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Fees hike won't hurt poor students [1]

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Thomas Byrne and Anton Howes, the founders of the Students For Tuition Fee Reform [3] group, have a good post [4] on Comment is Free today arguing that students have misjudged the tuition fees changes proposed by the government, and in fact they would give students a better deal than they currently have.

They make an important point:

> People from poorer backgrounds are much less likely to go to university, but research carried out for the Sutton Trust showed there is almost no difference between the participation rates of the poorest students and better-off peers with the same A-level results. . . . The issue here, then, is not fees, but that poorer students are being let down by a broken school system before even thinking about aspiring to university.

This is the key point that many people don't discuss in the fees debate. So few students from poor backgrounds end up going to good universities not because the fee system prevents them, but because the school system stops them from qualifying in the first place. This is the main thing that holds back the poor from better university education and, because the problem takes place long before that point, no amount of bursaries or grants can change it.

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