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Growth in Apprentices



In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the trade sector has recruited 21 apprentices from the Fiji National University's National Training and Productivity Centre for the month of July, making it the highest number of apprentices recruited during the first half of the year.

NTPC has fulfilled a total of 29 requests from organisations to provide quality apprentices since the beginning of the year.

National Apprenticeship and Trade Test Manager Mr. Alvin Lal, said it was a positive indication of the economy recovering as employers proceeded towards hiring new apprentices in various trade areas.

Last month, the Fiji Sugar Corporation hired 19 apprentices, comprising of four welding and fabricating apprentices, six electrical fitter mechanic apprentices, and three fitting and machinists.

Carpenters Motors, Energy Fiji Limited, Natural Waters Viti Limited, Lincoln Refrigeration Pte Limited, Goodman Fielder International, and Bluescope are some of the other registered employers that have hired new apprentices this year.

"Our team visited several firms in the central, western, and northern divisions at the beginning of the year and received overwhelmingly positive feedback on apprenticeship training. We received around 150 apprentice recruitment requests in the first quarter of 2021," Mr Lal said.

"Many organisations had advertised and finalised their selections, but due to COVID-19 pandemic, they opted to postpone the recruitment," he said.

Mr Lal added several firms had temporarily suspended apprenticeship intake while waiting for restrictions to be lifted so that their activities may resume as usual.

"COVID 19 has presented several challenges. Theoretical training is progressing as planned, but workshop practicals are being postponed due to a lack of face-to-face contact between staff and apprentices. The Apprenticeship Department has been in contact with both employers and apprentices regularly to verify that training is proceeding as planned. We also had our first virtual induction and orientation for the 21 newly enrolled apprentices. Although tough, it was also incredibly rewarding since this might become the new norm."

Dr Isimeli Tagicakiverata, Director of the NTPC, stated that the staff at the Centre have been putting in extra effort since the first wave of COVID-19 last year.

"This is a pleasing statistic for us, especially considering the dark times and businesses cutting expenses in the midst of the COVID-19 epidemic," said Dr Tagicakiverata.

"As Fiji's National Productivity Organisation, we always ensure that we provide excellent service delivery to our workforce in terms of improving productivity and helping them advance in their professional careers." Dr Tagicakiverata said.

The National Apprenticeship Scheme is a three-way agreement between the apprentice, the employer, and the NTPC. For three to four years, the apprentices are supervised and instructed by competent industry specialists. It allows the apprentice to be paid as an employee while learning and studying for academic certificates and diplomas part-time at university.

Since the scheme's inception in 1963, the Centre has graduated 8773 apprentices, with 70 expected to graduate at the end of 2021.

Chandra fulfils her dream after two decades

A strong mindset, the right attitude and an unwavering passion for two decades have helped Rukshana Chandra, 44, achieve her dreams of graduating from a university.

It is a proud accomplishment for Mrs Chandra to have completed the Advanced Diploma of Leadership Management TAFE Programme with honours from the National Training and Productivity Centre. She took two years to complete the course.

“As the saying goes, success does not happen overnight. We must climb the ladder of success one step at a time. To be successful, we must broaden our abilities and knowledge through various processes,” Mrs Chandra proudly said.

Mrs Chandra, who was born and raised in Tavua, acknowledged her spouse Rakesh Chandra’s unwavering support, which was instrumental in her success, urging her to rise to the challenges and triumph.

“Due to financial constraints, I had to start working soon after finishing Year 13 in 1996. I was so preoccupied with the work that I forgot about my childhood dream of obtaining tertiary education. Today, I am grateful to my supportive husband, who helped me pursue this path. He kept inspiring and encouraging me to pursue additional courses since he realised I was growing with the group and had great potential to diversify my leadership skills to a higher level.,” she said.

Mrs Chandra has been working for the Tappoo Group of Companies for the past 25 years, starting as a cashier and progressing to the position of beauty consultant, then salesperson. She has held a few other positions, including Supervisor and Store Manager, before being promoted to Retail Manager for the Sigatoka Branch after graduating from the programme.

“The Advanced Diploma of Leadership Management programme provided useful tools, resources, and insights into better understanding myself. I am certainly working hard to put my course learning into practice. I am also encouraged to see individuals putting my advice into action and getting fantastic results.

“The course taught me to think more creatively and innovatively, which brought innovation to the workplace.

“There is nothing to stop your growth in life or to reach your goals if you have determination and positivity. Commit to the goal, and the results will come not only professionally, but also in your personal life. As a leader, I admit that observing the impact I have on people’s lives is the most fulfilling component of my job. Changing people’s future lives has become a pleasure rather than a responsibility. Every day, I strive to cultivate and foster new leaders in the organisation.”

Mrs Chandra ended by saying that she is passing her leadership skills to her daughter, Raneesha, as she has been in a leadership role since her primary school and by teaching her new skills will further boost her leadership qualities.



Yaravu aspires to become a qualified tradesman

Becoming a tradesman was a decision that Peni Seveikau Yaravu did not have to think twice about. The twenty-one-year-old trusted his creative mind and enrolled into Cabinet Making and Joinery short courses offered at National Training and Productivity Centre this year.



Yaravu said pursuing a blue-collar career offers flexibility, an opportunity to learn new skills and a pathway to a successful career.

"If you are a hands-on person and prefer to work and be creative, then a trade job is one of the most interesting job prospects," Yaravu said.

"However, this does not mean that once you finish your training, then you are the best.

You will learn new ideas and techniques every day in the trade field, whether operating different types of machines or learning new methods to get the work done."

"One should always be ready to learn the new things that this trade offers you. The ladder to success is not around the corner, but involves many years of mastering trade skills," he said.

While undertaking the skills training programme at NTPC, Yaravu has also secured a job at a construction company in

Davuilevu. He continues to gain much-needed experience in his field of work, following all the COVID-19 measures and safety precautions.

"This is a fascinating and exciting line of work because it requires your skills and art to build perfect cabinets and joinery work," he shared.

"The majority of people are going through hard times after the second wave of COVID-19 where many are staying home because of the closure of universities, schools and workplaces. But one should always keep themselves busy. I am trying to master the skills by working at Trinity Construction Company constructing a house in our area."

Yaravu said he wants to support his father who works for Fiji Corrections Service and is the sole breadwinner in the family. He strongly believes that technical and vocational education and training (TVET) courses are an important area for individuals to pursue their careers, and the programme also ensures one has a bright future.

"Over the next few years, I want to explore and develop my skills in project management and gain experience leading projects for major clients, as well as look for opportunities to expand my responsibilities within this role, work towards my goal and relocate overseas."

NTPC's Cabinet Making and Joinery programme offer students an opportunity to become skilled tradesmen leading to rewarding career prospects in the building and construction industry as well as an opportunity of becoming entrepreneurs.

Prasad lauds TVET studies

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) study programmes have played a significant role in the innovation and development of Fiji and the Pacific region. These are the words of FNU student Ramneel Ronal Prasad, who is currently pursuing the programme Certificate in Plumbing through the National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC).

"TVET programmes are high in demand both locally and overseas, and the respective industries that come under TVET pay trade-qualified people well," said Prasad.

"We are fortunate to have training institutions like NTPC that offer a range of TVET programmes and produce highly skilled graduates who have become successful entrepreneurs or are doing well after joining the workforce."

Having attained a Certificate in Cabinet Making from NTPC earlier, Prasad saw an opportunity to undertake training in the plumbing trade and become multi-skilled.

"There is a shortage of qualified and skilled tradespeople, which has created a demand, and I intend to capitalise on that by learning a new trade which will enable me to offer more services."

Prasad believes students will have a rewarding future if they can use their knowledge and master the skills and techniques

when undertaking their training.

"It is always good to learn from the best, and in my studies, I am blessed that NTPC provided me with the opportunity to become the best with the courses and programmes they offer. Undoubtedly, they provide the path to a stable career," he said.

Prasad, who works part-time as a taxi driver, said that he is on the journey of excelling to become a multi-skilled tradesman, just like many others.

"One should continue to develop themselves, so their demand increases, and that is the reason why I joined the plumbing course after completing my studies in Cabinet Making," he said.

"In the future, I am planning to expand my knowledge in different fields studying other courses offered by NTPC."

There are a lot of trades within the plumbing trade sector. The major ones include pipe fitter, gas fitter/technician, drain layer, marine plumber, roof plumber, and mechanical services technician.



The National Training and Productivity Centre's Build the Future is a monthly newsletter which aims to promote the Centre's activities to the wider community. This newsletter is produced by the Centres Customer Service, Research and Promotion team. For views or comments please email pravin.narain@fnu.ac.fj.

Build the future welcomes submission by staff and students for publication in the newsletter. Please send your suggestions, comments or articles for consideration to pravin.narain@fnu.ac.fj