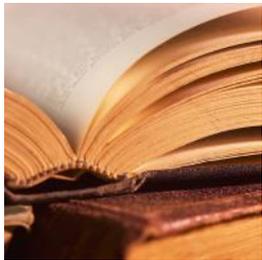


[On those university fees](#) [1]

Written by [Tim Worstall](#) [2] | Sunday 1 June 2008



Angela Phillips is concerned about the possibility that the cap on university fees might [be raised](#) [3].

Should our world-class universities be allowed to operate like football clubs and raise entry fees in order to pay the higher wages it takes to attract the Beckhams of the academic establishment?

I for one would welcome an influx of monosyllabic academics who were actually good at what they do, yes, and if raising tuition fees is the only way to achieve it then I'm all for that plan. A little more seriously:

Are we really ready to contemplate the possibility that education is not about social justice and that we should save the best minds in the world to educate a bunch of bankers and lawyers? Because that's what we are talking about if we allow a market to develop in higher education.

No, education isn't about social justice: it might be a means of achieving some but that's a by-product. The aim of education is, as the very word itself implies, to educate people, no, not just for the economic value of their subsequent output, but in the sense of aiding in the development of the full and rounded personality. The liberation of the whole human being if you wish. However, before I get accused of being a little too New Age in my outlook, this doesn't mean that fees should not be uncapped.

The people who benefit from the higher education system are those who go through it: not just in the higher rewards that some of them get in the jobs market, but in that greater appreciation of life which a rounded education will aid. Just as it should be the polluter who pays, so should it be those who benefit who pay. In this case the soon-to-be graduates should pay for the costs of the system which provides them with the benefits that graduation will bring.

The only alternative is that higher education be paid for from the tax system - and it's very difficult to see a moral argument that those who do not benefit from having graduated should have to pay the costs of the system which benefits those who do.

Free the fees and not just allow but encourage a market to develop in higher education. As I've said before, there are things which are simply too important for them to be excluded from the market.

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