



South Dublin
CHAMBER
IN BUSINESS FOR BUSINESS

Call for consultation
Department of Education and Skills
Statement of Strategy 2016-2018

Submission form South Dublin Chamber
1st June 2016

South Dublin Chamber was established in 1984 by a group of local business people to help develop the local business community. In 1996 South Dublin Chamber became the second Chamber in Ireland to receive accreditation under the CCI quality programme. In 1999 the Chamber purchased Tallaght Business Centre from the IDA and it has become a successful commercial concern. In 2003 we were named Ireland's Chamber of the Year and went on to represent Ireland as a finalist in the World Chamber Competition in Canada.

In 2005 we celebrated our 21st year as a leading Chamber and 'The Voice of Business in South Dublin.'

We continue now, in 2016 to give a voice to local business in the South Dublin County area.

Our vision is of every business contributing to the growth and development of South Dublin County through South Dublin Chamber. A county that is wealthy, dynamic and vibrant. A place of economic, social and cultural inclusion for all.

Our mission is supporting the growth and development of our member companies through relevant representation, networking and service provision. We will continue to be the voice of business in South Dublin County, creating an environment that is conducive to the creation of wealth and employment.

In responding to the Department of Education and Skills Statement of Strategy 2016-2018 South Dublin Chamber strongly supports the role of education in society. We believe that education has the capacity to improve peoples lives, support strong economic growth and drive the overall economic development of the country.

In drafting our response we will comment on two aspects of the programme,

Section 5: Promoting Creativity and Entrepreneurial Capacity in Students and

Section 8: Meeting the Skills Needs of the Future.

Submission:

Section 5 (a).

We would strongly support the acceleration of the digital and ICT agenda in schools, in particular the introduction of a coding course for the junior cycle and ICT/Computer science as a Leaving Certificate subject. However consideration should be given to a basic introductory course in Primary school. The widespread use of ICT technology by young people would indicate that the earliest introductory time possible would be beneficial and support a wider interest. There is a disconnect between the use of technology for social purposes and an interest in and an understanding of the science and maths required to create and develop the technology.

Guidance counselling is critical to the career choice of students. There is a wide variety of course choices available and students require direct guidance to correctly identify the area of study best suitable to their needs.

Transition year is a very important part of the school programme. Placement in a business for a number of weeks is a very useful introduction to the world of business. However this in many cases is a very hit and miss affair. In most cases students arrange their own placements. A more structured approach should be adopted. A business support transition year placement programme should be developed. A alignment of business needs and student expectations should be developed in a more formal structured approach.

Advanced economies have high competancies in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths or STEM. We welcome the committment to get the relevant Oireachtas Committee to review and develop a National Strategy.

However emphases should be to develop awareness in students on the benefits and applications of STEM. Identifying skill gaps is necessary but making STEM attractive to students is critical. In particular the importance of generating a higher female percentage participation in STEM is important. Technological innovation is a prerequisite_for an advanced economy, attracting FDI and the growth of the indigenous SME sector is dependent on a knowledge and understanding of STEM. In many case there is a growing disconnect between the benefits and acceptance of technology and the role of STEM in implementing_the same technology.

The need to develop team colloboration is important. Students tend to be examination focused which is an individual exercise. They see their success as dependent on their own efforts. In a creative and entrepreneurial environment collobrative and team based activities are required. Creative ideas are usually the result of many individual efforts. Students emerging for secondary school or 3rd level colleges are not familiar in many cases with this collobrative approach to either problem solving or creative activity. The Higher Education Authority has a role in developing a new appraoch to learning.

Section 5 (b).

Measuring creativity and entrepreneurial capacity in students should be project based and results driven. Where possible group based activities are useful in generating social and communication skills and an understanding of team dynamics where the interdependency

of the group is established. The young scientist competition is a useful blueprint in team building and creative thinking.

We have to make entrepreneurial activity exciting for students. A more formal relationship between the business community and the local school would be an important step to foster creative and entrepreneurial activity. In particular developing transition year projects would be beneficial. Project based activities within a business environment are measurable and results can be identified and accessed. Creating stronger links between the local schools, 3rd level institutions and the business community is an innovative way of generating a creative framework within which students can experiment with ideas and business models. Business could identify real time problems for students to consider and generate creative and entrepreneurial solutions. Local chambers are ideally positioned to develop this initiative.

Many 3rd level institutions are running incubator programmes whereby entrepreneurs are developing new technologies and business models. The majority of these entrepreneurs are young and not long out of school. Consideration should be given to fostering a new relationship between these new start-up businesses and the transition year programme. Students are the customers of tomorrow and could be involved in market research and product/ideas verification and prototype trials.

Section 5 (c):

Foster an awareness and an interest in entrepreneurship in students through a marketing campaign.

Target a greater female involvement in STEM.

Develop a more comprehensive transition year programme with a structured involvement with business.

Incentivise business to become involved with a structured transition year programme.

Create partnerships between schools and new start up businesses.

Foster team building and communication amongst students through project based activities.

Allocate resources to achieving target results.

Draw up a timescale to complete changes required in a timely manner.

Section 8 (a):

South Dublin Chamber will support any structural changes to the Department of Education and Skills which supports innovation and introduces the necessary changes required to deliver a first class education system developed to suit a modern first world economy and society.

We agree with the principle of creating Technological Universities linked to industry and with the capacity to create and retain jobs in the regions.

South Dublin Chamber has developed close ties with the ITT Dublin and the Synergy Centre in Tallaght. This has been to the benefit of the SME sector in the region and the promotion of new local enterprises including high tech innovative businesses.

It is generally understood that lifelong learning is now the established norm. Whether an individual is employed or seeking employment, access to learning is essential. Changes in technology, new production processes or changes to management practices require continuous training.

In 2015 South Dublin Chamber in association with South Dublin County Council and the Local Enterprise Office LEO conducted an on-line survey in order to determine more detailed data on the existing and future training needs of businesses.

The SME sector identified training of new and existing employees as a priority. In particular the basic entry requirement standard for many small businesses is the leaving certificate. However specific training programmes are necessary to integrate the employee into the organisation and improve overall efficiency.

Further research conducted by South Dublin Chamber identified the need to tailor training courses to the specific needs of businesses. Specifically businesses were interested in short duration courses as they could not release personnel for extended periods. Course content had to be tailored to business needs. Therefore we agree with courses being flexible in time and duration. Many businesses would support the 'sandwich year' concept whereby a student would spend their third year working in industry. This has the potential to develop strong links between industry and the 3rd level institutions. One of the criticisms from high technological businesses is that 3rd level institutions are out of step with the skills requirements of business, and are slow to react to new technological changes taking place. We have found the opposite with our local Institute of Technology in Tallaght which is very proactive to industry needs.

A structured 3rd year placement programme will provide positive feedback to colleges and open up channels of communication. South Dublin Chamber in partnership with Chambers Ireland fully supported the established of the Apprenticeship Council. High quality apprenticeships are a vital component in the economy and play an important role in Ireland's educational and skills provision system. A fully functional apprenticeship system tailored to the current and emerging requirements of a developed economy is necessary and offers students an exciting alternative educational path, as the college path is not always suitable to all students.

The 2015 survey identified that apprenticeships were a priority for 26% of businesses. This is a sizable number of businesses who identified apprenticeships as an important part of their business model. This is in line with the situation in many EU countries.

Many employees have obtained significant practical work experience during the course of their working lives without obtaining a specific qualification. Therefore we welcome the introduction of a mechanism to recognise a workers experience as an entry into an apprenticeship.

Inviting industry to partner in the delivery elements of the curricula at third and fourth levels is a positive development. Not all sectors of industry has the capacity to respond and participate in this initiative, however the larger businesses would have a positive impact.

Any system devised to promote the delivery and renewal of skills in newly emerging technical areas must be transparent, efficient, be able to deliver results in a timely manner and be free of undue bureaucracy and fit for purpose. Significantly employers require their employees to be competent and certified in their specific skills. This is usually a requirement of standard based quality, environmental and Health and Safety systems. Therefore SOLAS, QQI AND ETB's are critical in providing the infrastructure to deliver education to workers and job seekers.

Section 8 (b):

A key result from the 2015 survey was the need for training in sales, marketing and business skills.

Business required these skills in order to grow and develop their business. Essentially communication and team building were seen as essential to the promotion of the business. This process demonstrates that establishing communication channels between stakeholders enables key information to be obtained, relevant targets to be set and a process established to implement the targets in a predetermined timeframe. To ensure buy-in of the relevant stakeholder in the training programme, the training courses were designed to meet specific skill shortfalls. Moreover the timing and duration of individual training courses were specifically designed to meet the needs and logistics of business. Feedback is obtained from each training course and the programme is monitored and reviewed regularly. The department of Education and Skills should develop as a priority a new architecture which will enable it to identify future skill needs. Identify the key stakeholders involved. Establish communication networks between stakeholders. Develop processes to implement the necessary changes to meet future skill needs. Create clear timelines for implementation and assign responsibility. Creating a working group involving representatives of all stakeholders to monitor progress and to deal with difficulties that may arise. Develop a marketing strategy to create interest and awareness within the student population of the benefits to themselves and the wider economy of learning new identifiable skills. This can be monitored by student take-up and qualification in key skill disciplines. The value of identifying and promoting new skill learning is weakened if interest and up-take is not established and actively pursued.

Section 8 (c):

Identify the key technological, economic, political and social drivers in the economy in the coming decade. Identify the key skill needs required to meet and adapt to these drivers. Create a new architecture in the Department of education and Skills so that it can be the main driver for the changes necessary to deliver the key skill needs. Ensure that all relevant public service stakeholders are fully engaged in the process. Provide funding to public service stakeholders to ensure delivery of agreed targets. Engage with businesses including Chambers in identifying key future drivers in the economy and in ensuring delivery of targets. Involve business in the delivery process of key targets. Launch a marketing campaign to increase awareness and generate an interest in the student population in STEM. The marketing campaign should increase awareness in both students and their parents of the importance and job opportunities created by the apprenticeship programme. Make taking up an apprenticeship a real interesting alternative for a proportion of students. Incentivise businesses to take on apprenticeships. Create communication networks between 3rd level institutions and business. Create a structured transition year programme, local chambers are ideally placed to develop this initiative. Create a structured sandwich year programme, again local chambers are ideally placed to develop this initiative. Delivery of future skill needs should be seen as a partnership between the Department of Education and Skills, the Education sector and the Business sector.

