

Paper 2 - Reducing ESL in England

by Louise Ryan, Magdolna Lőrinc, Alessio D' Angelo, Neil Kaye (Middlesex University, London)

In the last few decades, education has been the subject of persistent and significant reforms in England. The present Coalition government has continued with its predecessors' policy paradigm, in particular the adaptation of education to the perceived needs of the globalised market and knowledge-based economy, promoting the marketisation of the education system, increasing school autonomy, and a discourse of individual aspirations, choice and responsibility. Our policy analysis revealed that while a large number of policy initiatives are aimed at raising attainment, reducing early school leaving (ESL) per se is not part of the policy agenda. Correspondingly, the dominant policy discourse in England defines young people NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) as the problem category.

In our presentation, we focused on three initiatives seen by Government as routes to increased standards and educational attainment: raising the participation age, changes to career advice provision, and school autonomy and choice. Our research revealed intriguing tensions in these ESL-related government policy initiatives, illustrated thorough a case study on the so-called Trojan Horse scandal