



Enhancing the Manpower Capability of Fiji

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The birth of the Training and Productivity Authority of Fiji (TPAF) from the Fiji National Training Council (FNTC) was the result of the country's strong commitment to the development of manpower. Fiji's first development plan following independence in 1970 recognized that the issue of skill shortages posed a threat to the growth of output and national productivity. It led to the conclusion that the only means of circumventing the existing shortage, at both skilled and semiskilled levels, was to institute organized, systematic training. Against this background, the FNTC was established in 1973 as a statutory organization, later becoming Fiji's national productivity organization (NPO) in 1984 when Fiji joined the APO. Since its inception, the TPAF has been one of the leading providers of training in the country, addressing skill deficiencies in the workplace with training being its main activity.

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National skill-building schemes

One of the missions of the TPAF is to develop and manage systems and frameworks that improve the skill base and quality of Fiji's workforce. The TPAF pursues its mission using three mutually reinforcing programs: the Levy/Grant Scheme, National Apprenticeship Training Scheme, and the National Trade Testing Scheme, in addition to its mainstream training activity. After a consensus had been reached on the establishment of a national training institute, it was argued that the support for such training must come from the beneficiaries of skilled labor, i.e., employers. This resulted in the



creation of the Levy/Grant Scheme, which requires all employers in Fiji in both the public and private sectors to pay a levy to the TPAF equal to 1% of gross payroll. All levy-paying organizations are entitled to claim training grants from the TPAF for approved training of their employees. Such training can be provided in-house or by a provider approved and registered by the TPAF for grant purposes. This scheme hinges on the belief that one of the prime factors affecting productivity at the organizational level as well as the national level is the quality of the specific skills of the workforce. The Levy/Grant Scheme compels all employers, including the government, to train their employees to make them more productive.

Another important role of the TPAF is as a national skill builder charged with monitoring the National Apprenticeship Training Scheme, which is designed to produce the best tradespeople and technicians in the country. Since its introduction in 1963, the scheme has produced more than 4,800 tradespeople and technicians. Currently, the scheme supports training in 28 trades and technical areas. Eighty employers are registered under the scheme, with 670 apprentices now in training. To enhance the scheme, competency-based training has been introduced in some pilot trades.

The TPAF also administers the National Trade Testing Scheme, which allows highly skilled workers without certification to become formally recognized for their abilities. Over the past few years, the TPAF

has been developing the National Qualifications Framework for Fiji, focusing in particular on trade and technical qualifications. This role will now be taken over by the National Qualifications Authority.

Direct training and consulting

Training and to a lesser degree consulting have been the core activities of the TPAF. It conducts training programs in construction, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, maritime studies, hospitality and tourism, manufacturing, information technology, general management, customer services, human resources management, and commerce. The TPAF also provides training in methodology, such as productivity improvement techniques including ISO9000, quality control circles, 5S, total quality management, benchmarking, etc., some of which occurs under the APO's Technical Expert Service Program. Training programs are focused primarily on individuals already employed to upgrade their skills to become more productive workers. Relevant training programs are developed through methods such as training need surveys, industry visits, and industrial development forums.

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Every year, the TPAF issues more than 25,000 certificates for its courses, which are mostly short and range from one day to three weeks. Certificates are also issued by the TPAF's strategic partners for formal qualifications up to postgraduate level.

Productivity promotion and enhancement

In 1984, Fiji became a member of the APO, and the TPAF (then the FNTC) was designated as the NPO

for Fiji. Since then, the TPAF has gone from strength to strength in its role of spearheading productivity promotion and enhancement. This is the direct result of strategies developed at the Roundtable Conferences in 1995 and 2005. As the national productivity promoter, the TPAF has conducted productivity awareness campaigns since 1998. The annual Productivity Week has now been upgraded to a Productivity Month with a wider range of promotional activities.

In addition, the TPAF has introduced and utilized various productivity tools and technologies. The promotion of quality circles and 5S has featured greatly in Fiji, and model companies have been developed in the two main areas. Visits to the model companies are organized so that others can learn from their successful strategies. The TPAF is also one of the major local providers of consultancy in ISO9000 and ISO14000. It has assisted 18 companies to acquire certification and is currently working with another three organizations. Consultancy on environmental management systems and HACCP is also provided.

The TPAF continues to innovate in the area of productivity enhancement. It is now working on Fiji's first *Annual Productivity Report* to be published in 2008. Fiji has been involved in various APO projects on productivity measurement and

benchmarking for the preparation of this report, which will be the first attempt to develop a research base for policy advice. The TPAF is also actively participating in programs on knowledge management as well as innovation and creativity.

Fiji Business Excellence Awards

The Fiji Business Excellence Awards (FBEAs), started in 1999, are designed to encourage and assist organizations in Fiji to become world-class competitors. It recognizes achievements at four different levels. To date, only two organizations have won the highest level, which is the President's Award, while around 40 organizations have received awards at other levels. The increasing participation of government agencies and schools in the FBEA process has been a welcome development, and we intend to encourage participation from local governments.

Conclusion

Raising productivity in Fiji is a challenging task, and over the years the strategies used have evolved according to the changes in the technological, economic, and social environment. The TPAF will continue to evolve for its ultimate goal of national productivity improvement. 