

THE FUTURE OF SKILLS



WITH SPEAKERS FROM



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TUESDAY
8 JUNE 2021
11.30 - 12.45



Event report

Young Enterprise was delighted to co-host a discussion on the Future of Skills with NI Chamber of Commerce, with key speakers from the world of education and business. Skills is an integral part of the economic recovery plan and key to unlocking the high unemployment rates in Northern Ireland. The Future of Skills campaign seeks to assess the skills issues impacting the local economy, working with business, education and Government Departments to develop recommendations and solutions.

This discussion led event focused on the collaboration of business and education to ensure that our young people and our employers can access the skills required to succeed and grow.

The voice of education in NI

Faustina Graham, Chief Inspector

Education and Training Inspectorate, Dept of Education

Faustina spoke about the essential building blocks needed to support the development of skills of young people. She noted the benefit of a skills-infused NI Curriculum, but recognised delivery is not always realised to optimum levels. There was a recognition that assessment creates focus. Whilst we say that skills are valued, we don't show this in how we measure development of young people. Most exams measure knowledge, not skills. It is important to have clear, precise language to build a common approach for the assessment and development of skills.

Catherine McHugh, Principal

St Patrick's College, Dungannon

St Patrick's College, Dungannon was nominated by YE for The Entrepreneurial School Awards held across Europe, and were announced as the UK winner, demonstrating their commitment to enterprise education. The audience heard practical examples of how the school have implemented a range of business engagement activities, before and during Covid.

This best practice included project based learning, including Young Enterprise activities, business speakers (continued online during Covid), participation in a range of external competitions.

The ethos of the school was clear that skills are viewed as not solely for the success of the economy, but to holistically develop young people to allow them to succeed as individuals.

Carol Fitzsimons, MBE

CEO, Young Enterprise NI

Our CEO introduced the importance of linking education and business to the 80+ attendees, stressing the importance of building lifelong employability for young people, rather than striving for lifelong employment.

The work of Young Enterprise was able to continue with schools during Covid by moving to the online YE Academy and over 50,000 young people accessed during the school year. The skills the charity works to develop were clearly the skills most valued by employers during Covid - creativity, innovation, communication and the ability to respond positively to change. As life returns, she stressed the importance of ensuring young people continue to develop their skills, rather than a focus on purely academic performance.



The voice of young people in NI

A highlight of the event was hearing from MD of the YE Company Programme NI winners, Siena McConaghie from Lurgan College.

Siena spoke passionately about the learning she had gained from being involved in the Company programme and the resilience it had given her - leading a team, developing a successful product to trade online, and meeting senior business leaders throughout the competition, providing guidance on how to develop their plans.

It was clear to all attending that she had built confidence and self-assurance as a result of being involved, and had strong self-awareness of her abilities and potential career pathways as a result.



The voice of business in NI

Gordon Parkes, HR Director, NIE Networks

Gordon gave a background on the work of NI Chamber in relation to the discussions about skills, and welcomed bringing the voice of education to the debate. He highlighted the ambition to reach zero carbon by 2050 and how we need to have a new approach to achieve this. Developing the workforce means we need to consider new ways of working. He provided an excellent showcase of how NIE have made effective use of the apprenticeship scheme in order to grow the skills in their workforce.



John Healy OBE, VP and MD Allstate NI

John spoke passionately about the importance of skills for all employers and recognised the value of business connecting with schools. Allstate are a Patron of the YE Company programme and John spoke about how impressed he had been with the talent and skills demonstrated by the students when he judged the competition. As a key employer in NI, he stressed the need for collaboration between education and business to support a talented future workforce.

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