

Education: something old, something new...

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A long history

- Callaghan, Ruskin and all that...
- Education for personal & social well-being
- Education for economic development

The Conservative heritage

- Marketisation
 - Choice
 - Competition
 - Diversity
- Central control
 - National Curriculum & standards
 - Accountability
 - Erosion of local & professional autonomy

The 'New' Labour vision

Since I became leader of the Labour Party, I have emphasised that education will be a priority for me in government. I have done so because of the fact – increasingly recognised across our society – that our economic success and our social cohesion depend on it. An Age of Achievement is within our grasp – but it depends on an Ethic of Education. That is why in my party conference speech I said that my three priorities for government would be education, education and education.

[Blair, 1996]

The 'New' Labour agenda

A new Labour government will focus on standards, especially in the basics of literacy and numeracy, in all our schools. We will expect education – and other public services – to be held accountable for their performance; we will urge teachers to work in partnership with parents, business and the community; and we will balance parents' rights with a recognition of their responsibilities. These ideas have one aim – to improve the educational experience, and raise standards of achievement, for the majority of children.

[Blair, 1996]

'New' Labour, old actions

- Maintenance/extensions of Tory policy
 - Markets, choice & diversity
 - Central control & prescription
 - Curriculum
 - Accountability

'New Labour, new actions

- Interventionism in the old agenda
 - Targetology
 - Initiativitis
 - Increased prescription
- Interventions on new (?) agendas
 - Social inclusion
 - Reduction of middle-class flight
 - Market damping

The score card

- Remarkable progress on standards targets
 - Now run into the sand?
 - Target-cuteness, not real gains
 - Disadvantage remains recalcitrant
 - Standards narrow education (& economic development)
- Choice remains problematic
 - Creates winners and losers (amongst institutions & users)
 - Distorts institutions' offerings

The score card 2

- Initiatives
 - Hard to manage
 - Hard to make coherent
 - May limit universal provision

The 'New' Labour dilemma

1988-97

Markets + central framework

1997-2003

Markets + framework +intervention

2003-?

More markets + framework +intervention

...or a new paradigm?