INTERNATIONAL SKILLS OLYMPICS

ATLANTA, GEORGIA, U.S.A.

JUNE 8TH - 21ST, 1981

Report by -

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The 26th International Skills Olympics held in Atlanta, Georgia from June 8th to 21st, 1981 should perhaps be described as an outstanding success and achievement in organisation and involvement.

The Venue for the 1981 event, unlike most other venues which have been held in Technical Colleges or Training Centres, was a large Convention Centre similar in size to the exhibition halls of the Sydney Showground. This meant that all equipment had to be organised and installed in place in a short space of time. Equipment covering some 34 Skilled Trade Areas from Machining to Bricklaying and Hairdressing to Dressmaking.

Some 14 Countries were active in the 1981 Olympics - 3 Asian, 1 North American and 10 European. The number of competitors taking part was 268 and 134 technical experts.

Prior to the actual event which lasted 3 days, the technical experts met to decide on the projects to be used. These were selected from between 4 and 6 projects put forward from the member Countries. For each trade area there is a trade description which is used as the official criteria for selection of these projects. Marking systems were also compiled and printed.

The three days of the actual competition were conducted with strict adherance to competition rules and all competitors must have felt an enormous amount of strain. Following on from the competition, the technical experts then had the task of marking all the projects (by trade) over the next 3 days. Throughout this competition I was most impressed with the diligence, competence and enthusiasm shown by all the competitors and technical experts.

The purpose of an Australian Delegation was twofold -

1/ To observe this competition with the view to possibly becoming a member of I.S.O. and taking part in future Skills Olympics.

2/ To canvass Australia's prospects of hosting the International Skills Olympics in our Bi-Centennial year of 1988.

As to 1/, providing that it could be proved that the Evatt Foundation was the right Organisation to be the representative body for Australia, there would be little trouble gaining entry.

2/ however, was seen as a more complex problem with some members of the administrative committee (Germany in particular) expressing doubt as to Australia's Technical competence to host such an event.

Active involvement in all meetings of Technical, Administrative and Member Assembly meetings, by myself, allayed many of these doubts with the result that at the final Member Assembly, Australia's application for membership was passed unanimously and the option to host the 1988 Olympics was passed with one abstention (Portugal).

The obvious pride, professional knowledge and proficiency displayed by all competitors leads me to feel quite sure that given enough publicity throughout Australia, this event could have a major effect on our school leavers' attitudes towards apprenticeship and trade training and lift parent and school career counsellors' impressions of apprenticeship.

B Franco.

It is hoped that the following in-depth report will form the basis for the better understanding of the working, organising and selection of Australia's apprentices to attend the International Skills Olympics, should the Evatt Foundation go ahead with its planned involvement.

1/ GENERAL DESCRIPTION

1:1 AIM

The International Skills Olympics was commenced in 1950 when Spain challenged Portugal to a competition in trade skills. Each year since then this competition has taken place with other countries becoming involved, thus widening representation, the exchange of technical information and the passing on of training methods used around the world.

Within the aims of I.S.O. are the development of youth and the pursuit of excellence. Young people up to the age of 22 in the year that the competition is held are eligible to take part.

1:2 INVOLVEMENT COMPETITORS

Each member country is allowed to have one competitor in each of the present 34 trade classifications. The addition of extra trade areas to the competition is only allowed after the proposing country has demonstrated the trade at an international event. For example, the U.S.A. provided a demonstration in Commercia Art and submitted a written proposal for consideration by the Technical Committee. The U.K. have requested permission to stage a demonstration in Smash Repair skills at the Austrian competition in July, 1983.

1:3 TRADES AND COMPETING COUNTRIES

The following is a list of trades, competitors and countries taking part:-

		Austria	Switzer.	Germany	Spain	Ireland	France	Liecht'n	U.K.	Japan	Korea	Nether'ds	Portugal	Taiwan	U.S.A.
1.	Fitting		•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•		•	
2.	Press tool making	•	•	•		•		•		•	•	•		•	•
3.	Instrument making		•	•				•		•	•	•		•	
4.	Watch making		•							•	•			•	
5.	Engineering drawing	•	•	•	•	•		•		•	•		•	•	•
6.	Turning	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
7.	Milling		•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
8.	Constr. Steel work			•		•	•			•	•	•		•	
9.	Gas welding				•	•				•	•	•		•	
10.	Electric welding			•		•				•	•	•		•	
11.	Wood pattern making	•		•			•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
13.	Panel beating		•	•	•		•		•	•	•			•	
14.	Sheet metal work			•		•	•			•	•		•	•	•
15.	Plumbing		•	•		•	•		•	•	•			•	•
16.	Industrial electronics		•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•			•	•
17.	Radio/TV Repairs			•						•	•			•	•
18.	House wiring		•	•	•	•		•		•	•		•	•	•
19.	Industrial wiring		•	•	•	•		•		•	•			•	
20.	Bricklaying		•	•		•	•		•		•		•	•	•
21.	Stone cutting	•		•		•	•		•	•	•			•	
22.	Painting		•	•	•	•			•	•	•	•		•	
23.	Plaster work			•			•		•	•	•	•	•		
24.	Cabinet making	•	•	•	•		•	•			•	•	•	•	•
25.	Joinery	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•		•	•
26.	Carpentry	•	•	•				•	•	•	•				
27.	Jewellery	•	•	•			•				•				
28.	Men's tailoring			•						•	•			•	
29.	Ladies' Hairdressing		•	•	•				•		•			•	•
30.	Men's Hairdressing		•	•	•				•	•	•			•	

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1:3 TRADES AND COMPETING COUNTRIES

The following is a list of trades, competitors and countries taking part:-

Total - 268

The minimum number of competitors in any one event cannot be less than 4 and the maximum, is of course only limited by the number of countries competing.

1:4 COMPETITION SUCCESS

The major reason for the success of this Skills Olympics competition is in a great part due to the total dedication and enthusiasm of people like the Technical Committee and the Technical Experts who each put in a tremendous amount of work prior to, during and after each competition.

1:5 REPRESENTATION BY MEMBER COUNTRIES

Each member country is allowed one official delegate, one technical delegate and technical experts in the ratio of 1 expert to 2 competitors. It should be remembered that these technical experts are the people who plan the projects and make the decision as to which one should be used. For this reason it is imperative that the expert chosen for a particular trade must be extremely competent in his area of specialisation.

1:6 COMPETITION DETAILS

Each of the 34 trade classifications used for the competition have a trade description which is used as the basis for each practical project submitted. All 34 trade areas have a number of technical experts, usually between 3 and 5 who following the trade description, design a project prior to attending the International Skills Olympics.

During the 4 days prior to the competition the technical experts for each trade area carry out the following duties -

1) Inspect workshop equipment, tools and materials supplied by host country.

2) Select on the basis of the most suitable project, one project from the number submitted for consideration.

3) Produce a marking sheet which covers all the skills demanded in the project to be attempted.

4) During the period of the competition all experts are in attendance to ensure that competitors can undertake the project in as near ideal conditions as possible and that any breakdowns, shortages and other problems are recorded on the marking sheets.

5) On completion of the competition, the jury of experts for each trade undertake the marking of all projects, taking care that no expert will mark a project of a competitor from their own country.

6) The results are then submitted to the technical committee for ratification prior to the awarding of medals.

1:7 SELECTION OF COMPETITORS

Each member country has, of course, the task of selecting its own competitors and this is usually done in three stages -

a) Local competitions (say, towns or cities)

b) Area or State competitions

c) National competitions

Two methods are in general use -

1) Using the Technical College system which has the ready made means of measuring a student's ability prior to entry at each level.

2) Encouraging individuals, Industry groups, etc. to put forward candidates for area or State and then national competitions.

These competitors would need to be chosen the year before the competition is to be held (say during their 3rd year of apprenticeship) to ensure that they will be eligible to attempt the International competitions. The age limit is strictly adhered to, i.e. each competitor must be under 22 in the competition year.

1:8 VOCATIONAL TRAINING EFFECT ON COMPETITION OUTCOME

Whilst it is not an indisputable fact that the degree to which a country is committed to vocational training has a marked bearing on the result of the International Skills Olympics, it was evident that countries such as Korea and Japan are producing trained craftsmen and women with a very high degree of skill and enter the International Skills Olympics determined to win.

2/ FUNDING

Throughout the 14 nations competing, there appears to be 3 methods of funding with the first method dominating.

2:1 INDUSTRY/GOVERNMENT GRANTS

As is usual in the concept that the user pays, so with this method industry is seen as the sector to gain maximum benefit from the competition, both by the levels of skill developed and by the lifting to new heights the general attitude to trade training. Most countries have the lion's share of the funding supplied by industry and commerce with some smaller share coming from Government sources. The majority of countries had their funds supplied in this manner.

2:2 COMPLETE GOVERNMENT FUNDING

The Countries where this form dominated were Ireland, Spain and Portugal and the finance appeared to be directed through the Departments of Technical Education.

2:3 COMPLETE INDUSTRY FUNDING

Perhaps the best example of this was the U.K. who were funded solely by Industry and Commerce and in fact the U.K. Committee was registered as a charity and any donations were tax deductible.

3/ AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE INVOLVEMENT

With the acceptance by the International Skills Olympics Member Assembly of the Evatt Foundation's nominations for membership and with the option to host the 1988 I.S.O. in Australia, a working document and detailed programme must be finalised and executed before the next event to be held at Lientz, Austria in 1983.

The purpose of this report is to set out basic details and requirements which can form the basis for discussion and comment leading to Local, State and National competitions in 1982 and International involvement in 1983.

3:1 AIM

To set up a National Organisation capable of administering and organising Local, State and National competitions in the 34 trades presently competed for in the International Skills Olympics. These competitions would need to be conducted each year and the successful competitor in each trade area would then compete in the International events in 1983, 1985 and then in 1988 in Australia for the Bi-Centennial Celebrations.

3:2 LOCAL COMPETITIONS

The Local Competitions which would need to be held, could quite easily use the existing local Technical Colleges and Staff.

The Head Teacher for each trade in each of the Technical Colleges would be asked to conduct a short practical test (designed by the Committee of Technical Experts) in conjunction with the known knowledge of the students' practical attainments demonstrated during the 3rd year of their course. This number of students would be kept to a minimum by previous performance demonstrated by the student and would not therefore, be an excessive number. These individual College winners could then all be forwarded to the Regional College and two (2) from each region (N.S.W. has 8 regions) could be submitted to the State Competition.

As the different trade areas usually have no bearing upon each other, these Local Competitions could be conducted during the 1 week break in July at different locations.

3:3 STATE COMPETITIONS

The holding of this competition should be during the September vacation period of 2 weeks and could be held as individual competitions per trade or as a major competition of all trades, which would arouse public awareness. Perhaps Apprenticeship Week in each State could focus around this competition. The minimum time needed for a State Competition would be in the order of 2 days. Projects to be attempted should be designed by the Technical Committee for each trade area. A suitable venue for these competitions would be one of the major City Technical Colleges.

3:4 NATIONAL COMPETITIONS

The winners from each State Competition would then compete in a 3 day event in a suitable venue (again perhaps a Technical College would be the ideal location) during early November or December. It is essential that this event does not clash with end of year examinations.

Strict International rules would need to be applied to this competition in order to give the competitors a sample of the International event conditions. The project chosen by the Experts would need to cover all the trade skills learnt and follow the trade descriptions laid down by I.S.O.

As most State authorities have difficulty deciding upon a set of criteria for selection of the leading apprentice in each trade, perhaps this competition could also have some relevance in this selection.

3:5 TRADE EXPERTS

To ensure that any competitions, Local, State or National measure the highest possible skills and knowledge and that they truly cover the whole range of skills in use at the time, it is essential that a wide cross-section of experts should be chosen, i.e. experts from Industry who can suggest up-to-date methods, and Technical College teachers who can submit a more academic approach to the project. In this way all avenues are covered.

3:6 COMPETITORS

As the aim of the Local, State and National competitions is to ultimately select the team to represent Australia in the International Skills Olympics, the rules that apply for the International event should be applied to the National events.

A competitor must not have reached his 22nd birthday in the year of the International competition. For this reason Competitors in the National competition can be selected from either 3rd or 4th year apprentices.

3:7 SPECIALISED TRAINING

Upon selection of the team to compete in the International event, consideratic should be given to allowing each competitor a period of intensive training under competition type conditions. This intensive training would ensure that our team enters with a solid foundation on which to compete internationally.

4/ AUSTRALIA'S BI-CENTENNIAL YEAR - 1988

One of the main reasons for Australia's involvement and the result of yearly National and Bi-Annual International competitions is to have Australia host the 1988 International Skills Olympics. This then poses quite different problems from sending teams to other countries in that the technical problems of organisation become much more complex.

4:1 MAJOR FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED

(1) VENUE

(2) ACCOMMODATION - Competitors, Organisers and Technical Experts

4:1:1 VENUE

Three possibilities for this come to mind and are listed for comment.

a) The use of an existing Technical College that would have the facilities to host the 34 trade areas in fairly close proximity to each other. It is an important feature that there is a close link between all trades to create the feeling of an International competition and to have spectator involvement to the full.

The question of the suitability of equipment can be overcome by having T.A.F.E. order its yearly renewal of equipment at a time suitable for the competition (February, 1988) and then having it dispersed after the competition to the various other Technical Colleges, and by having Companies manufacturing or supplying machine tools and equipment loaning equipment for the competition.

b) The construction and equipping of a specialised "Off the Job" Training Centre for this special occasion and then handing it over to Industry and Commerce Associations for use as a Group Training Centre. Specialised short courses could then be conducted for Industry in areas of particular need and skills in short supply.

c) Hire of a large convention centre, for example the Sydney Showground or the Randwick Race Course, which would have one large hall capable of staging all events in the same location. Manufacturers and Suppliers would then have to be asked to sponsor their equipment for the duration of the competition.

4:1:2 ACCOMMODATION

A vital factor and one which received perhaps by far the most criticism from competitors and delegates alike in the U.S.A. competition. It is important that competitors and delegates have adequate quarters of a complimentary nature and not have the wide extremes experienced in Atlanta. There, the competitors were housed in a College for negro girls which was to say the least, 2nd class. The delegates on the other hand were located at the most prestigous hotels in Atlanta, however, there was very little involvement socially for both groups. In an International event such as the Skills Olympics, this social interaction must have enormous benefits for all concerned and would go a long way to making the event achieve its aims.

There are, of course, many other factors that must be considered in addition to the points raised in this discussion paper and it is hoped that these will be covered as the Evatt Foundation establishes their order of events.

I found this experience of 26th International Skills Olympics a most rewarding time and believe that it can be used to create a tremendous interest and awareness in vocational training in Australia for the future.

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MEDAL TALLY

MEDALS	Aus.	Fr.	Ger.	Ire.	J.	K.	Liec.	Holl.	Port.	Sp.	Sw.	Tai.	U.K.	U.S.A.
GOLD	2	3	4	-	5	15	-	-	-	-	4	2	-	-
SILVER	2	2	4	-	8	6	2	1	-	-	5	4	5	2
BRONZE	2	3	3	1	5	3	-	-	-	-	-	7	1	-
TOTAL	6	8	11	1	18	24	2	1	-	-	9	13	6	2