton skills.

Only when a participant has participated fully in all of the above activities and programmes will he be awarded a Bronze Award. For the Bronze and Silver Award, the Minister of Youth and Sports will present the awards. However, for the Gold Award it is expected that the Prime Minister or the King would personally present the awards.

1.4.7 Implications of the *Rakan Muda* Programme

Recently, the Ministry of Youth and Sports has launched the “Rakan Muda” Scheme, whereby youths who are interested in a particular activity such as self-defence can apply to the Ministry of Youth and Sports to participate in such an

activity. According to this Scheme, the voluntary bodies would be responsible for organising these activities for the youths. The Scheme was intensely promoted through the electronic and print media. The response has indeed been overwhelming. More than 1,000,000 youths have registered with the programme (New Straits Times: 12 July 1995).

According to the *Rakan Muda* booklet, the programme is aimed at nurturing youths, galvanising them into being psychologically mature adults with the "mental agility and physical ability to assume the mantle of leadership". Further, it aims to equip them with skills, drive and passion to "power the economy, towards new exciting frontiers". In order to achieve these goals, the *Rakan Muda* will introduce youths to ten productive and interesting lifestyle programmes. These ten lifestyles are in sports, martial arts, environment, culture, innovations, entrepreneurship, physical fitness, community service, recreation and the uniformed corps. These ten lifestyles are to give youths "objectives to aim for, build their self-esteem, fire their imagination, cultivate a love for knowledge and instill an appreciation for high morals, values and positive attitudes".

The aim of the *Rakan Muda* programme, which is to develop psychologically mature adults, can be considered similar to the aims of the ARP programme which are to provide young people with opportunities to learn about responsibility, self-reliance, perseverance, challenge and personal achievement and to widen their

horizons. Thus, while the *Rakan Muda* appears to have a wider range of activities (lifestyles) provided, the final objectives coincide with those of the ARP programme.

In this study the ARP was chosen as it appears to be the most comprehensive programme for adolescent development available at that time. Further, it appears most suited in terms of objectives, structure and programmes, to be able to enhance identity development in adolescents. It is expected that the results of this study may also be useful in understanding the effects of the *Rakan Muda* programme on adolescent identity development.

With respect to the *Rakan Muda* programme, there have been some implementation problems. While the response from youths has been overwhelming, implementation of the programme has been slow. As the new Minister of Youth and Sports, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin had admitted, "We have done our hard selling to promote the concept of *Rakan Muda*. In a way this is good but we must ensure that we are able to meet the needs of the 800,000 youths (at that time) who have registered for the 10 activities so far. We do not want them to wait for a year before they can actually participate in the activities they have signed up for" (New Straits Times: 16 May 1995). The Deputy Director of the Perak Youth and Sports Department said that the Department had difficulty in implementing the programmes under the *Rakan Muda* Scheme. He noted that the Department had

difficulty in getting support from the voluntary organisations to organise the required activities (New Sunday Times: 21 May 1995).

Due to these initial implementation problems of the *Rakan Muda* programme, it was not possible to extend the scope of the study to include the new programme. Thus it was decided to retain the focus of this study on the ARP programme. However, it was noted that the *Rakan Muda* programme had in fact indirectly influenced the sample in this study. With the increasing popularity of the *Rakan Muda* programme among adolescents, the implementation and initial dynamism of the ARP programme was seriously challenged. Adolescents, including those in the ARP programme, appeared to be extremely enthusiastic of the promises of the *Rakan Muda* programme, and thus the popularity of the ARP was negatively affected. For example, while about 850 new participants had registered for the ARP programme in 1993, since the launching of *Rakan Muda* in October 1994, the ARP Secretariat reported that there had been no new registrations. This downward trend in the popularity of the ARP programme acted to limit the sample available for this study, the implications of which had to be considered in designing the sampling framework.

1.5 Adolescent Identity Development

In his classic work entitled *Identity: Youth and Crises* (1968) Erikson laid the foundation directing most of the research on adolescent identity development for more than a decade. Erikson views adolescence as a major junction in life when

young people focus intensive energy on issues of self-definition. Defined as “the accrued confidence in the inner sameness and continuity of one’s meaning for others” (Erikson, 1950), identity is considered to be of central concern during adolescence. In discussing Erikson’s definition, Patterson et. al. (1992) explain that three elements emerge as necessary for a sense of identity. Firstly, the person must experience inner sameness, or integrity, so that actions and decisions are not random. Defined values, principles and expectations order one’s behaviour. Second, the sense of inner sameness is continuous over time, that is to say, actions in the past and hopes for the future are experienced as related to the self of today. Thirdly, identity is experienced within the context of important others. Ideally, relationships and roles serve to support and validate an integrated, continuous identity.

According to Erikson, the life stage of adolescence provides young people with the optimal situation for defining a sense of identity. Not yet firmly tied by adult commitments, the adolescent may try out a variety of possible commitments in occupation and ideology, eventually adopting a more or less permanent sense of who he is. Adams (1992) adds that identity formation is an evolutionary process of “differentiation and integration, synthesis and resynthesis, and increasing cognitive complexity”.

If identity formation occurs optimally, subjectively there should be a sense of well-being. “Its most obvious concomitants are a feeling of being at home in one’s

body, a sense of knowing where one is going and an inner assurance of anticipated recognition from those who count" (Erikson, 1968). Kroger (1989) adds that optimal identity formation should show itself through commitment to those work roles, values, and sexual orientations that best fit one's own unique combination of needs and talents.

Building upon Erikson's work, Marcia (1966) developed the identity status approach to studying the process of identity formation. Marcia's four identity statuses occupy unique positions along the dimensions of exploration and commitment. Patterson et. al. (1992) add that identity statuses are both "outcomes of the process of identity formation and structural properties of personality, and each portrays a dominant mode of experiencing the world". Identity status helps shape future identity formation as well as the person's passage through subsequent life stages.

According to Marcia's identity status model, there are four identity statuses, that is, identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium and identity achievement.. Identity diffusion is the least developmentally advanced status. Commitment to an internally consistent set of values and goals is absent, and exploration is either missing or shallow. People in identity diffusion tend to follow the path of least resistance, and may present as having a carefree or empty life. Identity foreclosure represents a high level of commitment following little or no exploration. People who

follow the foreclosure pattern adopt a single set of values and goals, usually those of their parents. Moratorium status refers to the process of forging an identity from the myriad possibilities available. The person in moratorium is intensively preoccupied with exploring options and working towards commitment. Finally, identity achievement represents an autonomous resolution of identity incorporating a set of commitments adopted during a period of exploration. It is the exploration of the moratorium period that distinguishes the flexible strength of identity achievement from the rigid strength of identity foreclosure.

Using Marcia's model and reviewing literature on its correlation with elements of optimal psychological functioning, Waterman (1982) suggests that a clear sense of personal identity, based on the exploration of various possible elements followed by the formation of identity commitments, appeared to have a number of positive characteristics as follows:

1. "A clear sense of identity is associated with a sense of personal well-being in the form of self-esteem and self-acceptance and the relative absence of debilitating emotional states such as anxiety and depression.
2. A clear sense of identity is associated with goal-directed activity both in terms of goal-setting and in the sophistication of cognitive functioning necessary for success in achieving the goals set.
3. A clear sense of identity is perceived as a positive quality to enact.

4. A clear sense of identity is associated with the pursuit of socially constructive ends in terms of attitudes of tolerance and social acceptance, cooperation and helping, and the seeking of intimate personal relationships" (Waterman, 1982).

Waterman (1992) further suggests that intervention strategies that are designed to promote the exploration of identity alternatives and the formation of identity commitments, particularly to goals, values and beliefs should be developed. He goes on to add that, " if improvements in the quality of the lives of participants in intervention activities promoting identity formation can be demonstrated, this will provide still further support for the viability of the candidacy of a sense of personal identity for consideration as an aspect of optimal psychological functioning".

Further, in a study on ego identity status and adolescent problem behaviour Jones (1992) found that identity diffused adolescents were at greater risk for substance abuse. Jones concluded that fostering psychosocial development, perhaps in the form of social interventions, designed to enhance ego identity, may be an effective alternative to traditional prevention or intervention approaches to drug abuse.

As Waterman (1982) suggests, strategies that enhance identity development may be related to optimal psychological functioning. Further Jones (1992) contends that problem behaviour is related to the identity status of adolescents and thus suggests approaches emphasising psychosocial development maybe an alternative to

traditional prevention approaches. The question that may be raised is does ARP qualify as a programme that can influence identity development.

Marcia's Ego Identity Status Model states that the two variables determining identity status are exploration and commitment. The person who has undergone exploration and made commitments is considered as attaining the highest identity status level, which is identity achieved. On the other hand, the person who has not undergone exploration and commitment, is at the lowest status level, which is identity diffused. Thus, it can be said that if a programme has elements of exploration and commitment than that programme can possibly facilitate the process of identity formation.

1.6 Statement of the Research Problem

The study aims to determine the influence of the ARP programme on adolescent identity development. Identity development is influenced by the individual's exposure to a wide variety of activities that allow for exploration and give opportunities to make commitments to the choices one makes. Thus, any activity or group of activities that creates such circumstances and opportunities for an individual to make those explorations and commitments probably influences the formation and development of the person's identity.

The study also aims to investigate the relationship between self-esteem, social responsibility, attitude towards authority, social skills, goal setting behaviour, locus of control and adolescent identity development. Many positive characteristics have been associated with a clear sense of personal identity based on exploration and commitment. This includes self-esteem, self-acceptance, absence of anxiety and depression, goal-directed behaviour, attitude of tolerance, cooperation and helping and the seeking of personal intimate relationships.

ARP is a programme that aims to develop certain competencies. These include a better understanding of self, that is one's strengths and weaknesses, and thinking about one's goals. Further, it encourages experimenting with choices and learning new skills. Also, it facilitates the development of communications skills. These include planning skills, problem-solving and decision-making skills, building friendship skills, handling conflict skills, negotiation skills and working in group skills. Finally, it encourages young people to be sensitive and to be involved in helping others, especially the less fortunate.

In fact ARP may be seen as a relatively comprehensive adolescent development programme. It includes elements of personal discovery, growth and development, working with and through others, and service to the community. All of the activities in the four sections, provide ample opportunities for exploring many available options and making commitments to ensure achieving personal set targets. Konopka (1973)

views adolescence as a time of experimenting in order to learn more about one's self in relation to others, and to form an identity as an adult. Most adolescents develop more fully, and in healthier ways, if they are encouraged to do their experimenting within the context of supportive, yet challenging environments. They need access to a variety of activities in their schools, communities and families, he adds. The ARP programme can be considered a programme that provides a variety of activities in schools, communities and families that are within a supportive yet challenging environment.

Examining the objectives, structure and activities of the ARP programme, it can be said that the programme provides ample opportunities for exploration and commitment. The characteristics of the programme which is voluntary, non-competitive, involves individual goal-setting and trust are important foundations to enable youths to achieve the best out of the programme in a non-threatening atmosphere.

Further, the principles of the programme which concerns individual challenge, personal discovery, growth, self-reliance, perseverance, personal responsibility, new experiences, building competency, autonomy and working with others fosters the right environment for exploration and commitment, which could possible enhance the process of identity development in adolescence. Thus it is proposed that the ARP programme would provide a context that facilitates adolescent identity development.

Specifically, the psychological variables that can be associated with the ARP programme are self-esteem, social responsibility, attitude towards authority, social skills, goal setting behaviour and locus of control. It is proposed that a higher level of identity development would be evident in the significant presence of these psychological variables.

Thus the objectives of the study are to:

- (i) Determine the influence of the ARP programme on adolescent identity development.
- ii) Study the relationship between self-esteem, social responsibility, attitude towards authority, social skills, goal setting behaviour and locus of control and adolescent identity development.
- (iii) Study the effects of the demographic variables of gender, race and age on identity development.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The positive development of identity development has been associated with optimal psychological functioning (Waterman, 1982). It has further been associated with the reducing of problem behaviours (Jones, 1992). Thus any programme or activity that is able to influence positively the identity development of adolescents would probably be

useful in building adolescents with a greater sense of psychological well-being, with higher self-esteem and with a greater sense of caring for the community. Further, it could probably reduce the possibility of adolescents getting involved in negative behaviours.

In this study, the Premier Youth Award programme was chosen to identify its psychological effects on adolescents, the most important psychological effect being its influence in identity development. If there were indeed significant differences between the identity development level as well as psychological variables levels such as self-esteem, goal-setting and social skills, of ARP programme participants compared to non-participants, this would suggest that identity development can be influenced by adolescents development programmes. This has important implications for designing and implementing adolescent development programmes towards building well-adjusted and active adolescents. Further, adolescent programmes can also serve to reduce the number of youths involved in negative behaviours.

The Premier Youth Award programmes was chosen due to its comprehensiveness. However, it should be noted that this study is not an evaluation of the programme itself. It is a study of the psychological effects of the programme. Also, this study was restricted to the participants of the Premier Youth Award programme only, and did not involve any other adolescent development programme.