

Teenagers turned off 'difficult' subjects such as science

A new campaign – Your Life – is launched to promote the benefits of studying subjects such as science, technology, engineering and maths to a high standard



More pupils should study subjects such as science and maths to a high level, according to business leaders. Photo: Newscast

By Graeme Paton, Education Editor

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Companies are being starved of highly-skilled workers because teenagers believe vital subjects such as science and maths are too hard, according to business leaders.

The UK is not producing enough graduates and top-level apprentices in disciplines that are seen as important to economic growth, it is claimed.

In a letter to the Telegraph, major employers such as BAE System, Shell, Nestlé, Carillion and Ford said a “fundamental misperception persists” that practical subjects are too difficult and “not relevant” for the

majority of school leavers.

They said teachers and parents had a greater role to play to ensure pupils understand the benefits of learning advanced skills.

The comments were made before the launch of a campaign – Your Life – on Monday designed to raise awareness of the importance of studying science, technology, engineering and maths to a high standard. The new drive is being backed by Nicky Morgan, the Education Secretary, who is due to address business leaders on Monday.

It follows the publication of a report by the government last year that found migrants were filling a fifth of jobs in key industries such as oil and gas extraction and aerospace manufacturing because of a lack of skilled British graduates.

The letter, signed by eight senior figures including Ian King, chief executive of BAE Systems, and Richard Howson, head of Carillion, said that “significant progress” had been made in recent years to promote practical subjects in schools and colleges.

But it said the UK was “still not producing “enough graduates and skilled apprentices with a scientific, technology, engineering and mathematical background, and a fundamental misperception persists that these subjects are too difficult and not relevant for the majority”.

“Maths and science will open up a world of career opportunities and not only do we need young people to recognise this, we need the teachers and parents who are encouraging them to recognise this too,” the letter said. “We urgently need to boost young people’s career opportunities and to equip British businesses with the talent they need to ensure long-term growth.”

The business-led campaign is being launched to raise awareness of the "deficit of STEM skills" among school leavers. According to figures, some 7.1 million UK jobs will rely on science skills by 2030.

How we moderate

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