

System-level impact by WorldSkills

Case studies



Foreword

At WorldSkills, we believe that skills are the building blocks of human development. They support fairer societies, underpin secure economies, and lead to more prosperous nations. Now, with this report, we are able to show with more certainty how engagement with WorldSkills transforms systems.

Drawing on the experiences of WorldSkills Costa Rica, WorldSkills Japan, and WorldSkills UK, the WorldSkills Global Research Council and Oxford University have been able to understand how our Members turn Competition experience into lasting impact. What they have found is that change does not happen by accident.

These Members have shared how they have shifted policies and mindsets through deliberate engagement with stakeholders across their national TVET systems, building on the insights, standards and frameworks they get from WorldSkills Competitions.

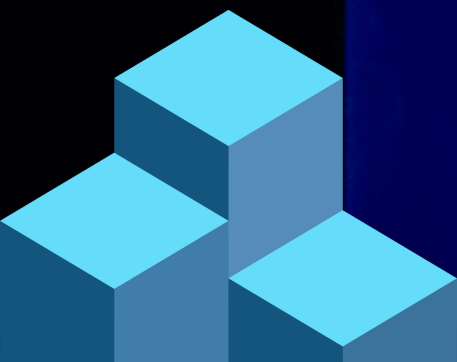
This research could not be timelier. As we finalize Vision 2035, we are committing to put rigorous impact measurement at the heart of our work. That means continuing to support the work of the WorldSkills Global Research Council as they partner with leading research institutions to prove our value at a national, regional, and international level.

Critically, we must then translate their evidence into insights that our Members can act on. Which is why this report is so important, as it helps us build a skills movement that is both credible and measurable.

I want to thank Dr Yushan Xie and Professor James Robson at Oxford University, the WorldSkills Global Research Council, and the three WorldSkills Members who gave their time and insight so generously. Together, you have created a clearer picture for our Members about the impact that is possible, and offered the guidance they need to transform their own systems.

David Hoey

CEO of WorldSkills International



Contents

1.	Overview	3
2.	WorldSkills Costa Rica	6
	2.1 Understanding the strategic foundations of WorldSkills Competitions	
	2.2 Institutional positioning, needs assessment, and strategic planning	
	2.3 Connecting to the policy framework and building networks	
	2.4 Standards and curricula are the core	
	2.5 Showcasing the benefits and impacts of engaging with WorldSkills	
3.	WorldSkills Japan	15
	3.1 Using international competitions to identify gaps and drive impacts	
	3.2 Standards are the core for improving skills excellence	
	3.3 Competitions create a natural mechanism for emerging system-level impact	
4.	WorldSkills UK	23
	4.1 Strategic definition of the membership with WorldSkills International	
	4.2 Mission, vision, and building credibility	
	4.3 Building aligned understanding of WorldSkills methodologies and benefits	
	4.4 Leadership for confidence and reflection	
5.	Dimensions for driving impacts	30
	5.1 The strategic value of engagement with WorldSkills and skills competitions	
	5.2 Placing Competitors, Experts, trainers, and teachers at the centre of impact	
	5.3 Standards as a core tool for impact	
	5.4 System dynamics and organizational positioning	
	5.5 Stakeholder engagement and alignment across the system	
	5.6 The role of success stories and impact research to gain stakeholder buy-in	
	5.7 The role of leadership at different levels of the system in enabling impact	
6.	References	38
7.	Endnotes	39
8.	Acknowledgements	40



1. Overview

Findings from the report published at the WorldSkills Conference in Lyon 2024 show that WorldSkills has the potential to become a catalyst for system-level impact¹. System-level impact, in the WorldSkills context, is understood across three levels (Xie and Robson, 2024): macro, referring to broader changes in growth, society, governance, and TVET system structures; meso, relating to changes among stakeholders and organizations within the system, such as schools, colleges, and industry partners; and micro, relating to impacts on individual participants, including Competitors and Experts, trainers and others involved in the WorldSkills Competitions and other activities.

The objective of this research is to start identifying evidence of system-level impact within Members, where and how it happened. The findings will contribute to the development of the WorldSkills Vision 2035 and inform the development of a toolkit to support Members in understanding, curating and expanding their impacts. The report addresses the following research questions:

- How are these Members connected to the policy structure within the TVET system, for example, in terms of funding, governance, and areas of work?
- What is the relationship between these Members and education and training providers, employers, and other stakeholders?
- What role do these Members play in bringing about impact, and how has WorldSkills contributed to this process?

Three Members, namely WorldSkills Costa Rica, WorldSkills Japan and WorldSkills UK, participated in the research, which involved collecting relevant data from an online survey and two rounds of online interviews. Each interview lasted 45-60 minutes, with translation support provided where necessary. These three Members reflect a certain level of geographical and socio-economic diversity, differences in the national TVET policy landscape, structure and characteristics, as well as the role and remit of these Members within their respective TVET systems. Despite the small number of participating Members, officials working in these three organizations provided detailed responses that help unpack and explain how impacts have taken place, which offers valuable learning for the wider WorldSkills Members.

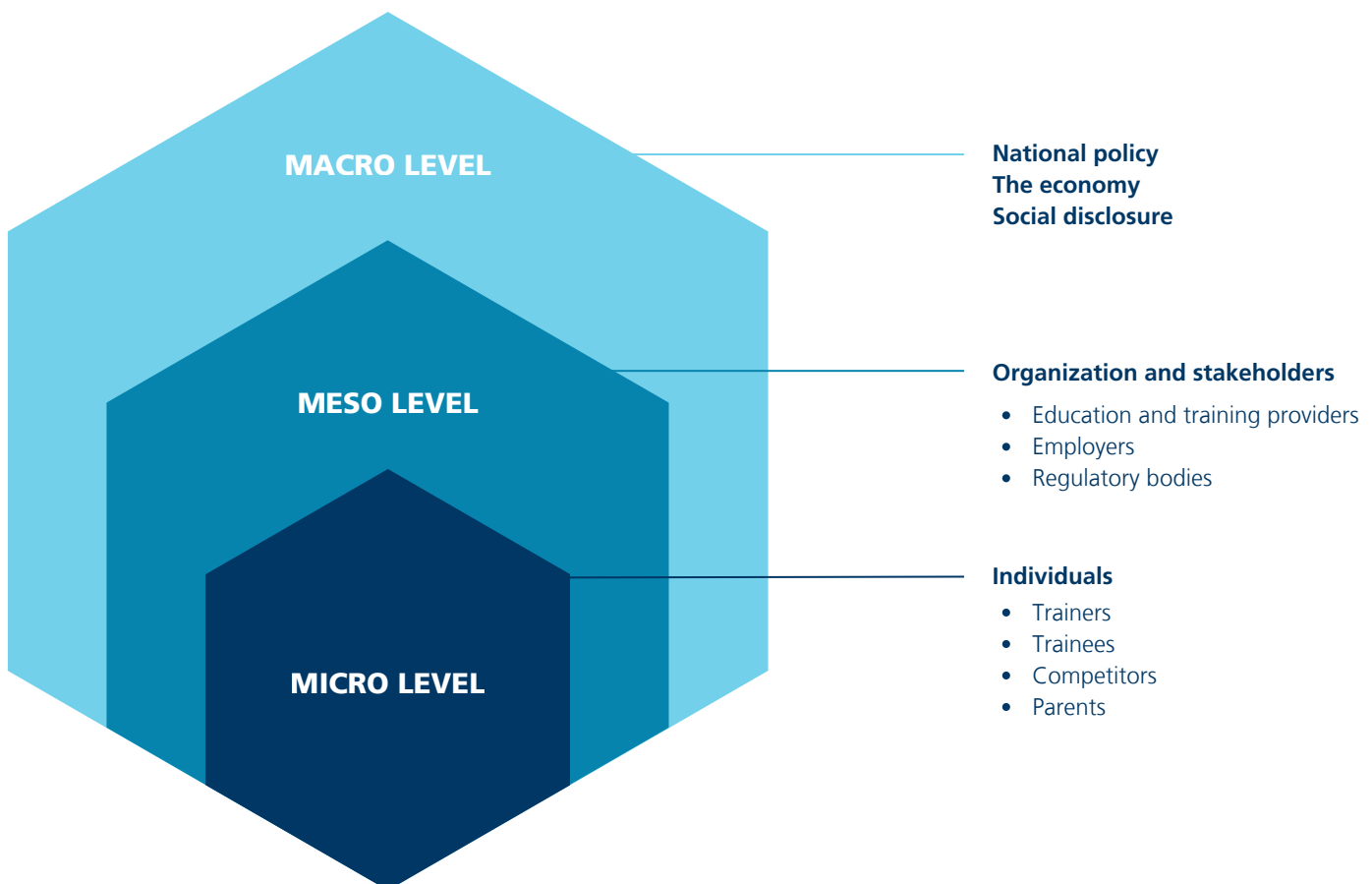


Figure 1.1: WorldSkills impact at the macro, meso, and micro levels (Xie and Robson, 2024)





The report is structured as three case studies, drawing on these Members' input. For each case study, a brief profile of the Members' engagement and ongoing impact work is summarized, followed by an analysis of the pathways or approaches adopted to achieve these impacts. After the case studies, the report provides a list of implications and practical guidance for the wider WorldSkills Members to address impacts, which are derived from the case studies. Quotes are included from key representatives of these three Members, whose roles relate to different aspects of their organizations' work, including strategic planning, organizing skills competitions, and developing external partnerships. Quotes have been proofread to improve clarity and ease of reading. This report also draws on relevant literature, press releases, organizational documents and policy materials to provide contextual information and support the interpretation of the case study analyses.

The case studies highlight diverse approaches and pathways taken by Members to bring about system-level impacts.

Figure 1.2 (see next page) illustrates how WorldSkills Competitions can facilitate these varied approaches and pathways, helping Members achieve their goals and generate system-level impact within national TVET systems. These approaches generate impact through multiple pathways, including individuals, organizations and key stakeholders, the TVET system, and the wider policy environment, which ultimately has the potential to contribute to skills development, higher quality of TVET, stronger collaboration and partnerships and the rising prestige of TVET.

In line with the diverse approaches and pathways to impact, the cross-case analysis also identified several common dimensions that influenced how Members leveraged the engagement with WorldSkills to achieve broader impacts. These dimensions are not intended as a prescriptive framework but as cross-cutting themes that emerged from the three cases and may help other Members reflect on their own context and approach when they consider system-level impacts and the potential contribution of engaging with WorldSkills:

- The strategic value of engagement with WorldSkills and skills competitions
- Placing Competitors, Experts, trainers and teachers at the centre of impact
- Standards as a core tool for impact
- System dynamics and organizational positioning
- Stakeholder engagement and alignment across the system
- The role of success stories and impact research to gain stakeholder buy-in
- The role of leadership at different levels of the system in enabling impact

It is important to recognize the diversity across Members and their national TVET models and characteristics. Approaches to generating impact vary depending on each Member's positioning, role, capacity, resources, and the wider socio-economic and political context in which they operate.



Pathways to impact

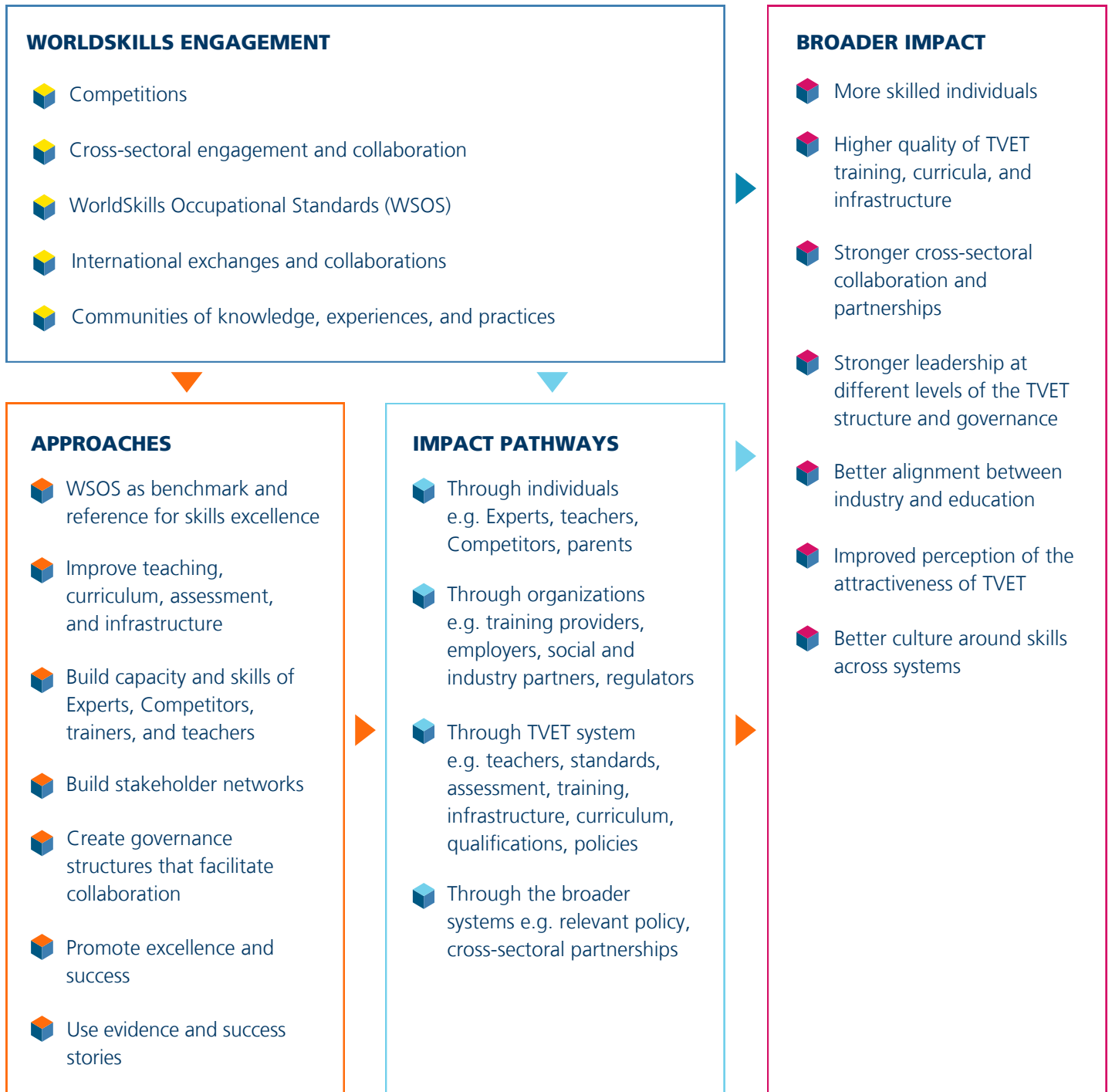


Figure 1.2 Different approaches and pathways to impact



2.

WorldSkills Costa Rica



2. WorldSkills Costa Rica

Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje, or National Learning Institute (INA), is a national and autonomous institution that represents WorldSkills Costa Rica. INA offers free training in skilled trades to anyone over the age of 15, with the aim of promoting economic development and improving the living and working conditions of the Costa Rican people (UNESCO, 2022). INA constitutes the country's largest public TVET institution, operating through nine Regional Offices, 54 permanent Training Centres, strategically distributed across the country to ensure equitable access to education, skills development and workforce services regardless of geographical location. In 2024 alone, INA delivered more than 16,000 training and skills development services, generated over 204,000 enrolments, served nearly 98,000 individual participants, and provided specialized services to approximately 3,500 enterprises and organizations, supporting productivity, innovation and workforce development across all productive sectors (Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje, 2024). In Costa Rica, technical education is recognized as a key contributor to both economic development and social cohesion (Álvarez-Galván, 2015). Stakeholders broadly agree that industry requires more skilled technicians and that these roles are attractive pathways that can enhance social mobility and cohesion (Álvarez-Galván, 2015).

Costa Rica became a full Member of WorldSkills in 2015. According to INA, in the first three years, participation prompted a question: how could the learning and experience gained through WorldSkills be translated into lasting, system-level improvements within the national TVET system? In response to this fundamental question, INA began thinking about how to build a mechanism to enable learning and insights shared across the national TVET system.

Through engagement in WorldSkills events, the exchanges with Members, and a broader ambition to improve the TVET system, WorldSkills came to be seen by INA as a strategic educational tool. INA drew on WorldSkills six focus areas as the foundation for its strategic planning, which included Promoting Skills, Career Building, Skills Competitions, Education and Training, International Cooperation and Development, and Research (WorldSkills, 2016), and adapted them to Costa Rica's specific needs and priorities.

As an emerging country, Costa Rica faced the challenge of progressing rapidly through stages of development that other Members had already reached over a longer period. This led to a decision to put priority on curriculum development, teacher training, and student impact in order to raise the standards of national technical education (see more in Section 2.4).

Initially, efforts were more confined to the immediate scope of INA's work and its associated training centres, while a broader strategic vision has begun to take shape: the development of a Costa Rica model that could expand the impact of engaging with WorldSkills to other parts of the TVET system beyond INA.

According to INA, the WorldSkills Costa Rica Model is a strategic framework developed by INA to maximize the value of WorldSkills membership beyond participation in competitions. Rather than viewing competitions as isolated events, the model integrates international benchmarking, quality assurance, teacher upskilling, student development, international cooperation and institutional innovation into a continuous improvement cycle that strengthens both INA and the broader Costa Rican TVET system. This model also includes engagement with key actors like the Ministry of Public Education (MEP), SINAFOR (Sistema Nacional de Capacitación y Formación Profesional), SINEFOTEF (Sistema Nacional de Educación y Formación Técnica Profesional), the National Qualification Framework, private institutions and others.



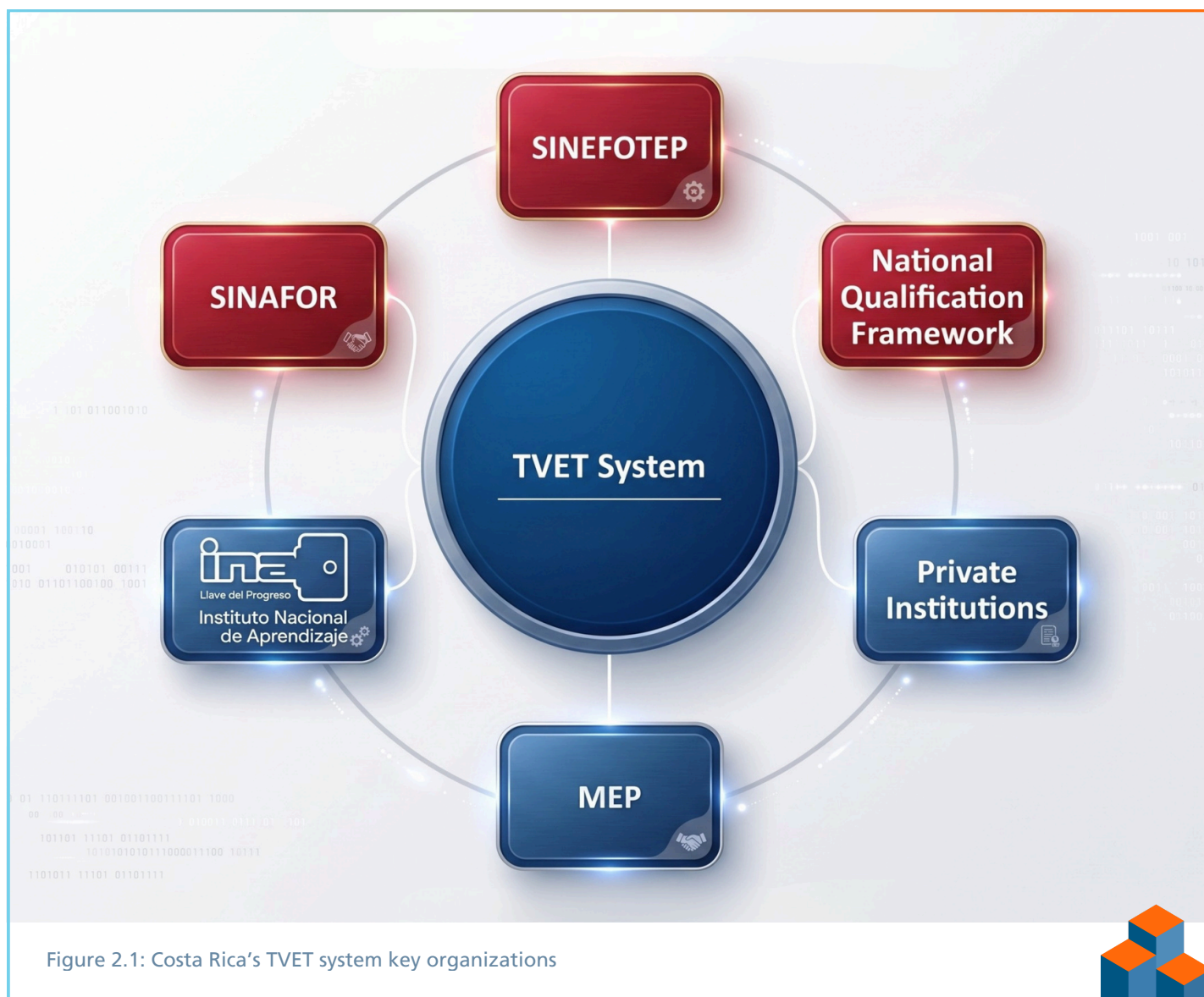


Figure 2.1: Costa Rica's TVET system key organizations

Costa Rica has made consistent efforts to take part in the broader WorldSkills ecosystem. This includes its engagement with the Technical Committee, Strategic Development Committee, Communications and Media, and other specialized committees. This commitment is also evident in its proactive approach to seizing important opportunities to engage with or contribute to the broader WorldSkills community, including WorldSkills Expert Faculty, BeChangeMaker, the WorldSkills Champion Trust, and the formal proposal to host the WorldSkills General Assembly in 2025. According to INA, they believe that:

These efforts underscore Costa Rica's commitment to strengthening its role within WorldSkills and also aim to showcase, internally within the institution and nationally, the full potential and benefits of full membership.

The participation and learning from WorldSkills have contributed, directly or indirectly, to some key initiatives and impacts, including the above-mentioned WorldSkills Costa Rica Model, specialized training programmes, Centres of Excellence, international cooperation (e.g. with WorldSkills Korea and WorldSkills Russia), and expanded student impact.

2.1 Understanding the strategic foundations of WorldSkills Competitions

For INA, the key starting point is to understand WorldSkills as a strategic reference framework to strengthen the TVET system, which goes beyond seeing competitions as an event. Its value lies in its standards, methodologies, and approaches, which can support Costa Rica in building a more robust and responsive system. The focus is therefore on understanding the conceptual and strategic impact of WorldSkills Competitions, and how these can be adapted and applied in the national context to develop human talent and enhance skills competitiveness.

Yet, reaching this understanding was itself a winding learning journey. Costa Rica didn't join WorldSkills with a fully informed vision of what WorldSkills was about and its potential in bringing wider impacts, but gradually developed its approach through trial and error, observations, reflections, and exchange of ideas.

 *(Representatives from WorldSkills Korea mentioned to INA:) You have to forget that the competition is an event. The competition is a movement, and it is a quality assurance tool. So you have to design the competition within your system in order to bring results.*

The shift from focusing primarily on competition participation to developing a more strategic vision of impact occurred at a time when WorldSkills Costa Rica was under growing pressure in relation to the value of investing in the team participating in international skills competitions. Questions and criticism were being raised about the extent to which the benefits extended beyond the small number of Competitors and Experts directly involved:

 *We were in a position where WorldSkills was about to disappear in Costa Rica because people thought that it was just a competition and you spent a lot of money there.*

This prompted INA to think more strategically beyond participating in competitions and winning medals, particularly about competitions and their related packages. In Costa Rica, the most significant shift was not only moving from the Competition as an event to the Competition as a movement, but transforming WorldSkills into a mechanism for institutional learning and holistic talent development. Competitions became a structured platform through which INA could identify gaps, mobilize teachers and experts, update curricula, strengthen quality assurance, promote international cooperation and integrate global standards into regular institutional processes. At the same time, WorldSkills inspired the development of a student-centred approach focused on creating a memorable student experience, recognizing that technical excellence should be accompanied by the development of leadership, resilience, communication, teamwork, and other transversal skills.

 *Costa Rica doesn't need medals. What we need is high-standard excellence and skilled people. [...] We want to develop our human talent. And we want that human talent to be developed at the highest standard possible in the world. And for that, we have to take the best from the best and try to incorporate the best strategies and best practises of other countries around the world. And WorldSkills is an amazing network for that.*



2.2 Institutional positioning, needs assessment, and strategic planning

It is important to understand the organization's role within the broader system, particularly its remit, positioning, and potential for strategic leadership, which will define how much strategic and coordinating capacity the Member has in order to drive system-level impacts. In Costa Rica, INA has a broad national mandate to offer training in skilled trades to anyone over the age of 15, with the intention of promoting economic development and contributing to the improvement of the living and working conditions of the Costa Rican people (UNESCO, 2022). This gives INA a more strategic position within the TVET system to drive initiatives, developments, and changes. Navigating the system-level structure, governance and understanding internal dynamics would allow Members like Costa Rica to find the appropriate and effective mechanism to contribute:

 *One of the things that helps us a lot is that INA is not just like an institute. It is the national TVET provider. [...] We have a lot of flexibility in our model, and we also have a good opportunity in terms of funding, the way that we are and our governance. Because in our governance, we have the key ministers who are in charge of human talent development, like the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Education. We also have the key actors of the system, like social organizations and the industry chambers.*

The unique positioning of INA, which has a close working relationship with other parts of the system, such as MEP, SINAFOR, SINEFOTEF and the National Qualification Framework, has placed INA in a very advantageous position to steer a broader, system-level agenda for change (see Figure 2.1).

At the same time, the process of integrating learning from WorldSkills into the national context starts with a clear understanding of national needs. This involves assessing gaps and needs within the national TVET system. The WorldSkills Occupational Standards, insights from the international competition platform, and exchanges with other Members offer great reference points and tools for Members like Costa Rica to identify areas where the national curricula or qualification standards differ from global standards. Based on this, curricula can be revised and adjusted (see more in Section 2.4 on Standards and curriculum section):

 *To incorporate skills in our model, we make an action plan. So first they have to analyse a gap we call a skill gap between the international standard and our curriculum. And then there is a plan there. You have to see what you have to improve in teaching skills, in infrastructure, technology, and curriculum.*

This needs assessment feeds into INA's development of a strategic plan for next steps and to determine what falls within the INA's remit and what requires external coordination and collaboration. At INA, as a key driver of this strategic plan, its work started internally by ensuring the necessary structures and infrastructure were in place. This included system mapping, building trust and forging key relationships across the system, developing supporting documentation, and laying the structural groundwork for scaling what they refer to as the WorldSkills Costa Rica Model.

 *Our first steps were within our institution. We had to try to establish the Costa Rica Model within INA and try to develop the documentation that we can incorporate into the broader system. For example, how are we going to incorporate those strategies in the way that we develop the curricula, we provide the services, we do our research, and we train our trainers. So, that was one of those steps that we have to follow first.*



2.3 Connecting to the policy framework and building networks

Connections and relationships emerge as key themes across three case studies because they enabled the alignment and relevance of the strategic agendas and priorities among key stakeholders and sectors across the TVET systems. For INA, its work often involves engagement with multiple actors, including ministries, employers, providers, and social partners, making coordination an essential part of the process. Without structured engagement, a system-approach to enhance the TVET system risks fragmentation and weak impact. In this context, sustained connections and relationships are foundational to effective system functioning. Costa Rica provides a detailed example, illustrating how INA has built linkages at two levels: 1) by engaging with different components of the system at the policy level; 2) by establishing mechanisms for stakeholder collaboration that actively inform strategic priorities; and 3) by working with leaders at different levels of the system.

2.3.1 Build networks across different aspects of the system, particularly at the policy level

This involves working across different parts of the system to ensure INA's agenda is aligned and supported by the policy framework. This includes engaging ministries and others who hold decision-making roles within the system, to bring the TVET agenda into the policy discussion.

 *I use any opportunity I have, any minimum I have. So, when I heard that I had to be in a meeting with the vice minister, I had to take the opportunity that I had in order to put the WorldSkills topic on the table.*

A working mechanism is also important, as it allows for consistent interaction and input from key actors and helps align Members' impact agenda with policy or ongoing work in the system. In Costa Rica, this is reflected in the inclusion of key policy actors on INA's board, which ensures continuous input while also enabling INA to feed its agenda into policy development. At the same time, it is important to recognize that this arrangement is shaped by INA's unique role and position within the system, which makes building and maintaining such relationships possible.

 *INA has a board of directors that is the leader organism in our institution. [...] So any decision and all the plans of INA have to be developed with the approval of the board of directors. And on the board of directors of INA, we have the representative from the Minister of Education and the Minister of Labour, who could be the minister or the vice minister. And we also have companies in different chambers and social sectors like unions and other stakeholders. So that gives us the opportunity and the advantage to impact and to link with government and also social sectors and private sectors with WorldSkills.*

In addition to having policymakers and other key stakeholders on the board, embedding INA's staff within key organizations across the system is another important part of building these networks. This includes those working on qualifications, occupational standards, curricula and others (see Figure 2.2).

 *We have the opportunity to link our work relevant to WorldSkills with the system. Since we have people in the National Qualification Framework, we have people in the SINEFOTEP and SINAFOR. So, that's one of the ways that we are expanding the model into the system. [...] This is a great way that we can show them and explain the WorldSkills strategy and a way to get them involved in the different processes.*



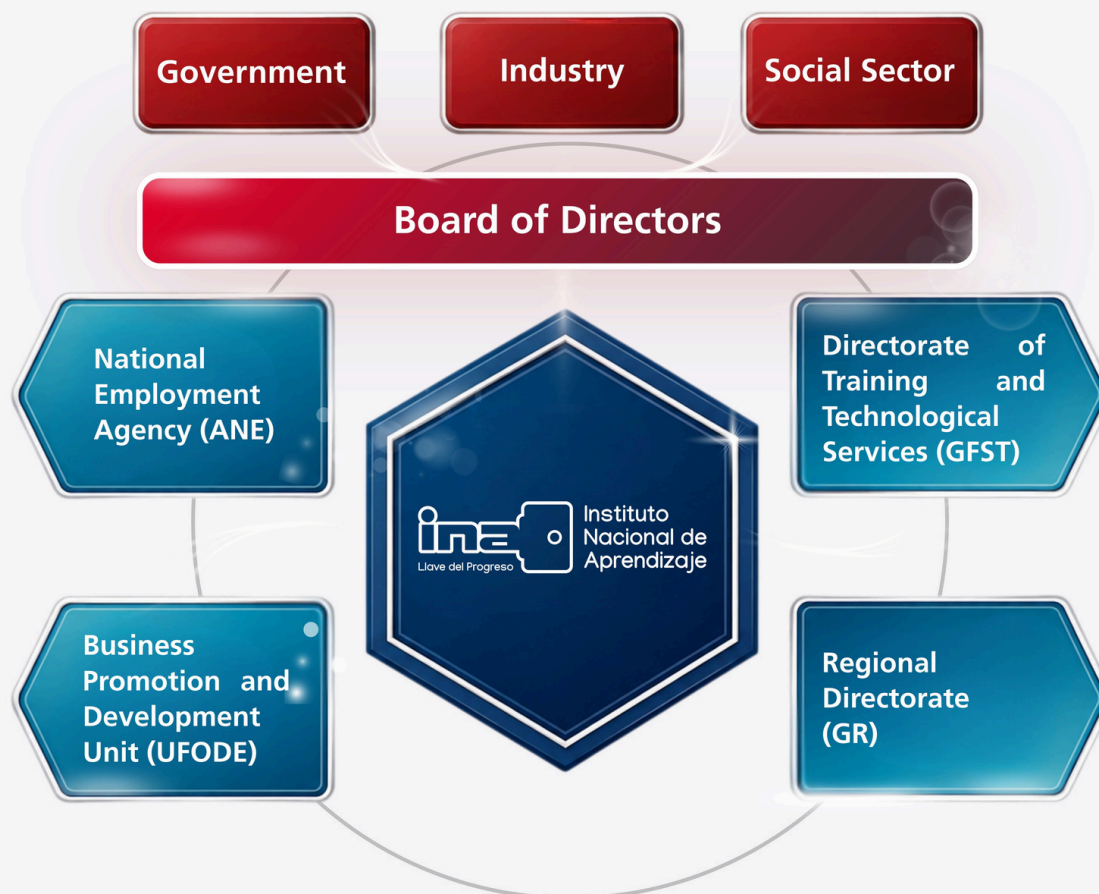


Figure 2.2: INA's governance structure

In the longer-term, these relationships and networks with key stakeholders such as MEP, SINAFOR, and SINAFOTEP consolidate a working mechanism that can help gradually expand the work and extend impact across different parts of the TVET system beyond INA.

2.3.2 Keep key stakeholders involved in this process and create a mechanism of collaboration

The case of Costa Rica also highlights the importance of leadership across different sectors and levels of the TVET system, and they have made an effort to connect with leaders as sectoral, local or regional leaders to champion INA's strategic agendas. For example, the story below demonstrates how a regional training centre director acted as a champion to communicate and expand the impact of the INA's model:

 *We had to find what we call champions. If we find a director of a training centre that connects with the purpose of WorldSkills Costa Rica, we call that individual a champion. If we need to convince another director of another training centre in our region, it is better not for me to talk to them directly because they could think that I don't understand all their work. But if we have a leader in another training centre who understands the Costa Rica model and WorldSkills, it is great for them to talk to each other because they are colleagues. They help us to convince other stakeholders, and they help us to expand the model.*

2.4 Standards and curricula are the core

Standards and curricula are the primary levers for achieving system-level impact in TVET systems, as they directly shape teaching, assessment, and the quality of learning. Evidence from literature and practice shows that embedding high-quality occupational standards into national frameworks can drive consistent improvements (Relly et al., 2021).

In Costa Rica, INA operationalises this approach by integrating WorldSkills Occupational Standards into national qualification standards, curricula, and training delivery. This creates a direct link between strategy and implementation in training centres, and ensures coherence across design, provision, and trainer development. It also supports system-wide diffusion by embedding these standards in national and regional structures and building the capacity of other organizations.

The focus on standards and curriculum was also an immediate first action in response to the criticism mentioned earlier, which prompted INA to think of a way to show the wider impact of engaging with WorldSkills beyond participating in competition events. INA has also developed a standardized pathway to incorporate WorldSkills Occupational Standards to enhance their standards, curriculum, teaching and infrastructure by four main steps: 1) gap analysis; 2) develop an action plan; 3) pilot competition; 4) expand to regional and national competitions. In this process, the curriculum, teaching, and infrastructure development will be diffused to all INA's training centres.

The gap analysis is the first step. Then let's make an action plan through that gap analysis, because the gap analysis is one thing, and then you make an action plan: how you're going to improve in those identified areas. And then we have pilot competitions. It's like an exercise that they can just try to test what a competition is and how the competition is not an event; it is an educational strategy.

The following examples explain how they improve the curriculum, equipment and infrastructure in practice, and also use WorldSkills as a resource to train their trainers:

 *The first is gap analysis. For example, in IT network system administration, we found out that our curricula only have two main models, but WorldSkills Standards uses four models. So we need to incorporate these other two things in our curriculum to have a student who meets international standards. [...] So for example, in web technologies, we find out that we need to have at least two monitors, not just one monitor. [So it provides better equipment and infrastructure].*

When WorldSkills Korea started working with us in IT network system administration, they helped us improve in these two models, but they realized they needed to train not only the Competitors, but also the trainers because our trainers didn't have that knowledge in the two models. So they started working on two models with Competitors and trainers. Then the trainers improved our curricula and started improving students.



2.5 Showcasing the benefits and impacts of engaging with WorldSkills

The case of Costa Rica also highlights the importance of demonstrating the impacts of engagement with WorldSkills. Evidence of impact is critical not only for sustaining and attracting funding, but also for communicating the value of the relevant ongoing work to key stakeholders and encouraging broader engagement in skills development initiatives. Depending on Members' capacities and resources, impact can be demonstrated in various ways, including showcasing Competitors' success stories, evaluating the return on investment of participation, and evidencing improvements in standards, curricula, infrastructure, and teaching practices that have resulted from engagement with WorldSkills.

 *To expand the Costa Rican model, we have to show people results, not in terms of medals, not in terms of competitions. Let's show them results in how we benefit young people, how we update our curriculum, how we update our educational practices, how we update our equipment and how we update our teacher skills.*

This also includes highlighting its international linkages and connections with organizations such as the OECD (including PISA-VET), ILO and UNESCO-UNEVOC, which have the potential to bring the countries and regions into a global network. Making these benefits visible helps sustain stakeholder support and align with them on the strategic importance of this engagement. In Costa Rica, for example, the introduction of PISA-VET has helped showcase the importance of engaging with WorldSkills and has supported the development of a stronger narrative to bring policy actors on board.

 *I think that the work that WorldSkills has been doing to expand WorldSkills in the world is also helping us a lot, because since WorldSkills became a key stakeholder of the OECD, that gives us also a lot of light and support here because the attention of the Minister of Education and organizations has realized how important it is to be a part of WorldSkills and to understand this model. That helps us a lot. That's one of the reasons that we are growing.*

Costa Rica's engagement with WorldSkills has not only supported participation in international competitions; it has helped INA develop a strategic model for improving technical education, strengthening institutional capabilities, empowering students and connecting Costa Rica with global discussions on skills and the future of work.



3.

WorldSkills Japan



3. WorldSkills Japan

Japan has a long-standing engagement with WorldSkills and has hosted the international competition three times, including Tokyo (1970), Osaka (1985), and Shizuoka (2007). WorldSkills Japan remains an active Member in the network and performs at a high-level in competitions. WorldSkills Japan is represented by the Japan Vocational Ability Development Association (JAVADA), which was established by Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) under the Vocational Abilities Development Promotion Act in 1969.

JAVADA's main responsibilities include organizing skills competitions and overseeing the selection, training support and dispatch of Competitors for international competitions:

Our association was established based on law, which stipulates that its purpose is to promote the sound development of prefectural vocational ability development associations and to advance the development of vocational skills in close cooperation with the national and prefectural governments, thereby embodying the fundamental principles of vocational ability development and enhancement.

One of our main areas of work is skills promotion, which includes: (1) organizing domestic skills competitions, (2) deciding Competitors for WSC, (3) supporting training programs to strengthen WSC Competitors, and (4) dispatching Competitors to WSC as WorldSkills Japan representatives.

JAVADA's national and prefectural structure provides a strong corporation framework to organize regional, national and international competitions that will raise the profile of TVET and skills across the country. Notably, Aichi prefecture worked directly with MHLW to bid for the WorldSkills Competition 2028. There is growing emphasis on supporting the TVET system, and the government's investment in hosting WorldSkills Aichi 2028 shows their commitment to raising the profile of TVET.

According to the Cabinet decision the government announced last year, this event will be used as an opportunity to build public respect for skills—including among young people—and to step up support for enhancing the abilities of skilled workers.

Close Cooperation with Industry, and with the National and Prefectural Governments

The Japan Vocational Ability Development Association has created a fair and impartial abilities evaluation system, in close cooperation with industry and with the national and prefectural governments and, as a comprehensive public institution for vocational abilities development, joins the Prefectural Vocational Ability Development Association to provide a nationwide service.

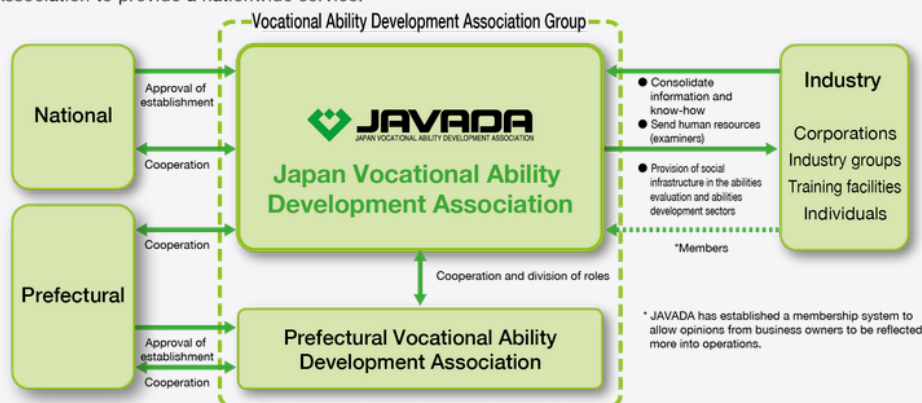


Figure 3.1: Corporation structure between national and prefectural vocational ability development association



As Japan faces demographic decline, an ageing workforce, and a decreased interest among young people in pursuing learning and work in manufacturing and skills trades, the transfer and development of the excellent skills that are the source of the country's competitiveness has become a major challenge and also a policy priority. In responding to these challenges, skills competitions have been seen as a strategic tool to raise the profile of TVET, attract young people and develop skills competitiveness:

 *In Japan, while the declining birthrate and ageing population are progressing at a very rapid pace, labour shortages have become a very important issue in every industry and every occupation, but the shortage of skilled workers is especially serious, and because of that, it is becoming impossible to carry out things like skills transmission as well. Therefore, we believe that we must place our efforts precisely on the development of skilled human resources from a young age.*

Yet, rising the profile of TVET, manufacturing and skills trades, the objective cannot be achieved through organizing and preparing for competitions per se – it lies in the attractiveness and prestige, the relevance of the curriculum, a strong TVET teaching force, and many other factors. Perspectives from MHLW highlighted that this poses a task for Japan to strategically envision, plan and drive wider impacts beyond the skills competitions:

 *In the end, if we hold WorldSkills Aichi 2028 and it simply ends there, then there is no meaning in it. We need to think about what kinds of things this competition will connect to in the future, and what kinds of things will remain as a legacy. I think we need to properly address that and how exactly that will be done.*

During the bid for Aichi 2028, WorldSkills Japan emphasized alignment with broader skills policy objectives, including training, sustainability, and industry engagement, and secured high-level political support, including the Prime Minister openly advocating for the role of skilled youth in opening Japan's future (WorldSkills, 2025). As Japan prepares to host the WorldSkills Competition for the fourth time, a policy priority of the MHLW is to explore how to sustain and expand the wider impact of participating and hosting WorldSkills Competitions, and build on the legacy of previous competitions to drive the skills movement.



3.1 Using international competitions to identify gaps and drive impacts

Japan mentioned in the survey that their performance in Kazan prompted the government to review their national policy, leading to increased funding and stronger government support to enable better competition performance; some of the efforts included the organization of Experts across sectors to contribute to training plans (see more in Section 3.2). This enabled Japan to identify gaps and areas for improvement, as was the case for the Japanese government after WorldSkills Kazan 2019:

The fact that Japan won the lowest number of gold medals ever at WorldSkills Kazan 2019 prompted the Japanese government to recognize the following issues:

1. *Discrepancy between the competition requirements for national and international competitions.*
2. *Insufficient training for selected Competitors and measures for international competitions.*
3. *Insufficient government support for strengthening Competitor development (reliance on voluntary efforts by affiliated companies and various industries).*

In addition to the competitions, there is growing recognition of the wider impacts of participating and organizing international skills competitions beyond the events themselves. As mentioned earlier, MHLW is now exploring approaches to sustain and expand the impact of international skills competitions and is very keen to learn from the experiences in WorldSkills Shanghai 2026 in relation to how the learning, insights and knowledge could be integrated in Japan's national TVET system:

 *There will also be WorldSkills Shanghai in September 2026. So we would like to obtain various kinds of information. And, in particular, regarding legacy, what kind of things will be left behind for the future? That is something that we think we will certainly have to consider going forward, so we would like to observe that area in particular as well.*



3.2 Standards are the core for improving skills excellence

Because competitions are the main focus of JAVADA, strengthening Competitors' capacity and performance has become the key priority. In this process, WorldSkills Occupational Standards have become the key in guiding the preparation for and organization of regional, national and international competitions. There are three main ways in which the WorldSkills Occupational Standards have been useful in supporting activities at the international, national, and regional or local levels.

3.2.1 Preparing for international competitions

JAVADA will receive overall recommendations and opinions on specific skills from the committee established for the commissioned project from MHLW, and provide resources to support the implementation of plans devised by subcommittees responsible for specific skills. In this process, the WorldSkills Occupational Standards will serve as an important reference. Members of the subcommittees will analyse this information and develop training plans aligned with standards of skills excellence.

 JAVADA gets guidance from MHLW about the strategies to improve the Competitors' capacity to compete, and JAVADA is in charge of implementing those recommendations. The committee was broken down into various subcommittees, and each of the subcommittees that specializes in the specific skills will study the specific WorldSkills Occupational Standards that are relevant to the skill that they're focusing on. And then, based on the understanding of the standards, they develop the concrete strategies and training plans for the Competitors. JAVADA will provide the resources to make that training possible.

3.2.2 Impact on the national standards and competitions

Second, the impact of WorldSkills Occupational Standards is not limited to preparing Competitors for international competitions; they are also incorporated into national competitions. As new skill sets emerge, national competitions are adjusted to include them and integrate relevant occupational standards to ensure that their structure, skills mapping and standards remain aligned with international skills development and standards.

 So, in terms of the impact of WorldSkills on Japan, just to give you a concrete example. If WorldSkills decides to introduce a new skill to be part of the competition, then the national competition would make a consideration to include that, and also adjust the occupational standards that come with the revision of present skill standards. So in that way, WorldSkills always has an impact, a direct impact on Japanese competitions.



3.3 Competitions create a natural mechanism for emerging system-level impact

What is distinctive is the nature of the competitions themselves. Organizing competitions, preparing Competitors, and participating in international or national events require a wide range of resources and capacities and the involvement of Experts, trainers, and industry partners. The format and process create a third, shared space for impacts to emerge either directly or indirectly, which is difficult to replicate in other skills-related activities.

This is reflected in the key responsibilities of JAVADA in terms of bringing stakeholders together, gathering resources and coordinating resources to raise standards and improve performance, as shown in the example mentioned under Section 3.2 on how the WorldSkills Occupational Standards have been used. These observations align with the findings from a previous report conducted by the WorldSkills Global Research Council (Xie and Robson, 2024), which highlights how skills competitions create the conditions to foster collaboration and improved standards.

 [...] We believe that by organizing skills competitions, we provide opportunities to connect policymakers, industry, and educational institutions. Through these cross-sector connections, the influence of WorldSkills naturally extends and contributes to collaboration and partnership.

The main mission of JAVADA is to run and organize the competitions nationally and then prepare the Competitors for the international competition. All these, through all this work, we think that there's constant facilitation by us amongst the multiple stakeholders. They come together to work for us. So this is another way for us to create stakeholder buy-in and collaboration.

Through preparing for and organizing competitions, JAVADA built connections and networks that are the key infrastructure of such impacts, and there is evidence of cross-sector collaboration and incremental improvements in teaching, assessment, and standards. While these outcomes may not always be the primary objective of competition participation, they emerge naturally from the interactions, relationships, and collective efforts that competitions bring together.

The national-prefectural governance of the Vocational Ability Development Association, with JAVADA as the national coordination organization, also demonstrates that skills competitions can act as a mechanism for emerging system-level impact. JAVADA, as the national coordination organization, prepares the occupational standards for vocational ability at the national levels, while prefectural associations dispatch delegations to competitions conducted in accordance with the standards.

 With regard to certification examinations and tests, our association prepares the examination questions and related materials, while the associations in the prefectures carry out the practical administrative work involved in conducting the examinations.



3.3.1 Policy and institutional structure

Competitions can act as a practical entry point for national discussions and policy forums at different levels by bringing together different stakeholders and creating the contexts and conditions for broader changes at the system level to emerge. For example, one of the insights learned by Japanese government officials during WorldSkills Lyon 2024 was:

 *One insight was that Lyon organizers got local organizations involved. So there were a lot of events held at the same time that were sponsored by local organizations. And we thought that that was a very, very good way of getting local organizations involved in being part of the skills competition.*

Another aspect is how competitions create opportunities for Members like JAVADA to connect with policy structure. As noted earlier, JAVADA receives recommendations from committees in which the MHLW is involved. This reflects a policy structure in which the central government provides overall direction and guidance for identifying priority skills and the development of training approaches.

 *JAVADA has been commissioned by the MHLW to form this committee, where the strategies to improve the Competitors' performance have been devised. So [JAVADA] is in charge of implementing concrete measures based on those recommendations made by the committee.*

As part of the more strategic goal to expand the impact of skills competitions beyond the events themselves, the Japanese government has sought to strengthen cross-ministerial collaboration to enhance the profile and prestige of TVET. This includes ongoing exploration between the MHLW, which oversees skills competitions and workforce skills development, and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), which is responsible for primary and secondary education. This allows a more coordinated approach to impact the school system to promote skills, guide occupational pathways and raise the profile of TVET.

 *School education is administered by MEXT, but while working in cooperation with them, when elementary and junior high school students receive lessons, we are considering producing supplementary educational materials and similar teaching resources. Through those materials, we would explain how the occupations featured in the skills competitions relate to various aspects of everyday life, what kinds of work those occupations involve, and, in a broader sense, what significance they have within society.*

3.3.2 Cross-sector partnerships

JAVADA has developed relationships with a range of stakeholders. One important partner is the Polytechnic University of Japan, which plays a central role in training and skills development. JAVADA's main focus on organizing and preparing for competitions require itself to work with professors from the Polytechnic University, among others, to contribute as skills committee/subcommittee members, Experts, and referees.

 *What JAVADA does and what Polytech University does are closely related to each other. So there's a lot of collaboration and relationships happening between the two organizations. For example, the Technical Delegate that we sent to the WorldSkills Competition is a professor from Polytech University. The subcommittees that I mentioned earlier, which focus on training Competitors, also include the professors and associated professors from Polytech University. And for the WorldSkills Experts, some positions are also taken up by Polytech professors. Also, a considerable number of Polytech professors serve as judges and referees at the national competitions.*





Collaborations also do not only exist between these two key organizations but extend to industries, sector bodies, and TVET providers:

So the committee, [...] in terms of how the organization facilitates the collaboration between multiple stakeholders and so forth. For the national competition, we form committees of technical advisors and referees. And that membership includes representatives from private corporations and Polytech University professors, but also other technical training and education institutions. [...] So those committees and subcommittees are also made up of the same mix of representatives. So in this way, people are constantly mixing with each other, talking to each other, in a way, creating a collaboration.

So in terms of deciding who or what industry should be involved in our subcommittee, we might consult some associations or bodies in industry.

These relationships create the conditions for further impact when key stakeholders take part in WorldSkills competitions, whether regional, national or international. Through exposure to the best national and international practices and exchanges with peers from other prefectures and countries, they gain new insights, approaches, and techniques, which they then bring back to their own institutions and everyday TVET practices.

So, for the technical Experts for the national competition, through the competition, the work that they do for the national competition, they're exposed to new test projects and new occupational standards. And it's likely that those educators, when they go back to their own institutions, will try to integrate these new skills and new occupational standards in their pedagogical work back in their institutions. But this is sort of an indirect impact of WorldSkills on the Japanese TVET system.



4.

WorldSkills UK



4. WorldSkills UK

WorldSkills UK has a long-standing engagement with WorldSkills International and is an active participating Member in the international network as well as WorldSkills Europe. The UK Government's engagement in WorldSkills is led by the Department for Education (DfE). WorldSkills UK receives funding from DfE, as well as from Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish governments. WorldSkills UK uses the funding to leverage additional funds.

The UK's Official Delegate is a senior officer in the DfE, and WorldSkills UK plays a key role in facilitating the participation of senior officials and ministers in both international and European competitions and engagement with WorldSkills UK's events and activities. This level of senior engagement has helped position WorldSkills UK more closely within the UK's policy landscape. For example, within the current government, both the Permanent Secretary at the DfE and the current Skills Minister have attended international competition events. The Permanent Secretary attended WorldSkills Lyon 2024, and the Skills Minister attended EuroSkills Herning 2025. According to WorldSkills UK:

 *This involvement and exposure provide unique opportunities for senior government representatives to understand how the UK's skills systems benchmark against other nations, including the highest performers in skills training and how to improve standards and outcomes. This senior engagement can be a lever for future system change that goes beyond the 'event'.*

WorldSkills UK sees the relationship between engagement and impact as 'non-linear'. The participation of senior civil servants in events didn't automatically translate into specific policy outcomes. Impact, instead, has been built over time through consistent efforts in building and accumulating trust and credibility in the TVET system, as well as strategically facilitating and driving changes. From this perspective, system-level impact is the result of continued engagement and efforts, rather than any single moment or standalone intervention. WorldSkills UK's work has gradually strengthened its position as a credible and trusted actor within the UK skills system, which can be demonstrated in WorldSkills UK's involvement in the recent major reforms in the UK's skills system:

- Review standards: WorldSkills UK has contributed to reviewing and updating standards across the UK, including technical education and apprenticeship standards and those set by Skills England.³
- Workforce developments: WorldSkills UK fed into the development of a new framework and programme structure for workforce development in further education and training providers and organizations

- Policy consultations: WorldSkills UK has shared insights in response to various policy consultations. Recent examples include the Curriculum and Assessment Review,⁴ development of V levels,⁵ and independent review of youth employment⁶ (Milburn Review).
- WorldSkills UK has been referenced twice in the recently published UK's Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper (DfE et al., 2025).⁷

One recent example is its effort to convene multiple government departments with an interest in skills through a working group leading to WorldSkills Shanghai 2026. This has been particularly significant given recent changes in government and the ongoing challenges of cross-departmental coordination in the UK's skills system (DfE et al., 2025). WorldSkills UK's role in bringing these actors together demonstrates its growing reputation and function as a convener:

- Inter-government partnerships – there is growing interest and great potential in a multi-departmental approach in the UK to WorldSkills Shanghai 2026. It is an excellent opportunity for a highly collaborative approach from the UK involving a number of government departments in creating a unique showcase for the UK and to learn from other nations' systems, programmes and priorities in areas of business, education, employment, digital development, and skills





4.1 Strategic definition of the membership with WorldSkills International

When discussing the impact of engagement with WorldSkills and their comment on the non-linear relationship between policymakers' participation and policy work, WorldSkills UK emphasized the importance of how membership with WorldSkills is understood and used strategically.

 *I think there is a kind of longer-term relationship in terms of WorldSkills UK and what we're here to do and how we've defined the value and the purpose of our membership with WorldSkills International. It's not a simple case of joining WorldSkills International, and then these things [system change] happen. I think it's important to build a narrative around it and a context of why a biannual event can be so pivotal in terms of driving quality.*



4.2 Mission, vision and building credibility

Being part of the WorldSkills global community while operating within the UK raises a parallel question: how to build credibility with the national TVET system and with linkage to the global standards. This requires developing a clear narrative about WorldSkills UK's role, its vision, and how its work aligns with national skills priorities. Membership alone and the participation of senior civil servants in events weren't sufficient to bring about lasting impacts. As a Member, it needs to work on a compelling and credible proposition that other stakeholders in the system can engage with, which then helps to create the conditions for broader impacts.

WorldSkills UK was thought to have a more confined scope of work, but this didn't reflect the vision they had. Yet, it wasn't an easy task to shift such perceptions, particularly when there were assumptions tied to the identity of WorldSkills as primarily competition-focused. WorldSkills UK made great efforts to build a wider vision to leverage wider impacts. The aim was to extend benefits to a broader range of stakeholders and reach more people across the skills system.

 *We were thought of as the people who did competitions. Training providers would put their brightest students forward for our competitions and enjoy seeing them succeed, but it was only ever for a small number of people, so it was seen as elitist. And so in 2015, WorldSkills UK started a lot of change in terms of creating a wider narrative that says, actually, this isn't just about those that are involved in our competitions or those that attend our National Finals, which took place in Birmingham at the time and attracted about 70,000 people. This is about the whole UK economy. And so there was quite a rigid and robust period where we actively didn't talk about competitions. [...]*

And I guess for us at WorldSkills UK, we've been developing that for the last 10 years. And so we've been trying to build that sense of credibility and a foundation for having an impact in the UK skills systems beyond running competitions.

A key part of this shift involved developing and communicating a stronger narrative around the broader vision and role of WorldSkills UK, and consistently articulating a move beyond being seen solely as competition-focused:

 *We were quite strict about talking about running skills development programmes and the broader impact we had and trying to move away from just being a competition or just being a big event. And that was both with our broader stakeholders, but also very much with ministers and civil servants and other opinion formers.*

The foundation of this narrative, or the credibility of this narrative, points to the importance of evidence – whether and how such an approach brings impacts. WorldSkills UK has invested in gathering data and conducting research to demonstrate the wider impact of its work, and used these to make a more compelling case to stakeholders about the broader benefits of its approach on system-level impact. For example, WorldSkills UK partnered with NCFE, Oxford University's Centre on Skills, Knowledge and Organizational Performance (SKOPE), and Edge Foundation on the evidence of its initiative Centre of Excellence as drivers of technical excellence in the skills economy (Relly et al., 2021). This also includes another piece of research between WorldSkills UK and Frontier Economics⁸ which finds out 'an ROI for the taxpayer of £3.50 for every pound invested in WorldSkills UK in our central scenario and at least £2.10 in our conservative scenario' (Frontier Economics, 2023, p. 6), which demonstrates high value for money.

 *Another thing, [...] we did a number of research looking at the impact of the investment the government gave to us. So, looking at the return on investment, on social investment and also comparing the earning potential of students⁹ who had been through our programmes with those that hadn't, which starts to paint a picture of our impact beyond the few that win international medals.*



Need: The skills of young people entering the workplace do not consistently match those required by employers and are not keeping pace with the changing needs of employers and industry

Vision: Young people have the skills to thrive in a dynamic UK economy

Purpose: We provide transformative opportunities that accelerate young people's skills and readiness to enter the workplace so they can thrive in the world of work

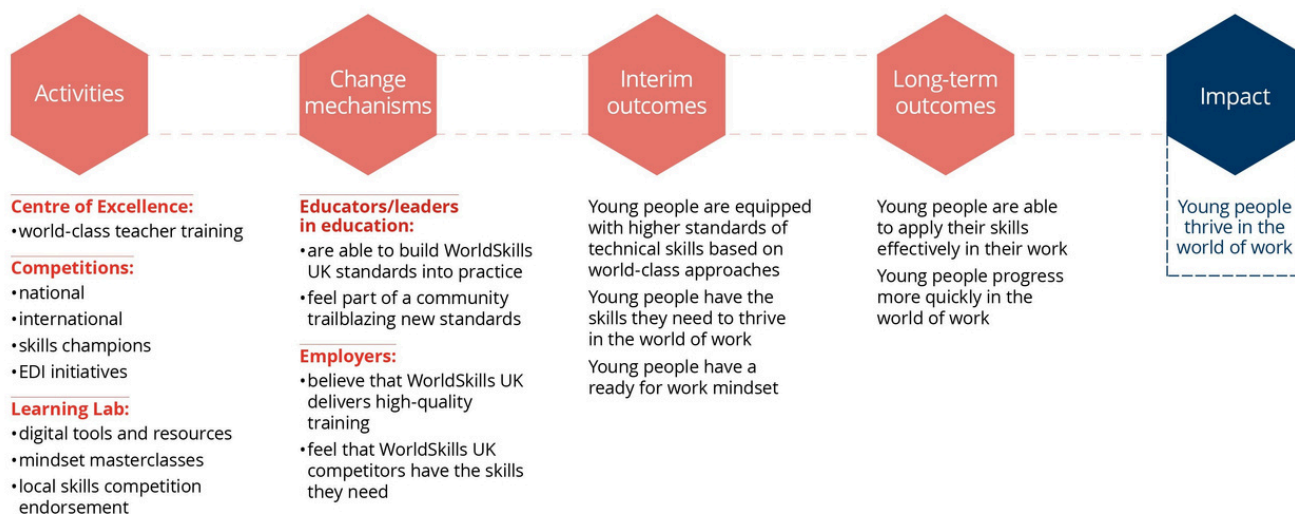


Figure 4.1: WorldSkills UK Theory of Change (updated in 2026)

More recently, WorldSkills UK has been undergoing an iteration of the organization's theory of change (see Figure 4.1), with a more focused mission on young people, how to support them to thrive and succeed in the world of work and develop employability abilities through WorldSkills's various programmes:

This iteration also reflects the organization's ongoing reflection of its role within the UK TVET system, considering how current policy priorities and sector-wide debates are manifested through the lens of WorldSkills UK and inform its strategic directions. The new theory of change shows how WorldSkills UK's approaches, expertise, and resources can contribute to addressing the current skills challenges and youth employment in the UK.

 *The theory of change is influenced by current government policy and ways of talking, which is in turn obviously influenced by facts on the ground. The number of young people who aren't in education, employment or training and the perceptions of employers that young people don't have the skills that they need to work, the fact that there seem to be fewer entry-level positions, and the challenges of AI squeezing out those early career positions. The theory of change is trying to be a WorldSkills UK lens as a response to those challenges.*

4.3 Building aligned understanding of WorldSkills methodologies and benefits

In the case of WorldSkills UK, bringing stakeholders and partners on board and aligning them around a shared understanding of the strategic value of engaging with WorldSkills is a complex task. A key part of WorldSkills UK's approach has been to help stakeholders and partners understand the WorldSkills methodologies to leverage system-level impact. For example, as part of facilitating a cross-departmental working group leading up to Shanghai, WorldSkills UK hosted meetings with civil servants to introduce WorldSkills methodologies and explain how engagement with the WorldSkills movement can support skills development, improving standards, and policy innovation:

 *We did hold a working group meeting a couple of months ago, and that was basically a teach-in about WorldSkills Shanghai, and it was attended by some departments. And then the slides were shared with other departments.*

Bringing stakeholders on board with WorldSkills methodologies requires more than simply presenting WorldSkills as a series of opportunities; it involves skilled communication and translation of WorldSkills approaches and showcases their relevance, benefits, and potential impacts. This process was nicely summarized by WorldSkills UK as engaging both 'hearts and minds', combining powerful lived experiences and success stories of those involved with robust evidence and data to build credibility:

 *We've always talked about 'the hearts and the minds' bit when you're influencing people. And I think the minds bit is needing to do research and collect data and have evidence points to share with people. But the hearts bit is getting people to come and see competitions and see the faces of the young people who are dedicated and going through it. And, you know, they're won over by that sort of instantly, aren't they? But you need the substance to back it up. It's about flash and substance.*

I do think research is really important. I think we have had key moments throughout the last 10 years where research from outside organizations has either measured our impact or has positioned the WorldSkills movement in a different context and made people think this is about more than just the young people that are involved.

In addition to building understanding, this work is also about shaping how stakeholders think and talk about WorldSkills. WorldSkills UK has made efforts to encourage partners to adopt this broader perspective and become advocates for the approach themselves, in order to expand the alignment across the sector. This includes working with college principals, Experts and Competitors to move beyond a narrow focus on competition outcomes to communicate the wider value and impact of WorldSkills.

 *I think it's about using the events to hook senior civil servants and then having a really strong narrative that says it's about more than the competition event. And we found that's landed fairly well. [...] And also getting our networks to talk in that way as well. ...getting the college principals and the people who are working with us to start talking about WorldSkills beyond just who gets on a podium.*

Competitors in particular are powerful advocates for this communication of the values of WorldSkills. Their experiences highlight that WorldSkills is not only about participating in competitions and winning medals, but also about longer-term outcomes such as career development, workforce development, and the impact on their social mobility and improved life trajectories.

 *But with our Skills Champions, it's not just about getting them to tell their story of the competitions. Our team has done quite a lot of work with them on what's happened next, for example, asking them about 'What's it done for your career'? It's easy to ask them to talk about how WorldSkills has put them on a stage, but actually, we need them to talk about what they've added to their company, or how they're now training the next squad. We've got a person in our team who's looking after that and creating that skill set within them to be able to tell that story that then links back to policy. And some of them are brilliant.*



4.4 Leadership for confidence and reflection



Bringing about system-level impact requires a deliberate approach to leadership, as reflected in WorldSkills UK's journey, which includes confidence in the organization's wider agenda and a readiness to tackle pushback and resistance within the sector, for various reasons. For example, efforts to position WorldSkills UK beyond a competition-focused role have not always been welcomed, particularly where stakeholders hold certain assumptions and expectations as mentioned earlier.

A similar point about resistance to change was mentioned by Costa Rica in the process of developing and expanding the WorldSkills Costa Rica Model. This requires the leadership team to have confidence in what they are doing is right and will bring long-term benefits for the organization and the TVET system:

 *I think there's an element of confidence in this as well. And I think you've got to be confident in what you're asserting as you're developing it, because you've really got to push that envelope.*



5. Dimensions for driving impacts

The above case studies of system-level impact highlight different approaches and pathways taken by Members. These are influenced by their governance structure, national contexts, capacities, and institutional positioning. The analysis provides a set of considerations for other Members of WorldSkills as a reference for their own work within their national TVET systems. These should be interpreted with consideration of each Member's national context, including their capacities, budget, resources, and positioning within the TVET system.

It should also be recognized that the writing of the case studies and the following dimensions may make system-level impact sound neat and simple, but the reality behind these impacts and dimensions is complex, difficult, and non-linear. Progress typically involves trade-offs, difficult choices, and competing priorities, which have not been sufficiently discussed in this report. Members should therefore approach the following points with caution and use them with consideration of the real-world complexity around system-level impact.



5.1 The strategic value of engagement with WorldSkills and skills competitions

Members may benefit from reflecting on what engagement with WorldSkills means in their own context. This can include considering how competitions and activities beyond competitions might support national TVET development priorities. This research and a previous study suggest that competitions themselves can contribute to system-level impact, and a more deliberate and strategic approach can help to extend and sustain the impacts beyond the events themselves.

The findings from this study, together with previous research (Xie and Robson, 2024), show that skills competitions can contribute to system-level impact. Beyond showcasing skills excellence, competitions can create opportunities to extend and sustain wider impacts beyond events themselves, including but not limited to strengthened standards, stakeholder relationship building, strengthened collaboration, increased prestige and attractiveness of TVET and skills careers.

For example, in the case of JAVADA, skills competitions served as a mechanism for bringing together training providers, industry experts, and other stakeholders to collectively develop training plans for Competitors and coordinate the resources required to realize them.

All three cases also illustrate the impacts of engaging with WorldSkills Occupational Standards, for example, how the standards have created opportunities to inform curriculum development, national standards, teaching approaches, and training equipment and infrastructure, which can bring longer-term impact on their national TVET systems.



5.2 Placing Competitors, Experts, trainers and teachers at the centre of impact

Competitors, Experts, trainers and teachers emerged as central actors in generating and sustaining the impacts of engagement with WorldSkills. While organizational structures, standards, and partnerships provide important enabling conditions (see the following points), many of the impacts are ultimately realized through the development and success of the individuals who participate in and interact with WorldSkills activities.

Competitors often acquire new technical and soft skills, professional networks, and experiences that contribute to their subsequent education and career pathways. Experts, teachers and trainers are exposed to new standards, practices, and approaches that can be transferred into teaching, assessment, curriculum development and workplace training. Learning generated through WorldSkills can diffuse beyond competition participation and reach a wider group of learners, teachers, and institutions.

The cases illustrate different ways in which Members placed people at the centre of their engagement strategies. In Costa Rica, INA focused on understanding how engaging with WorldSkills has supported learners' skills development and teachers' teaching capacities. In the UK, WorldSkills UK's new theory of change focused on supporting young people to thrive in the world of work. In Japan, JAVADA coordinated resources and expertise to support Competitors to develop stronger skills to match international benchmarks of excellence.

Competitors and other participants also acted as powerful advocates for skills movements and technical and vocational education. Through their experiences, they provide tangible examples of the benefits of engagement with WorldSkills, helping to communicate its value to learners, employers and the wider public. Their stories can make the impacts of WorldSkills more visible and accessible than institutional narratives.



5.3 Standards as a core tool for impact

The WorldSkills Occupational Standards emerged as a central mechanism through which engagement with WorldSkills was translated into wider system-level impacts across three cases. This finding aligns with previous research on the leveraging impact of international standards beyond competitions (Relly et al., 2021; Xie and Robson, 2024). Instead of serving solely as technical specifications for competitions, the WorldSkills Occupational Standards provided a reference point for quality, skills (both soft and technical) excellence, curriculum development, teaching, and equipment and infrastructure.

In all three cases, the WorldSkills Occupational Standards informed the selection and preparation of Competitors and served as a benchmark for national and regional skills competitions. However, their influence extended beyond competition activities. In Costa Rica, INA developed a model for integrating the WorldSkills Occupational Standards into curricula, teaching practices, assessments, and equipment specifications across 22 skills areas.

In the UK, the WorldSkills Occupational Standards informed the work of the Centre of Excellence and the framework for standards and assessment within apprenticeship programmes, while also providing a framework for designing and organizing national and regional competitions.

As international standards, the WorldSkills Occupational Standards provide a valuable global reference point, while recognizing that national qualifications, industry practices, labour market needs, regulatory requirements, and educational contexts vary.



5.4 System dynamics and organizational positioning

The cases suggest that Members' capacity to influence and drive system-level impact is shaped by their role, remit, and coordinating capabilities within their national TVET systems. The extent to which WorldSkills-related activities can generate broader impacts depends not only on the activities themselves but also on the Member's institutional positioning, relationships with other actors, and ability to influence existing system structures and processes.

The cases demonstrate that understanding system dynamics can create opportunities to connect WorldSkills activities to wider TVET development and priorities.

In Japan, JAVADA's framework provides mechanisms for aligning standards, training content, and assessment practices across sectors, enabling the diffusion of knowledge and practices generated through skills competitions. In Costa Rica, INA's engagement with the broader TVET structure, including Ministry of Public Education (MEP), SINAFOR (Sistema Nacional de Capacitación y Formación Profesional), SINEFOTEF (Sistema Nacional de Educación y Formación Técnica Profesional), and the National Qualification Framework, helped identify opportunities to position WorldSkills Occupational Standards and skills competitions as tools for supporting quality improvement and skills development across the system.



5.5 Stakeholder engagement and alignment across the system

Stakeholder engagement emerged as an important mechanism through which these three cases were able to extend the influence of WorldSkills beyond competitions themselves. Members engaged with a range of actors, including policymakers, training providers, social partners, industry representatives, and sectoral bodies. Approaches to engagement varied, but where relationships were sustained and formalized, provided a stronger basis for collaboration, which is key for facilitating cross-sector work to be done.

In Japan, professors from Polytechnic University, industry specialists, and sectoral bodies were involved in the development of standards and training plans for preparing Competitors for WorldSkills Competition, creating opportunities for expertise from education and industry to inform practice. In Costa Rica, INA established governance and consultation mechanisms involving policymakers, social partners, industry representatives, and sectoral bodies. These structures helped align institutional activities with broader national priorities while fostering understanding, support, and advocacy among key stakeholders.

In the UK, WorldSkills UK sought to bring together representatives from multiple government departments by facilitating a working group leading up to WorldSkills Shanghai 2026. This created opportunities to communicate the potential impacts of engaging with WorldSkills and coordinate learning and related activities across policy areas.

These relationships and networks served as channels through which knowledge, resources, and influence could flow between WorldSkills activities and the wider TVET system. They also contributed to greater alignment between WorldSkills-related activities and broader system objectives, helping stakeholders understand the relevance and wider impacts of skills competitions and associated programmes beyond the events themselves. However, the extent to which such relationships and alignment could be established and sustained depended in part on Members' convening and coordinating capacity within their respective systems.



5.6 The role of success stories and impact research to gain stakeholder buy-in

Evidence emerged as important mechanisms for demonstrating the value of engagement with WorldSkills, strengthening Members' credibility in their national systems and obtaining stakeholder buy-in. Evidence of impact can take different forms, which can include participants' success stories, estimates of impact on curriculum, infrastructure, student enrolment, and learning and employment outcomes, and estimates of return on investment, which can contribute to a better understanding of how engagement with WorldSkills influences individuals, institutions, and systems. However, previous research has shown that resource and capacity constraints can make it challenging for Members to conduct impact evaluations or track the longer-term trajectories of participants (Xie & Robson, 2024).

In Japan, JAVADA recognized the value of Competitors' success stories in enhancing the attractiveness and prestige of skills careers. In Costa Rica, INA used evidence of improvements in curricula, teaching practices, equipment, facilities, and training standards to demonstrate the benefits of engagement with WorldSkills to stakeholders who questioned its value at that time. In the UK, WorldSkills UK highlighted that the combination of compelling success stories and robust evidence can be particularly effective in communicating impact to different audiences.



5.7 The role of leadership at different levels of the system in enabling impact

Leadership emerged as an important factor in enabling the wider impacts of engagement with WorldSkills. Leadership involved more than organizing competitions; it included revisiting the organizational strategy, convening stakeholders, facilitating collaboration, coordinating resources, and creating opportunities for shared action.

The cases suggest that leadership is not confined to the Members themselves and that leadership should be considered at different levels and aspects of the system governance and structure. Impact was often enabled through leadership distributed across different levels and aspects of the system. Similar to a previous point, Competitors, training centre directors, teachers, industry partners, policymakers and other actors all played important roles in championing activities, mobilizing support, and translating learning into practice within their own areas of influence.

In Costa Rica, INA highlighted the importance of working with leaders within regional training centres to strengthen engagement with WorldSkills and support the dissemination of new approaches across the institution. In the UK, WorldSkills UK engaged industry leaders and training provider leaders as advocates for skills excellence and quality improvement. In Japan, experts involved in competition committees and sub-committees supported contributing their knowledge and resources. These examples illustrate how leadership can operate through networks of actors at different areas and levels of the system.



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7. Endnotes

- 1 See previous report of system-level change:
https://worldskills.org/what/projects/wsgrc_research_analysis/
- 2 The six focus areas were proposed in the WorldSkills General Assembly in 2016 as part of Vision 2025 planning. You can read more here: <https://worldskills.org/about/worldskills-vision-2025/>
- 3 Skills England is an executive agency of the Department for Work and Pensions formally established in 2025. It aims to work with partners to create better skills for better jobs, enabling growth and opportunity. See more details at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/skills-england>
- 4 See more details of the Curriculum and Assessment Review at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/curriculum-and-assessment-review-final-report>
- 5 See more details of new V levels at: <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2026/03/new-v-levels-and-post-16-qualifications-explained/>
- 6 This is an independent review of the increase in the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). See more details at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/young-people-and-work-interim-report>
- 7 See more details of the Post-16 education and skills white paper at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-education-and-skills-white-paper>
- 8 See more details on page 6 of the report at: <https://www.worldskillsuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/The-economic-value-of-worldskills-uk-2023.pdf>
- 9 See the report 'Earnings and Employment Effects of WorldSkills UK Competitions' at: <https://www.worldskillsuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Earnings-and-employment-effects-of-Worldskills-UK-competitions-final-050424.pdf>



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