

CHAPTER SIX

Discussion and Interpretation of Results

This Chapter is the discussion and interpretation of results presented in Chapter Five. The data collected from students through the in-depth interview process is analysed in relation to the preceding literature and information on joint developments, but within the specific context of CHEC as one of the innovative joint developments combining Senior College (DSE), TAFE and SCU. The analysis is based on what the students see as the critical themes and sub-themes of their present participation at CHEC.

Community perceptions are discussed as a major theme, incorporating sub-themes such as the locality of the Campus. The facilities major theme presents discussion on the library, canteen, administration block, sporting facilities and students' suggestions for additional facilities. Timetabling issues arose and perceptions as to the physical aspects of the Campus itself. Education outcomes for students as a major theme includes transition and visibility issues, access to information and credit transfer arrangements. Pathways and links between sectors emerged as issues, which include industrial relations. Cross sectoral links and articulation is discussed in relation to cooperation between sectors.

Another major theme is the social issue that is generated by the data. Student attire, staff and student relationships, atmosphere and student behaviour are significant sub-themes. Social activities are discussed, together with non-local and overseas student aspects, which is followed by the relationships between students in different sectors. There are social perceptions and relationships occurring in the student community of CHEC that are integral to the major theme of social issues impacting on the Campus. Within the attitudes to education major theme, the experiences of DSE students are examined, as well as individual sectors and orientation of new students.

The general attitudes toward education at CHEC, includes a brief discussion of integration as a minor theme, but this integration issue underpins all the major themes. A brief discussion of the adult learner is presented as integral to the analysis of students' perceptions. People enrol in education for a number of reasons, and there is a general overview of the adult learner and participation aspects, which directly impacts upon institutions. The discussion and interpretation of the data draw attention to whether the Campus meets students' expectations. What is clearly present in this analysis, is that there are perceived aspects of students' participation in education at CHEC that are of present or potential benefit, and some aspects, particularly integration, that are not adequately addressed.

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

The emergence of the CHEC as a joint development suited the local needs of the community. The growth in population and high unemployment rate directly affects the students in the area, as is reflected in the data where students commented on the convenience factor of the locality of the Campus. The enrolment figures in one sector, TAFE, support the view that Coffs Harbour is an area requiring vocationally skilled people as well as reflecting the need for other educational qualifications. In the age group 15–19, some 1183 students enrolled in TAFE courses in 1995 and the majority of enrollments were adult students aged 25–39 and 40–64 years, numbering 676 and 507 respectively. These two groups represented 22.9% and 30.5% of TAFE enrollments for that year.

Locality

From the studies on joint developments and the push for vocationalism of education, CHEC's partnership arrangement between high schools, TAFE and university is a local imperative. Students who attend CHEC found it to be accessible and that it offered them entrance to education to three Sectors located on one site within their local area. CHEC's presence is providing opportunities for local residents of Coffs Harbour and the immediate region and that Senior College students can continue their education in Coffs Harbour. It is apparent that local public transport has improved, as it now provides a regular service to the Campus. Students who have to travel further than the local area, are still inadequately catered for and often miss classes as the last bus for

some areas leaves the Campus at 3.15pm. The addition of a local football team is considered a benefit for the community, although it is perceived by students and the community to be a University team. Housing and rental demand is another perceived potential benefit to local residents, who are sensitive to the ever-present fluctuations in a town perceived as a tourist destination, with a transient population. Had the Campus not emerged to provide much needed facilities for local and regional residents, there may have been less interest or participation in education, particularly amongst the mature aged students as adult learners.

The perception that CHEC is beneficial to the community is a factor within the push for joint developments, but integral to this benefit is the need to develop a high educational standard and reputation both within and outside the local community, so that it does not follow the British prediction that lower educational standards flow on from amalgamations and linkages. Another significant factor is the relationships formed with the community. Employment and local industry are directly affected by the presence of the Campus and may in the future have an impact on funding for the continued provision for education; any proposed industry links are therefore paramount to the success of the joint development.

FACILITIES

The availability of facilities for students is crucial – not only the physical buildings, but the services for students such as counselling and learning assistance. The need to develop these services was seen by students as essential support for their participation in education. The use by students of actual operating facilities such as the computer laboratories at the Campus has provided demonstrated benefits for all students, particularly the DSE students who have more access at CHEC than at their previous high schools. However, there are inequities in the use of the computer facility and this has been directly attributed to funding arrangements between the partners. The level of use of this particular facility has caused hardship for some students, particularly in regard to use of the Internet. There is a move being made, in 1997, to provide access to TAFE staff to use the Internet, but only a limited number of TAFE students will have access. The situation is still viewed by students as inequitable and reflects the lack or level of integration between the participating institutions.

Library

The library was not initially set up to cope with the demands of the students. Industrial issues arose and impacted on whether students could have equal borrowing rights and various database systems were being used by the different sectors. Again, hardship was suffered by students because of inadequate resources in the facility and the bureaucratic regulations that bound each sector. Although the library situation has improved, the initial stages of operation were problematic because of the level of integration. Industrial relations, use of different data bases and ownership of resources directly affected both the students' borrowing rights and use of other sectors' resources. Potential benefits for students were the access to books from other sectors, but issues concerning use of the photocopiers and interlibrary loans negatively affected student use of the library facility.

Canteen

Operation and the environment of the canteen facility proved to be a significant aspect of the Campus. For DSE students, there did not exist the non-profit framework in which high school canteens operate. Their prices are much lower, due to voluntary canteen staff and subsidised food pricing mechanisms. As a private profit making business operates the Canteen at CHEC, most students are disadvantaged. In TAFE canteens, efforts are made to keep food prices competitive with local retailers; within universities, union fees and membership lower prices and make food more affordable for students, particularly as most students are on Austudy. The coffee shop alternative is also expensive, and is operated by the firm that manages the canteen.

The actual physical environment of the canteen is seen as detrimental to some students. Whilst DSE students enjoyed the atmosphere and common meeting place that the canteen offered, mature aged students found it a distracting and noisy environment, particularly with a jukebox and on Senior College lunchbreaks. There appeared a need for a different type of facility, one which was more adult centred and which would provide an essential social network for mature aged students. The issue of whether CHEC should provide a lounge area or bistro atmosphere similar to what universities offered, was an aspect that was not considered in the planning stage of the Campus, nor has it apparently been raised in any post occupancy processes.

Administration Block

Whilst it was seen that the administration block provided access to information about CHEC, the separation of the staff working in different sectors made access to this information difficult. Administration personnel from each sector were familiar with what that sector could offer as courses or administrative assistance to students, but were not available to perform the same role for students from other sectors. This is an important aspect if joint curriculum and educational pathways are to occur at CHEC, and students were aware of the lack of integration within the administration structures if they needed to ask for information. This lack of awareness of information on educational opportunities is, therefore, a potential barrier to intending students and continuing students at CHEC.

Sporting Facilities

For some students, the sporting facilities and associated equipment were disappointing. Apart from what students perceived would be offered at the Campus, such as a fully equipped gymnasium and hopefully a swimming pool, there were again different regulations for each sector's students. This reflects the difficulties of the partnership in that students are bound by institutional bureaucratic constraints on what they thought was a shared facility, with equal access for all students. The students wanted activities in the sporting facility, such as basketball, which they thought would then involve all students at CHEC. This was also a regular high school routine for the DSE students, who usually had a sports afternoon at which to mix with other students and participate in team sports. It was also an attitude of the mature aged students that a fully integrated sports facility would encourage social interaction amongst CHEC staff and students. Limited sporting facilities are a problem for students and the facility is seen as a physical facility where more social integration, using sport as the medium, can take place. It is one thing to build a gymnasium, but it is the sporting activities and opportunities for students to interact with each other that is overlooked, particularly when DSE students do not have a sports afternoon within this adult environment.

Additional facilities

A bar was also a suggested facility for CHEC. There were concerns about the age and behaviour of DSE students and that perhaps the idea of the campus was a place to be

educated and not a place to drink. However, the concept that CHEC provided an adult environment, meant that DSE students saw themselves as responsible adults and that a bar would be appropriate and encourage integration of the sector staff and students. The Osprey Restaurant was an added bonus for students, particularly the mature aged students, who saw it as a facility that would not be possible without TAFE's involvement at CHEC and that this provided the opportunity for social functions and that the food was cheap and the service excellent. The Osprey Restaurant was not seen as an optional facility for the DSE students, who thought that the Canteen provided their kind of environment. They also expressed a need for a coffee shop that remained open after the present 2.30pm closing time and that this be a place where people could listen to music. The workshop in K Block provided apprentices with excellent facilities that would not have been available at the other TAFE campus in Glenreagh Street, although the distance from the rest of the Campus was isolating for those students. K Block is situated 1/2 kilometre from the rest of the buildings and this means that TAFE students are not included in any aspect of the Campus except getting to the Canteen for food.

Banking facilities were not available at the Campus and this meant that students had to get into town during their breaks and it caused difficulties if they wanted to purchase books from the Co-op Bookshop located on site. They saw it as part of a service that is normally provided at universities, particularly when Austudy payments arrived. This is particularly important in a area like Coffs Harbour when a significant proportion of the population is dependent on some type of benefit. Childminding facilities were suggested as many students were sole parents and required childminding during their face-to-face student contact hours. These facilities were not part of the planning process for CHEC and due to the number of students at the Campus, a medical service was seen as an essential part of the Campus. A student had died on the Campus and other students are now concerned as to what facility is available for medical help.

Timetable issues

Timetabling problems with computer laboratories and science laboratories are already causing difficulties because HSC courses, as part of the DSE, are organised in different timeslots to fit into lines with other subjects; as in other high schools. SCU have a different calendar year for enrolments and course organisation and TAFE courses are subject to student enrolments numbers before proposed courses can operate. A timetable committee exists at the Campus, but there is little involvement of teaching staff from each sector in the timetabling process. Problems arise in priorities for sectors and subsequent room clashes. The computer facilities are operating at maximum capacity, and even with Stage 2 planned and under construction, there will still be inadequate computer facilities for the proposed growth in student numbers.

The computer rooms and library facilities are presently shared by students and not owned by any partner. However, if timetabling problems and subsequent access to facilities are to be resolved, then consideration has to be given to the projected growth and demand for such facilities. The library is at present considered only adequate and database systems are now being designed to make the facility more integrated; but at the time of inception, operating different library cataloguing and database systems caused confusion and disruption to library users and staff. There must be equitable borrowing rights for all students from all sectors and access to photocopiers as a library facility should not be a discriminatory issue between students.

In reference to the general facilities available, students saw it as three separate sectors sharing the same space, but with more facilities than other institutions. As student numbers are presently increasing, concerns are raised by students that although the existing facilities may be adequate at present, there will be more pressure and competition to access them.

Physical aspects

Undercover seating and shade is a problem for students. Admittedly, when the trees grow, the Campus will look more attractive and provide more adequate shade, but the trees chosen for the site are more tropical than dense shade trees. There is little protection from rain, and seats are bolted to the ground in outside areas so there is a continual problem for students attempting to get from one side of the Campus to the

other or finding seating under cover. The design of the buildings allows wind and rain to funnel underneath the covered walkways and the climatic conditions in Coffs Harbour mean exposure to intense heat and rain.

The physical presence of the Campus generated an award winning design and advantage is taken of the environmental aspects, whilst the zoning has potential for future development. Although concerns are raised as to heating problems, disabled access, lack of shade in the courtyard and limited protection during rainstorms, there are joint facilities for students' use, and the lecture theatre is designed so that it can be divided and used by community groups for various functions. A strong identity is created by the presence of the Campus and the design is considered flexible to allow minimal costs for reconfigurations. The standard of facilities is considered to be optimum and to have increased utilisation that would not be available to separate partners or to students.

Students consider the environment of the Campus to be very institutionalised, and the design of the classrooms too much like school rooms. This environment can create an institutional perception and barrier to participation, particularly as the Campus is supposed to be offering an adult education environment. The courtyard is compared to a school playground and no mention is made by planners that the physical presence and environment of the Canteen have an impact on students. Planning did not include a facility for a more relaxed atmosphere, and this aspect of provision emerged as an important one for students, especially adults. There appears a need for other facilities such as banking, medical and childcare facilities as the Campus is located outside the local CBD of Coffs Harbour. Rather than being concerned about where the drink vending machines are placed, it is more significant that somewhere like the Canteen is seen by mature aged students as detrimental to their learning, and that more student services or amenities are provided.

EDUCATION OUTCOMES

Transition

The transition between institutions is a potential benefit for students. Those students who have difficulty with the prospect of going to another institution, are far more comfortable and see it as a stabilising factor in their learning that they can move between the sectors at CHEC and not have to go away to continue their education. It was particularly helpful for those students undertaking the Tertiary Preparation Certificate as they could move from TAFE with a TES (Tertiary Entrance Score) directly into their chosen university courses, if they were offered at CHEC. Some of the DSE students commented that for some HSC students it would be better to continue through at the same institution.

Visibility

Visibility is a potential benefit to students at CHEC. DSE students were keen to mix with the older students and mature aged students thought it was a good opportunity for DSE students to observe the other sectors. It is evident that visibility of other sectors is significant to students, in that this encourages present students to continue their education, particularly in the higher education sector. The actual existence of other sectors and their accompanying courses on the Campus, was considered an advantage for some students, especially DSE students, who may never have had the exposure to that sector. CHEC offered tangible visibility of other alternatives or pathways.

Because all partners are located on the one site, it is assumed that pathways and links between sectors are integral to this aspect of visibility. The physical presence of the sectors at the Campus does not, however, guarantee access to information, nor an integrated approach to education. However, apart from offering a more academic environment for some TAFE students, it was also apparent that for one TAFE student the visibility aspect and exposure to university was nothing more than a physical building because of the lack of integration within CHEC.

Access to information

The educational information available to students about the different sectors was particularly useful to DSE students, as the Careers Advisor had first hand knowledge of options available within CHEC. Other students could access the information, only if staff were available for assistance or were willing to help them. The presence of the other sectors on the site did not automatically provide access to information and this assumption was tested by a student who was refused help from a member of staff in the university sector, even though he/she was a prospective student for a course in that faculty. This was an isolated incident in one faculty, but it does raise the question of systemic cultures within institutions in that staff may be resistant to the idea of integration and pathways and see themselves totally separate and not part of CHEC as an integrated facility. Students saw that there were three ways of accessing information, because there are three sectors and that it would be an advantage to them if it was all shared.

Credit transfers

Of particular concern to students was the absence of credit transfers and advanced standing arrangements and any cross sectoral educational arrangements. For students, therefore, the perceived notion of a pathway was not simply a progressive move through one sector to another, but an educational framework which offered joint curriculum and maximised credit transfers and advanced standing for all courses from all sectors.

Students wanted advanced standing arrangements and credit transfers between sectors and courses, but when CHEC opened in 1995 there were no educational frameworks in place. Although the vision was there, the practicalities and realistic options for pathways for students simply did not exist. Students are still, at the end of 1996, unsure as to what they can do as regards taking advantage of the presence of the other sectors and being part of an articulation process. There has been some work on proposed joint degrees and curriculum development, but the strategic plan for any educational framework did not evolve until July 1996 and is not available for discussion by teachers or other sectoral staff. It is at management level that this plan is operating.

Expectations were that this is a function of the Campus at inception; for students other than DSE students, to be presently excluded from any articulation between sectors, is a false representation of a joint development which purports to have a least some level of integration.

Pathways and Links

The student concept of pathways moved from a notion of combination classes, (referred to by planners as 'multi-level classes') to informal participation by students from other sectors, particularly DSE students, in university lectures, provided the right level of decorum was maintained. It would then give students an idea of what courses they might be interested in and some idea of the content. Students thought this to be something that the Campus would offer and that would have been in place before their participation.

The aspect of pathways and links between the sectors was of paramount importance to students as fourteen out of fifteen students made particular reference to this aspect. The one student who didn't comment, was the TAFE apprentice who was there because his participation was work-related only and he had no interest in further education at the Campus at this stage. The Campus was seen as providing pathways through courses from DSE through to TAFE and SCU. It is, however, only an assumption that this is the intention of all students at CHEC and that this provision of a proposed pathway is adequate for all student needs. Some DSE students had no intention of staying at the Campus, nor in Coffs Harbour, and many mature aged students were going elsewhere because CHEC did not offer the courses they wanted. The choice of courses was a barrier to participation for these students.

Present attempts to establish pathways is seen in both a competitive and cooperative light. An attempt had been made to integrate a TAFE course with a university course to share a visiting lecturer's costs, but there are problems with two groups of students from different sectors seeking the same vocational element in their courses. Students in one sector perceived that the students in the other sector are given preferential treatment and that this situation was not equitable for them as they were all involved in the same area. Two DSE HSC students had been selected for accelerated progress

between sectors in 1995–6. This meant that the two students enrolled concurrently in DSE and in SCU could get subject credits for the SCU course when they finished their HSC. This was, however, only available at CHEC and not transferable to other institutions. This action is considered discriminatory against other students in that this option is not made available to all students from all sectors. It also highlights the articulation issue in that if TAFE is an equal partner in the joint development, why was this sector and its potential course accreditation by-passed in the acceleration option given to the DSE students?

Further, it is considered that, because of the lack of educational integration, this in turn impacted on the students as part of the competition which they felt existed between sectors. Different sectors were perceived as trying to recruit students for their own institution, rather than sharing the vision of the joint development. The separateness at CHEC was attributed to causing course and subject duplication as well as competition, and this could be overcome by more integration, which in turn would address the distinction and barriers between sectors, both educationally and socially. DSE students extended this view further, by suggesting a cross sectoral type constitution for CHEC, so that it would represent the students of the whole Campus and not just individual sectors.

Industrial relations

It is acknowledged that industrial relations is an ever present constraint insofar as cross sectoral teaching is concerned, but teaching materials can be further developed using the potential skills of staff from all sectors and thus can be more productive than it is at present. The joint degrees are not yet in place, and many of the curriculum working parties have dissolved over time. The involvement of staff in the working parties is both on a voluntary and payment basis, so there appear to be discrepancies in the payment of selected sector staff for their services. In other words, the role and expectations of working parties are open to negotiation and different funding agreements. This has the potential to cause dissatisfaction amongst those staff with vision, if payment incongruencies exist within sectors.

There is little synergy amongst staff whilst the separation of sectors continues and joint development of curriculum is often difficult if staff are simply transferred to CHEC as a mandate of their institutions. A move to recruit staff who are enthusiastic about pathways and links is seen as a potential benefit for the success of CHEC and will ultimately benefit the students. The same principle applies to all levels of staff, from cleaners to Director status, as the demarcation issues occur in all areas which affect teaching staff and consequently the students.

Cross sectoral links

The positive educational outcomes envisaged by planners are that there are benefits from having systemic traditions within sectors, and that two joint degree/diploma courses are planned for implementation. There are presently a number of joint curriculum working parties and DSE students would benefit by accelerated learning and thus participate in lifelong education. Cross sectoral teaching, clear articulation and multi-level classes are also potential benefits. The DSE staff are to be given curriculum development experience at a local level, and also access to the HSC can be provided for adults. It is proposed by planners that there is also a demonstrated 'synergy' at the Campus. The independence of sectors within the overall structure of CHEC, the lack of educational vision and institutional baggage are all considered concerns to planners of CHEC. Concerns are raised as to the limits of developing joint materials and involvement of cross sectoral staff collaboration.

In light of the above, two issues bear consideration. Firstly, it must be acknowledged that, because sectors exist together at the Campus, systemic and institutional cultures can be seen both as the positive contributions of individual sectors to the partnership, and as resistance to integration by sector staff and consequently towards students from other sectors. The mere presence of the buildings is not enough for encouraging participation and providing incentives for lifelong learning. It is important that sector staff in the administrative area where students have their first line of contact have access to information about all sectors. In the educational area, sector staff can impose their resistance to integration by a negative approach to student enquiries. There has to be a team approach by sectors towards student needs at CHEC, so that this institutional culture does not provide a barrier to participation which in turn can have a negative impact on CHEC enrolments.

Secondly, the absence of any educational pathways and links between sectors is a concern for student participation. The existence and visibility of the sectors are potential benefits, but the amount of integration has to be more than co-location. Students expect an integrated Campus with established pathways. To students, these pathways are not as simplistic as moving from one sector to another, but involve a more comprehensive choice of courses and credit transfers and advanced standing amongst the sectors. The late planning of an educational framework is a distinct disadvantage to students, in that they cannot see many advantages of having three separate sectors operating on one site, if it doesn't provide them with the integration and potential benefits of credit transfers and course articulation. What the Campus can offer them as educational outcomes is unclear and misleading. The absence of established frameworks is detrimental to the Campus as students will go elsewhere if this option of credit transfer and articulation is not maximised to its fullest potential.

Cooperation between sectors

The need for cooperation in educational matters between sectors is paramount. If students perceive sectors as competing for students and duplicating courses, then the notion of CHEC as a joint development is questioned. It appears to students to be operating as co-locational, as individual sectors are not working together to promote pathways and credit transfers. It is too early in the post occupancy stage to evaluate any educational frameworks, but it is not too early to sense the lack of integration and level of competition that students perceive exists at CHEC. Planners are adamant that the whole is greater than the sum of all the parts, but for students, their interests in the Campus are, naturally, those which impact upon their progress and participation in courses. The students perceive difficulty in viewing the Campus as a whole, as they are directly affected by belonging to different sectors and being denied any potential educational benefits of integration and cooperation at CHEC. Further, all students from each sector are to be given the same opportunities for accelerated learning if the Campus is to provide an access and equity philosophy. The mission statement states that:

...the purpose of the campus is to maximise the educational and training outcomes for students by promoting the most effective relationships between the partners that will enable the campus to focus on articulation, credit transfer, joint development...

This does not imply that students from any one sector can take advantage of such educational outcomes – it has to be offered to all students and more expediently.

SOCIAL ISSUES

Attire

The social aspect was another significantly strong theme which emerged from the interviews. Regarding student attire, it is difficult to know whether it was just a single point of view or representative of a number of students. It is worth a mention, in that it was seen as a reflection upon the academic environment of CHEC. The view was expressed that if students, in particular DSE students, did not dress appropriately, then the community would view CHEC as a second rate institution. It seemed important to older students that higher education should be represented as a mature, academic environment; the way DSE students dressed was seen as detrimental to that notion. Although DSE students are advised to wear shoes, obviously for OH & S reasons as well as appearance, there is no enforcement of dress regulations on any students at CHEC, nor staff for that matter. Coffs Harbour is primarily a welfare based town, and has a sub-tropical climate, but it was perceived by one student, that dress had nothing to do with the climate or affordability. It was described as a lack of respect for education and the exposure and dress of DSE students gave the community the wrong impression of the Campus.

Staff and student relationships

There seemed little interest in the relationships between students and staff at CHEC. Apart from the comments made by DSE students, no mention was made of whether or not relationships existed between students and staff, nor between staff from different sectors. Some TAFE students who had progressed to university, liked the presence of their previous TAFE teachers at CHEC so they could keep in touch. Overall, the issue of staff relationships between students or between staff themselves, seemed too remote for students to get involved in at CHEC. Within the current operation of CHEC, this aspect did not appear to significantly impact upon their participation, nor did it seem important whether cross sectoral teaching occurred at CHEC or not. This is a heated

debate for staff at the Campus, but obviously students are unaware or uninterested in the issue as it probably is not seen to directly affect them.

Atmosphere

Atmosphere at the Campus was a disappointment to those expecting a university environment. The DSE students were happy with the Canteen and being able to mix with other students, but the mature aged students perceived a distinct social barrier, particularly because of the environment of the Canteen. The Canteen is not a place where students can sit quietly and talk, nor is there any facility for music or adult entertainment as there is at a university. This is difficult for adults, in that this social interaction within their courses is important to their learning; their expectations of a university atmosphere were not met at the Campus. They wanted to develop the camaraderie that is within a university culture, and within TAFE as well, although in a different form, and expected a more mature place to relax and unwind, away from the Canteen.

Behaviour

The mature aged students expressed concern at the behaviour of DSE students. This sector was seen as problematic, rather than TAFE students who tended to blend in with the university students. There is a negative perception towards DSE because of specific examples of noise and inappropriate behaviour that impact upon the perceived adult learning environment that mature aged students expect at the Campus. Adjacent rooms, especially within the lecture theatre complex, meant that not only students, but academic teaching staff, were subject to interference, particularly with DSE students undertaking Drama studies. Equipment such as photocopiers were damaged and the common perception was that DSE students were solely to blame. Clocks in the classrooms had batteries removed, supposedly to be used in 'walkmans' which belonged only to DSE students.

Their behaviour was seen as destructive and they are accused of accosting students, especially those from the university sector. There is an issue of which students were at the Campus first, and because DSE students started earlier in the academic year than TAFE or SCU students, the students from those sectors felt that DSE were antagonistic towards them. However, a DSE student simply presented the problem that people

within a large group such as the community of students at CHEC, is a group dynamic wherein there are always personality clashes between students. DSE students perceived the negativity and behaviour of the university students as the type of immaturity expected from high school students. It seems that the problem was worse at the commencement of the Campus and that, over time, people would settle in more and accept the social barriers between sectors, but that the situation would never improve unless the social integration issues were addressed.

Social activities

One way of addressing the social integration issues is through social activities. All students from all sectors thought that there was nothing to pull the students together and that unless there were common activities to all sectors, that the social barriers would remain in place. It is difficult to determine just what type of activities students wanted, but it appeared that the usual attempts at barbeques and sausage sizzles had failed. The DSE students saw these attempts as futile and in no way contributing to the positive interaction between students. The other sectors simply did not attend and either did not want to participate or integrate with DSE students. Sport was the only Campus activity where intersectoral liaisons could be formed, and even so, the existing football team was predominantly SCU students, so this is not seen as satisfactorily addressing the needs of all students.

Music and entertainment was a social activity that students thought could bring the sectors together. The DSE students wanted to mix with the other sectors and music is perceived as a common area of enjoyment. They missed the socials that were usually available at high school and the Campus did not provide this important function for the students from this sector. Apart from the students who wanted to actually play music, the other students wanted to go somewhere regularly and just listen to music. Because of the mix of students and different age groups and interests, it is difficult for students to find some mainstream social activity. All students thought it important for CHEC to provide this social interaction as they wanted an opportunity to interact and integrate. It was seen as adding that extra social dimension that students wanted at their institution. On a few occasions, a band had played at lunchtimes, but there being no common lunchbreak for all sectors and due to the type of music provided, it is seen by students

as only suitable for the Senior College. The students also see the need for their own attempt to instigate the social activities, but are unsure of what would be appropriate.

Non local and overseas students

There is little on offer for those students who are not locals. If they have come from Sydney or other areas, they suffer isolation and alienation because there is not an integrated social aspect at the Campus. The perception was that within a university culture the process of maturing and becoming independent was impaired at CHEC by the lack of friendships and support from other students and they remained dependent on distant family support instead of forming these important friendships. This will especially affect the new overseas students who are presently enrolled in the English Language Centre (ELICOS) as this is an important part of participating in Australian culture and improving their language skills. They feel alienated, not only because of cultural differences and language barriers, but also because they have no opportunity to socialise with any of the sectors at CHEC.

Relationships between students

In regard to student attitudes toward other students, one perception was that there was discrimination as to which sector a student belonged to, and that as an adult in a TAFE course, other SCU students did not want to establish any interaction. DSE students thought that the initial friction between DSE and SCU had passed because some of the DSE students had since dropped out of the Senior College. Another perception is that the Senior College students had every right to be at CHEC, but that they needed to have a more serious and mature attitude toward their participation at the Campus. There apparently is an easily discernible difference between students within each sector and that this difference does not encourage positive attitudes.

The SCU Student Association President, at the time of inception in 1995, did not help matters by publishing a derogatory article about DSE students and their Director. This was felt by one student as unrepresentative of how all SCU students perceived the presence of DSE students and that an individual should not promote his/her own biases and prejudices towards other students. Unfortunately, during 1996, there was a continuation of this attitude, when SCU students organised a protest rally on behalf at

students at CHEC, in response to cuts to higher education. A TAFE student participated in the rally and was subsequently fined by the local police for colliding, on foot, with a motorist. The TAFE student had joined the rally as it was seen as an issue for all students at CHEC and when he approached the SCU Student Union for assistance in paying the fine, he was refused on the basis of not belonging to that sector. Other students supported his effort in joining forces with them, and subsequently held a fundraising event for payment of the fine.

Photographs 2 and 3 were taken at this event, and provide a glaring example of the lack of cohesion that students perceive at the Campus. The students wanted the Campus Management to be aware that they perceived themselves as separate and not as a cohesive group. The banner in the photograph is to demonstrate and to draw attention to the lack of integration they feel exists at the Campus. The students who organised the fundraising event were from all sectors, and it is indicative from the photographs that integration, and the students' awareness of separation, particularly on a social level, is a constant problem and one which students want CHEC to address and which constantly pervades the atmosphere of the Campus.

Photograph 2. Fundraising Activity – October 16, 1996 at CHEC

Note : The orange banner behind the band depicts the words 'TAFE, SCU and DSE'

Photograph 2. Fundraising Activity – October 16, 1996 at CHEC



Note : The orange banner behind the band depicts the words 'TAFE, SCU and DSE'

Photograph 3. Banner at Student Fundraising Event –
October 16, 1996 at CHEC



Social perceptions

There are conflicting perspectives on the presence of DSE students and it varies from a negative perception that the tone of the Campus is lowered to that of it being a positive environment for DSE students. There is nothing to substantiate the claim made by one student that CHEC is seen as a dumping ground for other high school dropouts, but there is a perception from sector staff that the DSE is attempting to create a selective Senior College, which in turn, will produce a high standard of university students for SCU courses. In turn, some TAFE staff perceive that their students are being 'squeezed' out of the Campus, either through competition or indifference from the other sectors. There is, however, a very neutral attitude toward TAFE students at the Campus from the students of other sectors. The issues seemed to arise in relation to DSE and SCU students, and there is a perception that TAFE and SCU students are at the Campus because they are motivated to learn, whereas Senior College students may have been forced to attend due to parental pressure or as a last chance to get their HSC.

It must be borne in mind that, regardless of how other students in the TAFE and SCU sectors perceive the presence of DSE, it is perceived by *them* as an adult learning environment and that they are responsible for their own learning; the barriers that may exist between DSE and other students are not reflected in their comments about the present operation of CHEC. Instead, they demonstrated a far more positive attitude toward their participation and interaction with other students because they are willing to be part of this more mature environment. The suggestion from a mature age student from SCU that if other students treated DSE students like young adults and were more tolerant, bears some consideration as to the issue of attitude. Again, the level of integration underpins this major theme concerning social aspects for students at the Campus.

The lack of a cohesive educational framework is entwined with the social concerns of CHEC students. One of the key learning aspects proposed by planners for joint developments was a single reference to three groups of students having different cultures or identities. From this study, however, the aspect is far more significant to students than planners can predict. Students at CHEC are a large group, and within this group there are social dynamics that impact directly upon participation at the

Campus. The issue of social interaction plays an integral part in adults as learners and how they perceive the learning environment. It is important for mature aged students to have an academic atmosphere and positive learning environment which then perpetuates and encourages successful learning.

The social relationships between the students of other sectors is a concern raised by students. Although DSE students seem apparently satisfied with the presence of other sectors, the same view is not shared by other sectors toward DSE students. There is tension between this sector and others, and although time and the newness of the Campus is a consideration, potential for separation still exists. What is common throughout the sectors in the social aspect, is the need for social activities to integrate the sectors. Only limited access to music was available and it is an area which students see as providing a common or mainstream activity. The students are not participating in any organised social functions, except for a football team, but this excludes a majority of students.

There should be support facilities for those students who are non-locals and in particular, the new overseas students studying at CHEC. These students are suffering isolation and alienation, which is not conducive to their learning, nor to the reputation of CHEC as an integrated joint facility. Participation in social activities is perceived by students as critical to maintaining or pursuing an integrated Campus. This could then augment the planner's view that there is a link between the built environment and the educational (community and student services) objectives for the Campus which must be furthered. Students are interested in developing social activities which include all sectors, but this has to be supported by both sectoral staff and management, so that they have the opportunity to mix with each other and attempt to integrate on a social level.

ATTITUDES TO EDUCATION

Experiences of DSE students at CHEC

Students from the DSE sector provide an added dimension to this major theme. They have various reasons for coming to CHEC and draw comparisons with their previous high school experiences. Years 11 and 12 are viewed as a better stage of their

schooling, and some perceived their historical background of junior years (7–10) as impacting on how they are treated in senior years, had they remained at their previous schools. Labeling and stereotyping proves a problem for them and their participation in CHEC is seen as a fresh start and a chance to redeem themselves in regard to how teachers treat them. CHEC is perceived as another means of returning to study and continuing to further their education through obtaining the HSC within a new and innovative environment. They are aware that the DSE teaching staff at CHEC were also able to teach within this new environment, although some students thought that some staff had not changed their attitudes or teaching strategies from those which they employed in their previous workplaces. The staff for this sector were specifically chosen for the Campus on the basis of CHEC offering a different working environment, whereas other sector staff had simply been transferred to the new location.

The DSE student experiences at CHEC focused on the attitude that the Campus directly affected the way teachers treated them and that the environment at CHEC was, therefore, considered a more mature adult learning environment. The teachers who were keen to adopt a new perspective on teaching at the Senior College, fostered a different type of relationship than would have been possible within the constraints of their previous high schools. Students and staff are on first name terms, and the responsibility for learning is placed directly on the students. Not all students reacted favourably to the changed environment and other students perceived that their colleagues took unfair advantage of the new freedom previously denied at their high schools. It was standard practice in all local high schools, that if students were absent from class or did not hand in work required, the school contacted parents who subsequently became involved in discussions with either the principal or classroom teacher. Absenteeism of any duration requires a written explanation, signed by either parents or teachers and often taken from class to class. Students at CHEC thought this a ridiculous rule, and generally appreciated the chance to determine their own responsibility toward work. Playground duty is not in place at CHEC, nor is the concept of detention or consequences for late work enforced on the students. This is explained to students when they first commence their studies at CHEC.

It seems in the early stages of operation, the freedom and contrast to their former school structure, proved difficult for some students to accept. It is only an assumption

that all DSE students will react favourably to the removal of the usual boundaries and constraints which exist in other high schools. Students dropped out of the Senior College and some returned to other high schools, or simply did not return to education. Those interviewed had stayed, and made the comment that they would never go back to a normal high school after their experiences at CHEC. It was described as being a responsible and self-determining environment; if they took responsibility for their own learning, then they would do well at CHEC.

Teachers are seen as more 'human', and the DSE students generally react positively to staff at CHEC because they were seen to be treated with some degree of respect and can access DSE staff easily at CHEC if they are having problems. Some teachers had given students their home phone numbers and this is considered part of a mutual respect relationship. Students attributed this relationship with them as part of the environment of CHEC. However, one perception was that the staff may be aware that there is attention focused on the Campus and that it was important for DSE staff to be seen as doing a good job.

Subject choices did not suit all students, with music as an elective that students would like on offer at CHEC. Those pursuing this option were able to go to other schools in the area and continue by correspondence, but this was not seen as a good option. There was mention made that it was planned to introduce this subject in 1997, but at this stage it is not definite whether this subject is offered. The pamphlets and publicity for the Senior College apparently offered more than was available in 1995, but as the Campus expands, it is hoped more will be available for students to choose. Not all students were positive about pathways to university at CHEC, as neither the university, nor the town, offered enough for some local students.

The DSE students consider CHEC to offer more than their previous high schools. There is less constraint and more flexibility within the Senior College than at other high schools. Responsibility for learning is a concept that DSE students either accept or it becomes the reason for dropout. Relationships with teachers are better and they perceive the Campus as an adult learning environment, even though some are aware of tensions between students. Not all HSC students intend to stay at CHEC, but this non participation is also about course offerings and the locality of Coffs Harbour for

young people. A subsequent study of DSE student satisfaction at CHEC, conducted by a student counsellor, supports the positive view of the Campus reflected in this present study on students' perceptions.

Individual sectors

In reference to individual sectors, subjects and courses, it appears that enrolment procedures for some sectors are problematic. Incorrect information was given, which in some instances cost the students money, and this is directly attributed to individual sector's enrolment procedures. There was a perception by TAFE students that subjects in courses offered at TAFE would receive advanced standing and credit transfer arrangements at the Campus. Students perceived misinformation and lack of information as a negative aspect of not only the individual sectors, but the Campus itself. In their attitudes toward individual sectors and their courses, timetabling problems and confusion arose. For example, on many TAFE enrolment forms, students indicated that they were enrolling in the university sector, as the Campus is locally termed, 'the Uni'. This created havoc with TAFE enrolments and is still causing problems.

Orientation of new students

There was no common orientation for all students attending CHEC. This is still left to individual sectors to provide new students with this service and it was perceived that a shared or joint orientation for all students is a necessary process at the commencement of their studies at CHEC. This in turn, will create new relationships within the new student group, rather than separate groups having orientations at different times and never having an opportunity to meet new students from other sectors.

GENERAL ATTITUDES TOWARD EDUCATION AND CHEC

Integration issues

Within this study, the students mentioned motivational factors, barriers to their participation and how they perceived themselves within the context of adult education. There are perceptions of self, which are examined with Cross's model of participation, which are evident in the data presented. The very existence of the Campus was, for some students, a strong motivational factor within itself. Had some students not enrolled at the Campus, they would not have been motivated to continue to participate

in education. Students are aware of the concept of lifelong learning and how important education is for any age group.

The integration issue is, however, contentious. CHEC is a useful tool for the sharing of facilities, but a closer working relationship between the sectors is perceived as a need of all students as it impacts on their learning and participation. The Campus is then viewed as more equitable and more integrated than in the form of its current operation. A perception was that funding priorities and associated separateness negatively affects students and that the purpose of CHEC's presence is primarily for their benefit and not that of planners or for economic rationalism. It is also suggested that the level of integration should come from the top and involve all staff and students in a shared vision for access to education.

It is acknowledged by planners that cooperation between partners is a crucial factor in ensuring success for CHEC. Not only the partners as entities, but the personalities involved within the partnerships are a critical component of joint developments. It has been demonstrated by studies concerning amalgamations, mergers and linkages both within Australia and overseas, that the personalities of the people involved in such links will impact upon the success or otherwise of any institution. It is seen as a management view that partner cooperation exists at the Campus and there is goodwill at staff level. This staff level at CHEC is not clearly defined by planners; it is assumed that the staff level they refer to is at Director staff level, as there has been no involvement of teachers or other personnel at the operational or planning level.

If people are considered a critical element in the joint development process, then the late appointment of a CEO and the blurred concept of the role attached to this position, is detrimental to CHEC as a joint development. The constant changeover in Directors of TAFE and SCU is also seen as not contributing toward the ideal of cooperative working relationships within CHEC at senior management level. The lack of involvement of teaching staff has led to some resistance to the notion of cooperation within the Campus, particularly when staff perceive competition and rivalry for student numbers emerging from CHEC as a partnership. Industrial relations problems still exist and will prevent any cross sectoral teaching in the near future.

The management of operations at the Campus is, therefore, a nebulous area within the Campus, as the positive aspects of operation are supposedly based on different financial management systems and remittances between partners, yet the negative aspect or concern is that there are problems with differential funding allocations to each partner. If it is said then, that the Campus has a good operative level of management and commitment to integration, this should mean that the existing funding arrangements are not a problem and therefore should not impact upon the students.

It is a perception of students that the problems with funding exist between the partners. Particularly evident to students is the lack of integration and inequities in the computer facilities. Although one student commented that the lack of integration occurs at the 'top', most students have felt the thrust of the funding allocations in regard to access to the computer facilities. Students are aware of the lack of integration in the Campus and problems with funding. Planners and managers of CHEC need to be aware that the students are the 'users' or customers of the partnership they created and should address these inequities in the operational aspects.

Local participation

According to figures in the Coffs Harbour City Population Profile (1994), Coffs Harbour is predominantly a welfare town and the majority of people earned less than \$25,000 (48.3%) and 28.7% earned less than or equal to \$16,000 per year. This compares with 34.3% and 21.2% respectively for NSW as a whole. The majority of students at CHEC are not considered to be successful working adults, in a high income bracket. Within the preliminary investigation at CHEC, students mentioned employment opportunities as a reason for enrollment. Consequently, there is a responsibility for CHEC to provide appropriate educational programs to adequately meet the needs of a poorly educated, low income, unemployed rural population, especially as there is a national trend to encourage lifelong learning for all students, and to provide continued access and recognition of mature aged students, particularly women. There are still potential students within the Coffs Harbour community who are not taking advantage of the presence of the Campus.

Adults in Education

Tough (1971, 162) defines the adult learner as *“any adult involved in sustained, highly deliberate efforts to learn knowledge or skill”* and categorises adult learning activities into organised learning activities, self directed learning projects and learning for academic credit activities. Adult learners have characteristics that are affective, socio-affective, socio-economic, socio-demographic and are influenced by their educational background.

Attitudes of adults differ to those of adolescents. If adults are aware of the purpose of certain tasks, their efficiency improves. They are deterred from making effort if it appears impossible to accomplish a particular task. Adolescents adopt different perspectives on tasks because of the compulsive nature of school (Kidd, 1973). These differing perspectives between adolescents and adults are reflected in the data wherein DSE students perceive the environment of CHEC to be an adult environment, yet some mature age students from other sectors, perceive the learning environment to be detrimental to their learning. There is evidence in participation studies that the adult learner has certain characteristics which impact upon their learning and whether they will choose to participate in education or continue to participate. The comments in the data in this study reflect perceptions of both adolescent and adult learners about the nature of the adult environment of CHEC.

Socio-affective characteristics

Existing research on adult learners, (Kidd, 1973; Cropley, 1977; Jarvis, 1988; Cross, 1981) asserts that relationships exist between anxiety, tension and impaired learning. Feelings such as respect, admiration, generosity, sympathy, friendliness and encouragement foster a positive learning experience, whilst two remaining groups consisting of anger, fear and associated feelings result in a resistance to learning. Anger and associated feelings may occur because the established values of older people become threatened and consequently the ‘self’ is jeopardised. From this research on fear and associated feelings, there is a distinct relationship between anxiety, tension and impaired learning. There is also strong evidence to suggest that adults suffer a loss of confidence as they age. It is, therefore, apparent that if these affective feelings were present in childhood experiences of education, then adult

education programs and the educational environment need to reinforce the positive learning experience and its associated feelings within the adult learner. Otherwise, adult learners will not return to education or will feel threatened during their learning experience and discontinue the activity.

Earlier research (Havighurst 1965, Cropley 1977) established that socio-affective characteristics which relate to aspirations of goals and rewards and how the self is seen and relates to other people. Generally, it is considered that levels of development occur through age where self preservation in early stages changes to differing levels of development toward self fulfillment in the adult years. Participant profiles may, therefore, reflect that up to middle adulthood, rates and patterns of participation in education institutions such as CHEC, will be higher and different to that of retirement age, due to the changing social roles of adults. Their aspirations, goals and anticipated rewards at this middle stage of development will influence their decision to undertake learning activities, as will their perception of self. Educational programs at CHEC and the learning environment need to reflect and support these changing social roles amongst the student community.

PARTICIPATION ISSUES

It is, therefore, of concern that mature aged students perceive the Campus as institutionalised and not conducive to their learning. Every effort must be made by providers to ensure that adult students have positive learning experiences to reinforce their present and continued participation in education. Their perception of self changes with age and this impacts on lifelong learning in that adults should be encouraged to engage in education. CHEC is perceived to be an adult education environment and, as such, has to provide this encouragement and commitment to lifelong learning, particularly as the numbers of mature age students, and specifically women as students, undertaking education are steadily increasing. Those living in isolated or rural areas are usually disadvantaged by provision, and in this case, CHEC is a much needed benefit for the local community. An area such as Coffs Harbour reflects the lower-socio economic group wherein a large segment is still unqualified in either vocational or other educational qualifications and the presence of CHEC is an incentive for those who are interested, to pursue education without moving from this location.

Although there is no single study to define adult education or the adult learner, the mature aged students in this study shared some common characteristics in respect of their participation. Motivational factors appear in the data -- such as self perceived psychological inadequacies -- as students perceived themselves as not having the confidence to go to university or being told they had limited intelligence during their school years. Concerns about financial security is prevalent in a town such as Coffs Harbour, which is primarily a town dependent on welfare benefits. Adult learners who enrol in CHEC may view the educational path as one which will result in potential employment prospects, or improve the present employment of students. There are also social motives such as self fulfilment which participation at CHEC is seen to address. Whatever the motivation, adult learners must feel secure and get satisfaction in meeting expectations and needs.

The findings of non-participation studies revealed that not enough time to participate in educational activities and unawareness of educational activities available were two of the main reasons for not participating in education. Although time management is not within CHEC's control, the issue of awareness of educational activities is an aspect on which the Campus should concentrate all its efforts. This would be aided by strengthening the access to information for students from all sectors and providing a totally integrated approach to the options available at CHEC; otherwise students face what is termed an informational barrier. Another barrier to participation is the existence of both external or situational barriers and internal or dispositional barriers; those in the lower socioeconomic class face both obstacles.

Institutional barriers are practices and procedures that exclude or discourage adults from participating in learning activities and providers need to be aware that they have to respond to the needs of their students. There are finely balanced motivating forces within adults, and if they experience feelings such as hostility, anxiety and other negative emotions within their learning situation, they are less likely to enrol or to continue to participate in education. Social needs are also important as this aspect is considered an integral factor in participation studies on motivation. It should be emphasised that from the participation models studied, that incongruence between the self and other students, self and the institution are part of an additive factor toward non participation and dropout.

Cross's (1981) Chain of Response model

Cross's Chain of Response Model (1981) as a participation model has a number of steps which are used to estimate the likelihood of participation. Three integral steps are positive attitudes toward education, goals being met and institutions offering opportunities and removing barriers; provided accurate information is received. The preliminary study at CHEC and the data demonstrates that there are elements of this model that are applicable to students' participation in education.

Regarding self-evaluation, the data reflects that where students at CHEC are participating in courses, they want to prove that they had the ability to undertake either a university degree or a return to education after poor school experiences. In attitudes to education, this is linked to Houle's learning-orientated adult where students expressed their perceptions of expectations that CHEC would provide. Life transitions relate to the 'teachable moment' (Havighurst, 1965) and that it was critical CHEC provide the best environment to enhance this moment and is, therefore, sensitive to adult teaching and learning as part of its overall education strategies. The opportunities and barriers component of the model meant to students that CHEC should provide special opportunities to strengthen the force of participation and thus be considered as part of the educational framework at the Campus. Equitable use of facilities, articulation, credit transfers and cross sectoral opportunities are critical for students at this point of their participation.

Access to information for CHEC is reflected in the data where students are still seeking clarification of educational benefits of the Campus and are concerned at the separateness between sectors, lack of information and a lack of articulation between courses and subjects between the sectors.

Students at CHEC perceive education in a positive way, but there are some barriers to meeting their goals which can be attributed to the level of integration at the institution or lack of educational framework. Information is important and considered a strong participation factor within this model. This has to be addressed at CHEC.

In more recent participation studies, there are possibilities that strong motivation in adults to participate in education may be overcome by the lack of course offerings or by negative impressions of the course or institution. Therefore, a strong institutional reputation and the availability of courses may predispose people to enrol in education, even if they have a weak motivational interest. At CHEC it is evident that course offerings and a good reputation were perceived as important aspects for students and, therefore, influences their participation at the Campus. The individual student's perception of the institution is influential as often those who have had prior experience with the institution or course are more inclined to participate. It is vital that CHEC provides students with a favourable institutional perception and also attracts students who are participating for social reasons.

It is, therefore, significant, that CHEC as a provider, consider that not only do time and lack of money directly impact upon enrolments for all three sectors, but also the institutional barriers can affect participation. Within the data, students perceived and commented on the 'institutionalised' atmosphere of the Campus, and made reference to the classrooms as 'school rooms'. For some students, this physical manifestation of a school type atmosphere brought back memories of unpleasant school experiences, and is, therefore, seen as an area that CHEC needs to consider if it is promoting an adult environment for both DSE and other students.

Implications for CHEC as a Provider

Students at CHEC are adult learners within an educational environment. If there is a problem with dropout and non-participation, then much can be done by the institution to build positive forces to increase participation. Positive attitudes toward education and support for adult learning encourages participation, and if supported, participation is perpetuated. It must be seen as responding to the direction of the learner in order to generate new opportunities and remove existing barriers, such as more flexible and efficient delivery systems, and a strong educational framework. Unless the gap between the poorly educated and well educated is narrowed, then those with low motivation will not participate in courses at CHEC.

Two barriers are institutional requirements and scheduling, making even the most attractive programs non-viable if offered at an inappropriate time. Students can be more involved in the operational aspects of CHEC, so that providers can more accurately address their needs and ensure successful participation. Target groups of students can benefit by accurate information being disseminated. Courses that are considered a low threat level to learners, will attract those adult students who might wish to participate in education but have low self-confidence. CHEC managers and educators can research participation studies more comprehensively, particularly the role of self-confidence, if they want to encourage new students into the education system and provide a cooperative rather than competitive attitude at the Campus.

It is clear that when drawing conclusions about student perceptions at CHEC, that participation factors are an important consideration. The data collected from students demonstrates many motivational and participation characteristics and that adult learners have multifarious reasons for their enrolment and continued participation.

A qualitative approach is considered a positive way of examining formal education at CHEC and can lead to reorganisation to encourage a more favourable learning environment. Part of this environment should include the role of staff in the process of cooperation, and appropriate staff development would further enhance the opportunities for students by providing more support in educational aspects. The mission statement is clear that cooperation between institutions and sectors will give students opportunities for course articulation and credit transfers. In order to negate any student losses which usually occur in the transition between institutions such as school to post secondary education, CHEC can investigate areas such as scheduling, subject and course choice, credit transfers and education counselling services so that students see themselves as lifelong learners.

If the developmental stages of adults are taken into consideration, then CHEC is an institution wherein adult learners are moving through identity crises and require a warm supportive environment, rather than any notion of extended schooling. If adult learners are confronted with hostility by staff or there is a lack of appropriate information and difficulty is experienced negotiating the complexities of the Campus, then potential students are discouraged and are potential non participants. Rather than duplicating

courses or competing with each other, sectors can combine and offer attractive programs to meet the needs of those who want to participate and encourage those poorly educated or disinterested people to articulate their unmet learning needs.

The phenomena of participation is complex and diverse. However, providers such as CHEC can remove barriers that preclude adults from pursuing educational activities. These prospective students are often deterred by institutions offering inappropriate learning activities and only giving limited attention to important participation factors. The participation issues raised in this present study are student-centred and of equal importance to cost benefit analysis or infrastructure savings which joint developments seek to achieve. Primarily, educational institutions are designed to exist for students.

Summary

This chapter is an analysis of the data presented in Chapter Six. The analysis explores students' perceptions of their participation at CHEC. Their satisfaction with the operation of the Campus is what will determine the successful outcomes of such an innovative and unique environment. Student needs are often generalised or overlooked when providers are planning major capital works such as this joint development.

It is anticipated that the analysis of the major themes and sub-themes that have emerged from the data can be used to shed light on what is perceived by students and what their experiences are at CHEC. The data reflects that community perceptions of the Campus are an important local consideration, but that there are inequities for students in regard to use of facilities. The expectations of an educational framework which focuses on pathways and cross sectoral links have caused concern for students.

Social issues have been overlooked by planners and providers and this was perceived by students to be another important issue. Attitudes to education at CHEC has had an impact on students' perceptions and that two significant aspects have emerged. Firstly, the newness of the Campus contributed to some of issues that arose, and secondly, the level of integration needs to be addressed. The issue of integration is presented throughout the discussion of the major themes and sub-themes generated by CHEC students' perceptions of their participation at the Campus.

Another factor within this analysis, is the underlying issue of participation itself, and why adult learners participate in education. The discussion on participation studies is considered a valuable insight into what might motivate and encourage participation amongst present and potential CHEC students. The range of age groups at CHEC is a challenge for the Campus to address. It is an issue of the difference between adolescents and the characteristics of adult learners and how they perceive the learning environment. CHEC has to offer more than a narrow selection of educational programs for the student community; if participation and retention rates are to stabilize and grow. It is critical that the potential internal and external conflicts facing adults and adolescents are considered important aspects for the institution to recognise as one of its priorities. CHEC has to offer appropriate courses and flexible delivery, but there must be a conducive learning environment. Teaching and learning strategies for students in different age groups are also a consideration when providing education. If students as learners at CHEC can be adequately supported, this will encourage participation in lifelong learning. Students and teachers at CHEC are not given the opportunity to participate in the planning process, and in the case of CHEC, it was more crisis management and damage control in the early post occupancy stage, than a carefully planned educational institution.

What is recognised, however, is that CHEC exists as a reality, and had it not been for people with vision and a commitment in both the planning and operating phase, it may never have eventuated. Chapter Seven concludes the study with a brief summary of the issues raised and general recommendations, followed by suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

This Chapter concludes the study with general recommendations and suggestions for further research. It is reiterated that the focus of this study is to explore the students' experiences and perceptions of the Campus during its early post-occupancy stage of operation. The main aspects of the study are briefly summarised and the general recommendations are suggested to reflect the student voice at CHEC, in what they perceive as relevant issues to their participation. Further research is indicated as an essential follow up to recent initiatives at the Campus and is considered a valuable contribution to present and future provision of education at joint developments. Research built on this initial study would add to the potential benefit of CHEC as a provider, and raise awareness of the implications for students who choose to enrol at the Campus.

What is critical to the success of joint developments, is the acknowledgment of major changes in all sectors of education. This study is designed to articulate how CHEC addresses the needs of its students so that existing or planned joint developments enlarge their present focus on capital works and operational matters to include the most important factor within any educational development, that is, the students. As joint developments are seen as providing more facilities for students and increasing opportunities in education, it is imperative that planners and staff within these institutions consider the impact of user choice, as student participation will eventually determine survival of all educational institutions.

Amalgamations, Mergers and Links

It is clear that amalgamations, links and mergers within education, whether in Australia or overseas, are complex and problematic. There is a focus on the human factor in amalgamations as an unpredictable variable and much depends upon whether the people involved in strategic positions within the educational institution are committed to a common vision and are future thinkers and planners. There is difficulty in dealing with the systemic and traditional cultures of existing institutions in their present form, but

when cross sectoral or institutional links are proposed and implemented, these difficulties can impede the potential benefits for students. Studies on amalgamations highlight the political thrust behind the links, and these links can be perceived by providers as a mandate for the survival of their institution. It is, therefore, expected that staff employed in separate institutions on a lower strategic level than national planners can experience difficulty in sharing a common vision; they are usually excluded from consultation in linking or cross sectoral processes.

Joint Developments and CHEC

Joint developments are a manifestation of political influences and policy changes in education, particularly in the vocationalism of education. Economic rationalisation underpins the emergence of joint developments and is supported by political rhetoric that opportunities for students to access a broader range of programs and facilities are provided by linking institutions together. There are instances of this broader educational provision in some mergers and amalgamations, but joint developments are still subject to local conditions and individuals involved in the planning process, especially in the initial planning phase. There is no single example of a state or federal model for joint developments which can provide a clear blueprint for operational matters concerning facilities or the implementation of a common educational framework.

The focus of joint developments narrows toward a particular study of the Campus at Coffs Harbour. CHEC provides a much needed presence in the community to provide access to education and address the needs of local residents, as it is considered a rural area with fluctuating local industries, high unemployment and a low skilled workforce. The initial planning stage resulted in a partnership arrangement between three education sectors on a greenfield site and moved between the original concept of co-location toward a government directive of full integration. Students were to be students of the one institution, that is, CHEC students.

Three major critical success factors for CHEC as a joint development were that there should be a shared educational vision and commitment by the sectors, an enterprise agreement to resolve industrial issues and the early appointment of a Chief Executive Officer. A recent reflective workshop determined some positive outcomes and concerns surrounding CHEC operations, and the level of integration was seen as one of the

many aspects. Potential benefits included access to better facilities, educational advantages for students by providing access to a broader range of courses, credit transfers, pathways and articulation between sectors. A brief discussion on participation was considered essential to providing some understanding of adult learners and why they chose to enrol in courses at CHEC.

Methodology

The methodology chosen for this study was a qualitative approach as an initial quantitative pilot study appeared too limited. The study of students' perceptions of their participation at the Campus has been conducted within a broad phenomenological framework, incorporating theories of adult education. However, the qualitative paradigm also incorporated knowledge based on quantitative studies in adult education, such as studies on joint developments and participation. In this phenomenological approach, the researcher attempts to avoid assumptions about the study, and avoids reducing the students' reality to measurable variables. The study was approached with an open mind and neutrality in that the student's perception was the focus of the research. It was considered that face-to-face interviews with a cross section of students would then provide valuable information to gather a wider range of data than the originally planned numerical analysis. There appeared less opportunity for data to be manipulated or contrived to fit predetermined questions concerning aspects of the Campus, as the significant aspects of students' participation at CHEC emerged to form the framework of the study, rather than using predetermined questions to elicit quantitative and measurable data on particular aspects of the Campus.

The interaction identified the broad aims of the study which incorporated the impact of CHEC on students, the major themes and sub-themes of their participation and an exploration of these perceptions. The hypothesis and patterns emerged from the data and although the sample size was small, qualitative research is time intensive and yields rich descriptive data which can be a valuable addition to existing or future quantitative studies or evaluations of the Campus.

Results

The results of the data collected from students are presented as students' perceptions of their participation at CHEC. The major themes and sub-themes which emerged focused on the potential benefit to the community and physical aspects of the Campus; the facilities such as computer use, library, canteen and administration block. The education aspects for students included the familiarity and visibility of other sectors. Of particular interest to students were the access to educational and general information about the Campus and what they perceived to be pathways and links between sectors. Social issues arose concerning attitudes toward other students and social activities at the Campus. Within the attitudes to education theme, students discussed their previous high school experiences, adult education issues and general attitudes toward education and CHEC. The results are presented using quotes from verbatim transcripts used in the in-depth interviews. Both positive aspects of the Campus and students' concerns are presented for the reader, to give a balanced overview of students' perceptions.

Discussion and Interpretation of Results

The discussion and interpretation of results draws together the perceptions of student participation at CHEC. Integration underpins all the major themes and sub-themes from the data collection. Inequities appeared in the sharing of facilities between sectors and this directly impacted upon students. The perception of the extent of integration was the strongest theme in the data as it affected students' expectations that cross sectoral links were already in place when the Campus opened.

Students perceived the lack of integration as the most significant aspect to be addressed. This lack of integration at the Campus had resulted in competition and duplication, lack of access to information and limited articulation, credit transfers and pathways between sectors. The separateness of the sectors at CHEC not only directly affected students on an educational level, but also created barriers which impacted upon their social integration at the Campus. The students at CHEC share common participation characteristics which was explained using Cross's Chain of Response model. It is imperative that providers consider the retention and attraction of students to the Campus and promote participation. The adult learners and their environment are concerns for CHEC, particularly as lifelong learning draws more mature aged students toward education. There are issues for CHEC to address, and how students perceive

their participation within the context of a joint development will determine the success of this Campus. General recommendations are, therefore, suggested to assist planners and administrators to provide the most favourable educational environment for their most important asset – students as lifelong learners.

General Recommendations

The following list of general recommendations is generated by student perceptions of CHEC within this study. They are not considered negative criticisms of the existing Campus, but are designed to enhance the learning environment for students and to improve on what is already an innovative and unique joint development. It is clear from this research, that perceptions of CHEC are favourable in relation to its presence in the local community. However, the purpose of this research is to articulate student perceptions of their participation, so that providers can more adequately meet their needs and the mission statement of the Campus. It is recommended that:

- 1. There should be a demonstrated and ongoing commitment by staff to the joint developments which will then positively impact upon students. If staff are resistant to joint developments or joint curriculum development, this will negatively affect students through lack of educational programs and articulation.*
- 2. A cohesive and strong educational framework will benefit students by providing a clearer view of the existing level of integration of the sectors. This should be available to both teachers and students at CHEC so that misinformation is avoided. In addition, information should be available for students to access the educational opportunities at the Campus, such as information on all sectors' course offerings, articulation and credit transfers between DSE, TAFE and SCU and access to vocational counselling.*
- 3. Every effort should be made to maximise credit transfers, advanced standing and course articulation and accreditation in the immediate future. The prolonged absence of these proposed educational benefits is negatively affecting what students perceive as a potential benefit to them in their participation.*
- 4. Any acceleration programs, whether on site agreements or transferable, should be available to all students from all sectors.*

5. *Community perceptions can be enhanced by CHEC developing a sound reputation as a favourable adult education environment and can then attract a broader profile of students to undertake education. The range of courses offered should be broad and meet both student and industry needs.*
6. *Publicity is directed at all prospective students for CHEC and is shared between sectors equally to present an identity for the Campus as an integrated facility, rather than promotion of three separate sectors. CHEC should be portrayed as offering educational programs at the Campus, rather than by individual sectors.*
7. *Social integration can occur through more organised and resourced social activities. This will enhance the educational advantages and provide students with more interaction. The social aspect of the students is significant to their continued participation and enhances the learning environment.*
8. *Additional facilities to create a more mature environment will support the adult learner and promote participation and blending between sectors.*
9. *Funding arrangements between partners should not impact upon students from different sectors. There should be equitable sharing of facilities and all students should have equal access to resources.*
10. *A common orientation program for new CHEC students would encourage them to bond together and also reduce the institutional complexities that new students face. It also negates the image of separateness.*
11. *Participation studies and further research into non-participation by planners and administrators would provide a broader view of student learning needs and characteristics.*
12. *Planners and management should consult with teaching staff and students both in the planning process and in the post occupancy stage to improve the operational aspects of CHEC. This can be achieved through student and staff representation on relevant committees.*
13. *Stronger links between sectors would address the government directives and thus provide students with a more integrated institution to attract more resources.*
14. *Separateness of sectors has a negative impact on students' perceptions of their participation. Every effort should be made to integrate all partners at CHEC on both an educational and social level.*
15. *Information on all sectors and programs offered at CHEC should be a joint effort, rather than separate sectors offering a diverse range of material. There should be equal assistance from staff and access to information for students at the first point of contact located in the administration block.*

16. *Duplication of courses and competition between sectors to recruit students should be eliminated as presently there is a negative impact on students' participation at CHEC. The Campus should be perceived as a cooperative and supportive environment for students.*

Further Research

The Campus is addressing the local needs of residents, industry links and cross sectoral links in education. Joint developments are part of the changing nature of education and every effort to ensure their success and ensuing benefits for students should be made by planners and providers. Research into adult education is complicated by different perspectives dealing with philosophical and psychological concepts. Qualitative research produces tentative hypotheses which evolve after some time studying the phenomenon. This process focuses more on the how and why approach, rather than outcomes or measurable variables. People are seen as the best source for research, as there is no predetermined hypothesis to direct and limit the process of the study. This type of research within the concept of CHEC will add value to any quantitative studies or evaluation of the Campus. With this in mind, some suggestions for further research are made.

- *Continuing qualitative research which involves the components of adult learning relative to self direction, relationship of experiences to learning and the reflection upon the learning process of students at CHEC.*
- *Action research for student groups involved in courses at CHEC to determine what impact the learning environment has on their continuing participation.*
- *A more comprehensive participation study on motivation in an educationally relevant form, particularly the participant's perceptions of institutional barriers and situational barriers to participation.*
- *A longitudinal study of students from DSE, articulating to TAFE and then to SCU. This could be used as a sample group to test the learning environment of CHEC compared to other high school students' educational outcomes in the local area.*
- *A further study on students' perceptions of CHEC – at least three years post occupancy – as a reflective process for the current research and implemented as Stage Two of this present study.*
- *To investigate the industrial issues surrounding CHEC staff and how the relationships between staff from different sectors have impacted on the workplace relative to cross sectoral teaching aspects.*

- *A comparison of joint developments and student perceptions of their participation across different regions to determine what factors impact on the success of joint developments and whether student characteristics are similar or dissimilar.*
- *A study on the educational pathways and articulation processes at CHEC to investigate the potential benefits for students and to guide planners for other joint developments. This study could produce an educational model for planned or existing developments.*

This study has highlighted the significance of student contribution to any institution. Without this contribution, institutions can remain within bureaucratic constraints and have a narrow focus that excludes the learner and his/her learning needs.

CHEC is an innovative joint development. It has manifested itself as a reality, amidst planning problems and crises in operational matters. The Campus is a focus for the community, and a community in which a positive identity is a much needed boost to overcome the social problems that are aligned with high unemployment and welfare issues.

Young people and adults have embraced the Campus; many staff and students are enthusiastic about its presence. Its future is potentially bright, offering alternative education models and access to education for the critical mass of potential adult learners. The Campus evolved, and exists, as a direct result of the foresight and vision of people involved in the planning process. For all its perceived faults and any government directives or capital works benefits, it is a very real example of the potential for education and lifelong learning. This study is, therefore, not designed to cast a negative light on the Campus, but instead to reflect the student voice at CHEC, and what students wanted to say about their participation.