

2006 - Issues in Business & Administration

Employers demand 'softer' Skills

Employers have identified the need for 'softer' skills in the workforce. Skills such as communicating, planning and working in a team are essential for many working environments and yet UK employers find they are often the most difficult to recruit for.

The CfA is working with government to address employability and soft skills issues within Business & Administration. One of the first to tackle this issue, the CfA is doing so through the development of vocational qualifications. Jenny Hewell, CEO of the CfA explains:

"Employers might say, 'I want someone who is creative, flexible and of sound judgement'. These factors are very difficult to turn into qualification and we have worked out different ways of incorporating them into our standards. It is quite challenging."

Trends in Business & Administration vocational education

To compete on a global level, the UK must possess an increasingly skilled workforce. Whilst the government is committed to addressing employer's key issues such as the lack of skills among school leavers and the workforce in general, employers need to invest in their employees **now** in order to meet the demand of urgently needed skills.

Vocational education and training is evolving in line with current skills demands and courses are being designed to equip learners with a broad range of generic and vocational skills needed in 21st century employment. According to official figures, 40% of teenagers will choose vocational courses over academic GCSEs over the next 10 years.

Skills Gap in Business & Administration

There are almost 5 million administrators in the UK and a further 10 million people who need some Business & Administration skills at work. Whilst the demand for Business & Administration skills remains high, there are additional demographic issues in the workplace that need to be strategically planned for. If this is overlooked, we are likely to be looking at an unprecedented Business & Administration skills crisis in the next five years:

- Almost a third of UK employers are already reporting difficulties in recruiting administrators with the right skill and behavioural mix to meet business needs
- Local government currently employs a large number of 'baby boomer' administrators who are due to retire in 2010
- The service sector is predicted to employ a further 1.3 million people by 2012. Many of these workers will be female part-time employees who will need Business & Administrations skills at work
- On average employers spend between £250 and £500 per annum on continuous professional development for each administrator. Whilst this may seem a generous amount for such a large workforce, it is in fact £250 a year less than used to be spent on each administrator. In addition to this, that spend focuses largely on improving IT skills at the cost of maintaining or developing other essential administration skills.