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**Abstract**

Assessments of Labour's achievements in education in the immediate post-war period have been largely critical, but almost exclusively focused on schools' reform. This article in contrast considers Labour's policies for higher education, particularly universities. Three themes dominated the post-war agenda: science and technology, expansion (and access), and appropriate models of higher education. The demands of science and technology and the consequent need for expansion were the main drivers in Labour's programme. But the failure to offer a clear view of post-war development in higher education, together with a deep-seated ambivalence as to the role of technology and vocational education in universities, meant that plans for science, technology and expansion were only partially realised. The issue of appropriate models of higher education has bedevilled subsequent Labour governments, including the present administration, in their search for a policy for higher education.  
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