



Training Managers: Benefits from and barriers to WorldSkills UK participation

Project 6

DuVE: Developing and understanding Vocational Excellence

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Preface

The *Developing and understanding Vocational Excellence* (DuVE) suite of research projects focuses on WorldSkills competitions (WSC). This research is timely because the current vocational education system in the United Kingdom is struggling to meet the demands of the workforce and the needs of many young people. While problems with vocational education have been widely noted in research, few studies have focused on understanding vocational excellence. Gaining this understanding is the primary aim of the DuVE projects.

WorldSkills competitions are held every two years and are organised by WorldSkills International (WSI) as part of their mission to 'raise the profile and recognition of skilled people, and show how important skills are in achieving economic growth and personal success' (WSI, 2015). Competitors from 53 countries participated at WorldSkills Leipzig 2013 in Germany, where over 1000 young people mostly aged 18-22 competed in 46 skill areas.

The UK started to compete in WSC in 1953 and hosted competitions in Glasgow in 1965, in Birmingham in 1989 and in London in 2011. In 1990 UK Skills was established as an independent charity to organise and support UK participation in WSC. Renamed WorldSkills UK in 2011, it is now part of Find a Future, a new organisation which brings together skills and careers initiatives from across the UK.

The WSC are recognised by many as the pinnacle of excellence in vocational education and training (VET). The Centre on Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance (SKOPE) has been researching WSC since 2007 to understand better how vocational excellence is developed through competition and to inform the development of Squad and Team UK. Between 2007 and 2009, two small projects investigated the individual characteristics of the competitors and their workplace learning environments and covered the competition cycles of WSC 2009 and 2011. The overarching questions addressed were:

- What are the characteristics of individuals who excel?
- What kinds of support enable the development of high-level vocational skills?
- How can vocational education be structured to aim not simply for adequate standards of achievement but for high achievement that reflects world class standards?
- Can broader societal benefits to developing vocational excellence be identified?

Following on from these two initial studies, the first phase of DuVE consists of three projects conducted between 2011 and 2013 and incorporating the competition cycle leading up to WorldSkills Leipzig 2013:

- Project 1: What Contributes to Vocational Excellence? A study of the characteristics of WorldSkills UK participants for WorldSkills Leipzig 2013
- Project 2: Learning Environments to Develop Vocational Excellence
- Project 3: Benefits of Developing Vocational Excellence

Find a Future then funded Phase 2, consisting of three follow-on projects and three new DuVE projects. The six projects are:

- Project 1: Modelling the Characteristics of Vocational Excellence
- Project 2: Learning Environments to Develop Vocational Excellence
- Project 3: Benefits of Developing Vocational Excellence
- Project 4: Further Education College Participation in WorldSkills and other Skills Competitions
- Project 5: WorldSkills UK Competitors and Entrepreneurship
- Project 6: Training Managers: Benefits from and Barriers to WorldSkills UK Participation

Taken together, the suite of six DuVE projects form one of the five legacy projects (funded by the National Apprenticeship Service and now Find a Future), which are intended to use evidence-based research to further develop high quality WorldSkills practice.

Projects 4, 5 and 6 build on Project 3, Phase 1. Reports from the projects can be found on the DuVE website: <http://vocationalexcellence.education.ox.ac.uk/publications/reports/>. Projects 1-3 continue through WorldSkills São Paulo 2015. The findings from this project contain practical recommendations for WorldSkills UK practice and can potentially inform the VET system in the UK more broadly.

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Executive Summary

Training managers (TMs) prepare competitors to compete in the WorldSkills competition (WSC) for Team UK. Each TM focuses on a specific skill area. This report presents their perspectives on and perceptions of the role. It addresses the following questions:

1. What are the key elements of the TM role, as perceived by the TMs?
2. What are the main benefits of participation in WorldSkills UK for TMs?
3. What are the main barriers and difficulties faced by TMs?
4. What are the benefits from and barriers to participation for colleges and employers, as perceived by the TMs?

The findings presented in this report are based on semi-structured interviews held in person with 36 TMs preparing competitors for the WSC 2015 in São Paulo. This represents almost the full cohort of 38 training managers.

The TM role involves a number of different tasks and responsibilities. Training the competitors is, of course, the main focus, as well as attending competitions. In addition, TMs also perform a range of organisational and administrative tasks, liaise with colleges and employers on behalf of competitors, participate in technical conferences as preparation for participation in competitions and organise external training and specialist equipment. The role is unremunerated, although a daily rate of £150 may be applied for in certain circumstances and expenses are reimbursed.

A number of benefits of participation for TMs were identified. These include enhancing and maintaining cutting-edge skills and knowledge through participation in WorldSkills and networking with other professionals in their own and other fields with a shared aim of achieving excellence. Further, TMs are proud of representing their country and their skill and they take pride in accompanying their competitors' 'journey' towards participation in WSC. In addition, the TMs recognised a number of benefits for colleges and employers which included public relations and marketing benefits from their involvement with WorldSkills UK. In addition to this, TMs and competitors bring back their newly-acquired skills and knowledge to their colleges and workplaces.

Alongside the benefits were a number of barriers and difficulties faced by TMs. These were mainly associated with the intense time commitment required by the role and, for self-employed TMs, an associated financial penalty. Balancing work pressures with the pressures of the TM role is a source of tension. In addition, they reported administrative and communication problems with Find a Future and the lack of structured handover arrangements for new TMs. Finally, the TMs feel that their work for WorldSkills is often underappreciated. The TMs also identified barriers to participation by Further Education (FE) colleges and employers. These included a lack of easily accessible

information about WorldSkills for colleges and employers, and problems associated with TMs' absences from college or work to carry out WorldSkills duties.

Overall, the study indicates that the TMs play a central role in the competition work of WorldSkills UK, which is perhaps not always fully acknowledged officially or in the wider context. We make the following recommendations:

- **Recommendation 1:** Design a comprehensive induction programme for new TMs, ideally including an official handover period from the previous TM.
- **Recommendation 2:** Further investigate the TM workload and share the schedule for WorldSkills activities in good time so that TMs can negotiate time away from their work with their employers and colleagues, and also on behalf of their competitors.
- **Recommendation 3:** Ensure expenses incurred by TMs are reimbursed within a reasonable period of time, and ideally within one month.
- **Recommendation 4:** Enhance the communication and rapport between TMs and the Find a Future administrative staff. A specific contact person at Find a Future for each of the TMs would help with this.
- **Recommendation 5:** Improve and expand the information on the website, with specific content geared to colleges and employers about WorldSkills. For example, at present there is no information about how FE colleges or employers might become involved or what the benefits of that involvement might be.

1 Introduction

This report builds on earlier DuVE research (Mayhew et al., 2013) on WorldSkills competitions (WSC) by focusing on the perspectives and perceptions of the training managers (TMs) who prepare UK competitors for participation in WSC on behalf of Find a Future. Mayhew et al. (2013) pointed to the lack of research on the topic of promoting and staging skills competitions and specifically on the role of the TMs in this process. Given their key role in training young people in preparation for Squad and Team UK this dearth of research is somewhat surprising. Apart from Mayhew et al. there is a report by HOST (Rowe, Windmill, Willis and Opie, 2013) which focused particularly on benefits to TMs.

This report examines the following four questions:

1. What are the key elements of the TM role, as perceived by the TMs?
2. What are the main benefits of participation in WorldSkills UK for TMs?
3. What are the main barriers and difficulties faced by TMs?
4. What are the benefits from and barriers to participation for colleges and employers, as perceived by the TMs?

2 Methodology

We conducted semi-structured interviews with 36 of 38 TMs in post for the two-year training cycle preparing competitors for WorldSkills 2015 in São Paulo. The TMs were contacted through a mailing list made available by Find a Future. Two TMs were not interviewed for logistical and scheduling reasons. The sample therefore includes almost all the skill areas represented by the UK and nearly all the TMs. Thus, the findings reported here can be seen as representative of the views of TMs preparing competitors for the WSC 2015.

The majority of them are male (30 out of 36). All of the TMs interviewed are white British/Irish. Thirteen are full-time lecturers in further education (FE), nine are self-employed, nine are retired, and five are industry-employed.

The table below indicates the years when each of the TMs currently in post started work as a TM. Thus we were able to gain views from TMs with a variety of experience.

Pre-2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
3	1	1	1	3	3	2	3	4	5	5	2	3

Table 1 Year started TM role

The interviews took place at dates and times convenient to the TMs between March 2014 and December 2014. The TMs were all contacted by email to arrange an interview. The locations of the interviews included the TMs' workplaces and technical conferences, which were held at Loughborough University and form part of the TMs' development, training and preparation for WorldSkills. The longest interview was just over two hours and the shortest one was approximately 40 minutes. The interview schedule is included as Appendix 1. It was designed by the DuVE research team, and included sections directly relevant to each of the four main research questions, as well as other questions inviting more narrative responses from the TMs. All of the interviewees were guaranteed full anonymity and so the reported data do not include skill area or geographical location.

All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. In the first stage of analysis, the overarching themes, as well as sub-themes, were identified within each research question. In the next stage, cross-interview analysis was carried out to establish the key themes for the report, and to identify specific quotations to illustrate particular points.

This research relies on self-reported data, based on TMs' views at the time of the study. The data were collected in the run-up to one competition, and therefore we cannot make any comparisons between cycles.

The next section of the report addresses key elements of the TMs' roles. Sections 4 and 5 examine the main benefits of and barriers to TMs' participation in WorldSkills UK. Section 6 looks at benefits and barriers to FE colleges and employers from the TMs' perspective. Section 7 summarises the study's conclusions and provides recommendations. Three appendices include the interview schedule (Appendix 1) and two documents that describe the TMs' roles and responsibilities (Appendices 2 and 3 respectively).

3 Key elements of the training manager role

3.1 Overview of the TM role

The interviews with the TMs revealed the complexity and the intensity of the role. The extent of the range of tasks and responsibilities is clear from the 'person specification' for TMs and the roles and responsibilities indicated in the document for their appointment (see Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 respectively). According to the latter document, produced by WorldSkills UK (WSUK) for the WorldSkills Competition in 2015, the role consists of the following responsibilities:

1. To make a major contribution to the enhanced performance and wellbeing of the UK Team at the biennial WorldSkills Competition;
2. To help develop and maintain the WorldSkills Competition in a particular skill;
3. To oversee and participate in the training of competitors for the WorldSkills Competition;
4. To participate in the WorldSkills Competition as the UK's designated expert, and
5. To support the development of WSUK National Competitions in the alignment of standards to Squad UK.

In addition, under the first four responsibilities a further ten detailed tasks are specified. TMs are appointed for one WSC cycle only, and those who wish to continue in the role are expected to re-apply at the end of each cycle.

The document specifying the responsibilities indicates that the minimum time investment for a TM is 90 days across a two-year cycle, including around 20 days for the WSC in Brazil in August 2015, as well as four days at the Skills Show and a further four days for alignment activity linked with the international and national competitions. In addition, it is stated that up to the equivalent of 15 days of the 90 will normally involve weekend and evening work.

This commitment to the whole cycle is very important as a TM who leaves during the cycle will disrupt the competitors' training, which proceeds through various stages. The cycle begins with a large group of competitors (around 200), who are brought together for an induction event followed by 10 days of basic training. A small number (generally around three to five) from each skill set are then chosen for Squad selection, followed by around 30 days of training. The Team UK competitors are selected from the Squad, and the TMs then work closely with the Team UK competitors to prepare them for the WSC.

In terms of the financial compensation for TMs, the appointment document makes it clear that the role is unremunerated. Payment is made in 'exceptional circumstances' at a set daily rate of £150. Travel and subsistence expenses are reimbursed according to the relevant Find a Future guidelines.

3.2 Approaches to training competitors

The TMs interviewed had a variety of training approaches including individualised training and flexible modes of delivery, feedback and support. A large number of TMs spoke of the need to tailor the training to the individuals participating in the WorldSkills 'journey', as the young people enter the WorldSkills process with varying types and standards of skill sets, approaches to learning and personal characteristics. In contrast to the group training offered before Squad and Team selection, TMs subsequently worked with the single competitor (or with two competitors in a small number of skill areas) for Team UK on a one-to-one basis in the run-up to the international competition. All TMs mentioned the power of 'one-to-one' training and the importance of familiarising the competitors with the specific challenges of the WSC; many used examples of tasks from previous competitions as 'test projects' for training their competitors. The majority of TMs referred to the 'test project' and the need for 'pressure testing' competitors before the international competition in order to familiarise them with the time pressure of the competition:

I would normally give them the test project and I would explain it. And I would want them to go off and work out their ideas for each section and test project and what they would like to do. So it's normally student-led or competitor-led. But then you've got to bring it into a WorldSkills standardisation and what is the standard overall.

In terms of the practicalities of the training, TMs described various different ways of delivering the training, including: face-to-face training in college venues; training in other venues; remote training involving submissions of work for comment and (self-)filming to analyse working practices; and ways of saving time for the WorldSkills time-pressured competition. In a number of skill areas, TMs said that remote or distance learning worked very well, while it was not possible in other skill areas which involved highly sophisticated pieces of equipment.

3.3 People involved in the WorldSkills journey

Almost all the TMs commented on the importance of peer support from the cohort of other TMs. The support featured practical help with training venues, transport of equipment and competitors, and also support through any difficulties at the competition.

A number of TMs also indicated that they use former competitors as 'wider' trainers, with the associated advantages of the advice, motivation and aspiration they can offer:

I've got six [wider trainers] and they're all past competitors. [...] because they're past competitors who've been there, done it, been through it, they can relate to the young people and they're finding that they can ask them questions, well I found this worked and that worked.

The TMs worked very closely with the competitors. This started with a larger group of young people, moving onto the smaller group who made up Squad UK in their skill, and then the single competitor representing Team UK in WSC (or two competitors in a small number of skill areas). TMs commented on some of the difficulties and advantages associated with varying numbers who are trained in Squad. In general, TMs advocated at least three competitors in Squad in order to motivate them to improve their skill levels. A single competitor, with a guaranteed place on the team, might be less motivated to challenge him or herself. The TMs emphasised the importance of the role of the Squad phase, which benefitted learners beyond the single competitor selected for the international competition:

I mean, we've seen growth from a few competitors – just because they don't make the team, if they make the squad, I think their journey turns into a really positive one, and you'll see the growth.

In addition, the TMs also worked with performance coaches who supported them in their work with the competitors. The coaches were recruited by Find a Future. The TMs were mostly quite satisfied with the performance coaches' support. Some dissatisfaction was mentioned regarding limited feedback on the interaction between the performance coaches and the competitors, and delays in the TMs receiving that feedback from the coaches. However, mostly the TMs were positive about the competitors being able to speak to someone other than themselves in their skill area:

But they have a role to play because we get quite close to the competitors and it's good to have somebody from outside seeing a different view and then you think, okay, maybe they're right and it's great for the competitors to have someone else to talk to who is not judging them in the same way we are.

3.4 Locations of TM work

The locations of the work carried out by the TMs varied. They trained competitors in a variety of venues (their own college, a colleague's college, in an industry venue, for example), and also attended the Find a Future technical conferences at Loughborough University, together with the cohort of TMs and often with competitors. In addition, they attended the Skills Show each November in Birmingham at the NEC; the WSC of that cycle at the relevant location, and some TMs also attended EuroSkills. In addition to this, a good deal of their administrative and communication work was done in the evenings and weekends at home. They communicated with their competitors electronically or by telephone and also liaised with the competitors' networks (family, partner, and friends) and their colleges and employers as appropriate.

4 The main benefits of participation in WorldSkills for TMs

Building on the research reported by Mayhew et al. (2013), one main aim of this study is to further examine the perceived benefits of participation in WorldSkills UK for TMs. In the interviews, TMs were quick to identify the elements that were positive and beneficial to them, highlighting these as the main reasons for participation.

They identified a range of benefits including: professional benefits; personal benefits; and being part of the competitors' journey.

4.1 Professional benefits

4.1.1 Maintaining and developing cutting-edge skills and knowledge

The TMs pointed out that because the standards and requirements of the WSC are constantly rising, they must maintain cutting-edge skills and knowledge in their own fields. All TMs saw this as a professional benefit, as it spurred them on to developing ever greater expertise and finesse, as well as giving them the opportunity to observe their competitors, on occasion, surpass their own skill levels:

For me it's keeping on top of my skills area, skills sets, keeping current, staying current. I still love my trade, but, you know, to keep up to date like this and to see people going from, you know, a very slight skills set to a very much higher skills set than I've got, doing much more than I could possibly do in a set number of hours, you know, that's a big reward.

A small number also indicated that the excitement and challenge of WorldSkills compensated for some elements of their other jobs:

I would say that this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, I really would, it's a fantastic test and it's stretching me.

A majority of TMs mentioned the professional benefits of bringing the knowledge gained through WorldSkills back to their working environment, whether at a college or in industry. A number of TMs said this knowledge helped them gain recognition in their working context, and that it indicated the value to the employer or college of supporting their participation:

I think the biggest benefits for me are what I'm able to bring back to my own teaching practices and share around here.

This sharing of knowledge gained through WorldSkills extends the reach of the competition into the wider contexts of colleges and companies.

4.1.2 Networking opportunities

Many TMs identified making contacts with other trainers and forming international networks, all with a focus on working towards achieving excellence, as a motivating factor. Some of these connections reportedly developed over a number of years, and sometimes led to UK competitors participating in training events hosted by experts in other countries.

For the majority of the TMs the interaction available to them through WorldSkills with top-level trainers from the UK and abroad in their fields was seen as a benefit. Many of the TMs (particularly those in high-tech skill areas) also mentioned a significant benefit in coming into contact with manufacturers:

It allows me within my vocational area to see and engage with some of the best trainers and the latest techniques with not only other colleges and other training providers but with manufacturers as well.

In addition to finding networking benefits internationally in their field or with manufacturers, a large number of TMs mentioned the benefits they received through broadening their knowledge and understanding in interaction with other TMs from different skill areas:

I feel my benefits are, it sort of widened my knowledge skills. I'm working with the other Training Managers, you know, that has been fantastic, because I understand the intricacies of their skills as well.

These connections sometimes involved rather different skill areas, which might not usually collaborate with each other, and TMs noted the potential for inspiring and informing each other, in terms of professional practices and skill development as well as in terms of training for WSC. This is a particular advantage of working within WorldSkills for TMs as these cross-skill connections may not always occur in colleges or in industry. The closeness between the TMs was referred to by a small number of TMs as the 'WorldSkills family':

I use the analogy of a WorldSkills family, but you do, you make friends, you make acquaintances around the globe; the fellow training managers, we are extremely close.

This created a sense of being a united team, according to many of the TMs. One described it as 'a very good fraternity'. In addition, a majority of the TMs mentioned the professional benefits of working with new people, and experiencing different cultures and approaches to training:

The benefit is working in a bigger team, getting to meet loads of different people, getting to make new friends around the world. It's a very small world when it comes to the actual skill. Training in different countries - we've trained in Germany and Switzerland - seeing the way they're teaching in their colleges has been a big bonus.

Many of the TMs also described the motivating force of a shared goal of promoting excellence and a sense of working together:

I like the thought of mixing with other professionals who have the same thoughts, internationally and nationally, because there's definitely a swell of goodwill there, that we're all after one thing – that is promoting excellence.

The aspirational nature of WorldSkills therefore seems to operate as a significant perceived benefit for TMs in their work.

4.1.3 Wider benefits: Influencing competition participation

A smaller number of TMs also considered possible benefits beyond those that affected them personally. For example, they reflected on the purposes of WorldSkills competitions and the wider benefits of potentially being able to exercise some influence through being a TM by, for instance, encouraging increasing numbers of young people to participate in competitions:

But on a professional basis it's really opened up so many doors for me and, what it's done, it's allowed me to stay right at the cutting edge of the industry, but it's also allowed me to have an influence. So my role enables me to get a lot more people involved in the competitions, and also get young people inspired and looking to enter these kinds of competitions.

A large number of TMs also indicated that, in their view, being a WorldSkills UK TM gave them some influence, which was useful for them in their professional work and in their TM role. For example, doors were opened for some TMs within their skill or trade bodies and associations, and other opportunities emerged that might not have come their way had they not been active as TMs, such as becoming active in international networks.

4.2 Personal benefits

4.2.1 The 'addictive' nature of WorldSkills

Many of the TMs used similar vocabulary to describe their personal commitment. The terms they chose included: 'addictive', 'infectious' and 'buzz', and the TMs indicated the intense loyalty they felt to WorldSkills and their competitors. These terms referred partly to the training journey with competitors, but also to the actual competition environment, with the addictive qualities of noise, pressure and intensity:

To see youngsters go through this process is a massive buzz. For anybody that's involved, I'd be very surprised if they don't get an adrenaline rush to see these youngsters doing well and when you see ceremonies and people getting medals, it's fantastic.

An additional form of this 'addiction', expressed by a number of TMs, was the desire for better performances from competition to competition. The points required for medals and medallions can

often reflect tiny differences or errors, so the motivation to push for better results in the next competition, with the enhanced understanding gained from each cycle, was high amongst the TMs:

It's absolutely addictive, it really is. I finally got up to a bronze medal and I don't know, I really didn't realise I've got such a competitive streak in me that I want to carry on until I've got a gold medal.

This desire to improve the outcomes may partly explain why so many TMs stay with WorldSkills for a number of competition cycles. It was also apparent in the interviews that no matter how many times a TM saw competitors win a medal, this experience remained positive.

Many of the TMs also commented on their sense of pride in representing their country and 'wearing the T-shirt with UK on the back'. They also commented that competitors felt a similar pride in representing their country:

I'm never going to be a David Beckham, you know, I'm not going to play for England at football or cricket or anything like that, but I actually feel very honoured and very proud when I'm representing the country.

Thus, it appears that for many TMs, their role represents the pinnacle of their careers and offers them a highly positive and specific professional identity.

4.3 Being part of the competitors' 'journey'

For the vast majority of the TMs, the main benefit of the role was working with the competitors and watching them develop on their 'journey' towards the WorldSkills competition. The metaphor of the WorldSkills 'journey' ran through many of the interviews. With regard to this 'journey', almost all the TMs pointed out that attending the competition itself was only part of the role. The main part of their work was in training their Squad members prior to Team selection, and watching the development of the skills, knowledge and personal characteristics of their competitors:

The benefit for me is to see the competitor get the outcome at the end, that's the ultimate, that's the payback for me. To be able to take a young group of people, and even the ones that don't get through to the world finals, you know, you see those individuals improve. It's their own journey, it's their progression from where they've come from to even, you know, up to the point of deselection in some cases, they all make a remarkable journey.

The TMs said they supported their competitors and provided them with new skills and new experiences, and they all, without exception, commented on how much they enjoyed this experience. One TM commented: 'I think it's all centred around the competitor: we are there solely for the good of the competitor.'

The sense of satisfaction came partly from the successes of training young people and raising their skill levels so that they could credibly participate in the international competition. In addition to this,

the majority of TMs also felt a connection to their competitors and their careers beyond the WorldSkills cycle, following their progress and supporting them:

It makes me feel good; it's really humbling to know that I'm making a difference to these young people, and I feel that I'm able to upskill them and I'm able to give them more confidence. I mean, the amount of letters I have, you know, since I've been doing it thanking me for, you know, doing it. It helps them along the ladder as well.

Almost all the TMs spoke positively about their personal connections with many of competitors. Such connections developed through the training weeks, pressure tests, Squad and Team selection and beyond. For some TMs, more personal interactions also followed, such as invitations to competitors' weddings and their children's christenings:

It was a personal highlight when I got an email from an ex-competitor the other day saying, 'Thank you for the training; it actually motivated me to go and get a new job. I'm where I wanted to be'.

Almost all the TMs also indicated that they felt a great sense of privilege to be working with 'the best in the country', and with, in most cases, exceptionally motivated young people. The TMs commented that this allowed them to use more complex teaching approaches and skills than might have been possible in their everyday working lives at college or in industry. This also meant they could be more creative and demanding in their training.

Many TMs also mentioned the positive impact on them when their competitors do well and win medals or medallions of excellence, and the sense of pride they feel if they see 'their' competitor honoured at the competition:

It kind of sounds a bit corny, really, but the best thing in the world is when you see your students achieving, your competitors, managing to do what they never thought they could believe was possible. It's a strange thing, but twice now, I've been at closing ceremonies with WorldSkills, and you hear a cheer go up from the entire team when one of our men or women go up to get their medals. It's just absolutely staggering. You see grown men with tears in their eyes. Everybody wants the best for their competitors.

A small number of TMs also made the point that, although TMs do not receive medals or medallions, they feel part of any success their competitors may have at the competition. This point came across very strongly in the interviews when TMs talked about former competitors and their successes:

I think the benefit is from the actual competitors, and seeing them achieve. And, possibly, if you could get as far as getting a medal with the competitors, then that's a great achievement isn't it, something to put your name to as well as theirs.

4.4 Summary

The main benefits identified by the TMs included: professional benefits, such as maintaining cutting-edge skills and knowledge, networking with experts in their field and other TMs in other areas; personal benefits such as enjoying the 'buzz' of competition; and pride in representing their country and sharing the journey of the competitors. Our respondents also reported the positive impact of the peer group network of TMs in the UK. A number of TMs indicated that knowledge exchange across the skill areas was a key benefit for them.

5 Barriers and difficulties encountered by training managers

While TMs identified a number of benefits, a number of barriers to effective performance were also noted. Common themes included: the intensity of the time commitment; dissatisfaction with financial issues; difficulties with handover arrangements for new TMs; issues regarding administrative difficulties; and communication problems. In addition, the perceived lack of recognition of the work they do arose in many interviews. The TMs indicated that these barriers and difficulties may not prevent them from carrying out their role, but could compromise the effectiveness of their work.

5.1 Time commitment

All of the TMs described the intensity of the time commitment involved in order to be a good TM, and the difficulties in dovetailing the role with other work commitments (whether employed or self-employed), and with their private lives. Almost all of them, other than those already in retirement from their 'day jobs' (25% of those interviewed), observed that it could be difficult for them to fulfil all the tasks required alongside their other employment commitments:

It's the time commitment that's the number one issue, trying to find that time around the day job which is also a full-time job.

Balancing their workload with their role as a TM was a key theme for the TMs who were in full-time work. The demands were perceived to be close to overwhelming, with many TMs describing the experience as comparable to having two full-time jobs:

There are the obvious problems that I have, balancing the workload with this as well, which is a major headache that I have and to be honest, you just tackle it as it comes along. That's where I say, really, for somebody who's got a full-time job, who's current in industry, employed by somebody else, it's really, really hard to do the two jobs.

TMs who were FE lecturers at the time of the study (just over one third of the 36 interviewed) noted particular issues regarding the time spent away from college, such as the need for replacement teaching and the need to make up work accumulated during the time spent away. Some TMs who were FE lecturers found it difficult to conduct both roles within the time available:

It is very difficult, but not impossible, to do as a college tutor, because of the time constraints. Now, it will depend, obviously, on how much support you get from your college, but I know sometimes I would be working for WorldSkills, and when I got back, I would just have a pile of work that had just built up that I had to get through, which made it rather difficult.

The level of support provided by FE college leadership and colleagues affected how TMs' absences for significant periods were handled. Some TMs reported facing barriers because they perceived that colleagues and, in some cases leadership, did not appreciate the value of their role in WorldSkills. A

few TMs indicated that the pressure of the time commitment was reaching breaking point, such that they might not be able to continue in the future if changes were not made. The TMs described the time pressures as a 'battle', and outlined the difficulties they faced in attempting to carry out their duties at work and the TM role to a standard that was acceptable to them and the respective organisations. Therefore, some thought that the high level of intensity of the time commitment was potentially compromising their personal and trade professional standards.

The majority of the TMs commented that the role was full-time in the sense that they were always thinking about it, responding to competitors, or working towards WorldSkills goals by fine-tuning their training plans, checking relevant information online or completing bureaucratic and administrative tasks for ordering equipment or booking travel and accommodation. The majority of TMs pointed out that the role cannot be completed in countable days and that, rather, the TMs must be working constantly to do the job well:

I can honestly say there is not a day goes by without me doing at least one or two hours' work towards World Skills.

All TMs also mentioned the time devoted to planning and marking in addition to the contact time with the competitors. As one TM said: 'For every week that I train, there's another week in preparation'. This suggests that TMs work under considerable pressure, particularly during the training-intensive parts of the cycle.

The international competition and preparation for it also involve many additional responsibilities that take up the TMs' time, such as sourcing equipment, devising marking criteria and making logistical arrangements for competitors. On top of this TMs may spend two or three weeks away from home for the WSC:

Plus, before if you're going to a competition, before the competition, it's hectic because you've got to deal with so many things because nobody does it for you. You have to sort out what equipment you're going to need, you have to hire the equipment, you have to go through all your marking criteria, you have to get your competitors trained in what you're going to be, you know, doing in the competition, you've got to sort out travel arrangements.

Overall these findings suggest that many TMs, especially those with jobs at colleges or in industry, face significant time-related issues and struggle to balance their commitment as TMs with their work responsibilities. This risks compromising their professional identity, as the TMs demand very high standards of themselves as well as of their competitors.

5.2 Financial issues

The official job description (see Appendix 3) makes it clear that the TM role is unremunerated. Those employed in FE or industry do not receive any additional payment, but can claim reasonable expenses related to their WorldSkills role. Colleges and employers are entitled to apply for the £150 daily rate to recompense them for the absence of their member of staff. Self-employed and retired TMs are also eligible to apply for the daily rate. A few TMs stated in their interviews that they chose not to apply for the daily rate:

I want to give my time free. I wanted to give what I can back to society, if you like.

The TMs all commented positively on the transparency of the current daily rate, and the fact that everyone applies for the same amount, which was not the case in the past:

So if they have it as £150 for everybody then I see that as a lot fairer than doing any sort of private negotiations. And I'd rather know it's like that. WorldSkills is all about transparency, parity and everything above board.

A few other TMs, however, felt that payment should follow a graded scale, according to experience or according to performance at WorldSkills:

A novice coming in, is on that basic level, and then if you've done one tour of duty, to coin a phrase, one skill competition cycle, then it jumps up by £25. And if you have a Gold Medal winner, then there's an incentive payment, a reward mechanism there to say, you know, Gold will get you another £25.

Further, a few TMs said they felt devalued by the current daily rate:

But I think £150 is devaluing my role as a training manager. Because as an organisation WorldSkills UK has to decide what level of expertise they want, and from my point of view, I am taking a cut in my daily rate to do WorldSkills – which I accept, because I genuinely really enjoy it as an activity – but I think £150 sends a message out which is, we don't really value your expertise.

The financial implications were rather different for TMs who were self-employed, because they said they had to forfeit earnings to work for WorldSkills. Some TMs said this raised questions about the attractiveness of the TM role in the future for applicants who are self-employed and may have a desirable skill set for the TM role, but would potentially rule it out because they do not want to risk the financial penalty:

I have a commercial pressure, which involves quite strict deadlines. And on the one hand I have flexibility because I am self-employed, so I'm not negotiating with the employer for time off for all those skills events. However, it's quite difficult sometimes to balance commercial pressures which are my general income with World Skills, which doesn't really provide a particularly high level of income.

As well as the discussion regarding the daily rate, all the TMs also described problems with the reimbursement of expenses. Many TMs commented negatively on the time delay involved in their expenses being repaid and on the time they had to invest in chasing the reimbursements.

At least half of the TMs commented that in addition to the limited or, for some, non-existent, remuneration for being a TM, the role was costing them money:

I mean it is meant to be a voluntary role, which the majority of it is. But it costs me money and my major problem is that we don't always get paid our expenses very quickly, which can be a real big bugbear.

This related to the delay in reimbursements, which meant that TMs incurred charges on their credit cards, for example. Another issue was the difficulty of reimbursing mobile telephone bill charges, particularly with calls made overseas on WorldSkills visits. In addition, there were irritations to do with what were perceived by many TMs to be petty rules, such as limits for lunch claims which were difficult to meet when travelling with competitors. A specific example given by a large number of TMs was a £5 limit for lunch expenses, which was felt to be too low.

These smaller problems were not considered by the TMs to be significant individually, but in combination these difficulties risked undermining the TMs' motivation and effectiveness. Alleviating these problems would allow the TMs to focus more clearly on their main task of training the competitors.

5.3 Administration and communication

All TMs described particular issues in the administration of their role as problematic, such as: the procedures for ordering materials, rules on expenses, and communication, specifically regarding the planning of meetings and technical conferences. As the interviews took place during a phase of change, after Find a Future had taken over the organisation of WorldSkills competitions for the UK, some problems were attributed by some TMs to the change process. Many TMs referred to the disruption and the negative impact that had on their work:

Clearly, they morph through different management structures, I find the internal politics that I see difficult to come to terms with.

All of them raised the issue of the difficulty of communication between themselves and the administration. Timely communication is particularly important in order for TMs to make arrangements with their employers or their competitors' employers if they need to attend WorldSkills events:

Sometimes the communications between WorldSkills and us is a little bit late; things happen and we find out about them a little bit late, and it makes it a bit difficult to move things around so you can fit things in.

A related difficulty concerned the awareness of WorldSkills generally, which many of the TMs described as disappointingly low. They perceived that this may be one of the reasons why colleagues, employers and college leaders were sometimes less than enthusiastic about seeing a member of staff involved in an organisation about which they knew rather little:

Certainly in the UK the WorldSkills PR and media isn't fantastic. Unless you know somebody who's in there, you never get to hear of it.

This lack of information also relates to the quality of the Find a Future website, which many TMs said would benefit from up-dating and improving: 'The website that we've got is quite tedious and challenging for anybody who's new to it.'

It was indicated that the website could play a significant role in the work of the TMs – as a source of information, communication and outward-facing profiling. However, many of the TMs felt that it was less than optimal in its provision of information for themselves, competitors, FE colleges, employers and the media.

5.4 Handover arrangements

An additional barrier to effective performance was the lack of a structured handover process for new TMs. Reportedly this led to ineffective use of time in the initial months in the post, which could have been dealt with through a clearer handover procedure. For example, many of the TMs commented that new TMs would benefit from receiving clear information about training, training plans, test projects, and procedures for ordering material and claiming expenses. While this information is available through peer TMs and cluster leads, all of the TMs mentioned the need for a more structured handover.

A few TMs said they had benefited from advice, materials and guidance from the previous TM for their skill. However, a larger number stated that they had received no induction when they took on the role and no formal handover from the previous TM. Many TMs commented that they had been left to their own devices to come to terms with their new post and what it involved:

I'm surprised that for new training managers they don't have, like, an induction programme. I really, really am surprised with that.

This situation sometimes made dealing with all the requirements of the TM role extremely challenging, described by one TM as 'flying in the dark':

The main difficulties, being completely new to the system: designing test projects, designing marking schemes, there's no guidance on it. You know, you do it and because I literally had no involvement before at WorldSkills level at all, I'm sort of flying in the dark and making this stuff up as I go along. I would have appreciated probably a bit of assistance there with that, just even to put my own mind at rest to know that I was doing something right.

Many had views regarding the handover procedure for their post in the future, based on their own experience of taking up the role. Some had already identified a potential successor and were attempting to keep them well informed and aware of developments in WorldSkills and the specifics of the training:

I came into it totally cold, I had no handover period, no-one was in place, no one was competing. The ideal situation would be that you have a training manager to hand over to another one, so you have got that level of initial support.

In addition, some TMs were in favour of setting up more support for TMs starting in the role, and providing early assistance with the training:

I'd like to hand it over properly, to show them the nuts and bolts of the job, this is how you go through the processes, but sort of more so with the training, it's developing the training plans and monitoring and being specific on things. I'm actually surprised as well that there isn't a model training plan. I know they'd say one size doesn't fit all, but there isn't some spreadsheet set up?

This issue of succession and handover arrangements was considered to be vital for future TMs and for future WorldSkills UK participation. Many TMs commented that new TMs would benefit from effective information, guidance and advice about the various aspects of the role, particularly the training, the requirements of the WSC and the administrative structure. While some of the information will be specific to each skill area, the broader shape of the role could be communicated through a more generic induction.

5.5 Recognition and rewards

A large number of TMs commented that they would appreciate more recognition of their role. In all cases, they were not referring to more money or other rewards, but rather to an acknowledgement of their work and commitment:

I think more acknowledgement would be good. You know, just to get a thank you. Just from the management really.

Many pointed out that their recognition largely comes from the Squad and Team competitors, as they watch them progress through training and preparation. However, more official forms of recognition would also be welcome:

I wouldn't be able to name you what sort of recognition we do get. I think if I was doing it just for that, then I would have walked away a long, long time ago, because I don't feel that there is really a huge amount of official recognition. But again I guess what sort of recognition is there that you could get for doing it? We get a certificate at the end of it that says "you participated" and that's it.

A more significant profile of the TMs on the Find a Future website could go some way to providing this recognition, and also more publicity for their colleges and employers who are supporting them to take up this additional role.

5.6 Summary

The barriers and difficulties identified by the TMs could be described as 'irritant' factors. However, in combination they could undermine the TMs' professional identity and their willingness to extend their commitment for additional cycles. The intensity of the time commitment was clearly the main concern, with the financial problems the next priority alongside communication. In addition TMs identified a barrier to the performance of newly-appointed TMs due to the unstructured nature of the handover process. Despite these problems, the TMs interviewed for this study have made their commitment to WorldSkills very clear over a number of cycles. Greater official recognition of their work could go some way to reconfirming this commitment.

6 The benefits of and barriers for colleges and employers to participation in WSC

Colleges and employers with a member of staff or a student participating in WorldSkills UK as a TM or competitor make an important contribution to the UK commitment to international skills competitions. They do this through allowing their staff members and students the time required to take part in the training, technical conferences and competitions. This section of the report analyses the benefits they gain through participating as well as the barriers they face, from the TMs' perspective.

The working context of each TM influences how they view the benefits and barriers for employers and/or colleges. Before looking at the findings, it is useful to summarise the 36 TMs' working contexts at the time of the study: 13 worked as full-time FE lecturers, five were employed in industry, nine were self-employed and nine were retired.

6.1 Benefits for colleges and employers

6.1.1 Public relations and the marketing value of WorldSkills

The majority of the TMs pointed out the potential positive effects of the public relations and marketing value of WorldSkills UK for FE colleges and employers. This included: information in company brochures and college prospectuses about the WorldSkills UK participation of TMs and competitors, and enhanced networking with other participating colleges, employers and industry partners, nationally and internationally.

Some of the colleges visited promoted their involvement with WorldSkills UK in a variety of ways, including large displays and booths of competitors engaged in training and preparation on prominent display in the colleges' reception areas:

You walk round this college, you see pictures of WorldSkills or ex-WorldSkills all over the place, so they have really pushed that marketing side of it. We use WorldSkills as a marketing tool, that we've been so successful.

Other colleges did not appear to promote it as much, with perhaps just a discreet A4 recognition letter on display.

In addition many TMs pointed out that success in WorldSkills might attract students to the college, with the promise of high standards of teaching and learning and also potential participation in future national and international competitions (see also Mayhew et al., 2013,p. 35):

What it does for them, from a commercial point of view – you know, come and study at the college that consistently has competitors in the UK and international finals – that’s a big, big buy-in.

According to many of the TMs, employers also benefitted from positive public relations through their WorldSkills involvement:

A lot of it is about PR, and building a good image of giving back to young people, and developing young people, and putting something into the industry, and that’s a lot of what my director sees. He doesn’t see it as me going out to do things, he sees it as the company going out, so anywhere I go, it’s the company, and they are supporting this body in training and developing young people.

It is clear from this quote that companies can enjoy the kudos of supporting WorldSkills UK and the reflected reputational asset of having a member of staff directly involved in world-class training provision. As mentioned earlier, TMs may also bring back a wealth of knowledge and contacts to their employers:

The employer is getting quite a lot out of it. It is giving a UK-wide, industry perspective to what I do at work. It is informing my work from an international viewpoint.

Some TMs also reported that this benefit of positive public relations was important for employers with competitors on their staff who require certain periods of absence from the workplace to train for WorldSkills. An important aspect of the TMs’ role is to negotiate with employers and colleges to make it possible for the young people to train. Without the buy-in of the employers and colleges, the competitors’ progress is jeopardised. It follows that it is important for TMs and Find a Future to continue to build relationships with employers and colleges in order to safeguard their commitment to WorldSkills UK. In addition effective communication between the TMs and the colleges and employers was perceived as an essential and valuable element of the WorldSkills model. This communication can be a benefit for colleges and employers as they are privy to information about the training and the competition:

I had an employer on the phone because she got fed up of her [*the competitor*] saying “oh, I won’t be here tomorrow, I’m going on WorldSkills training”. That’s why I always make sure that the employer knows, because again they can ride on the crest of the wave as well. They could get all the extra publicity out of it and the kudos that goes with it.

In terms of publicity, TMs who were self-employed and/or run their own businesses also reported advantages to their WorldSkills UK involvement. For example, it showcased their skills and their companies and raised their profiles nationally and, in some cases, internationally:

I mean I’m looking at this now from a purely selfish point of view in some respects, that this is good for my business to do what I do, you know, because there’s not many people, well, there

isn't, there's nobody else in the country doing what I do, basically. So that, for me, is my unique selling point in my business.

6.1.2 Skill development at colleges and companies

The TMs working in FE as full-time lecturers all indicated that their additional experience and learning from WorldSkills participation benefitted the wider college through knowledge exchange with colleagues and enriched learning opportunities for the students:

That filters through to others because I'm leading other lecturers, so the other lecturers are getting the benefit of the training that I receive because I glean a lot from WorldSkills in the further training that I give the competitors.

For employers, there was the benefit of TMs bringing enhanced skills and knowledge back to the company, as this industry-employed TM argued:

Obviously for a month out of the year I'm not there, but they pay me, so they need to see something back from it. But, you know, anything that I see in training, then obviously I take it back there and use it there, so it's kind of win/win I suppose for them.

Many TMs pointed out that employers benefit from the enhanced skills and levels of maturity offered by competitors who return from competition or who go through part of the training journey. Further, TMs also commented that businesses enjoy the positive impact of the additional skills the young people gain as they progress through the WorldSkills stages which are not directly related to their skills area. These include: enhanced communication skills; presentation skills; the ability to interact with people from different countries and cultures; and the ability to work more independently. TMs also mentioned specific skills in the various sectors which the competitors were able to introduce to their employers and their customers, thereby enhancing the business:

And you could interview, I think, any employer that's ever had a youngster go past the Squad selection stage and be trained up to Team selection stage, if they don't say their business has seen the benefits I think they haven't been looking.

6.1.3 Enhanced competitor involvement for colleges

In terms of specific benefits for colleges and employers with TMs on their staff, TMs pointed out that their presence in colleges and companies can encourage participation in WorldSkills by the young people in those contexts:

It benefits this college particularly, maybe it's by chance or because I'm the lecturer here, in that we have had WorldSkills competitor after WorldSkills competitor and for the last four cycles, there's been somebody from this college involved.

According to the TMs, there is a group of colleges that is enjoying continued success in WSC, while others are not involved at all:

Once you get inside that circle of people that participate in competitions, and it's true today, I can name you the colleges that will participate and get people through to the national final year on year because it's the same ones all the time. You can virtually name the colleges that will end up in the final every time.

6.2 Barriers for colleges and employers

The barriers to college¹ and employer involvement identified by TMs focused on two main areas: a lack awareness of WorldSkills and TM time away from the workplace.

6.2.1 Lack of awareness of WorldSkills

Almost all the TMs interviewed, whether in an FE post or not, highlighted the lack of full awareness about WorldSkills and about competitions in general as a problem. In some cases, the TM's employer or college was well-informed, but the TM might have had difficulties persuading their competitor's employer or college to become involved and allow them time for training. TMs indicated a need for more effective media and public relations work to inform employers and FE staff at all levels about the potential benefits of getting involved in competitions and in WorldSkills UK. The following quotation represents the views of these TMs:

I think the key is to get more colleges involved. There seems to be almost like a 'premier league' of colleges that know about WorldSkills, and all of our competitors [*for a particular skill area*] come from those three or four colleges. None of the other colleges really know about it.

This wider awareness about WorldSkills was considered to be a prerequisite for colleges' participation in the competitions and support for TMs and competitors.

Many TMs also described the difficulty of outlining to employers what WSC and WorldSkills UK are, who is involved and how the organisation is structured. This might have an effect on the willingness of employers to commit their staff time to WSC, some TMs argued. One TM described a conversation with an employer, to persuade them to get involved:

I was, like, 'what are we called now?' So that was Skill Funding Agency and that one is WorldSkills UK and that one is Find a Future. I just kind of said, 'look at the end of the day we can't do it without the employers'.

In future it may be useful to have clearer documentation and explanations of how the competitions operate and how much time away from work will be required from competitors. This information could be located on the Find a Future website.

¹ See Project 4 report (Allen, James and Mayhew, 2015) for more information on barriers to participation for FE colleges.

6.2.2 The extent of the time commitment by colleges and employers

The time commitment and time away from their primary workplace was the main issue named by the TMs as a barrier for participation by colleges and employers. A small number of the TMs have changed their working arrangements to account for this and moved towards self-employment. A large number of TMs felt that working full-time in FE was not compatible with carrying out the WorldSkills TM role in terms of time management. The key difficulty was the time away from college and teaching required for the role:

I don't know that colleges are very supportive of it. They're not able to give the time, which is one of the reasons I became freelance so I had time to dedicate to it.

For some TMs, the support pledged to them at the beginning of their commitment to WorldSkills UK did not necessarily continue or continue at the same level of intensity. This perception of dwindling of support was related to the TMs' absences from college. TMs were aware of the difficulties faced by some members of the TM team:

I could name those that are finding it extremely difficult. When we were out in Belfast (*squad selection 2014*), one had a phone call from the college saying, "I didn't know you were out this week." These are all college principals that have bought into this.

It may be the case that such absences make it difficult for the colleges to manage teaching and administration:

At the beginning they were very, very 'yes' people, great, but I think because of the way our college was run I became more of a cost than an asset.

A further difficulty for colleges, mentioned by many TMs, is the financial pressure on them as institutions. As such, repeated absences of staff members may be viewed as a luxury colleges can ill afford:

But I think, as a college, finances became tighter and tighter and, you know, six years of redundancies, then I think I was looked upon as a bit of a Hollywood trainer.

Another reported difficulty for colleges with TMs on their staff is related to the management level at which the commitment to WorldSkills is made. As indicated in the following quotation, it may be the case that the principal expresses support, but the impact on timetabling filters down to line managers, causing potential tension between TMs and other members of staff. The TM role requires time away with the competitors and other TMs for training and development, and there appears to be work to do to make this more palatable to all staff members at FE colleges:

You'll find a lot of principals will wear their WorldSkills training managers on their shoulder like a badge of honour. When that filters down to a working level, to timetabling, it just causes problems for the line managers. And that makes you no friends with anybody. In some

colleges there's a lot of inflexibility, you teach, that's what you do, you're in there 36 weeks a year, there's no leeway, there's no nothing. Whatever project it is that takes you away from the classroom, some FE colleges cannot cope with that.

A small number of TMs working in FE also raised the negative impact of their absences on the levels of attainment of their full-time students:

My full-time students distinctly suffered last year, no question about it. Their success rate dropped off. It's back again this year but it's definitely a negative impact on the college and the students in the college and I don't know a way of resolving that.

The findings suggest that time away from college and teaching is a key barrier for colleges with TMs on their staff, as it affects their administration, teaching scheduling and planning.

Similarly to the TMs who work full-time in FE, some of the industry-employed TMs noted difficulties at work because they were perceived not to be working on their main job:

It hasn't been popular with management. There is an element with some people of if you are not at your desk then you are not working. Other people are very supportive and they can see the value of it.

According to TMs, employer support may be dependent on one individual in a company and a change in management might jeopardise this commitment. For this reason many of the TMs argued that appropriate official recognition of the effort put in by employers is essential.

A few TMs indicated that there were differing views on WorldSkills within their organisation. Thus, the commitment to WorldSkills may need to be renegotiated on a regular basis and, in any event, in the case of a change of leadership at the company:

There have been some people in the organisation who have tried to block me from doing it, and I have had some good managers who have allowed me to do it and understood the benefit I give them.

Supporting a TM may come at a cost to employers and this is also a potential barrier to participation: 'I mean, they charge me out – if I was to go to a customer site to do training, they charge me out at £850 a day. So the £150 fee is absolute peanuts, really.'

On the other hand, some TMs worked for companies with close links to WorldSkills International, which made their TM role more compatible with their job.

TMs who were self-employed did not need to negotiate for the time to carry out their TM duties, but some faced commercial pressures because the daily rate for TM work was significantly below their commercial daily rate.

6.3 Summary

This section has explored the TMs' perceptions of the benefits and the barriers to participation in WorldSkills UK for colleges and employers. It has identified two main benefits: public relations and the marketing value of WorldSkills, and skills development at colleges and companies. On the other hand, two main barriers were identified as a lack of awareness of WorldSkills and the extent of the staff time commitment required of colleges and employers.

7 Conclusions and Recommendations

This study focused on Training Managers who are participating in WorldSkills UK in the run up to WSC São Paulo 2015. TMs were asked to discuss benefits of participation, barriers to effective performance as TMs, and the perceived benefits from and barriers to participation by TMs' college or industry employers.

The main findings are as follows:

- The TM role is complex: in addition to training competitors and attending competitions they carry out a range of administrative responsibilities associated with the events and competitions involved in the WorldSkills UK programme, participate in technical conferences, and are in regular communication with their competitors, the competitors' support networks and WSUK. In addition, they carry out a representative role at the competitions and in international meetings.
- The benefits of participation for TMs are: broadening their knowledge, maintaining and enhancing cutting-edge skills and networking with other professionals in their field who also aim to achieve excellence through competition. They have a deep sense of pride at representing the UK, and also take pride in observing the 'journey' undertaken by their competitors as they progress towards participation in WSC.
- The barriers and difficulties faced by TMs are: the intense time commitment (and sometimes financial loss related to that commitment); administrative problems (such as delays in the reimbursement of expenses) and less than optimal communication with Find a Future. One particular concern is the absence of a strategy for training new TMs. TMs would also benefit from greater official recognition of their role supporting WSUK.
- Benefits for colleges and employers, from the TMs' perspective, include: public relations and marketing benefits from their involvement with WSUK; in addition TMs and competitors acquire skills and knowledge through their participation in WSUK activities, which they bring back to their colleges or workplaces.
- Barriers to participation by FE and employers, from the TMs' perspective, include: the lack of information about WorldSkills and problems relating to the time that TMs spend away from their FE college or industry employers to engage in their TM role. The latter may be due to misunderstandings within an organisation or to conflicts between the WorldSkills timetable and employer needs. Overall, the study indicates that TMs' central role in WSUK is not always fully understood or appreciated in the wider context.

Specific recommendations for moving forward emerged through the study, including:

- **Recommendation 1:** Design a comprehensive induction programme for new TMs, ideally including an official handover period from the previous TM.

The interviews indicated the multi-faceted nature of the TM role, and the steep learning curve faced in the role even by experienced lecturers, craftspeople and business people. For this reason, an induction programme into the specific duties of a TM and the structures within which they work (in terms of the training with regard to: the training plan, appropriate test projects, methods of engaging with the competitors and so on and, in practical terms with regard to: time-tabling, the procedures for ordering equipment, booking travel and accommodation, the bureaucratic requirements of work within the WSC cycle, and so on) should be developed. Naturally there are specific issues relating to each TM's specific skill area, working context and geographical location, but an induction outlining the general structure and requirements of the role, as well as details on the organisation, would be useful.

- **Recommendation 2:** Further investigate the TM workload and share the time-table for WorldSkills activities in good time so that TMs can negotiate time away from their work with their employers and colleagues, and also on behalf of their competitors.

Almost all TMs stated that the workload and time commitment required were extremely high. Some TMs found it difficult to balance this with their other work demands. It would be useful to investigate TM workload in more detail and to identify strategies for making best use of their time.

For planning and scheduling purposes, and to maintain the supportive role of colleges and employers, it would be helpful for the time-table of technical conferences and other meetings to be shared in a timely manner and, ideally, not to be subject to last-minute changes. This applies to TMs, but also, of course, to competitors.

- **Recommendation 3:** Ensure expenses incurred by TMs are reimbursed within a reasonable period of time, and ideally within one month.

Many of the TMs are working for no additional remuneration or for well below their standard daily rate when they work for WorldSkills. They accept that when they take on the role. However, prompt and timely repayment of expenses incurred would remove a potential source of frustration for TMs. One suggestion was to set up a fund from which TMs could draw expenses, rather than operating on a case-by-case reimbursement system.

- **Recommendation 4:** Enhance the communication and rapport between TMs and the Find a Future administrative staff.

TMs were of the opinion that communication between themselves and the Find a Future administration could be improved. A specific contact person at Find a Future for each of the TMs would go some way to solving this. In addition, the website could be redesigned to include more information for and about TMs.

- **Recommendation 5:** Improve and expand the information on the website, with specific content geared to colleges and employers about WorldSkills.

This recommendation relates to the fact that the majority of colleges and employers are not involved in WorldSkills UK at all, which may be partly to do with lack of awareness and lack of information about Find a Future and its activities at the time of the study. At present there is no information about how FE or employers might become involved or what the benefits of that involvement might be.

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Appendix 1: Interview schedule

Interview schedule for Training Managers, Project 6 of the DuVE research programme

Thank you for making the time available to speak with us today. Our research focuses on the role of training managers or TMs in preparing for and participating in Skills Competitions, and we would be interested to hear your views on how you have experienced and are experiencing this role.

Initial questions:

- How did you get involved in WorldSkills?
- What does being a TM actually involve in terms of logistics, practicalities and time commitment?
- What is your skill area?
- What is your working context? (FE college tutor or industry expert?)

The first set of questions looks at the benefits and difficulties for you as a training manager.

- What have been the benefits for you of getting involved in Skills Competitions (national and international)? Perhaps we could start with personal benefits, and then look at professional benefits?
- What have been the difficulties for you of getting involved in Skills Competitions? Perhaps we could start with personal difficulties, and then look at professional difficulties?

The second set of questions looks at barriers, difficulties and incentives, and the contributions made by training managers.

- What kinds of barriers and difficulties did you face when you were deciding to become a training manager?
- What kinds of barriers and difficulties have you faced in your work as a training manager?
- What kinds of incentives could, in your view, encourage more people to apply to become training managers, and to remain in post for a significant length of time?
- Is there any particular aspect of the role of Training Manager that you feel you were not prepared for or not expecting?
- In your view, what are the key contributions you have made as a training manager?

- What kinds of support could have made those contributions even more effective?
- What is the contribution of the TMs to employers and FE colleges?

In the third set of questions, we would now like to look at teaching and learning approaches.

- Which teaching and learning approaches that you have used with your competitors have been most effective?
- What are your views on the support and training you received in this area when you became a training manager?
- How would you describe the working relationship between you and your competitors? What support could, in your view, enhance that relationship?

The next question deals with the contribution made by employers and FE colleges.

- What kind of contribution has your college/employer made to your work as a training manager?
- What kinds of additional contribution would you like to see in future?

Are there any other issues you would like to raise?

Thank you for your time.

Appendix 2: Person specification



The appointment of Training Managers/WorldSkills Experts for The WorldSkills Competition: Brazil 2015

Person specification for Training Manager – Brazil 2015 Cycle

A successful applicant for the role of Training Manager/Expert is expected to demonstrate the following attributes:

Skills

- to have the ability to observe, analyse, assess and report on performance in great detail
- to demonstrate the performance of a skill to an exceptional standard, with commentary as required
- to communicate an understanding of a process or activity through a range of techniques
- to have a strong ability in the use of ICT
- to be able to select and use the appropriate techniques for teaching, training, assessment to develop individuals to the highest standards
- to be able to select and use the correct coaching techniques
- to be self-managing and governing
- excellent time management
- excellent project and task management
- to be able to lead a team
- strong influencing skills and an ability to build confidence in others
- sound oral communication in known and unfamiliar settings
- good formal and informal written communication, including by electronic means
- to excel at deriving, retaining and applying information
- to have an ability to work in a safe and appropriate manner on all occasions
- to be able to represent the UK in an ambassadorial context

to be able to apply the following knowledge

- to have an exceptional knowledge and application of a relevant trade, craft or skill, and the factors bearing upon it
- to have an in depth understanding (and/or willing to acquire) of international practices and standards in the trade, craft or skill, and of the factors bearing upon them
- of the main principles of and approaches to learning, teaching and training
- of the main principles and practices of coaching
- of the main principles of and approaches to assessment
- of principles and approaches to the support of other individuals
- of the legal and regulatory environment governing the skill category

Functional attitudes

- an acceptance and welcome of difference and diversity
- a sense of ease with people in a wide range of settings
- a respect of and for the development of young people
- high personal standards of behaviour, sensitivity and responsiveness
- high personal standards of integrity and responsibility
- a willingness to put collective goals above personal interest
- a willingness to adopt new approaches, methods and techniques.

Appendix 3: Description of responsibilities



The appointment of Training Managers/WorldSkills Experts for The WorldSkills Competition: Brazil 2015

New applicants

The Skills Funding Agency now invites applications for training managers/WorldSkills experts for the WorldSkills Brazil 2015 cycle, to be part of the wider team that recruits, develops and selects young people to represent the UK at WorldSkills International competitions. Sao Paulo, Brazil, is the next biennial international competition which takes place in August 2015. Written applications are required from applicants for each of the skills for which the Skills Funding Agency hopes to enter competitors. (Please see the attached list of skills). Applicants are encouraged to apply on the basis of their demonstrable attributes, which may have been developed in a wide range of vocational and or occupational settings.

Applicants are requested to apply by an Expression of Interest (EoI) which addresses the role description and person specification. Please also include an up to date curriculum vitae (CV). Please ensure you have the full support of your current employer prior to applying for the role and ensure they counter sign your application to confirm they understand the commitment required for the role.

Please send the EoI and CV as an e-mail attachment to International Skills Development Team at trainingmanagerapplication@skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk

Please add the following in the subject line of the email –

Application for the role of Training Manager 2015 _Skill title_ your name

The **minimum** time investment of a training manager/WorldSkills expert is 90 days over a two year cycle. Of this, attendance at the WorldSkills Competition occupies approximately 20 days over three weeks (in August 2015). As well as four days at The Skills Show and an additional four for alignment activity associated with the suite of international and national portfolios. Up to (the equivalent of) 15 days of the 90 normally take place during evenings and weekends.

With this in mind, applicants are requested to make clear the extent of the support offered by their employers, and any conditions relating to that support. They are asked to have their applications counter-signed by a member of the senior management team of their employing organisation. Where applicants are not in employment of this kind, they are asked to make clear the terms of their application on their own behalves.

Applicants cannot be called for selection interview until the terms of their applications are clearly supported.

The selection interview will comprise of a presentation, questions and answer session and a series of in-tray exercises.

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The appointment of Training Managers/WorldSkills Experts for The WorldSkills Competition: Brazil 2015

Past training managers and current training managers/WorldSkills experts

The Skills Funding Agency conducts a formal review with all current training managers/WorldSkills experts following each international competition cycle. The basis for this review will be your respective competitions' past experience and performance as well as your current role and support for involvement as stated above. We are currently asking all current (WorldSkills Leipzig 2013 cycle) Training Managers to reapply for their position as stated above with an expression of interest and CV.

Where the tenure of your appointment has expired, training managers/WorldSkills experts for past WorldSkills competitions are invited to apply for the positions also, please refer to the relevant WorldSkills Competition record of results in support of the application.

Terms of appointment for training managers/WorldSkills experts (also see above)

- 1 The time required of the training manager is not remunerated other than in truly exceptional circumstances.
- 2 Where truly exceptional circumstances are discussed and agreed we will pay a daily rate of up to £150, maximum.
- 3 Actual travel and subsistence costs necessarily incurred on behalf of the Skills Funding Agency are reimbursed in accordance with the written guidance which will be given to successful applicants on appointment.
- 4 Appointments will be made for one WorldSkills Competition cycle only, on the basis of the criteria set out above.

Interviews for relevant vacancies will take place in locations around the UK during from 28th October 2013. Announcements on successful candidates will be confirmed WC 18th November 2013.

The appointment of Training Managers/WorldSkills Experts for The WorldSkills Competition: Brazil 2015

The role and responsibilities of training managers/WorldSkills experts for the WorldSkills Competition: Brazil 2015

Introduction

The role of the training manager/WorldSkills expert is part-time and unremunerated. The time and contribution required is broadly equivalent to that needed to undertake a high level national professional qualification. The activities and the timetable for the role are determined by the biennial WorldSkills International Competition cycle and the annual WorldSkills UK cycle.

The role falls into the following responsibilities;

- 1 to make a major contribution to the enhanced performance and wellbeing of the UK Team at the biennial WorldSkills Competition,
- 2 to help develop and maintain the WorldSkills Competition in a particular skill
- 3 to oversee and participate in the training of competitors for the WorldSkills Competition
- 4 to participate in the WorldSkills Competition as the UK's designated expert
- 5 to support the development of WSUK National Competitions in the alignment of standards to Squad UK

The following outlines in detail the requirements of each responsibility.

The appointment of Training Managers/WorldSkills Experts for The WorldSkills Competition: Brazil 2015

Responsibilities and duties

Responsibility 1: to contribute to the wellbeing of the UK Team and world-beating performances at the biennial WorldSkills Competition.

Main duties:

- 1 to demonstrate and represent the standards aspired to by international skills and development
- 2 to take a leading role in the effort to secure world-beating performances in skills
- 3 to contribute to the UK's WorldSkills framework of standards, programme design, monitoring and quality development
- 4 to work with others to maximise the progress and attainment of potential and selected competitors
- 5 to participate in the training and development of all training managers
- 6 to participate in the appraisal processes of the Skills Funding Agency
- 7 to pursue personal training and development goals, seeking assistance as required
- 8 to take opportunities to demonstrate a welcome and openness to other nations, cultures and social groups
- 9 to provide feedback, for the benefit of both the Skills Funding Agency and relevant sectors, on alternative training and skill techniques.

The appointment of Training Managers/WorldSkills Experts for The WorldSkills Competition: Brazil 2015

Responsibility 2: to apply and develop the UK's training framework for the WorldSkills Competition

Main duties:

- 1 to participate in the biennial post-WorldSkills Competition review, and update the competition material accordingly
- 2 to identify the relevant international standards for the skill
- 3 to prepare and advise on the material required to select potential WorldSkills competitors
- 4 to prepare training and assessment materials for potential WorldSkills competitors
- 5 to analyse and review potential competitors' training needs and prepare draft plans for the technical training and preparation of those competitors
- 6 to prepare assessment plans to meet the needs of the potential competitors, other trainers and assessors, the Skills Funding Agency and others as appropriate
- 7 to work with the Skills Funding Agency and to estimate and manage the costs and resources required to deliver the plans
- 8 to work with the Skills Funding Agency and its partners to implement programmes of training, preparation, competitions and selection events
- 9 to highlight potential problems in fulfilling the technical training and preparation
- 10 to work with the Skills Funding Agency and its partners to monitor and enhance the programme and its results.

The appointment of Training Managers/WorldSkills Experts for The WorldSkills Competition: Brazil 2015

Responsibility 3: to prepare and train competitors in advance of the WorldSkills Competition

Main duties:

- 1 to establish sound relationships with the training team, potential competitors and others who have a bearing on the competitors' performance [specifically and generally]
- 2 to share information that contributes to the training of individuals
- 3 to complete initial assessments of potential competitors
- 4 to revise and propose training and assessment plans accordingly
- 5 to prepare the selected competitors for the skill to achieve towards the minimum of between 520/540 marks on the 600 scale
- 6 to oversee and support the delivery of the technical training and associated training and assessment plans
- 7 to prepare and execute test projects and other assessments, in conjunction with others (cluster events) as required for the ultimate selection of the UK Team
- 8 to maintain up to date training and assessment records which are available for monitoring, discussion and feedback
- 9 to raise to Team UK Manager, immediately, issues and concerns potentially or actually affecting competitors' performance
- 10 to participate in centrally organised training events with other training managers, international visitors and competitors
- 11 to support competitors in achieving qualifications or awards deemed to be required by the Skills Funding Agency
- 12 to provide feedback routinely and by exception on all matters relating to potential and actual competitors, with appropriate caveats where appropriate
- 13 to attend regular technical conferences and update training events

The appointment of Training Managers/WorldSkills Experts for The WorldSkills Competition: Brazil 2015

Responsibility 4: to participate in the WorldSkills Competition as the UK's designated expert

Main duties:

- 1 to establish and maintain effective relationships with the Chief Expert, Deputy Chief Expert and other experts for the skill
- 2 to participate in the discussion forum on the WorldSkills website to at least the minimum required standards
- 3 to prepare competition test project(s) according to the international technical description, the competition rules, and any valid agreements
- 4 to develop and maintain a detailed and accurate knowledge of the assessment practices, processes and procedures that apply to the competition
- 5 to maintain a detailed and accurate knowledge of the general and specific rules and regulations of the WorldSkills Competition, and to abide by these without exception
- 6 to review and appraise the tools, equipment and materials required for the competition, advise on any immediate or potential difficulties arising and propose solutions
- 7 to participate in briefing and training sessions for the UK team prior to the WorldSkills Competition
- 8 to attend the WorldSkills Competition as a designated UK expert and member of the international jury panel for the full specified period and to stay in the accommodation allocated to experts by the organisers
- 9 to work with the international jury during the competition to update and amend the technical description as required, and to inform the Skills Funding Agency of any significant changes
- 10 to provide intensive support for the competitor and fully safeguard his or her interests within the framework of the rules
- 11 to provide feedback to the Skills Funding Agency, routinely and by exception on (a) the competitor's performance in the competition and (b) the conduct of the WorldSkills Competition
- 12 where appropriate to take responsibility for the competitor's toolbox and work wear, taking advice from the Skills Funding Agency in doing so.