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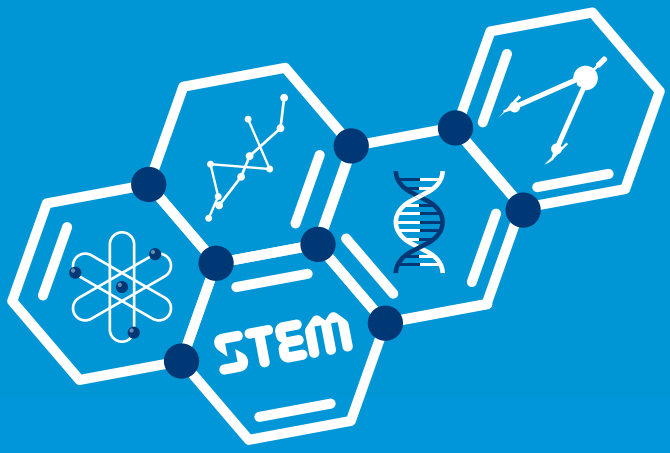
Continuing to Power Economic Growth Attracting more young women into Science and Technology 2.0



High performance. Delivered.

Women Invent

Accenture has been a partner of Women Invent since its inception in 2013. We know that women are vastly under-represented in Science and Technology based careers and in 2013 we studied this area in detail. We identified the barriers to girls studying for and moving into STEM careers.

Ireland has a vision to be a world-leading centre for the industries of tomorrow. According to the IDA, over 1,150 companies from global giants to the hottest high growth brands have chosen Ireland as their strategic European base. Dublin has become a startup capital whose vibrant and highly connected ecosystem is the envy of many. As an island nation our in-built international focus is a big part of what makes Ireland unique and a magnet for entrepreneurs, investors and some of the most innovative global multi-nationals.

To maintain this position and keep Ireland at the forefront of the Digital Economy, we need to ensure that we have the best talent in the world – not just now but into the future.

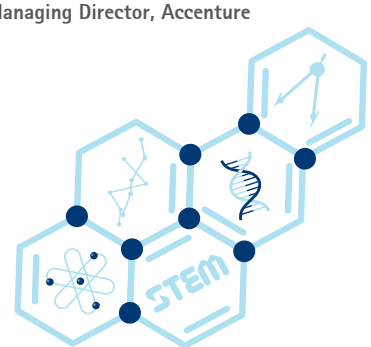
Lots of great work has been done in recent times. Women Invent has been joined by organisations such as Connecting Women in Technology and the 30% Club. Programmes like CoderDojo and "IT is not for Geeks" have been hugely successful. Accenture is also delighted to be involved in the inaugural Inspirefest - a three-day, international sci-tech event organised by Silicon Republic, Ireland's leading technology and innovation news service. Inspirefest aims to showcase diversity and connect professionals interested in the future of STEM, with new perspectives on innovation, leadership and success.

However, the challenge of attracting girls into STEM continues. This report tracks progress in the last two years and the results clearly show that the challenge remains in this area.

Other countries are sitting up and taking notice. In the UK for example, computer programming has been introduced into the primary school curriculum. This follows the example in Estonia where computer science has been on the curriculum for a number of years.

It is time for a sea change in Ireland. We need to push forward strongly and quickly in order to be a leader in the digital world. By strengthening and expanding the partnerships that have evolved between Government, Industry and our schools, we can make STEM subjects a reality for our students. Then Ireland can truly position itself as a global STEM hub and a magnet for talent.

Paula Neary
Managing Director, Accenture



"It is most timely that this new research from Accenture is being launched as part of Silicon Republic's ongoing Women Invent campaign, as we prepare to celebrate some of the leading women in science and technology from around the world on stage here in Dublin at Inspirefest 2015. Such research is crucial, as we seek to better understand the motivations of, and influences on, our young girls as they prepare to make subject choices at school, and as they form their career dreams and aspirations.

Women Invent exists because of the importance we and our partners like Accenture attribute to the visibility of remarkable women role models to inspire these young women, as well as their parents and teachers. We firmly believe that you can not aspire to what you do not see. So we must call a halt to publications and events that celebrate only the male leaders in these sectors.

We are most grateful to Accenture and our other wonderful partners for believing in the change we are trying to make in these STEM sectors. Women Invent and Inspirefest could not happen without their support.

Let's continue to work together to ensure that our remarkable women in STEM receive the attributions and recognition they deserve - and have earned. We will all be the winners for it."

Ann O'Dea
CEO, Silicon Republic
Founder, Inspirefest

Foreword

This Government acknowledges the important role that science, technology and innovation has as part of a sustainable economy that will bring better jobs and improved societal benefits for our citizens.

Today Ireland is world-leading in a number of research areas and has a proven track record in supporting excellent and impactful scientific research while encouraging industry collaborations. We are ranked at number 1 worldwide for quality of our Nanosciences; 2nd for Immunology and 2nd for Computer Sciences; 3rd for Animal & Dairy research; and 5th for Materials Science.

Through Science Foundation Ireland the Government supports a significant national effort to encourage engagement in STEM. Specifically, Smart Futures is a Government-industry initiative providing access to STEM careers information and role models to second-level students, parents, teachers and careers guidance counsellors in Ireland. I would encourage companies to partner with us in this initiative to change perceptions of careers in STEM, so far this year over 350 volunteers have been trained to deliver their career story to young people. Last year, in partnership with Engineers Ireland, over 26,000 students were reached through career events, competitions and online channels.

In an effort to gain a greater understanding of the attitudes and opinions of Irish third level students, Science Foundation Ireland commissioned Amárach Research to carry out an online survey among 2,000 third level undergraduate students. The central finding of the research relates to students' attitudes towards STEM courses and whether or not they feel they would fit in. Students put this fitting in factor above a number of other human and functional factors such as course career prospects, academic reputation, and the guidance of their parents. It is important that we all work together to enable students to choose the right course for them by providing them with easy accessible information on the choices and careers paths available to them.

Exciting new science curriculums at second level are also scheduled to be introduced over the coming years. These will be supported by professional development for teachers whose skills and abilities are crucial in inspiring passion and enthusiasm for the sciences in their students.

This welcome report by Accenture will also play a valuable role in highlighting important issues including the advancement of women in the areas of STEM.

By working together across government and industry we can engage, educate and encourage our young people to achieve their potential.

Damien English T.D.
Minister for Skills, Research and Innovation

Executive Summary

In 2013 Accenture Ireland, in association with Women Invent, issued the report - Powering economic growth; Attracting more young women into science and technology. This report looked at how to remove the obstacles which have so far lessened the involvement of young women in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) area by identifying what influences secondary school girls' choice of subjects and, in particular, STEM-related subjects. Research undertaken at the time showed some stark outcomes – negative stereotypes that STEM is more suitable for boys, lack of information for parents on STEM career options and a disconnect between skills in demand by industry and students' subject choices.

In 2015 Accenture extended the research to the UK and sought the views of more than:

- 1,500 girls aged between 11 and 18
- 2,500 young women (aged between 19 and 23)
- 100 secondary school STEM teachers
- 500 parents with daughters in post-primary education.

30% of these were based in Ireland. The findings were notably similar across all markets surveyed (England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). For Ireland this updated report tracks progress on the barriers and challenges facing parents, teachers and young girls when it comes to making early subject choices at school that will affect their career paths later in life.

It is two years since the original report and Ireland's economy is back to growth after a difficult few years. 2014 marked Ireland's first anniversary of exiting the IMF/EU bailout and the economic outlook is strong, having exceeded tax revenue targets and GDP targets. This year (2015) unemployment has fallen below 10% which is down substantially from 14.7% in 2012.

A report recently published by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (Forfás) shows that demand for people with IT skills is continuing unabated, with an increasing number of employment permits being issued each year to alleviate the shortfall experienced by employers in recruiting experienced and qualified IT staff. This is also reflected in the rise in the number of vacancies occurring in this field and the continued difficulty experienced by recruitment agencies to fill some of these positions.

Clearly there are jobs in this area and STEM skills offer great potential for further reducing unemployment and driving economic growth. Indeed our research showed that a high percentage of girls and young women surveyed say that, given the choice, they would study a STEM subject at secondary school or college with biology, mathematics and computer science being the most preferred subjects. Providing a wider range of life skills, enjoyment of curriculum content and supporting chosen career paths are the biggest reason for wanting to study STEM subjects. And yet recently released Higher Education Authority figures show that ten years ago we did not have the same problem attracting young women into STEM - 47% of entrants into STEM courses at university level were female – in 2013 it was 40%. In the same year only 16% of entrants into Computer Science were women.

So what are the barriers? While girls and young women believe some STEM subjects would create job opportunities for them, difficult subject syllabus, lack of information around subjects and the perception that these subjects are more suited for boys are the main reasons for not wanting to study STEM subjects.

As with Accenture's previous research, negative stereotypes persist. Girls and young women still believe that STEM subjects match 'male' careers and this is the biggest reason for boys being more likely to choose such subjects over girls, followed by better fitting boys' personalities and hobbies, and boys' brains.

We are also seeing what we term "Influence Ambiguity". Parents and teachers are the biggest influencers of school subjects chosen amongst girls and also most likely to influence career aspirations. Yet three quarters of teachers surveyed do not consider themselves influential. Parents on the other hand, who acknowledge the role they play, continue to struggle to make informed decisions or guidance for their daughter.

At Accenture we believe that if Ireland is to compete on a global stage in the Digital Economy it is imperative that we build the best STEM talent pipeline. We need to do this to ensure we are prepared for the demands of tomorrow's economy and have a high quality and diverse range of skills shaping our society.

The report that Accenture published in 2013 stated that by maximising the

impact of existing Government and Industry funded programmes, we can foster an interest and understanding in STEM career opportunities among female students and their parents from an early age. In turn, Ireland can begin to get the STEM talent pipeline flowing, which could power our digital economy and create a more joined-up approach between the relevant stakeholders.

The good news is that Ireland has the highest proportion of Science and Engineering graduates (both male and female) within the OECD, and there is active government policy and investment to continue to increase the number of students in STEM courses. Programmes such as the "IT is not for Geeks" schools programme, Girls Hack Ireland and CoderDojo, which continue to grow, are great examples of industry activity. The launch and development of the 30% Club in Ireland, which is working for better gender balance at all levels in Irish business, helps to highlight the issue and the work that the Science Foundation Ireland do in this field is exemplary.

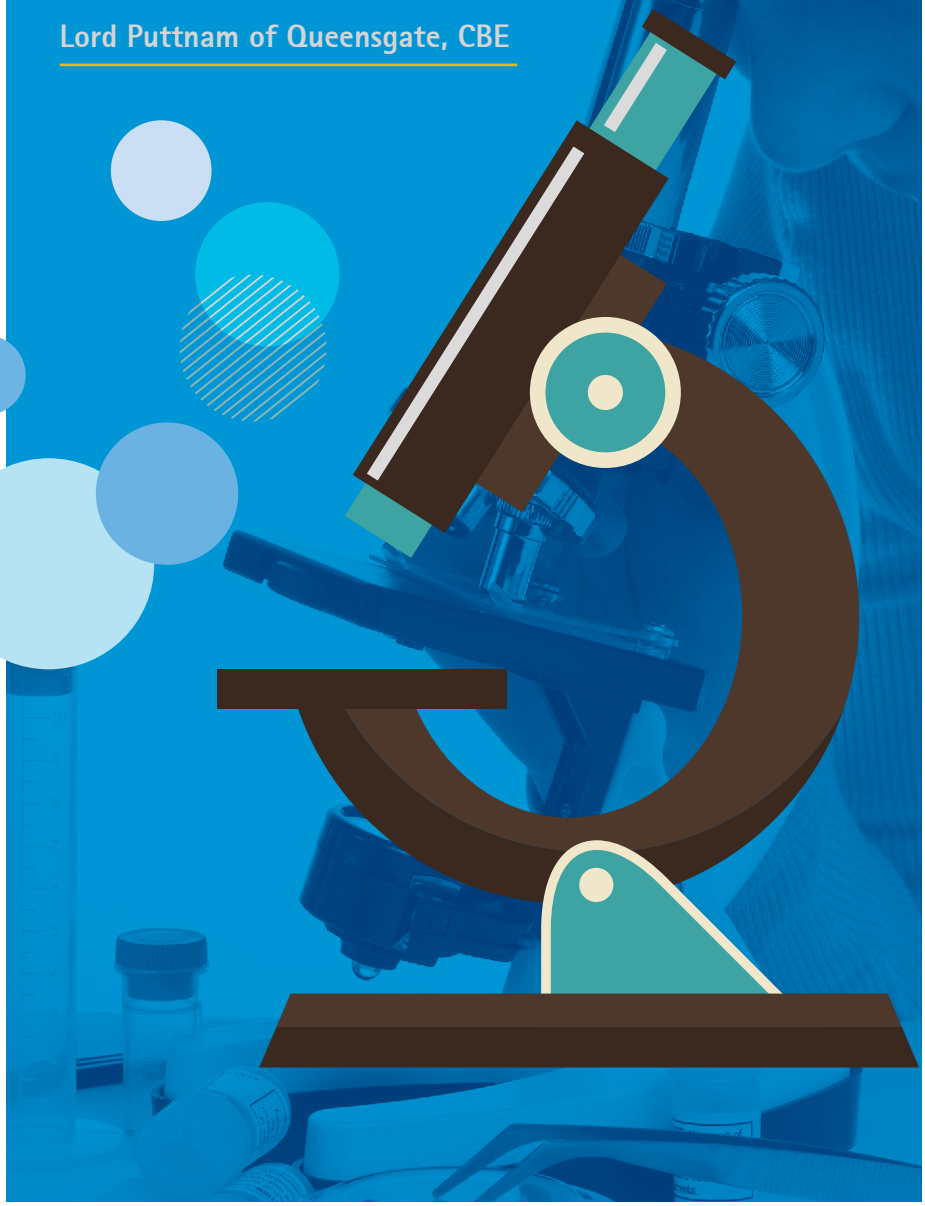
However, this report shows us the current landscape and that the barriers remain. The research clearly shows the problem in this area has not shifted. Girls are still not attracted to STEM subjects and Ireland risks getting left behind as other countries make clear moves to address the issue. In the UK and Estonia, computer skills are now on the curriculum at both primary and secondary level. This is a great way of demystifying the subjects and addressing the stereotypes that exist.

We need to build confidence in our young girls and look at the advancement of women in the areas of STEM. At the end of this report we propose recommendations on how we can all come together to promote women in STEM and build the talent pipeline we need to realise the opportunity offered by the Digital economy and build jobs.

"If Ireland wishes to remain competitive and relevant in the 21st century, we must encourage students, especially women, to acknowledge and embrace the entire spectrum of opportunities on offer for them.

With such a striking disparity between skills required and subjects chosen in Ireland, it is alarming that young women are still not taking up STEM subjects in anything like the numbers we need for the collective good of the nation. This is a problem we simply have to crack if Ireland is to bounce back fully from the financial crisis and ensure that it fulfils its potential in the coming decades. This report offers much valuable analysis which I hope policymakers and educationalists will take on board and act upon."

Lord Puttnam of Queensgate, CBE



What are the drivers for choosing STEM subjects at school?

One of the key findings of the survey is that girls and young women understand and recognise that their choice of school subjects will have a significant impact on their career choice. Four out of five girls and young women believe studying STEM subjects creates a lot of career opportunities. The trend continues with 88% of parents and teachers agreeing that the subjects girls choose at school/college are likely to impact their careers.

More than half of girls and young women surveyed say that providing a wider range of life skills, enjoyment of curriculum content and supporting chosen career paths are the biggest reason for wanting to study STEM subjects.

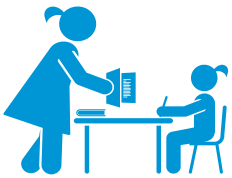
Biology (43%) is the STEM subject most girls and young women would like to study or have studied, followed by maths (38%) and computer science (37%). Physics is the least popular STEM subject amongst girls and women. Girls and young women alike link STEM subjects primarily to problem solving and analytical skills with innovative / creative thinking, decision making and team work lesser considerations.

Almost 6 out of 10 girls and young women cite the chance to invent new products / services, the chance to cure diseases and high salaries as the biggest associations with a career in STEM. High salaries are seen as an attraction with a further 61% of girls and 70% of young women believing they could earn a higher salary in the science and technology sector compared to other sectors.

This all comes across as very positive but if STEM is so appealing why are more girls not taking this forward?

In 2013, only one in four students in engineering, manufacturing and construction courses were female. And out of almost 118,000 people working in STEM in Ireland, just a quarter are women. Ireland is not alone in this issue. Less than 7% of technology positions in Europe are filled by women. And in the United States the number of female entrants to computer science is declining.

The research shows us that for girls, the key drivers of subject choice are how good they are at the subject (94%), the subject syllabus (92%) and whether the subject teacher is knowledgeable (91%) while 87% believe whether the subject teacher is fun is also important.



86% of girls / **77%** of young women believe the subjects they choose, or chose, at school are likely to impact the career they have in later life

Providing a wider range of life skills (**59%**), enjoyment of course content (**59%**) and supporting chosen career paths (**51%**) are the biggest reason for wanting to study STEM subjects

Job enjoyment (**69%**), earning potential (**64%**) and personal interests (**59%**) are the biggest influence on career choice for girls and young women

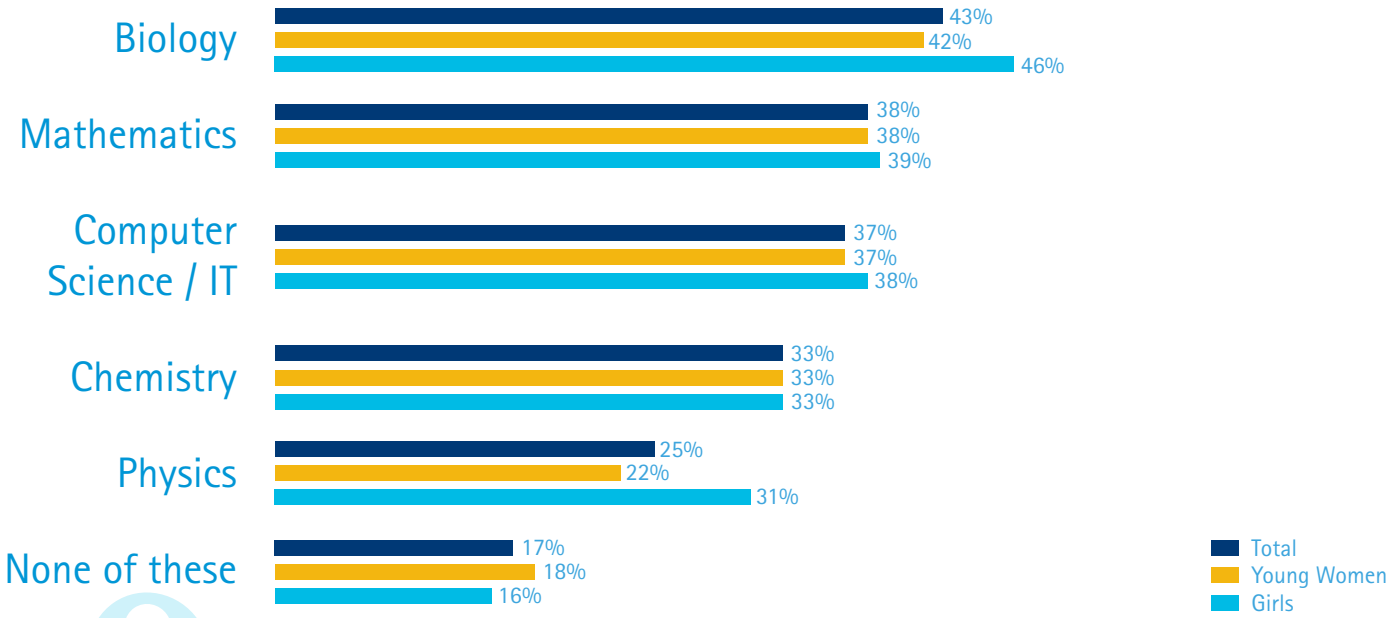
80% of all girls and **81%** of all young women believe studying STEM subjects creates a lot of career opportunities

The chance to invent new products / services (**59%**), the chance to cure diseases (**59%**) and high salaries (**57%**) are the biggest associations with a career in STEM

61% of girls and **70%** of young women believe they could earn a higher salary in the science and technology sector compared to other sectors

STEM SUBJECT PREFERENCE AT SCHOOL

Biology is the STEM subject most girls would like to study and most women would have liked to have studied, followed by maths and computer science.



What are the barriers to STEM subject take-up and have they changed?

The Accenture survey in 2013 found that there is a commonly held view amongst parents, students, and teachers that STEM subjects and careers are more suited to males than females. At the time, when asked why females are the minority in these areas, 44% of girls said 'the perception that these subjects are more suited to males than females'.

In this round of research we wanted to delve further into this issue. Nearly half (48%) of girls and women believe that such subjects match 'male' careers and this is the biggest reason for boys being more likely to choose STEM subjects over girls, followed by better fitting boys' brains (29%) and boys' personalities and hobbies (27%).

Teachers are more vocal than parents on why STEM is taken up less by girls than boys. Teachers cite peer influence (42%), a perception that STEM subjects are for boys only and a lack of high profile role models for girls (36%). Parents agree there is a perception that STEM subjects are for boys only and also cite a lack of information on subject / career opportunities as factors (36%).

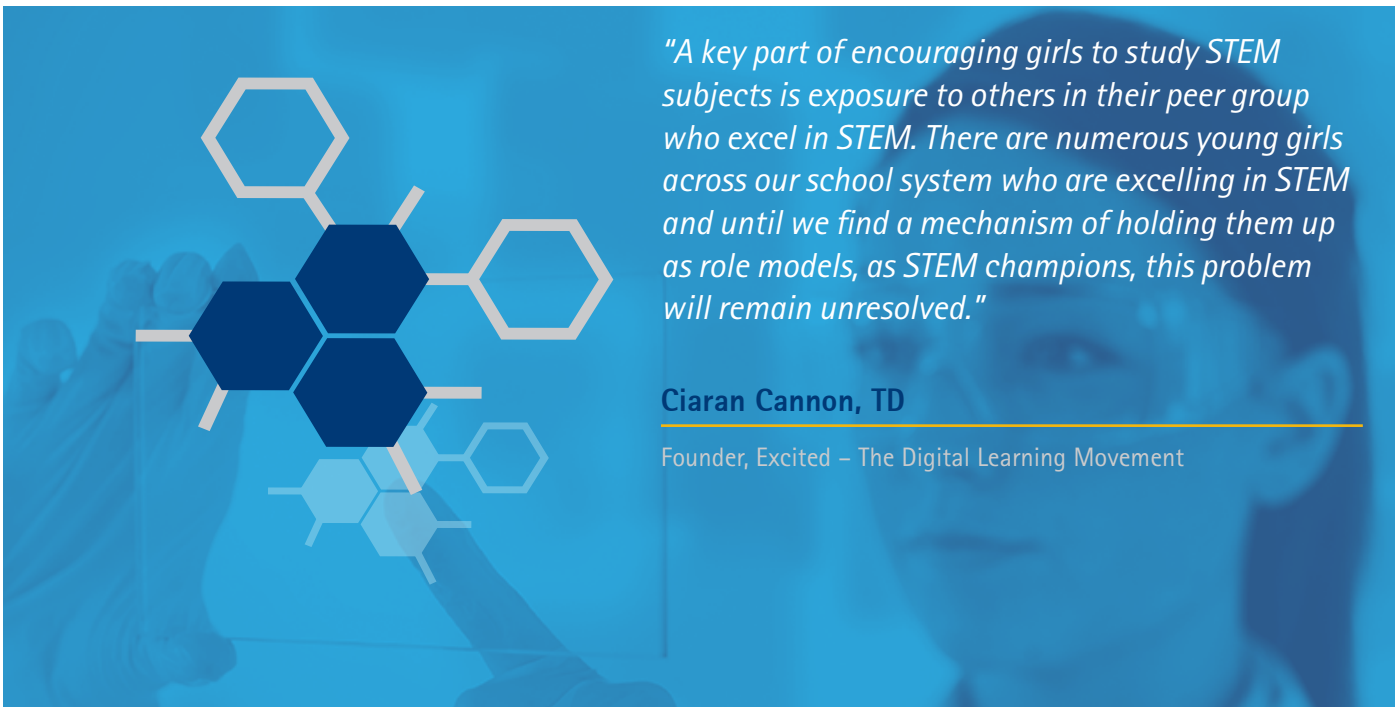
In 2013 one in four teachers said that the active promotion of so-called 'traditional' girls' career paths (such as nursing or teaching) contributed to the stereotype of STEM as more appropriate for boys than girls. This trend extends to 'new' career preferences with teachers highlighting the small number of female students, compared with males, interested in pursuing STEM related options such as App Development (1%), Electrical Engineering (1%) and Computer Programming (10%) when compared to stereotypical female career choices such as Beautician/Hairdresser (95%), Nursing (90%) and Child/Social Care (93%).

These figures are on a downward trend but the dip is slight and the impact has not changed. The new findings show that teachers believe nursing (78%), beauty / hairdressing (78%) and child care (67%) are careers which appeal exclusively to girls while engineering (78%), game/app development (67%) and scientist (67%) appeal exclusively to boys.

Aside from career stereotypes, another key barrier is the negative perception about the difficulty of STEM subjects. Despite the findings showing that girls and women, and indeed teachers and parents, are aware of the importance of STEM, established perceptions about the difficulty of such subjects at Leaving Certificate level is ultimately inhibiting young women from entering the sector. Half (48%) of all girls and women say Science and Mathematics are too difficult to learn.

Digging deeper, the research shows that difficult subject syllabus (61%) and lack of information around subjects (23%) are two of the prevalent reasons for not wanting to study STEM subjects. Interestingly, when we look back at the reasons why girls would choose STEM with 51% acknowledging that the subjects would support chosen career paths, 25% say they are unclear what careers these subjects support as a reason for not wanting to study STEM subjects.

This is despite 47% of this group believing maths would create lots of job opportunities, followed by 44% for IT and foreign languages (33%). On the back of this only 10% of all girls and young women think they need physics for their "dream career", followed by 13% for IT, 16% for chemistry and 24% for maths.

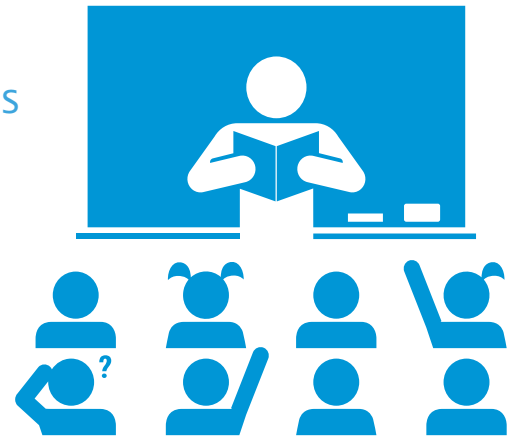


"A key part of encouraging girls to study STEM subjects is exposure to others in their peer group who excel in STEM. There are numerous young girls across our school system who are excelling in STEM and until we find a mechanism of holding them up as role models, as STEM champions, this problem will remain unresolved."

Ciaran Cannon, TD

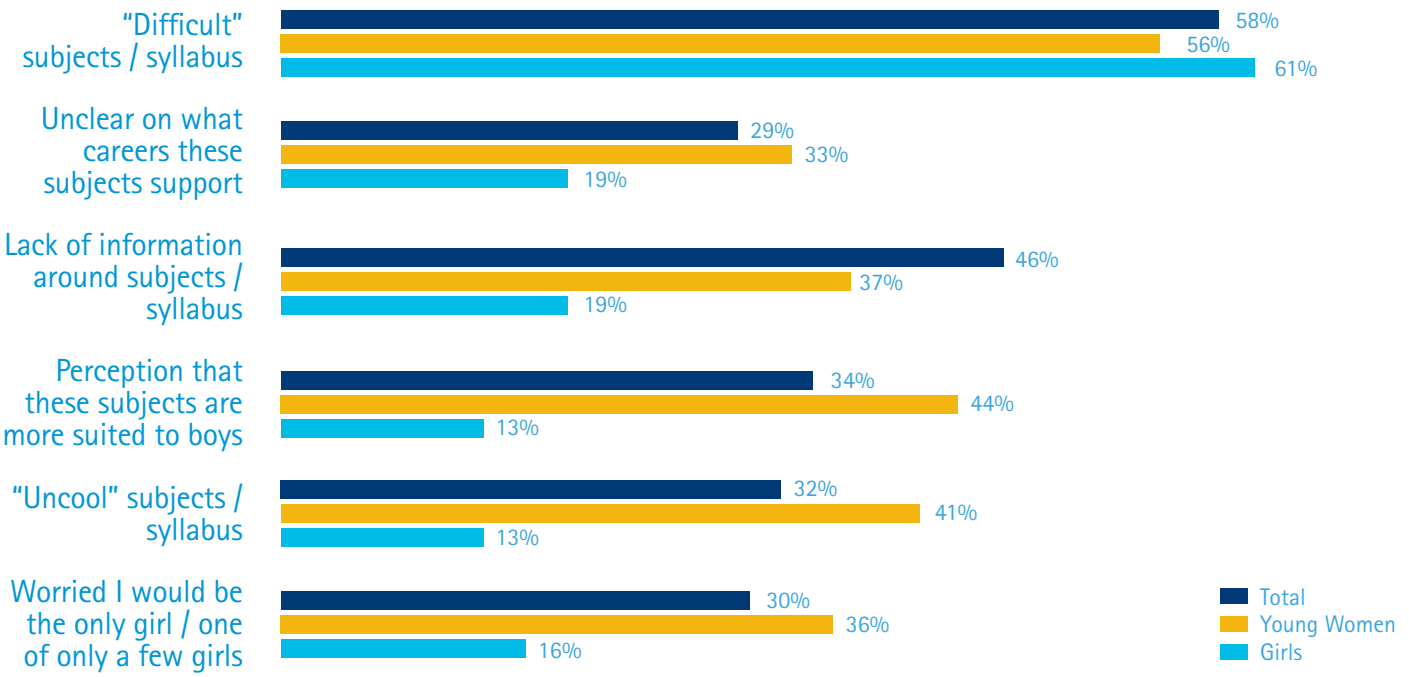
Founder, Excited – The Digital Learning Movement

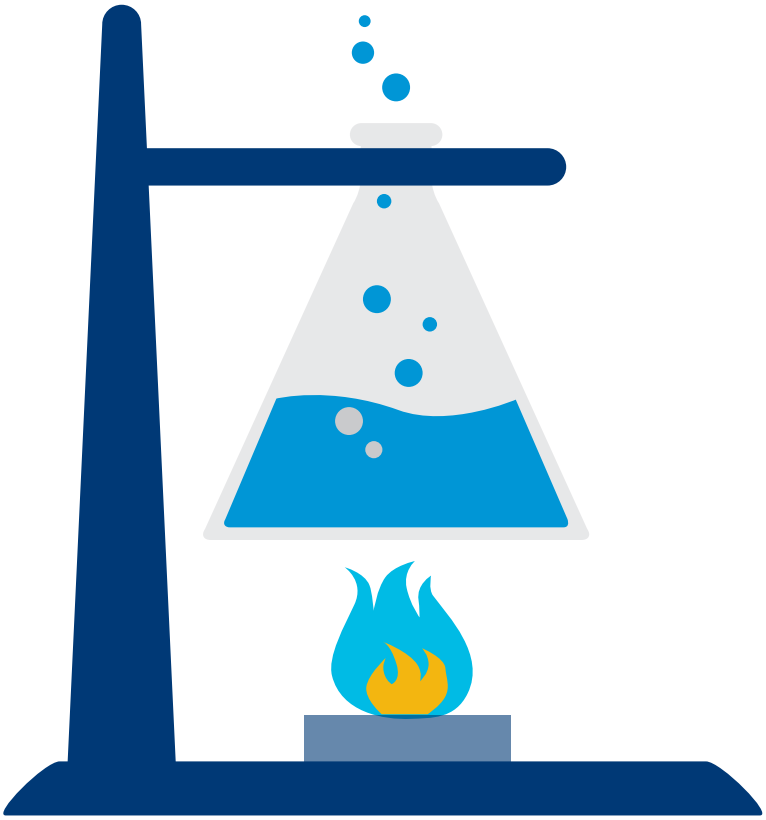
Nearly half (**48%**) of girls and women believe that such subjects match 'male' careers and this is the biggest reason for boys being more likely to choose STEM subjects over girls, followed by better fitting boys' brains (**29%**) and boys' personalities and hobbies (**27%**).



Teachers believe nursing (**78%**), beauty / hairdressing (**78%**) and child care (**67%**) are careers which appeal exclusively to girls while engineering (**78%**), game/app development (**67%**) and scientist (67%) appeal exclusively to boys.

Reasons for NOT wanting to do STEM subjects





"It is striking how deep and persistent gender based career stereotypes are even though they don't reflect today's workplace and the variety of opportunities open to young women. The challenge for all concerned - parents, teachers and career advisors - is to broaden girls' and young women's horizons in imagining and planning their future careers."

Brid Horan

Non Executive Director
Former Deputy CEO, ESB

Influence ambiguity

A key finding in the research is what we term "influence ambiguity". Girls and young women see parents as the biggest influence on subject and career choice, followed by teachers and careers advisors. Parents admit to lacking knowledge on STEM subjects and careers and point to teachers having a role. Teachers think friends are the biggest influence, followed by parents and they also put media ahead of career advisors.

Only 1 in 7 parents say they feel very informed on the different career opportunities which exist for their daughters, which given they are seen as the key information source and inspiration for girls and women, presents a disconnect.

Parents are still struggling to get to grips with the new world of work and despite being aware of the importance of STEM, one third (32%) of parents say they are not informed of the different career opportunities that exist for their daughters while over half of parents (56%) say they are not informed of the benefits of studying STEM subjects specifically.

Whilst the majority of respondents surveyed in 2013 also identified parents as the key influencer in Leaving Certificate subject selection and ultimate career choice, teachers are becoming an increasingly important influencer.

Parents rely most strongly on subject teachers when it comes to helping their daughters choose school subject options.

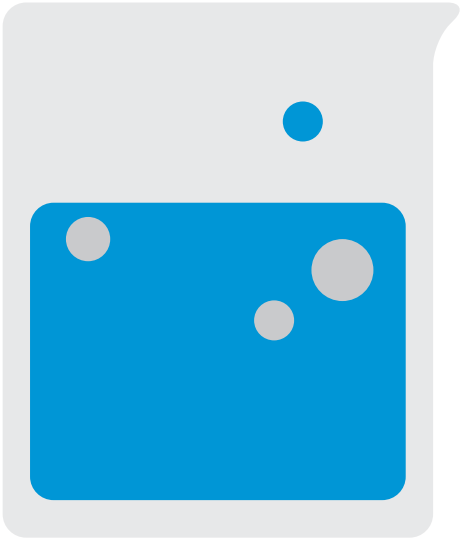
Parents are also most likely to encourage their daughters to discuss school subject options with subject teachers and the careers advisors. Interestingly, around half of parents are also encouraging their daughters to approach industry experts for school subject advice.

All groups think that schools are most responsible for encouraging more women to study STEM subjects. Girls and young women, in particular, think the media has a role to play whilst teachers would like to see parents more involved.

"This research shows that, even though girls and young women see the value of a STEM based career, this isn't driving their subject and course choices. It's time to empower young women and their parents with a better appreciation of the many opportunities and pathways that STEM subjects open to girls. Industry can play a critical role, working with parents and young people, but to deliver sustained and countrywide impact the education system - primary and secondary - must play its part. It's time to ask whether our existing model of career guidance is fit for purpose."

Brid Horan

Non Executive Director
Former Deputy CEO, ESB

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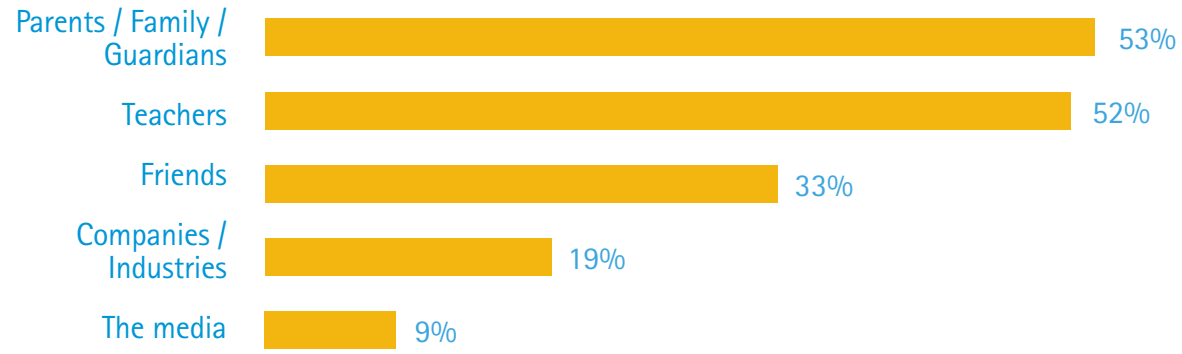
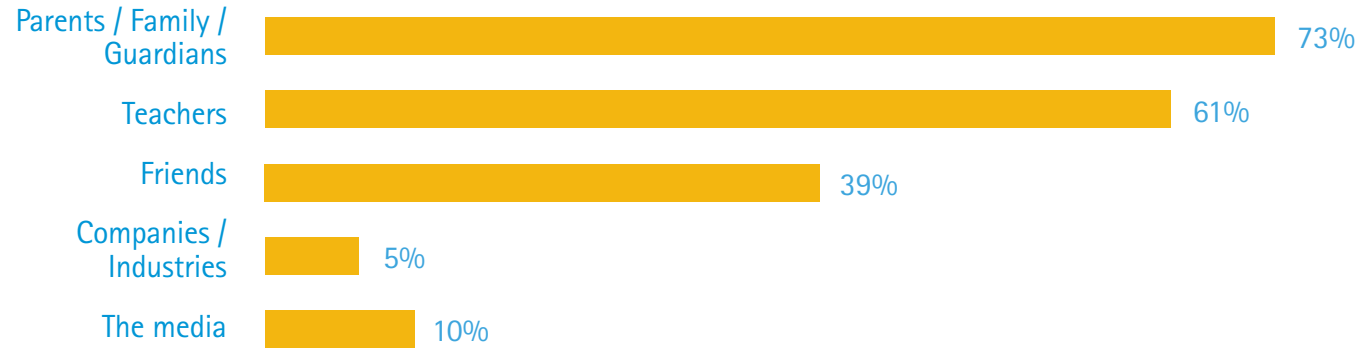
Biggest influence on subject chosen at school

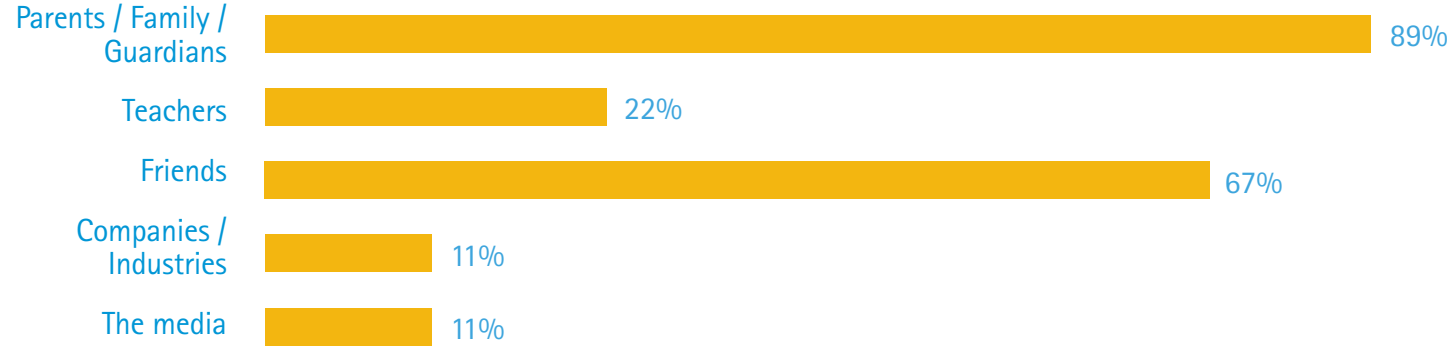
Despite the fact that whether or not a parent supports a subject choice is not regarded as a key driver of subject choice, against other influencers – girls regard their parents / family as most likely to influence their subject choice, followed by teachers and then careers advisors



Parents recognise themselves as the biggest influencers of subject choice for their daughters, with teachers in second place. Interestingly, they place friends and peers as the third biggest influence when actually only 33% of girls see their friends as having a big influence



Teachers are different again and clearly over-estimate the influence of friends / peers on subject choice – putting them just behind parents / family in their level of influence.



Moving forward

Promoting women in STEM

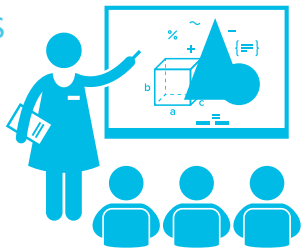
With the continued advancement of digital technologies the reality is that we no longer have certainty about the jobs and roles of the future. We do however know the core skills that need to be developed. Companies looking to hire STEM graduates hail from the fastest-growing sectors of the Irish economy. This presents a challenge when young women are choosing Leaving Certificate subjects as they and their parents cannot identify a clear career path. This is a new reality which students, teachers and parents alike need to become comfortable with.

In this survey we looked at how we can tackle the perceived barriers to students taking up STEM subjects thereby giving more young girls the foundation and the option of following a rich, exciting and varied career in STEM.

In terms of making STEM subjects more popular, parents and teachers agree that there are three key areas that need tackling – more information about what careers STEM subjects support, talks in schools from industry professionals and work experience in companies that use STEM skills. Teachers also advocate talks from industry professionals about STEM careers and more case studies on female STEM role models. This is also echoed by girls and young women who consider that more women teachers in these subjects would also help.

90% of parents and teachers agree that awareness of future career opportunities is an important factor in encouraging women to choose STEM subjects

80% of girls and **83%** of young women believe the science and technology sector is lacking high profile female role models

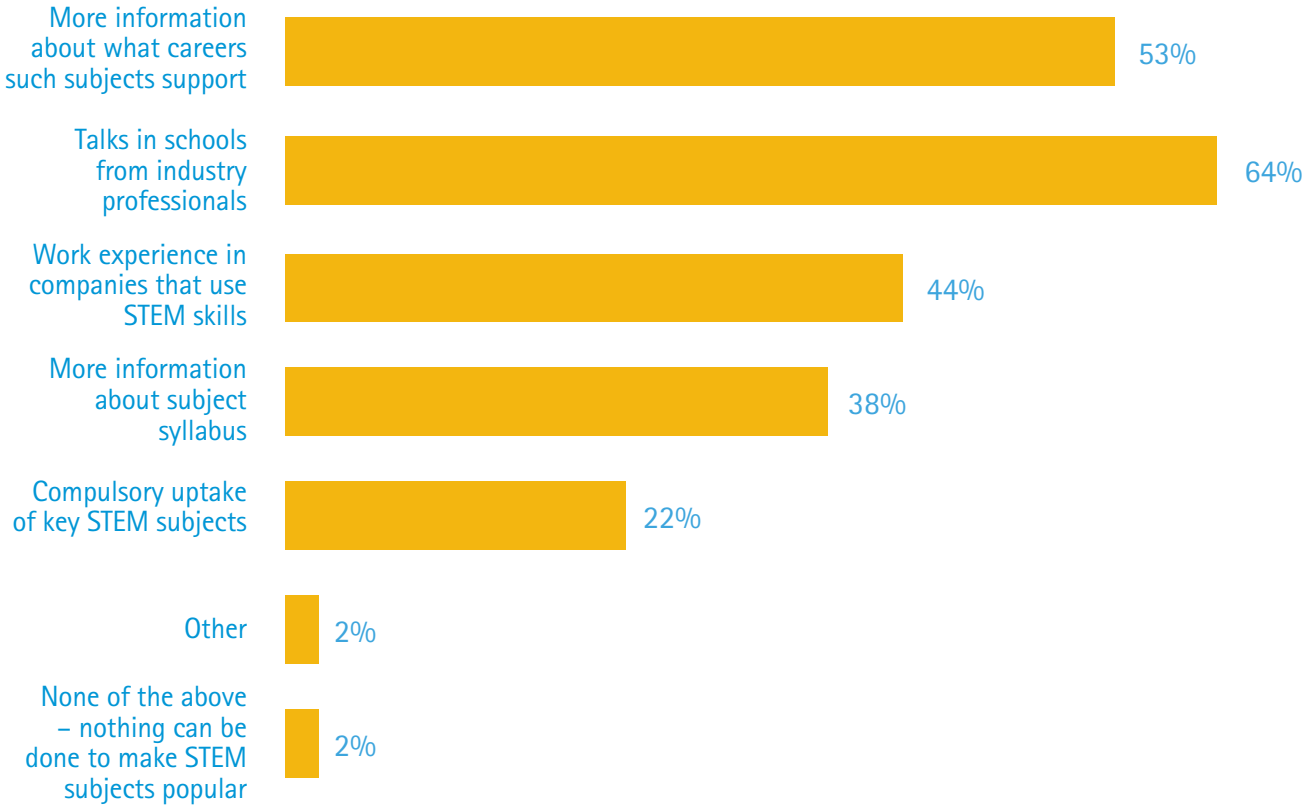


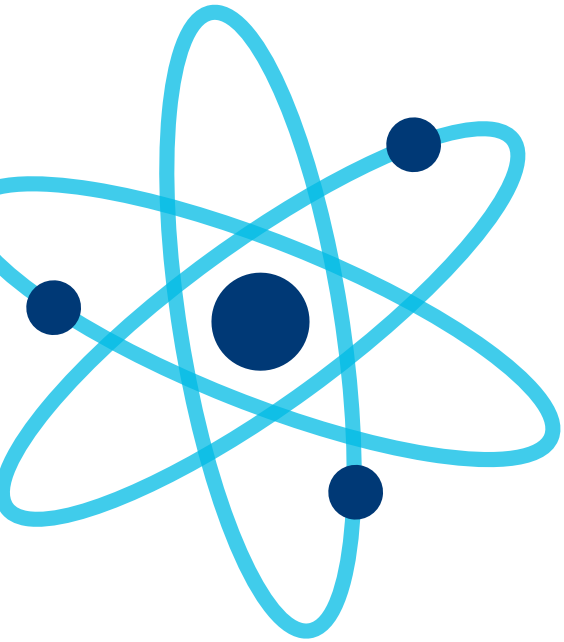
Teachers believe talks from industry professionals about STEM careers (**89%**), work experience programmes (**78%**) and case studies about successful women in STEM (**78%**) are important in promoting STEM careers amongst women

Girls and young women believe work experience in companies that use STEM skills (**56%**), more information about what careers they support (**55%**) and talks in schools from industry professionals (**48%**) are the biggest ways to improve STEM subject popularity at school

Ways to make STEM subjects more popular – Parents & Teachers

In terms of making STEM subjects more popular, parents and teachers are agreed that there are three key areas that need tackling – more information about what careers STEM subjects support, talks in schools from industry professionals and work experience in companies that use STEM skills.





"I think it is really important to encourage kids at an early age to get interested in science, technology, engineering, art and maths through fun activities. It is important to take the mystery about these subjects away. Showing kids STEM is fun and not just formulas is key.

It is beneficial to kids learning to see demonstrations on how STEM relates to everyday objects they use and the world around us. I like to hear about a "can do" attitude. My parents encourage me to try things out, obviously once they are safe. Letting kids follow their imagination like creating STEM games but letting them come up with the ideas, - this would be really exciting for kids to do and a huge sense of achievement."

Lauren Boyle

EU Digital Girl of the Year 2014

Next Steps

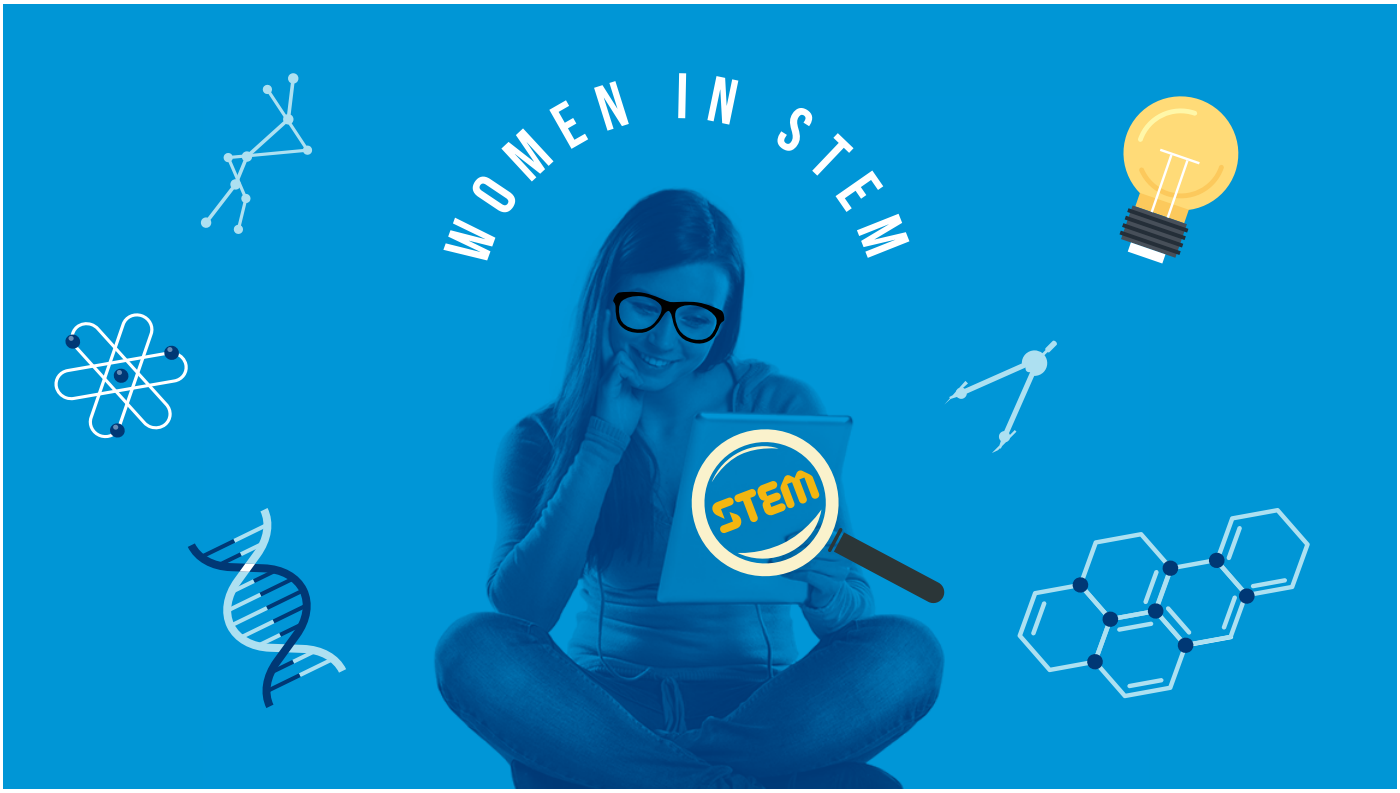
In the 2013 report, Accenture made a number of recommendations on ways to encourage more young women to have an interest in and to select STEM related subjects. Strides have been made by both Government and Industry and momentum has built but it is imperative that we increase the pressure and look to deliver support to parents and teachers. The STEM sectors are broad and therefore communicating the opportunities and variety of careers available is complex. By making more changes, we can come together to help students, parents and teachers understand what subjects young women and men need to study at second level to make their desired career choices a reality.

1. Put Computer Science on the curriculum.

Estonia led the way and England has recently followed. Since September 2014, children in primary schools in England get practical experience of designing and writing computer programmes and are taught about algorithms. From the age of seven, pupils will learn how the internet works.

Whilst a short course in programming and coding will be introduced as part of the revised Junior cycle, computer programming or science does not feature as a subject either at primary or secondary school level.

We firmly believe it is important to put computer science onto the curriculum in order to tackle the concerns that girls have about the difficulty of the subject and to make it more accessible to all. Computer science is the single most powerful force for upcoming generations and we need to teach it in a fashion that generates as much passion and understanding as possible.



2. Train the Trainer

To combat the challenge of training teachers in new technology in England, the British Department of Education is creating a network of "master teachers" with a high level of computer expertise.

The research clearly shows that teachers are key influencers. Industry needs to engage more with this audience to better support and inform them. This spreads across both primary and secondary level and teachers of the subject matters through to Transition Year teachers and also including careers advisors who are called out as key influencers.

Industry should look at how we can create and deliver a knowledge based course to teachers. We can leverage the "in-service training days" allocated to teachers. But we should also use the power of digital technology to create an engaging and on-going communication with teachers.

We know that subject matters are already a consideration for children from 6th class so it would be important to work with the various Teacher Representative bodies who can guide on the best way to deliver this support to teachers.

3. Supporting our parents

Parents do understand the importance of STEM and interestingly when asked what subjects they would have liked to have studied in school 39% selected engineering followed by computer science (37%) and biology (24%). But they are clearly lacking the knowledge to inform girls when it comes to subject choices.

There are a number of programmes for parents – Excited Ireland and CoderDojo help to break down the stereotypes that exist. But we need to "up the ante". All groups tell us they need more role models. We need to push the remarkable female role models that are out there and get them on the national airwaves. We could come together with the media to promote this area more – in a collaborative manner, to showcase the exciting careers and lifestyles offered by these sectors.

Working with the National Parents Association we could also look at how we create the learning and the understanding of the benefits of STEM. This could be through Open Lecturers or by leveraging the new technologies and digital channels.

We're at a moment in time, when parents, in particular the mothers of the current generation of school going kids, were not themselves introduced to STEM related subjects in a meaningful full way during their own educations. Lots of these parents don't have the understanding of these subjects or the skills needed to feel fully confident in supporting their children. At CoderDojo, we encourage kids to be influencers in their own homes. We also empower kids to mentor and support other kids, becoming peer level role models to others. The fast pace of change in technology can be intimidating to those not equipped with skills or an understanding technology, but we encourage everyone in our community, to just try it!

Mary Moloney

Global CEO, CoderDojo

Conclusion

The STEM sectors are broad and they continue to grow and diversify. New technologies are constantly emerging and exciting new careers are developing. Our research shows that girls and parents do now see the potential for opportunities in the STEM area, they just don't know the detail.

The opportunity does exist. If Industry, Government, teachers and parents can come together we can make the changes needed to get more girls in to STEM and more women into technology in Ireland. We need to build confidence in our young girls and break down this believe that STEM subjects are male. Together we can give our young girls the opportunities to do new things and to thrive in this exciting area. This will ultimately enable Ireland to attract further investment from international companies and to grow and maintain jobs.

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"We can't just hope that the stereotypes that still cling to STEM subjects will fade away in time. Stereotypes are born out of misperceptions and we can tackle these directly by ensuring that all students experience subjects such as computer science at school. The new Junior Cycle short course in Coding is a step in the right direction, but for as long as computer science isn't a subject on the curriculum we will continue to miss the best possible opportunity to open up some of the most rewarding education and career tracks to our young women. This is critical to ensure that we have a 21st century workforce with the skills necessary for the jobs and Ireland of tomorrow".

Fionnuala Meehan

Director of SMB Sales, EMEA, Google

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