

# Review of: "The equality agenda: a clear case of smoke and mirrors"

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This is an interesting paper, but in the end, I was not sure what the main thesis was. There is considerable history around the events discussed and some linking to the equality agenda (although the earlier part of the paper was less well linked to this agenda). I would have liked to see more of an unpacking of the differences between equality of outcome and equality of opportunity although I do acknowledge the political attempts to address these two foci are incomplete. Certainly there is considerable room for debate about these two different approaches and a need to discuss HOW they could be better operationalised. Whilst history gives us good examples of how NOT to do this, I would love to see the debate move into suggestions of better approaches. For example, we see from history how equality of opportunity, when it is simplified into an approach that offers the same supports to everyone, does not work because everyone does NOT require the same supports to succeed. Thus, we need to unpack the equality of opportunity agenda and ask to what extent does this require different approaches for different people in order to facilitate better outcomes. Or is equality of opportunity ONLY limited to providing the same services, without recognising that people come into those services with different backgrounds, experiences and capacity to participate.

Similarly, the equality of outcome agenda. To what extent does (and should) this address differences in capacity to participate? Who should define what the targeted outcome should be, and should that target be the same for everyone? And how do our assumptions about what SHOULD be the desired outcome impact on what supports we put in place to get people to that target?

There are many hard questions we have yet to address in the equality agenda and this paper does not yet attempt to grapple with any of these, nor use the history provided to begin to interrogate any of them.

Ultimately, we have to debate what does equality actually mean, but we are a long way yet from that conversation, but yes, it certainly is currently smoke and mirrors.