

THE INDEPENDENT

ON SUNDAY

Suddenly, training to be a stylist is very à la mode

Fashion advisers, now stars in their own right, are tempting others to try the career for size

By Kate Youde

A growing trend for styling, from the couture catwalk via television to the high street, has prompted a rush of would-be fashion gurus looking to makeover their careers.

As programmes such as Gok Wan's *How to Look Good Naked* have raised public awareness of stylists, increasing numbers of consumers are enlisting professionals to tell them what to wear. Many stylists, including *Sex and the City*'s Patricia Field and Rachel Zoe, who has a reality TV show and whose clients include Nicole Richie, have become celebrities in their own right and inspired people to enter the profession.

Increasingly, new recruits include highly qualified women who have left the rat race during the economic downturn to set up as stylists, said



Veronique Henderson, creative director of Colour Me Beautiful.

Alex Longmore, who has styled celebrities including the models Jerry Hall and Twiggy, is just the latest to capitalise on the growing trend, launching Style School in London in July. The business will host £795 one-week and £3,600 six-week courses for



Alex Longmore, inset below left, who is setting up a stylists' school, has dressed models Jerry Hall, far left, and Twiggy

budding stylists, covering everything from trend-spotting to dressing celebrities. Ms Longmore, who claims the number of "real women" seeking her services has trebled this year, believes styling is "having its moment".

This seems to be borne out by London College of Fashion, which has seen a "huge rise" in interest for its foundation degree in fashion styling and photography. There were 27 applications for every place this year, compared with four in 2008. The college is anticipating further demand by launching this autumn a degree in creative direction for fashion, which covers styling and the broader fashion industry. It has received an "unprecedented number of enquiries".

Tony Glenville, creative director of the college's school of media and communications, said people realised it was easy to become a stylist in a limited way but a range of skills was

needed to create a career.

Courses in styling, according to Wan, have given the calling a "very good profile and highlighted just how difficult it is". He added that attitudes to fashion have changed and that having a stylist was part of that trend: "Everyone can have a stylist. All they have to do is go to a department store and make friends with the woman who works there."

"I don't think there's anything wrong with that. If anything, it is stopping us from wasting money on stuff we probably wouldn't wear."

