

Overall sponsorship contributions for the sectors amounted to approximately £4.3 million in the 1993/95 cycle, a sizeable increase from £3.5 million in the previous cycle.

- 4.5 **Challenges.** Three ITOs had now signed up to develop direct links with skills competitions and modern apprenticeship programmes, with three others also involved. Results were expected by the end of March. There was a parallel project in progress to secure S/NVQ accreditation for participation in skills competitions. The Global multi-media challenge, introduced at Lyon to report results on the Internet, had been a success and was likely to grow. UK SKILLS would be seeking Board approval to continue with interest in EUROSkill.
- 4.6 **The Future.** The Chairman and Chief Executive would, over the next three months, be concentrating on ways of ensuring the future financial stability of UK SKILLS. Directions in which the organisation should concentrate its efforts were fully discussed in March 1995 by the Board and a final decision was intended for March 1996.
- 4.7 In conclusion, the Chief Executive thanked members of UK SKILLS staff for their hard work over the past few months.

5. Skill Olympics National Committee

- 5.1 Mr Hammer, as Chairman of the Skill Olympics National Committee, reporting on the meeting of 22 November, informed the Board that while the main business of the meeting had been to discuss the official report on the IYSO, the following items of importance had also been covered:
 - 5.1.1 **The role of experts.** It was clear that experts had a crucial part to play and that therefore great care had to be taken with their selection, training and performance.
 - 5.1.2 **Training programmes.** The standard of programmes produced was varied. There was a requirement for clearer advice and guidance on the production of programmes and for monitoring to ensure they were being followed. This was to be given high priority for 1996/97.
 - 5.1.3 **Work process management.** There was a clear correlation between the final results and the use of work process management. Those who used work process management did well, while those who ignored it did badly.
 - 5.1.4 During discussion, the value of **work process management** was further emphasised. It was **essential** that **technical experts were persuaded of its value** and that it should be included in training programmes. Considerable effort would be needed in promoting it to overcome the traditional British resistance to planning. Mr Rowlands informed the Board of the enthusiasm of some College Principals who were keen to take on some of the preparation of competitors, especially

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in work process management. It was also considered essential that the process should be included within S/NVQs; this had been raised with NCVQ and Prue Leith was asked for her support in both finding out to what extent it was already included in S/NVQs and getting it accepted as a recognised model.

- 5.1.5 Mr Sharkie briefed the Board on the nominee for the Fred Hill award, Jason Nightingale, the competitor in agricultural mechanics. The Board approved the nomination.
- 5.2 Mr Hammer, introducing the official report on the Skill Olympics, drew attention to the following points:
 - 5.2.1 **Selection of competitors** (para 2). Although some competitors were drawn from the biggest possible pool nationally, this was not the case in every trade and consequently in not all cases were the best in Britain selected. Skill competition organisers had been asked to certify that their competitors could meet the international standard. Although they all certified this, eleven competitors failed to reach the standard. The issue was a vital one to be addressed.
 - 5.2.2 **Preparation and training of competitors** (para 4) The importance of training programmes and of the selection and briefing of experts was again highlighted. A major problem proved to be in the training of competitors to meet the pressure of competition. While general principles and advice were given during the team briefing, this was still a subject that required further investigation.
 - 5.2.3 **Competition** (para 10). On the whole experts were satisfied with the way the competition was run, despite the administrative problems, with the competence of chief experts, and with the fairness of the marking, although clearer guidance was needed on some aspects. The IVTO had reviewed the selection procedure for projects to make them more demanding and to raise standards.
 - 5.2.4 **Performance of UK competitors** (para 19) The importance of work process management was again emphasised. This would continue to be given a high priority in the future.
 - 5.2.5 **Performance of UK experts** (para 20). Generally the technical experts performed well. Any shortcomings displayed by some of the newer experts would be overcome with more experience. Arrangements were in hand to set up a trawl for new experts and to increase the pool from which experts were selected.
 - 5.2.6 **Lessons for the future** (para 25). There was a need to select competitors from a wide national pool and at an earlier stage, so as to ensure that a minimum of six months was available for training. It was desirable that a short list of two or three should be selected at the national finals, with a "play-off" at a later stage after further appraisal.

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- 5.3 Mr Rowlands, as Official Observer, reported that it had been challenging to see the size and scope of the competition. The difference between the best and worst was very difficult for a layman to determine, although the good competitors always came out on top. He felt that arrangements should be made so that spectators could see more of what was going on, and more use should be made of CCTV. But these were only minor criticisms of what he considered to be an excellent competition. He suggested that, as one way of examining the international standard, projects used at Lyon should be circulated to training organisations to see if trainees could meet the standard.
- 5.4 Mr Rowlands took the opportunity to inform Board members of Manchester's keen interest in staging the International Youth Skill Olympics at the next possible opportunity (which would be in 2005). It was also hoped that Manchester would host EUROSKILL, possibly in 1998, when European funding might be available. On present planning EUROSKILL would take place in the non-Olympic year, although there were arguments that it should be in the same year, with the same competitor, which might reduce the training commitment.
- 5.5 During discussion on the standard of competitors it was suggested that the reasons for the success of other countries, including Austria, should be investigated. It was also suggested that the use of psychometric testing, in conjunction with interviews, should be considered. This warranted further investigation.
- 5.6 It was agreed that in some cases the transition from national to international competition was too great, with competitors being put off, in particular, by the atmosphere and the number of visitors. The pressure on competitors was not going to get any less, so competitors had to be equipped properly to face it. It was agreed that, where possible, national finals should be held as part of a bigger event (eg SkillBuild at InterBuild). It was again emphasised that national finals must be truly national and must last for four days, with the added distraction of large crowds to get competitors used to the conditions they were likely to meet at the Olympics.
- 5.7 Following discussion on the size of the team that should be selected for the IYSO, it was agreed that all competitors should be capable of achieving the international standard. It was interesting to note that Austria set standards for their national competitions - winners were not selected for the Skill Olympics if they did not meet these standards. This was the position we should be moving towards.
- 5.8 In summing up the discussion, the Chairman pointed out that all the top seven countries had an excellent track record in education and training; the UK would be unlikely to get into this group in the immediate future without a marked improvement in our standards of training. Our position was in the middle of the next group (8th to 17th); while we would like to be at the top of this group, this would not be easy to achieve. It was clear that our successful competitors came from good competitions, with good

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experts, using well written training programmes and employing work process management. Conversely, it was the opposite in our disappointing results - poor competitions, weak experts, competitors who were either not good enough or were affected by the pressure. Considerable effort was needed to sort out these problems.

- 5.9 The Board agreed that the official report should now be submitted to DfEE and with some editing it should be made publicly available.

6. Competitions Policy Committee

- 6.1 Dr Carey, Chairman of the Competitions Policy Committee, reported on the meeting of 30 November (Paper 4). It was encouraging to note that nine of the twelve national competitions currently concerned with Skill Olympic trades were likely to be able to meet the Board's requirement that selection for the team for the 1997 Olympics be restricted to those nominated from competitions meeting the mandatory requirements of the Code of Practice. That decision by the Board, which had been notified to all skills competition organisers on a number of occasions, had clearly helped to secure implementation of the code and the consequential improvement in the standards of the competitions.
- 6.2 Equally encouraging was the growing interest in skills competitions from other sectors, such as printing, retail, bakery and meat, and the commitment from three ITOs to take part in the project to develop competitions within modern apprenticeship programmes, with the possibility of obtaining some credits towards achievement of S/NVQ. Arising from this increase in the number and range of skills competitions the need had been identified for some revision of the Code of Practice. A modified version is being prepared for consideration at the next meeting of the committee.
- 6.3 The committee welcomed and wholeheartedly supported the proposal to award a seal of approval to competitions that met the standards laid down in the Code of Practice. It was accepted that a charge of £300-500, to include a non-refundable application fee of £100, should be made for the seal.
- 6.4 The possible development of a EUROSKILL competition was noted and, subject to the availability of resources, it was recommended that the initiative be pursued.
- 6.5 The Board noted the report.
- (a) The detailed recommendations in Paper 4 Annex A relating to individual competitions were agreed.
 - (b) The proposals for the award of the seal of approval were approved in principle and the committee was asked to determine the appropriate fee(s) to be charged.
 - (c) The recommendation to continue discussions on European competitions was agreed subject to the availability of resources

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Items for information

7. Financial matters

7.1 The Chairman commented that the financial position was disappointing. He had opened discussions with the Permanent Secretary at the Department for Education and Employment concerning funding and options for the future in an attempt to put things on a more satisfactory basis. The Board would need to discuss this matter more fully at its next meeting in March 1996.

7.2 The Board noted the financial position to date.

8. Communications

8.1 The Chairman thanked Mr Freeman for all his hard work in achieving what he had; UK SKILLS owed him much.

8.2 The Board took note of the report on publications, publicity and PR activities.

9. Dates of future meetings (at 1 Giltspur Street, London EC1A 9DD)

23/4/96
~~Wednesday 6 March 1996 at 11.30 am~~

Wednesday 18 September 1996 at 11.30 am, followed by AGM

10. Any other business

The Chairman reminded Board members of the reception at Lancaster House on 18 December 1995, the main emphasis of which was to be on the employers of competitors.

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