Just out of reach: Access to equity in Australian higher education

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Abstract

This paper provides an account of access and equity in Australian higher education across the period of recent Federal Labor governments and specifically of the discourses and practices surrounding *A Fair Chance For All: Higher Education That's Within Everyone's Reach*, Labor's latest policy on equal access to Australian higher education. The paper positions such an account within Australia's changing national and global economic condition, and the influence of New Right ideologies that proffer efficient and effective public sector management practices and market freedoms that have witnessed a privatisation and peeling back of the welfare state. The paper argues that while Federal Labor has clearly established social justice on the agenda of Australian higher education, it is a justice mediated by particular economic and managerial practices which tend to limit equity to issues of access and place broader equity concerns for higher education just out of reach.

Introduction

Access to Australian higher education first appeared on the national agenda in 1942 when the Chifley Federal Labor Government established a Commonwealth Scholarship Scheme to support university students in specific courses that were deemed necessary for the war effort. The scholarships were reorganised in 1944 under the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme and were aimed at ensuring the access of ex-service personnel to Australian university study. While seeking to redress the disadvantage of a particular social group, higher education was nonetheless considered primarily to be an activity of scholarly excellence (Brosnan, Carter, Layard, Venables & Williams 1971) and special access to higher education through such scholarships was viewed purely in terms of academic merit.

With the election in 1949 of the Menzies Federal Coalition Government and the influence of reports such as those chaired by Mills (1950), Murray (1957), and Martin (1964), federal support for institutions of higher education continued and expanded under the Commonwealth's special and tied financial grants to States. Direct financial support for tertiary students (and later, students of senior secondary schooling) also continued through the provision of Commonwealth scholarships, awarded on the basis of high academic performance on scholarship or public examinations.

In 1969 Federal financial assistance was expanded with the introduction of the Aboriginal Study Grants Scheme (ABSTUDY), giving particular support to Australia's indigenous peoples to study in institutions of higher education. The following year, in recognition of the lack of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in a position to avail themselves of higher education and ABSTUDY, the Federal Government introduced the Aboriginal Secondary Grants Scheme (ABSEG) to encourage their participation in senior secondary schooling - the two schemes combining under ABSTUDY in 1989. Whilst ABSTUDY was made available to all with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status (determined on the basis of descent, self-identification, and community recognition), access to higher education remained restricted to those who were admitted either on academic merit or through special entry provisions that gave recognition to mature age or relevant work experience. (It was not until the late 1980s that 'special entry' into most institutions was broadened to include Aboriginality as a priority area; institutions were encouraged to do so by federal funding under the Aboriginal Participation Initiative.)

With the election of the Whitlam Federal Labor Government in 1972, following 23 years of conservative federal governance, access to Australian higher education was reconstructed in the policy arena to 'reflect the distribution of different social groups in the population at large' (Karmel 1973, p. 20). 'Disadvantage' or the under-representation of some social groups - those with non-English speaking backgrounds, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, from low socio-economic groups, and/or from particular geographical locations - was largely understood as the result of unequal access to financial resources. Under the 1974 agreement reached with the States, the Commonwealth expanded its involvement in higher education by assuming total responsibility for the sector's financing, while legislative responsibility remained with the States.

Given this new arrangement the Commonwealth abolished student tuition fees and introduced a means-tested financial allowance (known as the Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme (TEAS), the precursor of AUSTUDY), aimed at removing the barriers to higher education for low socio-economic groups generally. It was a policy fuelled by the vertical fiscal imbalance in Australian federal governance, 'whereby the Commonwealth raised over 80 per cent of tax revenue but the States carried out over 40 per cent of direct government expenditure' (Drake 1991, p. 60). In Offe's (1984; 1985) terms, the Whitlam Government adopted a conjunctural approach to higher education access policy, informed by a Keynesian view of economics (most fully pursued in Australia under Whitlam), where social demands on governments were met with increased policy coverage and resources guaranteed by anticipated economic growth.

While financial barriers to accessing higher education were removed for many students, little changed in other admission criteria (Barrett & Powell 1980), and several studies (Anderson & Vervoon 1983; Williams 1987; Abbott-Chapman, Hughes & Wyld, 1991) into the composition of the Australian higher education population of the early 1980s concluded that 'the over-representation of students from high socio-economic backgrounds has remained constant, at least since 1950, as has the under-representation of those from lower socio-economic backgrounds' (Anderson & Vervoon 1983, p. 120). Teichler similarly concluded from several studies that 'the more selective the access to a sector of the university system, the lower the percentage of students from lower social strata' (1983, p. 301). Although the Whitlam Federal Labor Government had made higher education more accessible financially, other conditions of access remained closely linked to traditional meritocratic arrangements which failed to account for the unequal educational treatment of individuals in Australian society.

From Federal Labor's electoral defeat in 1975 to its subsequent victory in 1983, little was achieved by the Fraser Federal Coalition Government in redressing the social imbalance of Australia's higher education population. Indeed, as Macintyre (1985) has illustrated in several case studies comparing the social policies of the Fraser Government with its predecessor, some social justice actions seem to have been reversed. However, at *The National Economic Summit* (1983) held shortly after Federal Labor's return to office, opportunities for 'disadvantaged' groups and concern over participation rates at tertiary institutions returned to the policy arena, albeit framed within economic and public sector management reform considered necessary for 'the nation's present and future well-being' (1983, point number 45).

Such framing of social policy was born of Federal Labor's concern on the one hand to address an Australian economy in crisis - suffering from inflation, high levels of unemployment and the loss of global economic security - and on the other to establish a political platform that was substantially different from both the Whitlam and Fraser Federal Governments that preceded it. Labor's 'fresh approach' (Fitzclarence & Kenway 1993, p. 96) appealed to a revised conservative economic 'wisdom' - neo-classical economics - which valued minimal government intervention; that is, freedom for markets to regulate and fulfil social demands 'naturally', and responsibility for governments to target particular social needs, or 'niches', not catered for by the market. In this, Labor's approach was mediated to some degree by the retention of large government departments legitimated by their new 'business-like' orientation and changing focus from service to outcome delivery.

The new approach also gained public support within a notion of 'the national interest', positioned over and above self and sectional interests, and achieved in part through the reworking of the virtues of 'mateship' (Fitzclarence & Kenway 1993, p. 99); a consensus politics of working together for the good of the country. The agreement, reached between employers, unions and government at *The National Economic Summit* (1983), provided a basis for closure about 'what is to be seen as reasonable and possible' (Fitzclarence & Kenway 1993, p. 98).

These changes to the positioning of social policy in relation to economic policy signalled what Offe (1984; 1985) describes as a structural policy response to the social demands made upon governments; a response prevalent in times of economic crisis. According to Offe, governments that are unable or unwilling to match increasing social demands with more resources, seek to redirect that demand into areas they consider themselves better equipped to address or areas they find more legitimacy in addressing. In the reconstructed relationship between matters social and economic, traditional Laborist principles, such as social justice and equity, were able to find voice and even prominence, although constrained and legitimised within an economic rationale.

Within this context, a number of Commonwealth policies incorporating issues of social justice were developed in the early to mid 1980s, including the *Higher Education Equity Program* (1985) which sought to compensate those for whom traditional meritocratic access arrangements to higher education were deemed unfair. 'Disadvantage' under the program definition was widened from those of low socio-economic status, most prevalent amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, the rurally isolated, and people from non-English speaking backgrounds, to include those with physical disabilities, and women seeking entry into traditionally male-dominated areas of study.

Essentially, the *Higher Education Equity Program* was an incentive based scheme that invited higher education institutions to make funding submissions for courses and strategies, which were approved on the basis of Commonwealth equity principles. In part, the scheme sought to extend and expand those existing bridging and enclave programs within several institutions which were designed to enhance the study skills of their special entry students and in particular those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status. The Federal Government's financial support of these programs was directed towards encouraging all institutions to provide similar courses and to extend the client group to include a wider notion of disadvantage.

In practice the funding mechanism embodied in the program failed to generate a consistent equity outcome across Australian higher education. As Bowen suggests, 'although some universities had well established equity programs prior to 1988, many other higher education institutions made little effort to accommodate the needs of those who were under-represented in the tertiary sector' (1993, p. 2). Further, the accommodation of 'disadvantaged' groups within higher education courses did not always 'guarantee' their equitable educational treatment (Gale & McNamee 1993).

Labor's social justice agenda in higher education, post 1987

Following Labor's third successive electoral victory in 1987, the Government moved to make equity more visible in its social policies and to make social and economic policy relationships more explicit. *Towards a Fairer Australia: Social Justice Under Labor* (1988) provided one such avenue, voicing the Government's commitment to 'making social justice both a primary goal of economic policy and an indispensable element in achieving economic policy objectives' (p. vii). The document heralded a collection of integrated economic and social policies concerned with equity, equality, access and participation, including the 'fair and equal access to essential services such as ... education' (p. vi).

Here education in particular became a central link between social and economic policy domains. It was seen to hold the potential both to produce workers more suited to the changing needs of industry and business, necessary for the revamping of Australia to become more competitive in the global economy, and to be a channel through which social justice concerns, understood in terms of access and participation, could be addressed. In this it was a view of social justice that equated more education, particularly of the post-compulsory kind, with enhanced employment prospects (Fitzclarence & Kenway 1993). For Macintyre (1988/9), the equation was somewhat different: 'social justice denotes the social policies that Labor arrange around their economic policies' (p. 36).

Minister Dawkins' (1988) White Paper on higher education (*Higher Education: A Policy Statement*) formed an important part of this more integrated social and economic policy "package". While explicit about the Government's positioning of equity as a priority for higher education, the document also framed higher education concerns generally within particular economic considerations. For example, justification for continued government financial support of higher education was reworked to include education's potential contribution to resolving the country's economic crisis, while its value to individuals was addressed through the introduction of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) - tuition fees paid "up front" or through the taxation system by students after gaining employment. Within this positioning, the economic rationale for a socially just higher education system was clear:

> The larger and more diverse is the pool from which we draw our skilled workforce, the greater our capacity to take advantage of opportunities as they emerge. The current barriers to participation (in higher education) of financially and other disadvantaged groups limit our capacity to develop the highest skilled workforce possible and are a source of economic inefficiency. (Dawkins 1988, p. 7)

The White Paper sought to achieve its aims, 'to make higher education both a site and a tool of micro-economic reform and to give substance to the Government's commitment to equity for socially economically disadvantaged groups' (Henry 1992, p. 401), through the introduction of a unified national system (UNS) of higher education, and institutionally developed educational profiles that were required to give 'due regard to national priorities and to the objectives of improved efficiency and effectiveness' (DEET 1988, p. 30). In effect, the Government tied federal funding to institutional performance, reworking notions of university autonomy (Smart 1991).

It is in this context that *A Fair Chance for All: Higher Education*

That's Within Everyone's Reach (1990), the Government's most recent policy on equal access to Australian higher education, was conceived. In many respects the policy acknowledges similar concerns for education evident in several of Labor's post 1987 social and education policy documents: to change the balance of the higher education student population, gauged in terms of social groups, 'to reflect more closely the composition of society as a whole' (DEET 1990, p. 8).

However, the document also introduced into the higher education sector some important changes to the way in which equal access is addressed, at least at a systems level. Equity programs, previously submission-based and 'patchy' in their influence across the higher education sector, have become a compulsory component of each institution's educational profile - now including plans for the attainment of certain government equity objectives and student population targets that reflect the social group mix of the institution's broader community. In effect the Higher Education Equity Program has become tied to the educational profile process, changing the arrangements for allocating federal funds to programs by linking this more closely with institutional operating grants (although such funding is yet to be fully 'mainstreamed' - see Bowen this volume).

The attainment of these numerical targets - indicators of equity performance - have served to promote an 'equity of access, participation and success' (DEET 1990, p. 6), narrowly conceived within 'an input, throughput and output mentality' (Fitzclarence & Kenway 1993, p. 93) in which areas that are not readily and statistically measurable slip off the equity agenda. With a fixation for targets,

The possibility that knowledge itself may significantly shape an unjust society or has the potential to reshape society more justly seems to be outside of consideration. However, targets, once reached, provide evidence that justice has been achieved. They thus legitimate policy and conceal their own limitations. (Fitzclarence & Kenway 1993, p. 93)

In many respects the student population targets for Australian higher education have been and continue to be reached. Retention and participation rates within post-compulsory education, including universities, are at record levels, exceeding those anticipated by the White Paper for the current year (Marginson 1993). The improvement of the representation of 'disadvantaged' groups has also been significant and in this sense equity within the higher education sector has drawn 'within everyone's reach'. It is, nonetheless, an equity constrained by particular efficient and effective practices evident within higher education and it is to a consideration of their restrictive influence on broader notions of equity that we now turn.

Pursuing equity, efficiency, and effectiveness

In recent times Australian higher education, like much of the public sector throughout the country, has undergone something of a cultural revolution in its management practices (Yeatman 1990). As outlined earlier, it has been a revolution born of Australia's present economic crisis and of a New Right ideology that has advanced the 'virtues' of a free market and minimal government. Such themes have found expression within higher education through its 'unification', the increasing restrictions on government expenditure, and the expectation that higher education itself will contribute directly to the nation's recovery. Under the influence of corporate managerialism and its attendant concerns for efficiency and effectiveness, Labor has moved to position higher education to serve these particular economic ends, while at the same time attempting to include practices that provide more equitable access for all Australians, and institutional student populations that proportionally reflect the Australian social group mix.

However, in the management of Australian universities these discourses of equity, efficiency and effectiveness appear at times as oppositional to one another, at least more so than the policy documents that promote them seem willing to admit. Wilenski (1986) similarly notes that with regard to public administration generally, 'none of these obligations is at all a clear or unambiguous guide to action. And each is likely to conflict with the others in many concrete situations' (p. 51). In part, the conflict in higher education that arises amongst equity, efficiency and effectiveness lies in their possible different practices; issues that are more fully pursued below. But conflict amongst them is also related to the relative weightings enjoyed by each. Within Australian higher education it seems apparent that things economic occupy the 'master discourse' (Fitzclarence & Kenway 1993; Marginson 1993), and that particularly with regard to 'efficiency and equity, one sanctioning the operation of the market and the other registering its social effects ... it is all too clear which element is dominant' (Macintyre 1988/89, p. 37).

To some degree the Federal Government has attempted to resolve points of conflict amongst these discourses, and certainly to provide space for equity concerns, through the adoption of a 'logic of multiple pay-offs' (Fitzclarence & Kenway 1993, p. 93). Here the equity-efficiency-effectiveness relationship is not conceived of as one in competition, as in a zero-sum game in which one either wins or loses, but as a relationship of coherence. The marriage of these concerns within higher education, for example, is evident in student retention policies:

where the disadvantaged are seen to benefit because their career prospects are enhanced ... the nation is seen to benefit because the skills base of the population is improved ... [and] government funds are saved through a reduction in dole payments. (Fitzclarence & Kenway 1993, p. 92-93)

In practice, however, this logic of multiple pay-offs most often gives way to one of 'trade-offs' (Lindsay & Neumann 1987, p. 160) among competing discourses, each striving to moderate and constrain the others. And as previously noted, it is equity that appears most constrained by what is considered to be the efficient and the effective use of public resources in higher education. How is it, then, that efficiency and effectiveness, as they are manifested in higher education, work to constrain equity?

First, efficiency is concerned with the means by which outcomes are achieved, the 'internal cost of the production process' (Marginson 1993, p. 109). Measures of efficiency bring together these two emphases on means and ends by comparing the proportional economic benefit of outcomes with their associated costs (Wilenski 1986, p. 156). Here efficiency appears as a discourse of achievement via restraint; a matter of external (program versus program) and internal (resources versus outcomes) comparisons, measured in terms of achieving similar outcomes with less resources, improved outcomes with similar resources, or improved outcomes with less resources. It is the latter, doing more with less, that tends to be the preferred measure of efficiency in times of economic crisis, although with the present reductions in government resourcing of Australian higher education institutions, private funding supplements have become an important part of maintaining "core" operations (Marginson 1993).

The impact of a cost-minimisation (Marginson 1993) model of efficiency on Australian higher education equity programs - that rely overwhelmingly on government funding - is particularly significant. Bridging and enclave programs, for example, that offer alternative curricula and support networks for various (sub)groups of the student population, are drawn into justifying themselves by comparing their operating costs with those of others: $552 per student within the University of Southern Queensland's (USQ) Access and Equity Program compared to $440 per student for its Preparatory Studies Program (USQ 1993) over the 1989-91 triennium. "Best" equity programs become those that minimise costs; benefits that are more immediate, visible and measurable in comparison to those of social justice. Further, by utilising meritocratic principles of selection to allocate equity program places to 'disadvantaged' students (Gale & McNamee 1993), USQ maximises its programs' efficiency by controlling the amount of "treatment" students need to participate in and complete its courses. While the result might be efficient, equity success is questionable given that the selection process rewards those who are most like the "mainstream" and increases the "disadvantage" of those who are turned away.

In contrast to efficiency, effectiveness in higher education holds little regard for the means employed to produce a particular outcome. Rather, effectiveness focuses primarily on the 'extent to which the output achieves specified objectives' (CTEC 1986, p. 1). In essence, it is a discourse of demonstrated achievement of control over outcomes, or 'goal accountability' (Marginson 1993, p. 109). As such, it supports the use of quantifiable targets and performance indicators by which achievements can be readily measured and compared. While such targets have been effectively utilised in Australia to enhance the opportunities for the disadvantaged to access, participate in and complete higher education - the greater incidence of women in engineering courses provides just one example of this - equity has also been effectively narrowed to focus on the quantifiable; that is, those issues encapsulated within numerically defined targets.

Even within this narrow view of equity, of access promoted through numerical targets, there remain inequitable access arrangements. Institutional targets, effective as they might be in improving the proportional representation of Australia's social groups within university student populations generally, are often not fine-grained enough to account for the different kinds of higher education available. Where once access to higher education provided access to high social status and influence, the movement from elite to mass higher education has seen status and influence:

...devolved to certain institutions, and to certain professional, honours and postgraduate programs within them ... [the result] has been a marked increase in competition for the most sought-after places in higher education: the highest status professional courses. (Marginson 1993, p. 15)

The disadvantaged continue to be under-prepared for such competition and are consequently under-represented in areas that confer such high social rewards. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, for example, tend to be located in liberal arts courses (in faculties of education and arts), but rarely in law, medicine or dentistry. Similarly, their representation across institutions often reflects the old binary divide in higher education. While such distributions can be attributed to other social and cultural issues, effectiveness, determined numerically, appears at times as a coarse discriminator of equity success.

Conclusion

It is apparent that an equity of access, participation and completion has been institutionalised within Australian higher education, with significant results. Yet 'the fetish with access to the curriculum, without considering the curriculum itself, is symptomatic of a central weakness in mainstream equality discourse' (Marginson 1993, p. 244). More qualitative equity concerns about the existing curricula, pedagogy, and relations of power and governance within universities, have been generally ignored or 'only considered worth addressing to the extent that they inhibit throughput and output' (Fitzclarence & Kenway 1993, p. 93).

There are, of course, noteworthy equity programs within Australian universities that do attempt to address what it is that disadvantaged students are accessing, participating in and completing - ones that even attempt to reconstruct the very notion of disadvantage. The newly proposed bridging course for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at USQ is one such example of changing the focus away from "bums on seats" to incorporate 'Aboriginal ways of knowing ... [and a curriculum of] the political nature of themselves' (Twist 1994, p. 31). Similarly, the University of South Australia along with Griffith University have recently established senior management positions (Pro-Vice-Chancellors) and structures to support broader equity initiatives. (See the paper by Ramsay in this volume.) Yet across the Unified National System of higher education these efforts still remain isolated and fragmented, and for many just out of reach.

What we now need is to find ways to make these broader equity concerns more pervasive. One place to begin is with a more rigorous conception of social justice in higher education, one 'which is able to comprehend the structural connections between apparently diverse phenomena' (Fitzclarence & Kenway 1993, p. 94), and one which is able to stand beside, rather than replace or be subservient to, a 'master' discourse of economics (Marginson 1993). Pursuing equity more effectively will rely on us accepting these theoretical and practical challenges.

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Managing equity in higher education

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Abstract

This paper identifies and explores the practical and theoretical implications of the means by which the Federal Government has pursued its higher education equity agenda in Australia. An analysis is made of the impact of the funding and accountability mechanisms, which have stimulated a range of equity-directed activity across publicly funded higher education institutions, upon the nature of the resulting equity initiatives and, indeed, upon how equity itself has been conceptualised. The significance of the absence of any analytical or theoretical basis for the planning and prioritisation of equity initiatives is explored, particularly the limitations this has placed upon their effectiveness in terms of longer term and more wholesale change towards enhanced equity of access, participation and outcomes in higher education.

The extent to which the benefits of higher education have been the exclusive preserve of a social elite, determined not by ability, but by such factors as socio-economic status, ethnicity, regionality, gender, Aboriginality, and English language proficiency has been discussed in a range of studies[1]. In the period which is the focus of this issue of *Australian Universities' Review*, the Federal Government has consistently communicated[2] its policy intention to alter this situation towards more equal access, participation and outcomes for all members of the community and has put into place funding, program and accountability arrangements intended to achieve this across all publicly funded higher education institutions. During the same period the expectations of the wider community shifted in fundamental ways, placing demands upon higher education to accommodate not only greater numbers, but a wider diversity of students in social and educational terms. Thus the characterisation of this period of change in Australian higher education, commencing in the early 1970s and not yet completed in the middle 1990s, as its transformation from an elite to a mass system refers to not only the massive increase in participation in higher education but also, and more significantly in terms of social and political change, to the achievement of more broadly based participation including by those groups in the community which previously have had least access to and benefits from this level of education.

The Federal Government began the process of setting its higher education policy directions and national priorities in the early 1970s through direct official communication of its policy expectations, underpinned and strengthened by its control of institutional funding. Initially expressed through financial assistance to talented but disadvantaged individuals, in the early 1980s the Government's equity agenda shifted attention to the under-representation in higher education of whole groups in the community and particularly those which were to become the groups targeted by equity strategies (Ryan 1983); that is, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, those with a disability, people from lower socio-economic backgrounds or living in remote and geographically isolated locations, and women with respect to so-called non-traditional areas of study, including research degrees. In response and on the basis of advice from the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission, in 1985 the Higher Education Equity Program and the Aboriginal Participation Initiative were put into place, and a million dollars annually was allocated to them between 1985 and 1987.

The Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) took over responsibility for higher education in mid 1987, and the Green and White Papers of 1987 and 1988 established the Government's framework for public accountability in higher education, including the need 'to change the balance of the student body to reflect more closely the structure and composition of the society as a whole' (Dawkins 1988, p.21). *A Fair Chance for All* (DEET 1990) spelled out the Government's equity policy and program intentions in more detail and individual institutions were made administratively responsible for achieving its equity objectives. From 1991 higher education institutions have been required to develop and implement an annual Equity Plan and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy[3], targeting increased access, participation and outcomes for the groups already identified as disadvantaged, with the allocation of equity funds made directly to individual institutions on the basis of reported outcomes against identified objectives, including numerical targets. In the period 1989-92 approximately three million annually was allocated on this basis (DEET 1989), 'a powerful leverage on the system' (Williams 1990 p.151) in which 'the strategic resource role played by the marginal dollar' (Marginson 1993, p.56) is increasingly important. In the context of enhanced institutional (including financial) autonomy, Marginson refers to the 'small but significant zone of competitively based public funding' established between the (reducing) core of public funding and independent, market-based income in terms of its influence on institutions towards congruence with government policy and priorities (1993 p.56). Thus the annual equity funding, effectively marginal dollars in a resource strapped and highly competitive environment, in combination with the equity planning and reporting requirements introduced since 1991, have produced remarkable compliance at the level of programmatic activities in higher education institutions across Australia.

The pragmatic and strategic impact of the requirement to develop equity plans for the specified groups of students, to report publicly on targets and outcomes within an annual cycle and the funding which has been made available to support these processes, has undeniably produced a flurry of equity-directed activity across publicly funded higher education institutions. These funding and accountability mechanisms exert considerable influence on the means by which equity initiatives are put into place in higher education institutions, the nature of those initiatives and, indeed, upon how equity itself is conceptualised. For those very factors which have stimulated equity planning and equity initiatives in higher education institutions have also produced some theoretical dilemmas and operational issues which are explored below. Relevant matters include structural and staffing matters, particularly with respect to the expected mainstreaming of equity funding and responsibility (see Bowen in this volume), lack of institutional co-ordination and leadership, an emphasis on short-term and identifiable outcomes, and the absence of any serious or consistent attempts to analyse the causes and nature of the current inequities in higher education which the equity program has been established to change.

Equity planning and reporting have occurred as part of the introduction into higher education institutions of what Marginson (1993) refers to as the technical tools of corporate management, such as corporate planning, quality assurance processes, performance indicators, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Indeed, the equity planning and reporting processes required by the Government and put into place by DEET are clearly derived from the corporate planning methodologies