

The new Tory education policy is practically, socially ...

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After three weeks of concentration on this blog on budget related issues, I may be spending a little less time on blogging in the week ahead as there are other issues to attend to. However, one story demanded attention this morning. This is from [The Guardian](#):

Central to the white paper is a push for academy trusts to take over the running of schools in England, with a 2030 target date for converting council-maintained schools into academies and for them to have joined or be preparing to join a multi-academy trust (Mat).

The white paper also calls for a regulatory review of Mats, potentially paving the way for an independent regulator of school trusts and their operations.

The report added:

Academies are state-funded schools with higher degrees of autonomy in governance, use of resources and curriculum. But recently the number of schools converting to academy status has slowed, with a majority of primary schools and a fifth of secondary schools retaining their links to local authorities.

I spent more than fifteen years as a school governor when I lived in London, many as chair, so have some knowledge in this area.

What strikes me most about this proposal is how spectacularly it misses the point when it comes to education. The focus is not on teaching, except for a demand that there be a specific minimum quantity of hours of teaching when everywhere there is growing awareness that enforced attendance in a workplace for minimum time periods can reduce productivity. Nor is the focus on the needs of children, which I recall having to remind governing bodies was our focus over the many years when admin demands seemed to weigh us down. Instead the focus is on governance structure and control.

This was ever the Tory way. I recall why I was first invited to be a governor in Wandsworth. The Tories had introduced a demand that a local business representative

be on school governing bodies to add some business discipline and to remind schools of the need to produce children trained for the workplace. A parent suggested me to a local school knowing full well that I opposed the whole logic of this in education terms, believing that education for life was far more important than education for work. My attitude has not changed since then.

Nor, regrettably, has that of the Tories. It is apparent that they still have three goals. The first is to undermine local democratic control. The second is to focus on business need. The third is to commodify children's education, not least for the gain of those running academy trusts, which I have long thought a form of corruption in the sense that they channel public funds in a manner that makes them exploitable for private gain.

In this policy proposal we do then see the Tory mindset at work. There is indifference to actual need. There is also no idea how to meet it. And as for funding, they are now promising to match 2010 funding levels again - the level they inherited from Labour, having failed by choice to do so for a long time.

Then there is the anti-democracy agenda, seeking to undermine what should be a natural task of local authorities.

And there is the capture of public funds for private gain.

This is practically, socially and ethically bankrupt policy pursued solely for the financial benefit of a few at cost to many. When will people realise how badly they are being conned?