

# **Identifying the demand for middle-skill occupations in Fiji**

**Richard Curtain,  
Development Policy Centre, ANU**

# **Focus of paper**

- **The paper makes use of previously unpublished data to identify Fiji's skills stock for middle-skill occupations.**
- **This is to identify how many are employed in each major middle-skill occupation by broad education level.**
- **The purpose of this research is to work out how many graduates can Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC) produce before supply exceeds demand.**
- **This means also working out the type of the demand in terms of the skill required by an employer for each middle skill occupation.**

# Data sources

- **The data sources are Fiji's 2010-11 and 2015-16 Employment and Unemployment Surveys (EUS)**
- **The large size of the samples covering the formal economy in Fiji provides sufficient data to report occupations at the four-digit level.**
- **This level of disaggregation identifies the names of occupations that correspond to VET qualifications.**

# **Outline of the presentation**

- I explain how Fiji's middle-skill occupations are defined and recognised.**
- I then identify Fiji's existing skills stock, based on the number of jobholders in skills-based occupations and education profile of the jobholders.**
- I look in detail at two occupations: carpenters and cooks to identify different education levels and two types of skill demand they serve.**
- Preliminary data are presented on the number of APTC graduates in these two occupations**

# How middle-skill occupations are defined and recognised

- **Middle-skill occupations can be defined in terms of wage levels or VET qualifications**
- **Three broad education pathways internationally to a VET qualification**
  - 1. Complete first stage of secondary education which includes vocational or technical education in a particular occupation or trade. This pathway leads to the successful completion of a recognised vocational qualification.
  - 2. Complete an upper-secondary, specialised vocational education qualification, which may include some on-the-job training.
  - 3. Obtain a post-secondary non-tertiary education qualification, based on a mix of formal

# **How middle-level skills are recognised in the labour market**

- **Depends on employer recognition of the vocational qualification because in the final instance it is the employer who decides whom to hire.**
- **However, the employer's decision to hire workers with or without a VET qualification or what level of VET qualification will be strongly influenced by a range of factors.**
- **These include government regulation and market expectations, and worker associations**
- **Middle-skill occupations are also defined for purposes of migrant entry**

| <b>Fiji code</b> | <b>Four-digit occupation</b>          | <b>Below Form 4</b> | <b>Form 4 &amp; 5</b> | <b>Fiji School Leaving Certificate</b> | <b>University entrance</b> | <b>Certificate/Diploma</b> | <b>Total</b> | <b>N</b> |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|----------|
| 7115             | Building Carpenter, Carpenter, Joiner | 43.2                | 25.0                  | 14.7                                   | 3.5                        | 13.6                       | 100          | 11,029   |
| 7232             | Automotive Mechanic                   | 28.1                | 31.5                  | 7.9                                    | 0.8                        | 31.7                       | 100          | 4,187    |
| 7128             | Electrician, electrician supervisor   | 3.7                 | 7.8                   | 12.5                                   | 6.0                        | 70.0                       | 100          | 2,253    |
| 5123             | Chef                                  | 8.7                 | 12.2                  | 23.4                                   | 4.1                        | 51.6                       | 100          | 2,013    |
| 7213             | Welder                                | 17.2                | 25.1                  | 11.2                                   | 0.0                        | 46.4                       | 100          | 1,778    |
| 7127             | Plumber & pipe fitter                 | 16.7                | 14.0                  | 17.5                                   | 3.4                        | 48.4                       | 100          | 1,180    |
| 7434             | Tailor                                | 15.0                | 40.8                  | 34.7                                   | 2.4                        | 7.0                        | 100          | 1,083    |
| 7413             | Baker & Pastry chef                   | 12.8                | 16.0                  | 26.0                                   | 10.0                       | 35.2                       | 100          | 1,055    |
| 7234             | Fitter and mechanic                   | 10.8                | 18.5                  | 18.5                                   | 15.0                       | 55.7                       | 100          | 1,019    |
| 5123             | Cook                                  | 18.0                | 26.8                  | 47.7                                   | 0.0                        | 7.5                        | 100          | 949      |

| <b>Fiji code</b> | <b>Main occupation</b> | <b>Vocational/<br/>technical<br/>training</b> | <b>Total</b> | <b>Per cent with<br/>post school<br/>TVET<br/>training</b> |
|------------------|------------------------|---|--------------|--|
| 7234             | Fitter and mechanic    | 364   | 1,057        | 34.4   |
| 7128             | Electrician            | 677   | 2,146        | 31.5   |
| 7127             | Plumber                | 489   | 1,595        | 30.6   |
| 7213             | Welder                 | 446   | 1,778        | 25.1   |
| 7232             | Automotive mechanic    | 796   | 4,060        | 19.6   |
| 7434             | Tailor                 | 182   | 1,042        | 17.4   |
| 7214             | Fabricator, metal etc  | 170   | 1,036        | 16.4   |
| 7132             | Painter                | 87  | 756          | 11.5   |
| 7217             | Diver                  | 65  | 677          | 9.6  |
| 7115             | Carpenter              | 995   | 11,542       | 8.6  |



# Implications

- **1. The consistent results for the stock of the largest middle occupations for two time periods shows the total number of formal and informal sector jobs for these occupations.**
- **2. The education levels of jobholders shows the considerable scope for skills upgrading**
- **3. However, scope for skills upgrading by, for example, undertaking a APTC qualification is limited because many job incumbents will not have sufficient basic education to be accepted for a course at APTC or an internationally accredited course at FNU.**
- **4. There may not be a strong desire by job incumbents to upgrade their skills, nor a strong employer demand for workers to have higher skill level for the job they are doing.**

# Implications

**Many workers and employers may be locked into a low pay, low skill equilibrium**

**The EUS asked respondents whether ‘in their opinion to what extent does your educational qualification correspond to the work you perform’.**

**Of the 94 per cent who responded for the following occupations, between 74 and 96 believed that their education qualification was adequate.**

**Only between 2 and 13 per cent said their education qualification was insufficient. The job holders more likely to say their qualification was insufficient were plumbers (13 per cent), building carpenters (12 per cent), automotive mechanics (11 per cent).**

# Carpenters only

| Carpenter only                 | Much higher | Adequate | Insufficient | Does not correspond | Total | N     |
|--------------------------------|-------------|----------|--------------|---------------------|-------|-------|
| Below Form 4                   | 2.0         | 73.0     | 14.0         | 11.0                | 100   | 3,159 |
| Form 4 & 5                     | 0.0         | 95.3     | 2.1          | 2.6                 | 100   | 1,553 |
| Fiji School Leaving & Form VII | 0.0         | 80.2     | 8.9          | 10.9                | 100   | 1,217 |
| Post school Qual               | 0.0         | 96.4     | 3.6          | 0.0                 | 100   | 939   |

# Cooks and Chefs

|                                | Much higher | Adequate | Insufficient | Does not correspond | Total | N   |
|--------------------------------|-------------|----------|--------------|---------------------|-------|-----|
| <b>Cooks</b>                   |             |          |              |                     |       |     |
| Below Form 4                   |             | 100      |              | 0                   | 100   | 108 |
| Form 4 & 5                     |             | 86       |              | 14                  | 100   | 255 |
| Fiji School Leaving & Form VII |             | 100      |              | 0                   | 100   | 411 |
| Post school qualification      |             | 100      |              | 0                   | 100   | 71  |
| <b>Chefs</b>                   |             |          |              |                     |       |     |
| Below Form 4                   | 18          | 60       | 22           | 0                   | 100   | 174 |
| Form 4 & 5                     |             | 81       | 0            | 19                  | 100   | 246 |
| Fiji School Leaving & Form VII | 15          | 66       | 9            | 11                  | 100   | 414 |
| Post school qualification      | 3           | 89       | 8            | 0                   | 100   | 956 |

# Conclusion

- **Jobholder perceptions of the adequacy of their education levels for their work provide important additional information about the nature of demand for different skill levels in the two occupations of carpenter and cook/chef**
- **Many carpenters and cooks in Fiji are locked into a low-pay, low-skill equilibrium while a small number of jobholders have the qualifications suited to higher paid work.**
- **The small size of the latter group means the skills pool eligible for work visas in Australia or New Zealand is much smaller than the number of jobholders in these occupations suggest.**