

Tony Blair and the Politics of Race in Education: whiteness, *doublethink* and New Labour

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Abstract

It is tempting to view the Blairite legacy as a simple story of political hypocrisy: a government, swept to power after almost two decades of Conservative rule, promising much but reneging on those commitments and falling back on Thatcherite authoritarian popularism when the going got tough. But that would be too simple a story. The Blairite policy trajectory in relation to race and education reveals problems that are much more deep-rooted, and more significant, than mere political opportunism. The failure to address racism as a structural factor that shapes the taken-for-granted assumptions of the education system (embodied in notions of selection, ability and discipline) made possible, maybe even inevitable, a situation where race equality would be sacrificed to the perceived interests and sensitivities of White people.