Love’s Labours Redressed: Reframing Emotional Labour as an interactive process within Service Work

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Keywords: Emotional Labour, Service work, Teacher training, Teacher management

Abstract. Emotional labour was conceptualised by Hochschild [1] as a form of oppression on the service worker devised by a capitalist society; where workers’ physical actions and emotions were managed by their organisation. Although persuasive and revealing, there is a clear need for a more updated approach. It will be suggested that there has been little investigation into understanding the interactive nature of emotional labour eg. The emotions of the manager and the recipient and their effect on the emotional labourer and their performance. Moreover, there needs to be a distinction between the different types of emotional labourer, the waitress being different type of service worker to the nurse. (While this distinction is discussed in detail by Tang [2], for the purposes of this paper, the emotional labourers are the teacher or the nurse\(^1\) rather than the waitress or sales assistant.) This paper reviews the literature surrounding the effect of interaction on emotional labour performance and proposes that reframing emotional labour as an interactive concept has implications for emotional labour performance and design within nursing and teaching.\(^2\)

\(^1\) The Nurse and teacher are identified as the research participants whose findings formed the basis of this paper were mainly teachers, however, the findings apply as much to nurses, junior doctors, healthcare and teaching assistants using both the distinction employed by Harris [4] of “Professional” and “Occupational” (in this case the workers fall within the “Professional” definition) as well as qualitative similarities of the job within the professional hierarchy which the researcher has established through working within the teaching profession for 12 years and currently supporting various departments within a hospital.

\(^2\) The paper is summarised in the following video submitted for the 2013 International “Dance your PhD” competition and the author is performing as one of the pupil:  

http://vimeo.com/75050863