

Jobs or Skills? The Role of Education in the 21st century

During the 20th Century it was thought that education would be key to equality of opportunity, especially in access to jobs and a career. The key to this assumption was the idea that effort and ability would equal merit. At the same time it was thought that there would be a tightening bond between educational credentials and the labour market. Those who put in the effort and had the ability would achieve their just deserts.

While this view came in for strong criticism the ideal of education as being key to equality of opportunity and good jobs remained. In the 21st century fundamental changes to globalization and inequality have fundamentally repositioned education. The emphasis is now solely on education to service the economy in the cause of individual and national competitiveness. However, the relationship between education and the economy is becoming problematic for all but an elite. This suggests that education has been fundamentally repositioned. This lecture is about why that has occurred and what can be done about it.