

European Union Rural Training Centres Phase II  
Project

Graduates Tracer Survey

July – December 2002

*Preliminary results summary*

## **INTRODUCTION**

During the latter half of 2002 a nationwide survey was conducted of 240 rural training centre graduates who graduated from Rural Training Centres in the years 1995 to 2000. Presented here is an initial summary of the major findings.

## **Methodology**

For the main part of the survey (200 graduates), a cluster sample method was adopted. 20 clusters were selected randomly from the census enumeration areas. In each sample the survey team would find 10 graduates to interview. If they couldn't find ten in the district, they would move to the adjacent area until they found ten graduates. Graduates were interviewed with 50 questions, and several were selected in addition for qualitative analysis.

## **SUMMARY**

A wealth of relevant and significant data was collected and analysed. With the addition of our second purposive survey (40 graduates), qualitative data and our post survey discussions and checking of results, we now have a very clear picture of the demographics of RTC graduates, their experiences at RTCs and post-graduation, and their recommendations in the areas of curriculum and teaching quality.

The good news is that the graduates' experience at RTCs has been a positive one, and the practical skills they learnt have been useful to them in finding jobs in town, earning money at home, or being useful members of their rural community. These findings are significant, should not be underestimated, and are a boost to the RTCs.

However, it is clear that there is room for improvement in several areas. High on the wish list of graduates was an improvement in overall teaching quality, and requests that controlling authorities should employ only qualified teachers. Secondly, the curriculum used at RTCs came under scrutiny, more appropriate and practical curriculum being suggested in many areas. The teaching of agriculture was singled out as the core subject requiring the most improvement, with dissatisfaction with the English and Maths teaching and curriculum also very evident.

### **1. RTC STAFF QUALITY & GOVERNMENT RECOGNITION**

There are issues here for the education controlling authorities, the government and donors to look at. Clearly, the quality of the staff at RTCs needs to be improved. Many of the staff do not have trade or education qualifications, and the reason is money. There are plenty of qualified and skilled tradesmen and home-ec teachers in the Solomons, but even the best RTCs find it hard to recruit them because they cannot afford to pay proper wages. In addition, experienced and qualified staff often leave to take up other positions because they cannot manage on the salary.

Unless more resources are put into RTC staff pay, this situation will always remain. This survey clearly confirms the good and useful work being done by RTCs. The question is why government and donor resources (with the exception of the present EU/RTC project) are being funnelled only into the formal education system. Can the formal system point to the kinds of successes outlined by this survey?

### **2. YOUTH EMPLOYMENT**

There is much here for those interested in helping youth into employment or into starting small businesses. This age group (low to middle 20s) was particularly badly hit by the economic fallout from the ethnic tension, 30% saying they lost work because of it. In addition it is important to note that youth from Makira, Temotu and Central provinces were as badly hit as those from Guadalcanal and Malaita. Things have yet to recover for them, and a high proportion of them are now looking at establishing themselves in rural areas.

The experience of graduates at home underlines the importance of intervention at the extended family level. It is the family that helps pay graduates' fees, find them work, support them. Looking at graduates self-employment experience, relatively small loans (of less than a \$1000) could help them start off small activities, and are more likely to be repaid. On the other hand, it is unlikely that graduates will take on major building projects or start mechanic workshops in the short-term. Figures of \$20-30,000 were mentioned as start-up costs.

The time taken to gain experience post graduation is also another important finding of this survey. It is apparent from graduates own estimates that it takes several years post graduation experience (mostly at least 4-5 years or more) before they are ready and able to run their own larger-scale business.

There are important findings here too, if it is an RTC's mission to find graduates work in town. Practical attachments with companies are rated very highly as a way of gaining work experience, recognition by employers, and honing practical skills. Mechanics courses in particular must be more carefully designed with the centres' objectives in mind – are they teaching general repair and maintenance skills for staying at home and helping the community, or are they teaching specialist skills to enable the graduate to find work in a workshop? This has implications too for the equipment and training materials infrastructure required at centres.

### **3 WOMEN AND RTCs**

Clearly, women are not benefiting from the RTC experience as much as men. De facto enrolment policy means that women end up doing home economics at RTCs, nearly all of them excluded from building, joinery and mechanics. In addition the relative under-funding of home-economics and its unimaginative curriculum makes women's experience less attractive. It also appears that the drop-out rate from the centres is higher for women than for men.

There are messages here for RTCs and controlling authorities. They must put a higher priority on women's training –either by pushing more resources into home economics training materials and courses, or encouraging more women to be involved in traditionally male core subjects. The positive news is that centres are starting to implement a new syllabus for home –economics, now named life skills, (under development by the EU/RTC project) which is far broader and more imaginative, dealing with all the skills required to live in rural areas.

### **4 IMPROVEMENT IN COURSES**

There is a lot here for curriculum developers, controlling authorities and RTC principals and instructors. In particular there is a wake-up call for agriculture instructors. Most centres are falling somewhat short in this subject area, and not providing all graduates with the extra skills that could be useful at home, either for improved quality of life or to grow crops for sale. There is little chance that graduates will find paid employment with agriculture skills, that's why RTCs course designers must focus much more on skills needs in villages. They have to closely examine the quality and appropriateness of agricultural models and techniques are being taught, and make sure they are not, as indicated by many graduates, simply teaching 'gardening'.

Maths, English and Business teaching could also be improved. Although not the focus in RTCs, they are important. Maths needs to be integrated with the practical skill area, not separated from it. Likewise with business. All centres could copy the examples of those who use small centre projects or students own activities to teach simple business and accounting methods.

### **5 SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION RTC PROJECT**

For the European Union Rural Training Centres Phase II Project the data collected is invaluable, and significantly, the major findings confirm the direction and importance of the work that the project is doing.

In particular, the project is upgrading curriculum in all the major core subjects, as well as the compulsory subjects of English and Maths. The focus of the new curriculum is on practical methods of application and design of materials that are easy to use, both for the teacher and the students. In addition the project is running two parallel programmes to upgrade the quality of teaching staff at RTCs. The first is an in-service certificate of education course for all present RTC staff without teaching qualifications. Looking to the future, the project has also set up a teachers college for RTC graduates. The 2 year course presently prepares 20 graduates a year to teach practical skills in a way appropriate for rural living.

Other concerns expressed by the graduates about the quality of infrastructure and the availability of tools for training are also being addressed by the project which assists RTCs with grants for tools, equipment and enterprise development. For example, grants for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Work Programme (2002-03), total \$930,000. The usefulness of practical attachments in helping graduates upgrade or hone their practical skills has also been recognised by the project, which has organised over 70 work attachments with companies and NGOs.

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## FINDINGS

Presented here is a summary of the findings of the survey and discussions of the issues raised. A more comprehensive presentation of data and subsequent discussions will be available shortly. Also available will be details of survey methodology.

### **Part 1 About the graduates**

#### **1.1 Gender**

Male graduates greatly outnumber female graduates. There were only 31 female respondents in the sample of 200 graduates, only half current female student enrolment which has been at 30% for the last three years (2000-02). Although females may be slightly under-represented in the survey due to chance or bias, there is evidence that the number of female drop-outs from RTC courses is much higher than the number of male drop-outs, leading to a lower number of female graduates in the population.

One reason suggested for drop-outs were that females were less likely to get family support for fee payment than their brothers, and in the event of family economic difficulty, they would be the first to lose that support. Another reason was that misconduct at the RTC was likely to have more serious consequences for females, hence another reason why they would leave early. Yet another was that often females went to RTCs close to their family home, and could be recalled for family commitments.

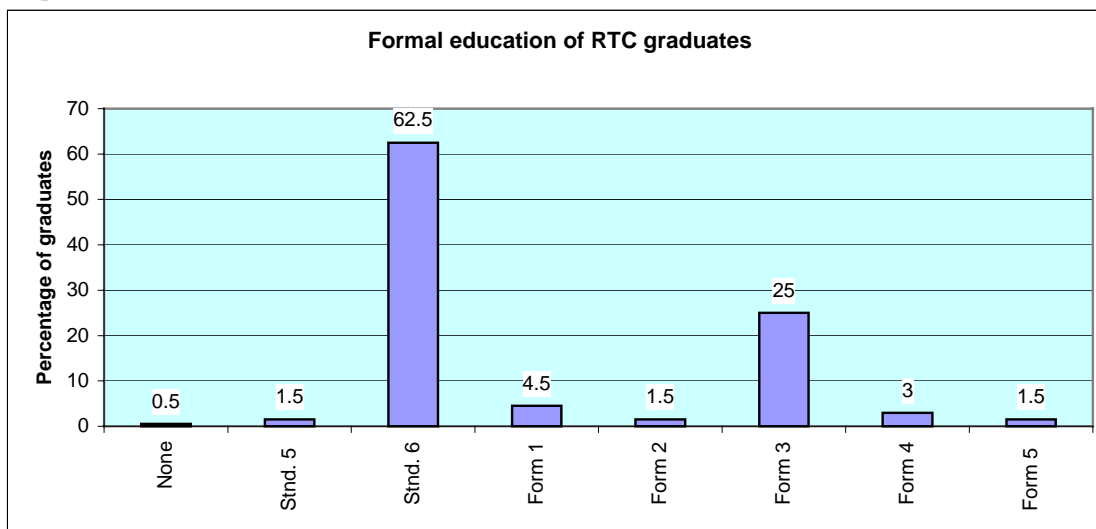
#### **1.2 Age**

Most RTCs take students in their early twenties, or to a lesser extent, their late teens. Males graduated on average at 25.6 years, and females at 24.8 years.

#### **1.3 Formal education level**

The majority of RTC graduates are standard six primary school push-outs. The other large group to be pushed out was at form three in secondary school.

**Graph 1 Formal education level**



##### **1.3.1 Enrolment policy and trends – education level of student intake**

Enrolment policy is determined by the controlling authority of the RTC. During the period surveyed, Church of Melanesia (COM) policy was to take mainly secondary school leavers, whilst Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) centres took a mixed intake. The trend however, at both these controlling authority centres is to take more secondary leavers and less primary push-outs. For example, the SDA centre, Batuna has only 3 standard 6 leavers out of 250 students (2003 enrolment), and Afutara, the other SDA centre has put a cap on the numbers of standard 6 leavers enrolled. This increasingly leaves only Catholic and South Seas Evangelic Church (SSEC) - owned centres providing spaces for standard 6 push-outs, of which there are an estimated 10,000 in the 15-24 age bracket (1999 census). With a rapidly expanding population, and the inability of the formal system to cope, more and more young people are being pushed-out at standard 6 level, and have a declining number of RTC places to go to. Controlling authorities must look at the issue of school push outs, as well as expanding either the size or number of the centres. Government should examine the formal system, and prioritise vocational education at the community high school level.

**Table 1 Formal education level of RTC graduates, by controlling authority of RTC**

Church controlling authority of RTC	Percentage Standard 6 leavers enrolled	Percentage Secondary leavers enrolled
Catholic	82%	18%
SSEC	73%	27%
United	64%	36%
SDA	55%	45%
Anglican	33%	67%

#### 1.4 Training centres attended

Graduates from 17 RTCs were represented in the main survey, which represents 77% (17/22) of the residential training centres in the country. However, of the remaining five, all but one started operations in the last few years, so would have had no graduates in the survey period.

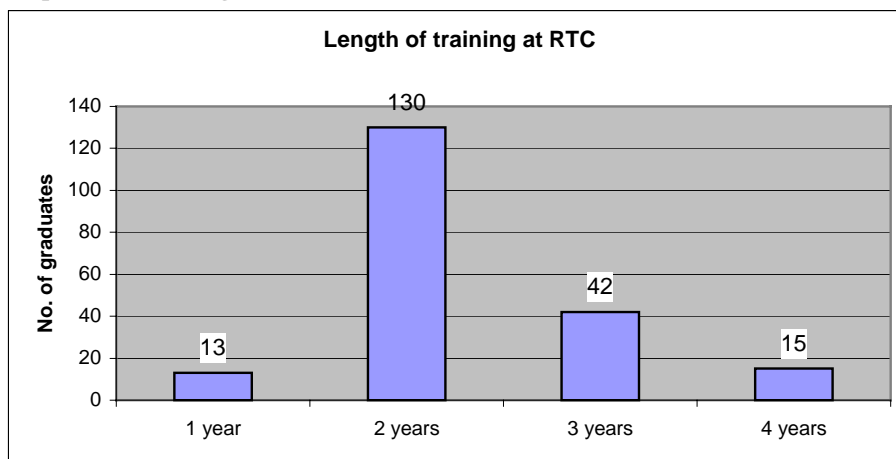
Two SDA training centres, Afutara and Batuna, supplied 42% of the sample (see table 2 below). One reason for this is the predominance of graduates from these two centres in the Honiara sample (16 / 20). Honiara is a frequent destination for these graduates because the training centres are active and effective in arranging practical attachments with businesses in Honiara. A further reason for the two training centres' predominance in the survey is the fact that SDA controlling authorities take more students from other churches. As denominations are geographically grouped, this would mean that in this nationwide survey graduates from these centres would be more likely to be picked up than those from other more localised centres.

**Table 2 Controlling authority of training centre attended**

Denomination	Number	Percentage	2001-2 Enrolment Percentage
SDA	84	42.0	23.2
Catholic	66	33.0	30.2
Anglican	24	12.0	28.5
SSEC	15	7.5	16.4
United	11	5.5	0.0

#### 1.5 Length of training

Residential RTC training is most commonly two years and the longest period of training in vocational schools is four years. The duration also includes practical attachments of up to one year.

**Graph 2 Course Length**

#### 1.6 Who chose the RTC and who pays the fees?

The choice of which RTC to go to was most commonly made by the graduate themselves (45%). The extended family was also very important in influencing graduates decisions (44.5%). The other significant influence was church personnel (8.5%). Most commonly, parents paid their children's school fee while a quarter of graduates (24%) paid for themselves, sometimes by working at the training centre during holidays. Younger graduates (under 20 when they completed training) were less likely to have paid the fees themselves.

### 1.7 How much are the fees at RTCs?

The average fees paid was \$558 per annum, with the mode \$200. Fees at Afutara (presently \$1,000 p.a.) and Batuna (\$1,500 p.a) are much higher than other RTCs and thus bias the average fees upwards.

### 1.8 Post-graduation training

Significantly, an RTC education can lead to further education. A quarter of the graduates (49) had done or were doing further training. SICHE (College of Higher Education) was the most common institution for further education. Churches were the next most common, mainly for theological and pastoral training.

**Table 3. Further training completed by type of institution and subject**

<b>Training Provider &amp; Course of study</b>	<b>Number. of graduates</b>
<b>College of Higher Education (SICHE)</b>	<b>19</b>
carpentry (7), mechanic (3), marine (2) teacher training (2), business studies (1) construction management (2), computing (1) English (1)	
Churches: theology (10), leadership (1)	11
Government: Ministry of Works: mechanics (3), carpentry (1)trades testing (2)	6
Non Government Organisations: literacy (1), Mother's Union (1), general (2)	4
Commercial: computing (2), electrical (1), business study (1)	4
University of the South Pacific: community studies (1), science (1), computing (1)	3
Rural Training Centre (RTC): carpentry (1), mechanics (1)	2

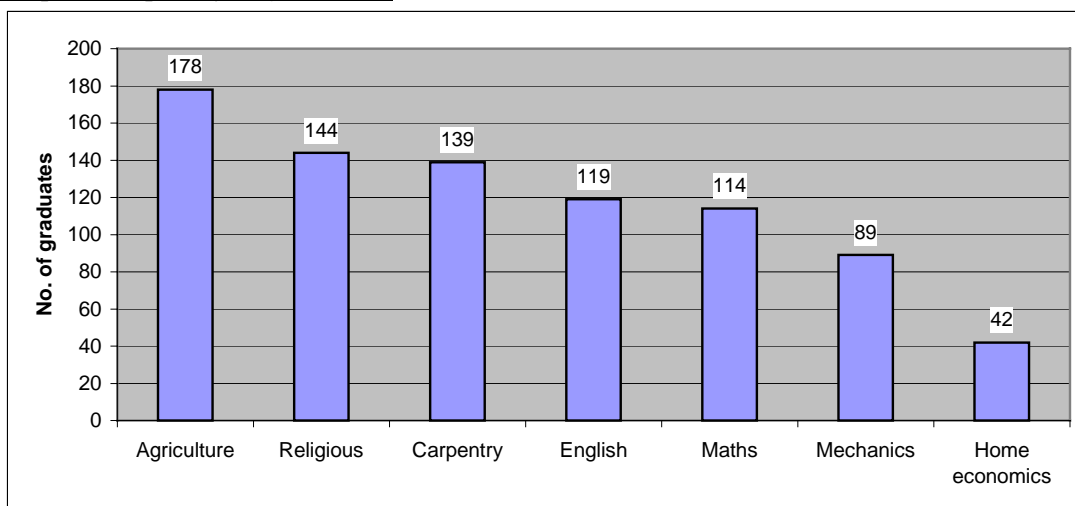
## Part 2 Courses, attachments and satisfaction

### 2.1 Subjects studied at RTCs

Nearly all the graduates took agriculture, as it is found on the timetable in nearly every RTC. As will be shown later (2.2, 2.3) this presence on the timetable has to be treated with caution. Findings from other questions reveal that in many cases, it is “gardening” rather than the learning of agricultural science.

Religion also features high on the list, reflecting the ownership and history of RTCs. Less than half of the students took mechanics as a compulsory subject. This is representative as less than half the centres have mechanics in the curriculum. The low numbers of females graduating is responsible for the low showing (21%) of home economics as a compulsory subject.

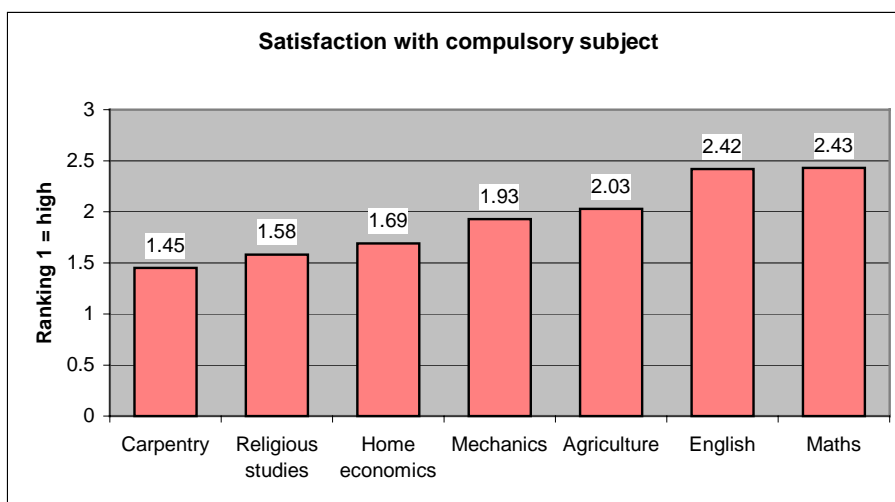
**Graph 3 Compulsory subject studied**



### 2.2 Satisfaction with compulsory subjects

This rating by graduates is very significant. Graduates overall rated their experience at RTCs highly. The satisfactory rating for main compulsory subjects was exactly 2 or good, and 43% thought that compulsory subjects were very good. Carpentry was the compulsory subject with the highest rating (1.45), and two-thirds of the scores for carpentry were top (1). Importantly, agriculture scored the lowest of the core subjects, excluding English and Maths.

**Graph 4 Satisfaction with compulsory subjects**

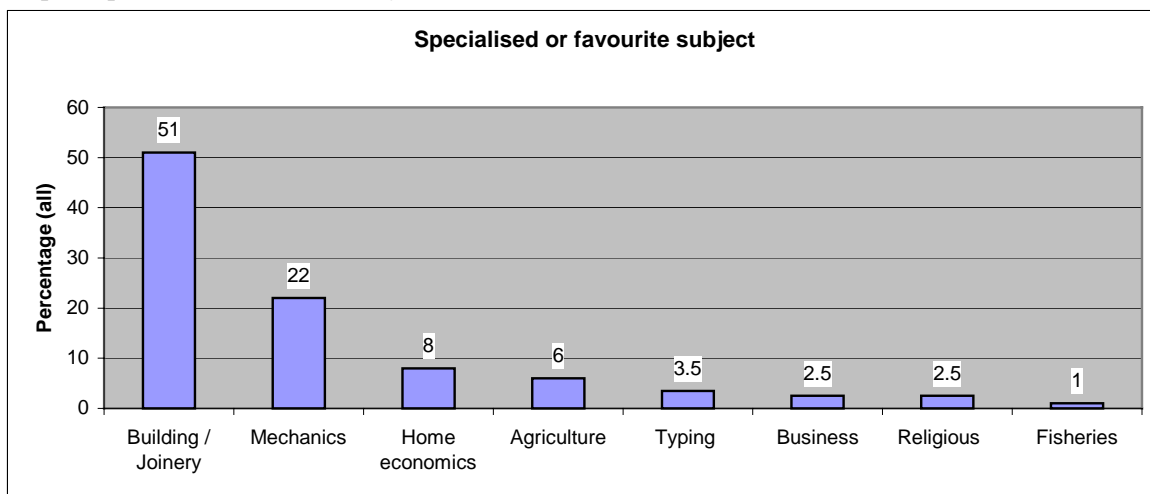


Although not true of every centre, there were many negative comments about agriculture: “just gardening”, “just planting cassava and cabbage”, “I learnt nothing new”, which may explain its low satisfaction and usefulness rating. Clearly there is a wake-up call for RTCs and controlling authorities in these subject areas.

### 2.3 Specialisation

Graduates were asked if they specialised in a particular subject, or in the case of a non-specialising RTC, which was their favourite course.

**Graph 5 Specialised or favourite subject**



This shows how for males, building & joinery and mechanics are all important. Significantly, nearly all the graduates who took agriculture did not specialise in it. Again, the low showing of home economics is due to the low number of female graduates.

#### 2.4 Most useful topics and skills within specialty subjects

Graduates were asked what were the most useful topics or skills with their specialty subjects. The open ended responses have been summarised and provide very useful detailed information for curriculum designers and teachers. Carpentry and building topics accounted for nearly 56% of the responses and have been summarised separately. All parts of the curriculum were found useful by the graduates. All the skills required to build a “permanent” house are listed, as are those used to make furniture. With mechanics, skills for repairing and maintaining two-stroke engines such as outboard motors and chainsaws were most commonly listed.

#### 2.5 Practical attachments during training

Several centres (particularly SDA, but also some COM) arrange practical work attachments for their graduates. 121 of the 200 graduates interviewed had done a practical attachment of some kind, and majority rated the experience very highly. SDA centres tend to organise their attachments for six or twelve months in town. Only a quarter did their practical attachments at home.

**Table 4 Location of practical attachments**

Where practical attachments were done	Number	Percentage of responses
Honiara	51	42.1
Other towns	18	14.9
Rural Training Centres	11	9.1
Home	29	24.0
Other - schools (3) ships (2),	12	9.9
Total	121	100

## **PART 3 Graduates location, work history and experience**

### **3.1 Home or Town?**

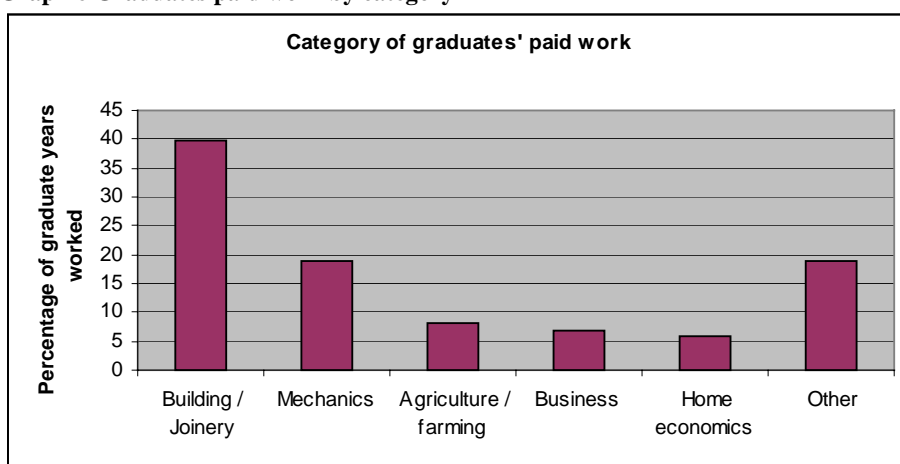
Urban drift is a concern for many in the Solomons, yet the survey found nearly 60% of graduates at home, and a rising trend for them to be there. This is hard to analyse however, as it can be seen from the effects of the ethnic tension (Part 4) that many left town and went home. Importantly, many graduates went home after graduation, and a large proportion of graduates is always based at home.

From our interviews with graduates and qualitative data, it is evident that there graduates come and go between town and rural areas. In the Solomons as elsewhere in the world, this age group is the most mobile and migratory group in the population. Graduates in this age group can be expected to move between home and town as a normal part of their youth experience.

### **3.2 Type of paid work done by graduates after training**

This question was interpreted as kinds of paid work done by graduates and was answered for each year after graduation. Thus a graduate who did the same job each year for 5 years is recorded 5 times.

**Graph 6 Graduates paid work by category**



Significantly, skills in building and joinery were most likely to help graduates into paid work, although this of course reflects the number of specialised carpentry graduates in the sample. It has also been remarked that the level of skills required to work on a building site may be lower than required by a mechanic to repair an engine. Agricultural skills (as possessed by the graduates) were unlikely to help to find paid work, as were home economic skills possessed by women graduates. In the other jobs categories, many graduates were not using their skills - house girl, security guard, seaman, meter reading, tour guide, special constable, data recorder and other single categories.

### **3.3 Who helped the graduates find paid work**

More than half the graduates (52%) who found waged employment did so through their immediate family, relatives and same language group ('wantoks'). A quarter of graduates (27%) found work themselves or applied directly, but virtually all the graduates found work through personal connections.

### **3.4 Who graduates worked with / for**

For each year worked, graduates were asked who they worked with or for. This included both paid work, self employment, and unpaid work. Over 40% worked with for themselves, their families or relatives. Just 16% worked for companies, and 13% for communities. Other significant employers were the church (5%), RTCs (4.3%) and schools (2.9%).

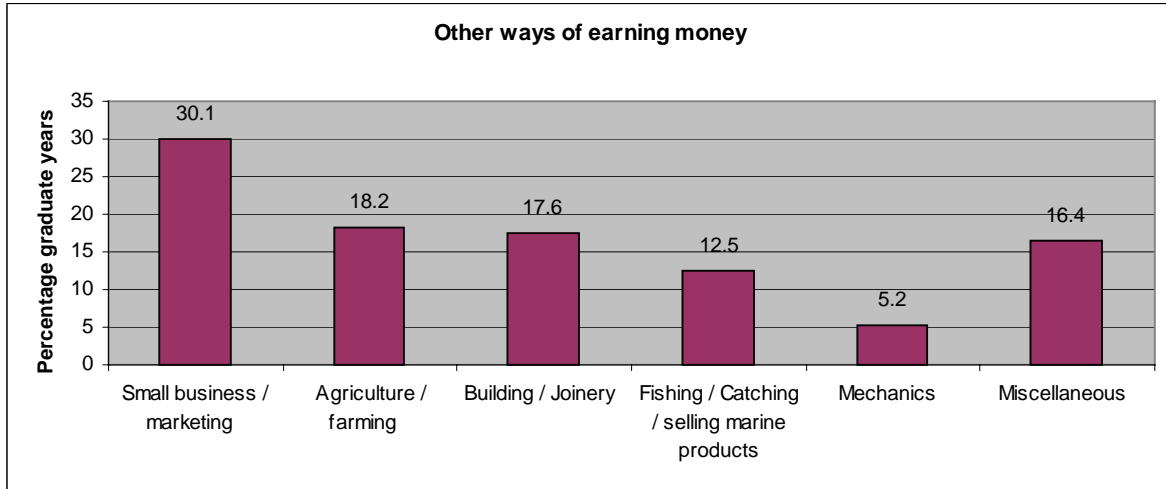
### **3.5 Wages and salaries of graduates**

Around 60% of graduates' work experience was said to be in paid jobs or earning money. Looking at pay, there is a rising trend with median wages, as one would expect, with graduates earning more in years 4-5 (\$450 per month) than years 1-3 (\$300 per month). These earning are quite low, and would be comparable to a labourer's wages, below those offered to public servants.

### 3.6 Other ways that graduates earned money

Graduates were asked what other ways they earned money in each of the years after completing training. Over 61% (123) of graduates said they had earned money other than waged or salaried work. Small business or 'marketing' was the most common means of earning extra income, followed by agriculture, carpentry and fishing. Marketing and small business included bakery (18), sewing / selling clothes (16), selling betel nut (9) Timber / logging (9), carvings / artefacts (7), fuel (7), small shop (6), cigarettes (6), other (5), unspecified (16).

**Graph 7 Other ways of earning money**



#### Part 4 Effects Of The Ethnic Tension 1999-2001

Graduates were particularly badly hit by the ethnic tension of 1999-2001. Overall a total of 60 or 30% of the graduates said they had to finish work because of the tension while most of these 55 (27.5% of the sample) said they had to go home.

**Table 5 Effect of the ethnic tension by province of graduate (ranked by percentage lost jobs)**

Province	Number of graduates	Finished work	% Finished work
Guadalcanal	30	13	43.3%
Temotu	10	4	40.0%
Central	10	4	40.0%
Makira	20	7	35.0%
Malaita	60	20	33.3%
Honiara	20	6	30.0%
Isabel	10	2	20.0%
West	30	3	10.0%
Choiseul	10	1	10.0%
Total	200	60	30.0%

#### 4.1 Who was most affected?

In terms of numbers, graduates from Malaita and Guadalcanal were most affected, but if we examine the proportion of graduates in the sample according to province, there was an almost equal impact on graduates from Malaita, Guadalcanal, Makira, Honiara, Central and Temotu, with lesser effects on West, Isabel and Choiseul. This reflects the fact that graduates from all the provinces were in Guadalcanal and Honiara before and during the ethnic tension.

According to the census data, an estimated 35,000 (8.5% of the population), were displaced in the first wave of displacement in 1999. This compares with 27.5% of the RTC graduates after both sets of displacement in 1999 and 2000. Thus graduates were disproportionately affected by the ethnic tension because of their age (as the most mobile population group) and are more likely to be seeking employment opportunities.

**Table 6 Province Left**

Province left	Number
Honiara	37
Guadalcanal	7
West	4
Makira	3
Central	3
Isabel	1

**Table 7 Destination Province**

Destination Province	Number
Malaita	17
Guadalcanal	11
Makira	9
Central	4
Honiara	4
West	3
Temotu	4
Isabel	2

#### 4.2 Where did they leave and where did they go?

Nearly two-thirds of those affected left Honiara, and Malaitan graduates left other provinces such as West and Makira. Malaita, Guadalcanal and Makira received more return migrants than the other provinces.

## Part 5 Usefulness of RTC training

### 5.1 Usefulness of training for the family or at home

Graduates were very positive about the usefulness of their RTC training for home or family, with 90% saying it was either very useful or useful. Just 4% thought it had no value. Building and joinery was still top of the list, skills involved in building permanent houses and making furniture singled out. In agriculture, piggery, poultry and vegetable growing skills were mentioned. Significantly, mechanics was lower down the list for useful skills at home, although out-board motor (OBM), chainsaw and truck repair skills were specifically mentioned.

Several graduates and others have commented about the problems of applying mechanics fully at home. In particular, the requirement of owning a large number of specialised tools and the non-availability of spare parts in rural areas are a constraint. RTCs should be very aware of these findings when designing mechanics courses.

### 5.2 Why is RTC training useful for home?

Frequently mentioned was building and joinery graduates' ability to build houses and other structures. Repairing OBMs is also valued at home, as well as "trade skills" such as plumbing, electrical and mechanics. However many responses were not directly related to the skills, rather focused on assisting or helping the family or the community. Leadership skills in the church, community, with youth and women were said to be valued by more than 10% of graduates.

**Table 8 Areas of Training useful for home**

Areas of training	Frequency	Percentage of graduates
<b>Building / carpentry</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>31.5%</b>
building houses (31), general (16) churches, clinic, school (9), carpentry (7)	-	-
<b>Assist / help family and community,</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>30.5%</b>
general (23), community work / activities (21) financial help to others (11), family/relatives (6)	-	-
<b>Mechanics</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>12.5%</b>
OBM (17), chainsaw (3), general (1), truck (1) generator (1), engines (1)	-	-
<b>Leadership</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>12.0%</b>
<b>Practical skills and knowledge:</b>	<b>22</b>	
general (12), trade skills (8), fishing (1), canteen (1).	-	-
<b>Agriculture</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5.0%</b>
<b>Home economics: sewing(6) sewing machine (1)</b>	<b>7</b>	-
<b>Other positive values</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9.5%</b>

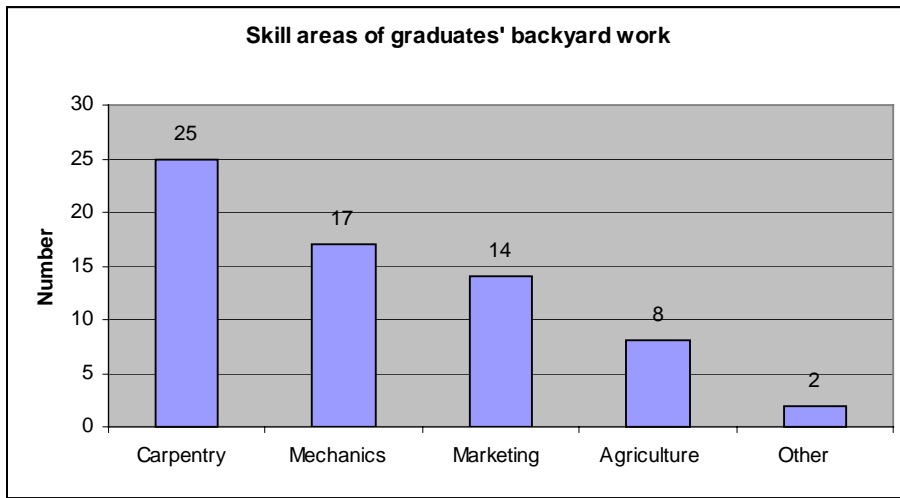
### 5.3 Use of RTC training skills for paid jobs

To assess the relevance of RTC training for paid employment, graduates were asked whether they used skills they had learned and if so, what skills they applied. 127 /138 (92%) replied that they used RTC skills. Again building and joinery were most useful for finding paid work, mechanics and home economics/typing coming after. Again agriculture courses were not considered useful to find paid work.

### 5.4 Usefulness of training for private or 'backyard business'

Nearly a third of graduates had done some kind of after hours work, mainly in town. Again reflecting the nature of the graduates skills, building and joinery skills were the most use. Mechanics, marketing and agricultural skills were also used. ,

**Graph 8 Backyard business, skill areas**



## Part 6 Self employment

Most RTCs specify directly or indirectly the goal of self-employment in their mission statements. To give graduates skills to lead useful and productive lives in their communities. However, this may not necessarily mean work for cash. It may mean working for the community. Graduates were asked if they had started their own business or project or had been involved in a community business or project. If they answered 'yes' they were then asked a series of questions about the activity and the relevance of their RTC training. There was ambivalence in answers related to community projects that led to some confusion in the answers.

### 6.1. Own businesses or projects started by graduates

Nearly half (46%) of graduates said they had started their own business or project or community project, and that nearly three quarters of these were still operating. On the face of it an impressive result, this needs to be treated with caution, firstly because community projects are included, and secondly there is no way of verifying or defining "still operating".

**Table 9 Graduates' home business and project activities**

<b>Small business</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>52.7%</b>
Canteen (small shop) (22), petrol & kerosene depot (15) bus / taxi service (3), 2 <sup>nd</sup> hand clothes (2) selling tobacco / betel nut (3), alcohol (1), rice (1)	-	-
<b>Agriculture</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18.7%</b>
piggery (5), poultry (3), cocoa (3), vegetables (3), cattle (2), honey (1)	-	-
<b>Home Economics:</b> bakery (8), sewing (3)	<b>11</b>	<b>12.1%</b>
<b>Carpentry:</b> building (9), joinery (2)	<b>11</b>	<b>12.1%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13.2%</b>
Fisheries (3), eco-timber / teak (3), mechanics (2), sign writing (1), treasurer (Mothers Union), World Vision (1), church work	-	-

In addition, closer examination shows that more than half (53%) of these were small trading operations, such as a small shop or fuel depot rather than productive enterprises. Significantly, carpentry and mechanics, the most important areas of paid employment (waged or private) are of much less use for self-employment, especially so soon after graduation. Most commonly, the need for start-up capital was cited as a constraint.

### 6.2 Origin and amount of start up capital for small businesses

Nearly two-thirds of graduates provided their own capital for starting their projects, with immediate family or other relatives the other significant source. Outside organisations and donors were insignificant.

Nearly two thirds (63%) of graduates started businesses with less than \$1,000. The five who had received loans from the DBSI loan scheme (set up under EU/RTC phase 1) averaged \$7,800. Only 12 graduates said they had not paid their loans back.

Significantly, loan repayment is very poor in the Solomons, with many defaulters. In this case, the small amount of the loans and their origin is likely to have improved chances of repayment. The DBSI loan scheme was wound up in 1998 with outstanding payments of \$1.5 million, and only a small percentage of loans repaid.

### 6.3 Reasons to start own business

Helping one's self, family, community, or meeting basic needs were the most common reasons given for starting a business, comprising over half of responses.

### 6.4 Who helped graduate in the business started

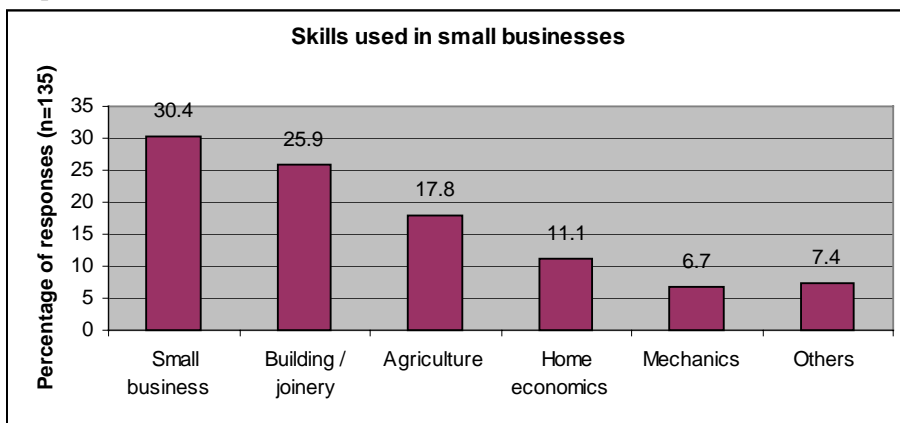
The survey was also interested in which people are significant in helping graduates start their own business. Two-thirds of the graduates who started their own business or project were helped by their

immediate families, relatives and wantoks, but a quarter (26 %) of the graduates started their business/project without help from others.

### 6.5 Relevance of RTC training for graduates own business / project

Very positive for RTCs, 79% of those starting businesses (71 of 90 respondents) said that they had used skills acquired in RTCs training skills. Business skills were mentioned by a third, and a further quarter mentioning building and joinery skills. 24 graduates mentioned agriculture skills and 15 home-economic skills. Again, significantly, mechanic skills were not important in helping graduates into self employment.

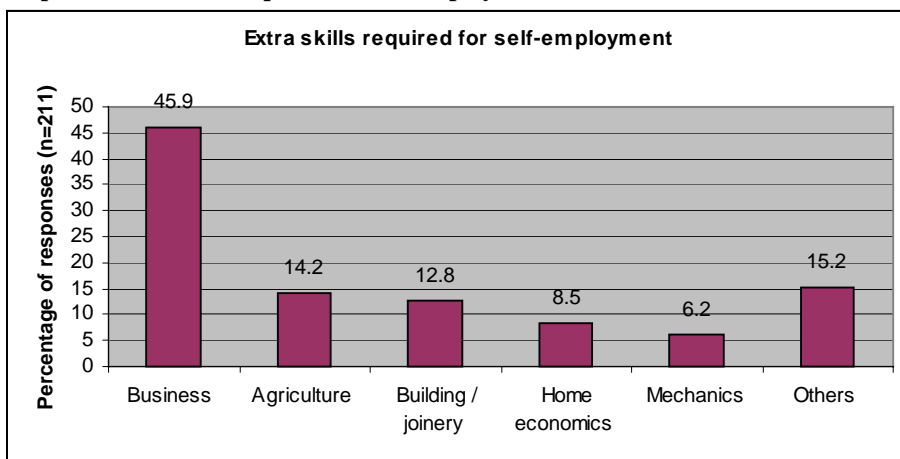
Graph 9 Skills used in small businesses



### 6.6 Extra skills or training needed for self employment

Graduates were asked what extra training or skills they needed for self employment, and what other courses would have been useful. The results from these questions are particularly significant for RTCs and curriculum developers. Clearly graduates feel that they are not getting enough business skills at RTCs. This is understandable, in many centres business is not a core subject. It needs to be taught to all graduates and integrated with the centre's own business activities. Second on the wish list is agriculture, and this would fit with responses to previous questions(2.2, 2.3). Agriculture curriculum (like all curricula) has to be relevant to graduates needs in villages, and the subject has to be taught as much more than gardening.

Graph 10 Extra skills required for self-employment

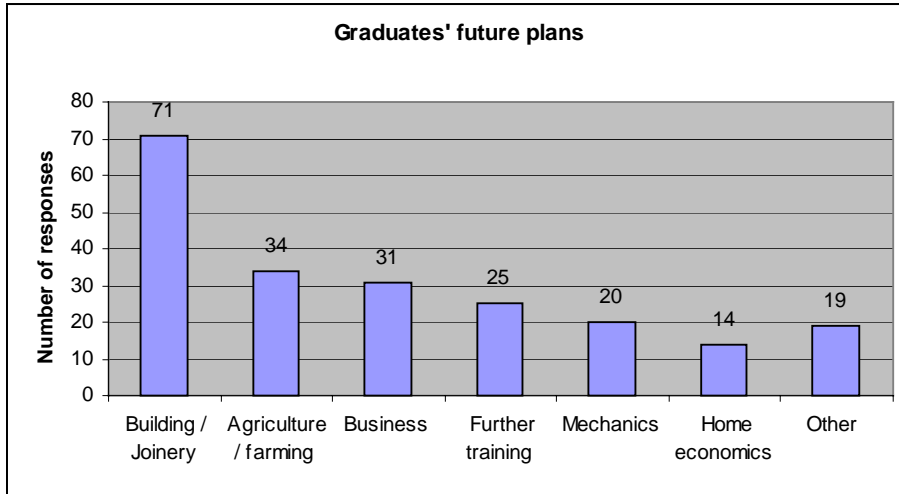


**Part 7 Graduates future plans**

**7.1 Ambitions for the future**

Graduates were asked what were their hopes or ambitions for the future, and the majority saw themselves as self employed. Again building and joinery was top of the list related to the number in the sample, with many graduates hoping to become contractors, or to have their own joinery workshop. Agriculture was second on the list, with piggery and poultry projects mentioned the most. Small businesses such as small shops or fuel depots was next. Further training was mentioned by 25 of the graduates and several mentioned studying to become a RTC instructor at Vanga Teachers College. 15 hoped to be teaching in RTCs in the future.

**Graph 11 Skills areas for graduates future plans**



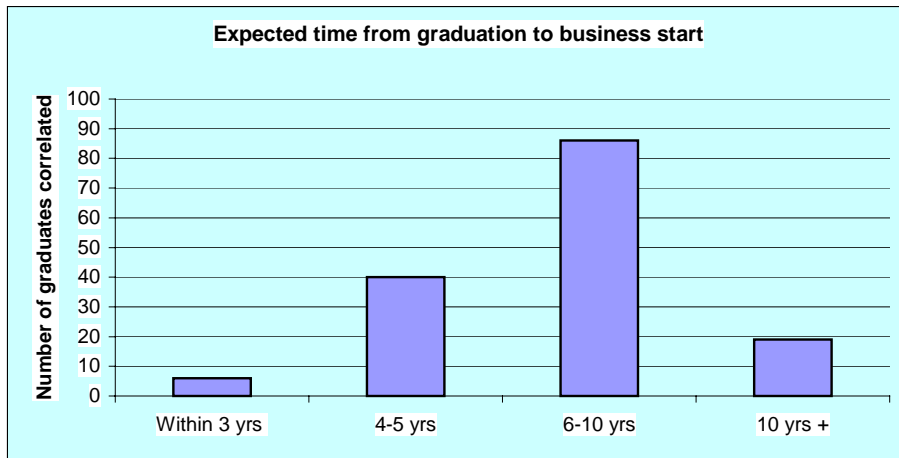
**7.2 Location of future plans**

Nearly three-quarters of graduates see their future plans taking place at home or in rural areas, and only 10% specifically mentioned Honiara as the location. This is a big change from a few years ago when nearly every RTC student interviewed mentioned their intention to go to Honiara. Undoubtedly, Honiara is now much less attractive due to the effects of the ethnic tension and economic downturn. Significantly, though, Honiara was never seen as a place for self-employment but rather for paid work. Graduates looking to be self-employed would face competition and a difficult working environment in town, not benefiting from the natural resources and community help found at home.

**7.3 Timing of future plans?**

A third of the graduates said they would be able to implement their plans in a year's time, and a further 20% within three years. The most significant findings come when the timescale mentioned by the graduate is added to the time since they graduated. Of the 151 graduates correlated in this way, 40 took 4-5 years to be ready for self-employment, whilst 86 expect to take between 6 and 10 years before they are ready.

**Graph 12 Time from graduation to business start**



The majority of graduates are not ready to implement their plans until at least 5 years after graduation. Those respondents with the longest period before they are ready (10 years or more) were mainly builders / joiners and mechanics. Other open ended answers to this question indicated that the need for relatively large amounts of money, capital & tools are needed to start up these kinds of small businesses. Tools to set up a workshop are estimated at SBD 20-30,000. The overall conclusion is that a 5-10 year horizon is not unreasonable for the majority of graduates planning their future work or business.

#### 7.4 Home or Town? Recommended destination for graduates

Nearly two thirds of graduates recommended home when they were asked whether they would recommend future graduates to go to town to work or go home to work. Only 5% recommended going to town, although this increased to 15% if the graduate had appropriate skills for town.

#### 7.5 Reasons for recommending graduates to go home

Helping family and community and utilising skills were the most commonly stated reasons for going home. This is a very significant finding, indicating that many graduates are not motivated to train to get a job, rather to assist their community or family and be a useful or productive person. Home is clearly the recommended option, and the ethnic tension and economic decline over the past three years is an important factor in this.

**Table 10 Reasons to go home**

Go home	Number of Responses
Helping community or family	85
Application of skills	74
Improving community and living standards	26
Others – especially start business / project / self employment (8)	16
Educating others	13
Town is worse	12
Home is better	10

#### 7.6 Reasons to go to town

Although there is probably some courtesy bias in answers, gaining experience, skills, knowledge and confidence (44) were more frequently mentioned by graduates than getting jobs or money (32).

If graduates had town experience they were asked why they had gone, and this provides a useful list of reasons why young people go to town. (Table 11 below)

**Table 11 Reasons graduates went to town**

Reason	Number of graduates
Get experience	17
Family live / work for family in town	15
Job availability / opportunity	10
Get money / build capital / finances	7
Get money to pay for tools	7
Utilise skills / knowledge	7
Insufficient opportunity / help at home	3
Temporary - will go back	3
Others	3
Pay for further studies, school fees	2

## Part 8 Suggested changes for Rural Training Centres

This section of the survey was very revealing in identifying problem areas at RTCs. Graduates were asked what changes they would like to see if they were to repeat their RTC years. Up to five open responses were allowed. 500 responses were given, and have been summarised into 3 categories: courses and subject material; teaching quality and methods; and training facilities. 40% of the changes suggested by the graduates referred to teaching quality and methods, 40% to improvements in infrastructure and training materials available, and 19% referred to changes to specific courses or topics.

### 8.1 Improvements in teaching quality and methods suggested by graduates

Very significantly, 202 responses were coded in this area, and half of these specifically related to improving the quality, qualifications, experience and performance of teaching staff. This was the single most important set of issues identified by 100 (50%) of the graduates in the study. This data provides confirmation of the need for two of the major components of the EU / RTC project – teacher training and curriculum development.

**Table 12 Suggested improvements in teaching quality and methods**

Issue	Frequency
Improve teaching quality and qualifications: Especially -more qualified / upgraded / trained teachers (85)	105
Improve curriculum syllabus	90
Discipline / rules	7

### 8.2 Changes to facilities and equipment that graduates want

198 graduates suggested the need for improved infrastructure, more than half of these referred to the quality of buildings such as classrooms, dormitories and workshops. Better equipment and tools were significant issues for change mentioned by 20% of graduates. This data again confirms the need for another component of the EU / RTC project, which is provision of tools and equipment for students and also more recently, graduates. Food and diet, in particular providing breakfast, was mentioned by 15% of graduates. Student rations are a major cost at RTCs, and this may indicate some cost savings by the RTC. It also underlines the poor performance of food production in some RTCs and their lack of available garden land.

**Table 13 Suggested improvements in infrastructure, and equipment at RTCs**

Issue	Frequency
Improved infrastructure	111
Improved equipment / tools	40
Improved food / diet / breakfast	30
Improved hygiene	5
Other improvements	12

### 8.3 Changes to courses and subjects suggested by graduates

96 graduate responses referred directly to specific courses or topics within courses. These suggestions, together with others on these core subjects are very useful for curriculum developers and RTC instructors

**Table 14 Changes to courses suggested**

Subject	Frequency
Mechanics	26
Building / joinery	24
Agriculture	17
Home economics	9
Other topics and subjects	20