

Education matters

All change in the classroom



Jennifer Wayte, President of FHT, looks at why the Wolf Report may result in more therapy training shifting towards the private sector

The Wolf Report*, much of which has been taken up by the government, has radical proposed changes that will have far-reaching implications. For instance:

Qualified further education lecturers will be able to teach in school classrooms on the same basis as qualified school teachers. This requires a change in the law.

Rules on allowing industry professionals to teach in schools will be clarified in time for the coming academic year.

Vocational qualifications offered by a regulated awarding body will be accessible to 14- to 19-year-olds.

Established, high-quality vocational qualifications that have not been accredited will be allowed in schools and colleges in September 2011.

Press reports state that some further education (FE) colleges providing higher education (HE) via links with a validating university have been told they must charge the same fees as the university in order to avoid competition within the partnership. While annual university fees are yet to be confirmed, these are expected to start from £9,000 in 2012.

Some far-sighted colleges are looking for new partners to avoid such high charges for their students. It is expected that most FEs offering university degrees will charge an average annual fee of £6,000 in 2012.

With FE colleges expected to follow the universities in increasing course fees by 2013, a huge drop in take up is expected, with many colleges decreasing staff and choice of courses – something I know many department heads are already reviewing. In addition, a six per cent cut in current education funding for FE colleges is on the horizon.

In my opinion – and that of many of my colleagues and the powers that be in education – it will be the private education sector that picks up student business. It will, however, be a buyer's market, where value for money, high standards, quality courses and teaching will win (which is good news for those offering FHT-accredited qualifications). Uptake in private colleges receiving validation of university degrees is also increasing, but a very firm hand regarding standards is being maintained.

Finally, it is important to note that the leaving age for compulsory education will rise to 18 under the Education and Skills Act 2008. This will take effect in 2013 for 16-year-olds and 2015 for 17-year-olds. What impact will this have?

* www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00031-2011



Holistic therapy tutor Mariette Lobo, MFHT, explains why she thinks an increasing number of colleges and universities are dropping their complementary therapy courses

'In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity' – Albert Einstein

Those teaching complementary therapies in further or higher education will be aware of cutbacks and course closures. Why is it happening? I believe there are a number of factors:

Funding issues

Further and higher education sectors in both England and Scotland have seen funding (bursaries to students and funding for courses) for adults aged 19-plus slashed by almost 20 per cent. As most complementary therapy courses attract mature students not school leavers, this is a real problem as it means – in most cases – prospective students need to fully fund their training.

Limited awareness of the range of potential students

The potential of complementary therapy as a career for mature students is neglected. Courses are not targeted and publicised to this group. Courses need to be more accessible to this target market and could, for example, offer flexible timetabling to suit students with other commitments.

Poor marketing

Holistic therapies are often housed within hair and beauty departments in the same college, though the aims of the two are different and, in some ways, conflict. The remedial intent of complementary therapies is not, perhaps, as easy to market and suffers by comparison. In schools, hair and beauty and complementary therapies may be too closely identified, leading to confused motivations in school students applying for places on complementary therapy courses.

Limited vision of employability

Opportunities for employment within the care, nursing, sport, and health and well-being sectors have not been sufficiently identified and publicised. Integration of aspects of complementary therapy courses into these sectors – and vice versa – need to be effectively investigated in order to exploit new markets.

Lack of business training

Students generally aspire to join a therapy practice or set up as self-employed. The risks are well known and the failure rate of new businesses is high. Colleges could easily add an element in business training to their complementary therapy courses. Standalone business units are available, but not in context, tending to follow a 'one size fits all' policy.

Poor representation in the media

The benefits of complementary therapy, particularly in college work-related projects (via community-based student placements), is undermined by media misrepresentation, which highlights what can go wrong rather than what can go right. This leaves the public and prospective students with a poor impression of the value of complementary therapies.

I would like to conclude by asking other therapy tutor members of the FHT:

How do you think all this will impact on our industry?

Does it present an opportunity for private training providers?

Many of our complementary therapy courses are allied to hair and beauty. Is it time to work with departments that better reflect our ethos, practice and achievements?

Do awarding and professional membership bodies need to widen their remit beyond their traditional focus on increasing membership (professional bodies) and selling courses (awarding bodies)? Do they need to engage more proactively and develop stronger links with further and higher education so they work in more collaborative ways with these sectors?

Please email your comments to kyoung@fht.org.uk writing 'Education matters' in the subject box.