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MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY

Institute for Work Based Learning

MASTER IN PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

**Project Title: The Teaching Methods in
Aesthetics in Relation to the Labour
Market Needs in Cyprus.**

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Module: DPS 4060

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Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
List of Tables.....	3
List of figures.....	3
Acknowledgments.....	4
Summary.....	5
1) Introduction	
• Background Investigation.....	7
2) Review and Statement of the Problem	
• Definition of the terms Skill, Competence and Practice.....	11
• Skills and Competencies that Recruiters look for in Graduates.....	11
• Why Practical Experience is Important.....	15
• The current state of the Labour Market.....	17
• Objectives of the Study.....	21
• Importance of the Project.....	22
3) Research Approach and Methodology	
• Research Level and Approach.....	24
• DataAnalysis.....	28
• Ethical Considerations.....	30
4) Project Activity	
• Data Administration and Data collection	31
• Gathering Data-Procedure Followed	33
• Limitations of the Study.....	36
5) Results –Analysis	
• Introduction	39
• Definitions	39
• Focus Group Results: Conclusions drawn from the research problems...	39
6) Conclusions Drawn	
• Discussion and summary of main findings.....	44
• Recommendations.....	46
References.....	59

Appendices

List of Tables

	<u>Pages</u>
Table 4.1.1: Focus Group Sampling and Size.....	32
Table 6.2.1.: Cyprus College Two-year Programme: Diploma	50
Table 6.2.2.: Cyprus College Three-year Programme: Higher Diploma	52

List of Figures

	<u>Pages</u>
Figure 2.2.1.- Skills and Competencies for Graduates	13
Figure 2.4.1. – Number of Customer-Beauticians in Impophar Trading House LTD....	18
Figure 2.4.2. – Number of Registered Beauty Salons according to the The Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus	19

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SUMMARY

When selecting the topic I would deal with for the completion of my master, I set as a goal the upgrading and recognition of the profession of the Beautician by offering an upgraded programme of study at Cyprus College.

Being a professional beautician and the owner of a Beauty Salon since 1990, as well as a Professor of Aesthetics since 2005, I have had countless experiences in this area. As a professional in the field, I often come across people who received " bad " services " from other colleagues." Unfortunately, I can ascertain that this is true as I participated in many seminars where I met professional beauticians whose educational level was below standard. Even my efforts to employ an assistant at my beauty salon were often disappointing. So, although teaching was one of my childhood dreams which was replaced by Aesthetics as I grew up , the idea of teaching courses related to Aesthetics began to take shape after the experiences I described above. I therefore started my efforts to obtain a diploma in teaching so as to be able to transmit as much information as possible in this field, but at the same time to get to know what was going on in the various colleges in Cyprus. All the above, enabled me and made me want to investigate, and in the process, develop Aesthetic education in my country.

The topic I will present in this project is “The Teaching Methods in Aesthetics in Relation to the Labour Market Needs in Cyprus”.

My aim is to clarify, analyze and develop the weaknesses and limitations that emerge from the various programmes of study in Cyprus through the answers I got from the different groups of people that participated in my research.

Having studied and quoted the background theory of the issues that are necessary and essential in education, especially for programmes such as aesthetics, I will present the findings of my research as well as my own ideas and suggestions, so that the

theory has a positive reflection on the research questions I posed at the beginning of the project. The presentation and analysis of some statistical data is another element that reflects the need for research in the labour market.

The approach used to yield my research findings was the qualitative approach which involved the use of secondary data analysis and focus group interviews.

One of the main problems identified is the lack of skills of graduates of two-year programmes of study. Through my proposed three-year programme of study, which runs as a pilot programme for four consecutive years, we get the answers to the research questions I initially set, since innovative methods in Aesthetic education in Cyprus start being implemented.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that it is not enough for someone to hold academic qualifications, to have skills, principles and a good character. It is our obligation to respond, through our qualifications of course, to the respective legislation of the state we belong to. It is proved through my research that the delay in the implementation of the Legislation for Beauticians was a suppressive factor in upgrading the profession of the beautician. This legislation was implemented recently, in the summer 2013. So, the programme of study of Cyprus College, gives its graduates the legal opportunity and possibility to get employed immediately at this difficult time that the island is going through.

1INTRODUCTION

1.1Background Investigation

The field of Aesthetics has evolved and developed in Cyprus over the last 20-25 years. The need for the education of Cypriots in their own country became necessary due to the economic situation that prevailed a few years after the Turkish invasion.

The first colleges of Aesthetics had short-term courses of study and mainly offered professional qualifications to their graduates rather than academic knowledge. In 1996 the Private Schools/Colleges in Cyprus were legislatively consolidated (Appendix 1). At that time, based on the regulations for registration in the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, the necessary requirements for the reliability of the Programmes of study came into existence. What followed was the Evaluation of the Programmes of study by the Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications - KYSATS(Appendix 2a).

As 'the competent authority of the Republic of Cyprus for the recognition of Higher and Tertiary Education qualifications obtained home and abroad',KYSATS has seven members appointed by the Council of Ministers (Appendix 2b):

1. A Chairperson who must be a Cyprus University Professor
2. A senior Law Officer form the Law Office of the Republic
3. A representative of the Ministry of Education and Culture
4. Four university professors, one from the University of Cyprus and the other three from three different countries

The above council awards two types of recognition: (a) equivalence and (b) equivalence and correspondence.

Therefore, more Schools/Colleges of Aesthetics have been gradually created so as to meet the needs of the Cypriot society, and due to their recognition by the state they expanded and enhanced the quality of education they offered through carefully selected material, proper laboratory infrastructure and qualified professors.

In 1999, the relevant legislation concerning the qualifications of beauticians and other related issues, which was submitted to the Ministry of Health by an organised group of beauticians - the Union of Cypriot Graduate Beauticians (E.D.A.K.) - was consolidated. Thus, the bill concerning the registration of beauticians was proposed in 2000 but was never implemented due to weaknesses in the existing law and reactions by the various bodies involved. The only activity that the appointed council managed to exploit was to register a small number of beauticians in the Record of the Ministry by 2006. Registration in the Record of registered beauticians presupposes among other things the possession of a degree, diploma or certificate in Aesthetics which has been recognized by the Cyprus Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications - KYSATS (Appendix 3).

Since 2006, the aforementioned law has not been implemented despite the reactions and actions of the Union of Cypriot Graduate Beauticians (E.D.A.K.). Unfortunately, an amendment law started being promoted after a tragic event which took place in 2012: the death of a woman connected to a slimming machine in a beauty salon (Appendix 4). This incident caused great concern to all those involved in the area of aesthetics and raised a number of questions concerning responsibility, safety, precaution, professionalism, knowledge and competence. The predominant question that needs an immediate answer and calls for immediate action is: Do the people who work in beauty salons know how to use such machines with safety? (Anon, 2013). The loss of a human life due to lack of adequate professional competence caused the uprising of state bodies and as a result the new amendment law for beauticians has come to the fore (Appendix 5a). At this point, it needs to be noted that at times, there have been accusations for malpractice and misapplication of aesthetic techniques by non-qualified individuals, but nobody has dealt

with the issue since no Disciplinary Committee had ever been established due to failure to implement the bill of 2000.

This changed with the implementation of the new amendment law of 2012 for the registration of beauticians, during which I was actively involved, and which states that, in order to be registered in the official register, a beautician must: be a holder of a degree, diploma or certificate in aesthetics which has been recognised by the Cyprus Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (KYSATS), or be a holder of a degree or diploma in aesthetics after two or three years of studies, including practice, by a tertiary education institution whose programme of study has been evaluated-accredited by the Council of Educational Evaluation – Accreditation (S.E.K.A.P)(Appendix 5b &5c).

Various actions and consultations are now going on. During these consultations, it has been agreed by the parliamentary Committee that two-year studies in aesthetics without any practice are insufficient. According to Morton Kaufman (2010, p.1), apart from being accredited by the relevant departments of a the country, the best aesthetic school should have ‘both hands on sessions and lectures frequently as one of the main part of the course’, and should encourage education but also facilitate the ‘communication skills of the students’(p.1), both needed today so as to get good jobs. It has therefore been recommended to gradually stop offering two-year programmes of study since these cannot offer the essential academic and practical knowledge required. Besides that, the recommended time for practical experience after graduation is impossible to exist because of limited absorption of graduates in beauty salons and very low wages. It is therefore important for hands-on experience to be part of the academic programme offered by an academic institution since it complements the theoretical framework that this institution establishes.

As ‘a person’s first-hand experience of something -usually, work-related - in an uncontrolled environment, for example outside the classroom’(Anon2007, p. 2), practical experience leads to personal theories which the employee devises while trying to understand the working environment around him/her. Thus, ‘practical experience is not

the opposite of theory. Rather, practical experience leads to the development of theories' and 'contributes to the development and refinement of an individual's theories' (p.2).

2. REVIEW AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

2.1 Definition of the terms Skill, Competence and Practice

According to the business sector a skill is ‘an ability and capacity acquired through deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to smoothly and adaptively carry out complex activities or job functions involving ideas (cognitive skills), things (technical skills), and/or people (interpersonal skills)’ (Business Dictionary). A skill therefore is the result of effort and refers to the ability gained through knowledge, observation and guidance, as well as repeated application and practice.

Competence on the other hand is more than a skill. It is ‘a cluster of related abilities, commitments, knowledge, and skills that enable a person (or an organization) to act effectively in a job or situation’ (Business Dictionary). Competence therefore allows someone to deal with and act in different situations.

Finally, practice refers to the ‘repeated performance of an activity in order to learn or perfect a skill’ (The Free Dictionary). **Practical Experience** refers to the result obtained through extensive and repeated application of skills and practice in real working conditions and confrontation of many different needs/problems. It is thus clear that no skill is acquired without practice. Practical experience is the prerequisite for producing skillful labour hands in the market.

2.2 Skills and Competencies Recruiters look for in Graduates

The great educational and technological advances witnessed in our era have led to the creation of a highly competitive labour market and have thus created the need for upgrading the existing educational settings and endowing graduates with the necessary qualifications, skills and competencies that will help them work themselves up the career ladder.

When recruiting graduates then, employers look for specific skills and competencies: essential/basic, technical, interpersonal, technological. The following diagram, *Target Jobs website* (September 2013) summarizes the main skills and competences that a graduate should possess.

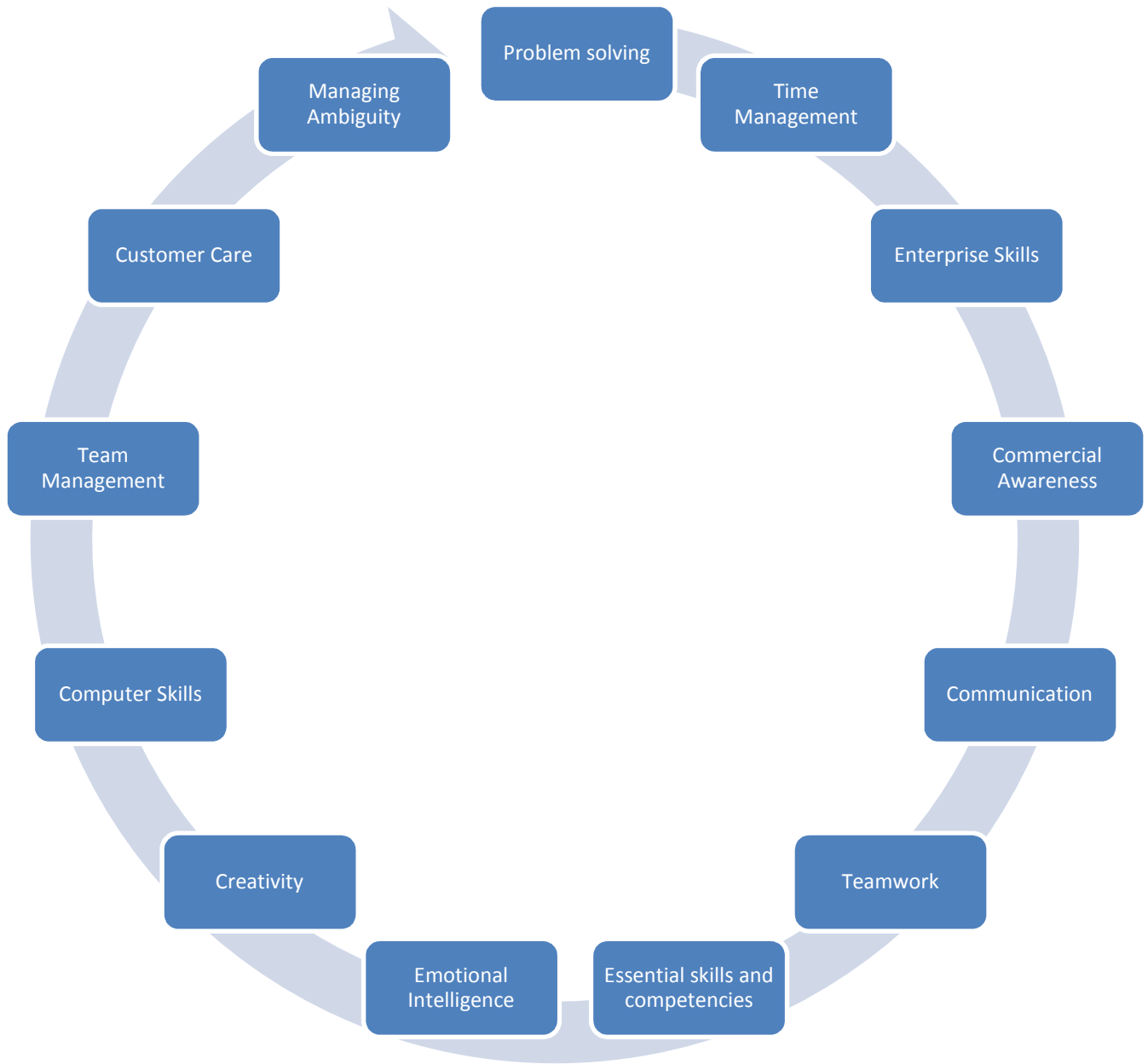


Figure 2.2.1.: Skills and Competencies for Graduates (Target Jobs, September 2013)

Most of the above skills and competencies are what beauticians need to have so as to successfully enter the competitive labour market and offer their services. The essential skills that a beautician needs to possess, along with the necessary and appropriate training, are the following (*How to Become a Beautician*):

- communication skills
- time and people management skills
- well-mannered and courteous behaviour towards the clients
- a flair for applying makeup
- thorough knowledge of various beauty treatments and massage techniques
- pedicure, manicure skills
- a good knowledge of human anatomy and its works along with skin and nail health.

When it comes to personal traits a beautician needs to:

- look well-dressed, neat and smart-looking at work
- be always polite, 'punctual and professional in her/his approach
- be patient and accommodating, inspiring the clients' trust and have good rapport with them.
- take an interest in the latest beauty trends and products to be knowledgeable enough to advise clients when required. This can be achieved by attending workshops, training programmes, and product shows (*How to Become a Beautician*):

Educational institutions abroad offering courses in Aesthetics and Cosmetology try to provide the labour market with graduates endowed with the above skills. In France in particular, one of the most popular countries in terms of aesthetic services and products, private educational institutions focus on the skills beauticians need to possess. Tactful and

courteous contact with the customer, skilful handling of equipment and awareness of innovations in the field are all gained through practice and experience which is highly valued and essential in such professions. Practical experience therefore forms an important part of the programmes of studies in Aesthetics and Cosmetology offered by private institutions in France. Two-year programmes of studies in Aesthetics (CAP Esthétique) offer a combination of both theoretical and practical courses, as well as 12 weeks of work placement during which students have the chance to apply both the theoretical and practical knowledge they have gained throughout their course in real life situations (*Le Guide de Formation Esthetiques, 4 March 2013*).

2.3 Why Practical Experience is Important

Practical experience and internships constitute an important institution with multiple benefits for the student/trainee, the department where he/she is studying and the relevant employer. The office of practical experience of the Higher Technological Institutions in Patra, Greece, offers an extended and thorough account of the importance of practical experience.

Benefits for the student trainee

Through the institution of practical experience, the first contact of the graduate student with his/her profession is realised. Undoubtedly, 'in a well-established and well-organised business, which operates within the general discipline of the student's specialisation, the student is integrated in the relevant working environment and actively participates in the production process' (*Office of Practical Experience, 2013*). He/She starts recalling the theoretical and practical knowledge he/she acquired during his/her studies, so as to apply it in practice and to cope with any problems he/she is assigned to tackle. Up until now, in the context of educational process, this has been hypothetically done through exercises and exams, whereas now, the student is called upon to face and tackle a real problem for the first time, starting from the most important problem, such as

doing a research study, supervising a production process, coordinating a workshop on a worksite, dealing with damages and breakdowns, helping and attending to customers, caring for patients, until the most trivial problems concerning the daily operation of a business. The student gains experiences which are particularly useful for his/her future professional career, experiences concerning the operation and organisation of a business which can be hardly gained through the usual procedure in the context of a classroom lesson (Office of Practical Experience, 2013).

During his/her internship, 'the student finds him/herself in a transitional period; he/she is neither an employee nor a student in the classical sense. He/She is being trained in a real working environment and is required to be fully integrated in it' (Office of Practical Experience, 2013). To achieve this, the trainee has to be responsible, to work harmoniously with his/her colleagues, to obey the commands of his/her supervisor, to be, polite, discreet, prim and proper.

Benefits for the Department where the Student Trainee is studying

In the context of evaluation of the practical experience that the student goes through, the supervising professor visits the business so as to have a complete picture of the working and educational conditions existing. These visits then are usually 'a first class opportunity for the supervising professor to meet the business executives and in extension constitute the starting point of a significant cooperation mainly concerning the solution of technical problems which cannot be tackled by the existing staff' (Office of Practical Experience, 2013). A characteristic example of the benefits of practical experience for both the department of studies as well as the business itself is the fact that the most valuable studies arise through the combination of dissertation work and practical experience (internship). These are studies whose topics deal with the solution of a real problem whose success requires a direct cooperation between the student, the supervising professor and the business executive. (Office of Practical Experience, 2013).

Benefits for the Employer

Apart from the high responsibility that the employer demonstrates by offering positions for practical experience (internship), he/she also ‘acquires the very important privilege to make safe choices concerning staffing’ (*Office of Practical Experience,2013*), provided that upon completion of the final stage of education, the new scientist will have already been tested under real working conditions, and demonstrated his/her expertise in his/her field of employment, his/her capabilities, potential, knowledge as well as his/her accountability, research ability, interpersonal skills and ability to evaluate. (*Office of Practical Experience,2013*).

The multiple benefits of practical experience have therefore been the driving force behind the proposal of the Amendment Law for Beauticians which promotes longer duration of studies including practice (Appendix 5c). The ultimate goal is to produce competent beauticians to meet the demanding labour market needs.

2.4The Current State of the Labour Market

According to information taken by companies providing colleges with aesthetic products, which have a list with the graduates’ names so as to keep them as future customers, the number of graduates per year (since 2000) amounts to three hundred. In fact, the statistics about the number of customers in Impophar, the biggest company in Cyprus which imports aesthetic products, show that the total number of beauticians has increased in the last twenty-five years.

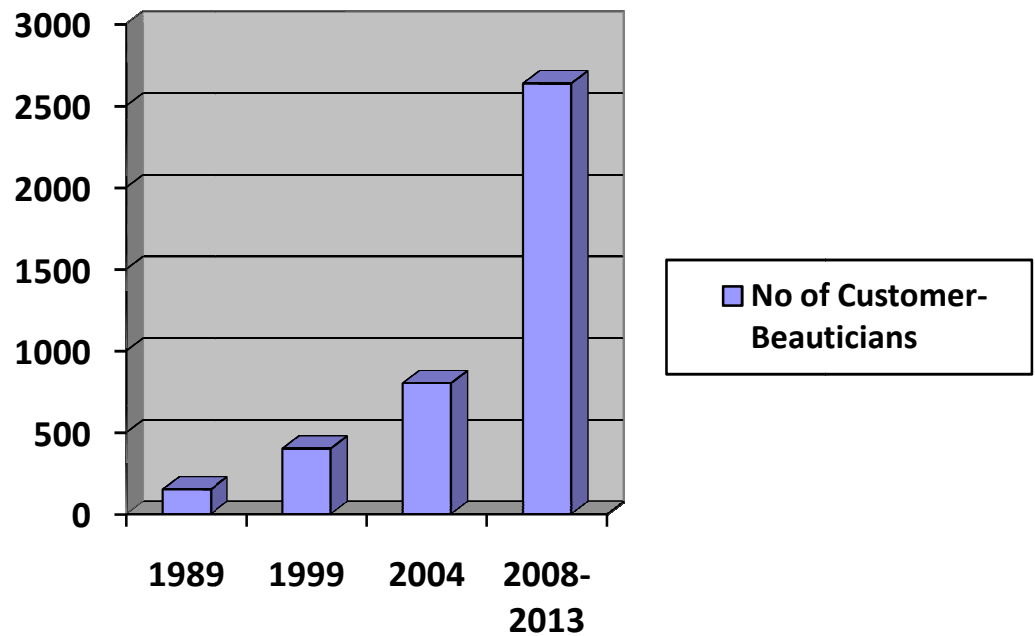


Figure 2.4.1.: Number of Customer-Beauticians in Impophar Trading House LTD

On the other hand, some statistics taken by the Cyprus Department of Statistics and Research show that by the end of 2007 there had been seven hundred and eighty-two beauty salons in Cyprus which means that there were at that time seven hundred and eighty-two beauticians in Cyprus. Numbers kept increasing and by 2011 the number of beauty salons was 1090.

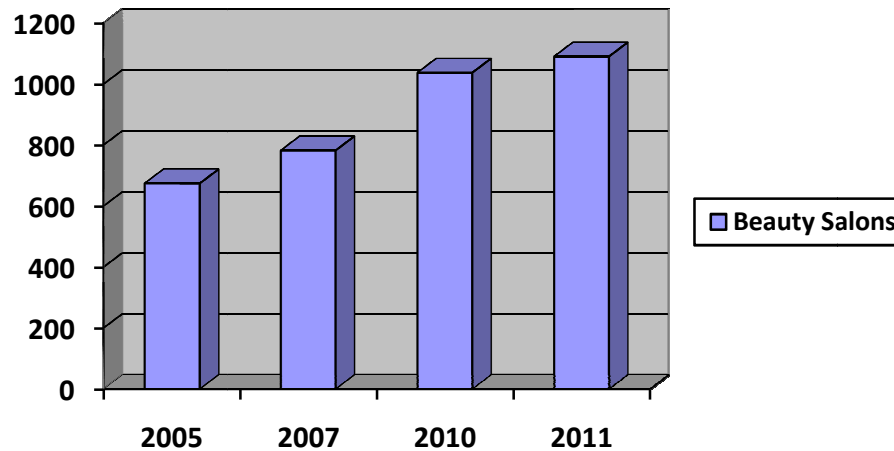


Figure 2.4.2.: Number of Registered Beauty Salons according to the Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus (The Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus).

What these numbers show is that the number of qualified beauticians in Cyprus is very high and it keeps increasing year by year. These numbers cause some doubt as to the quality of the beauticians who enter the labour market. Given its long experience in evaluating applications for membership in its council, the Union of Cypriot Graduate Beauticians (E.D.A.K.) doubts whether these seven hundred and eighty-two persons mentioned are qualified beauticians. According to the president of the Union of Cypriot Graduate Beauticians, Mrs Vakia Ioannidou, there cannot be more than four hundred qualified beauticians in Cyprus so this actually poses new questions and leads to other sort of conclusions. Where are all these beauty salons and what sorts of salons are they? One idea is that perhaps they are in a state of constantly opening and closing, or perhaps their owners have applied for official registration and they have been declined. These are plausible scenarios since the situation in the labour market is getting more and more unstable.

In fact, one can notice two extreme phenomena. On the one hand, large beauty salons and companies which are seeking employees are always in a state of searching. Their needs are served for some time (twelve -eighteen months) after training the employees for some

months (three-six), depending on each individual. Later on, these employees quit due to long working hours, distance, or low salary. The real reason, though, is the creation of a private institute. This may not meet the regulations, but very rarely will anyone legally prevent such an act, so these employees resort to self-employment which is the second extreme phenomenon which exists. These people then are satisfied with the salary they get and have no potential for professional advancement in the area because, if someone hurries to open her own salon, then she becomes stagnant because she can neither cope with her client's demands, nor financially manage to equip her salon. There is even the case where some beauty salons can barely stay open due to lack of clients. Continuous upgrading is the privilege of large beauty salons, where a quick amortisation of money takes place. Thus, the Beautician belonging in the previous category is slowly disappearing. Even the more "daring" individuals who are directly self-employed after their graduation may have the same fate, that is, they may fail as professionals. These people do not realize the benefit of working for some years as employees (depending on the individual) in order to become good professionals through the experience gained.

Some more capable but perhaps insecure individuals resign after a short stint of working as beauticians and change direction completely after realising that this kind of job does not please them or that they cannot perform well in it. Some of the reasons for this are their lack of skills, the lack of patience with people's demands, the low pay rate and the working hours.

The market needs, of course, differ from place to place, so it is impossible to rely on information concerning other countries, even Greece so as to interpret these trends. Sources and references are also limited but there are many people who agreed to report their experiences concerning the weaknesses in education, helping in this way to draw some important conclusions.

From some initial discussions with some people directly related to the field of Aesthetics, such as employers, it can be concluded that recently-graduated beauticians seem to have basic deficiencies in both the theoretical and the practical aspects of their job. Besides this, it is very sad to realize that the area of Aesthetics in Cyprus is not as it appears to be

and that a country in which there are great opportunities for employment in the field of aesthetics fails to deliver adequate services. The employers' expectations are not met simply because the labour market requires qualifications that graduates in aesthetics barely possess. What should be done therefore is to offer people better quality education, which is not to say that a complete change is necessary. An upgrading may be in order since 'education today is extended, not only to excellent academic records, but to candidates who possess such skills with which they can really make a difference in the market place' (Philippou 2006, p.79).

Given this, one may be wondering about the evolution of Aesthetic Science in general. A few years ago, the services offered by beauticians were limited. Concepts such as waist therapy, Radio Frequency (RF), Laser, ILP were unknown and therefore not used by beauticians (I will refer to these in more detail in the next chapter). At the same time, the importers of aesthetic equipment and machinery uncontrollably supply whoever claims to be a beautician with anything they need simply because no legislation has been implemented. It is therefore the obligation of all educational institutions to offer at least qualitative education which meets the needs of our time and it is the obligation of the state to legally fortify the graduates of these institutions.

Above all, it is up to those of us in educational facilities to invent innovative methods that will excite the attention and interest of people at all the levels of learning abilities. In addition to this, we should devise ways and means that will honour education in our country and not degrade it, as some witnesses reported, because this does not encourage the feeling of cooperation or pride in the student pursuing aesthetic studies.

2.5 Objectives of the study

The main aim of my research project is to examine the services offered in the field of aesthetics in tertiary education in Cyprus and to propose the creation of a three-year programme of study in Aesthetics which will result in obtaining a Higher Diploma in Aesthetics.

After focusing on the existing positive aspects of the field the project will make suggestions for upgrades in order to reflect the current Cyprus labour market needs. The ultimate goal therefore will be a better production of graduates in aesthetics, always in relation to professional ethics and in extension, the labour market needs.

The main objectives of the study are:

- to examine the services offered in the field of aesthetics in tertiary education in Cyprus: programmes of study, teaching hours, qualifications of the members of staff, teaching methodologies, laboratory equipment and cosmetics used.
- to make suggestions for upgrades in the field of Aesthetics so as to reflect the current Cyprus labour market needs.
- to propose new ways of approaching teaching and identify some methods that Cyprus College can apply so as to help students gain more practical experience.
- to make recommendations to the Cyprus College management on how to supply the market with well qualified graduates in Aesthetics.

2.6 Importance of the project

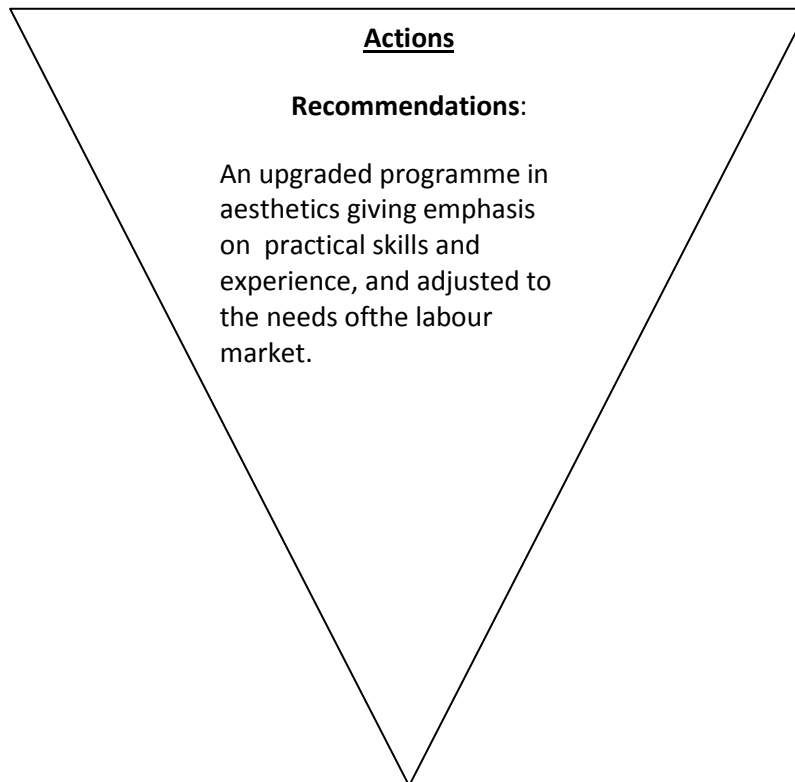
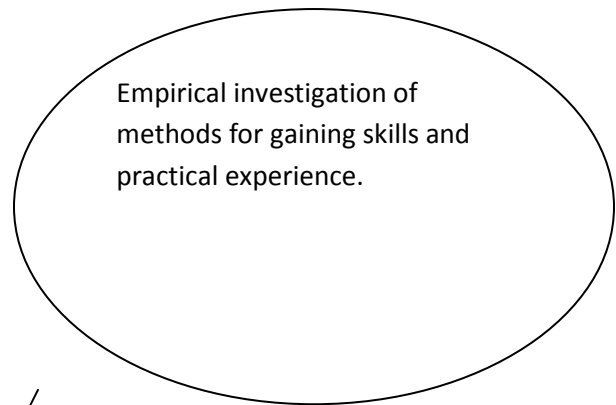
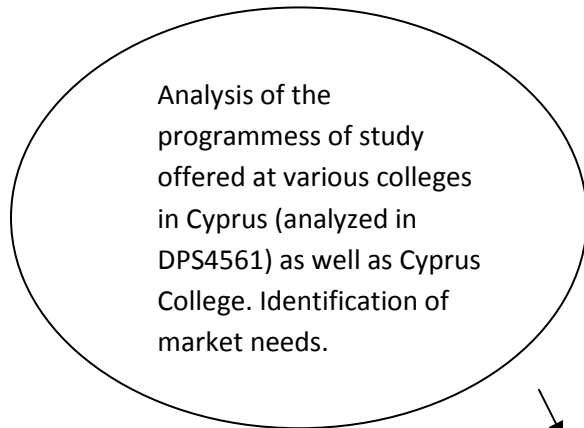
2.6.1 Target Audience

This project is expected to have a significant impact upon the managers and directors of Cyprus College and to appeal to the various aesthetic organizations or companies in Cyprus as well as to the students. On a theoretical level, the project will identify the existing problems and needs in Aesthetic education in Cyprus and suggest the development of the third year of studies in Aesthetics as a way to meet these needs. On a practical level, the project will open up possibilities for the formation of qualified beauticians who are well set up with theoretical and practical knowledge and will lead to the advancement of the educational level at Cyprus College. Finally, the project aims to consolidate the repetition of focus group interviews every two years in order to ensure the re-evaluation of the programmes of study and their adjustment to the existing labour market needs.

Generally, the value of the proposed study is divided into **three** main areas:

Theoretical framework

Practical framework



3 RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Level and Approach

As already mentioned in the literature review, the purpose of every research study or project is to either fill the gaps of ignorance on a particular field or to shed new light into areas related to this field which were undiscovered or unknown before. In order therefore to gain knowledge in the specific field of inquiry and in order to understand and meaningfully interpret the data collected the choice of a relevant methodology is required. As ‘the theoretical framework that guides how we come to know what we know’ (Glesne 2006, p.6) a methodology helps us contextualize and verify the meaning of existing data and findings. The two widely used research approaches to research are the *Quantitative and Qualitative research approaches*. Both methodologies follow certain specific steps: both state a purpose and raise a question, both have a target research population, use research methods to collect and analyze data and present their findings at the end of a research procedure carried out within a specific time span. (p. 4).

There are however distinct differences in the process used by each methodology. According to Glesne(p.5), Quantitative research methods are used to make generalizations about social phenomena, to make predictions about these phenomena and to provide causal explanations. This involves the manipulation of numbers with the use of statistical methods in order to extract information. There is a scientific collection of data followed by the use of statistical techniques to analyze this data.

On the other hand, qualitative research methods are used to understand social phenomena from the perspective of the participants (the people involved), ‘to contextualize issues in their particular socio-cultural-political milieu’ and to ‘transform or change social conditions’ (Glesne, p.4). In order to gain an insight into the multiple perspectives of those involved, ‘in-depth and long-term interactions with the relevant people are required’(p.5). So, unlike quantitative researchers who are detached from the data, qualitative researchers are personally involved in the study having thus a more active role. There are actually four basic personal skills accompanying a qualitative researcher namely: observing, conversing, participating and interpreting. According to Shank(2006,

p.146), the qualitative researcher's 'relation to data is more active and more interactive'. Interaction with the participants and an investigation into their own perceptions helps researchers approach the existing data from an epistemological perspective, giving thus an explanation on how the existing reality (the reality investigated) may be known

The social standing of the field of aesthetics through its immediate relationship with people and society at large require that the research questions and problems arising be examined by using qualitative research methods. As already stated, these are used to understand social phenomena from the perspective of the participants (the people involved) and approach the topic on different levels.

Critics of this approach though bring to the fore some ethical risks and epistemological issues implicated in its use. Issues such as anonymity, objectivity and 'effective interpretation and analysis of data by those who come to it from a distance, uninvolved in the process of data creation' (Irwin 2013, p.297) pose questions as to the role of a qualitative researcher and the effectiveness of his/her work. Is a qualitative researcher able to reuse the data of a primary researcher and interpret them correctly given the fact that 'they are "at a remove" from the data and the contexts in which they were generated' (p.298); Or is he exactly the right person to interpret them as he/she is detached from them and can analyze them objectively? Opinions vary, with some scientists considering this as a benefit and others as a limitation of this type of research.

This is where the mixed methods research comes in to clarify things. According to Venkatesh, V., Brown, S., Bala, (2013), the mixed methods research 'uses quantitative and qualitative research methods, either concurrently (i.e., independent of each other) or sequentially (e.g., findings from one approach inform the other), to understand a phenomenon of interest' (p.23). In the same thread of mind Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007 cited Wisdom, Cavaleri, Onwuegbuzie, Green 2012) state that 'mixed methods research capitalizes on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methodology by combining both components in a single research study to increase breadth and depth of understanding' (p.1). As each method complements the other results are more objective reliable and valid.

In fact there were four major types of mixed methods designs identified:

(1) triangulation (i.e., merge qualitative and quantitative data to understand a research problem); (2) embedded (i.e., use either qualitative or quantitative data to answer a research question within a largely quantitative or qualitative study); (3) explanatory (i.e., use qualitative data to help explain or elaborate quantitative results); and (4) exploratory (i.e., collect quantitative data to test and explain a relationship found in qualitative data). (Creswell and Clark cited Venkatesh et al., p. 24).

The methodological design used in this study is based on a triangulation framework, that is, 'the use of multiple concepts and methods to study a single phenomenon' (Denzin, 1978; Pelto and Pelto, 1978).

Triangulation in itself appears in four forms. According to Denzin (1970 cited Bryman) these are:

1. Data triangulation, which entails gathering data through several sampling strategies, so that slices of data at different times and social situations, as well as on a variety of people, are gathered.
2. Investigator triangulation, which refers to the use of more than one researcher in the field to gather and interpret data.
3. Theoretical triangulation, which refers to the use of more than one theoretical position in interpreting data.
4. Methodological triangulation, which refers to the use of more than one method for gathering data (p.1142).

The rationale behind the adoption of triangulation for the purposes of this proposed thesis lies in the incapacity of any single approach or conceptual and methodological framework to adequately explain/analyze the complex state of affairs in the area of Aesthetics. As Dreher and Hayes (1993) postulated, by using a combination of empirical and theoretical paradigms, the various components of a triangulated design inform each

other and increase the capability to answer the research questions. This, in turn, increases the researcher's confidence in the findings.

In this case, this specific methodological framework helps explain/analyze the complex state of affairs in the area of Aesthetics, ensuring validity and avoiding biased conclusions. It also fills the gap left by each of the two approaches mentioned above (quantitative and qualitative) and 'leads to a re-examination of the conceptual framework and the assumptions underlying each of the two' thus giving new opportunities for further study and future investigations (Venkatesh et al., 2013, p.25).

The qualitative approach used in this study involves the use of the following research methods, all aiming at the detection of the positive and negative elements of the education in Aesthetics in Cyprus:

(a) Secondary data analysis: This involves an extensive search and analysis of background information from libraries, the Internet and government statistical services (primary data). According to Hinds and Clarke-Steffen, and Szabo and Strang, 'it involves the use of existing data, collected for the purposes of a prior study, in order to pursue a research interest which is distinct from that of the original work' (cited Heaton 1998, p. 1). As data collected by someone other than the user it saves time and enables the user to build on information already existing, such as literature reviews, case studies and statistics. This approach helps 'to generate new knowledge, new hypotheses, or support existing theories' (p. 6). In the light of the above, a secondary data analysis was conducted in order to investigate the status of the profession of the beautician in the Cypriot market as well as its educational grounding, and to establish the existence of an underlying gap between them that needed immediate bridging. Statistics from the Cyprus Department of Statistics, records kept by the Union of Cypriot Graduate Beauticians – EDAK, and information about the programmes of study from the websites of six colleges in Cyprus offering courses in Aesthetics were consulted so as to define the problem in question: the lack of important skills and competencies by graduate beauticians due to the absence of practical experience prior to graduation.

(b)Focus group interviews (moderated by me): According to Zikmund (2003) these are free-flowing interviews with a small group of people (6-10 participants) and a moderator whose role is to introduce a topic and encourage discussion among the participants. Focus group interviews are beneficial as they allow people to discuss their true feelings and ideas, are quite fast, easy to execute, flexible and inexpensive. They are best used when the concept or idea evaluated is new.

Given this, fifty people who are directly related to the beauticians and their training were invited to take part in focus group interviews so as to share their ideas about the profession of the Beautician in general and aesthetic education in particular. The results yielded were used for the data analysis that follows in Chapter 4 with the aim of maintaining and improving the quality of Aesthetics education in Cyprus, and hence the quality of graduates and professionals in Aesthetics, always in relation to the needs of the Cyprus labour market.

The results of the study will serve as a keystone for the creation of an upgraded programme that will address the solution to the problems that exist.

3.2 Data Analysis

A detailed analysis of the focus group results is presented in Chapter 5. The data analysis was done on three levels: data reduction-copying, data display, theme creation and conclusions and verification.

After collecting the answers from the research questions which were addressed to the interviewees, a documentation process followed during which I noted down all the information provided to me by the interviewees. The analysis of my results started from this very first documentation of the results. Then, a coding process took place in order to sort and define the collected data from notes. This process involved the reduction of recurrent concepts-themes within the discussions which meant that these deemed special attention. These were classified accordingly and displayed so as to compare and contrast the various views expressed. This was achieved through the 'teaming' method, that is the

data was displayed in tables and thus was presented as an organized collection of information so that comparisons could be made and conclusions could be easily drawn. Through this comparison and contrast of the findings I was able to reach some analytic conclusions and approach the main research topic of my study: ***The teaching methods in aesthetics in relation to the labour market needs in Cyprus***. The facts from the current labour market have given a clear message that there is a need for the upgrading of education in Cyprus. The crux of the project is always the existing needs of the labour market in relation to the response of the graduates of this discipline to those needs.

The evidence on which the conclusions were drawn was carefully considered so as to reassure the authenticity of the conclusions. The conclusions were also assessed taking into account the 'tacit knowledge' of the interviewees. According to Altheide and Johnson (1994, p.12), tacit knowledge is 'the largely unarticulated, contextual understanding that is often manifested in nods, silences, humor, and naughty nuances; it therefore refers to a researcher's awareness of what the participants 'fail to state, feel deeply, and take for granted' (p.12).

3.3 Ethical Considerations

Given the involvement of people from various areas in my study, there are obviously some ethical issues to be considered before conducting the proposed research. To begin with, all the participants were thoroughly informed of the purpose and objectives of the study. The nature and duration of the study was also made clear to them and their consent to participate in it was obtained. Furthermore, the participants were assured that their anonymity will be respected and that their personal data will be treated confidentially. In Cyprus, anonymity in such studies is imperative; otherwise, the majority of people refuse to participate. Anonymity and confidentiality are also vital as I had to have access to personal and organizational records. Participants were informed also of the possible dissemination and publication of their opinions or of the data they provided me with.

Besides obtaining the participants consent, I also had to obtain the consent of the director of the college for using any sort of data directly related to the college, the students and teachers/professors involved. The director of studies was of course informed of the purpose of the study and its impact on the environment of the college and more specifically on the area of aesthetics.

Another ethical issue which had to be considered is my current position within the college and the specific area of studies. My role as an insider researcher, though positive in some respect, may prove problematic in terms of objectivity. According to Hockey (1993), the insider researcher is able to share the social world of the participants and therefore is less likely to experience culture shock but on the contrary the participants will show understanding and appreciation. On the other hand, Robson (2003) states that “over familiarity” and “taken-for-granted-assumptions” can lead to ‘thinking as usual’ which will result in the concealment or distortion of the truth. Besides this, an insider researcher is in the advantageous position to study a specific issue in depth as this person has a special knowledge of the subject through easy access to people and information related to the field being researched. Thus an insider researcher is able to ‘make challengers to the status quo from an informed perspective’ (p.3).

The issue of objectivity is definitely an issue which needs to be controlled and I believe that my experience in the field allowed me to handle things objectively, to be critical of my own work and be unbiased and open to various perspectives.

4 PROJECT ACTIVITY

4.1 Data Administration and Data Collection

Collection of Data

Section 1: Books, articles and the internet. (Secondary Data)

Target Group

The target group for each section was as follows:

Section 2: People directly involved in the area of Aesthetics

Focus group interviews

Sampling

The discussions were held in groups of 6-9 people sitting around a table during five consecutive meetings between January and June 2013.

The following focus groups, which were homogeneous as to the needs of the participants, were established:

- 10 students - undergraduate students registered for the Diploma in Aesthetics (two-year study) at the Cyprus College.
- 10 customers of beauty salons.
- 10 beauticians working in beauty salons which offer a wide range of services to the customers.
- 10 teachers/professors teaching any of the courses offered in the diploma in Aesthetics.
- 10 individuals working for companies that are selling aesthetic products and machinery and have therefore a basic idea of the level of services provided by the different beauty salons and the beauticians they employ.

Table 4.1.1: Focus Group Sampling and Size

Participants	No. of people per group	No. of interviews & duration
1. undergraduate students	9	1 - 1h 30mins
2. customers	6	1 - 45 mins
3. beauticians	6	1 - 1h 20 mins
4. teachers/professors	6	1 - 1h
5. professionals/individuals working for companies selling aesthetic products	7	1 - 1h 30mins

In my attempt to complete my research and form my focus groups I tried to gather information from various sources including the Cyprus Consumer Association. I thought that people may have resorted to them to express complaints and report incidents of bad service on behalf of specific Beauty Salons or the use and sale of problematic beauty products.

I actually managed to speak to a government official on the phone but the information I received was scarce. Surprisingly enough, there hasn't been any written complaint against any beautician for bad service or the sale of a beauty product in the last ten years. The only few complaints they had received were for supermarkets, so it had nothing to do with quality beauty products. A person who buys a face cream from the supermarket is responsible for his/her purchase in the same way he/she is responsible when buying the shower gel of his/her choice.

Moreover, we should not forget that the profession of the beautician was consolidated last summer. Because of this, any complaint against beauticians or beauty salons were not taken seriously simply because there was no official body to receive and deal with these complaints. This makes us also presume that if there had been any complains about "bad" services, this would have led to the completion of the much desired legislation sooner. There also hasn't been any publication of any complaint about this issue on the official website of the Cyprus Consumer Association.

I therefore realised that I couldn't include any representative from the Consumer Association in the team of people who would take part in my research simply because they would not be aware of my research topic and would not be able to respond to any of the questions on the issues addressed /raised during the focus group discussion or even contribute to the discussion in any way.

4.2 Gathering Data - Procedure followed:

All the focus group interviews were carried out in a pleasant atmosphere in the form of discussion. The procedure was as follows:

The discussion was guided and coordinated by me. After some introductory remarks about the nature of the focus groups, I addressed the questions outlined in Appendix 1 - one at a time- to the participants. Once a question was asked, one of the participants would start answering it, expressing his/her opinion. Then, the other participants would join the discussion, either to agree or disagree with the previous speaker, presenting their own arguments. My role was to coordinate the discussion, making sure to promote interaction between the groups by giving the floor to all participants for all the questions and keeping the sessions as relaxed and natural as possible. At the same time, I was taking notes and writing all the answers given in detail.

1st Meeting

The first meeting was held in my office at Cyprus College with 9 students: 3 sophomore female students, 3 third-year students, and three graduates of the three-year programme of studies all of whom were selected to represent different grading levels (from 60-95) so as to get different answers for the understanding of each discussion topic. The meeting lasted one hour and thirty minutes- it was one of the longest discussions. I can say that the research findings, which I analyze in detail and per section in Chapter 5, were very satisfactory. They actually made me feel that through the programme offered at the College, I succeeded in providing female/graduate students with an in-depth view of the field of aesthetics from their second year of studies.

2nd Meeting

The second meeting took place at the beauty salon that I own for 22 years now. I randomly chose six customers (2 old customers, 2 more recent ones and 2 new ones – the selection was done both in terms of the duration they have been visiting me and their age). The discussion lasted at least 45 minutes. The specific customers have visited various salons mainly in Cyprus but unfortunately none had much experience from abroad except from two. One of the two had the experience of an Asian beautician in Saudi Arabia (Qatar) who gave her the manicure and her comments were impressive. The second one was provided with waxing services in Greece but she was not very pleased with the outcome compared to the depilation results she receives in Cyprus.

3rd Meeting

The third meeting involved colleagues, that is other beauticians, and was held in a quiet cafe. It consisted of six colleagues aged 30 to 60 years old: two graduates of Cypriot Educational Institutions, two graduates of Greek Technological Educational Institutions (T.E.I. - 4 year Degree in Aesthetics and Cosmetology) and two graduates of English Educational Institutions. The whole meeting lasted an hour and 20 minutes. The overall feeling of the group was their resentment over the non-implementation of the relevant legislation by the State which has resulted in the uncontrollable application of services by individuals who are not Beauticians; for example, nail artists and different other people offering various services that are not within their competence. Furthermore, they are angry with the companies supplying these people with professional equipment, or even offer mini seminars about new hi-tech machines such as IPL-photothermolysis. In addition, graduates of foreign educational institutions challenge the substantive validity of the Diplomas (not just Regulated by the Ministry of Education) given in Cyprus regarding the criteria for admission into colleges and the rigor existing during the studies. It so happened that the beauticians who were present had employed in the past people who basically did not represent their diplomas.

4th Meeting

The fourth discussion group was the group of professors in Aesthetics. This meeting was also held in my office at Cyprus College which lasted one hour. Six fellow-teachers in Aesthetics attended the meeting. Three of these are currently teaching at Cyprus College in Nicosia and the other three are teaching at Cyprus College in Limassol. The programme of studies and the design and layout of workshops are common in both branches, since I personally arranged both of them when I first started working at the college in 2007 in Nicosia and in 2011 in Limassol. Four of the colleagues are graduates of Greek Technological Educational Institutions – T.E.I., one is a graduate of an English Educational Institution and one is a graduate of a Cypriot Educational Institution. Their view concerning the level of education and the material taught/offered were generally satisfactory and they believe that it matches the level of teaching that most of them were exposed to abroad. They all agreed though that the educational level of the students who are accepted for admission to the programme is low, something which is inevitable when it comes to private education. Furthermore, they think that qualified graduates have to be better protected by legislation since the number of possible graduates in Aesthetics is less important compared to the professional careers they will pursue.

5th Meeting

The last group was the group of people who are working with beauticians. It consisted of seven people: the president of the biggest company providing aesthetic products with over 30 years of experience in the Cyprus market and people / beauticians who are working there including the general trainer, the lady responsible for the promotion of machinery, beauticians / consultants working in the shop and beauticians / consultants who are visiting beauty salons. The youngest person has ten years of experience in the field. The discussion lasted 1 hour 30 minutes and was very interesting. All seven people expressed what the other groups expressed before: their indignation about the relevant legislation not being enforced, their agreement on the good educational level of colleges which must meet admission requirements, their inability to refuse supplying products and equipment to people they deem unsuitable but just bear the title of the beautician on their diplomas. They admitted that there are notable professionals in the field, but the majority are people with many gaps. They have noticed the difference in our graduates at Cyprus College who have attended the lesson of Practical Experience in the 6th semester, have pursued studies that included practice or have

worked in very good beauty salons for over two years before exercising their profession autonomously.

A detailed analysis of the focus group results is presented in chapter 5. The data analysis is done on three levels: data reduction, data display, conclusions and verification.

4.3 Limitations of the Study

Difficulties encountered while conducting my research and completing my project

When recollecting the time when I first decided to enter this game in the role of the 'student, parallel to my position as a teacher, an aesthetician, a mother, a housewife, I miss the will and enthusiasm I had four years ago. I say I miss, because I think that I don't have the same strength now. Many things in my life changed during these four years and if I hadn't taken this decision at that time, I would have never taken it and so obtaining a Master's degree would now seem an unfulfilled dream.

Being in the end now, I praise and thank God for the strength He gave me to keep going despite the difficulties I encountered. There were many times when I thought of quitting, thinking that maybe I was too selfish given the fact that I had so many problems around me (financial problems, health problems, lack of time to study) and mainly because these problems were not simply mine; I had and still have to take care of and protect my three children, all being in critical ages.

It may all sound typical and normal, perhaps even tiring since many people attend academic programmes while being employees and having families. I am certainly not the only one doing this, but what I can say with confidence, now that I am reaching the end, is that I don't regret it. I learned many things that I didn't know before and I gained a lot of knowledge in research areas. I made concepts such as define, clarify, present research questions, analyse, develop, answer and refute opinions based on theory clear in my mind. I thought that I knew all this. I only knew half of it and through systematic study, research, observation, and especially patience I can now say that I possess this knowledge.

Beyond the emotional aspect of it though, I also encountered other substantial difficulties – problems.

The biggest problem that I had to face, mainly at the beginning, was the English language. Due to the fact that I did not have the chance to study abroad, I discovered that my knowledge of English, though satisfactory during my school years, was actually limited. One of the reasons for that was that I had not used the language for years. With the help of dictionaries and guide books, I gradually managed to improve my reading skills and was able to read the notes I was given and then write. Even now, I have some difficulty in speaking fluently and comfortably mainly with native speakers of English.

A second problem I encountered was the lack of substantial bibliography. The existing bibliography proved inadequate perhaps due to the fact that the topic of my project is innovative (in relation to the Cypriot standards in the field of aesthetic education). After some time, and after some rejections from my advisor, I began delving into more open areas in statistics (which again was not sufficient and I believe it is the system of Cyprus bureaucracy that is to blame). I believe that I gradually managed to improve significantly in this area.

A third issue that came up was the following suspensory point. Initially, I had decided that the content of my project would be to investigate education in general and specifically in Cyprus, and through the research conducted I would have been in the position to compose the syllabus for a third year of studies to be offered (leading to a higher degree) if deemed necessary. However, in the course of time and seeing in the 2nd year that the needs in education were growing, I dared to urge the management of the college to submit the programme for third year studies for registration and finally for final accreditation-evaluation by S.E.K.A.P. . This would be another tangible result for my project- research, that is the resulting knowledge and skills the students would possess. So, I left the MProf for a while and I started working so as to complete the content of the syllabus. Once we got the approval of the Ministry of Education, I thought of implementing it for a year so as to test it and upon completion of my research I would check whether it was really efficient or it needed changes. The following two reasons, however, made this experimental stage last three more years, which in the end was better. At this stage I had a more complete picture and I was in the position to judge whether a Higher Diploma was necessary.

The fourth problem I had to face was the help I received from the advisor I had initially chosen. After some point I had to switch to another advisor and I feel that after this point I

had substantial help and I began realising what I was actually doing. Before that, the work done was superficial. I would of course like to thank both my advisors as I certainly received something from each one of them; each gave me something different. To avoid any misunderstanding concerning my choice, switching to another advisor was simply a matter of chemistry. I can understand my current advisor better, and even though my first advisor is a remarkable man and scholar, he had so many professional obligations at the time I wanted help that made me feel uncomfortable to ask for his help. This matter resulted in a year of stagnation.

The last problem I encountered was the delay for the legislation about beauticians to be passed. As I mentioned in the previous DPS 4561 and in previous chapters in this module, the above-mentioned legislation was passed in 2000 and due to weaknesses it was never implemented. I was part of the council that laid down this legislation and I worked with other colleagues for amendments of the law (Appendix 5b). As a citizen of the republic of Cyprus, I am ashamed to admit that the relevant bodies did not pay any attention to our issue, and as a result the profession lost its true value. Various institutes started appearing everywhere and people who had nothing to do with aesthetics declared being beauticians/aestheticians. In the year 2012 a tragic event-the death of a woman in a beauty salon (which I mentioned in Ch. 1) - caused the process for the amendment of the law to begin. I was invited by the Ministry of health and the Parliamentary Committee to help through my knowledge and experience in completing the amendments but there was a delay again and while I made plans to complete my project in the fall semester 2012, I postponed it once more since I wanted my proposal for the Higher 3rd-year programme to be in accordance with the legislation. This would give our graduates the opportunity to have the necessary qualifications and thus obtain the permission for exercising the profession, which is required for the appropriate exercise and application of the profession of a beautician/aesthetician as well as its fortification and establishment.

As far as the focus group discussions are concerned, there was no specific problem to deal with as my experience in the field has provided me with the necessary knowledge so as to approach people, make acquaintances and tackle any possible problems arising. Unlike new graduates in the field, I had no difficulty approaching the right people and developing an in-depth discussion. I must admit that the whole procedure was interesting and very informative.

5 RESULTS-ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

After collecting the answers from the research questions which were addressed to the interviewees, a coding process takes place in order to sort and define the collected data from notes. These are classified accordingly so as to compare and contrast the various views expressed. Through this comparison and contrast of the findings I am able to reach some analytic conclusions and approach the main research topic of my study: *The teaching methods in aesthetics in relation to the labour market needs in Cyprus.*

5.2 Definitions

The questions addressed to the five groups of people participating in the focus groups were all geared towards elicit their understanding of the terms skill, competence and practical experience and define the role of practical experience and its importance. Further than that, the questions aimed at extracting the ways education can benefit the beauticians, specifying what the labour market expects and what the beauticians need to have so as to enter and be part of the competitive Cyprus labour market.

5.3 Focus Group Results: Conclusions Drawn from the Research Problems

Section 1: Definitions

The group consisting of **students** believes that the area of aesthetics has a lot of significance and has to be scientifically approached; it is not just a talent. That's why beauticians need to be serious and professional in their approach and application of services beyond the practical skills that they need to possess which simply offer beauty and harmony. On the contrary, the group of **customers** indicated that the profession of the beautician is not highly esteemed and valued from an academic/educational point of view, beyond certain individual cases; they consider it a talent. The **professional beauticians** believe that Aesthetics is an underrated science which is not based on talent. The older beauticians feel underprivileged because they believe that what they studied several years ago was very remarkable, but in the end the state failed to protect it and keep its high scientific level. **Professors** in Aesthetics declare that Aesthetics is a paramedical profession that has been underestimated as a science and they also feel underprivileged because they feel that what they studied was very remarkable but

the state did not protect it so as to maintain its high scientific level. They admit that being talented helps, but it is not enough. The group of **professionals** working with companies selling and promoting aesthetic products agrees with the fact that Aesthetics is a paramedical profession which is constantly developing. It has however been underestimated as a science and they feel that what they studied and what they represent is so remarkable and valuable that the state must have kept the high scientific level it deserves, thus enabling them to work with people who deserve recognition. They do however consider talent very important.

As far as practical experience is concerned, all groups refer to it as something which is gained mainly after one's studies and it needs to be long-term (1-2 years) and diversified. The group of **customers** declared that they do not trust an inexperienced beautician, while **professors** and **students** at Cyprus College, as well as the group of **professionals** who worked with a group of Cyprus College graduates (despite some individual exceptions) said they were in the position to start work immediately.

Competence is achieved through practice and the groups of professors and students said that they gain a lot of experiences in the course of practical exercise (especially with external customers) which is 250 hours in the 2nd semester, beyond the practice done in the laboratories. During this course they are supervised by their professors, they are evaluated and they learn through their mistakes. Moreover, the fact that they work in actual beauty salons for 250 hours in the 3rd semester, during which they keep a diary and are supervised by a supervisor and evaluated through a log book by their professor, makes them ready to enter the working world of aesthetics. This was confirmed by three professionals who happened to work with some of our graduates as well as two beauticians who recruited two students during the course of practical experience (3rd year).

Section 2: The importance of Practical Experience

The group of students give great importance to practical experience and they revealed the insecurity they feel when they are about to start exercising the profession immediately and unsupervised. The three graduates of the three-year programme on the other hand confirmed that they had gained a lot from the course of Practical Experience offered in the third year of studies (see 3rd Year Table-Three- year Programme: Higher Diploma.). They feel that they need to live many employer-customer experiences before they set up their own beauty salon.

Nevertheless, they feel confident that they have a better grasp of the theoretical part they have been taught so far, perhaps better than professional beauticians who possess however the advantage of experience.

Customers prefer experienced beauticians, so all ladies agreed that they prefer young beauticians. They had all had experiences of poor service and inappropriate professional conduct: cleaning, hygiene, gossipy behaviour and lack of security and confidentiality.

At this point we discussed the conclusion of **empirical application** that I explained in chapter 4. **Beauticians** declare that the importance of practice and the willingness of a graduate to cooperate are of utmost importance. Generally, it is true that customers today are well-informed and so demanding that they would not justify any failure or mistake on the part of a young beautician. Practical Experience in real circumstances and conditions beyond that in a laboratory during studies where students practice on each other is therefore necessary. **Professors** in aesthetics agreed on the importance of practice and the willingness of a graduate to cooperate is of utmost importance. Generally, as professors in aesthetics they also agreed that customers today are well-informed and so demanding that they would not justify any failure or mistake on the part of a young beautician. Practical Experience in real circumstances and conditions beyond that in a laboratory during studies where students practice on each other is therefore necessary. Moreover, what we as professors promote through the course of practical experience in the 6th semester is proved to be very important. **Professionals** working in companies selling and promoting aesthetic products share the same opinion.

Section 3: The importance of education – the need for an upgrade

In this part a number of questions were addressed to specialists on the matter. These are mainly employers / professionals in the field. Through this part we can see the conclusions drawn from the research questions posed.

The research problems refer to the demands and requirements of employers and the way Cyprus College can help in meeting them within the industry of Aesthetics by applying its own programme, its own teaching methods and methods to enable skill development.

The group of **beauticians** believe that Renewal and updating are necessary. My colleagues have observed that conferences in Aesthetics in Cyprus are of a low level, especially when it comes to the quality of those beauticians participating in the conferences who make them feel insulted and embarrassed of the profession they represent. They all agree that private educational institutions have dropped the level of education they are offering. They would like their new employees to shed light on the developments in Aesthetics and to have more practical experience.

Professionals agree that renewal and updating are a must as aesthetics is a constantly developing science. Professionals working with beauticians have observed that graduates in aesthetics in Cyprus have a low educational level and that 2-year studies in aesthetics without practice are of a low level. They also said that they are surprised with the fact that many times customers and beauticians are unaware of and ignore important skills. An issue being raised was the fact that there must be specific criteria for admission and stricter approach on the part of all colleges so as to succeed in producing better quality graduates and ongoing training. This idea was strongly supported by Zoe Angastinioti from Impophar who studied and worked in England and is now the person in charge of providing training on how to use machines sold by the company. An additional comment that Zoe made and I would like to stress is the difference between the term 'beautician' and the term 'aesthetician'. The former refers to specific and limited services, such as manicure, pedicure, waxing and make-up while the latter refers also to face and body aesthetics. In the course of time and upon completion of the Legislation and Amendments of the Law in 2013 that separate the two-year programmes with a limited range of activities offered from three-year programmes, what Zoe said seems right. We must of course bear in mind that the syllabus taught in our colleges is different from that in colleges in England.

On the other hand, I would like to stress the position of **professors** who said that just like the beauticians they have also noticed that conferences in Aesthetics in Cyprus are of a low level, especially when it comes to the quality of those beauticians participating in the conferences, a phenomenon that does not surprise them as they have had experience with students. They also declared and all agreed that they are often surprised when graduates refuse categorically that they have heard things/material they had been taught. This is additional evidence showing that there must be specific criteria for admission and more freedom given by colleges to professors for more rigorous evaluation of their students so as to succeed in

producing better quality graduates. I also stress the position of **students** (they have not been asked directly in the section but they answered indirectly through the general discussion that took place) who believe that a beautician must never stop learning and should be constantly trained and informed. Students understand that the two-year programme of studies provides the basic qualifications and not expertise which is provided in the three-year programme. This includes syllabus based on the latest developments (from 2005 onwards) in the technology of machinery, cosmetology and in innovative applications in all areas (face, body, depilation, make-up and practical experience), something which was again clearly confirmed by three graduates of the three-year programme. Besides this, they are well aware, as I already mentioned, of the fact that there should be continuity.

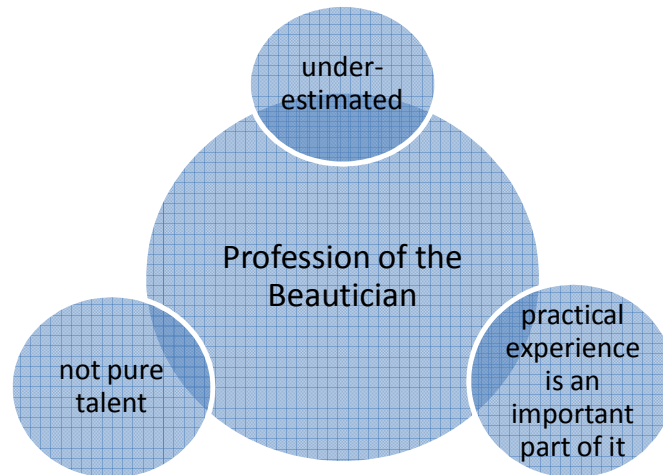
Employers require people with a relatively high IQ level, a good character which can be improved through studies and education, knowledge, skill and practice before obtaining their diploma. Cyprus College is trying to meet all these because through courses such as Professional Ethics, it cultivates the students' character as well. The policy of the College is not lenient with students. Personally, I have devised the system of repeated evaluation/assessment (see the evaluation/assessment table). When a student has a lot of absences he gets a zero, and since the courses in aesthetics are based on practice, a student who is frequently absent does not manage to gain the necessary knowledge and skills so he has to repeat the lesson. In fact, I have introduced 250 hours of extra practice in the second year and 250 hours in the third year, which means they have the chance to gain a lot.

6 CONCLUSIONS DRAWN

6.1 Discussion and Summary of Main Findings

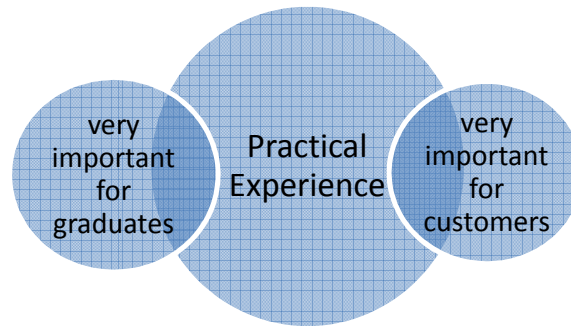
Following the analytical results of the focus group discussion we draw the following conclusions:

Section 1: Definitions



According to the focus groups results of the first set of questions, it is obvious that the profession of the beautician has been underestimated during the years and has not been given its proper scientific identity. All groups of people agreed that the profession has not achieved proper recognition despite its value and importance. Besides this, all groups, except customers, believe that the profession of the beautician is not pure talent and state that practical experience, both within an educational context or a working context, is an essential element in the development of the necessary skills required for this profession.

Section 2: The importance of Practical Experience



The results yielded made it clear that all groups interviewed are aware of the importance of practical experience in the field of aesthetics and the business world in general. Professionals need experienced beauticians that will enhance the success of their businesses, graduates need practical experience so as to be ready for their entrance in the labour market and customers require the experienced services of qualified beauticians. It is true that customers are well-informed nowadays so they will not accept mistakes of any kind. They need their demands to be met.

Section 3: The importance of education – the need for an upgrade

The actual situation existing	How to improve the situation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the profession of the beautician has been underestimated as a science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> renewal, updating and awareness of the scientific nature of the profession
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> low level of education offered by institutions (2-year programmes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> upgrade education –to achieve a higher level of education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> absence of well-educated beauticians in the market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> set criteria for admission to the course and strict evaluation of students by colleges

The results of the third group of questions summarise in a way the whole situation existing in the field of aesthetics, confirm a gap existing and call for action so as to amend the situation.

The fact remains that the profession of aesthetics is underestimated so its updating is a must and a priority. Results also indicated that the level of education offered by institutions (choice of courses and their content, seminars organised) is low not up to standard. This in itself leads to the absence of well-educated and qualified beauticians. Graduates lack basic skills and competencies which deprives them of the chance to be successful candidates in the competitive labour market and business world.

It is clear therefore that there is a gap between what the employers require and expect and what beauticians actually possess and can offer. Having spotted the gap it is therefore necessary to find the solutions to bridge it and produce qualified beauticians who can enter the market and compete healthily. As suggested by professors and professionals in the field the first things to be done is to set criteria for admission to the course and include practical experience in the programme of studies as it can help the students develop the essential/basic, technical, interpersonal, technological skills that recruiters and customers look for in a beautician.

6.2 Recommendations

It is obvious that the findings of the focus groups have clear overtones of and are in line with the relevant literature. The importance of practical experience which has long been discussed and stressed by scholars, as well as the need for the acquisition and possession of skills constitute the main focus of the focus-group discussions and hence the cornerstone for any proposals and suggestions to be devised.

The recommendations that follow are therefore derived from the findings and are rooted in the literature. These are divided in three sections: Recommendations to institutions regarding the introduction and enhancement of skills and competencies, recommendations regarding the ways/methods of gaining practical experience and finally recommendations for upgrading education through a third year of studies. In this last section I present the three-year programme of study of Cyprus college which run successfully for a year as a pilot programme and yielded positive results showing that it is necessary for it to continue. This is proved by the comments of the students who attended this pilot programme and the people who collaborated with them. The difference between the two-year degree and the three-year degree is noticeable and important.

a. Recommendations regarding the introduction and enhancement of skills and competencies

1. Instructors should arrange frequent visits of guest speakers in class so as to share their experiences with the students and teach them tips regarding management and leadership.
2. Instructors should encourage students to attend seminars on related subjects.
3. Institutions should consider designing a specific class/lesson at the beginning of the course in which students will be taught and exposed to the methods of writing an essay, conducting research and citing sources. Students seem to be unaware of the necessary skills of conducting research and gathering information so as to structure and write an essay and they often resort to the internet from where they copy chunks of information and present it as their own work.
4. Institutions should consider conducting interviews to students prior to their registration and enrolment to the course so as to check whether they can follow this course and have a prospect in the field of aesthetics
5. Visits to companies, trips abroad and seminars are mainly offered in the 2nd and 3rd years of study. The programming though of events should bear in mind the modernization of this science and the new issues that come up. This means that these will change from year to year.
6. Besides the main teacher who teaches a specific course, institutions should make sure that a second teacher/professor is present in the laboratories for better supervision of the students, for the detection of weaknesses and for answering any queries, enabling thus the acquisition of certain skills.

b. Recommendations regarding the ways/methods of gaining practical experience

1. Institutions should incorporate internships in their programmes of study. This means

that students should be placed in beauty salons to work for at least six months after which they will be expected to write a report describing their experience and stating what they have learned. This job can be paid or unpaid and employer should write a report assessing the student. The Cyprus College already gives the students the chance to work in the college Beauty Club. My recommendation then would be to allow the students the option to work in another beauty salon instead of the college Beauty Club. Students must again be asked to write a report describing their experience and the employer must again write a report assessing the student.

2. Students should be encouraged to get a part-time or summer job which can be paid or unpaid.
3. Students should be encouraged to join various organizations and clubs related to Aesthetics. Third year students should also be urged to consider registering in the Record of registered beauticians.
4. Students should be given the chance to do practice in Health Clinics. Visits to dermatology clinics will enable students to come into actual contact with skin problems. This makes them more skilled in Face Aesthetics. The same applies when students come into contact with patients who have undergone cosmetic surgeries.

c.Suggestions for upgrading Education: The programme of Study of Cyprus College

The programme of study of the Cyprus College was registered in the Ministry of Education and was implemented in the fall semester of 2007 as a two-year programme. Following its implementation it was evaluated-accredited in the summer of 2009 by the Council of Educational Evaluation – Accreditation (S.E.K.A.P). At the same time, seeing that the program was running successfully, I began to think of the possibility of a Higher Diploma, which would give graduates additional higher qualifications. Based on the evolution of Aesthetic science, the needs of the labour market required upgrading. It was impossible to add more material to be covered during the two years of studies and it was certainly impossible to replace it with something else. This, of course, was due to the fact that aesthetic knowledge, like any scientific knowledge, is built brick by brick and is based on previous

knowledge. So, I started adding new material in all subjects in aesthetics and I estimated that an extra semester offering theory and practice is needed, as well as one more semester during which students would do their internship-practical experience while doing research at the same time.

For the first semester, I considered adding a theoretical course Electrotechnology for deeper understanding of the courses Aesthetics since the physics course which included in the first semester needed enrichment given the new machinery introduced (photothermolysis, RF Mesotherapy) which were now included in the fifth semester. So I asked a group of fellow professors who had taught Physics in the program to help me set up the syllabus of the course since it was not my area of specialization.

As I already mentioned, two very important lessons are offered in the last semester:

- a. Practical Experience, which aims to expose students to a dynamic and thorough contact, on a theoretical and practical level, with the wider professional environment of the workplace – the beauty salons.
- b. The Dissertation, which provides the opportunity to the student to conduct research on an educational subject he/she wants to examine closely under the supervision of professors and advisors with relevant research interests and experience.

I present below the three-year programme of study as this was submitted for registration in the Ministry of Education and started running in the Fall Semester of 2009. All the students who graduated from the 2009 two-year programme attended this three-year programme. In the summer of 2010 the team responsible for Educational Assessment in S.E.K.A.P. visited our college, evaluated and approved our programme.

Table 6.2.1.: Cyprus College Two-year Programme: Diploma

1st YEAR		2nd YEAR	
COURSE	CREDI TS	COURSE	CREDI TS
<i>Semester 1</i>		<i>Semester 3</i>	
Anatomy & Physiology	3	Dietetics	2
Physics	1	Face Aesthetics II	3
Chemistry	1	Body Aesthetics II	3
Computer Science	2	Depilation II	3
Dermatology	2	Makeup	3
<i>English Language</i>	<i>1</i>	Hygiene & Safety	2
<i>Morphology & Colour</i>	<i>2</i>		
Manicure & Pedicure	3		
<i>Semester 2</i>		<i>Semester 4</i>	
Nosology	2	Face Aesthetics III	3
Cosmetology	2	Body Aesthetics III	3
Kinesiology	1	Professional Makeup	3
<i>Face Aesthetics I</i>	<i>3</i>	Aromatherapy	3
Body Aesthetics I	3	Aesthetic Medicine	1
Depilation I	3	Professional Ethics	1
Aesthetic Gymnastics	2	First Aid	1
		Principles of Management & Marketing	1

COMMENTS: Changes that took place in the three-year programme

1. *Face Aesthetics I* (4 hours) starts in the second semester in the two-year programme, whereas in the three-year programme includes *Face Aesthetics* in the first semester (1 hour) and *Face Aesthetics I* (3 hours) in the second semester.
2. *Morphology & Colour (4 hours)* is included in the first semester in the two-year programme whereas the three-year programme includes *Morphology & Colour (2 hours)* in the first semester and *Morphology & Colour (2 hours)* in the second semester.
3. A *Beauty Club* was established which involved free practice in the college workshops that the students were required to do. This constitutes a total of 250 hours of practice.

Table 6.2.2.: Cyprus College Three- year Programme: Higher Diploma**1st YEAR**

COURSE	CREDITS
<i>Semester 1</i>	
Anatomy & Physiology	3
<i>Face Aesthetics</i>	<i>1</i>
Physics	1
Chemistry	1
Computer Science	2
Dermatology	2
<i>English Language & Terminology</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Morphology & Colour</i>	<i>2</i>
Manicure & Pedicure	3
Cosmetology	2
<i>Semester 2</i>	
Nosology	2
Kinesiology	1
<i>Face Aesthetics I</i>	<i>3</i>
Body Aesthetics I	3
Depilation I	3
Aesthetic Gymnastics	2
Cosmetology I	2
Dermatology	2
Morphology & Colour I	2

2nd YEAR

COURSE	CREDITS
<i>Semester 3</i>	
Dietetics	2
Face Aesthetics II	3
Body Aesthetics II	3
Depilation II	3
Makeup	3
Hygiene & Safety	2
<i>Semester 4</i>	
Face Aesthetics III	3
Body Aesthetics III	3
Professional Makeup	3
Aromatherapy	3
Aesthetic Medicine	1
Professional Ethics	1
First Aid	1
Principles of Management & Marketing	1

3rd YEAR

COURSE	CREDITS
<i>Semester 1</i>	
Face Aesthetics III	3
Body Aesthetics III	3
Artistic Make-up	4
Specialised Depilation	3
Electro- technology	3
<i>Semester 2</i>	
Practical Experience	6
Dissertation	6

COMMENTS

- 1 In this programme of study the courses offered in the first year are different from those offered in the second year. The courses offered in each semester are also different. There are four courses which are the same (in terms of subject but not content and level) in both years and these are specialty courses (Body Aesthetics, Face Aesthetics, Make-up and Depilation). Total number of courses: 25.
- 2 The conclusion drawn from the above observation is that the syllabus for the specialty courses is taught in stages, which means that in the 2nd year the syllabus is completed. For example, upon completion of *the first year* the student is in a position to do facials whereas in the second year the student can apply therapies, use specialized ingredients and machines.
- 3 The courses of the first semesters, which are mainly theoretical in nature, prepare the students accordingly for a better understanding of those courses that will follow in the next semesters.
- 4 The teaching hours in the specialty courses consist, as a whole, of both theory and practice.

- 5 Assignments/Essays are written under the personal guidance of the professor in all the courses.
- 6 Some courses presuppose some others. For example: the Face Aesthetics course presupposes Dermatology, Nosology presupposes Anatomy and Physiology and the Body Aesthetics presupposes Anatomy courses, and cosmetology presupposes Chemistry.
- 7 The program offers 67 credits.
- 8 When a student fails a course, she has to repeat it. The passing mark is 60.

6.2.1 Innovations of the Programme of Cyprus College

By analyzing the courses in sections 5, 6 and 7, I present my own understanding of the aim of each course. This is the line that the Aesthetics programme of CYPRUS COLLEGE follows and I can check this from my position as a teacher and coordinator of the programme. I cannot determine if the course aims of other programmes of study are kept, but I can certainly present the innovations made by CYPRUS COLLEGE because of prior investigation and analysis of the other programmes of study presented in DPS4561.

- 1 Each student has her own storage locker for her personal belongings in a specially designed area, the dressing room. This enables the students to put on their uniforms before entering the laboratory and so no valuable time is lost, overcrowding is avoided and the students do not transfer any germs due to improper storage of the uniform. They just enter the room with only the necessary laboratory equipment for the needs of each course.
- 2 The Aesthetics laboratories are very modern not only in terms of laboratory equipment, consumables but also in terms of the rules concerning the hygiene of the place and in extension, the safety of the beautician and the client. There are sinks between two beds or armchairs and these serve two students. This makes the course safer and causes no delay (as in the case of using a common sink) because the use of water and antiseptic cleaning liquids is constant during the practice and training

involved in all the courses. In the laboratory designed for the Body Aesthetics there are showers also. A specially designed area for SPA services as well as a gym complement this laboratory.

- 3 The laboratories are designed to be used for practice by only eight pairs of students and there are different laboratories for each course tailored to the needs of each course.
- 4 Every week two students from each group are made responsible for the laboratory. The programme is specified from the beginning of the semester and changes every week. Through the simple responsibilities designated to them, the students learn about the needs of the Beauty Salon and its organization. If the students are left on their own to volunteer for this task, then they will never learn how to be organised. Voluntary work is very rare. At the beginning students were not forced to undertake these responsibilities. The result was that some students were undertaking more responsibilities than others and some undertook no responsibility at all. In the third year, this procedure is compulsory, so all the students are expected to do it. This is one of the innovations of the three-year programme.
- 5 The pairs of students designated for practice change every week on the basis of a programme announced at the beginning of each semester. Thus, the students have the opportunity to apply the techniques taught on various types of people (skin, body, hair, features). If this is not set as part of a programme, then the students hide behind personal preferences without considering the benefit of this task.
- 6 The phenomenon of absences due to immaturity is common in all the colleges. In aesthetic courses, however, the syllabus cannot be covered if the student simply studies by herself. In practical courses the students are allowed very few absences and only for serious reasons. This problem is dealt with by frequent assessments and I will explain what I mean by this. According to the college regulations, the students have a midterm and a final practice exam which corresponds to a predetermined grade percentage presented in the course outline. Another percentage of the grade refers to assignments and from this another percentage is taken for constant evaluations (during the lesson and practice) which are not announced to the students. The student knows from the beginning that she will have to pass through five evaluations-assessments per semester besides the two main ones (midterm and final exam), from which the top

four will be kept and considered as part of the grade percentage for assessments. So, a 4-hour absence per semester (per aesthetics course) does not cause any problem. But if a student is repeatedly absent, valuable hours are lost; for example, being absent for five days equals twenty hours out of the forty-eight teaching hours of the semester (fifty-six with the examinations). Obviously, the gaps created are many. The aim of such an evaluation tactic is not to punish the student if she does not obtain the required credit units, but to deter her from making unjustifiable absences, thus missing valuable information every time she is absent since the syllabus is covered quickly within this specified time limit. (There are different evaluation forms for all the courses. Two samples are attached. See Appendix 7)

7 The continuous upgrading in Aesthetics is necessary as it is a science which is constantly developing. Both the syllabus and the laboratories should be reviewed annually. This is a tactic that CYPRUS COLLEGE already applies. As far as the syllabus is concerned, this is continuously tested and additions are made. We review the syllabus following a discussion and evaluation by the professors. The college management is also willing and ready at any time to review and make additions to the laboratories, knowing from the outset that this is a costly field of studies which must offer to the students all the skills necessary for high-quality education in order to succeed.

8 The Beauty Club, (taking place in the 2nd year of studies – 250 hours) enables the students to apply their services to real clients in extra practice hours, beyond those offered in the programme of study. This is done in the college laboratories under the supervision and guidance of their professors. In this way, they get more familiar with their subject area. In order to make this compulsory for the students, students go through a sort of evaluation. In the second year of studies, they go through four evaluations-assessments instead of five during the lesson (as stated before in comment 7). The fifth evaluation-assessment is done during the Beauty club practice.

As already mentioned, Aesthetics is a constantly developing science. As such, it requires a continuous updating by the people involved in it, so innovations in the programme of study of Cyprus College will not stop here.

To begin with, I would like to state that there is a big possibility to include more subjects in the field of aesthetics in a few years, so the need to upgrade the syllabus will certainly arise at some point. This means longer duration of studies. Judging from other sciences that extended the duration of their studies so as to reach a high level of education (Nursing –two years of studies were extended to 3 and 4 twenty years ago), the same will probably happen with Aesthetics since it is a considerably new profession in relation to others such as medicine.

According to the content of the syllabus, in relation to the results of my research and the existing legislation, we have a very good program that meets the needs of the Cyprus labour market. Graduates of the three-year programme are way above graduates of other schools when it comes to skill related to practical experience. This was a point that was extensively commented on during the focus groups.

The field of Aesthetics, however, requires more qualifications than those discussed in the focus groups. Even if these may be of less importance, I believe they are remarkable and it is good to take them into consideration in the future when the possibility of creating an additional year of studies necessary for obtaining a degree in Aesthetics may arise.

These additional qualifications include the thorough knowledge of the English Language, the French and Italian Terminology and the main principles of organizing a beauty salon.

- English Language. Most students lack basic knowledge of the English language and the course English Language and Terminology offered at the College in the first semester is not enough. I suggest that this lesson be transferred to the 3rd semester where the students have a more thorough picture of what it is and so can better understand the terms used. This is a problem which has been also noticed by the professors who taught the course at times. If a four-year of studies is going to be created one day, then I suggest that this course be part of the syllabus for obtaining a degree in aesthetics. This will enable graduates to attend seminars abroad, which are necessary. They will also be able to read instructions on products or keep themselves updated through international press and the internet.
- French and Italian terminology. These are two languages spoken in countries that are well known and have a history in Aesthetics and Cosmetology. It would be useful if

students were able to understand the names of ingredients written on cosmetic products.

- Organizing a Beauty Salon. The students are exposed to basic knowledge on how to organize a beauty salon during the course Principles of Management and Marketing offered in the 4th semester. However, this is only a one-hour course and does not give the opportunity to the students to acquire the knowledge necessary to create a large Beauty salon or Spa. It is therefore necessary to include courses that belong to the field of Marketing or Business at some point.

Every science is like a living cell which develops and transforms according to new challenges and conditions. As such a science, Aesthetics also develops and transforms according to new challenges in the labour market. I believe that this project presents a new challenge in the area of aesthetics in Cyprus and is going to be of great value to Cyprus College and its students as it will fortify the profession of aesthetics and eliminate the opinion held by some people that the profession of aesthetics is underestimated. The truth is that it is a paramedical profession that deserves the respect and trust of the public. This is then our goal as Cyprus College: to provide students with skills and knowledge.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 6

The research questions of the study are divided in three sections:

Section 1: Definition of basic terms and ideas

1. What do we mean when we refer to 'skills and competencies' in relation to the field of aesthetics?
2. What do we mean by practical experience?
3. Do the programs offered at various colleges and especially at Cyprus College provide students with all the skills, competencies and experience needed in the business world?

Section 2: Importance of skills and competencies

1. How can students in aesthetics actually gain or improve their practical experience?
2. How can students use this experience so as to gain a competitive advantage over other students/graduates?
3. What is the effect of having strong experience on students when entering the real business world?
4. How can students be well prepared for a successful entry in the market place?

Section 3: Experts' point of view: Focus groups

The main questions to be answered in this section are:

1. What specific skills and competencies do recruiters really look for when hiring?
2. What methods do recruiters think Cyprus College should employ to help students develop such skills?

Questions that will be included in the interviews:

1. What do you understand by the terms (a) Aesthetics and (b) beautician
2. What qualifications will make a beautician capable of pursuing her profession successfully?

3. Which traits should not “accompany” a beautician?
4. To what degree do you think the profession of the beautician is a profession that can be easily pursued by anyone?
5. How would you describe the educational level of a beautician?
6. What services should a beautician be able to offer?
7. Do you think there are problems in aesthetic education in Cyprus? If so, what are they?
8. What are the specifications of a good Beauty Salon?
9. Did you detect any weakness in a professor of aesthetics?
10. Have you ever detected a weakness in a beautician?
11. How does a beautician ensure professional recognition?

- **Questions 1- 6 & 8 will be addressed to all groups: students, professors, customers, practitioners and the general public.**
- **Question 7 will be addressed to the students, professors and practitioners.**
- **Question 9 will be addressed to the students.**
- **Question 10 will be addressed to the customers, practitioners and general public.**
- **Question 11 will be addressed to the students, professors and practitioners.**

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