THE PARTICIPATION AND EQUITY PROGRAM IN TAFE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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FOREWORD

Just prior to the completion of his term as National Secretary of the TAFE Teachers' Association in 1984, Peter Noonan was asked to prepare a discussion paper on the implications of the Participation and Equity Program (PEP) for TAFE.

Peter accepted this onerous task on top of an already formidable work schedule and completed the paper before the end of 1984.

His work therefore predates that of the recent Kirby Committee on Labour Market programs and the OECD review of youth policies in Australia.

Nevertheless the paper provides a fresh perspective on a wide range of PEP policy issues of significance to TAFE. It raises a number of matters that are of considerable importance to TAFE planners.

In common with all occasional papers, this report does not necessarily reflect the reviews of the Board or staff of the TAFE National Centre for Research and Development.
INTRODUCTION

The Participation and Equity Program introduced for the first time the notion and objective of equity as a major goal in the provision of, and outcomes from, TAFE courses. Participation has been increasing rapidly in TAFE for some time. As such it is not a new policy consideration. The linking of the issues of participation and equity, however, poses some fundamental challenges and dilemmas for TAFE. This paper argues that the extent of these challenges has been insufficiently recognised to date.

The paper traces the background to the development of PEP and looks at the issues of participation and equity as general policy considerations.

It identifies the major structural barriers which affect equity in TAFE, particularly in its historically close relationship with the labour market.

The paper suggests that the program is too limited at this stage to be a major element of youth policies in Australia, and that fundamental changes in TAFE, the labour market, and the role of the Commonwealth in these areas will be necessary before its admirable objectives can be implemented.

The paper concludes by identifying some options by which the role of the Commonwealth might be enhanced in order that these objectives can begin to be met.
THE PARTICIPATION AND EQUITY PROGRAM IN TAFE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The Participation and Equity Program for Australian schools and TAFE colleges had its origin in the implementation of some of the elements of the education policy of the Australian Labor Party when the ALP took office early in 1983.

The major elements of the policy developed by the current Finance Minister, John Dawkins (Shadow Minister for Education from 1981 until early 1983)—were:

- A restatement of long-held commitments to increasing equality of access to education, with a greater emphasis on the production of equitable outcomes.
- The objective of increasing retention rates in government secondary schools and increasing participation in post-compulsory education.
- An increase in resources available to government schools, and the application of the 'needs principle' in the funding of non-government schools.
- Greater recognition of the TAFE system through a continuation of funding for TAFE capital work whilst seeking a better arrangement with the States in the provision of recurrent funds.
- References to the development of a coherent youth policy, including the expansion of work, training and education options, and rationalisation of youth income support schemes.
- Specific recognition of the needs of disadvantaged groups such as women, Aborigines and migrants.

The ALP policy in relation to the funding of private schools became one of the major debates in the early period of the election campaign. It subsequently became the priority issue for the new Education Minister, Senator Susan Ryan.

The financial commitments to education made by the ALP when in opposition, not only ran foul of the budgetary process—as the government sought to reduce the budget deficit—but also encountered opposition from a viewpoint which held that providing untied, general resources to the States limited recognition of the role of the Commonwealth, and did not allow specific government policies and priorities to be implemented. It was argued that grants to implement ALP promises should be targetted in specific, clearly defined ways.

In opposition, the ALP had been critical of the 'School to Work' transition education scheme of the previous government arguing that it assumed that teenage unemployment could be related to inadequate preparation of young people for the workforce. However, the scheme provided an ideal basis for a new program. It was targetted to those most 'at risk', and could be relatively easily modified.
The transformation of the transition scheme would enable a number of objectives to be met: firstly, increasing resources to education (but with a tied and clearly defined objective); secondly, beginning the development of a comprehensive youth policy, and finally, by building in some of the major themes of ALP policy—curriculum reform, raising retention and participation rates, and promoting equity. This would enable implementation of many of these themes in a single program.

The Participation and Equity Program was announced in the 1984 education funding guidelines, (brought down in July 1983). It received considerable publicity at the time, as the program introduced concepts and reforms which many interest groups and commentators had been pressing for some time.

Twenty million dollars (additional to existing expenditure on transition) was to be allocated for schools. However, only an additional $2.2 million was allocated for TAFE. Nonetheless the client groups for TAFE courses were to be extended to include eligible persons aged up to twenty-four years.

The government stated that the basic objective of the program was the achievement of a full secondary education (or the equivalent) for all young Australians. It was:

... the centrepiece of the overall framework of the youth policies which it (the government) is developing.

However the description of PEP as the centrepiece of the development of youth policies is an overstatement of its actual importance when compared to the number of participants in, and expenditure levels of, other programs. Moreover, the decision to leave the other major youth programs in the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations left these more significant programs in another portfolio, militating against effective co-ordination in the longer term.

The transfer of the Office of Youth Affairs to the Department of Education (and Youth Affairs) implied that government youth policies would have a strong educational flavour, but measured in resource terms, that was not to be the case, particularly with the inception of the Community Employment Program which assists many thousands of young people.

For example, in relative terms in 1983/84, the Commonwealth spent over one hundred million dollars on apprenticeship rebates (with over 90,000 clients) and seventy million dollars on work experience programs. Expenditure on all labour force schemes totalled $333 million. Over 100,000 young people (excluding apprenticeships) were assisted in 1983/84, compared to 15,500 on transition courses.

The OECD review into youth policies in Australia and the Kirby review of labour force programs, combined with reviews of youth income support may produce recommendations for more effective policy co-ordination and development. In hindsight, it may have been preferable to develop the PEP guidelines and objectives (at least in TAFE) when these reviews had taken place.
In responding to the program, the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission commented that:

The (TAFE) Council supported the decision to extend age eligibility for participation in the program to persons in the 20-24 age group but noted that the additional $2.2 million would not allow for any worthwhile extension of access for 20-24 year olds without a reduction in the opportunities currently available for the 15–19 year old group. Without detracting from the needs of the sector, the Council is concerned that as the major provider in existing programs TAFE has received only a minor increase in funding.

In its subsequent report for the 1985-87 triennium, the CTEC commented further:

The 17,000 students in PEP in 1984 will comprise part of the rapidly increasing number of full-time students in TAFE, estimated to number 79,000 in 1984 (there were 60,000 in 1982). As pointed out in several places in this advice, this trend has major implications for accommodation, equipment, staffing, counselling and other services. Few of these costs will be borne by PEP funds and thus must be met either by State Governments or by other Commonwealth programs.

These statements reflect a number of limitations in the program as it has been developed to date. Firstly, it is a much more limited program than the objectives would suggest, and 297,000 people, as at November 1983 were eligible for 17,000 places with only an initial 10% and a subsequent 13% increase in funds in 1985 from the small base of the original transition program. (1985 expenditure will only be $30 million). Secondly, the program was basically concerned with issues currently under debate in schools and to maximise the impact of increased Commonwealth education expenditure. There was little mention of TAFE's role in the initial PEP statement and the subsequent publicity and debate has centred almost entirely around school related issues. Thirdly, there is a tendency to see the program as a single entity, and not to differentiate between the quite different roles of schools and TAFE.

These deficiencies all result from the pressure under which the original PEP statement was devised. The process did not allow sufficient consideration of the entrenched and powerful structural barriers to increasing equity in TAFE or options by which equity might be enhanced or promoted.

It is necessary to look at the issues of participation and equity quite separately from all PEP programs in order to understand how these issues apply to TAFE, or might be applied as objectives.

**Participation in TAFE**

There has been strong growth in full-time participation in TAFE by young people in recent years. That growth has been relatively stronger for teenage females than males.
The 'Learning and Earning' report, published by the CTEC in 1982[^6] highlighted the fact that TAFE participation had grown strongly, while retention rates (for males) fell in secondary schools, and participation in higher education by young people also declined. (Ironically, the report was published just before a major increase in retention rates in schools and a significant increase in demand for tertiary education as a result of the collapse in the teenage labour market in 1981/82). Enrolments in TAFE had almost doubled between 1975 and 1982, to over one million students by that year. Increasing participation is not a new issue for TAFE, in fact, demand for TAFE courses in many areas far exceeds available places, including many full-time courses.

Other findings relevant to TAFE emerging from the Learning and Earning report included:

- Apprenticeship is a significant destination for young males, with 35% of males in the bottom three achievement quartiles (based on ACER tests) either past or present apprentices, and 20% in the top quartile.

- TAFE was attracting students from all achievement quartiles, including both extremes.

- The apprenticeship system had acted as an effective buffer against unemployment for teenage males (up until 1982) but had been only one factor in teenage female unemployment. Any expansion of the apprenticeship system in traditional trade areas was unlikely to benefit young women.

The study also highlighted under-representation for other categories of young people; in particular, young Aborigines and rural youth in areas where TAFE colleges were not located.

Many TAFE courses, including the apprenticeship system and many certificate courses require employment and other pre-requisites, either as a formal or informal pre-condition on enrolment or course completion. As such, participation in TAFE courses is likely to be affected by structural features of the labour market. These features restrict access to courses most likely to have occupational outcomes (those most closely related to the labour market).

This relationship with the labour market raises a number of important policy issues: whether or not participation increases should be based and funded on course demand (regardless of labour market considerations); whether or not certain courses should be given priority (in areas of labour shortage or where courses are likely to accrue the most general benefit to the individual); whether or not increased participation should be based on full or part-time enrolments, and what other measures the government should take with full-time employment opportunities declining.

For example, most trade unions oppose the institutionalisation of trade training, even in the initial phases, and training authorities will not recognise any qualification in trade areas other than apprenticeship (although pre-apprenticeships are common in most States and the Commonwealth has provided special assistance to enable 'out of trade' apprentices to finish their indentures in TAFE colleges in response to the effects of the recession on the apprenticeship system).
In effect, participation can be increased in a number of ways: by enabling more young people to enrol in existing courses by removing or changing entrance requirements and providing additional resources; providing new full-time courses in similar subject areas without requiring the same pre-requisites, and by expanding the range of courses to include occupational areas where courses were not previously available.

The two latter approaches have been used to a greater or lesser extent in different States. PEP has facilitated the development of new courses which are not directly employment related (EPUY) or more specifically vocational, without requiring the pre-conditions of employment or other pre-requisites (work skills, trade introduction courses or school certificates). However, in themselves, PEP courses do not provide sufficient skills or are not sufficiently well recognised to enable entrance to most occupations without further training.

A separate and growing category of PEP courses operate in both schools and TAFE. 'Link' courses also suffer from a lack of recognition for both employment or enrolment in vocational courses.

There has been little done to improve access by 15-19 year-olds to the bulk of what might be termed 'traditional' courses, para-professional, certificate, post-trade, and technician-level courses. For example, in streams one and two respectively, 76% and 69% of students were aged over 21 in 1980, although there are variations in some States such as Victoria where certificate courses are exit destinations for many students, particularly secondary technical schools.

Teenage participation was concentrated in trade and so-called preparatory courses, with teenage males overwhelmingly dominating trade areas.

With the 1981/82 recession significantly reducing employment in manufacturing industry, these trade areas, particularly in the metal trades (the largest apprenticeship area), become less valuable as options for school leavers.

PEP courses are classified as preparatory but the program will not necessarily result in increased participation by young people in specifically vocational courses. Further, these (vocational) courses are related to many areas of employment growth or stability: accountancy and business studies, technician areas including computer courses, specialised post-trade courses, and courses in service occupations such as tourism, travel and recreation.

It is possible to increase participation in TAFE in ways which have no significant bearing on its major vocational areas. This is a quite different situation to both schools and to other tertiary sectors where the outcomes are expressed in qualifications with a much more common status and a clearer relationship between qualifications in a sequential hierarchy.

For example, initial access to a University guarantees a degree (if successful), followed by a clear path through Honours, Master's, and eventually PhD.
Access to TAFE through a PEP course does not guarantee access to vocational courses or even further education, and although a student's prospects of obtaining an apprenticeship are improved, the student may find a job (often in an occupation quite unrelated to the course) and other social and non-vocational benefits might accrue to the individual.

Increasing participation in, and access to, TAFE through PEP will not result in more equitable outcomes without more fundamental changes to the method of entry to courses in streams 1-4 in TAFE.

PEP does however have great potential to act as a 'bridge' to those courses if accompanied by other changes such as a formal recognition of its role in a defined and coherent structure of courses and qualifications.

The vast majority of TAFE courses continue to have a close relationship with the labour market and will reflect the discrimination, inequity and trends inherent in the labour market.

While issues such as accreditation, content of courses, and labour force planning could usefully be explored, suffice to say that they exist as substantial factors which will continue to restrict participation for many people in TAFE, and must be considered in any program seeking to increase equity through increased participation.

Equity

A recognition that TAFE did not provide equally for all groups was strongly stated in the ALP election policy:

The deep seated nature of the discrimination inherent in the current patterns and levels of TAFE provision will require substantial attention over a long period. As a first step in its elimination, a Labor government will seek a report and recommendations from the TAFE Council with a view to implementing an equal opportunities policy for TAFE within Australia and Labor will provide appropriate funding and legislative support for such a programme.

Regrettably, the council was not requested to provide such a report before the PEP program was devised, nor was the TAFE Council or the State TAFE Authorities consulted about the issues which might arise.

As previously stated, this is reflected in the initial PEP statement which although calling for a searching re-examination of TAFE's role in the area, did not suggest how that re-examination might occur.

Arguably the government should have referred the matter to the OECD youth policy review team and to the review of employment and training programs before announcing the program.
A further consideration is that the term 'equity' has never been operationally or even philosophically defined. A number of important considerations arise, such as those referred to in the discussion on participation. Clearly, participation in TAFE can be increased at all levels, or in specific areas—without more equitable outcomes occurring because of barriers to access to the more occupationally and economically significant courses.

In fact, one could go further and argue that the goals might be in conflict at a time of expenditure restraint. Consider the following statement made by the South Australian Director of TAFE in 1983.

Technical and Further Education colleges, as part of the tertiary education sector, have traditionally been concerned with the post-school vocational needs of people of all ages. This role will remain as their primary purpose although a shift from part-time courses for people already in employment to full-time courses prior to employment has already commenced. This shift in provision is expected to accelerate during the eighties and will also require a re-allocation of resources.

Assuming that expenditure growth is limited, but that demand for courses by people in employment continues to grow, not only will decisions on the basis of equity be made between the employed and those who are unemployed or who have not worked, but cost differentials between part and full-time enrolments will result in reduced overall participation if priority is given to full-time preparatory courses.

Arguably, much greater inequities exist, both in resource allocations between education sectors (will similar policies of attrition be pursued in employment-related professional courses in other sectors which also confer greater occupational privilege?) and in the broader economic and social institutions which determine the structure and pattern of income and wealth, and in so doing determine the structure and outcomes of the education system.

Teese (1983) comments in relation to schooling (the statement applies to the education system as a whole:

If social groups differ in the use they make of the school system, this is because the arrangement of its various parts and the content of the services it provides offer uneven potential for them in the first place, and that the use made by the group whose institutional presence is fullest, sets limits on the manner and extent of use of any other groups.

TAFE courses continue to be at the bottom of a fairly clearly defined hierarchy, and even if their perceived economic utility has increased, TAFE continues to exist with fewer resources per student and in many instances with facilities and equipment which would not be tolerated in the other tertiary sectors. This is largely due to TAFE's historic role and image as the provider of the 'working man's post-school education'.

Inequity operates within TAFE between various groups of people. It operates more generally between TAFE and the other tertiary sectors and that inequity is reflected in the ultimate occupational attainment and social value which accrues to different qualifications.
It is in that context that any discussion about equity as it applies to TAFE must be located. It also is in the context of total expenditure of $2,226 million by the Commonwealth on tertiary education that a $30 million program in TAFE must be seen in considering its likely effect on equity, particularly when students in the program are unlikely to gain access to any courses funded out of the remaining expenditure, let alone those funded out of expenditure by the States.

The Federal government has recognised the need for greater general access to higher education and has made some commendable moves in that respect. However, the domination of entrance to certain institutions, and certain courses within those institutions, chiefly by the graduates of the wealthiest private schools, and in turn by certain occupational and income groups, remains the basis of educational inequity in Australia, an inequity which ultimately manifests itself in broader social and economic inequity.

Further, the assumption that education can in itself contribute significantly to reducing social inequality has been shown to be flawed. The government seems to have been aware of this in shifting the emphasis from equality of opportunity to stressing the need for more equitable outcomes.

The task remains to translate that recognition into reality by a close examination of the barriers to achieving more equitable outcomes.

**Limitations on the role of the Commonwealth**

The emergence of TAFE as an identifiable sector within tertiary education came only after the publication of the Kangan Report in 1974. Despite its recognition as an important and useful report, many of its recommendations could not be implemented due to the double dissolution of Parliament in 1984, the budget restraints of the 1975 Hayden budget, and the poor condition of the State TAFE systems, including a poor capacity to plan ahead for increased capital expenditure.

Although there has been significant and necessary expenditure on capital works since 1977, the role of the Commonwealth in recurrent expenditure is limited and its capacity to influence policy directions accordingly reduced.

However it is in the broader policy context that issues of participation and equity will be resolved.

The Commonwealth role is limited by its relatively minor role in relation to industrial training, particularly with respect to curriculum, standards, and determination of other matters related to the trades and in more general terms, the fact that the States control and continue to make the major decisions which control entry requirements to TAFE courses.

This manifests itself in the quite substantial differences which have emerged between the major States—New South Wales and Victoria—in the provision of pre-apprenticeship courses—an area into which NSW has moved heavily, while such courses are effectively limited in Victoria for industrial and related reasons.
However, in Victoria, many young people enrol in Tertiary Orientation Programs, which are not trade or employment related, but provide an alternative means of access to Universities and Colleges of Advanced Education. Transition, and now PEP funds have however been used to expand pre-vocational (trade based) courses in South Australia and Tasmania, and a quite different pattern of opportunities for young people emerges between the States in this regard.

As transition funds could only be used on new courses other disparities also emerged. Commonwealth funds could be used for courses in some States, but not others (Queensland and NSW) who had moved into the pre-apprenticeship area at an earlier time.

In South Australia, there are moves to establish a more uniform TAFE pre-vocational qualification, directed to either a specific trade or a family of occupations. Models which looked at these and other options were discussed at recent seminars held by the TAFE National Centre for Research and Development, and it is clear that major policy decisions affecting the pattern of participation by young people in TAFE will be made in the near future.

Significantly, the Commonwealth has little direct role in this process except by funding through either DEIR or the CTEC. It will however have a substantial indirect role in that the existing anomalies in the provision of student allowances could affect the pattern of choice and participation if, for example, these courses only qualify students for the tertiary allowance, while PEP courses run separately, targeting on the unemployed, who qualify for full unemployment benefit funding, plus the 'transition' allowance.

There is a danger that because of funding restrictions, the development of pre-vocational courses in TAFE will emerge as substantially a State responsibility, with PEP being targeted more to areas of disadvantage, being more attractive in the short term because of the allowance differential, but ultimately being seen as less relevant by students of greater ability or achievement because of the limitations in access to other TAFE courses.

This will be even more pronounced if successful participation in a pre-vocational or pre-apprenticeship course becomes a pre-requisite for a full apprenticeship. In some areas, this is already effectively the case.

In summary, it is suggested that the role of the Commonwealth is confined by its low level of recurrent expenditure on TAFE and by the limited powers it has in relation to course development, particularly where course content, provision and access is heavily contracted by State training authorities and in turn by the State TAFE systems.

Policy goals such as increasing equity will continue to be elusive if the authorities responsible for running the State systems do not regard equity as a primary objective and a fundamental policy consideration.

In the short term, there is little the Commonwealth can do where it has little power. However, the history of Federalism has demonstrated that what the Commonwealth is unable to achieve in terms of direct power, it can achieve through its fiscal powers. The low current base of expenditure on TAFE provides potential for expansion of both its funding and overall policy role.
Ashenden and Costellor, in a recent paper entitled 'Shaping Participation in Education', prepared at the request of the Commonwealth Department of Education and Youth Affairs, argue:

If the Commonwealth wishes to see the expansion and renovation of TAFE (and we have argued that there are compelling reasons for doing so) then it must be prepared to foot much of the bill. Indeed it has an interest in doing so, since it gives the Commonwealth one larger voice in determining the shape of things.  

Such an expansion could be based on the objectives of increasing participation in TAFE in order to promote equity, rather than confining these objectives to a single, small program such as PEP.

The danger in relating those objectives to a single program is that they may be bypassed in overall policy determination; that is they are seen to be the province of PEP rather than having a universal application.

Other objectives for TAFE

A feature of the education funding guidelines for the 1985-87 triennium was the requirement by the government that CTEC should report on measures which could be taken to increase the contribution of tertiary education to promoting economic and employment growth, particularly in manufacturing industry.

In their submissions for the 1985-87 triennium, most TAFE Authorities highlighted their concern at the poor level of equipment provision in TAFE, firstly, in terms of replacement of depreciated stock, and secondly, in terms of the obsolescence of much of TAFE's equipment.

Other areas requiring attention included the revision of curriculum and updating of teacher knowledge, particularly through inservice courses and industry release schemes.

All of these measures—particularly the provision of equipment—are expensive and could be seen to be in competition for resources with the goal of increasing equity.

For example, giving priority to courses in areas of employment growth such as in the high technologies, would tend to emphasise TAFE streams one, two and three. Measures designed to assist manufacturing industry, for example, by reducing training costs, would advantage those most assisted by the apprenticeship system—young males. It is unlikely that the economic imperatives outlined in the funding guidelines will await the long-term changes necessary to improve access to these courses.

As previously stated, most States have reported substantial unmet demand for many courses; in NSW reportedly exceeding 30,000 and in Victoria 20,000 places. While some of this demand exists either in PEP or related courses, a great deal of it is made up in courses perceived to have rewarding vocational outcomes.
Funding restrictions also limit the number of new courses which can be mounted, even where employment opportunities exist and formal training opportunities are restricted.

Most TAFE colleges will report shortages in teaching and support staff, provision of basic teaching material and aids, and other essential facilities and services.

Fees for stream six (leisure and personal interest courses) have risen alarmingly, effectively barring many low income families from participating.

Political pressure to increase funding in these areas will result in a 'trade off' between fulfilling these needs and further expanding courses targeted to the most disadvantaged, and in turn seeking.

Other barriers to access

The recognition in the ALP policy of the deep-seated nature of discrimination in access to courses was accurate, but perhaps unfairly located the blame on attitudes and barriers within TAFE. Although prevalent, they are symptomatic of attitudes and barriers which are conferred and reinforced in families, schools, by the media, and in other social institutions.

In a sense some measures such as the active provision of special courses and programs encouraging girls to take up apprenticeships and other traditionally male occupations may have acted as a 'blind'--giving the appearance of greater changes occurring than there has been in reality. This is not to deny that some change in attitudes has occurred in the community and in the TAFE system.

The issue has also been confused by the decline in apprenticeships as a source of teenage male employment over the past few years and the much greater levelling out of unemployment statistics between teenage males and females.

In effect, there is little TAFE can do when barriers to access, such as parental attitudes, exist before the point of access. Teachers and counsellors working in areas of affirmative action cite numerous examples of girls who have expressed interest in courses being stopped by their parents, or being denied employment and perhaps a full apprenticeship by employer attitudes. Even peer influences can act as a substantial deterrent.

Many useful initiatives have been undertaken under transition and now PEP for women and girls, and also for disadvantaged specific populations such as Aborigines and the disabled. More could be done in terms of publicity and encouragement, counselling and support services, but the magnitude of the problem requires a more fundamental assessment than that being offered through either PEP or under the new category of designated, special-purpose grants.
Offering more and more specific courses for particular target groups, without challenging and changing the assumptions and bases upon which mainstream provisions are based must be seen as inherently limited.

This is one of the main issues raised by those teaching, developing, and supporting special access courses, many of which have been funded under PEP.

If nothing else, the courses have served to raise the debate within TAFE, and have forced administrators and teachers to confront the issue of discrimination. However, even greater reform within TAFE is unlikely to change community attitudes in the short term and it is incumbent on the Federal government to recognise that TAFE's capacity to respond is constrained by these attitudes, and that PEP in itself will have little impact because of the pre-conditions imposed by the gender-based segmentation of the labour force.

**Schools and TAFE**

There is a prevalent view amongst TAFE teachers and administrators, particularly those working in the PEP area, that the thrust of the program is aimed at schools, and that there is little consideration and understanding of TAFE's role.

This perception has been shown to be soundly based, as the examination of the origins of the program has shown, and has further contributed to a more generally held view in TAFE that the sector lacks support and understanding in the community, and that schools in particular, and other tertiary institutions, have a more visible and clearly understood position. The limited role of the Commonwealth in TAFE, and the differential funding allocations between schools and TAFE under PEP exemplify this situation.

The change in administrative arrangements to a situation where TAFE is automatically assigned only one out of fourteen positions on State co-ordinating committees, (when it runs half the program), has worsened the situation.

There is a real danger in that the debate and publicity surrounding PEP, in concentrating only on school-related issues, will lead to a further marginalisation of TAFE courses and that in turn there will not be the rigorous evaluation and scrutiny necessary to begin to meet the objectives set by the government.

TAFE Colleges and schools are quite distinct institutions, and the Participation and Equity Program will operate differently, with different outcomes and different implications between the sectors.

Some of these distinctions should be outlined:

- TAFE is an extremely diverse system, with hundreds of highly specialised courses, mostly conducted on a part-time basis. Students and teachers have little contact with other subject areas and it is possible to bring about significant changes in part of the TAFE system (for example increasing participation by particular groups) without affecting in any way other parts of this system. This is the dilemma in terms of access and equity referred to earlier.
Schools are more homogeneous institutions. Changes in one area of schooling force changes in other areas. For example, the effects of increased numbers of students staying on at the end of school affects curriculum, teaching methodology and school practices throughout the school because the curriculum and school experiences are more common. Because of more regular and long-term relations, students relate more closely through locally based peer groups and between students and teachers.

Increasing the number of young full-time students in TAFE has its own consequences, but these can be contained, particularly when courses are physically separated from the main institution.

TAFE students enter PEP courses after a period of unemployment. They are older and have some out-of-school experience. This characteristic will become more pronounced due to the extension in age eligibility. The experience of attending a TAFE college is new and quite different to the school environment with fewer restrictions, more flexible timetables and in pre-vocational courses a practical, task-oriented approach to learning. There seems to be a contradictory view of this experience for full-time teachers who undertake teaching in PEP courses. Some have difficulty adjusting to working with students who are not working in a related occupation, who are not obtaining 'on the job' skills and experience, who lack confidence and motivation, and who bring behavioural and other social problems not hitherto experienced. Other teachers feel that they are assisting in an area of real need and respond to the challenge.

Many PEP teachers in TAFE are employed casually or on contract, usually working in a specifically vocational or practical area. The industrial conditions of these teachers, and the lack of formal pre-service training and systematic, paid inservice training must be of concern, particularly in working with students with learning disabilities who require sustained remedial assistance.

TAFE teacher education courses do not, or are only just beginning to, respond to the requirements of the new TAFE clientele, again in working with students with learning disabilities or poor educational histories, teaching for difference among students of diverse abilities and dealing with behavioural and social problems which are more frequently being brought into the college.

Transition education in TAFE was mainly oriented towards mounting new courses, with around 80% of expenditure being directly related to enrolments. Transition in schools was more related to the promotion of change, or running alternatives within schools which did not affect overall enrolment patterns. There is less scope in TAFE for using funds for non-teaching purposes—for example, curriculum development, or projects aimed at promoting systemic changes without reducing funding for teaching purposes.

There are many other special characteristics of TAFE and differences between schools and TAFE, but the purpose of listing those above was to make the point that any program such as PEP should be based on an analysis of their respective strengths and assets. It should take account of factors such as those outlined and should acknowledge and seek ways of overcoming the weaknesses and limitations inherent in both systems.
In effect, the guidelines for the original transition program were too vague to be of much use, and could be interpreted in any number of ways. As 1984 is itself a transition year, it is too early to assess whether or not PEP will differ substantially from the transition program. Many of the things the government envisaged occurring under PEP were in fact already occurring under transition, mainly due to the high degree of local and State level innovation, rather than the intrinsic merit of the original transition guidelines.

The rapid development of link courses will draw the TAFE institutions and schools more closely together, but the existence of 'Link' courses serves to exemplify the different role TAFE will play as a provider under PEP and similar programs.

It should also be noted that substantial expertise exists in TAFE in terms of adult literacy and numeracy courses, EPUY, adult matriculation, tertiary orientation and other general education courses. Attempts to assign TAFE to a purely industrial training and directly vocational role run contrary to the recommendations of the Kangan report which recognised and supported the development of TAFE's 'further education' component.

The need for a broadly based education is more pressing now than ever, due to high unemployment, technological change and the need for occupational mobility. Narrowing TAFE's role to one of purely training, and leaving the role of general education only to schools will deny the needs of thousands of both young and older students who urgently require opportunities for further education.

Other options for the Commonwealth Government

It is regrettable that this paper was finalised before the report of the OECD team reviewing youth policies in Australia and the report of the Kirby committee into labour force programs.

These reports will be dealing with the totality of Federal government provisions in this area and will have more long-term implications for participation and equity in TAFE, in training schemes and in employment than the small PEP program.

It can only be hoped that the reviews will seek ways to rationalise the plethora of labour force related schemes, some of which have a substantial impact on TAFE, such as the apprenticeship rebate scheme and funding of pre-apprenticeship.

One approach might be to combine funding under the Community Employment Program work experience schemes, and other schemes which relate to employer subsidies as a single wage subsidy or work experience program which could have a highly structured and regulated training component (CRAFT and the apprenticeship system) or less structured but credentialled training components mainly in TAFE, but perhaps also in CYSS, secondary schools and even 'on the job' where training could be assessed, supervised and ultimately recognised by authorities such as TAFE.
This approach would have a number of advantages. It would expand the work/study model which has been favoured under youth policies developed in many European countries, recognising that many young people prefer the experience and economic benefits of employment as opposed to continuing full-time education. It would lessen the direct costs associated with income support schemes, and the additional costs associated with full-time education as opposed to part-time education, and would direct government funding into areas of broad community benefit and enhanced economic growth.

The nexus with employment could begin to assist in overcoming some of the structural barriers to many TAFE courses where employment and industrial experience is required, and would enable the extension of the apprenticeship system into areas of skill where formal training is not presently required such as the retail industry, many service occupations, recreation and care of the aged, community service, banking and some areas related to new technology (for example, in computer programming and operation) as well as many clerical occupations.

TAFE's role in such an arrangement would be to conduct complementary courses, either directed to the occupational field where literacy, numeracy and other basic skills are needed or to be involved in more general education, matriculation and tertiary orientation programs.

These courses would operate in areas where a substantial period of pre-employment training is not required. In the trades and other occupational areas where such courses are either substantially developed, or there is agreement that an initial period of full-time training would be beneficial, opportunities must exist for the course to be linked to employment, with the work/study model then to prevail.

In that context, detailed consideration will have to be given to the continued development of full-time pre-trade courses in occupations likely to either remain static or likely to decline as a source of employment as the number of trainees undertaking such courses is likely to exceed available places in the apprenticeship system.

The extension of formal training opportunities into other areas of employment growth would have more equitable outcomes in terms of employment participation on a more equal basis by young men and women, and higher levels of participation where enrolments are part time.

This suggestion implies that the Participation and Equity Program has limited value as a single program given TAFE's historic and continuing relationship with the labour force and the relationship between education and work, particularly where work is an essential pre-requisite to many TAFE courses. Equity must be a primary consideration in all relevant State and Commonwealth programs.

It suggests that the specific functions being performed in these courses—work skills, pre-vocational training, literacy and numeracy courses, introduction to skills and so on, should be extended across a broadly-based scheme which has participation and equity as its objectives, but which does not seek to pre-define those outcomes without having regard to the existence of other more substantial programs, and structural barriers which will inhibit their achievement.
Finally, it suggests that there are limits to which an institutionally based program can overcome the inequity imposed by external factors to which the institution has traditionally responded—rather than transformed.

This view does not however consign TAFE to having a purely reactive role. Rather, it seeks to relate the objectives of labour force based programs to institutionally based programs; and in so doing builds on the strength and compensates for the weaknesses of both approaches. Too often they are posited as alternatives.

In time, inequity in the labour force may begin to be redressed, but that process will only begin when a fundamental re-assessment (with equity as its basic objective) of all programs takes place. That assessment must look at the totality of TAFE provisions rather than confining the objectives of participation and equity to a single program.

However, the fact that discussion is now occurring about the relationship between equity and participation, that equity has been defined as a major objective in TAFE and that various reviews of both TAFE and labour force programs are occurring, provides ample scope for the necessary changes identified in this paper to begin to be effected.
REFERENCES


2. The Participation and Equity Programme. Statement to the Senate by the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, December 1983.


7. Ibid. Chapter 4.


(A study undertaken for the Department of Education and Youth Affairs. The study does not necessarily represent the views of the department.)