(How) did New Labour narrow the achievement and participation gap?

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Outline of Presentation

• Access and Achievement in England
• The Pre-School Attainment Gap
• The Attainment and Participation Gap
• What contributed to any narrowing of the gap?
• Policies and Prospects post-2010
Figure 1: Attendance at different types of university by socio-economic group
Figure 2: Average rank of test scores at 22, 42, 60 and 120 months, by SES of parents and early rank position
Figure 3: Percentage of cohort achieving five good examination passes at age 16 by parents’ social class: 1988-2003 (%)
Source: DfES (2006)
Figure 4: Relationship between household deprivation and relative performance in examinations in core subjects
Source: Cook (2011)
Figure 5: “Gaps in educational performance have narrowed only very slightly despite significant investment”
Examples of New Labour Education Policies

- Class size reduction
- Education Action Zones
- Excellence in Cities
- National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy
- More teaching assistants
- Improving school leadership training
- Enhancing teacher quality, e.g. Teach First
- Creation of specialist schools
- The London Challenge
- Autonomous Academy schools
- Personalisation, e.g. Reading Recovery
- Every Child Matters
What didn’t make a difference

• Class size reduction
• Education Action Zones
• Excellence in Cities
• Employment of teaching assistants
What may have made a difference

• The National Strategies?
• Academies?
• Extended Schools?
• Reading Recovery?
• Teach First?
• The London Challenge?
Figure 7: Performance at GCSE by region
Source: DfE (2011)
What may have made a difference

- The National Strategies?
- Academies?
- Extended Schools?
- Reading Recovery?
- Teach First?
- The London Challenge?

... or just ‘the economy, stupid’?
Current Coalition Policies

Key Conservative policies

- More Academies and Free Schools
- Traditional curriculum and examinations

NB Tension between neo-liberal and neo-conservative elements of policy

Key Liberal Democrat policies

- Pupil premium for disadvantaged students
- Learning and Teaching (‘What works’) Toolkit for teachers funded by Education Endowment Fund
Figure 8: The size of the gap including “elite measures”
Source: DfE (2013)
Questions and comments?

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