



EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT SURVEY REPORT

2018

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Glossary

APTC	Australia Pacific Training Coalition
EES	Employer Engagement Survey
NGO	Non-Government Organization
PNG	Papua New Guinea
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Annual Employer Engagement Survey provides valuable information on the views of the employers on APTC training outcomes. These insights help shape and improve APTC's training delivery in the Pacific to meet the demands in various industries. A few employers still responded to the survey after the graduate(s) have left and moved on to other organizations. In the 2018 survey, the number of APTC graduates employed by the responding employer organizations range from 1 to more than 20 graduates.

628 organizations were approached to participate in the survey across APTC campus country and Small Island States. Of the targeted employers, 334 completed the survey with a response rate of 53%. Employers were drawn from APTC's database of employers, as identified by the graduates. The majority of the employers were from the private sectors, the tourism and hospitality sector being the main group of respondents. Most of the employers responding to the survey employ between 1 to 10 people.

In terms of satisfaction, employers rated an overall 99% satisfaction with the APTC graduates. This includes the ability to perform to the expectations at their workplace, using of relevant skills and technology, working knowledge of the industry, minimal supervision, taking on increased responsibility, solving common work related problems, communication and positive attitude. The high rating indicates that graduates are prepared to be work-ready for the industry that they aspire to work in.

Responses received demonstrated APTC training's added value. Responding employers reported to be:

- 93% satisfied (strongly agreed or agreed) that APTC training had a positive impact on their overall productivity or business performance
- 97% satisfied with their assessment of graduates and 84% were happy with the personal attributes of graduate recruits
- more likely to employ another APTC graduate (98%) into their organization
- more likely to recommend (98%) that other organization employ APTC graduate
- promoting graduates (85%) or provided them with greater responsibilities since taking up jobs with the employer

24% indicated they currently have job vacancies in their organizations, with most openings in the areas of tourism and hospitality, education and training, construction and manufacturing. 49% anticipate they will experience job vacancies over the next 12 months, mainly in the areas of tourism and hospitality, education and training, with equal opportunities in construction, manufacturing and other areas. 36% employ foreign workers in their organizations, majority from Australia and Fiji.

97% of the polled organizations indicated they would be interested in supporting other employers attend an APTC course. They cited among other things benefits accruing back to their businesses, and exposure to overseas skills for their employees as the major driving forces for their willingness in this regard. The survey however falls short of probing in what ways employers would be willing to provide this support. This should be considered as an area of enquiry in future surveys.

The primary reasons for establishing a relationship with APTC as a source for future graduates were international accredited courses offered locally, existing relationships with previous graduates who are now employees and specific offerings such as placements and work experience programs. Overall, these survey results demonstrate the continued relevance of APTC in skills development in the Pacific.

2. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The Australian Pacific Training Coalition (APTC) goal is 'a more skilled, inclusive and productive workforce [that] enhances Pacific prosperity. Its purpose is to ensure 'the skills and attributes available to employers from TVET system align with labor market requirement'. Strong engagement between APTC and employers has the potential to play a vital role in enhancing the Pacific's economic profile. Education and training systems is a core part of the enterprise, development and innovation infrastructure in the Pacific.

To gain a better understanding of the impact of APTC's training delivery, APTC undertakes an employer engagement survey (EES) annually. The target population for the survey is the employer who employs an APTC graduate as identified by graduates through Graduate Tracer Surveys. The employers are from private, public sector and NGOs.

The purpose of the survey is to elicit the employers' feedback on how APTC graduates perform in the workplace. This is in terms of their **technical or work-readiness skills, personal** and **professional development** among other things. Furthermore, the survey captures employers' appetite for co-investment in skills training as well as collect key insights on labour markets. The findings of this survey will be used to help APTC improve its training delivery and support services leading to a more efficient and responsive workforce.

This survey targets a broad range of business representing different sectors, ownership (multinational and locals) and company size. The overall objectives of the survey is to ascertain employer's views on a range of items including (but not limited to):

- Employer assessment of industry readiness
- Employer assessment of productivity and performance
- Employability of APTC graduates
- Appetite for co-investment

3. METHODOLOGY

Data collection for the Employer engagement survey is by way of a structured questionnaire, administered by APTC campus admin. A copy of the questionnaire is available on request to pmel@aptc.edu.au. The questionnaire has undergone several revisions and iterations, since it was first administered in APTC in 2012. In summary the questionnaire covered the following topics:

- General employer information
- Employer assessment of graduates
- Labour market information

The sample population is composed of employers, identified as having employed one or more APTC graduates. The employer listing was generated out of the APTC database and lists were distributed to campus country admin representatives to conduct the survey. Each campus had 8 weeks to collect the data for the period beginning 5th September to 5th November. Additionally for employers with valid email addresses, the questionnaire was emailed by a central team located in the Regional Head Office.

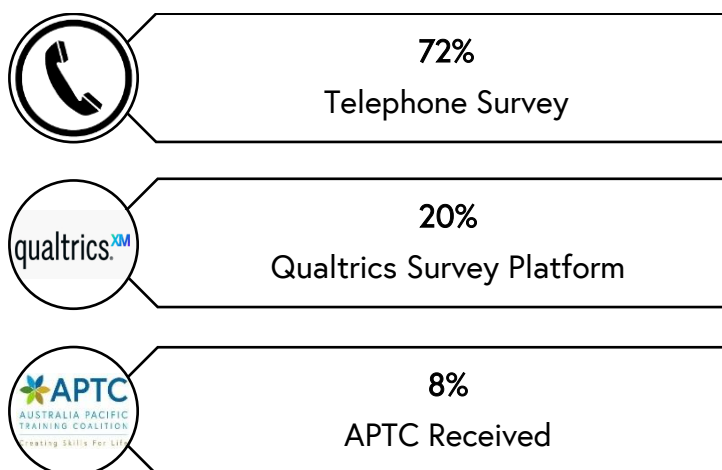
Data collection was conducted through emails, face to face, telephone and online using the Qualtrics survey software. Figure 1 below outlines the data collection approaches employed by country teams in gathering the EES data. Across all respondents, the online and telephone survey took approximately 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

The majority of the survey was completed through telephone survey (72%), followed by online (20%) and 8% was comprised of those who were present for the face to face method (APTC Received).

Following data collection, all phone and written survey data was entered into the survey platform – Qualtrics. Data was cleaned and any follow-ups initiated to ensure data capture was maximized and ready for analysis. The data was then analyzed using Qualtrics reporting platform with results exported to Microsoft Excel for further formatting and visualizations.

In order to address possible differences in responses by individual cohorts, results are shown separately, where possible, by each of the key variables type of company (Private/Public sector/NGO), primary work undertaken (construction, manufacturing, tourism and hospitality) and more.

Figure 1. APTC survey methods



4. RESULTS

4.1 Demographic Insights

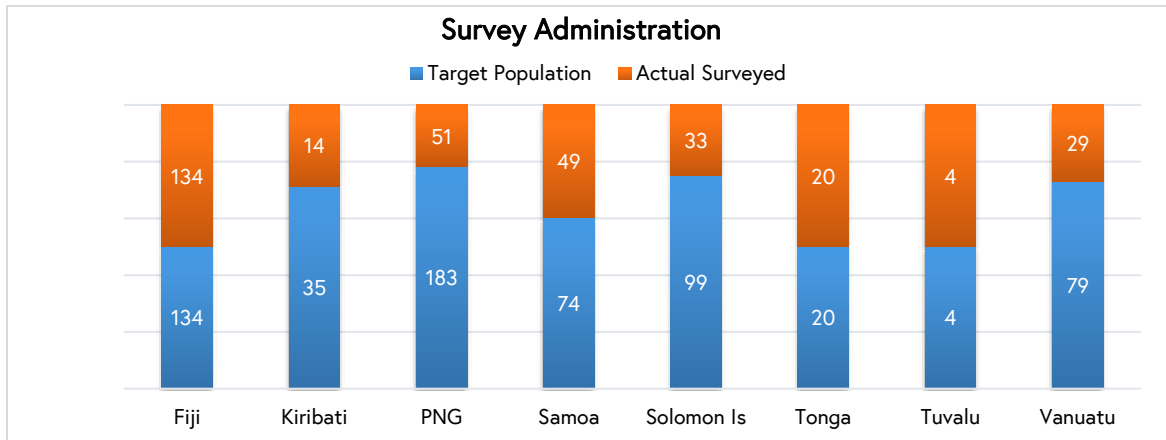
The demographic insights cover response rates and employer profiles. For 2018, the overall survey response rate was 53%. Of the 628 organizations approached, 334 completed the surveys. The response rate is marginally above the targeted 50%, propped mostly by Fiji, Tonga and Tuvalu who each reported a 100% response rate (see Figure 2 below).

Challenges noted by countries that achieved a below-average response rate include:

- employers were uncontactable as they have moved locations and also those in other provinces
- graduates left the organization hence employers reluctant to engage in the survey
- general reluctance by employers and unwilling to complete the survey
- as survey is administered by campus staff, they were fully occupied with other activities and could not fully concentrate on survey follow-ups

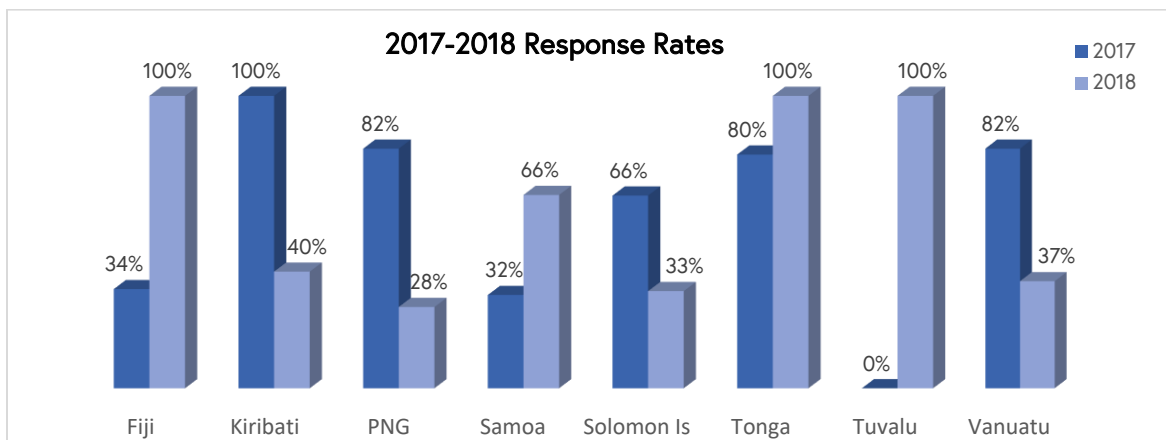
Improving response rates should be a priority area for APTC, as this will increase the robustness of data.

Figure 2. Survey Response Rate by Country



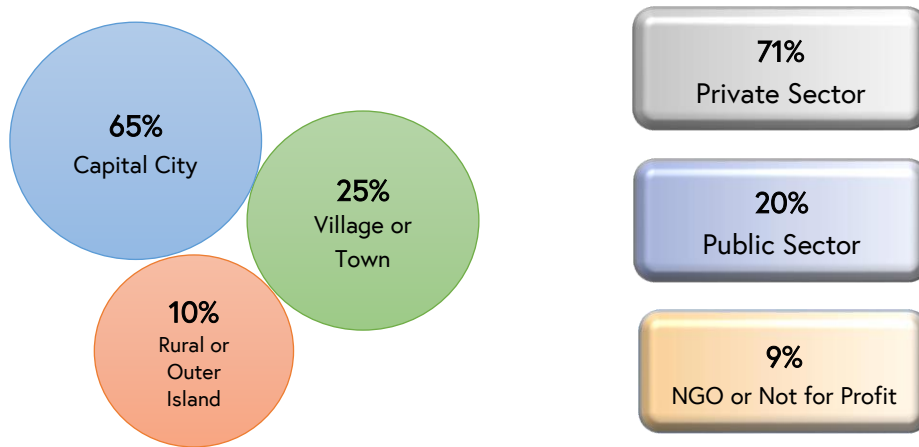
Compared to 2017, there were notable increases in survey feedback received for Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and Tuvalu in 2018, indicating good response rates and feedback from employers in these island states. Kiribati, PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, however, recorded a decrease in surveys received for the same period.

Figure 3. 2017-2018 Survey Rates



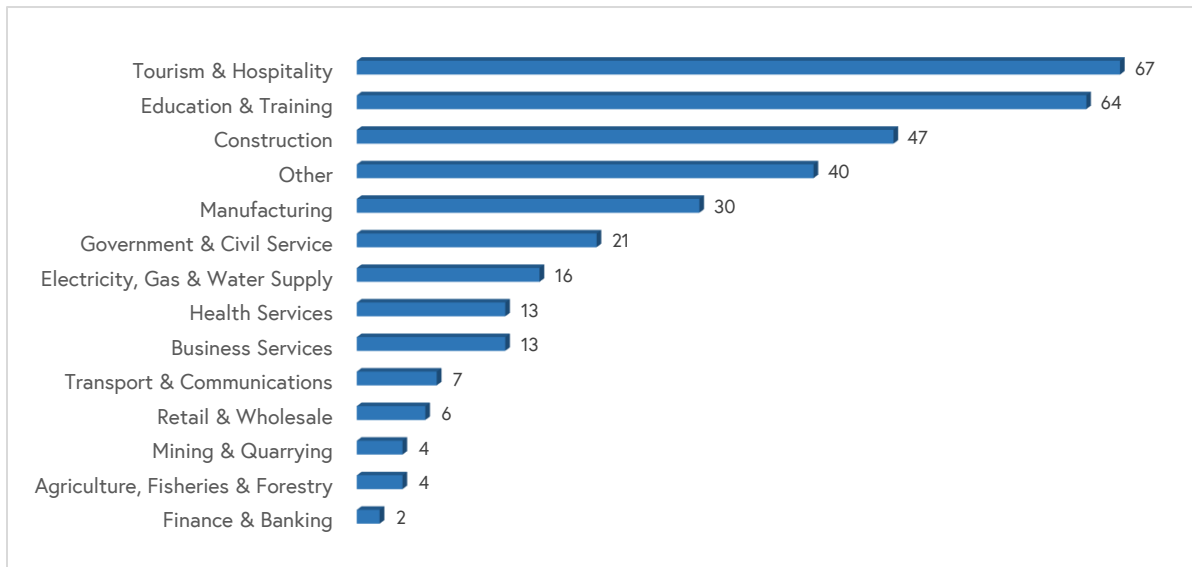
71% of the employers surveyed are from the Private sector, 20% in the Public sector and 9% are NGOs or Not for Profit organizations. Majority of the employers are located in the capital city (65%), while a quarter of these are located in villages or towns and 10% operate in rural or outer islands. Figure 4 below shows the distribution of respondents by location and type of company.

Figure 4. Employer Location and Type



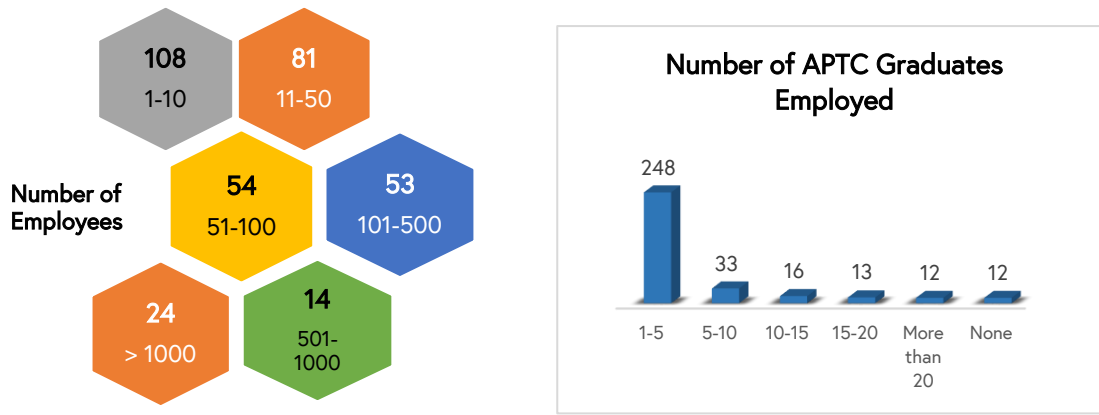
Out of all the employers that responded, majority are in the tourism and hospitality industries (20%), followed by education and training (19%).

Figure 5. Employer Primary Type of Work



Most of the employers have 1 to 10 employees and approximately 74% of all responding employers employed 1 to 5 APTC graduates in their organization. The graphs below show detailed analysis across work types and the number of APTC graduates employed.

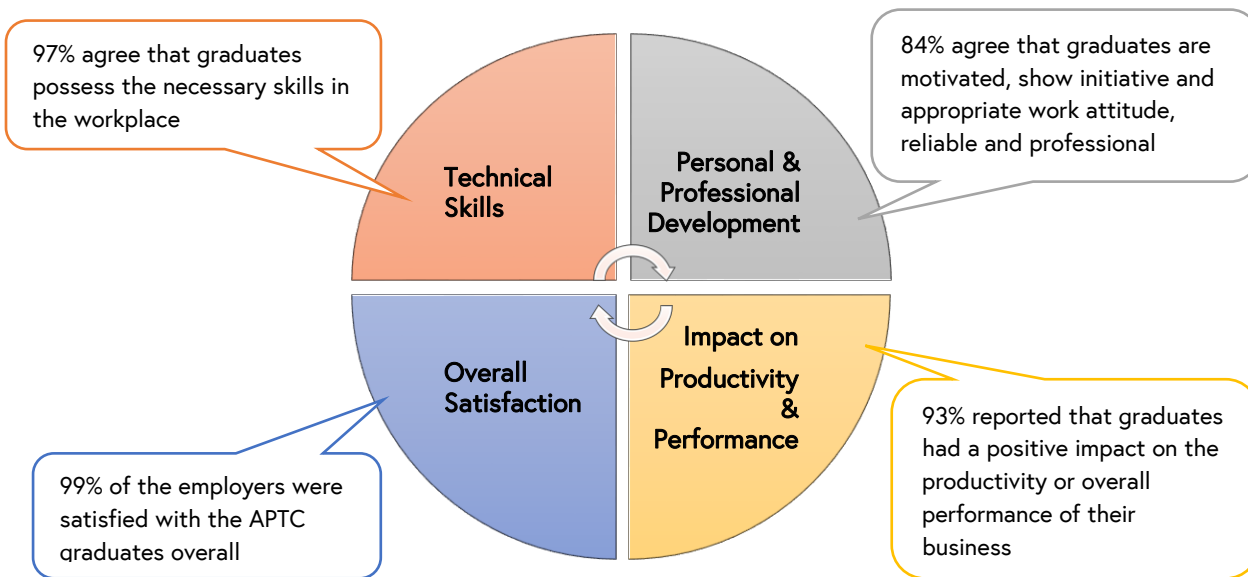
Figure 6. Size of Firm and APTC graduate employment profile



4.2 Employer Assessment of Graduates

APTC is a high profile Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) regional program which seeks to achieve greater alignment with Pacific governments' priorities for national economic growth and skills development. Developing skillsets that immediately address industry needs and satisfies national skills interest is vital. APTC's training profile will be increasingly informed by industry and national interests. Findings from the EES are invaluable in demonstrating the extent to which APTC is producing industry ready graduates.

Figure 7. Employer Assessment of Graduates



The employers' assessment of graduates focused on three key areas which are, the graduates' work-readiness skills, personal and professional development and impact on production and performance. Given the high satisfaction rates in the diagram above, it is evident that employers were very satisfied with the graduate performances in the organization.

The employers were then asked about their overall satisfaction of the APTC graduates employed in their organizations. Specifically, 99% of the surveyed employers were satisfied with APTC graduates overall. 93% further noted that graduates had positive impact on production and performance. A detailed breakdown of the responses to the employers' graduate assessment is available in the Appendix section of this report.

"Graduate for example has become very confident and bold in her approach in new product or sample that is introduced in her line, to take on the challenge if its new to them – Survey Respondent, 2018",

"As a small cafe, most of our staff don't have exposure to cafe's or restaurants - most have never eaten at a restaurant before working here. So APTC grads have a better idea of what people expect when paying, and what is good/bad customer service - *Survey Respondent, 2018*".

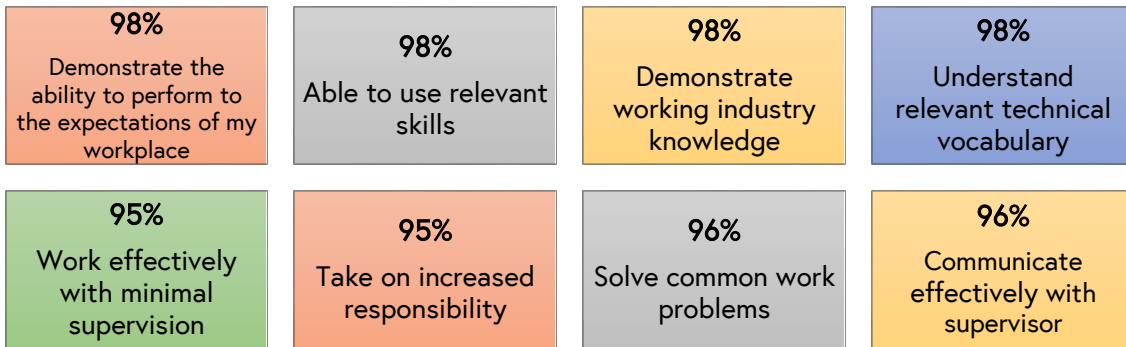
4.2.1 Technical Skills Assessment

The employers rated their satisfaction of work-readiness skills of APTC graduates with a rate of 97%. The graduates were assessed on eight different skills such as, how they were able to perform to the expectations of their workplaces and how graduates were able to use relevant skills.

Also, assessment were conducted on how graduates demonstrate a working knowledge of the industry, having the ability to understand the relevant technical words used in the workplace and working effectively with minimal supervision.

In addition, graduates were evaluated with their attitude to take on more responsibility, have the ability to solve common work-related problems and the communication skills they possess to effectively engage with supervisors, co-workers and clients or customers.

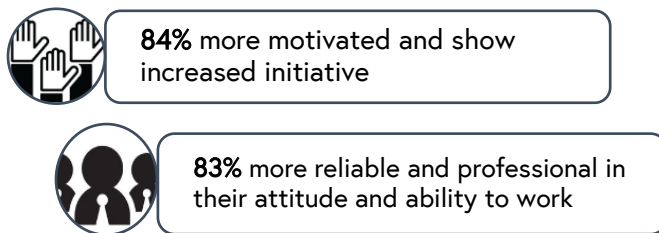
Figure 8. Technical Skills



4.2.2 Personal and Professional Development

84% of employers were satisfied overall with evaluating graduates on their personal and professional development. Compared to non-APTC graduates, APTC graduates were more reliable and professional in their ability to work and were more motivated while displaying increased initiative.

Figure 9. Personal and Professional Development



4.2.3 Impact on Productivity and Performance

93% of employers reported that APTC graduates had a positive impact on productivity or overall performance of the organizations they worked for. Some of the employers' sentiments on the positive impacts of graduates' performance were:

- being able to apply training and sharing knowledge with others

- *introducing new skills and knowledge to their workplaces, and readily assisting others*
- *ability to work on own initiative to resolve issues and challenges*
- *improved confidence, self-esteem and dedication*
- *better and improved performance, including being organized and active*

"Graduate has gained a lot of confidence since joining APTC and is working towards gaining her CIV in TAE online. She has been able to take on a lot of responsibilities assigned to her by the lead trainer in Education Support and we are confident that her capabilities as a Trainer will be further improved once she gains her TAE – Survey Respondent, 2018"

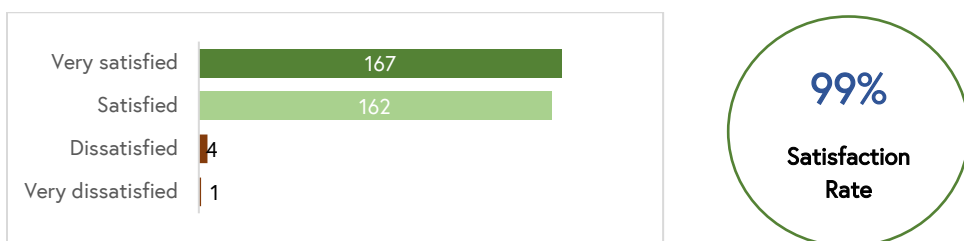
"The skill they have learned from APTC courses has attributed to their high performance and productively contributed toward achieving the overall organization goals and objectives. The organization has benefited from the knowledge and skills they have gained as most of them have been appointed to take up leadership role in the force – Survey Respondent, 2018"

6% stated there were no impact at all and 1% mentioned negative impact, citing reasons that graduates were new to the business, hence too early to do any assessments. Also, other reasons cited include graduates resigning due to personal reasons, no change of mindset or not using initiative, acts unprofessional at times or unwilling to take directive from experienced but non-qualified superiors.

To address the above, APTC could apply some focus on training its students to maintain the right attitude when returning to the workforce.

4.2.4 Overall Satisfaction

99% of employers were satisfied with the APTC graduates overall.



This encompasses all areas of graduate activity, performance and attitude in the workplace. Graduates were equipped with work-readiness and communication skills, sharing knowledge or providing constructive feedback to co-workers, showing initiative or professionalism in their work, having the right attitude to add value to the organization as a whole or being a good team player in the workplace.

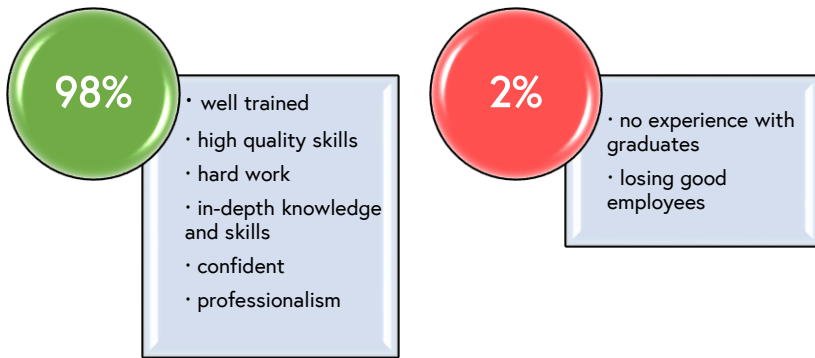
4.3 Employability and Referral of APTC Graduates

This section refers to two survey questions on whether employers would be willing to employ another APTC graduate (employability) and whether they would recommend that other organisations employ APTC graduates (referral). Producing graduates who are employable is an important indicator of APTC's success. Employers' willingness to employ APTC graduates acts as proxy measure of relevancy of APTC training in meeting the demand for skills and qualifications by the industry.

According to survey data, 98% of respondents indicated they were willing to employ a graduate of APTC in their organisations or to refer graduates to other employers. Reasons cited included graduates superior skillsets, higher standard of work outputs, guaranteed productivity, etc.

Figure 10 below highlights some of the reasons employers would be willing to employ APTC graduates, and Figure 11 lists why they would recommend other organisations to do the same.

Figure 10. Possibility of employing APTC graduates

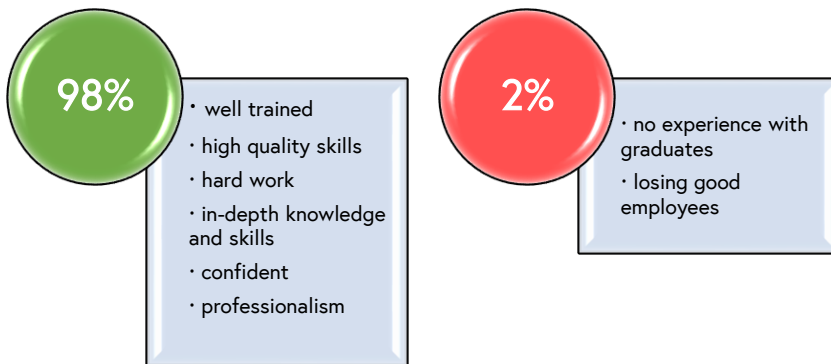


"APTC offers a great programme. My APTC recruits have been average standard as due to our business size we do not attract the top of the class. But in comparison to staff that have not had the opportunity to attend APTC, the APTC students are better rated. – **Survey Respondent, 2018**"

"Construction industry in Samoa is growing and getting qualified workers is a must. APTC provides the training that we need to upskill/qualify our workers to meet certain requirements from our clients. – **Survey Respondent, 2018**"

"I have 6 other ex APTC students on my staff who have contributed in the overall productivity of our business. It is definitely a plus to have them as part of our team. They have also assisted in the training of our unskilled team members. – **Survey Respondent, 2018**"

Figure 11. Employers recommending other organisations to employ APTC graduates



"Even though the graduate left us for her own personal reasons, I ever hesitate to recommend her employment or others to people and other businesses because I find that they work hard – **Survey Respondent, 2018**"

"Generally speaking, I would highly recommend APTC graduates to any potential employer though those graduates being considered for employment are individuals and have strengths, weakness and personalities that may also affect their work attitude – **Survey Respondent, 2018**"

"The experiences and skills that graduates have with teaching children with special needs. I would highly recommend other schools to employ teachers with these skills as there is quite a high number of children with special needs and not enough teachers with appropriate training for all schools in Samoa – **Survey Respondent, 2018**"

4.4 Co-investment

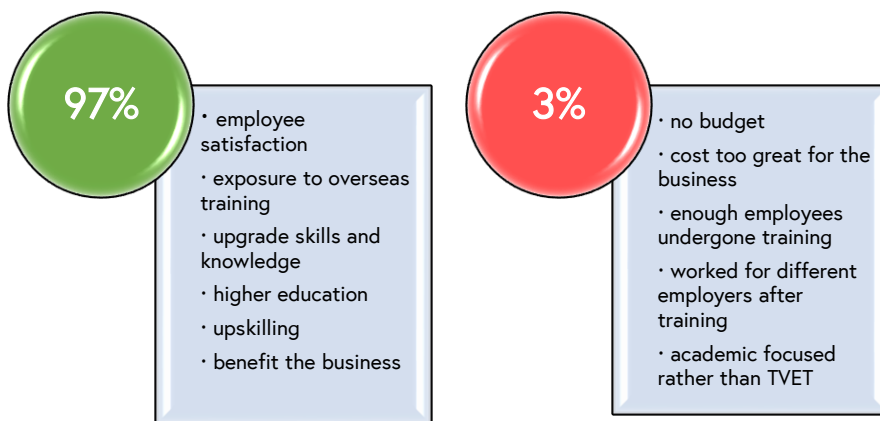
Contributing to the cost of skills training is key to sustaining TVET training offered by institutions such as APTC. Investment can take many forms among which contributions by employers is one form. In this section, the employers were asked if they were interested in supporting other employee(s) to attend APTC courses.

According to the survey results, 97% of the respondents indicated they would be "interested in supporting other employees to attend APTC courses". Among the reasons cited for such an interest was the benefits accruing to the business and the exposure to overseas training received by students (*APTC offers internationally accredited training*).

Of the minority 3% who were not interested, some of the barriers mentioned were the lack of training budgets, graduates seeking green pastures after the training, as well as costs far outweighing the benefits of training. In addition, employers may initially be willing to send staff for training but might be reluctant to pay for their studies, for the same reasons mentioned above.

Whilst the response from employers is high, the reality as shown in the enrolments is much lower for employer funded students. It is therefore recommended that further study be conducted to determine why the response to survey does not convert to actual numbers.

Figure 12. Employers' interest in supporting other employees for APTC courses



"I have been recommending this, I have APTC form with me which I encourage my workers to fill and have submitted. – Survey Respondent, 2018"

"It would be in the employer's best interest to send more employees to this leadership program as it would enable them to apply their learning to the workplace. – Survey Respondent, 2018"

"Because it is of Australian standard, they use updated facilities and technology to promote improved performance in the organization – Survey Respondent, 2018"

The high positive outcome on this question needs to be further investigated given anecdotal evidence points to lower appetite for co-investment. There is a high likelihood that the questions used for this part of the survey are being misinterpreted and may need revision.

4.5 Labour Market Information

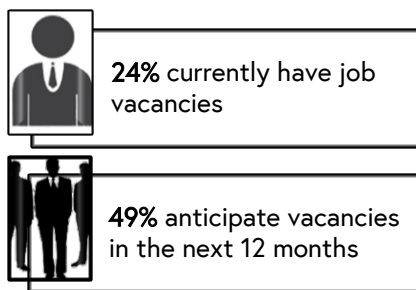
APTC3 has a strong focus on ensuring training is driven by market need and demand. Employers are a key primary source of data of labor market information. In this section, employers were asked three questions –

- (i) whether the organization currently has any vacancies
- (ii) how do the vacancies come about, and
- (iii) whether foreigners were employed in the organization and if so, to list the countries where they originated from.

According to survey response, 24% of the employers had job openings at the time of the survey, and 49% were anticipating vacancies in the 12 months following the survey. Details of vacancies are presented in Annex 2.

On reasons on how job vacancies were available, almost a third of the respondents highlighted the need for additional staff required to meet business growth. Another one-third indicated experienced staff had left the organization, the need for change in skill requirements for staff, experienced staff had retired or were almost retiring and other reasons. A breakdown of these feedback is available in the Appendix section of this report.

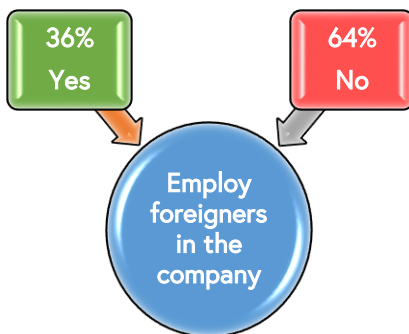
Figure 13. Current and Future Vacancies



For organizations currently having a vacancy, the key contributing factors were additional staff requirement to meet business growth at 31%, while 11% were comprised of those experienced staff departing the organization.

To improve insight, it is vital to capture detailed analysis of job vacancies in organizations and factors affecting the employability of APTC graduates.

Figure 14. Percentage of Foreigners Employed



The demand for highly skilled labour is also evident from the survey results, with slightly more than one third of the respondents employing foreign labour to meet organizational needs.

Majority of the respondents filling in roles were from Australia, followed by Fiji and an equal number of foreigners originating from India, New Zealand and Philippines.

5. CONCLUSION

The 2018 EES has provides very useful indicative results about the degree of satisfaction by employers with the overall level of graduate's skills and attributes. Overall, 97% of the employers were either satisfied or very satisfied with the APTC training provided to their employees. This indicates a high acceptance of APTC's training programs within industries in the various PIF countries.

Employers gave very positive feedback about the degree to which APTC qualification prepare graduates with the range of technical or work-readiness skills and generic skills required in the labour market. The most highly rated skills were technical skills indicating graduates' work-readiness for the industry. This is in regards to graduates' ability to perform to the expectations in the workplace, demonstrate working knowledge of the industry, ability to solve common work-related problems, and working with minimum supervision.

Labour market data, particularly evidence on current vacancies demonstrates some growth in industry and therefore need for skills to cover this growth. To provide better information of skills demand, there is a need to improve the coding of vacancies so as to undertake insightful analysis of this data.

Despite the positive findings from the employers, the survey has identified some weakness and short-comings in the current methodology that require further attention to improve the robust and validity of the results. There is a need to improve response rates so as to have a higher degree of confidence in the results. Suggestions for improvement include mapping the skills being sought by employers to the Industry Engagement records which are collected by trainers. In addition, future data collections could be outsourced initially to an independent party and later on, the same could be conducted for the full survey administration.

To this end APTC will be seeking the support and collaboration from employers in responding to the survey when it is launched each year. APTC also welcomes suggestions from employers on strategies to ensure higher engagement.

APPENDIX

Annex 1: Detailed Tables and Graphs

A. Employer Assessment of Graduates

Question	Satisfaction Rate
Demonstrates the ability to perform to the expectations of my workplace	98%
Is able to use relevant skills and technology in workplace tasks	98%
Demonstrates a working knowledge of the industry	98%
Understands the relevant technical words used in the workplace	98%
Works effectively with minimal supervision	95%
Is able to take on increased responsibility	95%
Is able to solve common work related problems	96%
Communicates effectively with supervisor, co-workers and clients/customers	96%
Average	97%

B. Personal and Professional Development

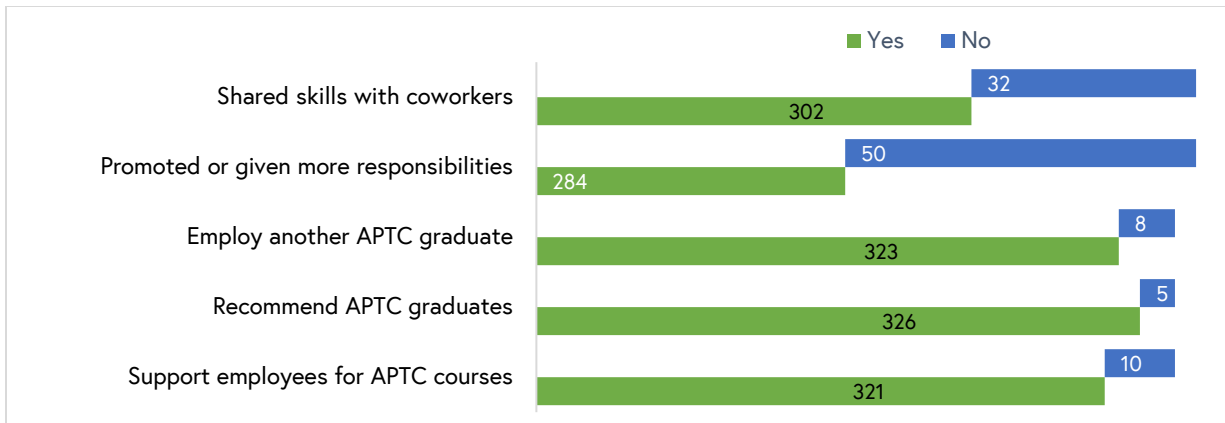
Question	Satisfaction Rate
Graduates are more reliable and professional in their attitude and ability to work	84%
Graduates are more motivated and show increased initiative	83%
Average	84%

C. Overall Satisfaction with APTC graduates

Response	%
Very satisfied	50%
Satisfied	49%
Dissatisfied	1%
Very dissatisfied	0.3%
Satisfaction Rate	99%

D. Comments and Suggestions

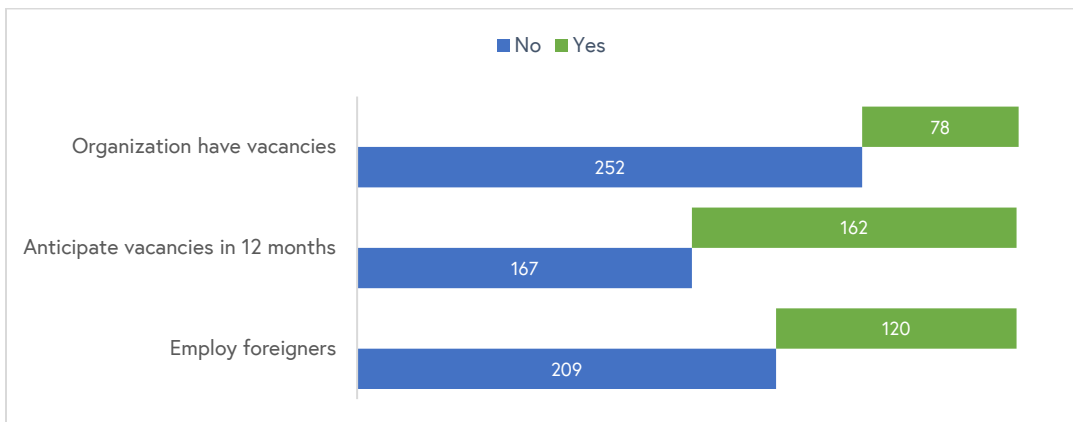
Question	Yes
Shared new skills with other workers	90%
Promoted or given more responsibilities	85%
Employ another graduate	98%
Recommend others to employ APTC graduates	98%
Interested to support other employee(s) to attend APTC courses	97%
Average	94%



Impact of APTC graduates on productivity or overall business performance	Satisfaction Rate
Positive	93%
Negative	1%
No Impact	6%
Total	100%

E. Labour Market Information

Question	Yes
Organisation currently has vacancies	24%
Anticipate vacancies in 12 months	49%
Employ foreigners	36%



How have the job vacancies in the organization come about?

Response	Count	%	Response	Count	%
A	101	31%	A, O	3	0.9%
E	35	11%	U	2	0.6%
A, C	28	9%	R, U	2	0.6%
R	22	7%	R, O	2	0.6%
O	22	7%	R, E, U, A	2	0.6%
E, A	15	5%	E, U, A	2	0.6%
R, A	12	4%	E, A, O	1	0.3%
C	12	4%	E, O	2	0.6%
R, E, A, C	11	3%	R, U, A	1	0.3%
R, E	11	3%	R, E, U, A, C	1	0.3%
R, A, C	8	2%	R, E, U	1	0.3%
R, E, A	7	2%	R, E, C, O	1	0.3%
E, U, A, C	6	2%	R, E, A, O	1	0.3%
E, A, C	6	2%	E, U, C	1	0.3%
R, E, C	5	2%	E, U	1	0.3%
E, C	5	2%	Total	329	100%

- **A** - Additional staff required to meet business growth
- **C** - A change in skill requirement of staff needed
- **E** - Experienced staff have left
- **O** - Other
- **R** - Experienced staff have or about to retire
- **U** - Unable to attract new entrants

Annex 2: Current and Anticipated Vacancies and Primary Work Industries

Primary Type of Work	Current Vacancies	Anticipated Vacancies in 12 months
Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry	2	3
Business Services	5	6
Construction	8	14
Education & Training	14	26
Electricity, Gas & Water Supply	2	10
Finance & Banking	0	1
Government & Civil Service	6	10
Health Services	4	7
Manufacturing	8	15
Mining & Quarrying	2	3
Other	7	15
Retail & Wholesale	1	4
Tourism & Hospitality	18	46
Transport & Communications	1	2
Grand Total:	78	162