

# Lower-level qualifications deserve more attention

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Many lower-level vocational education and training (VET) qualifications meet industry and social needs and should not be overlooked in skilling and social policy developments, according to a recent report.

The report, commissioned by the former Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency, outlines a number of positive roles for lower-level [qualifications](#) in Australia's VET system, including the VET in Schools program.

"Qualifications at Certificate I and II levels not only provide foundation skills such as literacy and numeracy, but are also important for a range of other reasons," said lead researcher Associate Professor Chandra Shah from Monash University's Centre for the Economics of Education and Training.

"Recent policy changes have emphasised higher-level qualifications, but our findings show that lower-level qualifications also deserve attention."

The study found that lower-level qualifications are used for entry-level training, industry 'taster' programs and as pathways to higher-level qualifications such as apprenticeships. They also broaden the range of study options for senior secondary students.

"For many equity groups, such as people with a disability, Indigenous Australians and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, the qualifications are often the point of entry into the world of further education, training and work as they provide foundation and employability skills," Associate Professor Shah said.

The future role of lower-level qualifications and the VET in Schools program depends on how quality of outcomes and funding arrangements in the VET system in general are addressed. Industry's strong preference is that courses leading to lower-level qualifications, particularly in the VET in Schools program, should include a structured workplace-learning component.

"Many stakeholders also expressed concern about variation in the quality across industries and programs," Associate Professor Shah said.

"However, these matters are clearly related to funding and industry's willingness to take on students for workplace learning as well as to government regulations for quality assurance."

Recent changes in funding arrangements and the influx of private providers, particularly in Victoria and South Australia, have resulted in volatility in student numbers in lower-level qualifications, distorting the true demand for these qualifications.

**More information:** The report is available online:  
[arrow.monash.edu.au/vital/acce...sitory/monash:153057](http://arrow.monash.edu.au/vital/access/handle/monash:153057)

Provided by Monash University

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