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Embedding sustainability in the practice of trainee entrants to the Hairdressing industry

Abstract

There is currently little consideration of the environmental impact of practices within the hair and beauty sector. However, Hairdressers have the ability to build sustainable practises into the commercial operation of salons and to introduce sustainable practise to their clients.

In this project, awareness of sustainable practise has been built into the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities for Hairdressing tutors provided by UK awarding organisations. The project was conducted by Southampton University and funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ERSC) and Vocational Training Charitable Trust (VTCT).

CPD workshops were provided to Hairdressing tutors to equip them with the knowledge and skills to embed sustainability into the delivery of the Hairdressing curriculum. Tutors participating in workshops were provided with a survey to assess the attitudes, awareness and behaviour of Hairdressing trainees. The survey provided tutors with a tool to raise their trainees' awareness of sustainable Hairdressing practices, e.g. reducing water use, turning off appliances and reducing colour waste.

481 learners from 40 colleges responded to the survey. The results showed that in the process of completing the survey, the trainees developed their intention to employ specific sustainable practises within their Hairdressing and were more likely to state an intention to employ these practises.

***Keywords:** sustainable, environmental, green, hairdressing, behaviour, CPD, training, questionnaire, VTCT, Southampton University*

1 Introduction

VTCT is an awarding organisation which has been developing and awarding qualifications for entry to the hair and beauty sector since 1962 and is the market leader for the provision of qualifications in this sector in the UK. VTCT is a charity committed to improving the skills and performance of entrants to these professions both in the UK and internationally. In developing the next generation of qualifications, VTCT has been mindful of the sustainability challenge facing the world in terms of the consumption of its resources, generation of wastes and global warming. VTCT feels a corporate responsibility to ensure that its qualifications not only include awareness of 'green' issues within the syllabuses, which VTCT develops, but that this results in real change in the practice of graduates from its qualifications.

Southampton University has published a number of papers on engaging Hairdressers in pro-environmental behaviours and on having the capacity to influence pro-environmental behav-

iours in their clients (Baden & Prasad 2013 & 2014). Southampton University wanted to disseminate its findings and embed pro-environmental behaviours in the practice of Hairdressers.

The two organisations thus have common ground in being committed to fostering environmentally sustainable practise in Hairdressing and partnered for the project. VTCT gave a match-funding grant to the University as to enable it to access further funds from the Economic and Social Research Council (ERSC) to disseminate the lessons learned within the research.

The aim of the project was to enable College tutors teaching Hairdressing to new students/trainees preparing to enter the industry to develop the knowledge and skills to embed sustainability into the delivery of the Hairdressing curriculum and to develop environmentally sustainable approaches within the practise of their trainees, including encouraging their trainees to recommend environmentally sustainable practises to their clients for the after-care of their hair at home.

This was initially done by experts on sustainable approaches from Southampton University, providing inputs at teacher Continuing Professional Development (CPD) workshops for Hairdressing tutors to equip them with the tools to raise their trainees' awareness of sustainable Hairdressing practises, e.g. reducing water use, turning off appliances and reducing colour waste. Within the workshops, participating tutors were provided with a survey to assess the attitudes, awareness and behaviour of Hairdressing trainees. The survey also served to raise the awareness of trainees about these issues and were thus effectively learning materials as well as evaluating the awareness of trainees.

2 Environmental sustainability in the Hairdressing Industry

Meeting the wants and needs of ever-increasing populations aspiring to resource-consuming lifestyles, in a sustainable way, that maintains the environment of future populations is a major challenge of our time. It is generally accepted that to meet this challenge people and businesses need to adopt sustainable pro-environmental behaviours.

Traditional approaches to this issue focus on a top-down process, setting targets, legal sanctions and green taxes. Such approaches often focus on big business, extractive manufacturing and transport industries. However 99.9% of enterprises in the UK are Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) (Department of Business Innovation and Skills 2014) and SMEs are notoriously harder to engage in environmental policies and behaviour (Revell & Blackburn 2007). The Hairdressing industry in the UK is typical in that it is primarily composed of small high street salons employing 1-5 people.

Individuals and businesses are often resistant to amending their day to day behaviour and adopt environmentally sustainable practises. Consequently top-down provision of environmental information is unlikely to create large scale behavioural change and more targeted

behavioural interventions are needed to move toward pro-environmental behaviours becoming the norm (Barr et al 2011; Brook Lyndhurst 2009). TVET programmes that prepare new entrants for the workplace are ideally suited to the promotion of sustainable practises in the workplace (UNEVOC 2006).

This research uses the adoption of pro-environmental behaviours in the Hairdressing industry as an example. Hairdressing can have negative environmental impacts in terms of its consumption of electricity and water, and use of chemicals.

Hairdressing involves a particularly high consumption of water and generates 'grey water', waste water that is contaminated with detergents and hair dye products. These contaminants may have detrimental impacts on the environment e.g. ammonia in water courses may cause eutrophication, reductions in oxygen levels due to surface algal growth. The range of chemicals used within hair dyes is considerable and a proportion pose potential carcinogenic and mutagenic risks (de Sanjose et al. 2006).

In addition, the consumption of palm oil in shampoos and conditioners contributes to the demand for palm oil and consequent deforestation for palm oil production, resulting in a loss of biodiverse forest.

Hairdressing also consumes considerable fuel in water heating, reducing the quantity of shampoo and conditioner used, the number of rinses and the temperature of the water used not only reduces the use/release of chemicals and waste water but also reduces the consumption of fuel.

Hairdressers can reduce the environmental impact of their industry by adopting relatively minor changes in their Hairdressing practise. Examples include:

- a) Reducing chemical use
 - Using less shampoo
 - Reducing waste hair dye, e.g. measuring the correct amount of colour
- b) Saving water
 - Shampooing once rather than twice
 - Turning tap off between washes
- c) Saving electricity
 - Washing hair in slightly cooler water
 - Reducing blow drying and blow drying efficiently
 - Turning off appliances e.g. turning off straighteners and curling tongs immediately after use

As yet there is little quantitative research to illustrate the reduction in environmental impact of these practises but they would seem self-evident in terms of reducing consumption and waste.

Hairdressers as champions for pro-environmental behaviours

Hairdressers have the capacity to change their own impact on the environment but also to influence the behaviour of clients, through the after-care advice that they impart (Baden & Prasad 2014).

A key competency of Hairdressers is the capacity to provide after-care advice to clients, on how to look after their hair. In the UK this is built into the National Occupational Standards and the training of entrants to the Hairdressing industry. Trainees are taught that they should follow the 3Rs in completing the service.

Recommend – advise clients on how to look after their hair and what products they might try

Retail – Sell the client hair products

Repeat – Persuade the client to book their next visit to the salon before leaving.

Of course this mantra is designed to increase the commercial success of the Hairdresser but recommending haircare to the client provides an ideal opportunity to promote pro-environmental behaviours to members of the public.

Targeting students/trainees entering the Hairdressing Industry

The adoption of these behaviours can be sold to the Hairdressing industry in terms of benefits

- for the environment and thus sustainability
- to the salon business, saving money and time
- to the client in terms of the condition of their hair

Once engaged and informed about sustainable practise Hairdressers expressed a willingness to address these in their salons and to engage clients in conversations relating to sustainability (Baden & Prasad 2013).

However, the issue was the difficulty in reaching Hairdressers to educate them on sustainability. The Hairdressing industry is predominately composed of SMEs, and is fragmented and hard to engage.

The approach decided upon in this project was thus to focus on the training of new entrants to the industry so that they took pro-environmental attitudes and practises with them into the Hairdressing industry.

3 The methodology adopted

VTCT, as the qualification awarding organisation, is well placed to take this forward by:

a) Embedding the pro-environmental behaviours into qualifications

VTCT engaged with UK Sector Skills Body for Hairdressing to update National Occupational Standards (NOS) and develop qualifications to build environmentally sustainable practise into

the curriculum for the initial training of Hairdressers. By incorporating environmentally sustainable practise into the qualification it is recognised and built into the knowledge and practical skills assessed for achievement of qualifications used for entry to the Hairdressing profession.

b) Training Hairdressing tutors to enable them to deliver the curriculum

VTCT has an extensive network of Hairdressing teachers in colleges and training providers which use its qualifications for the delivery of accredited training of students intending to enter the Hairdressing industry. VTCT provides a programme of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) events for tutors from its partner colleges and training centres to update them on changes to qualification standards and enable them to update their skills.

Southampton University provided expert presentations for Hairdressing tutors at a number of these Continuing Professional Development (CPD) events to raise awareness of practises that should be adopted to reduce the environmental impact of the Hairdressing industry.

c) Providing materials for tutors to use with students

At the CPD sessions Tutors were provided with a questionnaire in the form of an online survey designed by Southampton University for use with their Hairdressing students/trainees. Candidates were asked to grade likelihood of the pro-environmental behaviour in their own practise on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very likely' and 5 is 'very unlikely'.¹ The questionnaire had two functions.

Function 1: To educate, providing information and raising awareness about sustainable practise within Hairdressing

The early questions within the survey were designed to encourage learners to consider environmentally sustainable Hairdressing practises by asking them to assess their own attitudes to these practises. For example:

'How aware are you currently of the following benefits to salons and the environment if you turn the tap off between shampooing and conditioning? (1 'very aware' – 5 'not aware at all').

- It reduces water use which can reduce the risk of water shortages.
- It can create financial benefits to the salon as a result of lower energy bills as less water needs to be heated.
- It can create cost savings on water bills.
- It reduces unnecessary noise leading to a more peaceful atmosphere.

The questions encourage learners to engage with the pro-environmental behaviours relating them to their own practise and thus building their cognitive relationship with the practise.

¹ A copy of the questionnaire can be obtained by e mailing nicrobinson@vtct.org.uk

Function 2: To assess how the attitudes of the learner to pro-environmental behaviours have changed as a result of completing the questionnaire, measuring the impact of the survey as an educational tool.

The final questions in the questionnaire asked the students about their future intentions to assess whether they were likely to implement more environmentally sustainable practises within their own Hairdressing and advise clients to adopt more sustainable practises in their hair care. For example:

‘Future intentions: How likely are you to turn the tap off between shampooing and conditioning a client’s hair? (1 ‘very likely’ – 5 ‘very unlikely’)’.

By comparing these latter responses with responses to similar questions at the beginning of the questionnaire one can assess whether it had had any impact as a learning activity. There were 481 responses to the questionnaire from Hairdressing students from 40 colleges across the UK producing the results below.

Table 1: Results on Pro-environmental Behaviour of Hairdressing Students

Pro-environmental behaviour	Score when starting the questionnaire		Score on completing the questionnaire		Significance
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
To turn off the tap between shampooing and conditioning hair	1.71	1.07	1.48	0.91	F(1,480)=25.65 p<0.001
To switch off heated appliances when finished using them	1.52	.83	1.38	0.77	F(1,4802)=12.32 p<0.1001
To minimise colour waste	1.83	1.84	1.63	0.88	F(1,480)=19.18 p<0.001

It can be quite clearly seen in the results above that the respondents were significantly more likely to report their intention to turn off taps between shampooing and conditioning hair, turn off appliances after use and to reduce colour waste after completing the questionnaire than they were at the introduction of each topic. The activity of completing the questionnaire has impacted on the students’ intention to employ sustainable approaches within their own Hairdressing practice. Of course this does not, in itself, mean that the student will actually implement the pro-environmental behaviour in their own practise.

4 Conclusions

The study shows that learning activities can have at least a short-term influence on the intentions of students to adopt sustainable practises within their Hairdressing. Whether this intention will persist and be translated into behavioural change, in which they will implement sustainable practises in their Hairdressing when they enter the industry, is beyond the limitations of this particular study. This would need to be investigated through a more longitudinal study, measuring the actual behaviour in a real work environment once the trainees became practising Hairdressers and whether this was transferred to their clients.

Tutors participating in the project demonstrated a willingness to build environmental sustainability into their delivery but indicated that in addition to CPD sessions they needed materials to support teaching and learning. Southampton University and VTCT are thus continuing to collaborate in the development and dissemination of teaching and learning materials to build sustainable practice into curriculum. In particular we are jointly providing, PowerPoint presentations, student quizzes and video clips. Resources can be accessed from the following link: <http://ecohairandbeauty.com/resources/>

The study also demonstrated the effectiveness of questionnaires and tools for teaching and learning. Rather than simply presenting information in a didactic format they encourage the student to think about the information and their position in relation to it. Perhaps, this same approach could be applied to all vocational training gradually changing the culture of the workplace in terms of sustainable practice.

In conclusion, the study has resulted in a model for injecting pro-environmental behaviours into the practise of an industry by focussing on the initial training of entrants to the industry. For this to be successful the project found that it was necessary to:

1. Embed the pro-environmental behaviours into the trainees curriculum
2. Train the trainers to enable delivery of the curriculum for environmentally sustainable practice
3. Develop materials to support the teaching and learning of the curriculum for environmentally sustainable practise

The three elements form a model, shown in Figure 1 below, which can and perhaps should be applied more widely to vocational training to change the behaviour of individual entrants to an industry and embed sustainable practice for the preservation of our environment into every day behaviour in the workplace.

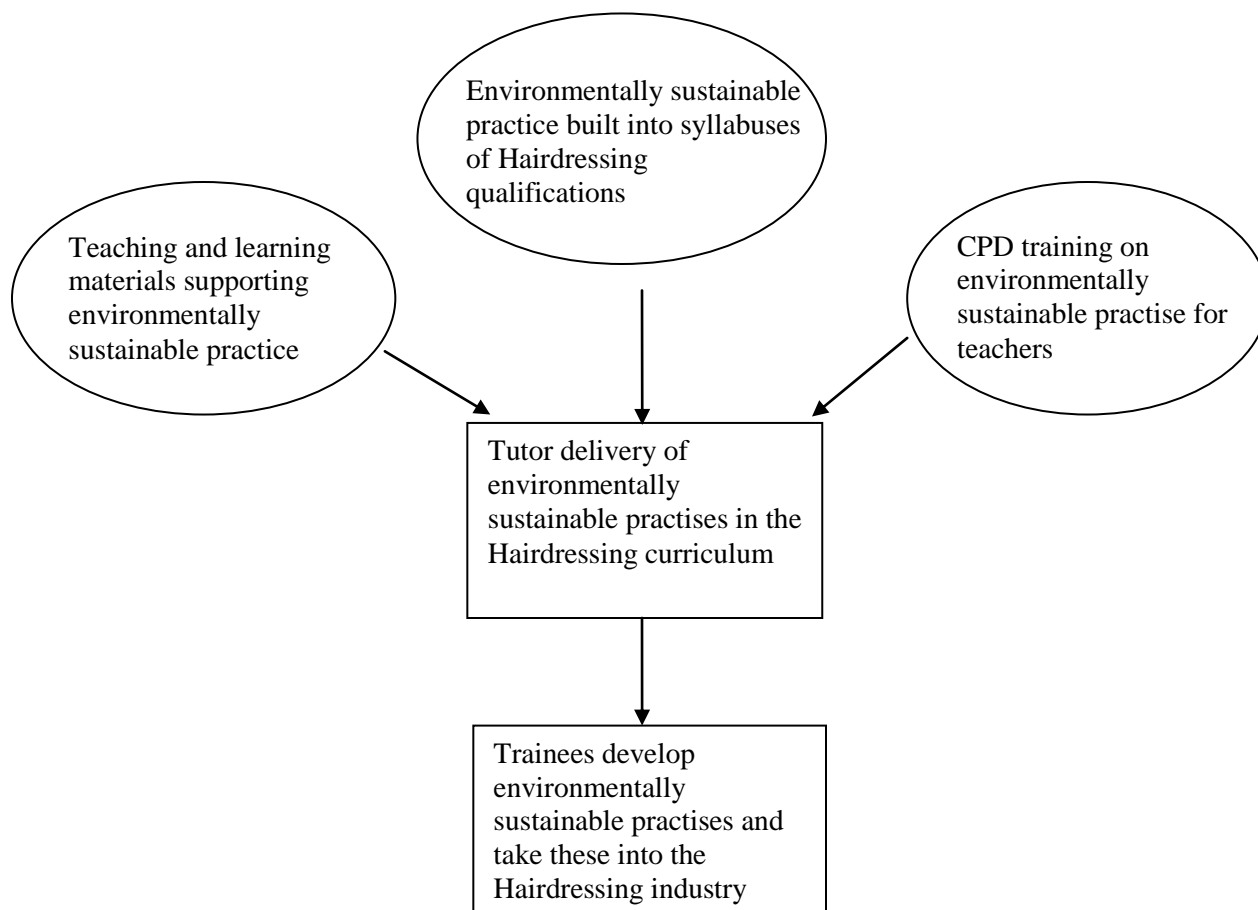


Figure 1: Model for building environmentally sustainable practises into the Hairdressing industry

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