This paper provides an analysis of participation and access issues which were identified by the Kangan Report of 1974 and which remain significant in Australian technical and further education in the 1990s. A conjectural and deliberately dichotomous ‘social-service’/‘economic-utility’ framework is superimposed upon some of TAFE’s features in order to explore changes in the system and the attendant assumptions about participation and access. Sectoral growth, attendance patterns and socio-economic shifts in the TAFE population are examined within the framework, providing a basis for an exploration of specific, but interrelated, issues: women’s participation, access courses, the emergence of selective admissions, academic drift and costs to the student. In each case it is shown how the notions of participation and access may be interpreted and what might be the future consequences of policies which tip the balance between social service and economic utility in either direction.

Introduction

In this paper, we examine participation and access issues which have emerged in relation to Australian technical and further education since the early 1970s and which are likely to grow in significance in the coming years. We draw upon a vast, but often piecemeal, collection of information in the form of statistics from various sources, research data, commentaries, commissioned reports and policy documents. We do not merely marshal this information by theme, but take account of what Schofield (1994, p.60) refers to as ‘the sharp dichotomy between educational and social purposes on the one hand and labour market purposes on the other.’ She argued that ‘an adequate analysis of the impact of this split...[is] fundamental to an understanding of TAFE within today’s debate around the national training reform agenda.’ In this paper, we construct a bipolar ‘social-service’ and ‘economic-utility’ framework, which owes much to Burgess’s (1981) and Warren-Piper’s (1984) explorations of bias and fairness in British higher education, to Hawke and Sweet’s (1993) writings on access and to Ryan and Scholefield’s (1990) series of models of TAFE in Australia. Within our framework, we examine firstly: sectoral growth, attendance patterns and pertinent demographic and socio-economic shifts in the TAFE population. These analyses provide the context for exploring, secondly,
selection of specific, but interlinked, issues: women’s participation, access courses, selective admissions, academic drift and fees. These issues, while not an exhaustive catalogue, have been chosen to provide a barometer of systemic accessibility. Each was identified originally in the Kangan Report (1974) in its consideration of major barriers to access in TAFE and have been subject to a modicum of research over time.

Our conceptual framework, to be explained in more detail below, superimposed upon our analyses, promotes a better understanding of the complexities inherent in the notions of participation and access, how these might be interpreted and in which ways TAFE policy can be extrapolated against a backdrop of social, economic and political change.

Two conjectural views of TAFE

In a ‘social-service’ view, the individual student is TAFE’s primary focus and equity of access within a broad framework of social concern is a guiding principle. With political commitment to social expenditure and associated full public funding of tertiary education, TAFE’s expansion is facilitated to cater for all needs and interests. The system is characterised by a proliferation of courses which endorse ‘contextual’ (Kangan 1974) or ‘generic’ (Beswick et al. 1983) curricula; that is, those embracing adaptability, social responsibility and personal development of the student, in addition to the teaching of specific vocational skills. It is not forgotten that the individual has to get a job (Lloyd 1976), yet students are not discouraged from exploring different options before finding a suitable niche. The concepts of recurrent education and life-long learning are emphasised. An ‘open’ access system is therefore espoused in which:

\[\text{everybody would be offered some way in, although not necessarily the same way. However, each of the entry points would be equally accessible to those whom they suited . . . and each would give equal opportunity of reaching one of a number of exit points. These exit points, giving different levels and types of accreditation or implying different kinds of educational expertise, would reflect the wishes and the capacities of the students. \quad (Warren-Piper 1983, p.8)}\]

Strategies to enhance equity of participation are not restricted to particular groups, although the nature of disadvantage is examined in
order to inform special provision through transition, access and bridging programs in conjunction with college-based social and educational (along with public) support services. Equity of participation is seen in the broader context of social justice.

Although it might be argued that such a view of TAFE bears no semblance to reality, many of its features were explicit in the 1974 Kangan Report and were facilitated by economic growth and fundamental transformations in community values during the 1960s and early 1970s. Writing in 1980, Kangan looked back to the conditions which were ‘just right’ to receive the concepts of his committee’s report. In this, the central vision was that TAFE should not be perceived ‘mainly as the supplier who meets the needs for skilled labour, but as supplying each person with education to meet his freely-chosen vocational need . . . within the context of the vocational world’ (p.11). TAFE authorities needed ‘to proclaim that they are educational authorities, not manpower nor employment departments’ (p.12). If elements of the social-service view of TAFE and the Kangan Committee’s vision have left their mark on today’s sector, few remain unquestioned.

In an ‘economic-utility’ view, TAFE is seen by government as one channel through which to promote national economic development. By default, the economy drives enrolments, determines their social distribution and influences the nature of student demand. Government, and the system itself, look beyond public funding to the private sector, specifically industry and individual users who are defined as the private beneficiaries of TAFE training. Fees, together with competitive selection policies, deter ‘frivolous consumption’ (Marginson 1988, p.80) and efficiency is stressed in terms of maximising retention and completion rates. Credentials become the currency of exchange between ‘suppliers’ and ‘clients’ in a context where education and training are defined as a commercial transaction, rather than as a process of social and cultural formation. Working from a human capital paradigm, education and training become ‘skills formation’ (Boomer 1987; Marginson 1993); the principal objective of which is to ‘add value’ and boost the productivity and competitiveness of industry, rather than contribute to social and personal development. Accordingly, curricula become decontextualised, market tied and hierarchical.
Although equity remains an issue, its definition differs markedly from that specified by the social-service view. It is not simply a matter of 'meeting social objectives related to equity. Rather it is an economic argument about increasing the pool of human resources' (Dawkins & Holding 1987, p.16). In this view, there is a tendency for socio-economic inequality to be accepted as given, so that broader social equity questions wane in favour of what Marginson terms 'market equity'. This 'extends to freedom to enter the market (in which TAFE is a major supplier), not to enter it on equal terms and of course is not concerned about equal outcomes' (Marginson 1988, p.7). As opposed to the social-service view which advocates distributive justice and needs-based approaches to resource allocation, the economic-utility view assumes that the market is a more efficient and equitable allocator of scarce resources. In extremis, provision for disadvantaged groups becomes one of many institutional performance indicators, given lip service by government and unsupported by the public purse.

While this view in totality might be regarded as immoderate, clearly many of its aspects have gained currency and are likely to remain significant throughout the 1990s. The Scott Review (1990) of the TAFE system in NSW, for example, argued that the 'quasi-welfare' role of TAFE had taken precedence over meeting the education and training needs of industry. It criticised TAFE for having 'over-emphasised the importance of individual skill requirements at the expense of workplace relevance by pursuing an "open-access policy"' (Scott 1990, pp.12-13). Although other versions of the economic-utility view treat economic growth and social equity as mutually dependant and reconcilable objectives, they simultaneously re-define access and equity as 'community service obligations', a truncated and compartmentalised version of social-justice concerns.

Some might argue that the emergence of the economic-utility view was inevitable, having its roots in economic downturn. From this perspective, priorities need to be ordered, the most favoured order being determined by what appear to be the most pressing macro-economic considerations at the time. Others might argue that the way in which priorities are determined is a matter of ideology. In either case, tensions arise in which participation and access issues are central.
By way of summary and for later reference, some of the features and access implications of these bipolar views of TAFE are set out in the accompanying table. Although the social-service and economic-utility views on the role of TAFE are represented as opposites, they do, nevertheless, bear a close resemblance to actual policy configurations and discursive positions adopted in the debate about vocational education and training over the past few decades. It is conceded that they are subject to myriad differences in emphasis and interpretation and that, in reality, at any one time various policy prescriptions will contain elements of both views. It is the balance that is of interest. Table 1 illustrates some of the points where the balance might tip and tensions arise.

Terms

Notions of participation, access and equity are linked. The ‘somewhat over-used’ term ‘participation’ in education usually refers to the number of people who are ‘in’ the system at any one time (Brewster 1985; Brewster et al. 1985) or to the distribution of enrolments according to various population categories, gender, age group and so on. According to Warren-Piper (1984), population characteristics such as these assume within-group homogeneity, so that arithmetical facts can be revealed about the participation of each group at a particular time or trends may be observed over a period. This approach does not, however, reveal how a pattern comes about nor, as Williams puts it, does it:

provide direct evidence of inequities but, rather, show[s] only that participation rates vary (or do not vary) across sub population groups. Where rates vary, we may choose to say they should not . . . In some cases we will want to say that these differences in participation rates are evidence of inequities in access . . . In other instances the interpretation of between-group differences in participation as evidence of inequities may not be clear-cut . . . members of a group [may] not participate at rates equal to other sub-population groups simply because they do not want to . . . We might take the position . . . that they should—or would if they had not been ‘disadvantaged’ by family and/or culture at an early age.

(Williams 1987, pp.15-16)
Table 1: Features and access implications of two conjectural views of TAFE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Social service</th>
<th>Economic utility</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Finance</strong></td>
<td>• public</td>
<td>• public/private</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• distributive justice</td>
<td>• user pays</td>
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<td><strong>System emphasis, goals</strong></td>
<td>• integrated social/educational/vocational objectives</td>
<td>• vocational/instrumental/training</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• focus on individual needs and outcomes</td>
<td>• skills acquisition</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• lifelong learning</td>
<td>• economic benefits to individual and industry;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• recurrent short-cycle training</td>
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<td><strong>Student enrolments</strong></td>
<td>• student driven</td>
<td>• market driven</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Entry</strong></td>
<td>• everybody offered some way in</td>
<td>• restricted</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• exploration encouraged</td>
<td>• 'frivolous consumption' discouraged</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Courses</strong></td>
<td>• courses match people</td>
<td>• people match courses</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• broad-based, transferable skills</td>
<td>• job-specific skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• student centred</td>
<td>• industry determined</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• flexible, participatory</td>
<td>• standardised</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• contextualised, socially critical, integrative</td>
<td>• sequential</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• decontextualised, non-reflective, hierarchical</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Selection</strong></td>
<td>• open access</td>
<td>• rationed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• non-competitive</td>
<td>• competitive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• non-discriminatory</td>
<td>• ranked</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• flexible</td>
<td>• systematised</td>
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<td><strong>Equity goals</strong></td>
<td>• welfare oriented</td>
<td>• economy oriented</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• inclusive with special provision based on nature of disadvantage</td>
<td>• selective with subsidies based on levels of disadvantage</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• needs based, responsive to student diversity</td>
<td>• deficit based, targeted to designated groups</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• social equality</td>
<td>• market equity</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Awards, credentials</strong></td>
<td>• descriptive, emphasis on achievements</td>
<td>• graded, emphasis on market value of credential</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• open, multiple outcomes</td>
<td>• pre-determined outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Influencing factors</strong></td>
<td>• economic expansion</td>
<td>• economic restraint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ideological commitment to the public good and social development</td>
<td>• ideological commitment to economic growth and industry priorities</td>
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Hayden’s definition of participation links with the notion of access: ‘the number of people likely to engage in . . . education under certain conditions’ (1982, p.88). Hayden distinguishes economic conditions (such as perceptions of costs and benefits and the ability to afford to study), social and environmental conditions (such as social and cultural background and geographical location), and psychological conditions—all of which interact to affect individuals in different ways. While access is therefore often perceived in terms of barriers to participation (Powles 1987a), individual choice needs to be added to the complex equation.

Extrapolating these definitions, refined categories can be established and further facts about the population revealed. Obviously, great care must be taken in establishing categories and exploring their characteristics. It must also be remembered that no matter how refined the category, individuals are involved; and, moreover, ‘facts are given meaning only by the political significance of the category used’ (Warren-Piper 1984, p.10) This said, some broad observations may be made about the TAFE student population and some implications drawn.

**Growth**

The present observations begin in 1973 and the overall growth of the sector since this time has been extraordinary. By 1973, TAFE catered for around 430 000 people (Kangan 1974). Enrolments grew strongly throughout the 1970s, averaging 6 per cent growth per year until 1981, when numbers reached over the million mark (CTEC, various years). In 1988, enrolments stood at just under one and a half million. By 1992, almost one and three quarter million students were enrolled in TAFE (DEET, various years; NCVER 1993).

The numbers of institutions and local annexes in major population centres and country areas have increased accordingly, providing not only the widest geographical accessibility of all post-secondary sectors, but also a great range of vocational programs as well as general education and leisure-interest courses. Growth in the diversity of offerings, which came to include remedial and ‘equity’ provision during the 1980s, led to increasing criticism that ‘TAFE’s diffuse purposes dissipated its effectiveness at what it “really” should be doing. TAFE
was criticised as being “all things to all people” (Ryan & Scholefield 1990). It was also argued that increasing enrolments has no necessary virtue from any of a series of viewpoints, be they enhancing productivity, improving prospects for people and so on—unless growth is linked to greater social equity (Ashenden & Costello 1985).

Growth has given rise to a changing variety of pressure points on the sector. The location of pressure points and associated access issues may be illustrated by observing mode of attendance patterns, socio-economic features, provision for particular sections of the population and the balance between vocational and non-vocational education.

**Attendance patterns**

One wide-ranging way of observing participation in TAFE is to examine attendance patterns. Ninety per cent of enrolments are part-time; a proportion which, having remained around that level since the early 1970s, has led to many assumptions about the population as a whole.

Analyses of full-time participation rates by age and sex over time illustrate the importance of this mode of study, by single year of age from fifteen to nineteen, for young females in particular. For instance, in 1992, one third of female eighteen year olds in TAFE and one fifth of males of the same age were enrolled full-time (NCVER 1993). Full-time participation has peaked at age seventeen consistently between 1975 and 1988, since when it has constantly peaked at age eighteen. Between 1990 and 1992, there was a ten per cent increase in the full-time participation of eighteen year olds. Since 1985, full-time participation has been increasing steadily amongst eighteen and nineteen year olds—the age group most vulnerable to the decline in demand for full-time labour (see also Sweet 1988, 1990). In 1992, 49 per cent of full-timers were aged nineteen and under; a further 25 per cent fell in the twenty to twenty-four age group, leaving 26 per cent in a ‘mature-age’ category, where the proportions who are women increase with age.

Whereas early school leavers are highly vulnerable in the labour market, TAFE provides an attractive full-time alternative to staying at school for many young people. With its flexible entry requirements, alternative curricula with an employment focus, lesser conformity to the academic
pattern, and greater emphasis on self-responsibility, it generally provides a more adult atmosphere (Powles 1988). These attractions would, of course, also apply to young people seeking part-time involvement.

Full-time attendance in TAFE has been strongly associated with low socio-economic status (King 1987), a finding which connects with Williams’ observations that preference for education (in relation to post-compulsory school retention, but which could just as well apply to choosing the TAFE alternative) is ‘rooted in the complex of values, orientations, attitudes and behaviour that characterise families in different social status groups’ (Williams 1987, p.112). Williams considers preferences to be more to do with social than family economic circumstances, although he recognises that the latter have become more important in influencing decisions to proceed or not since the early 1980s economic downturn. Clearly, then, availability of places, as well as financial support for young people from less well-off families who wish to proceed with full-time post-compulsory education in TAFE, are issues not only of access, but also of social equity.

The full-time/part-time ratio varies considerably across streams of study. It might be expected that the pre-vocational/pre-apprenticeship areas (75 per cent full-time enrolments in 1992), as well as the educational preparation stream (13 per cent), would retain their ‘traditional’ full-time clientele of early school leavers and lower socio-economic groups. On the other hand, since the early to mid 1980s, post-compulsory school retention rates began their dramatic climb, educational aspirations rose and excess demand for higher-education places began to escalate. These factors, combined with a dwindling number of jobs in the youth-labour market, unemployment and economy-driven realisation amongst young people that post-school qualifications meant jobs, have resulted in TAFE becoming an increasingly common destination for school leavers with Year 12 certification, despite a large majority of them indicating preference for university (ANOP 1993). Excess demand has become more apparent in full-time courses, at advanced-certificate and associate-diploma levels in particular; entry qualifications for which have not, until recently, been rigidly defined on higher-school completion criteria (Powles 1990b). In this context, issues which will gain prominence in the 1990s—to be considered later—are those concerning the demise of open access and
the possible displacement of the traditional full-time youth clientele, as applicant qualifications rise and so does the probability that courses will be increasingly designed to cater for a more highly-qualified applicant group.

As for part-time participation, assumptions, hitherto made on the basis of demographic variables and the simple fact of majority part-time attendance, have only relatively recently come under scrutiny (King 1987; State Training Board of Australia (STBV) 1987; Powles 1990a; Sturman & Long 1990).

The overall structure of the part-time population is an inversion of that of full-timers: in 1992 only 24 per cent were aged nineteen years and under; a further 20 per cent fell into the twenty to twenty-four year range; leaving 56 per cent aged twenty-five and over. The only major deviations from this pattern are found in the trades streams: 83 per cent and 87 per cent respectively of the part-time component of Streams 3211 (pre-apprenticeship) and 3212 (apprenticeship) were under twenty-five years of age, and were mostly male (NCVER 1993). However, considering the large numbers involved, the part-time option is critical in terms of access to training for young and older people alike, and not only for those in employment.

Data from the Victorian TAFE system indicates that in Stream 2000 courses, where 84 per cent of all students were part-time, 61 per cent of female students (who comprised 58 per cent of the total Stream 2000 population in 1990) were either in part-time work or unemployed. This compares with only 37 per cent of the total population. In addition, 50 per cent of students in Stream 2000 were over 25 years of age and 'therefore more likely to have dependants and heavy financial commitments. In many instances, for female students to be able to participate in either full-time or part-time training in Stream 2000, they would need financial assistance' (STBV 1992, p.69). Examination of income support patterns, therefore, is crucial to the access issue.

While part-time study with its great number of students is likely to be the only study option for the full-time worker, it may also be so for those responsible for children (Powles 1987a) or those seeking work. Part-time courses may be doubly attractive to people wishing to distance themselves from school regimentation—recently experienced or
recalled—in terms of reaching goals in their own way and at their own pace (Kangan 1974). For many young people, a full-time course may be no option if costs form a barrier—which has been shown to be the case for a significant proportion of younger students who may lack family support, who are ineligible for student assistance, and who need to work to support themselves when they move from the family home (Powles 1986).

The above considerations of full-time and part-time students’ characteristics illustrate how common assumptions about their ages, backgrounds, work patterns and income can be shown to be questionable, and, in many cases, invalid. Proponents of a social-service view of TAFE, by penetrating the surface of the category, would accommodate heterogeneity in policy decisions. Conversely, emphasis on category, a characteristic of an economic utility view, would serve to mask inequity and to marginalise disadvantage.

Socio-economic indicators

During its very early development, Australian technical and further education had a distinct working-class orientation (Murray-Smith 1966, 1968, 1971) and dual goals: to provide skills instruction for the workforce and to offer people from lower social strata opportunities for personal development and advancement. A major difference has been detected between the latter specifically social goal and the perspective of the Kangan Committee which ‘did not recognise that TAFE clientele came from any particular social group or strata’ (Anderson & Vervoorn 1983). Around 1980, data from several major documents (COE 1978; Williams 1979; ACER 1982) demonstrated that the socio-economic profile of vocational streams paralleled that of the total population and that in this it differed substantially from the recreational stream and from higher education. Complexities were, however, masked by treating the TAFE students in vocational streams as a single group.

King’s (1987) pioneer work, utilising the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ socio-economic status (SES) postcode indicator, showed that the 1986 population of metropolitan Sydney TAFE was representative of the region. Yet, it was also shown that low SES groups were concentrated in preparatory and basic-skills courses, not proportionally represented in
programs associated with the professional, para-professional and technical-labour markets, and very much under-represented in associate-diploma courses. The fields of art and design, food and rural studies all exhibited high SES profiles. King proposed that these failed to attract students from low SES groups because of high materials costs in the case of art and the concentration of food and rural studies programs in a college located in an above-average SES area. Also, in the last two instances, a very high proportion of all Sydney metropolitan associate-diploma students were located in that college, so that a higher-school-certificate entry barrier was in effect. Thus, once again, costs and credentials issues come to the fore.

Further observations on SES by stream, following King’s method (Powles 1990a), revealed more variations and inconsistencies. For instance, King’s analyses distinguished the Sydney professional stream from all other old classification streams by its relatively high SES profile. This was seen to hold for the 3600 category under the new nineteen-stream classification system for each of the years from 1986 to 1989. In Victoria in 1987, however, the professional stream exhibited a mirror image of the Sydney situation, with significantly higher percentages in the low SES category than all but the preparatory stream—a finding consistent with further indicators of socio-economic disadvantage in Victorian TAFE (see STBV 1988a). It was also shown that significantly higher-than-expected percentages of high SES enrollees were to be found in other streams in Sydney metropolitan TAFE, although the skew was not as marked as it was in the professional stream. In several of these cases (3300 and 4500), the skew was consistent between 1986 and 1989, but in other instances (3500, 4100 and 4300) the profile approximated more closely to that of the total population in some years. The Victorian data revealed further variations.

These exploratory studies have succeeded in demonstrating hitherto undocumented, complex details about the population and points on the stream classification grid where people from various socio-economic groups are entering TAFE. Clearly, ‘the degree of equitable access to education [must] be measured with reference to the nature of the provision to which access is gained’ (King 1987, p.17). With further research, trends may be observed over time, and more sophisticated formulations of SES may inform the observations. It will still be necessary to explore a plethora of relationships between SES, age, sex,
geographical location, educational preference and so on (Powles 1990a). But while such research is needed to indicate where socio-economic disadvantage might be broadly detected in the system, the use of SES as a categorical concept will inevitably conceal people who fall around the margins of groups with which policy is concerned.

Women

Women’s participation in TAFE has increased considerably since the 1970s, to 55 per cent of total enrolments in 1992. However, only 44 per cent in Streams 2100–4500 were women, whereas 75 per cent of the recreational stream (1000) were women. Looked at another way, 47 per cent of all females in TAFE were concentrated in Stream 1000 (compared with only 21 per cent of males). In Victoria, women’s participation in Streams 1000 and 2100–4500 increased from 38 to 41 per cent in the five-year period between 1985 and 1990, yet female enrolments in Streams 1000 and 2000 remained static. Moreover, although the number of women enrolled in Streams 3000 and 4000 almost doubled over the same five-year period, the proportion of women in each of these streams was still less than 35 per cent in 1990 (STBV 1992, p.13). A point to be taken up later is that Stream 1000 courses often act as a first taste of post-compulsory education and often have vocational content. Women are now a majority in basic skills and preparatory streams (2100, 2200 and 3100), as well as in the professional stream (3600). They remain severely under-represented in the trades and are a minority in the para-professional streams. The picture becomes far more complex when age, mode of attendance and SES participation rates are superimposed upon gender patterns by stream (Powles 1990a), as indicated earlier. Patterns such as these indicate little of barriers which are deeply embedded in slowly-changing community attitudes and values in relation to gender roles in the workforce (Powles 1987a). What the patterns indicate is that women’s access to many areas of TAFE is not necessarily a problem, but that occupational segregation is likely to persist. However, just as means will continue to be sought to correct imbalances (Pocock 1987 a&b; DEET 1991), other questions must be addressed.

Pocock suggests that the critical problems are not of access to TAFE, but those of quality and inclusiveness of teaching, course content, facilities, equipment and support services such as counselling and child care. In
addition to the vulnerability of special-access programs in which many women congregate, attention has also been drawn to funding priorities which have always favoured the trades, and now also technological areas, which continue to be largely unattractive to women (Powles 1990a; STBV 1992).

Wilson and Wyn (1987) challenge some of the assumptions inherent in the way equality of opportunity is interpreted in relation to women's participation. By encouraging women to follow 'male' career paths, their considered choices not to accept hierarchical, competitive structures of the labour process are demeaned, their personal identities are undermined, and the political character of social relations within which education is acquired and perpetuated is left unexamined.

More recently, debate about women's participation in TAFE has broadened beyond a consideration of structural and attitudinal barriers. While issues such as income support, child care, timetabling, counselling, information and the TAFE college culture and environment remain a source of enduring concern, attention has focussed on the gender construction of skill and the manner in which systems of skills recognition and training devalue women's knowledge and skills (Cox 1992; Jackson 1991; Probert 1992). Although current evidence suggests that male bias in the conception and articulation of skill and competencies has a negative impact on women's participation in training, further research on the nature and extent of gender inequities is required (Wallace 1993).

Access courses

The Kangan Committee identified a series of psycho-social as well as structural barriers to post-compulsory education participation, which it thought TAFE was in the best position to address. Barriers included: individuals' fear of failure, possibly experienced at school; fear of tests and examinations by which apparent failure is publicly exposed; rigidly-defined course pre-requisites; inflexible learning methods; hierarchical structures appearing to favour higher academic achievers and 'those whose circumstances—social as well as economic—permit a prolonged school life' (Kangan 1974, p.11). The Committee located educationally-disadvantaged groups—women, people in country areas, people with
disabilities and minority groups such as Aborigines and immigrants—within a broad context of societal disadvantage. From the mid 1970s onwards, an array of access programs was instigated on the premise that TAFE had a vital role to play in redressing social imbalances.

Hawke and Sweet (1983) have observed that growth of special programs depended ‘largely on the capacity of those concerned with equal opportunity to capitalise upon a climate of overall expansion of TAFE resources. Their capacity to do so was enhanced by a clear commitment by the Kangan Committee to unrestricted, universal, or open access to TAFE quarter’ (p.2). Whereas in Kangan’s view, TAFE should provide more than merely job preparation, by the early 1980s, the more prevalent attitude was that general or non-vocational programs were somehow ‘the icing on the TAFE cake’, separate from mainstream provision. Access programs for specific groups were assigned to the recreational and preparatory streams, were often ad hoc, short, non-certificated and therefore doing little in terms of redressing social inequities. Many of them met their demise because of inadequate understanding of the nature of need, leading to targets being missed, and lack of planning and integration with mainstream TAFE provision. Participation rates in TAFE courses rose rapidly over the post-Kangan decade, particularly by young people enrolled in special program initiatives such as transition education, employment programs for unemployed youth and related courses. However, it became evident that increased participation per se had not fundamentally altered traditional patterns of access to and participation in mainstream TAFE courses. In this regard, special-access programs were based on a simplistic equation between participation and equity. Although subsequent programs, particularly the participation and equity program, sought to enhance equity of access to mainstream courses in TAFE by increasing participation of certain disadvantaged groups, they continued to suffer from a failure to address the structural and cultural barriers which arose from their marginal status with respect to mainstream funding, course provision and recognition (Sweet 1985; Lechte 1985; Noonan 1985; Anderson 1985).

In a context where Commonwealth funding for special-program initiatives was of short duration and peripheral in nature, amounting to less than ten per cent of total recurrent expenditure, autonomous State TAFE systems viewed special-program funding as supplementary and
uncertain. Such initiatives failed to take account of the selective nature of access to mainstream provision, entry requirements for which were often determined by industry and/or State training authorities and which lay outside the control of TAFE providers. Although individual program providers were committed and creative, TAFE authorities and colleges were often not persuaded as to the efficacy of access courses—a trend that became more apparent in the 1980s as the flow of resources was stemmed and calls for accountability and cost-effectiveness became increasingly strident. Moreover, as Kell (1990) observes, the paternalistic and technically-oriented ‘workshop culture’ of TAFE colleges presented insurmountable barriers to acceptance.

Hawke and Sweet (1983) have argued that although it is essential to look beyond barriers to access (see also Beswick et al. 1983), special-program provision is appropriate in many circumstances. The nature of the provision needs to be closely aligned to an understanding of participation patterns and of the complexity of those social and institutional factors that form barriers to initial and subsequent participation. In addition, special programs for particular groups ‘should be justified by educational need rather than by group membership’ (Sweet 1985, p.92). Accordingly, access policies should be based on an integrating principle which:

suggests that the question of access is broader than the needs of specifically nominated groups; presumes fairness in resource allocation; makes no distinction between fringe and mainstream; directs attention to student selection, and implies a commitment to efficient use of resources as a corollary of their equitable distribution.

(Sweet 1985, p.90)

Special-access courses with clearly defined objectives have had positive outcomes and these need to be acknowledged. Work at the TAFE National Centre for Research and Development provides insight into (and valuable literature reviews of) provision for adult women with limited education or outdated vocational qualifications (Richards 1987; Binns 1989); for women in isolated areas (Mageean 1988); for rural communities and non-metropolitan populations and particular sections of them (Guthrie & Krzemionka 1987; Parkinson 1987; Budge 1989; Mageean 1990); for Aboriginal people (Ensor 1989); and the aged and ageing (Nairn 1985). These, together with the Victorian State Training
Board’s student profile survey reports on women, the unemployed, and people from non-English-speaking backgrounds (STBV, 1988 a, b & c), demonstrate that while the needs of specific groups can be understood and met, dangers remain that access courses are located at the margins of the mainstream, and that provision may depend on a mere checklist by which judgements are made as to whether needs are real or not.

The debate over access to TAFE for women and disadvantaged groups has shifted considerable ground since the mid-1980s. Greater emphasis has been placed on integrating special-access programs into mainstream vocational provision and facilitating the direct access and participation of disadvantaged groups in mainstream courses. This has occurred by means of participation targets and mechanisms which enable recognition of skills acquired informally or overseas. Under the influence of human capital theory and in a context where the needs of industry and individuals are claimed to be converging, the rationale for specific-purpose-access programs has come into question. The Deveson Review (1990), for instance, advocated the selective use of targeted training subsidies rather than specific-purpose-access programs, in an attempt to balance the conflicting objectives of promoting market competition and ensuring fairer and more equitable access: ‘It is people who need to be subsidised, not the courses in which they happen to cluster. Through this approach, the causes of both equity . . . and efficiency can be served simultaneously’ (vol.1, p.10).

Such rhetoric, however, disguises the reality that social equity has been subordinated to the efficiency concerns that dominate the economic-utility view. The argument for selectivity in the distribution of benefits and services is essentially just a diluted version of the economic-rationalist faith in the superiority of market forces as a mechanism for efficient resource allocation (Marginson 1993). While the need for educational recovery and ‘second chance’ opportunities is recognised, such programs have been re-defined in economic terms and subsumed within a corporate management framework. This measures effectiveness in terms of participation targets and completion rates, rather than the extent to which the social and educational needs of disadvantaged groups have been met.

To a large extent, the debate over the need for special-access and equity initiatives in TAFE has been subsumed within the drive to reform the
entry-level training system. The Finn Review (1991) and the Carmichael Report (1992) proposed the development of a comprehensive and integrated framework of entry-level training opportunities and pathways, which would provide both broader coverage for women and disadvantaged groups and more effective linkages with the workplace and other educational sectors. In addition, both the Finn Review and Carmichael Report recommended wider application of strategies for setting targets to increase the access of specified groups to mainstream vocational programs, such as the National Plan of Action for Women in TAFE (DEET 1991) and the Negotiated Targets Strategy in Victoria.

In effect, 'mainstreaming' and participation targets in TAFE are considered to obviate the need for special program provision. As Powles (1992) argued in relation to the Finn Review, the problem with this approach to access and equity — i.e. abandoning broad definitions of disadvantage in favour of strategies to increase the participation of smaller sub-groups of those identified 'at risk' — is that those on the margins of disadvantage, such as early school leavers, may well miss out.

In 1992, 49 per cent of all enrolments were in vocational streams (3100–4500), 15 per cent in preparatory streams (2100–2200) and 36 per cent in recreational/enrichment programs (Stream 1000) (NCVER 1993). Stream 1000 has grown more rapidly in recent times than vocational and preparatory streams (2100–4500), numbers rising between 1985 and 1992 by 53 per cent and 21 per cent respectively. It has frequently been observed that the so-called recreational stream acts as a first, often tentative, contact with post-school education, by which means many, particularly older women, can overcome psycho-social barriers to further participation (Martin 1988; Barnett 1993). Often these courses provide vocational content and vocational outcomes or act as a point of transition to mainstream courses (STBV 1988a; Edgar 1987), thereby potentially offering access to, and progression through, the system. Despite concerted attempts to attain national consistency in course classification since 1985, some overlap remains. Nevertheless, Stream 1000 courses are not recognised as having vocational content by TAFE authorities (Stevenson & Mountney 1985) and, by falling into the 'hobby category', attract fees. Neither of these factors would pertain in a social-service view of TAFE, whereas economic utilitarians would argue that the (declared) recreational nature of these courses attracts an older middle-
class clientele with the ability to pay. In this case, it should be asked whether the higher socio-economic profile of Stream 1000 is the result of these structural factors and, conversely, to what extent and for whom they constitute barriers.

**Selection**

'Open access' policy recommendations in the 1970s were not the sole preserve of the Kangan Committee (Beswick et al. 1983). They appeared in various contexts in the Karmel Report on the Open University in 1975, in Dennison's study for the Commission of Inquiry into Poverty in 1976 and in the Williams Report of 1979. None of these conceived all courses being immediately open to all, but rather that everyone who wished to enter might be offered *some* way in—a notion consistent with the social-service view of TAFE detailed earlier. From the early 1980s, however, it became apparent as demand increased and resources dwindled that access to TAFE was being limited by its available supply of places. According to Hawke and Sweet:

> At a time of growing pressure for accountability, a commitment to open or unfettered access, with its implied emphasis on equity at the expense of efficiency, becomes increasingly difficult to maintain ... [I]n the climate of the early 1980s a commitment to more equitable access to TAFE needs to rest on a rationale which recognises a need for accountability and which at the same time avoids the risk of resulting action being seen as marginal to the mainstream of TAFE's provision.

(Hawke & Sweet 1983, p.2)

By 1990, the swing of the pendulum towards economic utility is quite evident. The Scott Report disparages 'an emphasis on "open access" to TAFE with "enrolments for enrolment's sake" taking precedence over the education and training needs of industry and commerce' (1990, p.6). Emphasis on vocational courses and industry destinations thus supersedes concern about how people enter the system and how a measure of fairness might be attained in selecting them.

Through national surveys in 1987, an attempt was made to explore the nature of the shift. Powles (1990b) proposed that from the point where a
course can no longer accommodate all qualified applicants, a series of ‘evolutionary’ phases ensue until selective admissions are adopted.

Although residual elements of open access were to be found in some colleges, these tended to serve sparsely-populated rural communities, or were newer ones in developing outer-metropolitan areas where community response had not had time to advance. As demand for places began to exceed supply, a first-come, first-served (fc-fs) for admissions was a common first response and is still prevalent. Few colleges were operating entirely on that system (these were predominantly regional), but often it was used within the same college, alongside other high-demand courses in which competitive selection procedures had been introduced. When asked to list advantages and disadvantages of fc-fs, Powles’ respondents were evenly divided. Those in favour mentioned fairness—in that students with the pre-requisite qualifications were treated equally, the method was objective, free from values of selectors, administratively simple, and thought to be acceptable to the community. A majority of respondents who listed disadvantages of fc-fs said it was unfair—to potentially suitable applicants who did not make it to the queue because of employment, distance and family responsibilities. Queues were considered undesirable from the applicant’s point of view and embarrassing for the college. Others indicated that without selective admissions, standards would be lowered, and because there would be more students who did not ‘match’ the course well, attrition would be greater. Clearly, their opinions reflected notions about ‘appropriate’ clienteles.

Demand is now high and selective admissions are widespread. These ‘have evolved at a faster rate and are relatively more prevalent in full-time programs and higher-level courses where demand has been precipitous, and where there is a relatively higher human and monetary cost investment’ (Powles 1990b, pp.62-63). Often, if queuing has been abandoned, application or pre-enrolment forms have been introduced with the purpose of: firstly, culling applicants who do not meet course requirements; and secondly, in many cases, to choose amongst the qualified according to specified criteria. Interviews may be used for the same purposes, alone or in addition to forms such as those just mentioned.
The next evolutionary development—competitive selection—is described as 'explosive'; resulting, however, in a 'veritable dog’s breakfast of different, most often locally-developed, selection instruments, methods and processes, which have little consistency even between similar offerings at the same level, in the same field, in the same geographic area' (Powles 1990b, p.63). Several survey respondents confirmed an earlier observation (Hawke & Sweet 1983) that many of the methods in use were of dubious validity and intent. Selection bias was apparent in many full-time middle-level (certificate) programs, for which people who had completed a higher-school certificate were given preference over applicants who met lower-level stipulated pre-requisites. In addition, the more articulate and 'well presented' interviewee was favoured and those with a 'more professional approach' (NSW TAFE 1990b, p.35) were welcomed—all of whom are likely to be socially advantaged. When asked to rate the importance of a series of statements concerning purposes of selection, likely success on the course was nominated most frequently by Powles’ respondents. This subscale included selecting the most capable, the keenest and also selecting out those who were likely to fail or withdraw. Items on a 'social equity' subscale (matching the social composition of students to that in the community, positive discrimination for disadvantaged groups, effecting principles of social justice) received the lowest ratings, irrespective of course level.

The study emphasised that selection to a course is a process, each stage of which needs to be critically examined for evidence of bias: from published information about pre-requisites and what lies in store; to pre-course academic, career and welfare counselling; through to application of a validated selection method with a rigorously defined set of objectives (see also Haigh 1987). All of these stages will be affected by the way the balance tips in favour of social service or economic utility. If it is to the latter, changes in the socio-economic spectrum of the population would be expected, with a skew towards the upper end.

**Academic drift**

A tendency towards academic drift is likely to hasten a shift in the TAFE student population towards the upper end of the socio-economic profile. As early as 1976, Lloyd (2.4) predicted that ‘the “standard” of certificate
courses [is likely to] drift upwards—resulting from a misplaced drive among teachers for "academic respectability", just as Armstrong (1979) saw the colleges of advanced education abdicating their role in the preparation of para-professionals in favour of developing degree courses. The tendency in TAFE is apparent, whatever the motive. It has been accelerated in part as a result of changes in nomenclature and reorganisation of course offerings (Stevenson & Mountney 1985). Many courses traditionally conducted at Year 10 admissions level have now been re-accredited as associate diplomas with Year 12 entry. High youth unemployment and excess demand for post-school qualifications in recent years have fuelled credentialism, thereby confirming the upward drift in TAFE provision. In NSW, for example, TAFE enrolments increased by 75 per cent between 1989 and 1991 for courses leading to an associate diploma. In Victoria, the number of 20 to 24 year-olds commencing advanced certificate and associate diploma courses increased by 73 per cent between 1985 and 1990 (ESFC 1993). TAFE continues to look 'upwards', as articulation with higher education and credit transfer become more of a reality (Beswick et al. 1983; Parkinson 1985; Golding 1995a & b).

The upwards drift in academic status of TAFE courses is compounded by 'downward' pressure from partially or fully-qualified university students seeking additional qualifications from TAFE. Golding (1995a & b) has discovered that between 1990 and 1994 in Victoria, up to 25 per cent of enrollees in TAFE associate diploma, diploma and certificate courses had university backgrounds and the numbers far exceeded those going on from TAFE to university. The combined forces of creeping credentialism and so-called reverse transfer are likely to displace TAFE’s traditional clienteles.

Fees and financial assistance

In 1974, the Whitlam Government abolished tertiary fees. In that year, and subsequently, States Grants Acts (under which TAFE monies were allocated by the Commonwealth) included the condition that no tuition fees would be charged. The definition of fees did not include those payable to student organisations, or for services of a non-academic nature. Ryan and Scholefield (1990, p.2) observed how 'the late 1980s saw a swing away from . . . the mood which accompanied the abolition
Reduction in public expenditures and the applications of user pays principles became important government goals. Significant policy changes have since occurred, including the introduction of the tax debit scheme for university graduates (HECS), removal of the fees prohibition for TAFE courses and an increased application of service, administrative and materials charges. The last mentioned had become a 'bewildering array' of fees and charges under a variety of appellations and a wide spectrum of levels—differing from college to college and from State to State. The Deveson Review (1990) considered this situation to have arisen because of the 'need to avoid direct confrontation' with tuition fee provision under the Commonwealth’s States Grants (TAFE Assistance) Act. In the Committee’s view, the first step towards 'the development of more open, rational and equitable charging arrangements in TAFE' would be the removal of the fee restrictions under the Act accompanied by an 'equity package' (pp.48-53, our italics). With the subsequent removal of the fee embargo by the Commonwealth, however, it could be argued that these proposals were the thin edge of the wedge, the consequences of which have been documented in NSW and Tasmania.

Costs to the student increased dramatically from 1988 to 1989 in NSW, when ‘administration’ charges were introduced on a State-wide basis. They increased again in 1990 and further increases were mooted for 1991. In 1989, an extraordinary 17 per cent decrease occurred in enrolments (NSW TAFE 1989a), with a further decrease in 1990—a total estimated drop of 100 000 enrolments. In effect, total enrolments in NSW TAFE fell from 474 051 in 1987 to 368 619 in 1990—a 24 per cent decrease (NSW TAFE 1990b). While administration charges and associated problems have undoubtedly contributed to this trend, further examination of where decreases occurred would seem to indicate a strong price-sensitive effect. From NSW TAFE data (1989 and 1990), it can be determined that enrolment drops were greater in the following areas: country regions compared with more affluent metropolitan Sydney, with the former showing an enrolment fall of 19 per cent in 1988-89 and 7 per cent in 1990; isolated colleges servicing poorer communities, with West Wyalong dropping 50 per cent and Moree falling by 75 per cent in 1989 and 1990; external studies which attract a lower SES clientele than do part-time or full-time modes (Anwyl et al. 1986); groups aged thirty or more, many of whom are educationally-disadvantaged women; the para-professional stream where the fee increases were greatest; and amongst full-timers in Stream 2200, the
largest 'access' point for young people and notable for its low SES skew. Colleges with predominantly female populations suffered serious falls in 1989 and 1990, with enrolments in the School of Fashion declining by 46 per cent and similar falls in areas with high relative proportions of female students, such as catering and nutrition management (50 per cent), office administration (36 per cent), art and design (30 per cent) and general studies (12 per cent).

The Tasmanian experience reveals similar trends in access and participation rates, particularly for women, in the wake of fee increases (Dallas & Wieranga 1992; Potter 1992). After the introduction of fees in 1991, women's enrolments declined by 18 per cent, in contrast to those of men which decreased by 13 per cent. By the end of 1992, the gap between female and male enrolments had extended from 6 per cent to 12 per cent. In particular, female enrolments in commercial studies courses fell by 30 per cent from 1990 to 1991. While the precise nature and relative importance of causal factors are unclear, such data nevertheless suggest that these declines are in part attributable to fee increases.

In this context, it should be mentioned that most of the groups who were deterred from re-enrolling in higher education by the prospect of HECS (Robertson et al. 1990) are more prevalent in TAFE: mature-age people, part-timers, external students, those from families in which parents have low levels of education, non-native speakers, and those who are economically disadvantaged. Obviously there are many overlaps with the very groups amongst whom enrolment decreases were greatest in NSW, following the introduction of administrative charges. On the other hand, it has been shown, albeit briefly, that TAFE's population characteristics are multi-dimensional, and that fees would, and are, impinging on the circumstances of people who are less readily detectable in terms of a disadvantage checklist or an equity 'package'. In NSW, the number of applicants (deemed disadvantaged on a range of criteria) who qualified for exemptions from the charge was severely underestimated: exemption quotas were introduced; selection amongst the disadvantaged has to take place. However, 'the qualifying cut-off point for exemptions and concessional treatment raises further equity concerns involving the likely displacement of those groups at the margins of this point' (Barnett 1994).
The thin edge of the wedge described above bodes ill for the less privileged. This includes the many whose vocational goals are least defined and who consequently fall into the economic-utilitarian category of ‘frivolous consumers’. The obverse is that fees can distort the educational choices made by those least able to pay. Potter’s 1992 study of women with low incomes in Tasmanian adult education courses identified a tendency amongst this group to select shorter, less expensive and more vocationally-oriented courses rather than ‘traditional’ adult courses in the wake of the fee increases since 1989 (cited in Barnett 1994).

An apposite contrast may be observed with prevailing attitudes in 1974, when not only were fees abolished, but the Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme (TEAS) was introduced. By providing non-competitive, income-tested allowances for full-time tertiary students, TEAS was underpinned by major concerns for expansion and reform in the public sector. The Hon. K E Beazley’s Second Reading speech on the Student Assistance Bill 1973 exemplified the social-service function of the scheme. He said:

student allowances ought to be sufficient to give students the leisure to think as they pursued their studies . . . [they] should therefore be sufficient to meet basic living costs . . . with the highest levels of assistance directed to those who did not have access to family or personal resources sufficient to keep them during their years of study.

(DEET 1986, pp.4–5)

TEAS was not the only form of income support then available for TAFE students. By the early 1980s, it was recognised that the multiplicity of allowances and benefits paid to students or their parents required rationalisation. Early documentation revealed how different levels of financial assistance, the criteria attached to them and the sources of that support could have perverse effects on incentives and considerable inequity in distribution (Wilenski 1983; DEET 1983). Subsequent research has highlighted the issue in TAFE with respect to gaps and anomalies created by confused definitions of stream, course entry-level requirements, full-time or part-time status, and what constituted ‘secondary’, ‘post-secondary’ and ‘tertiary education’ (Powles 1984; Goozee 1985, 1986).
Discrepancies were noted between stipend levels provided under education and training schemes at that time (administered by separate Commonwealth departments), as well as between the types of courses designated to attract allowances. This prompted criticism that ‘training’ was somehow accorded more value to the community in terms of public investment in student support, than in general, basic, remedial or liberal programs grouped as ‘education’ (Powles 1984). Sweet (1987) observed, moreover, that individual choice could be thereby manipulated.

Although changes to student assistance policy were introduced with AUSTUDY in 1987 (Powles 1987b) and modified, particularly in the 1992–3 Commonwealth budget, they did not include any emergency loans scheme for TAFE as had been propounded from the early 1980s (e.g. Powles 1984; Goozee 1985, 1986) and again recommended by the Deveson Review (1990). As Goozee observes, ‘the changes . . . did not go far enough and, yet again, only played around the margins’ (1993, p.134).

How can student assistance schemes be allocated adequate funding? The Yeatman Report from South Australia was certainly not the first to express a view (Davidson 1988; Farrar 1987; Marginson 1988) which this paper endorses.

A taxation-funded public tertiary education sector which does not have fees as one of its barriers to access is much more in accord with a genuinely universal framework of income support.

(Yeatman 1988)

Conclusions

While access and equity in TAFE have received some attention in recent policy developments, Powles argues in a discussion of the implications of the Finn Review (1991), that ‘the concepts of “access” and “equity”, which often nowadays have little more depth of meaning than catchwords, need some sustained debate’ (1992, p.61). These issues have remained largely peripheral in the development of national strategies for increasing the participation of young people in post-compulsory education and training. This apparent indifference can be attributed in large part to the ascendancy of economic rationalism and the preoccupation with economic objectives in debates about public
education policy. As Marginson puts it, 'education is now seen as a branch of economic policy rather than a mix of social, economic and cultural policy. To the extent that there is a continuing concern about social policy in education, it is mostly understood as labour market policy' (1993, p.56). This observation is especially pertinent to TAFE, which occupies a strategic position at the education–labour market interface. Both as a consequence of, and a contributing factor to, the current policy distance from the issues, has been the dearth since the early 1990s of any systematic analysis of participation and barriers to access in TAFE. Moreover, the absence of any large-scale surveys of the demographic and socio-economic profile of the TAFE student population has contributed to an environment in which policy has been developed in an effective vacuum of information regarding its potential social implications.

By superimposing two conjectural (and deliberately dichotomous) 'social-service' and 'economic-utility' perspectives upon some of TAFE's features, changes within the system have been explored as they relate to notions of participation, access and equity. This is also a useful device for questioning how these terms are interpreted under different conditions. In this paper, it has been argued that the terms are used freely, but less often debated. As Farrar (1987, p.21) puts it, 'people's ideas of what is politically or socially fair can be appealed to precisely because it's taken as self-evident.'

It has been shown that many elements of the hypothetical economic-utility view of TAFE, having gained currency from the mid 1980s, are now much in evidence, and are likely to persist through the 1990s. These need to be critically examined against 'self-evident' assumptions. It is not self-evident that further enrolment increases are desirable in the interests of developing a broader skills base to underpin economic growth, unless it is asked: Whence the resources for expansion? What are the limits to expansion? In setting limits, how are priorities ordered? Who will benefit? Who will miss out, and why?

As this paper has revealed, it can no longer be assumed that the TAFE population represents the wider community in microcosm. Nor can policy rest on assumptions as to its older, part-time student/ full-time worker majority clientele, with a peppering of disadvantaged groups. Instead, it needs to be asked, in terms of its demographic and socio-
economic profile: Who is entering the system and why? Who is not? How, at what points of the sector, and for whom can barriers to participation arise? What factors affect observed changes in the population's composition?

Through this paper's approach to questions such as these, recurrent themes have been identified. The nature of 'access', selective admissions, creeping credentialism, costs to the student, and targeting remain important issues in TAFE for the next decade. Each will be affected by the way the balance tips in favour of social service or economic utility. If it is the latter, it is likely that an accumulation of current trends will evidence further shifts within TAFE to the disadvantage of the socio-economically under-privileged.

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