



JUNE 2015



SKILLS COMPETITIONS



RAISING STANDARDS



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FE Week

THE 'RIPPLE EFFECT' OF COMPETITION

FE WEEK TEAM

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For the young people involved, there can be no doubt skills competitions offer a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

However, the impact of skills competitions ripples out much wider than just the handful of talented young people who make it to the medal podium — and that ripple effect in raising standards is what this supplement sets out to explore.

Skills competitions began in Spain in 1947, with the first international competition in 1953. Today, 74 countries compete in 46 sectors at WorldSkills.

In the UK, Find a Future oversees WorldSkills UK, which runs around 60 competitions at regional and national level, choosing the best competitors for the biennial WorldSkills and EuroSkills competitions. This year will see the

WorldSkills finals take place in São Paulo, Brazil — and the team UK members are due to be announced this month.

The process begins again in November, when the national finals at the Skills Show will determine who makes it through to the training squad for WorldSkills Abu Dhabi 2017.

The UK's official delegate in Brazil, Skills Funding Agency and Education Funding Agency chief executive Peter Lauener shares his hope and view of the benefits of competition on page 3. On pages 4 and 5, we look at research into the impact of 2011's WorldSkills London with WorldSkills International chief executive Simon Bartley explaining how the UK can make the most of taking part.

On page 6, North Warwickshire and Hinckley College principal Marion Plant explains the benefits of WorldSkills on standards across the college, while UK Skills head of development Jenny Shackleton tells us what competitions do for the FE sector as a whole.

Private providers are under-represented in competitions, so on page 7 we look at what benefits are gained by the few that do take part, and Association of Employment and Learning Providers chief executive Stewart Segal gives also gives his view.

On pages 10 and 11, we find out more about

the dedicated training providers who guide competitors on their WorldSkills journey and hear about what they take from the process.

On page 12, we find out how skills competitions affect industries that are involved and on page 13, we see how inclusive skills competitions are benefitting learners with disabilities and learning difficulties.

Finally, on pages 14 and 15, former competitors explain how WorldSkills changed their lives and careers.

As always, you can join the conversation at feweek.co.uk and on Twitter with @feweek.



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MICHAEL OSBALDESTON
SKILLS ADVISER AT THE CITY & GUILDS GROUP

Let's shine the spotlight on excellence

If you ask people outside of the FE sector to describe what demonstrates excellence in the skills world, you will probably be met by a puzzled face.

Everyone understands what it looks like in academia; guest lectures, lucrative book deals, panel debates and so on. And the national press rushes to cover rankings of the world's top universities.

There's nothing wrong with celebrating academic achievement. But why do skills not share the spotlight?

A skilled workforce fuels our economy, but we tend to take those who excel in a particular skill for granted. They are considered part of a system — and they are — but they should also be acknowledged as talented individuals, equipped with skills that are much-needed in society.

That's why skills competitions are

so important. They give individuals a chance to showcase skills that so often go unrecognised in day-to-day working life. Simply put, they provide skills with the respect they deserve.

Inspiring our future workforce

At the City & Guilds Group, we are firm believers in celebrating excellence wherever we find it, to recognise people for their hard work and talents, and to motivate others. For example, every year we award our Medals for Excellence to both tutors and individuals who have shown not just talent, but a dedication and passion for their vocation, often in the face of adversity.

Celebrating excellence does more than recognise individuals. It inspires others. Think about football for example. Whenever you see the greats of the game like Messi or Ronaldo meeting young fans and

demonstrating their skills, the expressions on the fans' faces are priceless. You can see they are being inspired to enhance their own skills so they can emulate their heroes.

I've seen the same thing happen time and time again at different skills events — talented people demonstrating skills and inspiring others to follow in their footsteps. It's amazing just how much of an impact it has.

And of course skills events and competitions are a brilliant form of peer-to-peer careers advice. We all know careers advice needs to improve — teachers don't have the time, or even the knowledge of all the different routes available, and often young people are directed down the university route by default.

That's why events such as the Skills Show are so valuable. They highlight the opportunities that are available to young people, opening their eyes — and potentially doors — to their futures.

A bit of friendly competition

We can't underestimate the importance of the competitive spirit. When I attend events like EuroSkills and The Skills Show, the competitive edge of those individuals taking part shines through.

This is a good thing — embracing competition and channelling it encourages

us to be the best we can be. It's not just the individuals that benefit; training someone up to be a future gold medallist requires a lot of hard work — and pushes tutors and colleges too.

Such competitions encourage organisations to develop their skills even further and benchmark excellence in training delivery. And not to mention the morale boost it provides for the organisation and its learners.

Keeping up the momentum

It's fantastic to see that skills competitions are now a fixture in the international education calendar. With skills gaps a growing threat and stubbornly high levels of youth unemployment in the UK and across the world, it has never been more important to highlight the opportunities skills can forge.

For anyone taking part in a skills competition this year, I wish you the best of luck. You are truly inspirational, and are helping to shine the spotlight on FE that little bit brighter.



FUNDING CHIEF AND WORLDSKILLS ‘CHEERLEADER’ Q&A

The UK has competed in WorldSkills since its inception as an international competition 1953.

In the last competition, held in Leipzig in 2013, team UK came 10th in the medal table, with two gold medals, one silver, three bronzes and 17 medallions of excellence — awards given to competitors who reached a near-perfect industry standard but who were beaten on points.

Accompanying the 2015 final team to São Paulo to see if they can beat that ranking will be the official UK delegate, Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and Education Funding Agency chief executive Peter Lauener. FE Week caught up with him to ask what he made of the competitions.

How do you see your role as the official delegate?

My job is to be a cheerleader for the UK team. I'm looking forward to spending time talking to the competitors and the trainers and really just encouraging them as they compete.

What do you think engaging with other countries like this does for UK's reputation for skills internationally?

I look forward to meeting the representatives of the other countries because it's an opportunity to talk about aspects of their system that they're very pleased with and looking at the area where we do well, looking at the areas where the other countries do well and see what there might be to learn.

What do you think skills competitions do for UK skills?

First of all I think it's a great thing for the competitors, I've met with a few of them — I visited Chesterfield College which is a good example of a college that's really embraced the focus on skills competitions and as a result have greatly expanded their apprenticeship work.

I talked to some of the young people who were successful at the UK competition last November at the skills show. I saw how much they got out of being able to benchmark their skills against others, how much confidence they got when they won medals and it was really interesting to talk to the employers as well and see how much they valued the high-level skills that the young people had developed.

But even those who don't get a medal, they've still got a commendation that they've reached the world class standard — it gives them tremendous confidence with their career.

One of the interesting and nice things about the competitions is that they have the alumni come back to help and most of those have had fantastically successful careers



You see differences in the way things are done between different countries and that kind of sharing I think is a very good thing

WorldSkills UK official delegate Peter Lauener, chief executive of the Skills Funding Agency and the Education Funding Agency

as a result of the skills they developed with WorldSkills.

Do you think it can raise standards?

It absolutely can. I like the concept that you're marked on a very precise scale which is designed by experts in the field.

Getting that absolute clarity about what excellence is and how to measure it in different areas is important, and I think the fact that the trainers see that as well as the students and take it back to their colleges and training providers — so there are all kinds of ways in which it raises standards.

It's also just great to celebrate success and the life experience for these competitors, like meeting people who are practicing these skills from around the world, is a great thing.

Sometimes you see differences in the way things are done between different countries and that kind of sharing I think is a very good thing as well.

How does the SFA support WorldSkills in that role of raising standards?

It's as a cheerleader role to encourage the student to encourage the trainers, working together. I'm the official delegate so I'm part of the skills network worldwide so it's an opportunity to talk to colleagues from nations like Germany, where apprenticeships are very strong or other European nations where there's a focus on

the institution system — the opportunity to see what is being done in different countries.

The UK's work on WorldSkills is led by the Education and Training Foundation, and the funding for Find a Future, the organisation that actually runs the work is no longer directly funded by the SFA and that's fine, it's nice and straightforward and we're not planning to put funding in — I don't think anyone's expecting that.

But I think what we can do, in our role funding apprenticeships is to look to those lessons we should take on board.

As far as the competition my aim is to be there to support the competitors and trainers.

Is there anything the SFA can do to encourage more independent learning providers to get involved?

There are providers, particularly employer providers like BAE, Systems which are very committed, but if it's an issue we'd be delighted to talk about it with Find a Future and we'll have the opportunity to talk about it in Brazil.

With funding getting tighter and increasing pressure on staff time, what would you say to colleges or independent learning providers worried about taking the plunge?

I really can't say enough about the benefits to individuals, for staff and training colleges

and providers — it's absolutely great and it's given huge motivation and the feedback to the individuals and the institutions.

I guess when I talk to providers about it they are always keen to talk about it — never have I spoken to anyone who's said 'I didn't like it and I stopped it'.

Give it a try — come and see what its like, talk to the students and talk to the trainers.

If you're a provider, actually talk to the trainers, they are perhaps even more enthusiastic than the competitors because they feel incredibly validated they all talk to me about how it's made them change the way they deliver the training.

Do you have a message for the competitors you'll be supporting in Brazil?

For the competitors, whether or not you're in the UK team, well done, you've done incredibly well to get this far, good luck for your competition and I look forward to seeing all those UK medal winners.

For you personally, what's your favourite aspect of the competitions?

I quite like seeing the skills I'd like to have a go at myself — plastering is one of those things where I find myself looking at the lovely smooth finish the plasterers get and I find myself thinking 'I wish I could do that'. I love standing in awe, watching really skilled people do what they do.



Looking beyond the podium

Perhaps not surprisingly, WorldSkills International president Simon Bartley thinks there's more to skills competitions than places on a podium.

For Mr Bartley, allowing the expertise gathered through WorldSkills to disseminate through industry and teaching "actually is probably more important in regard to raising standards than actually having individuals winning gold medals".

And a WorldSkills research programme, Modelling Vocational Excellence (Move), which surveyed experts and competitors at WorldSkills London in 2011, found that part of the way this happens is through a shift in the attitudes to work among those involved in all levels of WorldSkills.

The 165 experts surveyed, on average, said they strongly agreed with the statements 'since being involved with WorldSkills, my commitment to my trade or profession has increased', 'I have become more determined to keep my professional knowledge and skills up to date' and 'I have developed leadership skills'.

The 386 competitors, on average, answered that they strongly agreed with the statements 'I am confident that I help my peers to solve a work problem' and 'becoming a master in my trade/profession has become very important to me' — and 80 per cent saw themselves more as a 'member of their trade or profession' than a student.

The researchers concluded: "The insights experts gather through competitions positively influences how training is organised and delivered, both on and off the job."

They added: "WorldSkills expands the pool of leaders in vocational excellence — now and in the future."

So what can the UK do to harness these benefits — both by making sure young people and experts have the opportunity to take part, and ensuring WorldSkills is understood widely enough to make a difference?

Firstly, says Mr Bartley, young people who do well need to be used as "exemplars — to other young people, to parents and teachers, that skills, vocational skills are a valid route to excellence".

And, he says: "Experts in particular learn a lot more about the techniques that are being used in countries in the day-to-day workplaces and colleges, so it's about taking what experts have found out and disseminating it amongst their colleagues in the same industry, craft or technical area."

Fortunately, he says, the UK is fairly good at this — but it would have more impact if we were able to raise the profile of WorldSkills



Simon Bartley and, inset, Front cover of the report *What contributes to vocational excellence?* by WorldSkills research group Modelling Vocational Excellence, published in 2012 and based on the experience of competitors at WorldSkills 2011

among ordinary people, which in turn could raise the profile of vocational learning.

"WorldSkills has an ability to show parents and teachers, that the work is about excellence, rather than competence, and it's something that they should aspire to as a potential route for their children," says Mr Bartley.

"We open a window to parents and teachers by holding skills competitions, and that ought to change things in this country."

Of course, he acknowledges, not everyone can get to a skills competition to see for themselves.

"We need to be coming up with clever ideas of broadcasting, or using social media, to actually demonstrate what you see when you go," he says.

"Seeing is believing — but we need to make that seeing electronically as well as seeing with your eyes in the first place."

Employers, on the other hand, require a different approach, says Mr Bartley.

"We need to engage employers in skills competitions in their workplace, in their industries, on a regional basis," he explains.

"As a way of demonstrating that when their young employees participate in

skills competitions, employers see a step change in their attitude to work and their development of skills."

Can the UK learn from other countries' approach to WorldSkills?

South Korea is known for its success at WorldSkills, and the rewards and recognition offered to competitors (gold medal winners are, according the WorldSkills South Korea website, given around £40k prize money from their national organisers in addition to a study bursary).

The country has included WorldSkills participation in its economic strategy to become a country that gives out more foreign aid than it receives.

Under the South Korean system, competitors are 'hot-housed' — intensively trained, day-in and day-out, for year in the run up to WorldSkills.

However, Mr Bartley says: "I think it's a mistake for us to concentrate too much on trying to be another South Korea — I don't think hot-housing suits our individual characteristics or work and learning characteristics in this country."

Unsurprisingly, Switzerland presents a possible model for the UK to emulate partly, says Mr Bartley, because of its lack of discrimination between vocational and

academic career paths, but also because of its engagement with employers.

"The employers are involved in the training process, not only by giving young people work, but in the curriculum, in the measures of competence required — they are integral to the process," he explains.

"In the UK some employers are really good, but it isn't part of a business's DNA either to develop skills in people, or to understand the world of skills development.

"In the UK, most employers don't think of training and skills development as an investment, they think of it as a cost — and that needs to change."

Another country which offers an interesting example, is WorldSkills 2015 hosts Brazil, where, Mr Bartley says, "they take skills development so seriously that it's an embarrassment for many of us in the West".

In Brazil, an organisation called Senai funds a college network through an employer wage bills levy. Mr Bartley says: "Because of Senai, a powerhouse is developing the economy, that gives the message to parents and others that actually, if your child can go to a Senai school or college, then they are going to be a great success in their life."

In fact former Brazilian president Luiz

finish



Inácio Lula da Silva began his career as a trained lathe operator from a Senai College. And although he stops short of endorsing the introduction of this system in the UK, Bartley says he would “like every country to use the schools infrastructures within their countries to promote excellence in vocational education through skills competitions — I think it’s a working model”.

And he says: “I would like government and industrialists to use the WorldSkills model of benchmarking, through skills competitions, to identify those areas of the UK economy that could be improved by further investment in skills.”

Most importantly for the UK, Mr Bartley has a warning.

“There are countries clamouring at ministerial, prime ministerial and presidential level to be part of the WorldSkills movement,” he says.

“I would find it extraordinarily strange if the UK took its foot off the accelerator of developing skills competitions at a college, local, regional, and national level, and participating at WorldSkills.

“If the UK was to take the backward step, I think some countries could point at that and say, ‘You ought to think again about that because you’re wrong’.”

Source: What contributes to vocational excellence? Characteristics and experiences of competitors and experts in WorldSkills London 2011, a report to the WorldSkills Foundation on the MoVE International research project conducted at WorldSkills London 2011

165 respondents

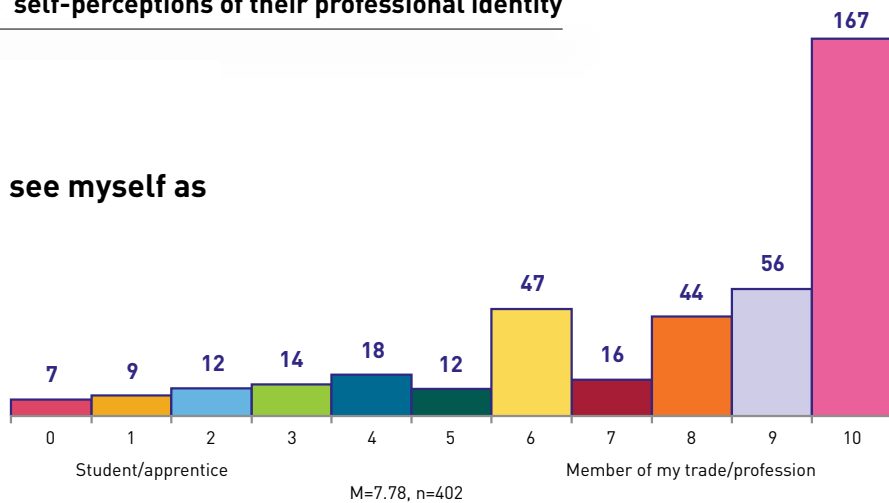
Qualities competitors feel they have gained since they have been involved in WorldSkills

(1= Disagreement, 3= mild agreement, 5= total agreement)



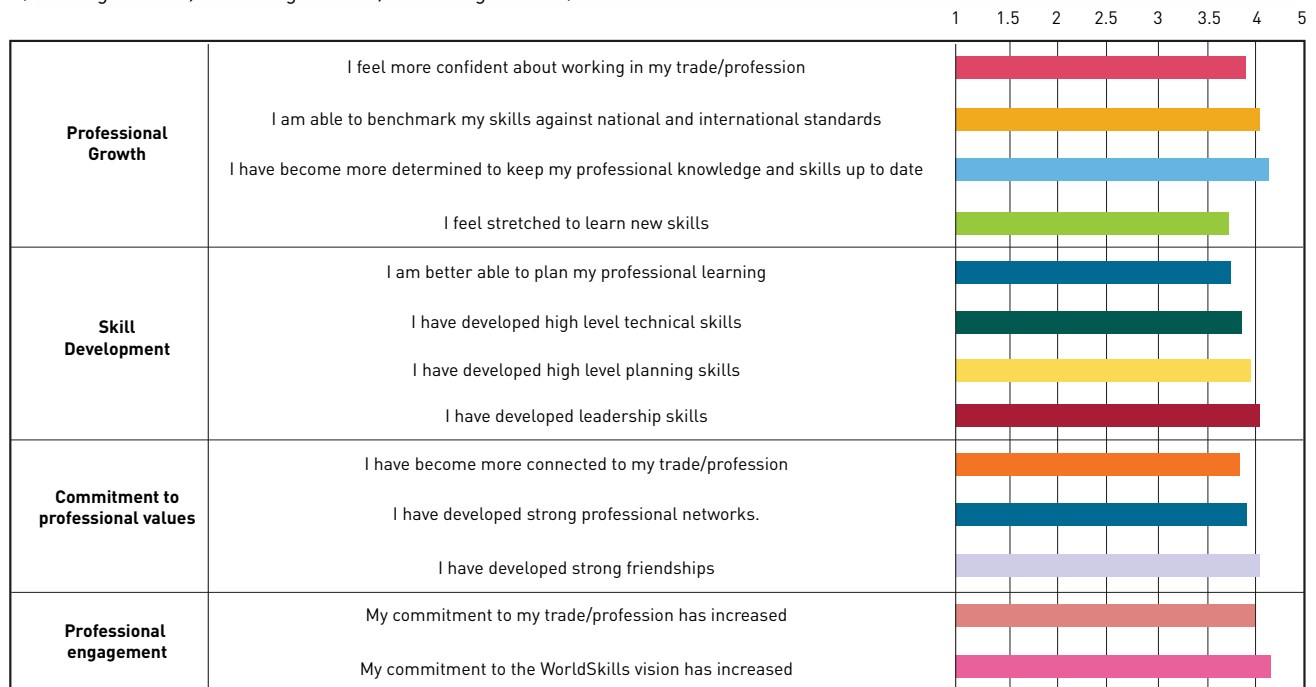
Competitors' self-perceptions of their professional identity

I see myself as



Professional growth qualities experts feel they have gained since they have been involved in WorldSkills

(1= Disagreement, 3= mild agreement, 5= total agreement)





MARION PLANT OBE

PRINCIPAL, NORTH WARWICKSHIRE AND HINCKLEY COLLEGE
AND SOUTH LEICESTERSHIRE COLLEGE

Stretch and challenge through skills competitions

The effect of competitions on learners is clear not only from their increasingly confident demeanour, but also in their growing level of newly-acquired knowledge and experience. However, there are benefits also for their tutors and providers, explains Marion Plant.

Last year almost 2,500 full-time students including apprentices at North Warwickshire and Hinckley College took part in competitions at all levels of learning.

This included participation by Entry and Foundation level students in the unique 'Footsteps to the Future' competition through to 17 apprentices and other FE students competing at the UK WorldSkills finals at the National Skills Show in 2014.

Each of these individuals secured life-changing benefits — greater personal confidence, increased ambition and aspiration, outstanding technical skills and enhanced employability, through the development of the critical skills of communication, team work, the ability to work unsupervised and under pressure, and the creative mind-sets which set them apart from others.

A recent Ofsted report about the college commented on how "students develop successfully a wide range of skills relevant to their chosen profession including the use of competitions which prepares them well for future employment." In addition students who are coached towards competition participation consistently achieve higher qualification success rates

than the already high average success rates for all other college students.

Skills competitions sit at the heart of teaching, learning and assessment strategies at both the colleges I lead. Staff embrace this with ambition and passion and many work to improve their own technical skills to "keep up" with the students they coach.

As a result coaching has become an established way of working within both colleges as has the excitement of sharing best practice in teaching, learning and assessment across the global WorldSkills competition community.

Whole college participation in skills competitions has been catalytic in developing a culture of ambition, competitiveness and high performance, making a significant contribution to the consistently good and improving Ofsted grades at each college.

Employers who work with both colleges view success in skills competitions as a differentiating feature within the recruitment of potential employees. Several have reported positive impacts on their business performance citing excellent technical and well developed employability skills in these employees.

Both colleges have benefitted from increased levels of employer sponsorship and many new employer relationships as a result of their success in skills competitions. Staff, students and governors at North

Warwickshire and Hinckley College look forward with pride to cheering on one of our own, Alex Elton, as he competes to secure a place in Team UK within CNC turning.

Students who are coached towards competition participation consistently achieve higher qualification success rates than the already high average success rates for all other college students

My personal leadership, support and passion for the role of skills competitions at the heart of teaching, learning and assessment is unrelenting. I urge colleagues across the sector to continue to get involved and to marvel with me at the game-changing impact of skills competitions on individuals, organisations and the wider economy.



JENNY SHACKLETON

ASSESSMENT ADVISER TO WORLDSKILLS INTERNATIONAL AND WORLDSKILLS EUROPE AND FORMER WIRRAL METROPOLITAN COLLEGE PRINCIPAL

Occupying the space between competence and excellence

Jenny Shackleton considers the wider impact of seeking a competitive advantage.

Skills competitions occupy the space between competence and excellence. Competence is what we get when knowledge, skills and personal attributes are combined to achieve a desired outcome.

In skills competitions competence is the baseline; the competitions' purpose is to identify the characteristics and extent of vocational performance above that baseline. Competitions are all about vocational excellence.

Excellence really matters: to enable a company to break into new markets or cope with change; to expand opportunities and strategies for individuals in education, training and work; and collectively to help raise productivity and competitiveness

within and across nations. The capacity to generate excellence is an indispensable part of a progressive, well-articulated education and training system. So how do or can skills competitions support national systems in their social and economic endeavours?

Starting locally and nationally they can offer aspiration and ambition for learners, and essential feedback for business and industry, institutions and systems.

As a high performing, well integrated system, Finland's skills competitions even offer a direct route to credit and qualifications. This has proved to be a popular route to the vocational mastery that includes the acquisition of the high level generic attributes that increasingly matter to business and industry.

Naturally, to achieve such outcomes, skills competitions have to be conceived, designed and managed explicitly for these

larger purposes, rather than be seen as an "add-on", or a display for an elite few.

The UK is privileged to belong to the European Qualification Framework; elsewhere clusters of nations are creating their own Qualification Frameworks. Continental skills competitions, such as WorldSkills ASEAN, WorldSkills Americas and WorldSkills Europe, both reflect these cross-border alliances and add substance to their efforts. While the frameworks establish baselines for recognition, the competitions test each system's performance and grow its capacity to excel.

Exactly 70 years ago Unesco was given the global remit for education of all types, purposes and needs, as the key to an interconnected world in which all might play an active part. WorldSkills supports that endeavour in supremely practical and vivid ways.

Within a well-tested conceptual frame it generates, consults on and updates global standards of good practice, based on occupations and presented as learning outcomes. It designs assessment methods, vehicles and tools to identify vocational performance within, across and above competence at the levels associated with technical and vocational roles.

Its biennial WorldSkills Competition produces three sets of winners: the competitors who grow by striving to be the very best; the member countries which become better at growing their own

capability; and the multiple products of this remarkable event, such as standards, assessment methods and aids, professional development, networks, and visioning.

The capacity to generate excellence is an indispensable part of a progressive, well-articulated education and training system

In the UK, where internal boundaries can be restrictive, it is promising to see new apprenticeships emerging with features that chime with WorldSkills: clear and concise standards stretching up to and beyond higher technician level, a focus on assessment, recognition and registration as much as qualifications, end tests incorporating differentiation, and higher expectations all round. As WorldSkills sets itself the challenge to become the global showcase for technical and vocational education and training in the 21st Century, it is building its value while looking to members to grasp what is within their reach.

INDEPENDENT PROVIDERS MISSING OUT IN COMPETITION STAKES

Of the 88 young people who made it through to the WorldSkills UK squad, just 10 came from independent learning providers (ILPs) while 11 came from employer providers.

The vast majority (59) were from colleges, while four came from universities and four did not say.

So why is it that ILP and employer provider learners represent such a small number of those in the squad?

FE Week spoke to two ILPs who have taken the plunge to find out what barriers they faced and why so few of their fellow ILPs have chosen to join them.

Katy Godsell (pictured below), marketing manager at Powys-based Cambrian Training, which this year began setting up new WorldSkills competitions in butchery, said cost was likely to be an issue putting off ILPs getting involved.

“We’re putting a great deal of money in ourselves — mainly in time,” she said.

“So what we get won’t cover everything that we’re putting in, so that’s probably the biggest thing. If it was something that was guaranteed to generate money probably more ILPs would try it.”

Although the upcoming 2017 cycle will be the first time the UK has competed in butchery at WorldSkills, Cambrian Training has been running the Welsh Young Butcher competition for 10 years, so it knows the benefits that competition involvement can bring.

“We’ve had young people who win the Welsh competition and they ask us ‘where can I go from here?’ And we have to tell them there isn’t anywhere,” said Ms Godsell.

“So that was one of the motivations behind getting involved with WorldSkills — we know this is the sort of thing that might have an impact further down the line, but not immediately, and it will be one of those things that from a maths perspective will be very hard to measure anyway. It’s good to do but hard to measure in a way that means you can say ‘look, here are the benefits.’”

Gary Howard, managing director of Manchester-based Complete Forensics, which began running forensics competitions three years ago, said funding could explain why providers were less willing to invest their time and money in competitions than colleges.

“ILP funding is so much tighter, they have to make sure everybody achieves on their courses and it’s very results-driven,” he said.

“I know the colleges are experiencing financial pressure as well, but they have that extra reliability of the funds coming the following year — it’s highly unlikely a college is



Tom Jones, aged 25, is one of Cambrian Training’s butchery apprentices

ever going to be told ‘no you can’t have the funding,’ whereas an ILP could be.”

Mr Howard also said a lack of awareness among providers was “a major issue”.

“They don’t understand what they as a company can achieve as well as their learners,” he said.

And trying to get employers to recognise the value of competitions, to release their apprentices for the intense training required for WorldSkills, could often be a challenge, he said, particularly in industries that haven’t had much experience with competitions previously.

But, he said, in forensics at least, that was “slowly turning around”.

And for Complete Forensics, getting recognition had been an important factor in persuading him to get involved.

“I was struggling to get the company up and running, and I wanted a way to get the brand out there and show people what young people were learning and how they were learning,” he said.

And the gamble seems to have paid off. “There’s a massive marketing appeal,” said Mr Howard.

“We’re known up and down the country now, which is mainly due to WorldSkills — we’re very big around the greater Manchester area because of the Skills Show experience.”

The contact with other providers and businesses in the same field had also been an unexpected benefit, said Mr Howard.

“We’ve been able to engage much easier with other companies who offer the same consulting services as us.

“Normally they would close doors and see us as a

rival, but we work together because of the competitions, which has enabled us to grow really.”

Ms Godsell agreed. “That contact with industry is good for students in the long run and also ultimately it helps get the word out further,” she said. “What it will do is

get our name out in Wales as the training provider to go to for butchery and food manufacturing — it’s very good PR.”

For providers looking to dip their toe in the water, but with reservations about their funding and success rates, Mr Howard and Ms Godsell agree on best way to start off is to stick to what you know.

Mr Howard said: “People don’t necessarily see the advantage of being involved particularly when they’re spread across too many areas, too many subject specialisms. We have forensics that’s in our blood that’s everything we do so its easy for us to concentrate on that provision, we’re able to devote more time to WorldSkills, and for us it’s been ideal.”

Ms Godsell said: “Because butchery is one of the biggest sectors we have, it’s worth it.

“We’ll generate expertise and advice for the industry through the organisations we’ve built relationships with — and to really get the benefit of that, at least initially, focussing on your core market is what I would recommend.”

Visit www.worldskillsuk.org for more information about how to get involved in skills competitions, through entering competitors, offering an expert and a training manager or organising competitions.



STEWART SEGAL

ASSOCIATION OF EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING PROVIDERS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND A FUTURE BOARD MEMBER

Generating independent interest in competitions

At the recent Team UK Selection Competitions for WorldSkills Sao Paulo 2015 in the East Midlands, it was good to see independent learning providers (ILPs) take advantage of the seminars there during the week for organisations to learn more about how skills competitions can raise standards in training and how more providers can get involved.

They were given a tour of the competitions and got to meet Squad UK who are competing for a place in the team to represent the nation in São Paulo.

An increasing number of providers are seeing the benefits of taking part in skills competitions as a vehicle for raising the profile of skills and linking with some major employers.

The career prospects of the learners who take part in skills competitions can also be transformed and this is why more and more ILPs are interested in getting their learners involved in skills competitions.

Developing skills competitions can be a very important way of inspiring young people into a wide range of careers and driving the high level skills so it is important that they are integrated with apprenticeship programmes.

The Education and Training Foundation has recognised the value of trainers and assessors engaging in skills competition activity for their own professional development.

In a 2014/15 National Skills Competition CPD Programme, funded by the Foundation, AELP worked with Association of Colleges to ensure that the expert practice of the competition trainers is made available to the sector.

The numbers of staff from ILPs registering for this programme is encouraging and more information about the CPD events already underway and resources can be found here <http://bit.ly/1EU6Fmx>





MEDALS FOR EXC

City & Guilds have been awarding their Medals for Excellence for over 100 years to those who have gone the extra mile whilst studying for or teaching their courses. A medal recognises not only excellent results but also those who show a true journey of progression throughout the course of their learning, with many of those studying having overcome significant challenges to achieve their goals.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF THE 2014-2015 WINNERS OF THE MEDALS FOR EXCELLENCE PROGRAMME.

Neil Abeysekera

- Engineering
- APSS International Networks (PVT) Ltd

Samantha Alder

- ITQ Level 2 for IT users
- Worcester College of Technology

Chantelle Allen

- ITQ Level 1 for IT users
- North Lancs Training Group Ltd

Htet Myat Aung

- Level 3 IVQ Technician Diploma in Mechanical & Electrical Engineering
- Dual Tech

Kim Avery-Doherty

- Level 2 Certificate in Cleaning Principles
- Birmingham Metropolitan College

Christopher Martin Baldwin

- Level 5 NVQ Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety Practice
- John B McLaughlin Associates

Mark Barkley

- Level 3 Certificate in Logistics Operations
- North Lancs Training Group Ltd

Gill Booker

- Floristry
- Missenden Abbey Adult Learning Centre

Chris Bowran

- Level 2 Certificate in Design and Craft – Visual Techniques (Creative Computing)
- ArtyBird Carnforth

Christina Brier

- Level 3 Certificate in Creative Techniques – Floral
- Missenden Abbey Adult Learning Centre

Trevor George Burchick MBE

- Health and Social Care
- Fulcrum Academy

Keston Cato

- Level 2 IVQ Diploma in Electrical Installation
- Automation Technology College Ltd

Nicky Chinnery

- Functional Skills
- IWC Community Learning Centre

Joseph Cilia

- Engineering
- MCAST Institute of Building & Construction

Sushana Cole

- Level 2 Certificate in Make-up
- D'Marie School of Make-up Artistry

Trevor Collette

- Oil and Gas
- Kenson School of Production Technology Limited

David Coyne

- Built Environment Services
- CDETB Ballyfermot Training Centre

Paul David Dainton

- Level 2 NVQ Diploma in Highways Maintenance (Construction)
- SWH Training

Kristian Dalziel

- Level 3 Furniture Design and Making
- Cornwall College Camborne

Sisira Dharmathilaka

- Level 5 IVQ Advanced Technician Diploma in Construction (Quantity Surveying)
- Intec - Asia

James Dilloway

- Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Customer Service
- North Lancs Training Group Ltd

Timothy Dixon

- Level 2 Furniture Making
- Newark College

Natalie Duddridge

- Level 2 NVQ Diploma in Performing Manufacturing Operations (QCF)
- North Lancs Training Group Ltd

Polaris Dyas

- Level 2 NVQ Certificate in Business and Administration
- North Lancs Training Group Ltd

Daniel Evans

- Level 3 Diploma in Health and Social Care (Adults) for England
- SBC Training & Consultancy

Stuart Evans

- Level 3 Furniture Design and Making
- City of Oxford College part of Activate Learning Rycotewood

Yazid Emamdeen

- IT
- Trinizuela Technical & Vocational College

Giovanni Fantuzzi

- MEng Aeronautical Engineering
- Imperial College London

Tomasz Ferenc

- Level 2 NVQ Diploma in Professional Cookery (QCF)
- Coleg Cambria – Work Based

Christopher Gale

- Level 2 Certificate in Retail Skills (QCF)
- Derry Youth & Community Workshop

Aneta Gelazeciene

- Hospitality and Catering
- McDonald's Restaurants of Ireland

Dorota Gierynska

- Level 3 Diploma in Design and Craft – Stitched Textiles (Embroidery)
- North East Lincolnshire Council Community Learning Services

Andrew Ginn

- The Frontline Skills Framework – Utilities (5831)
- Gas Network Design
- Develop Training Limited

Wei Yen Go

- Level 2 IVQ Diploma in Patisserie
- Berjaya Higher Education Sdn Bhd

Soner Göksu

- Hospitality and Catering
- Mutfak Sanatları Akademisi

Connor Greenhalgh

- Level 1 Award in Introduction to Travel and Tourism Industry
- Wigan & Leigh College

Anthony Gregg

- Level 2 Award/Certificate and Diploma in Creative Techniques in 2D and 3D
- The London School of Picture & Frame Restoration

Charlotte Haenlein

- Level 3 Certificate in Design and Craft – Stitched Textiles (Patchwork and Quilting)
- Missenden Abbey Adult Learning Centre

Jacqueline Harrison

- Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care
- Q Training (Bristol) Ltd

Helen Heard

- Level 3 Certificate in Design and Craft – Constructed Textiles (Feltmaking)
- Artybird

George Hemstock

- Level 2 in Work-based Environmental Conservation
- SLIC Training

Shelley Hickman

- Level 2 NVQ Certificate in Business and Administration
- Sussex Downs College

Kate Horner

- Constructed Textiles
- Artybird

Baduge Indrasiri

- Level 3 IVQ Technician Diploma in Motor Vehicle Systems
- Skills College Of Technology

Adam Irish

- Level 3 NVQ Extended Diploma in Mechanical Manufacturing Engineering - Machining
- Royal Engineers Vocational Qualification

Mewan Jayasinghe

- Level 3 IVQ Technician Diploma in Motor Vehicle Systems
- DIMO Automobile Training School

Mehmet Kabayuka

- Level 2 IVQ Diploma in Food Preparation and Cooking (Culinary Arts)
- Mutfak Sanatları Akademisi

Uğurcan Karaman

- Level 2 IVQ Diploma in Patisserie
- Mutfak Sanatları Akademisi

Elsie Koerner

- Level 3 Diploma in Public Services – Operational Delivery
- City of Bristol College



ELLENCE

The culmination of the Medals for Excellence programme is the Lion Awards, which honours the best of the best in the world of vocational education.

This year City & Guilds have added a new award, and the medal winners with the highest scores in each region will go forward to compete for the National People's Choice Award at the Lion Awards. This award is voted for by the public, for the person they think is most deserving, whether that be an inspirational lecturer or an awe inspiring learner. This year six regional winners will compete for the prestigious national award which will be announced on June 17 at the Lion Awards.

To find out more about the regional winners and cast your vote, visit the website: <http://lionawards.cityandguilds.com/content/peoples-choice>

Good luck to the six regional winners:

Scott Mitchell

- Armed Forces Training Lecturer

Jacques Perree

- Apprentice Level 3 Advanced Diploma in Timber Vocations (carpentry)

Amy Rush

- Automotive Engineering Apprenticeship

Polaris Dyas

- Business Skills Apprenticeship

Dorota Gierynska

- Level 3 Diploma in Craft Occupations

Jill Magennis

- Lecturer in Early Years

Diana Korovina

- Level 2 Diploma in Women's Hairdressing
- Sligo College of Further Education

Lindsey Latimer

- Level 3 Certificate in Independent Advocacy (plus specialism)
- Advocacy Consultancy Training and Supervision Ltd

Trung Le

- City and Guilds Level 2 3D studies (Jewellery)
- Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service

Emma Leslie

- Level 2 Wood Machining
- The Building Crafts College

Chan Yik Liaw

- Level 2 IVQ Diploma in Food Preparation and Cooking (Culinary Arts)
- RIAM Institute Of Technology

Jamie MacGregor-Ryan

- Level 3 Diploma in Operational Delivery
- City of Bristol College

Jill Magennis

- Children
- Southern Regional College

Ayodya Yamani Manatunga

- Level 2 Diploma in Beauty Therapy + Evolve
- Ramani Fernando Training (PVT) Ltd

Heather Martin

- Level 1 IVQ Certificate in Food Preparation and Cooking
- Waikato Institute of Technology

Stephen Lawrence Martindale

- Level 3 Certificate for Proficiency in Food Industry Skills
- Coleg Cambria – Work Based

Guy Nicholas Mason

- Level 2 NVQ Diploma in Kitchen Services (QCF)
- North Lancs Training Group Ltd

Hiram McClean

- Level 5 IVQ Advanced Technician Diploma in Electrical and Electronic Engineering
- Automation Technology College Ltd

Thomas McMeeken

- Level 2 & 3 Diploma in Work-based Agriculture (Mixed Farming)
- Bishop Burton College

Alistair Mitchell

- Construction
- Leeds College of Building

Melissa Mohammed

- Oil and Gas
- Kenson School of Production Technology

Carl Morris

- IT
- North Lancs Training Group Ltd

Kevin O'Neill

- Level 3 Work-based Horticulture (Sports Turf – Greenkeeper)
- Oaklands College

Jensen Ong

- Transport Maintenance
- Despark Auto (Melaka) Sdn Bhd

Jackie O'Sullivan

- Level 2 Certificates for Legal Secretaries
- Kingston College

Fiona Padgett

- Level 2 Certificate for the Children and Young People's Workforce (England)
- St Loye's Foundation

Chelsea Parker

- Level 2 NVQ Diploma in Upholstery and Soft Furnishings – Modern Upholstery
- Burnley College

Pilu Pazos

- Hospitality and Catering
- Lakefield

Jessica Pell

- Beauty Therapy
- West Nottinghamshire College

Victoria Pern

- Employability and Personal Development
- North Lancs Training Group Ltd

Jacques Perree

- Level 3 IVQ Advanced Diploma in Timber Vocations (Site Carpentry)
- Guernsey College

April Poblete

- Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Hospitality Supervision and Leadership
- Lakefield

Sudarshan Priyendra

- Hospitality and Catering
- McDonald's Restaurants of Ireland

Sajid Rahman

- Transport Maintenance
- Amantech (STC Karachi)

Rajeev Ramrattan

- Level 3 IVQ Advanced Diploma in Oil and Gas Operations (Electrical Maintenance Technician)
- Kenson School of Production Technology Limited

Thomas Rankin

- Level 2 Furniture Making
- Rotherham College of Arts & Technology

Natalie Reid

- SVQ 3 in Nail Services at SCQF Level 6
- Forth Valley College of Further & Higher Education

Angela Robertson

- Level 2 in Floristry
- Bridgwater College

Amy Rush

- Level 2 Diploma in Light Vehicle Maintenance and Repair Principles
- Coleg Cambria - Work Based

Amir Sabir

- Level 2 Diploma in Process Technology – Petroleum Operations (QCF)
- Automation Technology College Ltd

Govind Sooramsingh

- Level 2 Process Technology - Chemical Process
- Trinizuela Technical & Vocational College

Luke Sullivan

- ICT Professional Competence
- PERA

Gayan Sumanasekara

- Level 3 IVQ Technician Diploma in Motor Vehicle Systems
- Future Links Institute of Technological Studies

Thelma Thomas

- Level 2 NVQ Certificate in Customer Service
- Saint Helena NVQ Assessment Centre

Russell Tickner

- Level 4 Diploma in Hospitality Management
- Sussex Downs College

R. M. C. Udaya Kumara

- Technician Diploma in Telecommunication Systems
- Sri Lanka Telecom

John Upton

- Building Services Industry
- Burnley College

Safiyah Wahid

- Oil and Gas
- Automation Technology College Ltd

Richard Walden

- Level 2 Functional Skills (English)
- Milton Keynes College

George Wallace

- Level 3 Diploma in Work-based Land-based Engineering Operations (Agriculture)
- Wiltshire College

Dylan Ward

- Functional Skills (English)
- Milton Keynes College

Mary Webb

- Health and Social Care
- Q Training (Bristol) Ltd

Rachel Whitton

- Learning
- Coleg Cambria - Deeside

Michelle Williams

- Level 3 Certificate in Creative Techniques
- Herefordshire and Ludlow College

Auriel Williams

- Level 2 NVQ Certificate in Customer Service
- Saint Helena NVQ Assessment Centre

John Wright

- Level 3 Work-based Horticulture (Sports Turf – Groundsman)
- Institute Of Groundsmanship

ON HAND TO HELP AN

Watching nervously over the shoulder of the UK competitor in every WorldSkills competition will be their training manager.

They travel almost every step of the WorldSkills journey with the competitor, from spotting them in regional competitions, giving them the high-level training to push their skills to world class standards, and ultimately judging who has what it takes to go through to team UK.

WorldSkills UK education and development manager Maureen Evans-Olsen oversees the training managers.

“Training managers develop a training plan for the individual, identifying the development that the competitor needs,” said Ms Evans-Olsen, who was business development manager at the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) before taking up the WorldSkills UK role with Find a Future.

“They won’t deliver all of the training, because we realise there’s not one person who can deliver absolutely everything a competitor needs, so they will source the best person to deliver the components of the training that they need.”

Each nation competing at WorldSkills sends its own experts in each of the skills in which it competes to manage the competition and lend their own knowledge — and the UK sends its training managers as experts.

“This means they are the person best placed to know exactly what the competition requires in terms of the make-up and breadth of the competition, and be on top of their game,” said Ms Evans-Olsen, who been partnership manager at the Skills Funding Agency before her NAS role and previously also spent 10 years as teaching and learning development and work-based learning manager at Liverpool’s Hugh Baird College.

Training managers are sourced from across the UK — and are mainly drawn from colleges.

The WorldSkills training requires a commitment of between 90 and 110 days over the two-year cycle.

“Competitors who are chosen for the squad get roughly 10 days back-to-basics training, so that will be the very early days of squad, when we’ll start off with around 170 people, cut down as we go,” said Ms Evans-Olsen.

“And then they will move into their squad training, so that’s about 40 days over year, and then when they have team selection they will have another 10 days specialist training.

“And there’s a whole host of other things



Name: Christian Notley (right)
Employer: Chichester College
Skill: Cabinet-making
Training manager since 2011

— we run psychological preparation camps with competitors and training managers and then they also have international development meetings and events.”

The idea of having staff take so much time out to train someone else’s learners might seem daunting to a lot of colleges, but Ms Evans-Olsen explained, the system actually set up to benefit the sector as widely as possible.

“It all comes down to why your country participates in WorldSkills,” she says.

“If it was just medals and sending the

My competitor [George Callow, pictured left] won gold in Leipzig, and that was fantastic because he deserved it. Even when I watch videos now I still get a lump in my throat.

He was one of my own students too, so I had known him for five years and I had seen him develop into the craftsman he is now. I was very proud, and you do get very emotional about the whole thing.

Being a training manager is a lot of work and commitment.

We recruit people for competitions but also making contact with the lecturers I find makes a big difference, and really saying to them

what we’re doing and what we’re looking for, and that helps them to understand and to train their people to meet those requirements — and they’re quite receptive to that.

I run a week of training for my squad every month, and I tend to choose different colleges as venues every time — so that gives me the opportunity to get to know the lecturers better, and explain to them about WorldSkills, but it also inspires the students when they watch our guys competing at the highest level and drives their standards up — and that really does work.

I get around all the colleges in the country

very best team to come out with the best result, then maybe we might do it more like the hot-housing systems they use in South Korea, China, and Japan, where all their competitors will do, day-in, day-out for two years is train for the competition.

“But for us, one of the fundamental reasons why we participate is we want to have UK-wide impact, so hot-housing just a few in a darkened room is never going to achieve that.

“So in the model we use, we try to involve as many of individuals in

vocational education as we can while also trying to develop the best possible team to go out and compete — having training managers who go back to their colleges with what they’ve learned means it can cascade down through the sector.”

And, she says, the UK system is actually “win-win” for providers, training managers and WorldSkills UK.

“We get the benefit of using their specialist staff, and the providers get access to the latest innovations in each sector, and their employee gets access to cutting-edge

D ON DUTY TO LEARN

Automotive engineering training manager John Dawson, from Central College Nottingham, watches over WorldSkills 2015 squad UK member Elijah Sumner, aged 20, whose provider is ProVQ and employer is Halfords Autocentre. Inset: Mo Evans-Olsen



Name: Ian Thompson
Employer: Coleg Llandrillo, North Wales
Skill: CNC milling
Training manager since 2010

Being a training manager has changed my teaching practice, you have to train people in a different way to what you would do in a normal FE environment. WorldSkills lads are really keen, they phone you up every week, they want information, so you have to be on top of your game and the stuff you prepare for them can be taken back to make lessons more interesting for your other students. I have a pre-agreed contract with the college that allows me to do WorldSkills — they do get a little bit of remuneration

from Find a Future to cover the costs of the training that I do. It's about 90 days training over the two years — it ends up being a little bit more than that effectively, but I have been fortunate this year in that I have all the equipment I need here in my college, so I can keep my normal teaching schedule in between training. And that's equipment that they have bought in because of my involvement with WorldSkills. It's high-end technology equipment I identified we needed

from visiting other countries and seeing what sort of kit they have. It gives our competitors the best training and the best opportunity to compete at the highest levels, but it's good for the students at the college too. I do a lot of development with the staff as well, giving them intensive training on more advanced equipment, and they in turn change their curriculum in order to use it. As a skills champion in engineering, I also do a lot of staff development throughout the whole of Wales, so we are effectively trying to raise the nation using my association with WorldSkills and I have definitely seen a change. With the funding cuts, there is a new workload allocation for FE staff and actually getting the time is getting harder and harder. But colleges have to understand the benefit they will get from the skills the training managers get — if they invest a little bit of time in their staff they get a lot more back.

so I'm picking up ideas from all over the place, and hopefully my college benefits from that, and they recognise that they do, so that's why they are so supportive, and I have to say they have been fantastic. Because training managers need support — they need the time to go and do all these training events, and making sure that when they get back to college they don't get a massive workload. It's a great process to be in, both for the competitors and the colleges where those students come from. To get that benefit out to the colleges I think is the key going forward.



Name: Sue Simpson
Employer: Style Training, Southport
Skill: Beauty therapy
Training manager since 1999

Being a training manager is just amazing. These are young people with the fire, passion and drive, who want to do well, and they're so motivated that working with them is a pleasure. You see them develop and change over the process. They become much more mature, much more confident at what they are doing — and that's why we do it, because you see the distance these young people travel from when you first see them to when they finish the journey. As a private provider, you see both sides of it — the training they're getting and the training you need to give your own learners to push them on. It does take up quite a lot of your time in fits and starts. I think the official figure is 40 days a year but it could take more than that — it

depends how involved you are with them. I've also picked up new skills and techniques as well, through the training we've done with other national teams, and that's an amazing experience. There is always something new to learn and something that you can then pass on to the next competitors as you are going along — but it also means that I can bring that skill back into my centre to train my students as well. And whenever we do a training event, I invite tutors from other colleges to come and have a look and see the standards that I am trying to equate to, and they then take those back into their institution and deliver it — so we are genuinely upskilling the nation. And you can see it having an effect — the standards in competitions have risen tremendously over the years since I've been involved. We're now at the point in national competition where it's really hard for judges to actually pick out who is the best — so that is fantastic.

training and development through their work with other countries, but they also get access to the latest technology, equipment and resources. "And they take their learning right the way back into their learning environment. "It also means that the industries the team managers are associated with also get access and they can impart their knowledge to their teams, their staff, which in turn raises the skill level within their workforce but also makes them more competitive on a global scale."



In competition for industry

In Brazil this summer, vocational learners from around the world will battle it out in 46 skills competitions, with Team UK participating in 37 of them.

Closer to home, around 60 competitions in different industries are expected to be on offer at next year's Skills Show in Birmingham.

And, as FE Week discovered, it's not just the teachers and the students who feel the impact of competitions, but the industries connected to the competitions too.

Find a Future's outgoing chief executive Ross Maloney said through WorldSkills and national skills competitions the UK was "able to showcase the excellence of its VET [vocational education and training] system and industry to a wider audience on a global stage".

"To ensure the portfolio of WorldSkills UK skills competitions remains relevant to education and industry, Find a Future reviews the competitions on a yearly basis, inviting organisations from industry and education to submit applications to run competitions," he explained.

To be considered, he added, competitions must "represent priority skills in industry".

One of the newest industries to be added to the list of WorldSkills international competitions is CNC turning, which became a competition for the first time three cycles ago, in Calgary, Canada.

Team UK CNC turning training manager Chris Cooper said he had seen the competition's impact on the industry through his own experience.

"The idea is for colleges across the board to raise their level to produce candidates that are close to industry standards by bettering their curriculum, and that's what it did for me," he said.

"I got involved because I was a young lecturer and enthusiastic but maybe my skill wasn't where it needed to be — and I didn't want to end up an old, unenthusiastic lecturer still not having the skills.

"I started doing the training and I found I was getting upskilled much more quickly than I had been when I was just teaching."

Mr Cooper has since left his lecturing job at North Warwickshire and Hinckley College and taken up a role training staff at CNC turning competition sponsors DMG/Mori.

"In terms of my skill, it's put me on an exponential learning curve, using brand new technologies all the time, and I'm definitely better in my job from WorldSkills, so industry is benefiting from it in that sense," he said.

"And my employers appreciate that —



Chris Cooper watches WorldSkills UK 2015 squad member Cody O'Pray, aged 20, compete for place on the CNC turning UK squad in Belfast in June last year. Cody's provider is Lakes College, West Cumbria, and his employer is M-Sport. Below: left, Ross Maloney and right, Mike Spence



they release me to train and sponsoring it is a massive commitment from them."

He added that Clamonta, who employ CNC turning squad member Alex Elton, were also "delighted" with Alex's level of work after competing in WorldSkills.

"He goes on training courses and he comes back and is teaching older members of staff how to do things on the machine," said Mr Cooper.

For competitions that have not yet made it into the international competitions, developing competitions could still have an effect.



The games industry, for example, contributes roughly £1.7bn to the UK economy — and yet 30 years ago, the industry and training courses catering to it were non-existent.

South Thames College became the organising partner for games design competitions three years ago, and training manager and lecturer Mike Spence agreed the competition was "definitely" making its presence felt in the industry.

"One of the main reasons why I wanted to put together the competition was to make sure that we could give best practice

to all of the colleges that wanted to offer 3D modelling and games development," he said.

"In 2010 a paper called the Next Gen report identified that lots of FE colleges around the UK were offering these courses but not all of them were terribly valuable in being able to give skills and we wanted to make sure delivery around the country was up to par.

"By running these competitions tutors like myself have a chance to meet up with other tutors and also with industry and share best practice, which is going to bring a higher quality of student who is more realistic about their goals going into the industry.

"And because we're working with industry who are saying 'this is what is needed', we're able to raise the profile of what FE colleges can do with regard to producing students with the right skills in the hope that boosts their work for the company."

The project has had a positive response from industry too.

Andy Matthews, lead character artist at Cloud Imperium Games, said: "The games industry is continuously evolving into an increasingly complex, technical and diverse medium and it has never been as important as it is now to bolster the link between education and industry to ensure the graduates have the world leading skills needed to enter employment.

"WorldSkills UK continues to be a fantastic experience and I have found myself becoming increasingly passionate about supporting the bridge between industry and education as a result."

Currently, the competition only focussed on 3D modelling — creating the visual elements of the game, but Mr Spence said he would like to see that expanded to include other elements such as programming and level design.

"We're looking to develop a competition, where, for example a team of six has 48 hours to develop a working demo for whole game," he said.

He added that he was hoping to submit an application to be considered as a WorldSkills international competition in the next couple of years — "once we've got a format that works".

WorldSkills UK is still looking to expand the range of skills it offers as competitions both at home and abroad, and the deadline for submitting application for a new skills is June 26.

Visit www.findafuture.org.uk to find out more about becoming a competition organising partner.

ROOM FOR ALL ON PATH TO EXCELLENCE

Competitions set out to inspire, demonstrate and spread excellence — and the inclusive skills competitions do just the same for those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The competitions were founded five years ago by Shropshire’s Derwen College — and after North Warwickshire and Hinckley College began running a similar programme the two college joined forces in 2013.

The Association of National Specialist Colleges (NatSpec) came onboard in 2014 and now the movement is starting to roll out across the country to join up with other colleges running their own competitions.

Derwen College principal Ruth Thomas said: “I had come from an FE background in a college that had run a lot of competitions, and I felt that introducing that competitive element maybe would give learners some added incentive to take their skills to the next level, and add different dimensions to their CVs.

“And the actual competitions give the college the opportunity to promote and demonstrate the fantastic abilities of the students.”

Louise Keevil, the college’s director of services agreed.

“I see this as a great area, definitely,” she said. “If we believe it in mainstream, why aren’t we doing the same for learners at different levels?

“And when I spoke to WorldSkills UK at the time, it was clear that there was nothing for this group of people so we decide to do something ourselves.”

The inclusive competitions now run in partnership with WorldSkills UK, and Ms Keevil said “the dream” was to encourage regional activity to build up into a national championship.

The range of competitions available is expanding, and currently includes presentation skills, music, introduction to sports, art, and catering.

And, said Ms Keevil, the competitions have been well received by young people themselves.

“They love it,” she said.

“It’s exactly the same as with any other young people, some 18-year-olds get upset if they don’t win, but they have to manage that — it’s part of life.

“What is most significant though, is that I can feel that they are appreciating the opportunity to have a go, to be included — you can just see it.”

And, according to the competitions’ chair Jane Hatton, who is also director of disability employment charity

Derwen College learner Dan Kirkham, aged 19, competing in foundation level cookery in the Skills Cymru inclusive competition at Bridgend College in March



competitions, they’ve done more than raise the skill level.

Ms Hatton said: “It raises the standards of the students because they want to do as well as they can, but it also really makes the tutors perform as well as they can because they want to beat the next college — so I do think that competition does help to raise standards generally.”

And one of the areas where the competitions have the potential to make the biggest impact is employer engagement.

“The skills competitions are a really good way of showcasing the talent of young people in the workplace, so that employers would be able to see past the stereotypes into what talent was available,” said Ms Hatton.

Employers typically struggle with the idea of employing someone with a disability — particularly a learning disability, she said.

“They could perhaps get their head around the idea of having someone in a

wheelchair, but you start talking about people with learning disabilities and the barriers come up,” she said.

“I think there are a lot of stereotypes about people with learning disabilities not being able to perform in the workplace, or being a problem rather than an asset, and it can be hugely problematic for young people.”

And, she added: “It’s not about feeling sorry for people, or even about giving someone a chance — it’s about seeing that the talent is there and is going to be good for your business.”

With employers becoming involved in judging and offering work placements to successful competitors, she said it was beginning to have an effect.

“It’s still hard work, but I think it’s just beginning to challenge some of the perceptions around what people are capable of,” she said.

The challenge now, all three agreed, was getting the word out to employers,



Ruth Thomas



Louise Keevil



Jane Hatton

learners and other providers, which they hope will be helped by the new website, inclusiveskills.co.uk, where colleges offering similar competitions in different regions will be able to advertise and network.

For Ms Keevil, specialist college involvement in competitions was an obvious choice.

“Why wouldn’t we just do it?” she said.

“We are a vocational college for adults with learning difficulties, so if we’re not doing this then I would be critical of us, because there is so much evidence that demonstrates that skills competitions raises skill levels.

“If we want to be the best, then we’re going to have to do it, aren’t we?”

From learner to full-time earner

After the years of relentless training, the tension of the competition and the nail-biting wait for the judges' decision, what happens next for the young people who have proven their skills to be among the best in the world?

FE Week caught up with seven former competitors to find out where life took them after WorldSkills.

LUKE GRIFFITHS & GEORGE CALLOW

Skill: Cabinet making

Year competed: 2009 (Luke, pictured below left), 2011 (George, right)

Result: Medallion of Excellence (Luke) and gold (George)

Provider: Both went to Chichester College

Employer: Luke and George are looking to start their own business together



"Skills competitions encourage you to pass on your knowledge to other people," says Luke.

"During the process people were asking who my role models were and you realise at the end you want to be a role model.

"So after competing I went to teach at my college and passed it on to George who was my apprentice.

"Off the back of WorldSkills, an investor approached us and is looking at starting up a workshop with both of us, and although nothing's signed yet, we're hoping to be up and running by the early part of next year and we're looking for other WorldSkills competitors to come and work for us.

"My dream is to have above our

workshop 'Home of WorldSkills UK Cabinet Making' — I want us to be training the next lot to come through."

George says: "When I was doing it, as lame as it sounds, Luke was my role model. All I wanted to do when I was training at WorldSkills was to beat Luke's score.

"Worldskills gave me a lot of confidence — the theory I go by now is if I can do WorldSkills I can do anything. I'm pretty ambitious, because I know that if you work hard you can achieve what you want.

"We see training as essential to our business. The benefits for the employee, the competitor are massive, and so is what the company gets out of it."

BEN EATON

Skill: Automotive refinishing, Year competed: 2011, Result: Bronze, Provider: Thatcham Motor Academy, Employer: Mercedes Formula One team

"When I did WorldSkills I was doing an apprenticeship with BMW, who were great and helped me out with all the training," says Ben.

"After winning the bronze medal, I came out with quite a lot of job offers, and one of them was the Mercedes Formula One team and I've been working there since.

"I started off working on Michael Schumacher's car and then Nico Rosberg's and now I'm on Lewis Hamilton's [pictured with Ben, right].

"And I definitely don't think I'd have had those opportunities if I hadn't done WorldSkills, because doing the competition and also the training leading up to it, you get to meet a lot of influential people in the industry and it gets your name out there.

"There's more doors that open to you through it. It's a massive boost to your career and your confidence, that pretty much any job you walk into, you're going to be better than any other candidate there.

"I'm also earning more than I would have done, too. The motor industry, with the



recession went a bit downhill, so I was happy where I was but pay rises weren't coming in very fast, and I was sort of stuck in between a full wage and an apprenticeship wage, but now I'm painting Formula One cars, it's a bit more specialist and they've got enough budget to pay good wages now, so definitely I'm earning more."

JADE KIDD

Skill: Beauty therapy, Year competed: 2007, Result: Medallion of Excellence, Provider: Lincoln College, Employer: Self-employed



"Competing at WorldSkills was an amazing, life-changing experience," says Jade.

"I was only 19 when I competed and I'd just opened my own salon at the same time and business went through the roof because of what I had done at WorldSkills — I think both because your skill level increases

dramatically, but also because you can say you were selected as the best in the UK and you've go out and represented your country, just that in itself works wonders.

"I've now just expanded and moved premises.

"Recently I did a qualification to become a make-up artist which I finished in in September and I was extremely lucky to have WorldSkills on my CV and the level of work that has given me because it meant I walked straight into a job on BBC One doing make-up on the TV programme Ordinary Lives, so it just keeps getting bigger and better.

"I don't think I would have had those opportunities had I not done WorldSkills — it's helped me build up connections within the industry very quickly. People take years to get into TV and it took me not even a month.

"What stays with you after WorldSkills is your work ethic because I've worked to a high standard and I know I can raise that standard even higher."

— how competing changed lives

RACHAEL CARR

Skill: Engineering team challenge
 Year competed: 2011
 Result: —
 Employer Provider: BAE systems



“Because of the nature of the competition, I’ve found that it’s made me more receptive to different challenges,” says Rachael.

“The work we do at BAE can be very focussed and single-minded view and you go away and work on one thing — whereas I think WorldSkills left helped me be more open and more able to take things on.

“It hasn’t really made a difference in terms of money, because of the way progression works at BAE, but it’s helped me grow as a person and I just think I’ve got to certain milestones mentally and capability-wise sooner than I would have done if I hadn’t had the experience.

“There have been personal milestones like taking on more tasks and responsibility and being able to cope better as well as doing level five qualifications, which I always planned on doing anyway but because I was doing the competition I could do it sooner.

“I’ve just finished my degree and I graduate in the summer and I want to be chartered engineer, that’s a personal goal of mine.

“Within work, I’d like to go up through management. I want to be in a position where you can have influence and help.

“And WorldSkills has opened my eyes to the routes and directions available.

“My employer values that connection with WorldSkills — we’re supposed to be the best in the world and how can we prove we’re the best if we don’t compete?”

DOUG HILL

Skill: Cabinet making
 Year competed: 1953
 Result: Silver medal
 Employer: Retired



Now aged 80, Doug Hill was the UK’s first ever WorldSkills competitor in 1953, and travelled to the competition in Madrid, Spain, with his father, after seeing an advert in his local library.

Doug, an apprentice in his father’s Canterbury workshop, was the sole competitor from the UK.

Doug said: “It was amazing to hear how Team UK is now supported in terms of the training they receive from industry, their employers and colleges.

“The opportunities made available to them are very impressive and all goes towards raising the skills levels in the UK. When I competed I had no structured training programme, it was just down to me. My dad even had to drive me to the competition in Madrid.”

However, both Doug and his father returned impressed with what they had seen and passed information about the competitions to training organisations, although it took until the 1960s for an official team to be put together, so in the meantime, Doug’s father Frederick paid for young apprentices to go over and take part.

The confidence Doug gained through his WorldSkills experience spurred him on to start his own successful company, making noticeboards —including the first flight indicator board for Heathrow Airport.

Doug, who volunteered at WorldSkills 2011, said: “As we approach WorldSkills São Paulo 2015, I will be cheering on Team UK and will follow their progress in Brazil over the internet. It is a once a lifetime opportunity and I wish all the competitors the best of luck.”

WILL TORRENT

Skill: Patisserie and confectionery
 Year competed: 2007
 Result: Medallion of excellence
 Provider: University of West London
 Employer: Self-employed



“I often say WorldSkills was the moment which changed everything,” says Will.

“Since then I’ve done almost a mini-rollercoaster of the industry — I’ve worked for top chefs like Heston Blumenthal and Jamie Oliver.

“I’ve worked at some amazing establishments including an award-winning patisserie and now I work for myself working with Waitrose and Cacao Barry chocolate and I’m currently writing my third book, which is due out next year.

“I very much doubt I would have been doing any of this had it not been for WorldSkills, because the training I got has catapulted me ahead of where I would have been — I’m probably about five or 10 years ahead of where I would have been if I hadn’t gone.

“There’s a quiet, understated confidence that competing in WorldSkills gives you, knowing you’ve represented your country, whether or not you came back with a medal, and not many 21-year-olds or younger are able to say that so especially in vocational education and skills — it’s normally footballers or athletes or so on.

“You also get a general confidence about who you are — you know you’ve put the time in and it makes you come out of yourself.

“There’s more things in the pipe line for me so it’s going to be an exciting few years.

“WorldSkills was an amazing experience and something that I’m very lucky to have been a part of.”



IT TAKES YOU HARROW

CELEBRATING SUCCESS THROUGH THE TECHBAC TEAM CHALLENGE

To prepare young people for the world of work, It Takes TechBac. To develop a winning party political campaign, It Takes Harrow College.

City & Guilds would like to say huge congratulations to learners at Harrow College who have won the first ever TechBac Team Challenge. Learners from the London-based college impressed the judges at national news agency Thomson Reuters with their party political campaign We Are One.

The TechBac Team Challenge was developed as part of the City & Guilds TechBac to help young people develop the wider business and enterprise skills needed to stand out from the crowd. This year, entrants were asked to create a new political party ahead of the 2015 general election.

THE CHALLENGE WAS CREATED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MYKINDACROWD.

DISCOVER WHY IT TAKES TECHBAC AT TECHBAC.COM