QUALIFICATIONS AND PATHWAYS

Emerging Themes and New Directions

Policy Development Paper
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Foreword

This is the first policy development paper in a series that the Victorian Qualifications Authority (VQA) intends to publish on issues related to post-compulsory qualifications.

The VQA Board has expressed its aim as ‘making qualifications work for Victorians’. Its responsibilities to the Minister for Education and Training include the monitoring and analysis of student achievement, and the development of ways in which to improve linkages between qualification and in which to improve access to learning for all Victorians. To meet those responsibilities, the VQA Board commissions papers which provide it with analyses of the wide range of education and training data with a view to informing its decisions on current and future qualifications policy.

This paper aimed to provide the VQA Board with a reflective survey of research studies and program evaluations drawn from the previous year to draw out policy implications and trends for consideration during the VQA Board’s strategic planning process.

The VQA Board found the analysis in this paper to be helpful in its forward planning and drew out specific issues from it to include in the VQA 2004–06 corporate plan. The Board agreed that a wider education and training audience might find the paper helpful, particularly the concept of ‘productive life’ as an organising principle for qualifications development for individuals in later life.

We welcome feedback on the paper and on its organising themes – and especially welcome comments from stakeholders on the extent to which the issues which they see affecting their organisation’s future use of qualification are covered in this paper. If there are other issues not covered, we would like to hear about them.

Any comments or feedback should be sent to Dr Carmel Brown at the VQA, either by post to the VQA’s address or by email to brown.carmel@edumail.vic.gov.au. We thank Carmel for her work in preparing this paper. We look forward to comments from stakeholders to help us develop qualifications policies that meet the needs of all Victorians.

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Contents

Section 1 Overview and Key Findings 5

Section 2 Central Organising Themes 7
  2.1 Pathways and transition 7
  2.2 Restructuring of post-compulsory initiatives 9
  2.3 Movement and recognition of learning 13
  2.4 Employability/generic skills and capacities 15
  2.5 Dual purpose – employment and social factors 18

Section 3 Conclusion 22

Section 4 Where to From Here? 23

Appendix A Glossary 24

Appendix B Sources and References 25
Section 1  Overview and Key Findings

This report, written in 2003, was designed to assist the Victorian Qualifications Authority (VQA) Board to fulfil its legislative responsibilities, and to act as an important source informing its strategic planning.

A previous paper to the Board described patterns of participation and outcomes and identified key findings for the VQA’s information. That paper has been a reference point for the research for this report.

This report is more extensive in scope and interpretive in purpose. It has scanned the education policy and research arenas to ask: what qualification issues have received attention in post-compulsory state, national, and international research and policy? Are there any connecting themes? What is missing? Out of this analysis the paper offered an update of the qualifications landscape for consideration by the VQA in planning of future work.

Sources for this paper have been state education and training departments and offices, national policy bodies and national and international education and training research organisations and publications.

The research scan has identified the following five main themes:

1. Pathways and transition
2. Restructuring of post-compulsory initiatives
3. Movement and recognition of learning
4. Employability/generic skills and capacities
5. Dual purpose – employment and social factors

These five themes form the basis of organisation for this report.

Key findings

The key findings emerging from the report are:

- There has been progress in both the interpretation and strategies to enhance a variety of pathways, as evidenced by recent Year 11 and 12 initiatives in various states. Research shows that pathways can be various and non-linear. There is further scope for qualifications development to encompass this feature.

- Years 11 and 12 programs and certificates are a source of attention across the nation. One difference in provision in the various states is the option for either single or dual certificates. Given the successful initiation of the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL), there are solid grounds from which to re-pose the benefits and implications of single and dual certificate options (refer section 2.1).
The notion of productive life is identified in this report. Productive life refers to education and training which is about development – of individuals, community and state. It encompasses but is not contained by employment. This idea is supported by pathways research and post-compulsory initiatives which incorporate social factors (refer sections 2.1 and 2.2). It is also evident in Generic/Employability skills literature (refer section 2.4).

Policy initiatives and commentary are ambivalent about the connection between the two realms of employment and social development. The current state of play with Generic/Employability skills, and the Vocational Education and Training (VET) implications of unemployment, exemplify this tension (refer sections 2.4 and 2.5).

An orientation to productive life may call for the introduction of a new qualification development, where an encompassing qualification incorporates the range of life involvements, and of vocational education and training opportunities.

Learning-conducive work is identified as a central dynamic of VET in the review of Training Packages Phase 1 (Chappell et al. 2003) and in workplace learning literature (refer section 2.4). If correct, it implies an increased importance of recognition of what counts in learning and assessment, and subsequently for strategies to optimise the capacity and worth of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Recognition of Current Competency (RCC).

In this recognition there may be a case for a new standard way of working out the worth of what counts. This would be an advance on the current endeavours to smarten up the process, and to press upon the sector the importance of RPL/RCC (refer section 2.3).
Section 2 Central Organising Themes

2.1 Pathways and transition

There has been progress in both the interpretation and the strategies to enhance pathways. This is evidenced in the recent reorganisation of Year 11 and 12 provision in various states. In Victoria this is also evident in such initiatives as Managed Individual Pathways (MIPS), On Track, the setting up of Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) and the introduction of VCAL.

While these developments have been occurring it is useful to consider what the VQA June monitoring Report had to say by way of proposals for action on pathways:

If pathways are ‘rarely unbroken’… consideration needs to be given as to how a knowledge of such histories, including those moments of ‘biographical discontinuity’ can best be assembled to inform the policy deliberations about qualifications and related initiatives…(p. 30)

This section scans research and policy on pathways and transition. It raises the questions: Are current qualifications sufficiently allowing for the non-linear aspect? Is there a need for a qualification that better suits the notion of learning platforms as coined by Kirby (2000) and others?

Local research, that explores factors affecting completion rates, as well as international case studies research, makes plain that pathways are various and include non-linear histories.¹

Lawy & Bloomer’s work among young people in regional England emphasises the notion that transition projects need to take into account the intricacies of biographies to inform strategy (2003). In their ‘tracking’ of participation of particular individuals in VET over time, Lawy & Bloomer observe that each learner seems to reconstitute their pathway, and that at times this can mean the postponement of work identities. The authors identify the central influence of personal life circumstances, and a ‘by chance’ and yet necessary identification with practices of particular workplaces. Their claim is that the latter identification is a stronger impetus for continued learning, than education and training involvement of itself.

Smyth (2003) also traces the course of learning among young people. He advances Wyn and Dwyer’s ‘new patterns of transition’ (2000) to describe ‘multiple forms of transition’ (p. 127). Smyth’s fieldwork comprised interviews with 209 young people in South Australia who had not completed, or were at risk of not completing, secondary schooling.

The qualification context of Smyth’s research is a single post-compulsory certificate. Smyth argues that the young people negotiate their sense of agency with their measurement of the worth of

¹ Schofield (2002) But individual learners… ‘swirl’ – dropping in and out of different learning sites and institutions and transferring freely between them and between work and study. Linear pathways embodied in traditional models of learner progression from education to work, as conceived by policy-makers, no longer apply (p. 150).
credentials: ‘The value of the credential to them was only one among many considerations they were struggling with’ (p. 136).

Closer to home, the recent Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission (VLESC) Consultation Paper (2003) also refers to ‘varied and uncertain pathways and outcomes’ (p. 5). It cites Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) data to exemplify the point: in the 1990s 29.5 per cent of young people in the seven years immediately post school experienced either brief or extended periods of interruption from work or study (p. 6).

This data is made more intricate by different experiences of particular groups.

A University of Melbourne/RMIT report (2001) suggests that those without any post-school qualifications were more likely to want to complete courses. However, it also registered ‘delays’ in completion of entry level certificates. Furthermore, males were significantly more likely than females to delay (p. 4). The report contends that those with more consolidated schooling ‘are more likely to see their new study in terms of specialised knowledge. Those with limited schooling background… emphasise the role of the new course as a study pathway or in terms of developing confidence as a person and as a learner’ (p. 5).

The VLESC paper does not explicitly draw out the implications of interrupted pathways, instead it refers to DE&T initiatives, which are ‘found to be providing benefit’: VCAL, LLENS, MIPS, On Track, as well as the efforts of providers (2003, p. 7).

The VLESC paper also affirms the Credit Matrix as a step in streamlining credit arrangements (p. 11). In addition to credit for attainment, it also lists flexibility of delivery and individual support as core requirements to optimise post-compulsory provision and pathways (pp. 4–5; see also Marsh & MacDonald 2002).

One implication that can be derived from the preceding research is the extent to which qualifications can encompass what appear to be unplanned but strategic pathway moments. If these moments are ‘on the job’ as pinpointed by Bloomer and Lawy, recognition would appear to rest on a workplace culture which was itself alert to learning – formal and informal – or on a relationship of a company or particular employees with the learning ‘industry’. This aspect also coincides with the discussion of ‘learning-conducive work’ that is pinpointed in the Phase 1 review of Training Packages (Chappell et al. 2003; refer section 4). The VQA project on recognition of informal learning may have some scope to investigate this potential.

Given that career trajectories of a section – at least – of learners are difficult to predict, one challenge is to recognise and incorporate versatility (of arenas of learning) as well as flexibility of entry and exit points. In practice this reinforces the potential of the credit matrix. It also may call for a new qualification arrangement to better encompass flexibility of purpose and focus.
2.2 Restructuring of post-compulsory initiatives

Years 11 and 12 provision and certification are a source of policy attention across states. A snapshot shows that there is a high level of synchronicity in the approaches and plans as well as particular differences.

The common policy interests are pathways, VET in schools, support for individuals and attention to disengaged learners, developing community and industry links, recording and counting of broader domains of learning. Differences are also identifiable. For instance, in Queensland, there is an explicit focus on Year 10 as a transition year and a mandatory underpinning of individual student plans. The outstanding point of difference in the more general set of orientations across states, is the respective adoption of a dual or single post-compulsory qualification.

This section highlights some pertinent aspects of an emerging approach. In particular, it broaches the dual and single certificate option.

What are the features of the state initiatives? What are the qualification options?

The following summary of initiatives is not exhaustive. It is selected on the basis of status of initiatives. For instance, in the Northern Territory a report is currently being prepared following an extensive review of secondary education (NTU 2003).

Queensland

The Queensland White Paper, *Education & Training Reforms for the Future*, was released in November 2002. Legislation is being prepared for implementation of the reforms, and trials are being conducted.

The new Senior Certificate being devised by the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) will mark out the quantity and quality of required learning, and enable the recognition of learning previously unable to be counted. A ‘tailoring’ of options will underlay individual training plans and there will be banking of credits across sectors or providers. The package encompasses registration of each person with the QSA to ensure that learning can be recorded and counted for the Senior Certificate.

Once a student has completed Year 10 and/or has turned sixteen years they must participate in education and training for a further two years, or until they have gained a Senior Certificate or a VET Certificate III, or until they have turned seventeen years. Exemptions can be granted for a person who enters full-time work after the Year 10/sixteen years requirement. The QSA with the Training Recognition Council is developing ‘new ways’ to deliver and accredit VET in Schools. Year 10 is to be regarded as a transition year and there is a review of P–12 curriculum with an eye to achieving success in the senior phase of schooling.

Other components of the reforms are mandatory involvement of parent/carer, community commitment at a local level and development of District Youth Achievement Plans, and the setting
up of pilot programs to improve engagement and to strengthen collaboration between schools and TAFE on matters such as career planning.

**New South Wales**

Currently under consideration is the NSW Department of Education and Training consultation paper *Lifelong learning – the future of public education in NSW* (2003). This paper outlines proposals in terms of ‘whole-of-life’ education provision that is aimed to be more responsive to community needs. A restructuring of the Department to create a single public education system from early childhood to training for employment and beyond accompanies this shift.

One intention is to assist stronger links between schools and TAFE, without diminishing their strong separate identities.

**South Australia**

The Department of Education and Children’s Services has produced *Futures Connect*, which outlines a ‘multidimensional… cross-agency approach to services which assist young people make the transition from school’ (p. 6). The key components for students are a learning plan, a transition portfolio and an exit map. The school leaving age is to be raised to sixteen.

FoCIS School Clusters will be established under Futures Connect, to collaborate with youth service providers, industry and agencies in the development of local education and training options.

*Futures Connect* has been issued in tandem with the discussion paper *Pro-social Skills and Young People* produced by the Office of Youth (an independent government unit). This paper ‘explores the promotion of the positive participation of young people… through the development of pro-social skills’—pertaining to personal, social, academic and employment domains (p. 5). The policy reach extends to the wider community, namely to develop a mutually respectful society (p. 2).

**Tasmania**

In 2003, the Tasmanian government is developing a *Post Compulsory Education and Training Strategy*. The focus is on the improvement of participation ratios, better access for disengaged learners, clearer pathways, community involvement in planning and provision, and skilling of the workforce along with promotion of a training culture.

The strategy is underpinned by the Ministerial Statement *Learning Together* (2000) which looks to 2020 and emphasises closer strategic links between industry, TAFE, the University of Tasmania and local government.

A consultation paper, *The Issues Involving Education of Students in Years 9–12 in Tasmania* (Arnold 2002), is assisting a program of reform for the Years 9 to 12 curriculum. This includes the establishment of the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority (TQA), to coordinate and integrate current qualifications processes. The TQA will also be responsible for non-self-accredited higher education
programs, thus emphasising pathways into higher education. Discussion has also taken place about certification at the conclusion of Year 10 and Year 12.

Tasmania has opted to create more diverse pathways within a single senior secondary qualification, the Tasmanian Certificate of Education. Greater emphasis is placed on identifying ways of recognising both formal and informal learning (and on identifying any links between the two), and on the need for certificates to clearly state what a student can do. Certification will encompass VET in schools, careers education and enterprise education undertaken by students in Years 7–12.

A key component of post-compulsory initiatives has been a large scale tracking exercise involving Year 10 students of 2001. The full cohort, including early school leavers, will continue to be tracked into Year 12 and beyond.

**National**

The MCEETYA Taskforce on Transition from School has developed an Action Plan that implements the Ministerial Declaration *Stepping Forward – improving pathways for all young people* (MCEETYA 2002). The Declaration provides a common direction for improving social, educational and employment outcomes for all young people.

The Action Plan is intended to guide jurisdictions, to promote a holistic approach to the range of options that young people face. It declares a commitment to greater cross-agency collaboration and cooperation. A progress report on the implementation of the Action Plan is to be provided to MCEETYA in 2004.

The national direction is not dissimilar to the focus of the states. Deliberations about certification are left with the states.

**Single and dual certificate**

Each state is expanding pathway options in Year 11 and 12 provision. Certificate options vary. In Victoria, the evaluation report of VCAL (Henry et al. 2003) makes plain that the qualification is consolidating itself alongside VCE as a distinct post-compulsory option. In Queensland, the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) is devising a new Senior Certificate that encompasses a range of learning options including VET. Tasmania has opted for more diverse pathways within a single senior secondary qualification. In Western Australia, current implementation of proposals from its review of post-compulsory education include options related to levels of complexity within a revised set of subjects, and the inclusion of VET in the Western Australian Certificate of Education.

The option for provision of a singular or dual pathway may in part be contextual, historical and strategic. Tasmania for instance has a history of separate Year 11 and 12 colleges and one certificate. Western Australia has had an established and sizeable proportion of Year 11 and 12 students in a single qualification, who do not seek a TER score. And prior to the introduction of the VCE, Victoria had a dual schooling structure – secondary and technical. Victoria has also had
experience with several options in Year 12, for instance the Secondary Technical Certificate and the
Tertiary Orientation Preparation alongside the Higher School Certificate.

There is more than history at stake however. Qualification options can be associated with learning
models. For instance ‘applied learning’ is a source of appeal and subsequent participation in the
VCAL option (Henry et al. 2003, pp. 59–61). And yet such learning distinctions are not
straightforward – some workplace learning research disclaims separation of theory and practice as
bases of knowledge (Billet 2003; see also Chappell et al. 2003a). The discussion about ‘new
knowledge’ may become more lively.

There are also social factors that have a bearing on the structuring of certificates. In this context,
recent qualifications research by Strathdee (2003) is useful. He appraises the post-compulsory
qualifications framework’s implementation in New Zealand, and notes several factors inhibiting the
potential to reposition less advantaged groups. These factors include recent policy changes which
seem to have reinforced differences in status of certificate options. Amongst his observations,
Strathdee found:

■ Changes to assessment declare 60 per cent of the final grade in most standard subject areas of
  the New Zealand Certificate Education Achievement (NCEA) to be determined by an exam result.
■ The insertion of the NZ Scholarship as another qualification over and above the NCEA suggests
  a hierarchy of success.
■ The framework has been ‘bolted on to existing practice’ (p. 150).

Despite these factors, Strathdee notes that it is ‘highly likely’ that there has been a contributing
change via the strengthening of networks around particular qualifications. He also comments on
the importance of the social network as a source of information about the kind of qualifications
needed to enhance employment chances (p. 154).

The VQA may wish to consider more thorough research into this question of what makes either
of the post-compulsory qualification models work. In Victoria, there is an emerging interest in
discussing the long-term directions for senior secondary qualifications. There are international
initiatives such as the Learning Certificate in Ireland, which could be investigated. There is also
discussion of an overall qualification in the United Kingdom (which includes ‘graded’ options
within a main qualification strand), and in the New Zealand combination of the NZ Scholarship
and the NCEA.
2.3 Movement and recognition of learning

There have been four national/state reports published this year on recognition of prior learning (RPL) and recognition of current competency (RCC). RPL and RCC are clearly matters of interest within and between sectors and policy advisory and research bodies.

The VQA June Monitoring Report had this to say on recognition: ‘The movement of TAFE students onto higher education – and the very low level of associated credit transfer – is an issue of pressing concern’. It also noted the AQFAB (2003) position that ‘RPL be explicitly included in institutional negotiations and agreements regarding credit transfer and articulation, and for monitoring of RPL to be undertaken by state bodies’ (p. 4).

The VQA is currently investigating recognition for learning completed in informal, quality assured settings.

The various RPL/RCC reports – together with research tracing inter and intra-sectoral movements – suggest that current ways of recognising and even structuring learning do not match the movement and versatility captured by data.

What does research suggest about effective processes and scope of RPL/RCC?

Recognition of prior learning/current competency

The RPL/RCC reports are by AQFAB, the Queensland Department of Education and Training, Bateman and Knight (2003), and Bowman et al. (2003). The matters that stand out from those and more general international literature are these:

- RPL/RCC is ‘virtually non existent’ in non-accredited, general and preparatory VET programs, so these are excluded from the national figure of 4 per cent of total students in 2001 having received some RPL/RCC (Bowman, K. et al. 2003, p. 7). And yet Saunders (2001) in a survey of ACE providers to determine staff knowledge of linkages with VET, concludes that ‘the comments suggest that RPL or RCC is commonly used to link ACE to mainstream VET’ (p. 68).

- There is considerable RPL/RCC occurring upon enrolment, and RPL-like activity occurring early in the tuition phase which is being recorded as a ‘pass’ (Bateman & Knight 2003, p. 10). Perhaps in keeping with this practice, Bowman K et al. (2003) suggest that Registered Training Organisations need to reposition RPL/RCC in a broader framework of assessment, with attendant quality assurance processes (see also Bateman 2003; AQFAB 2003).

The Queensland Department of Education and Training’s recent declaration of an RPL framework (DET 2003, p. 2) situates RPL development in planning and advice to learners (p. 10). There is a high priority placed on stepping up its use through a statewide communication strategy.

Another emphasis in literature is the link with informal learning.

- The OECD reports that ‘experiential attainment’ or achievement of learning from life is ‘quite often ignored’ (OECD 2003, p. 187). In Beyond Rhetoric (2003) it observes that ‘recognition of
all kinds of learning can motivate adults back to learning’. It links this to the potential of Qualifications Frameworks to assist learners to ‘design their own education pathways’ (p. 79).

• In keeping with this theme the report notes that in British Columbia there are guidelines that cover prior learning recognition of both the K–12 system and of adult education (OECD 2003, p. 218).

Movement patterns

In an update of their 1993 report, which first called attention to the scale of movement from university to TAFE, Golding and Vallence (1999) review patterns of movement and factors affecting it. The salient matters for qualifications are:

• University to TAFE movement exceeds TAFE to university by at least three times at initial vocational award levels. It is primarily unplanned and unanticipated across field of study, and often involves ‘backtracking’ across the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) (p. 27).

• Intra-sectoral traffic and re-credentialing/retraining within the same sector exceed inter-sectoral traffic by a factor of approximately five (p. 29).

Golding and Vallence state that qualifications have a motivating influence on inter-sector movement; however, they observe that they operate differently in the two settings (p. 21). For many, a VET qualification post university is less important than the specific skills underlying a suite of modules. In contrast to that, TAFE to university movement is more closely related to gaining a qualification and some recognition in a related field (p. 24). Inter-sectoral mobility is often associated with multiple awards, and these students become the most highly qualified (p. 21).

Summary

The matters raised in the reports on movement and recognition are about how learning across courses is connected, collected and weighed. The picture of backtracking, intra-sectoral, specific skill enhancement, and dual skill focus reinforces the good sense of being able to accumulate and count studies. The report of the VQA Credit Matrix consultation should have much to say on these matters. There may be scope for a standard process that incorporates professional deeming of some aspects of learning requirements as a quality assured mechanism for recognition purposes.

A further aspect for consideration is that there are pointers to the scope for a qualification, which incorporates but is broader than the immediate vocational. This is indicated by commentary on recognition of informal learning, by the variety of movements across and through the system, by the take up of additional qualifications (or parts thereof) and by the ‘swirls’ of pathways.

The recognition and movement reports collectively open up the boundaries of what counts for learning. The notion of productive life is one way of encompassing the diversity of vocational options over time, and lifelong learning that is informal.
2.4 Employability/generic skills and capacities

There is an impetus – internationally as well as locally – to articulate and embed core or generic capacities in qualifications and learning provision across sectors.

Seven NCVER projects have been published since May 2002. Topics include generic skills and experiences of displaced workers, how the skills are developed in novice workers, conditions for assessing and certifying. There is also one in-house NCVER project in progress: how generic skills are understood, practised and valued. In addition, ANTA has commissioned employability skills projects, including a (pre)entry course.

The ACCI/BCA framework – the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry/Business Council of Australia – is being discussed at a variety of national forums, including MCEETYA, the Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities and ANTA National Quality Training Council. The exact status of the ACCI/BCA framework remains unclear, and hence its validation or endorsement incomplete.

The VQA is working with the Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission (VLESC) on the development of a position on generic and employability skills. There will be detailed discussion at a joint meeting between the VQA and the VLESC in February 2004.

What is encompassed by generic and employability skills? What qualifications emerge from the current state of research and policy?

Definitions and purposes

Although the NCVER distinguishes Generic Skills, Key Skills and Employability Skills, there is an interchange of use between them in the reports (www.ncver.com.au accessed 19 Sept). This interchange demonstrates a tension of purpose. The most obvious question is whether or not the skills pertain to employment only. However, even if that were the case, there is no uniform designation of skills and capacities in the international literature.

Various terms are used across countries to describe the learning in this arena. For example, employability, generic skills, and transversal competencies... (Kearns 2001; ACER 2002). McCurry (2003) characterises generic skill constructs across particular countries and also the OECD. He distinguishes the Mayer key competencies on the basis that they are constantly ‘envisaged as kinds of activity’. They ‘do edge cautiously towards attitudes, views and values’, but less so than other constructs (p. 94). Yet attitudes, views and values are not readily measurable as competencies. If they were included, it would call on a framework which is additional to the current AQF–VET characteristics of learning outcomes.

McCurry also raises the grounds of authority of selection of skills, saying that there is little notice taken of the field of psychology of performance and abilities (p. 95). Smith also notes that many formulations of generic skills have proceeded without clear conceptual and theoretical foundations (2003, p. 17).
Although the NCVER recognises multiplicity of definition and purpose, its projects have been centred on the ACCI-BCA list that was produced in the *Employability Skills for the Future* report (2002). It is this ACCI/BCA list which is being used by ANTA and NCVER commissioned projects.

However, even the ACCI/BCA report, with its dominant focus on work, recognises some ambivalence. It comments that employability skills are ‘skills required not only to gain employment, but also to progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one’s potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions’ (p. 14). Elsewhere in the report however, ‘interviewees also argued that the employability skills… were as important to effective participation in the community as they were to effective participation in the workforce’ (p. 6).

The range of definitions and purposes is one of the matters that stands out in the research. Clearly there are implications of this for qualifications development. Further discussion of criteria of selection would be necessary for the deeming of what can and cannot be included, and of what is able to be implemented and assessed through existing AQF guidelines.

**Workplace dynamic**

A second matter is that current interest in generic skills has in part emerged from changing dynamics of work, social development and learning. This too has implications for qualifications and their capacity to incorporate these elements.

Back in the workplace there are new vocational demands on the learner/employee associated with an intensification of the workplace. Demeanour and disposition, work orientation, the capacity to use and produce knowledge are not developed by Training Package delivery alone. Nor is the learning which develops an interpretation of these demands (Chappell et al; ANTA Training Package Review Phase 1 2003).

Billet (2003) vividly depicts generic skills ‘at work’:

> Increased intensity of work requires the skills to manage multiple work tasks simultaneously and to prioritise how best to achieve desired workplace goals… there is the need for workers to possess a wider range of capabilities, to understand the requirements of a widening range of factors that influence effective work practices (p. 2).

While these changes are far reaching there is caution against being too quick to generalise:

While a high-skills high-performance economic model is the goal of many OECD governments, evidence of the emergence of this model is ambiguous. Australian evidence suggests that low skilled work has emerged as the main contributor to employment growth. Other evidence suggests that high skilled work has emerged largely in new knowledge based industries such as Information and Communication Technology (ICT), biotechnology, and nanotechnology (Chappell et al; ANTA Training Package Review Phase 1 2003, p. 1).
Social dynamic

Specific employment-related generic skills or competencies have been identified in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, South Africa and the United States. Other countries, such as Norway, Switzerland and Finland, have placed greater emphasis on the broader social relevance of generic skills, and still others have linked the issue to debates around qualification frameworks and processes of curriculum development or assessment, for example Denmark and Germany (Smith 2003, p. 17).

More broadly, there is a social aspect to disposition and cognitive work-related capacities; they are not peculiar to employment. A generic skill such as self-management is a dynamic of social and cultural life (Giddens 1998).
2.5 Dual purpose – employment and social factors

This section draws on the previous one to nominate a core operating principle for qualifications planning, that of productive life.

Research identifies a duality of employment and social factors in pathways, post-compulsory initiatives, movement and recognition of learning, employability/generic skills and lifelong learning. Research also shows international and national policy interests in the integration of welfare, work, and (vocational) education and training. Recognising the scope for inclusion of the range of life involvements makes it possible to come up with a more encompassing dynamic or strategic principle of structuring of qualifications. The general notion of productive life is one way of proceeding with this development. In turn, this notion refers to a particular form of work and employment.

What does this imply for qualifications options? In this section some indications are identified through looking at the current options available to those who are unemployed.

Employment and social life – a duality

Clearly, employment-related learning is a core purpose of post-compulsory education and training, and is forcibly demonstrated by the various state reports pertaining to Years 11 and 12. The centrality of employment in education and training reaches across sectors and curriculum. It is exemplified by:

- projects and policy deliberations about employability/generic skills in each sector
- the ANTA auspiced Training Package Review Phase 1 (Chappell et al. 2003), which draws attention to the changing demands of the workplace
- pathways projects such as Managed Individual Pathways (MIPS) and On Track, which highlight vocationally aware progressions and corresponding involvement in qualifications.

Interestingly, these projects, while being oriented to education/employment, also touch on a notion of productive life that is broader than employment. This is evident across the board. The clues are these:

- each of the various state reports or reviews of Years 11 and 12 provision advances the notion of social partnerships to assist support mechanisms for disengaged learners
- the generic skills projects and policy movements incorporate social or collaborative capacities, or personal management skills; at times, even affective skills
- the Training Package Review Phase 1 report (Chappell et al. 2003) highlights general productive capacities. It also points to social disparities in the experience of the new world of work
- pathway reports and patterns of movements (inter and intra sector) show that life matters, as well as employment dynamics, intervene in educational and occupational progressions
further to these initiatives, an expansion of partners-with-interest can be identified in ANTA’s *Shaping Our Future* plan for VET 2004–10, which now includes regions and communities alongside industry.

So there is a duality in intent – there is a focus on employment but some inclusion of matters pertaining to social life. But it is an uneasy or perhaps evolving relationship and is not addressed through current official course provision. Either way, if the two elements were combined there would be a more encompassing dynamic or strategic principle of structuring of qualifications. This new dynamic could be the basis of a new qualification.

**Employment and social life – a new possibility for qualifications**

A new qualification based on the operating principle of productive life need only be developed if it is not able to be met in the already existing range. This can be discerned if we can take *employment* (the current main organising principle of post-compulsory education and training), and consider the qualifications options for the person without it – the person who is unemployed.

Across age groups a person is meant to devise their pathways in a situation where employment is a major source of identity and endeavour. In the case of an unemployed person however, employment does not provide this identity. They are not alone in this conundrum – it is a global world. Regional labour markets intersect with the increasing movements of business, politics and culture, and in these circumstances the anticipation of full employment and employment of a particular kind can become fanciful. Consequently, there can be challenges to a sense of self that is anchored on having a particular career or a productive life more generally.

The necessity to devise a life in the face of such influences – and less predictable, if not precarious life matters – affects all social groups. However, there are more acute challenges for those who are vulnerable to disparities in access and conditions. Subsequently, there are important challenges to education and training programs and qualifications.

Given what has been surveyed in previous sections, how do current options for provision and qualifications address the matter of productive capacities? What more can be set in place?

**Options**

**Self-development:**

One response is to enhance learning that is about self-development, well beyond the narrow focus of a specific vocational outcome. This approach primarily relates to provision of courses to second-chance learners. However, there is a lost opportunity if the total program offering does not incorporate the employment-productive capacities of the learner. The overwhelming dominance of non-accredited learning through ACE is a case in point (Teese 2003). The inclusion of Training Package units as an option in the reaccredited Certificate in General Education for Adults (CGEA) (2002) is an instance where an employment link adds...
to the already established premise in CGEA of literacy development to enhance social participation. The link with Training Package units is an additional employment option.

**Competency based training:**

A second option is the provision of occupationally based units of competency and corresponding qualifications.

The Training Package Phase 1 report suggests, that in a changing world of work, this approach no longer covers all the grounds of learning (Chappell et al. 2003). The authors propose two main points in this regard:

- Learning-conducive work is central to production. The workplace has then to be reconsidered as a generator of learning. This can include learning which is not anticipated by Training Packages.

- There are new vocational demands on the learner/employee associated with an intensification of the workplace. Demeanour and disposition, work orientation, the capacity to use and produce knowledge are not developed by Training Package delivery alone. Nor is the learning that develops an interpretation of these demands.

The need to fill these learning gaps is stark. It is not met by simulated workplaces or workplace experience alone.

**Individual and social dimensions of training:**

A further option is couched in terms of connecting individual experience and socio-economic life in development.

- Lifelong learning is one expression of this impetus. It is used to examine practice and potential for recognition of informal learning (OECD 1996; Behringer; OECD & Coles; QCA 2002). In so doing, the report opens the field of what is ‘qualifiable’, or what learning in life could count.

- One international example of the individual/social link is in program provision which is explicitly about socially productive endeavours. Interest in Enterprise Education in England, for instance, draws on a desire for agency but also promotes state economic enterprise (Turner 2003).

- An underlying development is the international policy movement to integrate welfare, work, and (vocational) education and training. This entails a ‘whole of government’ approach that, according to the authors, is ‘being picked up by policy makers’ (Keating et al. 2002, p. 169).
In Victoria, the establishment of the LLENS and the introduction of the VCAL intersect with this orientation. The former is an attempt to integrate and develop initiatives at a local level. The VCAL experience reminds us that a student does not just enrol in a course, but is entwined in a constellation that has personal and social ramifications. The detail of the qualification is important in reflecting that. For instance, the theme-based initiatives in 2003 include a parent ‘major’.

The connection of individual experience and socio-economic life clearly has significance for the person who is unemployed. On the one hand, post-compulsory education and training enhances occupational and training capacities and involvement; on the other, there is some mindfulness of social life that encompasses more than particular occupational pathways. There is perhaps an evolving relationship between the two which is not addressed through current course provision. A qualification can expand the socially productive field of what counts.

Each of the above options contains pointers to a qualification that encompasses a general or social dimension to education and training, and at the same time allows for a vocational orientation. The preparation of this report suggests that this qualification option is warranted.

There are several courses that would be useful to include in deliberations, including the Certificate in Vocational Studies with its core and optional units and modules, and the CGEA with General Curriculum Options and Training Package units as an elective.
Section 3  Conclusion

Qualifications have to take into account the individual and their development, and the relationship between education and training to employment and social life, as well as a myriad of other critical issues. Research suggests that there is a challenge for qualification arrangements to advance the notion of agency while reflecting accredited and practical options. Where this doesn’t happen there is a mismatch of expectations – of the person and of the system.

The following recommendations are presented for the consideration by the VQA. The recommendations seek to achieve a further enhancement of the post-compulsory education and training qualification developments to assist productive life. The more detailed sources of the recommendations are located in the key findings outlined in the introduction.

1. The concept of productive life could form an organising principle of qualifications whose purpose encompasses vocational and general education.

2. The development of a qualification for adults could be considered that encompasses general and vocational domains. This would entail the recognition and development of the range of capacities and skill requirements of productive life.

3. A fundamental review of established RPL/RCC processes could be considered.

4. A detailed examination of newly emerging international and interstate approaches to post-Year 10 provision could be commissioned, including the adoption of innovative arrangements in regard to single and dual certificate provision.
Section 4  Where to From Here?

Each of the four broad themes contained in this paper’s recommendations – senior secondary provision, recognition of prior learning/current competency, productive life and new qualification for adults – carries direct relevance for the forthcoming work of the VQA. Over the coming year, the VQA will seek to take up these themes under a number of specific initiatives.

Senior secondary education

Work continues on thinking through new possibilities for Victorian senior secondary qualifications, taking into account recent new developments such as the success of the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL), the development of the credit matrix, the middle years reform, and the review of training packages. These developments will be extended over the coming period, and will include the preparation of a possible consultation paper on long-term senior secondary outcomes, including an analysis of approaches interstate and overseas.

Recognition of prior learning/current competency

Two important studies have been commissioned by the VQA in this area. The first is investigating the feasibility of providing recognition to learning completed in informal, but quality-assured settings. The second study is examining the possibility of valued outcomes from apprenticeship training which are currently either unrecognised or under-recognised. It is hoped that both studies will provide insights able to be shared across the range of settings in post-compulsory education.

New qualification

Research will commence shortly into the development of new qualifications to meet the needs of adults, including approaches to pre-vocational, post-trade pathways and the needs of older adults in work and beyond work. This work will inform the development of possible models for consultation with key agencies, and a proposal for consideration by Government.
# Appendix A: Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACE</td>
<td>Adult and Community Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANTA</td>
<td>Australian National Training Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>AQF</td>
<td>Australian Qualifications Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>AQFAB</td>
<td>Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>CGEA</td>
<td>Certificate in General Education for Adults</td>
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<tr>
<td>DE&amp;T</td>
<td>Department of Education, Science and Training (Victoria)</td>
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<td>DEST</td>
<td>Department of Education, Science and Training (Comm.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LLEN</td>
<td>Local, Learning and Employment Network</td>
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<td>MCEETYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs</td>
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<td>MIPS</td>
<td>Managed Individual Pathways</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCVER</td>
<td>National Centre for Vocational Education Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>RCC</td>
<td>Recognition of Current Competencies</td>
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<td>RPL</td>
<td>Recognition of Prior Learning</td>
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<td>VCAL</td>
<td>Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning</td>
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<td>VCE</td>
<td>Victorian Certificate of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>VET in Schools (also VETiS)</td>
<td>provision of VET in senior secondary school</td>
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<td>VLESC</td>
<td>Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>VQA</td>
<td>Victorian Qualifications Authority</td>
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Appendix B: Sources and References

Sources

Research sources have been government and education sector bodies:

- EDNA weekly newsletters: Communicator, Networker, VET; Campus Review, OTTE Weekly Media Service
- Organisations: NCVER, VOCED, ANTA, ACER, OECD, CEDEFOP
- State and Federal Government department sites: schools and VET. In Victoria DE&T includes OTTE (and VLESC); Federal Government: DEST, Parliamentary Skills Inquiry
- National bodies: NQTC, MCYEETA
- Education journals
- Universities research centres: UTS, Melbourne, Monash, VU

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Making qualifications work for Victorians by

• safeguarding the standard of Victorian qualifications
• ensuring qualifications work for Victoria’s economic future
• providing qualification options that help Victorians achieve their career and personal ambitions.

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