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“My message to any student thinking about their career is simple – employers need apprentices.

And the business leaders of today value young people who choose this career path as highly as someone who chooses a course of study at college or university.

Apprenticeships are fast becoming the top-rated way of getting a qualification – often at degree level, enviable skills, experience of work and life, and all of this while being able to earn.

More opportunities than ever before are being created in this area. There are the traditional sectors like the crafts and hospitality and there are the new career paths into sectors like insurance, finance and accounting, fin-tech and ICT.

Go to apprenticeship.ie to check out what is on offer.

In January I was fortunate enough to see apprenticeships in action at Combillift in Monaghan. It is opening its doors to young people and giving them an insight into a multi-million euro manufacturing industry, supplying state-of-the-art machinery to companies around the world.

It is just one of the companies on board with the Government’s ambition to see a total of 50,000 people enrolled on apprenticeship and traineeship programmes by 2020 – that is 14,000 enrolments every year.

Expanding the opportunities for school

leavers and young people is a key priority for this Government.

Schools, teachers and guidance counsellors play a hugely important role in supporting our young people and helping them to make independent choices on their journey into a career. So too do the parents, families, friends and role models in the community and local clubs.

All of us need to see the huge transformation that is taking place in the further education and apprentices sector.

The employers are leading the way. Their attitudes towards graduates from apprenticeships and Post-Leaving Cert courses tell their own story – they are rated as highly as graduates from universities and third-level colleges.

Not only that but employers will tell you that graduates of further education have better skills when it comes to team-working, they have more commercial awareness and they are more likely to think like an entrepreneur.

It is a massive vote of confidence in the sector.

I look forward to the School Summit 2019 sponsored by ABP, taking place on 16th & 17th September in The National Show Centre, Swords, Co Dublin, and I know that the Ireland Skills Live event and its three day expo from 21st to 23rd March in RDS Simmonscourt, Dublin will be a major boost to bring apprenticeships and traineeships into the 21st century.



Minister for Education and Skills Joe McHugh TD

At these events you will get the best advice, the right guidance and the chance to hear first-hand from those who know what is best.

I want to see more initiatives to bring vocational education and private industry together. We are responding to the new demands of the workplace. We are investing to open doors for young people who are moving from school to careers. We are ensuring lifelong learning. Our education system is on course to be the best in Europe and apprenticeships are key to our ambitions.

I urge students to think with every single avenue open to them leaving school. You are facing into a rapidly changing world of work. We are expanding the opportunities to set you on the right path and to give you the best preparations for a career and for life. Use these events to test the possibilities and seize the initiative to learn and earn.