

~~We~~ need to invest much more in our schools. A better educated Britain is better for employers and for improving social mobility.

One of the Liberal Democrats' core policies is improving social mobility. [Tim Leunig](#) argues that the key to improving social and economic mobility is in improving school results. Increasing investment in schools and education may well pay for itself in the future.



Social mobility is core to the Coalition and Nick Clegg personally. It means that your birth plays little or no role in determining your life outcomes. It is the opposite of feudalism. Economic mobility is an important part of social mobility. Where you end up economically is determined by your ability and hard work, for sure, but also by whether you get a good education, good advice, and – for some – by whether you inherit.

Government should concentrate on what it can do, in this case education. Kids from poor backgrounds generally do much worse at school – and so they end up poor later on. Government can improve school results for such kids relative to others: [Labour did it – a bit. There is big variation in this across the country](#), so every local authority except one should be ringing up those who are doing better and learning from them.

Money matters to schools. I would like to see a handful of schools given it in spades – some double the usual budgets, some quadruple, and so on – to see just what it costs to ensure that next to no-one leaves school without the qualifications and attitude to make a go of their lives. As a country we need to know what it costs to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. It may even be that it pays for itself in future tax revenues and falls in benefit spending. Or it may be so expensive that we take the democratic decision as a nation, not to pay for it.

Social mobility is usually measured in terms of whether people relative to each other. If one person rises, another must fall, by definition. Although true in relative terms, it is not true in absolute terms. Graduates' numbers increased dramatically over the last twenty years, and the graduate wage premium has not fallen. A better educated Britain is more attractive for those wanting to employ the well-educated.

The Victorians worried that we would have too many people able to read and write (“Why do labourers need to be able to write?”) – but as education increased over the twentieth century, the quality of jobs increased with it.

We never have anything to fear from increasing the supply of well-educated people. Social mobility is not a threat to the haves – we can all “have”.

This article first appeared on [Liberal Democrat Voice](#) on 25 October.