e-skills uk

The Sector Skills Council for
Business and Information Technology

The National Skills Academy

IT

Computing in Schools

Summary of industry feedback

The Royal Society has been leading an 18-month project looking at the way that computing is taught in schools. The study addresses growing concerns that the design and delivery of the ICT and computing curricula in schools is putting young people off studying the subject further. The effect on the UK economy of the dwindling enthusiasm for computing will be explored, together with the need for more specialist teachers and development of qualifications that can motivate and inspire the next generation.

The Royal Society questionnaire to industry was distributed by e-skills UK in June 2011 to ensure employers views were represented in the project. Responses from 21 leading employers of IT professionals across the economy were received. All responses were anonymised and passed on to the Royal Society and the project steering group as input to inform the project.

The key points made by respondents to the questions are set out below with the number of responses to the question in brackets.

Is computing a discipline in the same way that mathematics, physics and chemistry are? (21)

> Overall the weight of responses suggests yes, computing is a discipline in the same way that mathematics, physics and chemistry are. However, respondents thought that Computing was a newer/less well established 'discipline.

> In addition, many responses noted that Computing/Computer Science is more "applied", "practical" or "vocational" than many other subjects.

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What key ICT/computing skills are necessary for the workplace now and in the future? (20)

> Overall the weight of responses suggested that a range of skills are needed from ICT user-type skills for everyone with more technical skills depending on the workplace, for example those who will enter the technology sector and also for professionals and business leaders to understand, shape and develop their business.

What, if any, changes would you like to see to ICT/computing science provision/ qualifications in

a) Schools? (20)

> Overall the responses suggest that provision of ICT/Computing in schools needs to have a broader appeal through better links to industry/real life.

> Changes to the GCSE and separate qualifications were suggested by many respondents as was wider availability.

> There were also comments in relation to teaching staff in the responses as well.

b) and at university? (20)

> Many of the respondents mentioned that provision in Universities needed to be linked more to the real world with more practical application and links to industry. Outreach to schools via University students was also suggested.

> There were some suggestions that IT/Computing as an enabler should be included in every degree course.

Should ICT and computing science both be part of the school curriculum? (21)

> There was a fairly even split between the responses in those that respond yes to this question and those that respond positively in regard to ICT but suggest that Computer Science should be an option.

End of document

Prepared by: Liz Hollingworth
Date: 4 January 2012
E-mail: liz.hollingworth@e-skills.com

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