

**AESTHETIC LABOUR AND THE POLICY-MAKING AGENDA: TIME FOR
A REAPPRAISAL OF SKILLS?**

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Editor's Foreword

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Abstract

Previous research in the area of 'aesthetic labour' has suggested that 'aesthetic skills' are important in interactive service work, such as retail and hospitality. To-date, research on aesthetic labour has merely pointed to the existence of aesthetic skills, but there has been no real attempt to examine the extent of the demand for such skills. This paper seeks to rectify this omission. It reports on a survey undertaken in the Glasgow retail and hospitality labour markets by examining labour demand in terms of recruitment and selection, skills and training. The findings point to a high level of demand for aesthetic skills in retail and hospitality. Pursuant on this identification of the demand for such skills we consider apposite policy responses, suggesting that there is increasingly a need for a reappraisal of skills in the current, service-dominated economy.

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Introduction

This paper reports on a recent survey undertaken to discern the aesthetic skills needs of employers in the retail and hospitality industries of Glasgow. With economic regeneration, Glasgow now has a thriving retail and hospitality sector. Whilst expanding, and an important source of current and future employment opportunities, the needs of employers in these labour markets do not appear to be fully met. Recent figures have suggested that the city has a reported 5,500 job vacancies in the retail and hospitality industries whilst the city has high residual unemployment (Holland, 2000). There can be a number of reasons for this recruitment problem, ranging from poor pay to unattractive working hours. One other key reason could be a skills mismatch between the demands of employers and the supply of labour from employees. It is this aspect that is explored in the survey reported in this paper. In exploring this issue, the paper provides more comprehensive, industry specific labour market intelligence within the context of the Glasgow economy. Importantly, though, whilst the paper reports on research evidence on Glasgow, we would strongly argue that a number of trends seen in Glasgow are also likely to be true of other re-structuring British cities, such as Leeds, Newcastle, Manchester and Liverpool (and see for example Westwood and Nathan, 2003).

Our previous research in the area of aesthetic labour suggests that one reason for the potential skills mismatch is that employers in certain parts of the service sector, termed by us the ‘style labour market’ (encompassing boutique hotels, designer retailers and style cafes, bars and restaurants), require more than just technical and social skills from their employees, they also require ‘aesthetic’ skills. These are the skills that enable employees to ‘look good’ and/or ‘sound right’ in their jobs by presenting themselves appropriately to customers. This presentation encompasses the body language, dress sense and style, personal grooming and the voice and accents of potential and existing employees. The limited evidence prior to the survey reported here suggests that there are ‘hotspots’ of well-developed demand for aesthetic skills in an emerging style labour market. Just as important, there is a less well developed but increasing demand for these skills in non-style retail and hospitality outlets. As a consequence, aesthetic skills are becoming a key skill required for work and employment across interactive service work. The demand for this skill has so far been unappreciated and unanalysed by policy-makers. The paper

examines these issues by analysing labour demand by employers in terms of recruitment and selection, employer skills demands and training, and cross-checking this demand by reference to the experience of employees.

The following section discusses the broader context of the shifting nature of services, work and employment. It outlines a double shift in the nature of the contemporary economy, both in terms of the number of service jobs, but also the nature of those jobs. We then go on to consider how the meaning of ‘skill’ has changed considerably in a service-dominated economy. In particular, we introduce aesthetic skills as important in industries such as retail and hospitality. We then briefly outline the research methods and employer and employee respondent samples of the empirical data. The research findings are then presented and inform the discussion of policy implications, which conclude the paper.

Services work, employment and skills

This section outlines the quantitative shift to service jobs generally and in Scotland and Glasgow particularly. It also outlines the accompanying qualitative shift in the nature of the jobs and the new skills that are required in contemporary interactive service work and employment. This ‘interactive service work’ refers to the face-to-face and/or voice-to-voice interaction between employees and customers.

In addition, the section examines a niche within the service sector – style-driven outlets – and the type of labour – aesthetic, that is employed in this niche, and how the emergence of this type of labour is so far relatively unacknowledged and unappreciated in Scotland but is increasingly regarded as indicative of cities’ economic regeneration and so is being foregrounded in policy discussions outside Scotland.

Services: the double shift

Much is made of the shift from manufacturing to services in the contemporary advanced economies. Aggregate data seems to bear out this shift. By the 1990s large numbers of manufacturing jobs had disappeared and the number of service sector jobs increased. Services cover a wide range of activities, not just public, private and voluntary but also heterogeneity with categories. Financial services, for example,

encompass fund management and call centre operations. The research reported here focuses on retail and hospitality.

In the UK, retail employed 2.7m people in 2000 or 11% of all employees. Jobs grew in the five-year period to 2000 by 15%. Growth in Scotland was lower at 4%; although employing 226,000 people or 10% of all employees in Scotland, relative retail employment mirrors that of the UK. Of this workforce, 67% were female and 58% worked part-time. A similar pattern exists for the hospitality industry, which employed 1.6m people in 2000 or 6% of all UK employees. Growth was good too, at 13% to 2000. In Scotland, the industry employed 164,000 people or 7% of all employees. Of this workforce, 59% were female and 57.5% worked part-time (Futureskills Scotland, 2002a). The shift to services in Scotland is forecast to continue to 2006, as 34,000 jobs disappear from manufacturing. As Futureskills Scotland also notes, retailing, hotels and restaurants are amongst the four industries in Scotland that will require more than 40,000 new employees during this period.

As its manufacturing base declines, Glasgow is an exemplar of a UK city reinventing itself as 'post-industrial' and in this process 'leisure shopping and a new café culture have been fused with the city's famously friendly atmosphere to create an almost tangible buzz' (Glasgow Tourism Development Group, 2002: 7). Between 1950 and 1991, the city lost almost 200,000 jobs, 90% of which were in manufacturing. Over the past few years, employment has steadied and begun to rise, with most new jobs in services. At 14% to 2000, the growth in the city's service jobs was greater than for Scotland as a whole at 9% and for the UK at 12%. Services now account for over 85% of Glasgow's employment. More women than men are now employed in the city and, not unrelated, part-time work in the city also increased. Retail, wholesale and hotels alone account for 20% of the city's jobs. Job growth in these industries is continuing and is forecast to continue and so is a key feature of the city's regeneration efforts (Glasgow Development Agency, 1999a, 1999b, 2002). Indeed, tourism generally is at the forefront of the Glasgow economy and the city now attracts three million tourists each year, generating in the region of £670 million annually in the local economy (Glasgow Tourism Development Group, 2002).

It is important to note, however, that there is again heterogeneity in these jobs. In addition to the non-style retail and hospitality outlets, there is an emerging style-driven niche in Glasgow that encompasses boutique hotels, designer retailers and style cafes, bars and restaurants. In 1999 alone there were 35 applications to Glasgow City

Council to open new bars in the city centre. Between 1994 and 2000, the number of major hotels in the city increased from 42 to 89, with a further 27 planned. The city also has approximately 1000 bars and restaurants and is now considered second only to London as Britain's culinary capital (Glasgow Tourism Development Group, 2002). Similarly, Experian also acknowledges Glasgow as the second largest retail centre in the UK outside London (Glasgow Tourism Development Group, 2002). Not surprisingly, the city has been dubbed 'the style capital of Scotland, if not all of Britain' (*Sunday Mail*, 1999: 25) and described by the US magazine, *Travel and Leisure* as 'The UK's hippest and most happening city' (cited in Glasgow Tourism Development Group, 2002: 7).

It is often not appreciated though that a double shift has occurred as services displace manufacturing. The first and most cited shift is a quantitative one: the increase in the number of jobs now provided by services. The second shift is qualitative and less appreciated: the nature of work and employment changes with service jobs. As with manufacturing, a production process still occurs in service jobs. However, unlike manufacturing, the service production process is:

- Simultaneously produced and consumed.
- Employees directly interact with consumers.
- Employees are part of the product.
- The 'service encounter' between employee and customer is intangible, contingent, spontaneous and variable.

In other words, the product being offered can, for example, be affected by employees' moods at the time of working, customers' responses within the interaction and the enactment and efficacy of it is difficult to measure and assess. To counter these problems some service work has stripped out labour and replaced it with technology - as automated calling and interactive voice recognition systems illustrate in call centre operations. However, there are other ways in which these issues are addressed.

One way is to try to systematise the service encounter with tight rules and regulations. For example, call centres and fast-food outlets commonly script employees' verbal interactions with customers. Emphasis is also put on shaping and, if necessary, changing the attitudes of existing employees. To do so, many of these

rules and regulations focus on managing employees' feelings whilst they are at work. In the literature, this managerial control is called emotion management. It involves systematising – through training – and monitoring *what employees say* and, importantly, *how they say it* in their interactions with customers. Employees are instructed in how to calm irate customers or affect their own feelings of irritation with customers, for example. This type of work is called 'emotional labour' and the managing of these emotions by employees can also be a skill (for a discussion of these issues see Bolton, 2004).

Alternatively, companies can employ only those people who already have the right attitudes. This approach is linked to competency-based recruitment and selection. It is a way for companies to employ the right staff at the point of entry rather than having to train them once they are through the door. The recruitment policy of one Glasgow-based high street retailer emphasises the desired personality of employees, wanting to attract staff with 'star quality'; another supermarket asks job applicants to walk through the store and talk to customers in order to assess their existing interpersonal skills. The aim is to have 'oven ready' employees, able to be popped straight onto the shop floor to work with minimal preparation (i.e. training). This strategy potentially reduces costs but it also signals that a belief that the desired characteristics and dispositions of employees cannot necessarily be trained.

These developments raise the issue of what now constitutes 'skill', what is the range of new skills needed by employers and how the policy-making community can provide for these skills through training provision. Providing a comprehensive review of knowledge, skills and competitiveness in the UK, Keep and Mayhew make the point that the meaning of the term 'skill' has expanded considerably in recent years. They note that 'Many employers...appear to be using the term "skill" to embrace personal characteristics and psychological traits' (Keep and Mayhew, 1999: 10). Importantly, Keep and Mayhew continue, 'This broadening of the spectrum and mix of knowledge, capabilities, traits and physical attributes that can be grouped under the umbrella term of skills raises a number of major issues for policy-makers' (p. 10).

Looking good and sounding right has always been a feature of employment but in the past was more often an outcome of ad hocery on the part of employers. Alternatively employees took it upon themselves 'to look the part', particularly when trying to get a job or seeking to develop their careers (Bixler and Nix-Rice, 1997; Jeffes, 1998; Spillane, 2000). Now, for some employers, it is becoming a strategy,

featuring in their recruitment, selection, training and remuneration of employees. The purpose is to portray a company image and create an appealing environment for the customers.

In this respect a pattern is emerging of employers' current skill demands in interactive service work, such as that of retail and hospitality. With respect to sales and personal services work, Jackson *et al.* (2002) point out that in their analysis of job adverts, the skills stated as necessary by employers are 'social skills' and 'personal characteristics'. Likewise, a recent examination by Martin and Grove (2002) of nearly 100 human resource professionals in the USA responsible for hiring entry-level hospitality industry employees revealed that the top two criteria were:

- Pride in appearance.
- Good attitude.

The UK Hospitality Training Foundation (HtF) has also recently conducted research into which skills were considered important to employers and the results are outlined below.¹

Table 1: Relative importance of particular skills

	% very important	Now index	Future index
Willingness to learn	87	1	1
Being flexible/adaptive	85	2	2
Personal presentation/appearance	85	3	3
Ability to follow Instructions	84	4	4
Initiative	82	5	5

Source: HtF (2000)

Thus, whilst debate continues about whether or not attitude and appearance constitute skills, and how and if they can be trained, there is increasing consensus about their importance to employers. The importance of employees' attitude and social/interpersonal skills is now recognised and appreciated. Futureskills Scotland's

¹ It should also be noted that there were sub-sectoral differences. For example, for hotels personal presentation/appearance was ranked 4th, for pubs and bars 3rd and for the restaurant sector it was 1st.

recent employers survey highlights the skill most lacking in employees is customer handling (56%) for example, and that skill shortages in Scotland are amongst the most common in hotels, restaurants and retailing (Futureskills Scotland, 2002b).² As the subsequent report states, providing for companies to be able to ‘attract...appropriately skilled staff is a middle ranking challenge for Scotland’s employers but [is] the highest ranking challenge over which the public sector could act’ (ibid.: 14).

However, the customer handling skills identified by Futureskills Scotland need to be better unpacked. We would argue that, to date, these ‘soft’ skills are equated with social and/or interpersonal skills. But this is only a half-truth. The aesthetic or self-presentational skills that comprise the other half of ‘soft’ skills have not been recognised.

Aesthetic labour and the style labour market

From Banff to Bath in the UK, from the *Irish Times* to the Italian *Il Corriere della Sera* across Europe, ‘aesthetic labour’ caught the popular imagination when a short research monograph was released in 1998. Aesthetic labour, in different appellations, continues to feature as an issue in the press, the term has also become incorporated into academic textbooks and is filtering into policy debates about VET and careers guidance in the UK and abroad.³ The Industrial Society (now the Work Foundation) published a report on it and also continues to heavily feature it in its commentaries on the future of work and employment, and the development of successful cities (respectively, Westwood, 2003; Westwood and Nathan, 2003).

The term ‘aesthetic labour’ is analytically complex and a full working definition can be found in Nickson *et al.* (2001), with further discussion in Warhurst and Nickson (2001) and Witz *et al.* (2003). Here it is enough to note that companies employ people with certain capacities and attributes that favourably appeal to customers and which are then developed through training and/or monitoring. It has become translated in the popular imagination as those people who are employed on the basis of ‘looking good’ and/or ‘sounding right’. In its tabloidised form, along with sexism, racism and ageism, ‘lookism’ is now offered as one of the key issues of the

² Two other points are worth noting; only 1% of employers with a skill gap reported employees as deficient in technical skills and the questionnaire to employers did not include items related to aesthetic labour.

³ Indeed, ‘aesthetic labour’ has recently been recognised as a neologism in the new edition of the *Collins English Dictionary*.

contemporary workplace: 'If your gender and your race haven't kept you off the short list, your physical appearance still might' (Oaff, 2003: 7).

Our attempts to develop the concept of aesthetic labour were based on an exploratory study over 1997-98. Stimulated by a number of job adverts in the press, the purpose of the study was to identify if aesthetic labour had been or was an emerging feature of contemporary work and employment and, if so, how important a feature. The focus of the study was Glasgow's expanding number of designer retailers, boutique hotels and style bars, cafes and restaurants. Some inclusion, though undeveloped, was also made of banks. The study had three research foci. Firstly, it examined the personal physical capacities and attributes demanded by employers at the point of entry to employment. Secondly, it examined how these capacities and attributes were developed by employers through training and regulation. Finally, it explored how the capacities and attributes featured in the actual work of employees as they interacted with customers. The findings of this study are fully reported in Nickson *et al.* (2001). In short, the study found that the need to look good and sound right did exist and was very important to employers. These employers believed that having staff that look good and/or sound right not only helped companies create a distinct image on the high street but also provided competitive advantage for these companies in the crowded retail and hospitality industries. The study revealed that companies in the service sector desired and developed employees who could become the physical embodiment of the image and 'personality' of those companies. As one respondent stated about her company's recruitment and selection, they wanted:

'...people that look the part...fit in with the whole concept of the hotel'
(cited in Nickson *et al.* 2001: 180).

The focus of the exploratory study was on what we termed the 'style labour market' but, in the course of the study, it became apparent that the success of companies drawing upon this style labour market was having knock-on effects in non-style high street retailers and hospitality outlets. These companies too are beginning to think about using employees' physical capacities and attributes to appeal to customers. The results of the study have stimulated extensive academic interest. They have also become incorporated into policy debates at UK level and practitioner initiatives in Glasgow because they raise important questions about the nature of and intervention

in the labour market, social inclusion, training provision and skills development (and see Nickson *et al.*, 2003).

Based on the foregoing we would now suggest it is now accepted that:

- The need for employees to look good and sound right exists in the service sector and that a style labour market is emerging.
- That this need is regarded as important by employers, and not just by those companies that are style-driven but also by some non-style retail and hospitality companies.

What is not known is how extensive the demand is for aesthetic labour amongst both style-driven and non-style companies, and by implication how important are aesthetic skills to employers in the retail and hospitality industries. The Glasgow services survey was commissioned to address this gap in information.

Research methods

Outline of the Glasgow services survey

There are a number of employment surveys of Strathclyde and Scotland that encompass Glasgow, for example those conducted by the Strathclyde labour market intelligence service (SLIMS), the Fraser of Allander Institute and Futureskills Scotland. These surveys tend to focus on 'hard' technical skills, usually quantifiable through accreditation and qualifications. There is some inclusion of 'soft' skills, though the range of soft skills extends only to social and/or interpersonal skills. As we have argued elsewhere this range is partial (Warhurst and Nickson, 2001). Soft skills encompass both the social and aesthetic: the interpersonal and the self-presentational. Having identified the existence and importance of these aesthetic skills, most obviously in the style labour market, it becomes necessary to assess their extent in the services sector, not just within the style labour market but beyond into non-style service providers.

This survey encompasses the retail, hotel and restaurant/bar/cafe segments of the Glasgow service economy. All of the industries involve service work and employment with employees directly interacting with customers. The survey was questionnaire-based, with tailored questionnaires for each industry. In addition, both employers and

employees were surveyed. The questionnaires were developed and piloted in conjunction with human resource practitioners, training and development agencies, trade unions and employees. Examining current and future supply and demand, the focus of the questionnaires was:

- Recruitment
- Selection
- Training

The purpose of the employee survey was to cross-reference the responses of employers. For the employee survey it was decided to survey only students. Recent research suggests that the vast majority of students who work do so in the retail and hospitality industries (Canny, 2002; Curtis and Lucas, 1999; Taylor *et al.*, 1999). Moreover, it is a group that is homogeneous. Finally, given the size of the desired sample, this group was more easily accessible than targeting employees in individual service companies. It is recognised, however, that by no means are all employees in the retail and hospitality industries students. Students simply provided an accessible and indicative sample group of the desired size.

There is no agreed upon standard for a minimum acceptable response rate however it is important to receive a minimum 10% response rate in order to comment on the significance of the findings. Survey based research shows that response rates are generally lower in central cities and for using a postal method to distribute questionnaires. It has also been found that recent business surveys have response rates of 15-20% (Saunders *et al.*, 2000).

Employers' survey

A database was compiled for businesses in the retail, hotel and bars/restaurant/café sub sectors of the Glasgow service sector. Sources used to create the database were *The List* magazine⁴, the Greater Glasgow and Clyde Valley Tourist Board Accommodation Guide, the Buchanan Galleries Directory and also a list of retail outlets provided by Glasgow City Centre Partnership. This was triangulated with the *Yellow Pages*, the Glasgow Restaurateurs Association booklet and the Merchant City

Guide. Post-piloting, a total number of 1023 postal questionnaires were distributed to retail outlets (479), hotels (89) and restaurants/bars/cafes (455) in Glasgow City Centre and the West End during November and December of 2002. Follow-up visits and telephone contact were made at the start in January 2003. A mixture of independent and chain establishments were included. Approximately 25% of the sample was businesses within the style labour market (240).

Employees’ survey

During December 2002 and January 2003 students at the Universities of Glasgow, Strathclyde and Glasgow Caledonian were approached. The sample included a mix of Social Science, Business and Hotel School students mainly in pre-Honours classes. The students were informed about the research and those students who worked or had worked in retail, hotels, bars, restaurants and cafes were asked to complete the questionnaire.

Table 2: Employees’ sample broken down by university

University	Approximate number of students
Strathclyde	530
Caledonian	85
Glasgow	12
Total	627

Employers

After distributing the questionnaires it became apparent that certain businesses were part of a group where the recruitment and selection of staff tended to be conducted by a central office, therefore reducing the number of possible responses. For example, the G1 Group have 24 establishments within the bar, restaurant and hotel sub-sectors in Glasgow. A total number of 29 questionnaires were returned due to the property no longer existing or the questionnaire was returned uncompleted. As a result the total number of reachable responses in all sectors was reduced to approximately 950. One hundred and forty seven completed responses were returned, giving a response rate of 16%. The response rate for each sector was 11.5% for retail, 22.5% for hotels and

⁴ A local listings magazine covering the Glasgow area. As well as a bi-weekly publication, the magazine also produces a yearly guide to bars and restaurants in the Glasgow area.

16% for bars/restaurants/cafes. The responses break down as follows; 55 from retail outlets (37%), 20 from hotels (13%) and 73 from bars/restaurants/cafes (50%). The sample size for the hotel sector in Glasgow is much smaller, accounting for the low number of responses compared to the other sub sectors.

Table 3: Response rate for employers' survey

Sector	Sample	Responses	Response rate (%)
Retail	479	55	11.5
Hotel	89	20	22.5
Bars/restaurants/cafes	455	73	16
Aggregate	1023	147	14
Reachable responses	950	147	16

Employees

Across the three universities, 207 questionnaires were completed giving a response rate of 64%.

Table 4: Response rate for employees' survey

University	Number of Students	Sample	Responses	Response rate (%)
Strathclyde	530	293	176	60
Caledonian	85	27	27	100
Glasgow	12	4	4	100
Aggregate	627	324	207	64

Having outlined the approach adopted to the survey attention now turns to the results.

Research Findings

This section outlines the findings of the surveys. The findings are predominately drawn from the employers' responses, though occasional reference is made to the employee survey.

Recruitment and selection

For much interactive front line service work, studies consistently report high levels of informality in recruitment and selection, including things such as word of mouth,

referrals and casual callers, especially in the hospitality industry (and see for example Campbell *et al.*, 1998; Cheng and Brown, 1998; Kelliher and Johnson, 1997; Korczynski, 2002). Moreover, in customer service work, recruitment and selection is more likely to be based on people’s social and aesthetic skills rather than technical skills. Thus managers’ preference for recruitment and selection in service work has tended to be on the basis of personality and increasingly, as we have argued, self-presentation. It is of course noteworthy that it is at the recruitment and selection stage that employers have most opportunity to ‘filter out’ those who are considered ‘inappropriate’ for the company image. Our previous research in this area has highlighted this fact and also pointed to a certain amount of self-selection as potential employees may, for example, consider themselves not ‘posh’ enough for certain jobs (Nickson *et al.*, 2003).

Recruitment methods

On the specific question of recruitment methods, Table 5 below presents the most common sources of recruitment used by employers in the survey and those that have been most useful for potential employees to learn of jobs in the hospitality and retail industries.

Table 5: Sources of recruitment (% and rounded)

	Employers	Employees
Job centres	71	49
Local Press	50	60
Word of mouth/referrals	65	65
Casual callers	49	17
Websites	32	16
National press	17	20
Training agencies for the unemployed	13	Question not asked

Generally, these findings offer no real surprises but several aspects are worthy of comment. An interesting finding was the high number of companies who still make use of job centres, with 70.8% of respondents still using this service. It is also unsurprising to still see relatively large numbers of employers using the local press. In terms of recruits’ personal aesthetics, employers can signal the type of labour required by using terms such as ‘smart young person’ in the advertisement or require

the enclosure of a photograph with applications. Jackson *et al.* (2002) in a review of 5000 jobs advertisements across a number of different occupations and sectors found that only 26% of organisations mentioned the need for educational requirements in their advertisements. Within personal services this figure was less than 10%. As with our earlier much less systematic review of job adverts (as reported in Warhurst *et al.*, 2000) Jackson *et al.* also found numerous instances of front line service jobs asking for attributes which referred less to what individuals could *do* than to what they were *like*, such as being ‘well-turned out’ or ‘well-spoken’, or having ‘good appearance’, ‘good manners’, ‘character’ or ‘presence’.

On that latter point, it is noteworthy here that there was a noticeable difference between the employers’ and employees’ response on the use of a photograph as part of the recruitment and selection process. Only 2.7% of the employers suggested that they used a photograph as part of the recruitment and selection process. This low figure may well be a recognition by employers of the advice from the Employment Service to desist from using photographs due to their potentially discriminatory nature. However, 23% of the employees’ sample noted that they have been asked to provide a photograph as part of the recruitment and selection process.

As was noted earlier, a number of employers in the retail and hospitality industries use more informal methods, not least because such methods are inexpensive. Beyond this cost factor, we would argue that things such as casual calling also allows for the filtering out of those who may not best embody the corporate image. The fact that many young people, such as students, may seek work by presenting themselves in person enables employers to screen for aesthetic aspects.

A further point to note from the findings is the low number of employers who use training agencies for the unemployed. Only 12.6% of the respondents used such agencies as a potential source of recruitment. Clearly, this finding is likely to be of concern to policy-makers who are working with the long-term unemployed and those seeking to access work through the intermediate labour market. Although the overall number of respondents using this service remained disturbingly low, it is also noteworthy that there was a disjuncture between the sub-sectors. Although only 10.9% of the retail companies and 5.7% of the cafes/bars/restaurants used the service, within the hotel sector the figure was 44.4%. In part, this may be explicable by the fact the hotels in the sample were generally larger organisations. Equally, the hotels are more likely to have a more departmentalised structure and consequently offer a

much more varied range of jobs, both front and back of house. This is a finding that is perhaps worthy of further research to assess in more detail the attitudes of retail and hospitality employers to those using intermediate labour market services, and particularly those associated with the long-term unemployed.

Selection methods

In service work the social composition of the producers is part of the product. Employers seek employees with personal characteristics likely to make them interact spontaneously and perform effectively. Thus as we suggested earlier sociability, self-presentation, friendliness, drive, honest/integrity, conscientiousness and adaptability are more important selection criteria than technical skills. To discern such characteristics and attributes most of the surveyed organisations relied on the so-called ‘classic trio’, of application forms (78.9%) and/or CVs (74.1%), interviews (89.1%) and references (59.9%). The interview remains popular with managers and applicants alike, as it is simple, quick and cheap - despite reliability and validity concerns. It also fulfils a social function, enabling recruits’ social, and we would argue, aesthetic aspects that are so integral to front line service work, to be assessed.

Over and above the ‘classic trio’ there was little evidence of employers seeking a more sophisticated approach to selection. Other aspects mentioned by employers and employees are outlined below:

Table 6: Other selection methods (% and rounded)

	Employers	Employees
Product knowledge tests	7	18
Role playing dealing with customers	6	22
Personality test	7	15

The disparity between the figures here may be explained by different perceptions of the selection process. For example, employers may well include issues about product knowledge testing actually within the interview process, likewise asking applicants about their responses to past situations, and so not count it as a separate aspect of selection.

What is clear is that throughout the recruitment and selection process employers are judging potential employees on the basis of customer focus, interpersonal skills and self-presentation skills.

Importance of image and appearance

As we argued earlier, it is increasingly recognised that control of employees’ attitudes and appearance are seen as legitimate managerial strategies for service companies in the name of customer care. Within these broader customer care strategies, the aesthetic content of labour, in the form of language, dress codes, shape and size of body, manner and style, is deliberately manufactured to appeal to customers. This strategy was evident in the findings. Asked to assess the centrality of appearance to the success of the business, 53% of the sample felt it was critical, 40% felt it was important, and 6.2% somewhat important. Thus, at least 93% of respondents attributed importance to the image of customer-facing staff. Only one respondent suggested that the appearance of customer-facing staff had no importance to business success. Detail can be added to this point by further considering aspects of self-presentation that employers considered important, as outlined in Table 7.

Table 7: Image and aesthetic labour proxies (% and rounded)

	Critical	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Age	5	12	35	48
Size		7	22	71
Height	1	3	16	80
Weight		6	25	70
Dress sense/style	7	42	34	17
Voice/accent	8	36	33	22
Physical looks	2	20	48	30

Clearly, some proxies were considered more important than others, with age, dress sense/style, voice/accent and physical looks all attributed significantly greater importance, than size⁵, height and weight. Eighty three per cent attached some importance to dress sense/style, 78% to voice/accent and 70% to physical looks. If aesthetic labour is conceptualised as a composite of a number of aspects of

⁵ Size here refers to body frame. For example, UK women’s clothes indicate this frame with sizes 8, 10, 12, etc.

corporeality, certain of these aspects are clearly more important to employers than others.

This is a question that might be problematic for employers to answer because of its ethical/discriminatory associations. It is instructive therefore to also turn the answers around. Few employers attached importance to employees' size, height and weight. But much fewer, only around one-fifth, attached no importance to dress sense/style and voice/accent. Less than a third attached no importance to physical looks and less than half attached no importance to age. In other words, these latter proxies are important for most employers.

Image and dress codes

When writers in the services marketing and management literature talk of the importance of 'servicescapes' (Bitner, 1992) or 'packaging the service provider' (Solomon, 1985) it is clear that organisations are increasingly taking an interest in further refining the corporate image through things such as uniforms and dress codes. As Income Data Services (2001: 3) note 'There is little mileage to be gained from introducing a smart new uniform if the general appearance of staff undermines the overall look'.

A recent survey by Industrial Relations Services (2000) of 79 organisations across a variety of sectors found that 60 of these organisations were operating a formal policy on uniforms and dress codes. The vast majority of these organisations, 82%, introduced these policies to maintain a corporate image. A question in the survey of Glasgow elicited a similar response, with 80% of organisations operating a uniform policy, primarily for the purposes of maintaining a corporate image. If companies are willing to spend money on uniforms to project a positive brand image to customers then they are equally keen to ensure that the overall 'look' is not undermined by other aspects of employees' appearance. Thus, 89.7% of our surveyed companies also operated a dress code for employees. Aspects of the dress code included:

- Rules for general tidiness 98.5%
- Clothing style 74%
- Jewellery 65.6%
- Make up and/or personal grooming 63.4%
- Hair style and length 45%

Appearance therefore matters to employers. Employers are concerned not only with recruiting the ‘right’ image, but also then further moulding this image through the use of uniform and dress codes. In this respect, it should also be noted that 30.8% of respondents do not allow visible tattoos in their customer facing staff. These findings would seem to chime with views previously expressed by key informants in the hospitality industry, in particular. For example, in 1996 Bob Gledhill, then the Deputy Editor of *Caterer and Hotelkeeper*, speculating on the employability of Job Seekers to be sent by the Benefits Agency commented: ‘And imagine some of the candidates who are going to be rolling up for interviews – tattooed ladies with rings hanging anywhere but on their fingers, a great army of the unwashed, the uncommitted and, as far as we are concerned, the unwanted.’ This is an industry that has notoriously bad labour shortages. Given that tattoos cannot be moulded, having tattoos, or having visible tattoos, might impede employability.

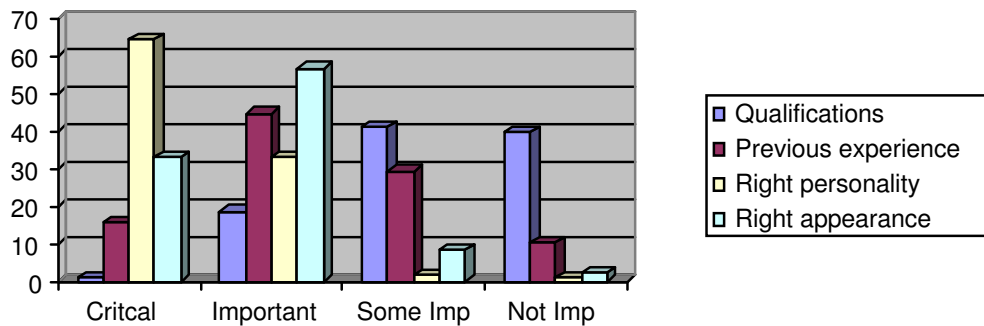
This practice may raise some ethical considerations in terms of the extent to which companies can legitimately involve themselves in policing individual’s appearance in the organisational setting. For example, there may be certain aspects of dress codes, which could conceivably infringe employees’ rights to freedom under the Human Rights Act 1998. Indeed, Javaid (2003) notes how employees in Job Centres have successfully challenged the government through the Employment Tribunal system over concerns of the introduction of a dress code that was felt to be intrusive, sexist and unacceptable to male employees. Pragmatically, though, it would seem crucial for policy-makers to recognise the reality of dress codes in outlining dress and grooming standards within many companies. There have been some moves towards addressing this situation. In 2000 changes to the New Deal introduced a strict dress code for jobs seekers, with special funds being made available to help applicants buy smart clothes to impress potential employers (Hetherington, 2000).

Of course, as we have previously recognised, aesthetic skills are not the only skill employers are seeking and within the New Deal revamp, much attention was also directed towards issues such as improving literacy and numeracy. However, as the earlier figures from the likes of the HtF suggest, it is likely to be the self-presentation skills that will be of greater importance to potential job seekers, particularly if potential employing companies do operate a dress code.

What are employers looking for? Attributes and capacities for customer facing staff

The following figures reiterate much of the previous discussion that points strongly to employers, in the first instance, being more concerned with aspects such as sound attitudes and the right appearance in their customer facing staff.

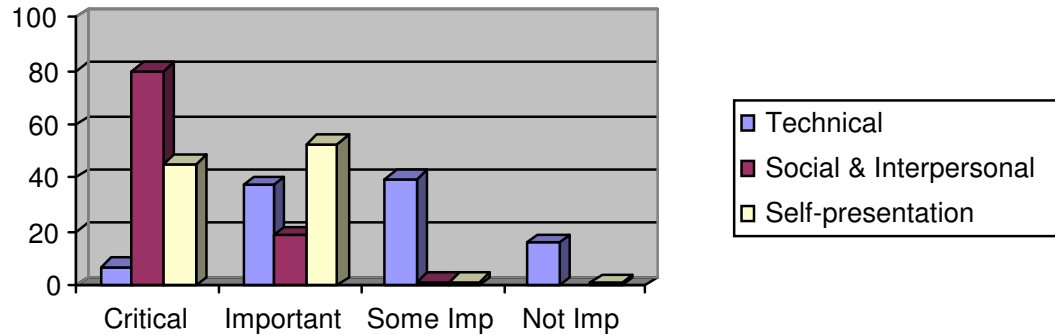
Figure 1: The attributes and capacities employers are seeking at the point of entry to employment (recruitment and selection)



On the question of what employers are looking for in front line or customer facing staff 64.6% suggested that the right personality was critical, with the remainder of respondents suggesting this aspect was important. Equally, 32.9% of the employers surveyed felt that the right appearance was critical and 56.8% as important, only 2.1% of respondents felt it was not important. These figures can be compared to qualifications, with only one respondent seeing qualifications as critical, 18.7% of employers felt it was important and 39.6% suggested it was not important at all for selecting their customer facing staff. These findings are consistent with other work, such as Jackson *et al.*, which suggests that the right personality and right appearance are clearly accorded greater worth by employers in the recruitment and selection of front line staff compared to qualifications.

Employer demand: skills

Figure 2: The skills that are important in customer facing staff

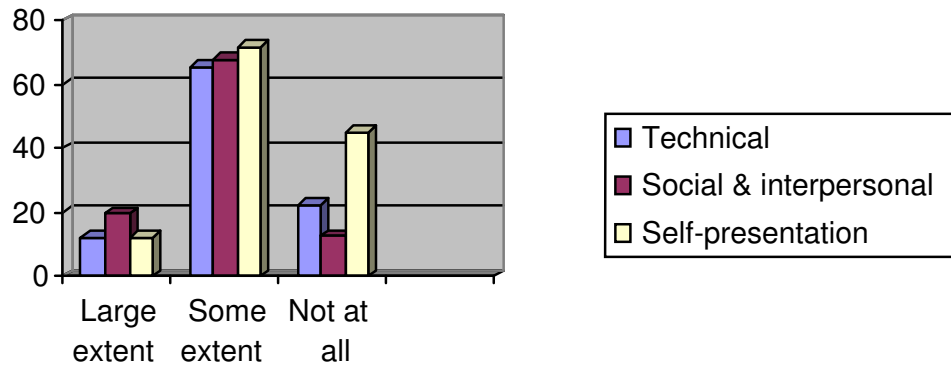


In Figure 2 it is clear that employers place a far greater emphasis on ‘softer’ skills for customer facing staff. Ninety nine per cent of respondents felt that social and interpersonal skills were felt to be of at least significant importance, and 98% felt likewise about self-presentation skills. Conversely only 48% of employers felt that technical skills were important in their customer facing skills, with 39.6% suggesting it was somewhat important and 16% suggesting they were not important at all. The skills that matter to employers in customer facing staff are therefore soft, and for both aspects – social and self-presentation, not technical.

Skills shortages

On the different question of the extent to which *applicants* for customer facing positions lacked certain skills, the findings confirmed those of Futureskills Scotland that point to the skills being most lacking as being in areas such as customer handling and other soft aspects.

Figure 3: The skills lacking in applicants for customer facing positions



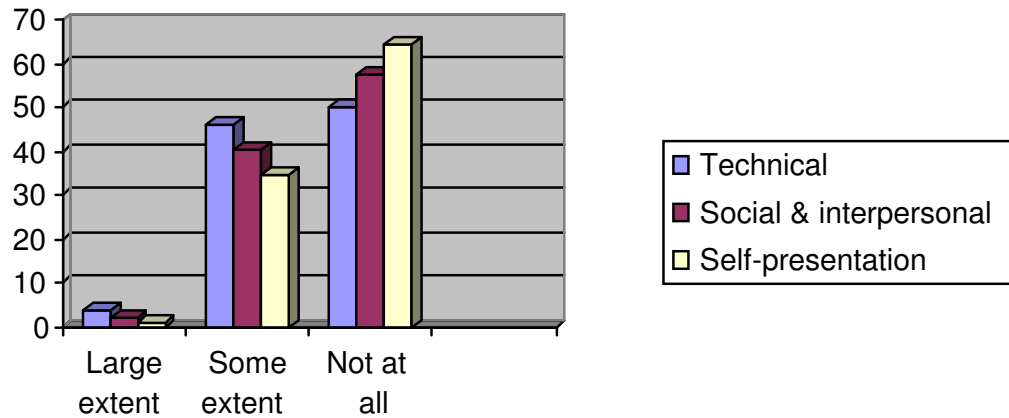
As Figure 3 outlines, for technical skills 12.2% of the respondents suggested that applicants lacked such skills to a large extent, with 65.5% to some extent and 22.3% not at all. It should be appreciated that in interactive service work what constitutes these technical skills can be quite limited. For many employers it relates to employees' competent computerised till operation.

With regard to social and interpersonal skills 19.6% of the respondents noted that applicants lacked these skills to a large extent, 67.8% to some extent and only 12.6% not at all. Lastly, at the point of entry, for self-presentation skills 12% suggested that applicants lacked these skills to a large extent, 71.8% to some extent and only 16.2% not at all.

Skills gaps

The figures for those lacking such skills at the point of entry can be placed alongside the extent to which these skills were lacking in existing customer facing staff, as outlined in Figure 4 overleaf.

Figure 4: The skills lacking in existing customer facing staff



For technical skills, only 3.6% of the respondents felt that present staff lacked technical skills to a large extent, 46.4% to some extent and 50% not at all. For social and interpersonal skills, 2.1% felt that this was true to a large extent, 40.4% felt that existing staff lacked such skills to some extent, with 57.4% suggesting not at all. Lastly, on the question of self-presentation, 7% felt that this was true to a large extent, 34.8% felt that current staff lacked these skills to some extent, with 64.5% not lacking such skills. These figures are similar to Futureskills Scotland findings of skills deficiencies in existing employees in the areas of soft skills in particular. Equally though it is clear that a number of existing employees do have such skills and this finding is arguably explained by the fact that those lacking social and interpersonal and self-presentation skills are more likely to be filtered out in the recruitment and selection process. Our contention would therefore be that those with social and aesthetic skills are at a distinct advantage in the recruitment and selection process, compared to someone who lacks such skills. A point with obvious policy implications for those working with the unemployed.

Training

To address any skills gaps in existing employees, employers provide training, though it is clear again that such training is more likely to be more orientated to addressing deficiencies in hard as opposed to soft skills.

Figure 5. The training provided for customer facing staff

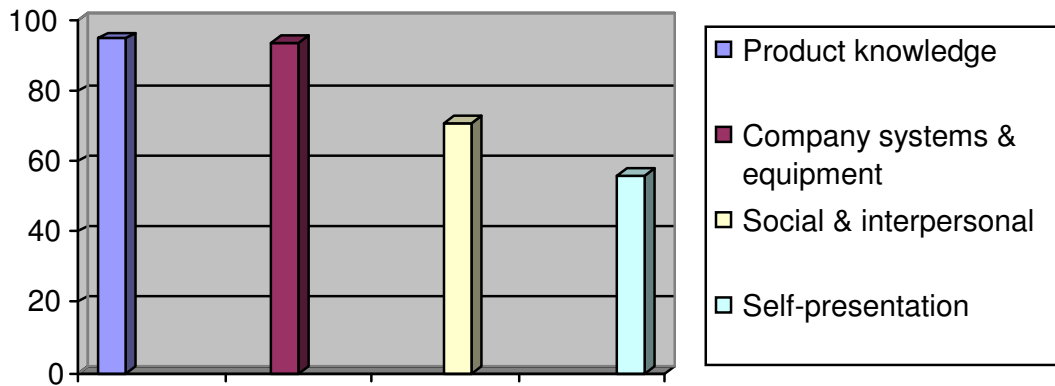


Figure 5 demonstrates that much of the training that occurs within retail and hospitality companies focuses on hard technical aspects, such as product knowledge and company equipment (computerised tills for example again), with a lesser, though still significant, emphasis on social and interpersonal and self-presentation skills. The latter is again likely to be an outcome of existing employees having such ‘skills’ when they enter employment with the company and thus be, as it was suggested earlier, ‘oven ready’.

Nonetheless, there are some employers who continue to offer further training for employees in aspects of self-presentation. The findings demonstrate that employers do continue to ‘mould’ employees through training in areas such as grooming and deportment (and see Nickson *et al.*, 2001: 181-2). Of the 56% of employers who do offer training on self-presentation, the most popular methods are outlined in Table 8.

Table 8: Training in aspects of self-presentation

Body language	✓
Dress sense and style	✓
Personal grooming	✓
Voice/accent coaching	✗

Almost 77% of employers who provide training in self-presentation offered this training in body language, largely with the intent of portraying the correct and welcoming ‘image’ to initially attract potential customers and then training in how

best to approach customers by ‘reading’ their body language and responding accordingly. On the question of dress sense and style, 61% offered such training and 34% in the area of personal grooming.⁶ These findings should clearly be taken in conjunction with the earlier discussion about image and dress codes. It is clear that simply having aesthetic skills at the point of entry is not always enough and employers wish to go further in refining their employees’ image in order to best embody the corporate image.

In summary, what the findings demonstrate is that it is clear that aspects of self-presentation, along with other soft skills, are an integral part of the ‘product’ offered by hospitality and retail organisations. These aspects of self-presentation can be seen in a number of ways. For example, throughout the recruitment and selection process employers are judging potential employees on the basis of customer focus, their interpersonal or social skills, and aesthetic or self-presentation skills. Equally, companies continue to ‘mould’ their employees’ once they are in the organisation through detailed requirements articulated in appearance and dress code regulations and by training in aspects of self-presentation. With this recognition of the importance of aesthetic and self-presentation skills there is a need for a considered policy response and this is outlined in the final section of the paper.

Policy implications

This concluding section considers some of the policy implications of the findings from the study and the broader discussion of skills, training and aesthetic labour. Underpinning these policy implications are three linked issues:

- The need to contribute to a better match between employers’ demand and the labour supply in Glasgow, particularly for the unemployed.
- The need to help develop training provision that is sensitive to the skill needs of employers.
- The possibility of integrating ‘aesthetic’ or self-presentation skills into existing VET policy.

⁶ Although a small number of employers offered voice/accent coaching, 12%, a much higher number of employers, 83%, did offer training in what to say during the service encounter. This scripting, as we recognised earlier, is common in many service organisations as they aim to offer a consistent approach to customers.

The range of skills

The key point to reiterate is that there is a range of skills that are demanded by employers, encompassing the technical, social and aesthetic. As we have previously argued the first two have been subject to scrutiny and policy interventions, the latter though continues to remain under-appreciated by policy-makers.

This situation needs to be rectified given the findings of the study. Data from organisations such as the HtF suggests that there is a need for both academics and policy-makers to reconsider what denotes a ‘skill’ in the modern economy and what skills employers need. At the very least there is a need to better appreciate what constitutes soft skills. Specifically, our survey points to soft skills rolling up the social or interpersonal *and* aesthetic or self-presentational. It also needs to be noted that aesthetic skills do not necessarily equate with only ‘looking good’, it can also be about looking *right* in terms of the company’s image. As the HtF representative interviewed in Gillen’s (2003: 31) study on aesthetic labour stated, ‘...people aren’t looking for the same things in the appearance of their staff, but they are looking for *something*’. To this end, training related to the importance of appearance generally rather than specific looks is more appropriate; that is training in self-presentation.

The survey reported here focused on ‘front of house’ employees in interactive service work and employment who have face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact with customers. For these employees appearance-centred skills are clearly important. But it must be noted that again a range of skill needs exist even within these industries. For those who work in the ‘backroom’ technical skills, such as culinary skills and book-keeping, are probably more important.

Thus, there are different skills needs across the economy and even within industries. For this reason, the range of VET has to be varied and not overly concentrated on one particular skill. VET providers should not be encouraged to simply ‘cherry pick’ the latest perceived skills demand from employers. Instead, VET provision should be balanced and co-ordinated to meet the range of skill needs. Bob Leitch, Director of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, has made the point that the information based on the labour market created by Futureskills Scotland is only a first step. Taking this point to the wider UK context we would argue that what is now needed is for policy-makers to work out the UK’s skill needs for the next 10-20 years and plan VET and wider educational provision accordingly. Training in interpersonal and social skills is already part of the VET agenda. Aesthetic or self-presentation

skills are not. The under-appreciation of aesthetic and self-presentation skills means that it has tended to be neglected. We would suggest this neglect needs to be addressed. Recent developments in the Wise Group point to how these may be done and aesthetic skills training should become an integral part of training for the long-term unemployed, or those accessing the labour market for the first time from school. (See Nickson *et al.*, 2003 for further discussion of the Wise Group initiative).

As Jeffes (1998) points out, wearing certain clothes, using certain words and even walking with better posture significantly enhances employability. We would argue therefore that to meet employers' demands in the current jobs market, VET provision should include self-presentation skills. These skills, we would suggest, are a key element of all interactive service work and providing young people and the long term employed with such skills enables these individuals to get in and get on in all employment.

Integration into the evidence base

Part of the reason for the under-development of aesthetic and self-presentation skills has been the lack of substantive evidence on the extent and importance of these skills to employers. We would argue there is a need to better integrate the issue of aesthetic and self-presentation skills into the existing evidence base, upon which labour market and VET decisions are made.

As we noted earlier, the Futureskills Scotland Scottish employers' skills survey identified that where skills shortages and gaps exist, these most often refer to soft skills, for example communication, teamworking and customer handling skills. It also highlighted skills deficiencies to be most common in lower skilled jobs. Equally, though, as we also recognised earlier in the report, Futureskills Scotland do not currently assess aesthetic or self-presentation skills because questions relating to these skills are not included in the questionnaire design. This deficiency is one currently common to labour market questionnaires both in Scotland and the UK generally and goes some way to explaining why recruitment agencies express surprise that academics and policy-makers have been slow to recognise these skill needs amongst employers. We would suggest the issues highlighted by this paper need to be taken seriously in future analysis of the labour market and we would argue that questions concerned with aesthetic and self-presentation skills should be included in future labour market surveys conducted by Futureskills Scotland, and other publicly-funded,

UK surveys, especially, though not only, those examining service work and employment.

Policy integration

Currently, the learning market is not effective in the area of self-presentation skills. A key reason for this deficiency, as we noted earlier, is that the lack of appreciation by policy-makers of the importance to employers in the service sector of aesthetic skills. Taking the example of Scotland, there may be a number of reasons for this neglect within the policy-making community, as Gillen (2003) notes:

- lack of awareness of the demand for aesthetic skills;
- uncertainty about how to incorporate them into training agendas; and
- concerns about the ethics of ‘moulding’ employees’ appearance.

In addressing Gillen’s first point – the lack of awareness – this study has clearly demonstrated that these skills are needed by employers not just in the style niche but also in non-style services. The distinction of Pettinger (2002) is useful here. In her study of style and non-style female clothing retailers she identifies overt aesthetic labour in the first and labour that is increasingly becoming aestheticised in the latter. Whilst such skills are important for employers, there are apparently lacking in employees. Generally, it is important to recognise:

- These skills are important levers to all employment, regardless of industry or occupation, helping individuals through recruitment and selection and in sustaining employment.
- Enhancing employability through self-presentation skills is applicable to both the style-driven service niche and also non-style service employers.

The conclusion of this study is that aesthetic or self-presentation skills are needed by both employers and employees in both work and employment generally and in Glasgow specifically. According to employers, state-funded training for the unemployed does not currently address the importance of appearance for employers. Gillen’s (2003) work sought to address this issue and she reports the views of a range

of policy-makers, representatives from industry bodies and significant others. For example, as a representative from the HtF stated:

Training providers just haven't cottoned on that this is what employers in the sector are looking for...we try to get them to be a bit more forward-thinking and liaise more with employers, but there's a definite mismatch between what we hear employers saying they need from training and what the providers are actually offering. (cited in Gillen, 2003: 32)

Gillen's third point relates to the ethics of 'moulding' employees appearance. We recognise that in advocating the need to train such skills there may also be a need to encourage a change in mind set on both the part of policy-makers and trainers and the unemployed themselves. For policy-makers and trainers there may well be ethical considerations relating to the extent to which they should be seeking to infringe on people's lifestyle choices. We largely reject these concerns and would argue that concerns about 'social engineering' have tended to reflect middle class mores. In offering training to improve aesthetic and self-presentation skills we are not advocating what we have previously termed 'the Eliza Doolittle syndrome' (Warhurst and Nickson, 2001); that is the complete re-invention of an individual. Rather, we are arguing for sensible and pragmatic responses to a labour market in areas such as hospitality and retail that clearly demands the ability of employees to consider their image and self-presentation. This is most developed in the 'style labour market' but as our evidence shows is equally true for more prosaic organisations operating in the high street. For the unemployed themselves there is a need to recognise the notion of 'masks for tasks' and that to access jobs in retail and hospitality they have to consider how they present themselves to potential employers. Evidence from the Wise Group initiative on aesthetic skills training points to the long-term unemployed welcoming this training. Generally, the participants on the course welcomed the chance to consider these issues and as one respondent suggested after completing the course: 'I realise that personal appearance is important. I didn't bother before now but now at work I do. I mean I still wear my biker jacket and that but not while at work. I need to look right and my voice is important. I think I have developed an awareness of these things in myself and that they are important in work' (cited in Nickson *et al.*, 2003: 199). Similarly, several of Gillen's (2003: 33-34) respondents suggest that it would be *unethical* not to train the unemployed in these skills. In not doing so, one argued: 'we

[will] have done these people a disservice, since they have not been given the training required to give them the best chance of finding work'. And by not doing so, he continued, 'we are not ambitious enough for the unemployed'.

If there is a need for aesthetic or self-presentation skills training and acceptance that training provision should be made, incorporation into VET then follows. This next step relates to Gillen's second point. Current VET provision is deficient in respect to the provision of these skills but in order to enhance individual employability provision of these skills must be made. There are a number of mechanisms for integrating aesthetic or self-presentation skills into education and training. From the evidence from the study reported here, intervention would be best prior to entry to employment. In other words, to ensure that individuals have the right self-presentation skills during the processes of recruitment and selection because this is the point at which employers most usually demand and assess these skills – that is, in applicants rather than existing employees. Whether or not aesthetic or self-presentation skills training should be stand-alone or incorporated into broader skills training remains an issue for debate.

Further issues for consideration

Focusing on retail and hospitality, this study has provided the evidence needed to demonstrate the importance of aesthetic or self-presentation skills to employers in the Glasgow service sector. This last section of the paper has also argued that recognition of the need for these skills needs now to be incorporated into VET across the UK. Such incorporation raises a number of issues specific to these skills and current VET policy generally.

Firstly, policy-makers are concerned that the style-driven labour market is transient. It is true that business is dynamic and that companies continually seek new ways of securing competitive advantage so that change is frequent. However, there are two points worth bearing in mind. Whilst call centre jobs can be moved 'off-shore' from, for example, Glasgow to India, for example, through technology, eating, shopping and sleeping cannot. Some services are location-dependent: they have to be consumed at the point of production. Retail and hospitality are two such industries. A hotel bed has to be used where it is made, for example. A hotel bed cannot be made up in India for tourists in Glasgow. Moreover, the promotion of Glasgow as a 'style capital' is a strategy that is to continue. The evidence from the research reported here

indicates that the demand for appearance centred skills exists very strongly beyond style-driven niche into more mainstream retail and hospitality. With 40,000 new jobs projected in retailing, hotels and restaurants to 2006 (Futureskills Scotland, 2002a), significant demand for these skills will not diminish in the foreseeable future. Again, here, we would also suggest that these issues are likely to be true to other British cities, which are seeking to re-invent themselves as service centres (Westwood and Nathan, 2003).

Secondly, there is the issue of whether integrating self-presentation skills into VET provision is feasible and, indeed, whether aiming for a system of skills accreditation is desirable. In that sense, we do recognise here the very real debate as to whether such training is creditable. Aesthetic skills, as with other soft skills, are difficult to quantify. How is 'looking good' or 'sounding right' to be measured and assessed for example? Equally, would employers necessarily pay much attention to a qualification in self-presentation anyway? This point may be particularly true for employers in the more overt style labour market, where their judgements may well be about whether any potential individual employee fits into the visual style that they are aiming to create. In this instance even any putative qualification in 'aesthetic skills' may not be helpful for individuals seeking work, if they do not have the right style for the employer. However, given that employers' and employees' need for self-presentation skills will not be transient, a full evaluation should be undertaken of how training for these skills can be progressed and whether it makes sense to go down a route towards accreditation. In theory, this may be possible, for example one of Gillen's respondents stated: 'I don't see why the qualification couldn't be changed in theory. I mean I think that any problems with the content could be overcome, as long as we were convinced of the need to do it. I suppose what I'm saying is that if it was necessary then we would just have to find a way of doing it' (cited in Gillen, 2003: 26). Clearly, though, this point needs debating and there are no easy answers on the question of accreditation.

Such considerations raise a third issue about the balance of training provision between the state and employers. It is widely noted that employers in the UK often complain about skills deficiencies, yet they provide too little and too weak training for employees. For employers, skills are not a high priority. Sectoral organisation, product strategy and job design all take precedence. In particular, tourism, which encompasses retail and hospitality, has higher than average skills deficits. However,

employers in tourism are markedly less likely than in other industries to fund or provide adequate training. They are also less likely to participate in publicly funded training programmes. Tourism employers are more likely to seek to recruit employees with the existing necessary skills rather than develop these skills through firm-directed training, a low skills equilibrium is then reached in which employers do not train for fear of poaching by other firms. As a consequence, it is assumed that the state should step in to make good this 'market failure'. Employers are increasingly demanding that the state ensures that school, college and university leavers are 'job ready' having already received soft skills training. The government providing this training prior to employment shifts responsibility and costs onto the state. A self-fulfilling prophecy then emerges in which employers do not train precisely because the state does so. As Keep (2003: 10) argues: '...the more that a market failure argument is deployed by government, the more likely it is that the market will fail, as employers realise that by not doing something...the state will then be forced to step in and make good the shortfall'.

These points are not insignificant. They should provide the starting point for further discussion. This study has demonstrated both the importance and extent of aesthetic or self-presentation skills in the Glasgow retail and hospitality industries, a picture we would argue is seen elsewhere in the UK. In terms of skills, employers know what they need, policy-makers have to become aware of these needs and factor them into policy formation. The first step in this development is better labour market information about employer needs. This paper and the survey reported in it provide that information.

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