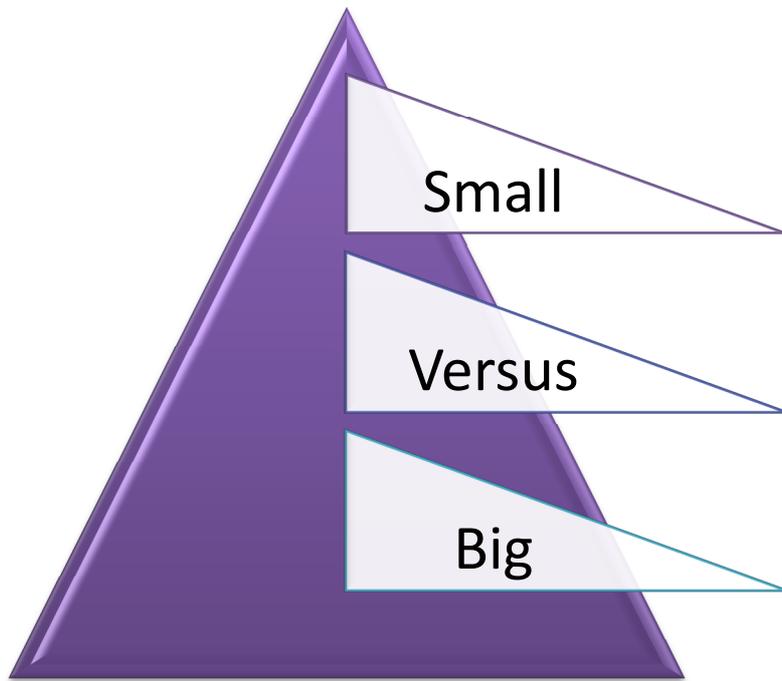


# The Beauty & Holistic Industry



*Which way do you prefer to train?*

*“In small private training schools or in larger FE colleges”*

An Action Research Paper

Looking

At Individual Learners Preferences

By Helen Vickers

# **Contents**

## **Introduction:**

The Key Features and Purpose of Action Research.....	Page 2
The Action Research Cycle.....	Page 2 - 3
A Model for Action Research.....	Page 4

## **Initiating Action Research:**

Justification for Action Research in this area.....	Page 4
Intervention Strategies and Timescales.....	Page 5
Ethical, Political and Confidentiality considerations.....	Page 6

## **Research Methodology:**

Appropriate and relevant literature for referencing.....	Page 7
Quantitative and Qualitative data collection.....	Page 8/9
Methods selected for research in this area.....	Pages 10

## **Data Collection:**

Data collected and ways of analysis.....	Pages 11 -12 – 13 – 14 - 15
Data Analysis: .....	Page 16

## **Research Conclusion:**

Results and Conclusions.....	Page 17
Recommendations and Actions.....	Pages 17 - 18

<b>References &amp; Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>Page 19</b>
---	----------------

# The Key Features and Purpose of Action Research

Action research has several key features and purposes below are examples:

- collective and collaborative self-reflective enquiry
- undertaken by participants in social and professional situations
- to make their own practices more rational, coherent and satisfying
- Action research enhances participants' understandings of their own professional practices and the situations in which they are involved in

The purpose of my action research is to explore the relationship between the delivering of training in small training centres and larger centres (colleges). I will present the Benefit & Disadvantages as gathered from the experiences of the individual learners and of others, for example, teachers and assessors. My research is not necessarily intended to improve the teaching practices in either but to highlight the concerns that financial profits maybe shadowing learning outcomes.

Whilst carrying out my action research in my specialised area and practice, my research will utilise several methods using a varied range of skills. These methods will indefinitely involve valuable input from others, which lead to why action research is often referred to as P.A.R (Participatory Action Research).

*"A primary purpose of action research is to produce practical knowledge that is useful to people in the everyday conduct of their lives. A wider purpose of action research is to contribute through this practical knowledge to the increased well-being - economic, political, psychological, spiritual - of human persons and communities, and to a more equitable and sustainable relationship with the wider ecology of the planet of which we are an intrinsic part."*  
(Reason P & Bradbury H, Handbook of Action Research, Sage Publications, 2001, p2)

## The Action Research Cycle

In reality, the action research cycle may not be a straight forward process. The reason for this is that the research activities usually overlap, and initial plans quickly become obsolete in the light of learning from new research findings and experiences. With this in mind the process of planning needs to be constantly reviewed and evaluated to ensure beneficial outcome.

The action research cycle starts with an idea of research resulting to possible action for change, debate or improvement, the actions of the cycle can be shown with a simple diagram. Reviews and evaluation following the completion of the research will undoubtedly present the need for further research. This is mainly due to the evolution of the holistic and beauty industry, where one question/issue is addressed; the answer will often generate a new question.

## The Action Research Cycle continued..

**Identify Issues For Research** – Consider if the research is a benefit on a personal level and or a professional level this will help identify the basis of the research issue.

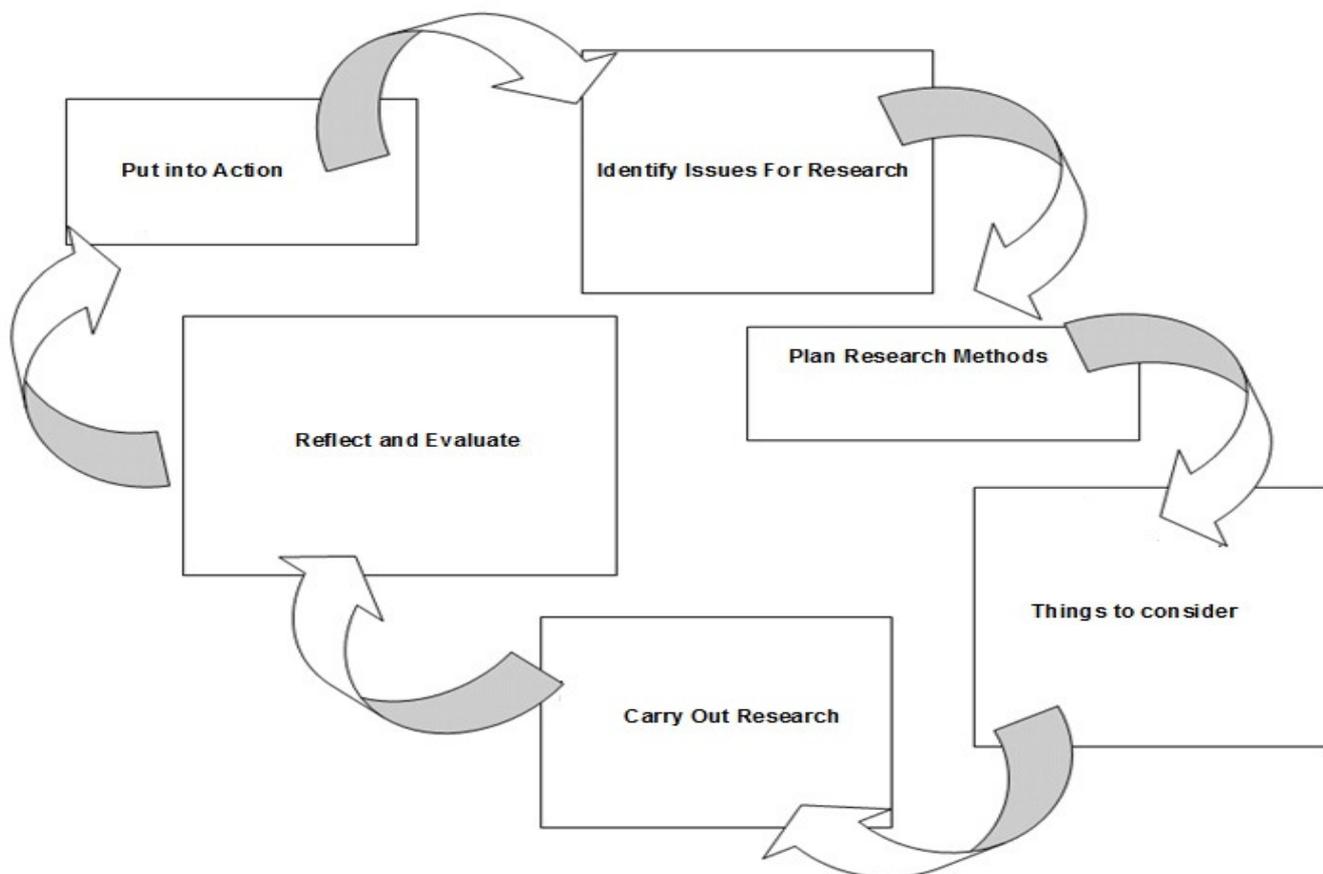
**Plan Research Methods – Things to consider** - What methods are readily available to you, do any of your chosen methods require outside resources and will the methods used contribute to your research on many levels or just one.

**Carry Out Research** - With your methods discussed and prepared set a disciplined timescale for you to carry out the research. Prepare a plan to help facilitate this process and have everything in place ready to carry out a professional research process.

**Collect, Analyse all Data and Formulate an Action Plan** – Look at the ways you collected your data, put these into a format that allows you to analyse all your finding in a fair and honest way.

**Reflect and Evaluate, Put into Action** – Look at all your results, consider what the advantages and the disadvantages are linked to your findings, both on a personal level and a professional level. Access the possibility of putting your findings into action and the openings for more research, if needed.

## A simple Action Research Cycle



## A Model for Action Research

When adopting any model for action research you must be prepared to adapt and diversify as you proceed. Most ideas/models of research are aimed at providing improvements and can become problematic as your personal views, beliefs and values may start to over influence aims and outcomes.

A good model to work within is the Look – Think & Act model.

**Look** - building a picture and gathering information.

**Think** – interpreting and explaining. When evaluating we analyse and interpret the situation. We reflect information gathered. Look at areas of success and issues or problems.

**Act** – resolving issues and problems. In evaluation we judge the worth, effectiveness, appropriateness, and outcomes of those activities. We act to formulate solutions to any problems. (Stringer 1999: 18; 43-44;160)

*<http://www.infed.org/research/b-actres.htm> Exhibit 1: Stringer on community-based action research*

## Initiating Action Research

Justification for Action Research in this area:

Training within the complementary therapy and beauty industry has been an area in which over the last 5 years has positively boomed. As a result of this the ways in which training is delivered has evolved. What I want to establish is whether this evolution is for the better or worse.

Since the promotion of the PTTLS qualification qualified therapists have had much easier access to gain a basic teaching qualification that has in turn then led them to be able to either gain employment in an established training environment, or set up their own training service. In particular the latter is where the boom has really occurred.

Using my own journey of training as my initial comparison, 9 years ago the high majority of training was carried out within established colleges of further education offering excellent facilities, assisted funding, and training was delivered over a period of a full school year (32 weeks). This was all delivered by a tutor in a classroom environment.

Moving forward to current day the same training can be attained with small private providers in a matter of days and in some instances even online. Is this causing a decline in standards? From an employers' perspective we have accommodated students from further education colleges for work experience and have seen standards vary drastically between providers. Why is this?

Through my research I hope to identify the key areas that give cause for concern in both learning environments along with what works well. Ultimately this information could be used to help shape learning environments in the future.

## Intervention Strategies and Timescales

### Justification for Action Research in this area;

The strategy of my research will serve to identify possible opportunities to improve training services and standards and identify problem areas, my research will deal with both as important opportunities for improvement.

I will publish my findings so that other members of the industry can adopt new ways of working in order to promote better standards throughout. The involvement of others will be the main aim of my strategy relating to the training experience and outcomes; this in turn could help raise standards throughout the industry.

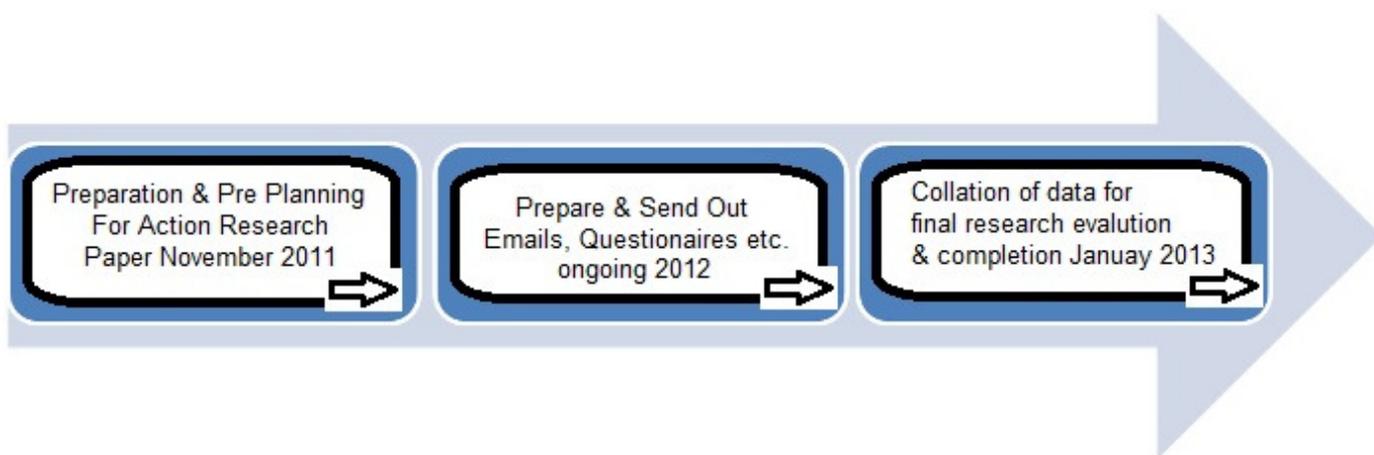
The subject for this paper has been an on-going source of interest for me for a number of years, but the research element has only come in to action since the commencement of my DTLLS course (November 2011). With this being considered, this research paper will be completed with a total timescale of just over year.

### Intervention Strategies and Timescales;

Having been a qualified therapist within my specialised field for over 7 years my approach and techniques used during and relating to my action research will help and promote awareness of options relating to training. The strategy of my research will serve to identify possible opportunities to the implementation of the knowledge of choice.

Initial choices made during consideration of undertaking training at all and any levels within any learning environment, i.e. FE & private providers, can have an effect on the individuals learning outcome and their overall performance.

When my research findings are published on the chosen social sites, I believe that it will encourage new ways of thinking for potential learners in order that they too can benefit from the findings, and if needed implement their own strategies regarding learning.



## **Ethical, Political and Confidentiality Considerations**

My subject for research has to take into account all and any Ethical, Political and Confidential concerns. In order to maintain professionalism throughout I will develop my guidelines before commencing my research, I consider the following to be of great importance relating to research ethics. Ethics both personal and professional, within the beauty and holistic industry, can be described as the rules or morals of professional behaviour. This means that the behaviour of a professional should be;

- Respectful
- Competent
- Responsible
- Have Integrity

Due to the subject of my research, I feel the political aspect of this paper will appertain more to that of individual private training providers more so than further education colleges, any of my findings will be detailed in a balanced and unbiased nature thus by working within the above detailed guidelines there should be no conflicting issues or concerns.

Due to the complexity of this subject confidentiality of any and all responses is very important with this in mind I will put into action an optional “anonymous” response system. Each respondent will be made fully aware that unless they request their name/details will not be used within any data/results. In order to maintain an ethical approach to my research I will observe and work within the following guidelines.

- To identify any relevant issues of individual learners
- What if any are the parameters of the research
- What legal guidance exists relating to training extra
- What FE and Private Training Centres advice
- Is there guidance available from the industry relevant bodies

## Research Methodology

### Appropriate and relevant literature for referencing;

Appropriate and relevant literature for referencing information relevant to my research will come from postings on social media sites, beauty blogs, email requests to industry based magazines and web site news/articles.

A varied approach to the methods I use to gather information and produce surveys will present both formal and informal views of therapists, salon owners, trainers/tutors and other professionals within the holistic and beauty industry.

One of my main research methods will be to survey our own student data base; this will help me assess comments, thoughts and experiences from learners over a large age range and social background.

I will also use the forums on Salon Geek, this site is a place where therapists and other professionals from the industry share their thoughts and concerns on all subject of the beauty and holistic industry.

Being linked directly with therapists via Salon Geek allows me to evaluate the views of the majority rather than a majority in an up to date manner.

Although magazine articles relating to training within the industry tend to be edited more to promote a certain training provider they do provide a reference source to what is currently available to learners. Two of the main magazines I subscribe to and read are The Guild and Choice Health Magazine.

Web site articles again can be valuable source of referencing for training information, such sites are The CMA (Complementary Medical Association) and The Beauty Guild.

[www.salongeek.com/](http://www.salongeek.com/)

The world's largest community of **Salon** Professionals

[www.choicehealthmag.com/](http://www.choicehealthmag.com/)

Take your therapy skills and business to the next level. Find out what the experts say and read.

[www.the-cma.org.uk/](http://www.the-cma.org.uk/)

Promoting ethical, responsible, professional complementary medicine to the public and the medical profession.

[www.beautyguild.com/](http://www.beautyguild.com/)

The official website of **the Guild** of Beauty Therapists

## Quantitative and Qualitative data collection

In order to gather a broad spectrum of information for my research I will utilise a quantitative collection process to target a majority audience. I will use the following methods of data collection techniques.

### Quantitative Techniques

\*\*Pre/post learner questionnaires for new learners

\*\*Existing Databases questionnaires

Industry Surveys

I believe that these\*\* techniques will provide me with responses that are not affected by business profit etc., however the later technique will involve actual training providers and may be influenced by financial profits.

All data collection will be collated and calculated as a statistical percentage rather than individual's experiences. Unfortunately a disadvantage may be that a percentage of responses may be falsified by respondents that don't have real concerns and or have had individual bad experiences during training. This method of data collection may not to provide me with an in depth portrayal of validity, however it still remains important to my research.

Taking the above in to the equation I will also use a qualitative method to collect information. This information will be collated from actual training providers and FE colleges, along with industry therapist insurance representatives. It will help provide a different prospective relating to views within the actual industry.

Qualitative data is simply about collecting people's feedback. The ways I used for & during my action research were as follows:

**Feedback Forms/Questionnaires:** A simple way to collect people's thoughts & suggestions.

**Online:** Social networking sites and forums are just as legitimate for collecting qualitative data. I used the sites of Salon Geek & Facebook.

**Face to Face:** a great way of collating qualitative input is through talking to previous learners and other tutors in both smaller training centres & FE colleges.

Given that qualitative and quantitative data and methods can have different strengths and weaknesses, by using both methods I will aim to provide more reliable information for use in the evaluation of my research and summary of any possible recommendations.

Qualitative and quantitative methods have similar strengths and weaknesses, below are detailed the brief examples of strengths and weaknesses of both.

**Strengths:**

Useful for studying a limited number of responses in depth

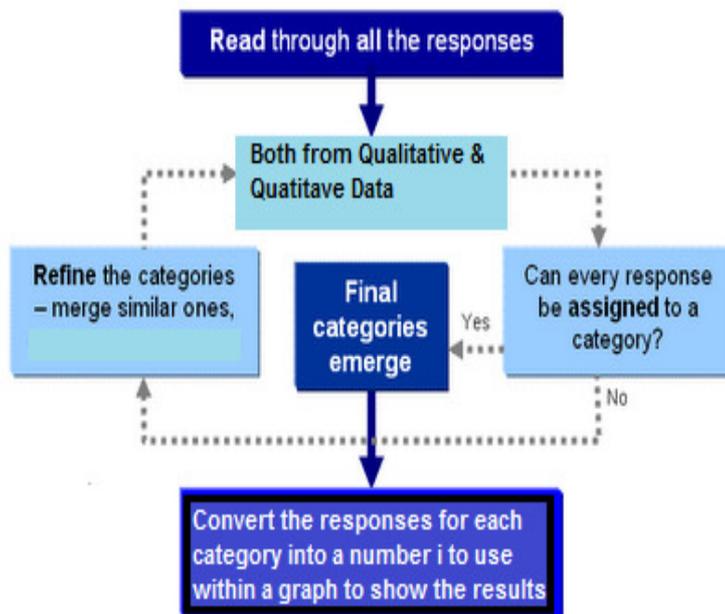
Allows cross-category comparisons and analysis

Presents a good understanding & description of peoples personal experiences & thoughts

**Weaknesses:**

Data analysis is often time consuming

The results can be easily influenced by the researcher’s personal biases and beliefs



The categories used are detailed below.

- Private Training
- FE Colleges
- Personal Touch
- Funding
- Smaller Classes
- Access to government fund
- Concessions
- Better resources
- Marketing Budgets
- No Comments

For both qualitative & quantitative data I used the above flow chart method as a way of analysis

## **Methods selected for research in this area**

To obtain information for the collation of my research I will use four different methods of collection.

1 - I will use a basic questionnaire style email; this email will be sent to 150 email questionnaires, to randomly select past TSL students, email inquiries from non-enrolling learners, with the TSL and to individual therapists throughout the UK both in small and large businesses. I estimate that due to email spam software systems, only 30% to 60% of those emailed will reply, however all responses and non-responses will be counted. Below is an example of the email questionnaire.

Hi,

I am doing my action research paper for my DTLS course and am collating opinion. What I would like to ask you is for your professional opinion to which way do you prefer to train: in small private training schools or in larger FE colleges.

I would love to hear your personal thoughts on all the above, all replies will be kept and recorded as anonymous. If you'd like to add any further comments in addition to the direct questions I'd be very grateful. My findings will be published in due course.

Thank you in advance – Helen Vickers

**Please spare a few moments to add your comments and thoughts to the questions below.**

**1 – Do you prefer training in small private training schools or in larger FE colleges?**

**2- Could you please give your reasons to why you prefer that particular way.**

**3- What challenges do you think smaller providers face that larger providers don't**

**4 - If you are a small training provider what do you feel are your biggest challenges in providing a training service?**

2 – I have enlisted the help of the industry recognised company Beauty Finder; they have agreed to include my request for feedback in their next newsletter the following;

***Hi I am doing my action research paper for my DTLS course and am collating opinion. What I would like to ask you all is in your opinion which way do you prefer to train: in small private training schools or in larger FE colleges. In your answer could you also include why you prefer that particular way. If you are a small training provider what do you feel are your biggest challenges in providing this service? I thank you all in advance for your participation.***

***Thanks in advance Helen Vickers please email your comments to TSLHolistic@aol.com***

My findings will be published by Beauty Finder in due course.

The above will hopefully help generate a wide responses and comments from many sources, thus presenting views from people at all levels within the industry. These responses will serve to provide information for evaluation both on a quantitative and a qualitative level.

3 – Verbal responses will be obtained and recorded on a personal level. This information will be gathered by speaking to qualified therapists as well as those currently undertaking training. I will also be talking to other training providers.

4 – Social media sites and industry related blog sites will be used to obtain immediate response to my research. An example of this is detailed below, as collected from our company page on the social site “Facebook”.

***Helen Vickers [TSL Holistic & Beauty Training Centre](#)***

***Hi I am doing my action research paper for my DTLS course and am collating opinion. What i would like to ask you all is in your opinion which way do you prefer to train: in small private training schools or in larger FE colleges. In your answer could you also include why you prefer that particular way. If you are a small training provider what do you feel are your biggest challenges in providing this service? I thank you all in advance for your participation. Thanks x***

Below are examples of actual comments already received.

**MC** Small training schools, more informal, less daunting, the training feels more one to one and personal, more likely to have the confidence to get involved and ask questions... xxx

**LHK** 1, small centre. 2, more personal and a better environment. 3, I think you learn more at a smaller centre as the ratio of students is lower. 4, smaller places are more appealing to people with low confidence, big collages only see you as a number where as smaller centres offer a more personal approach to learning x

**MP** I prefer training through a college. My last course was on an Adult Education Course and that was a nightmare.. due to the lack of knowledge of the tutors. I dare say private is good and faster but can be rather costly

All the above methods will provide a wide variety of research data and will help me evaluate, understand and reach a conclusion for any recommended actions.

## **Data Collection**

### **Data collected and ways of analysis;**

My Action Research data will be collected and collated using my four chosen methods –

- 1 - Email Responses from targeted (Past students) and random none and qualified therapists
- 2 - Industry recognised company Beauty Finder member survey
- 3 – Verbal responses will be obtained and recorded on a personal level
- 4 – Social media sites and industry related blogs (Obtained from posting questions in different formats on a variety of sites)

Due to the possibility of receiving “No” responses, to either the email and or survey methods of my data collection, my collated data will have a section titled “No Opinion” on the graphs.

This is the best options for me to take as I cannot give or assume the choices of those not replying to my request, for my research.

Each methods result will be shown in the form of a separate pie chart or graph relating to each of my chosen research methods. Once all data has been collected and transferred to the graphs I will analysis all the results with the final graph showing all the collated data as one.

I will also show an overall graph/analysis relating to set questions from the questionnaires. As the questions may produce a wide selection of ways of explain the answers I will group them into the following:

- 1 – Do you prefer training in small private training schools or in larger FE colleges?

**Shown and detailed as**

**Private Training Schools**

**FE colleges**

- 2- Could you please give your reasons to why you prefer that particular way.

**Shown and detailed as**

**Personal Touch**

**Funding**

**Smaller Classes**

3- What challenges do you think smaller providers face that larger providers don't

**Shown and detailed as**

**Access to government funding**

**Concessions**

**Better resources**

4 - If you are a small training provider what do you feel are your biggest challenges in providing a training service?

**Shown and detailed as**

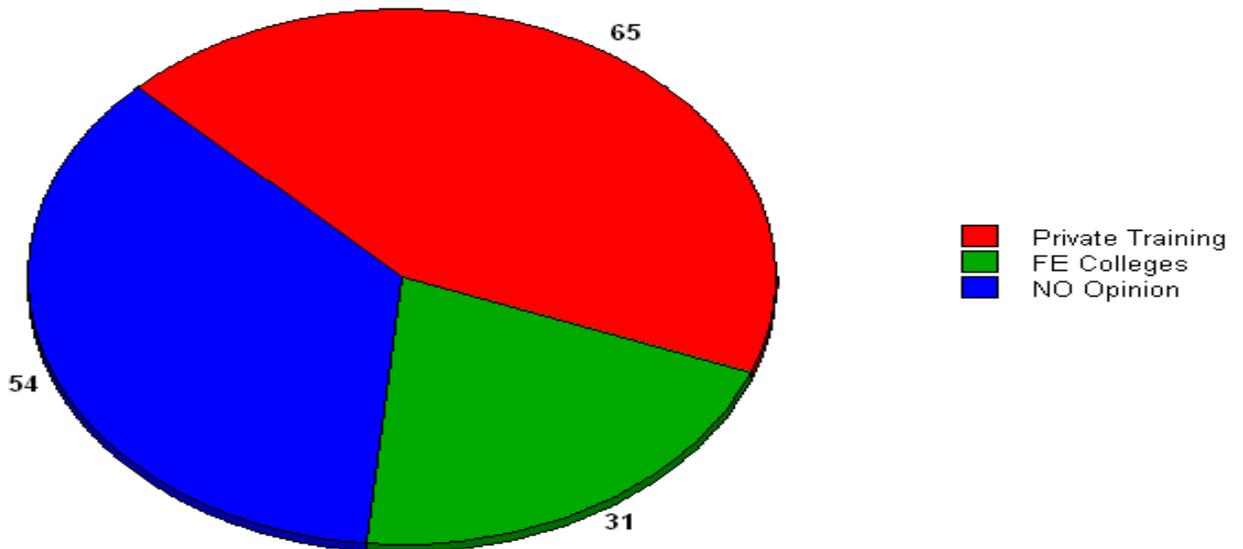
**Marketing Budgets**

**Access to government funding**

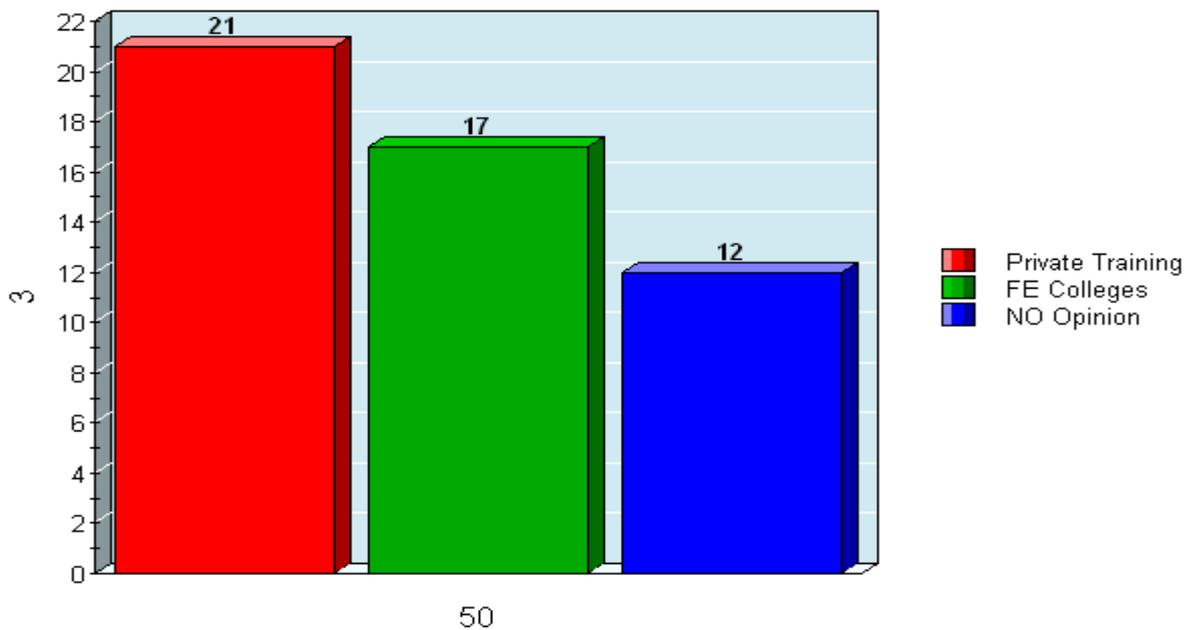
1 - Email Responses from targeted (Past students) and random non and qualified therapists

I sent out a total of 150 email questionnaires, between May 2012 and January 2013 to randomly select past TSL students, email inquiries from non-enrolling learners, with the TSL and to individual therapists throughout the UK. Each email recipient was given 30 days to respond from the date of sending the questionnaire; no replies were counted and recorded as no opinion.

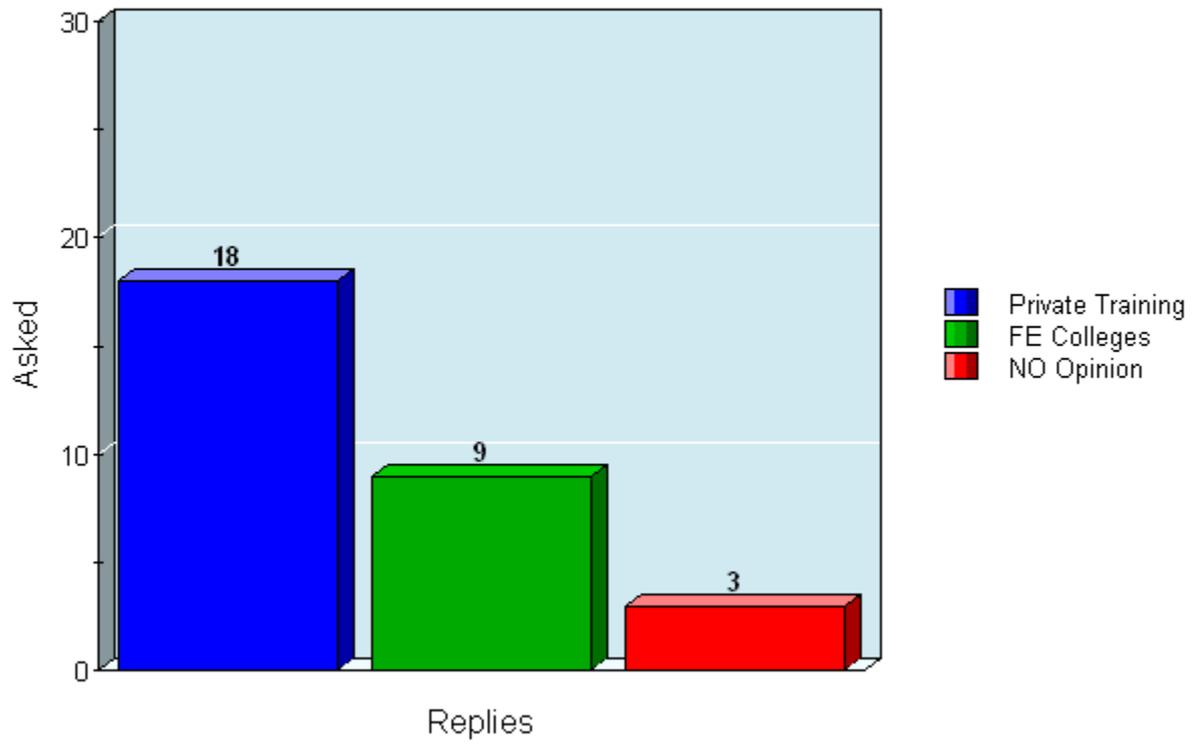
**Email Responses 150**



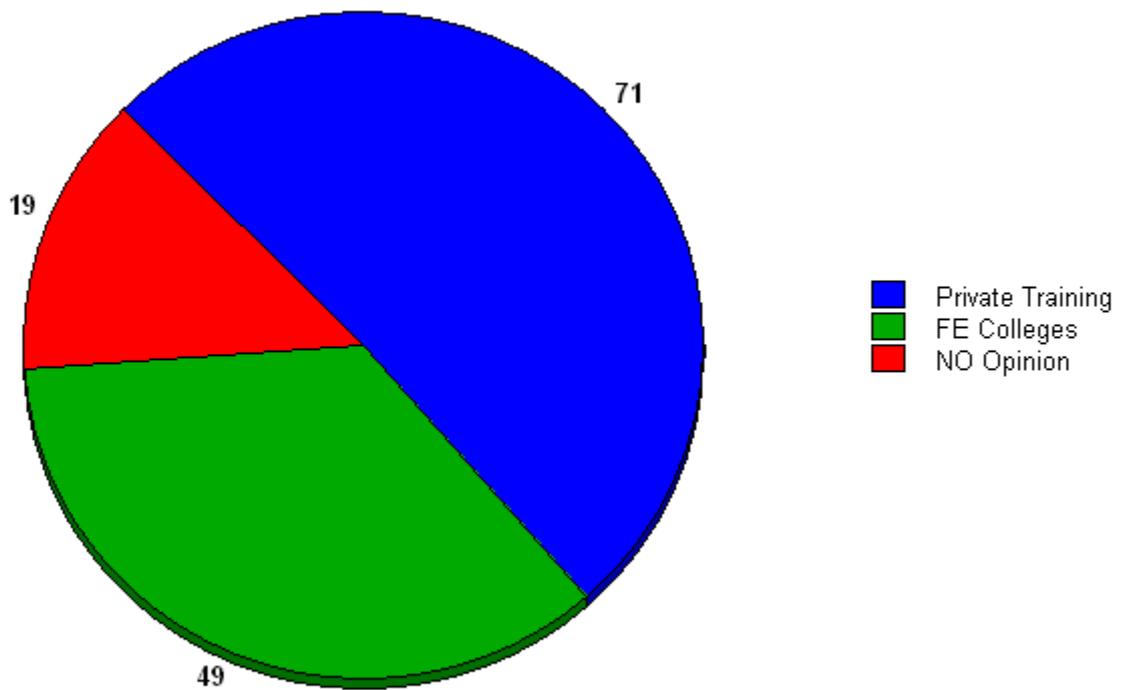
**Industry member survey**



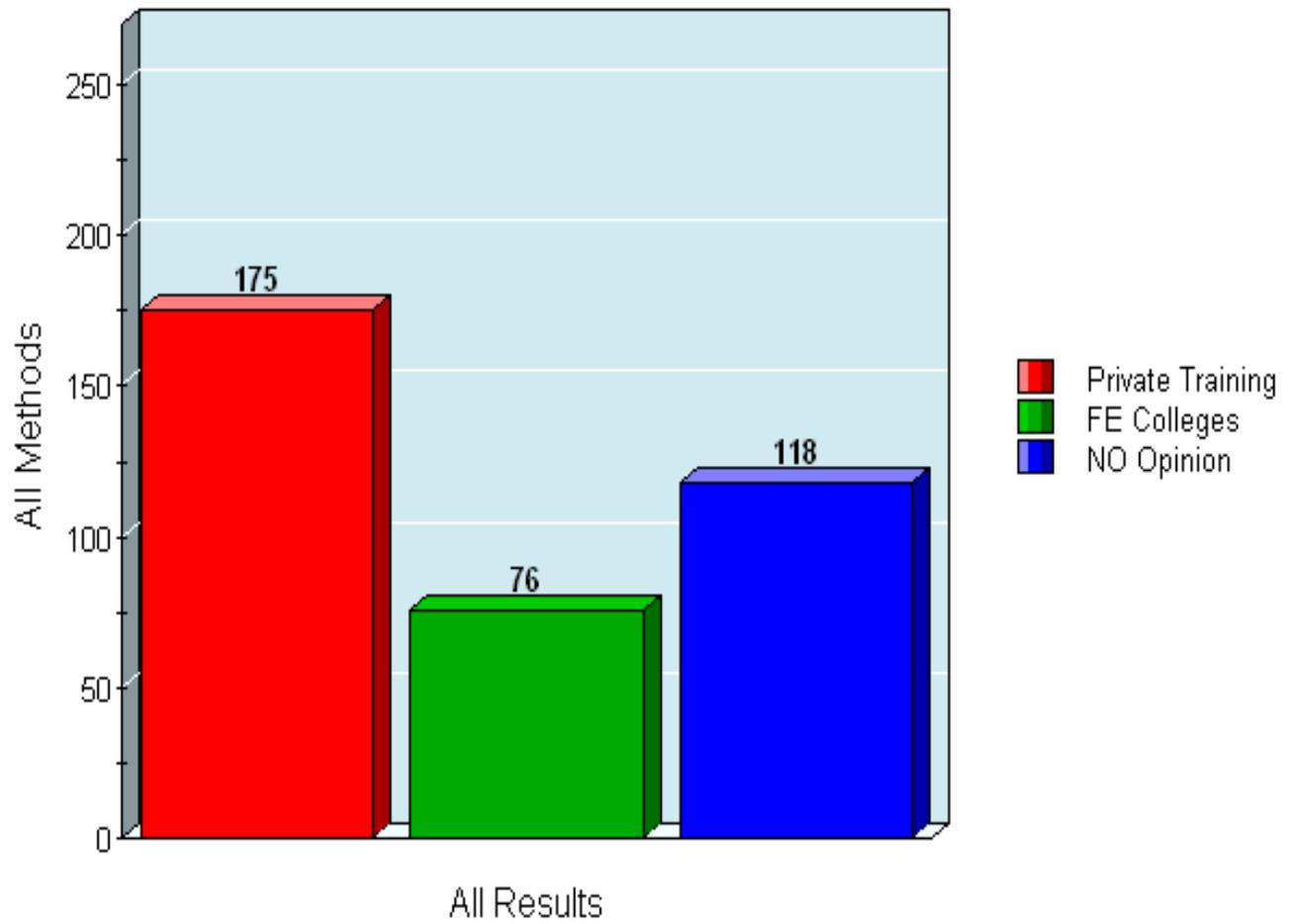
## Verbal Responses



## Social media sites and industry related



## Combined Results



## Data Analysis

Following the collation of my collected data via my chosen methods and resources I will now analysis the results.

I have shown the overall results relating to set questions from the email questionnaires, and questions asked both face to face and on social media sites. As the questions asked produced a wide selection in the ways of explain the answers I have grouped them into the following segments:

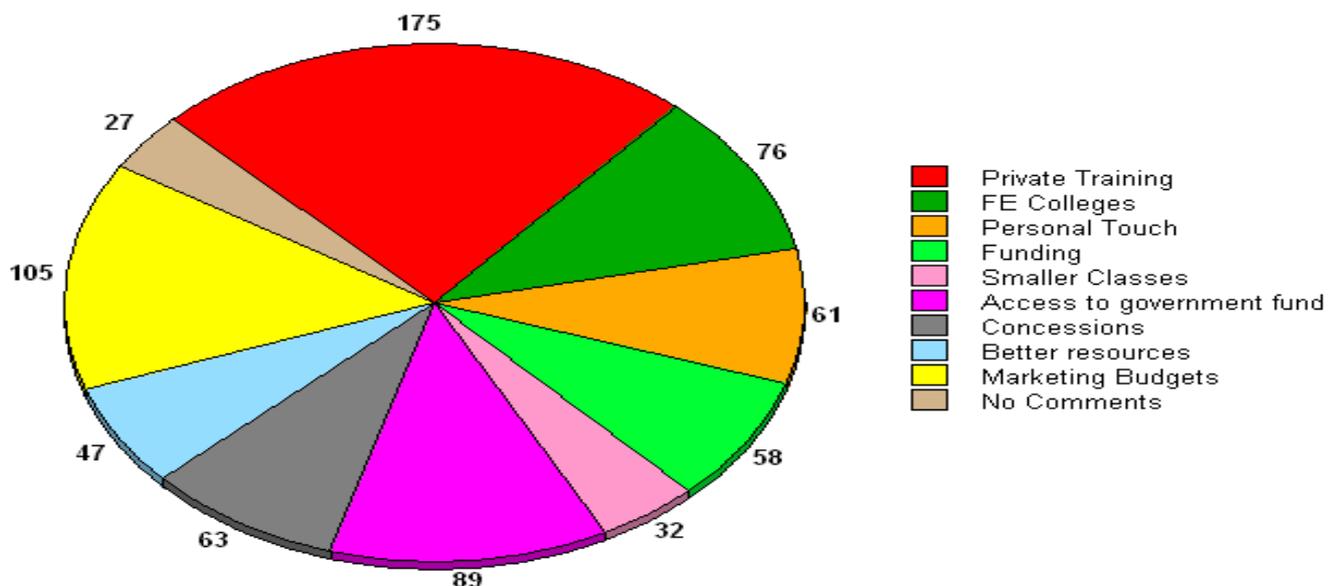
Given the different types of methods of collection used for data collection and the responses received it is better to collate all the responses as a whole. Due to the responses being collated in a numerical format analysis will be best conducted through the use of a graph.

The aim of the analysis will be to format a graph that takes into consideration all the results/responses given. My final graph has been divided in to 10 sections, relating to the 4 initial questions asked” No comments have been counted and included within the graph.



All the responses were read and the responses to the initial 4 questions asked were placed into the categories as detailed on pages 11 and 12. A total of 773 answers were given, in response to the 251 people being actually questioned through one of the chosen methods.

### Questionnaire Responses



## Research Conclusion

Having spent many months compiling, gathering and analysing the data I have collected I have been able to conclude that the majority of the people questioned prefer to undertake learning within smaller private training facilities. The people that expressed a preference of undertaking learning within FE Colleges were mainly aged 16 to 23. It appears that their responses were influenced by the government funding that is available to that age range of learners. Government funding although available to a few private providers is still very restrictive.

The high result for the preference of private training schools were from two main groups of learners; The first being learners that had experienced different levels of aged related challenges within FE Colleges, this was expressed through comments that most learners in the classes were 16 to 19 year old. Respondents, aged 30 +, expressed their personal concerns of the lack of maturity of the younger students impacting on the learning environment thus inhibiting education. The second, being less confident learners with insecurities in things such as previous academic challenges and low self-esteem issues, this was deduced from comments linked to answers relating to smaller classes and a more personal approach to learning.

Other comments that were revealed but did not show as a repeated concern/opinion were:

Diversity of courses available through private centres is much greater.

Limited CPD opportunities through FE colleges

Inconsistent standards

Flexibility of courses

Last minute course cancellations due to lack of uptake

From the training providers perspective comments included:

Private schools impacted negatively on FE enrolments

Small providers are limited to offering private courses as opposed to QCF courses due to student number requirements or minimum turnover

## Recommendations and Actions

From this data I can see a few areas where improvements could be made in either setting so I will address each separately.

FE Colleges:

The main benefits of this institution is its appeal as a post 16 option up to approximately 21 years of age. This is due to funding being available.

To make this setting more appealing to more mature learners offering courses on an evening class basis or more age appropriate basis would be an option.

Smaller class sizes would also be preferable from the learners' point of view but would also ensure the tutors are more able to provide the individual attention to maintain standards.

Widening the curriculum to include more CPD courses would help to maintain student levels/interest

Multiple start dates rather than just a September intake

## Private Training Centres:

Although these offer the greatest flexibility and choice with course offerings they have little to no access to government funding to assist students with fees. This is generally due to the fact that they are too small to offer courses that are registered on the QCF therefore I would suggest that the institutions that make these available for larger providers consider ways to ensure all learning providers can gain access. This will not only help to open up funding but will also serve to raise standards throughout the industry.

The other main concern was with the level of resources available. Again smaller providers tend to have limited funds; space etc. so cannot compete with the resources available in FE colleges. This is an area that I feel all providers can improve on.

Through providing concise course materials, ensuring students have access to ALL equipment as needed (I have experienced this failure first hand). Lending libraries or recommendations for appropriate literature, dvd's, web sites etc., online learning tools and forums and using interactive technology in the class room such as white boards and also the building of relationships with product suppliers to host short seminars as a way of enriching the learning experience.

As a final summary my research does show in favour of learners preferring smaller training centres/providers over FE colleges. In regardless of preference I believe that all training providers should work together to provide the best modalities for learning. If this is to happen then radical changes to systems, such as funding and acceptance of the smaller centres, is required. However I think that it will be through the continuing increase in small training centres/providers and the slow decline in learners enrolling within FE colleges that will be the starting point of change.

The current government are all for "training and retraining" for post 16 learners, however attention seems to be centred on core subjects/industries, such as construction, rather than in general. Might this focused attention put more pressure on FE colleges to increase enrolment to cover costs and reach budgets etc., rather than concentrating more on course content and delivery?

In reflection following the completion of my Action Research Paper, on a personal level, it has served to highlight that as a tutor within a smaller training facility the main strength I have and contribute to learner and the system is my personal touch. The sharing of my experience not only as a tutor but as a therapist working within the industry proves to be of great importance when learners are making a decision to where to learn. However one weakness that is apparent is the need to regularly review the facilities we offer as a centre. Training facilities, such as interactive smart boards etc., in smaller centres tend to be restricted due to available grants, financing etc. To improve upon this, as I have valued input into the running of our centre, more focus on budgeting for new and updated equipment/facilities will be implemented. On a personal level I will continue to undertake and improve on my own knowledge, as well as attending new courses both from smaller training providers and FE colleges. This will allow me hands on experience of both facilities and continue my research, in order to help improve learning for others on all levels.

Whatever the future holds one question that will always be in potential learners minds will be

*Which way do they prefer to train?*

*"In small private training schools or in larger FE colleges"*

*Helen Vickers*

## References & Acknowledgements

AR Page 2 (Reason P & Bradbury H, Handbook of Action Research, Sage Publications, 2001, p2)

AR Page 4 <http://www.infed.org/research/b-actres.htm> Exhibit 1: Stringer on community-based action research

AR Page 5 [www.salongeek.com/](http://www.salongeek.com/) The world's largest community of **Salon** Professionals

AR Page 5 [www.choicehealthmag.com/](http://www.choicehealthmag.com/) Take your therapy skills and business to the next level.

AR Page 5 [www.the-cma.org.uk/](http://www.the-cma.org.uk/) Promoting ethical, responsible, professional complementary

AR Page 5 [www.beautyguild.com/](http://www.beautyguild.com/) The official website of **the Guild** of Beauty Therapists

A special acknowledgement goes out to all those therapists, learners and training providers that replied and contributed to my research, through either personal comments or questionnaires.