

GREEN EYED NATION: SKILLS ARE ENVIED MORE THAN BEAUTY

Date of issue 9 July 2007
Publication number 451
Embargo until 00.01 Monday 9 July 2007

Forget beauty or money – the real thing we envy in others is their skills, according to a new ICM poll, commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), out today. More than a third of people in the poll confessed to envying the skills and abilities of others, whereas only 4% felt jealous of other people’s beauty.

The survey marks the launch of a new campaign - ‘*Our future. It’s in our hands*’ - from Government to inspire people and business to improve their skill levels and ultimately support the target set by Lord Leitch in his review of skills for the UK to become a world leader in all levels of skills by 2020.

“Skills are fundamental to our future as individuals and a nation,” explains the new Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, John Denham. “This survey reveals a hidden desire that people want to improve their abilities. Given that millions people currently lack skills like basic maths and reading, we have to remind people about their ability to learn. The launch of today’s advertising campaign, is a major step towards achieving the Leitch ambition.”

Professor Raj Persaud, Consultant Psychiatrist at The Maudsley Hospital, supports the theory that envy can be a positive emotion. “If you are working with a colleague who seems more skilled than you, or you are playing sport against

someone who seems more able, then feelings of frustration and envy are natural,” he explains.

He continues: “This arises out of a process some psychologists refer to as social comparison. 'Upwardly directed' social comparison is where you compare yourself with those better than you. This can lead to feeling low about your own position in life - but only if you view your situation as not changeable by yourself. Our attitude to skills and the acquisition of them is vital - if you are inspired to raise your game by comparison with role models, then improving your own skills is a psychologically healthy response to this predicament.”

Many of those polled in the survey had strong ambitions for the future. Almost two in ten wanted to be an entrepreneur like Peter Jones, from Dragon’s Den. While only 1% wanted to be a reality TV star such as Jade Goody and just 2% wanted to follow in Kate Moss’s size 0 footsteps to become a model. The skilled professions including nursing scored well, with 14% of people aspiring to become a nurse or doctor and 10% to be a teacher.

“It is great to see that people recognise the tremendous skill involved in everyday vocations such as teaching and nursing,” says Chris Banks, Chairman, from the Learning Skills Council. “People are realising that fame is not all it is cracked up to be. This survey shows we value real skills and entrepreneurship over instant celebrity.”

Further questioning revealed that many people see skills as playing an integral part in feeling in control of their lives:

- 90% of respondents believe they have the ability to control their future using current skills or by learning new ones;

- 47% people felt that access to training to improve their skills would help them feel more in control of their lives, as opposed to changing their partner (9% and moving house (24%.

“The feeling of being in control has a lot to do with self confidence,” explains Dr.Raj Persaud. “Investing time and effort in new skills is a great way to build self confidence, so it’s very interesting to see that people are making this association and recognise that skills will help them reclaim control”.

-ends-

Notes to editors

This survey applies to England only. A full table of survey results can be found at the end of these notes.

For further information, contact:

Kate Lupton, Hill & Knowlton: 020 7413 3769

Pippa Strutt, Hill & Knowlton: 020 7413 3060 or mobile 07816 849305

Shavaun Glen, LSC 07766 441 866

Suzanne Ashe, LSC 07880 722 915

Ann Gill, LSC 07776 464 369

Learning and Skills Council (LSC)

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

this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.

Dr. Raj Persaud is available for interview to talk about the findings of this study. Interviews can be arranged by calling Kate Lupton, Pippa Strutt or Ellie Morley on the numbers above.

ICM

ICM Research interviewed a random sample of 1,725 adults aged 18+ by telephone between 13th -17th June 2007. Interviews were conducted across England and the results have been weighted to the profile of all adults. ICM is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. Further information at www.icmresearch.co.uk

A summary of the full results is as follows

What two things do you most envy about others?	
<input type="radio"/> Their ability/skill to do something you have always wanted to do	34%
<input type="radio"/> Money/wealth	29%
<input type="radio"/> An inner wellbeing	23%
<input type="radio"/> The perfect job	17%
<input type="radio"/> Academic credentials	11%
<input type="radio"/> A gorgeous partner	9%
<input type="radio"/> Beauty	4%
Who do you most aspire to be like?	
<input type="radio"/> An entrepreneur (e.g. Peter Jones/Richard Branson)	17%
<input type="radio"/> A nurse/doctor	14%
<input type="radio"/> A teacher	10%
<input type="radio"/> A footballer (e.g. David Beckham)	4%
<input type="radio"/> A model (e.g. Kate Moss)	2%
<input type="radio"/> A reality TV star (e.g. Jade Goody)	1%

<p>Which of the following would help you to feel more in control of your life?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improving my confidence levels ○ Easier access to more training to improve my skills ○ Getting a better job ○ Moving house ○ Changing my partner 	<p>54%</p> <p>47%</p> <p>39%</p> <p>24%</p> <p>9%</p>
<p>Which of the following statements do you believe most?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I don't have the ability to control my future through learning new skills ○ I have the ability to control my future through learning new skills ○ I am able to control my future using my current skills 	<p>7%</p> <p>33%</p> <p>58%</p>