



Note: Australia-Pacific Technical College

By Stephen Howes
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*We are starting a new category of blog posts to supplement our longer, daily feature posts. **Notes** will be much shorter posts, scheduled on demand.*

In a recent Centre for Global Development blog [post](#), Owen Barder puts forward some promising migration-for-development initiatives, highlighting, among others, the Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC) which, he says “is financed by Australian aid to train workers in its poor neighbouring countries (such as Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu) so that they can work in Australia.”

If only this were the case. A 2011 Australian National Audit Office [report](#) [pdf] found that only 40 or 1.7 % of APTC graduates had found work outside their home countries. The report goes on to inform us that APTC course profiles have now been decoupled from Australian visa requirements, and that “local labour market demands are more central to the focus of training.” (p.90) The report also raises concerns about value for money, noting that the cost per student is as high as a scholarship to Australia (p.92).

The APTC, a 2005 initiative, was certainly meant to increase labour mobility. What went wrong has never been publicly explained, and would make a good research topic. The Audit Office suggests that the labour mobility aims of the APTC aroused suspicion among regional governments who tended to view the colleges as a way to hasten the exodus of already skilled workers.

Whatever the reason for its failure to achieve its labour mobility objective, the Australia-Pacific Technical College unfortunately cannot be hailed as an example of a successful pro-development migration policy.

This note is a part of a series on the Pacific Seasonal Worker Program. Other blogs in the series can be found [here](#).

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