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Passion for precision

Intensive training helped Mr Wong Bing Zhi to be a winner in the WorldSkills Singapore competition while he was studying precision engineering in ITE

BY ARUL JOHN
SPH Content Lab

Wanting to take over his father's precision engineering business, Mr Wong Bing Zhi enrolled at the then Institute of Technical Education (ITE) College Central (Balestier Campus) in 2005 to study the subject, which also interested him.

But eventually, he embarked on a different path instead.

Mr Wong, 29, recalls: "At that time, ITE offered three major core modules for precision engineering, which were machining, tool and die, and aerospace.

"I majored in aerospace because I could pick up the skills required to service and maintain aircraft, which was also what I wanted to do then."

After completing his ITE course in December 2006, Mr Wong pursued a diploma in manufacturing engineering at Nanyang Polytechnic.

After he completed his polytechnic studies, and before he got enlisted in national service, he worked at ST Kinetics as a technician doing engineering jobs.

"It was a fulfilling experience as I had always loved mechanical engineering, assembling materials and troubleshooting problems," recalls Mr Wong.

Thanks to a collaboration with the Singapore Institute of Technology, he then obtained a degree in mechanical design and manufacturing engineering from Newcastle University in the United Kingdom.

His father may have inspired him, but it was Mr Wong's decision to participate in the WorldSkills Singapore 2006 competition that led to a personal triumph.

Mr Wong and several other students were selected by their lecturers to take part in the competition because of their academic performance and skills.

WorldSkills Singapore is the premier national competition for skilled talents in Singapore.

Skills beyond the classroom

Mr Wong recalls: "The training was systematic. We learnt how to approach and tackle problems. Our trainer and mentor was a very experienced full-time ITE lecturer."

Training from 8am to 5pm for five days per week enabled him to pick up skills and knowledge beyond what was taught in the classroom.

Recalls Mr Wong: "I learnt more about CNC Programming, a software used to generate a toolpath and code in order to communicate with the machine to produce parts."

The competition was only four months away then and the learning curve was

steep. But his mentor and good friends spurred Mr Wong on.

When he learnt that he had won the Bronze Medal in CNC Milling at WorldSkills Singapore 2006, he was happy that he had not let his lecturers and trainers down.

With the help of the SkillsFuture Study Award for WorldSkills competitors, he is currently pursuing a master's degree in mechanical engineering at the National University of Singapore.

"Taking part in the WorldSkills competition was memorable as I learnt to complete the tasks at hand and set goals. This led me to my education and career path," says Mr Wong.

Showcase your skills

The WorldSkills Singapore (WSS) 2018 finals will be held from July 5 to 7 at Suntec Singapore Convention Centre.

Besides watching the competitors, the public can pick up new skills, learn more about different industries, and explore various education and career pathways through career talks, workshops and an exhibition.

Test and celebration of skills

A key programme under the SkillsFuture movement, the WSS competition pits the nation's best young talents in a rigorous test of skills and grit.

Held every two years, it is jointly organised by the Ministry of Education, SkillsFuture Singapore, the Institute of Technical Education, Nanyang Polytechnic, Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Republic Polytechnic, Singapore Polytechnic and Temasek Polytechnic.

The winners of WSS 2018 will represent Singapore at the next Asean Skills Competition in Bangkok, Thailand, in August; and the international WorldSkills Competition in Kazan, Russia, in 2019.

New skill areas added

For WSS 2018, nine new skill areas have been included:

- 3D Digital Game Art,
- Automobile Technology ,
- Beauty Therapy,
- Cyber Security,
- Fashion Technology,
- Hairdressing,
- Rapid Transit Systems,
- Freight Forwarding, and
- Water Technology.

These bring the total number of skill areas to 26.

Singapore's victories on the global stage

Singapore has been participating in the Asean Skills Competition since 2007, and the WorldSkills Competition (WSC) since 1995.

Since the 33rd WSC in 1995, Singapore has won:

- 25 Gold Medals,
- 8 Silver Medals,
- 13 Bronze Medals, and
- 73 Medallions for Excellence.

Visit www.worldskills.sg for more information.

PHOTO: INSTITUTE OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION

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MR WONG BING ZHI (right)
Bronze Medal winner
WorldSkills Singapore 2006

