

If an action doesn't reduce inequality why is government...

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I write a lot about tax, and I make no apology for doing so. It is, however, important to realise why I do that. It is because I believe the tax has the greatest ability of all of human inventions to change the prospects of the people living in most countries on earth, including the UK. This is what I define as The Joy of Tax. In that case this statement in the Guardian this morning [was of concern to me](#):

Social mobility in Britain is hampered by a “culture of inequality” that penalises school leavers who enter the workforce rather than higher education, according to a parliamentary report.

An investigation by the House of Lords committee on social mobility called for radical revisions to the content of schooling from the age of 14, to better prepare teenagers who do not go on to university for the world of work.

I am not sure on the first reading that I subscribe to all the opinions that the members of the Lords committee express, but that is not the point: if state spending that is ultimately linked to tax is being used to reinforce inequality in society then we have got something seriously wrong. The whole point of a good tax system is that it should provide the opportunity that would otherwise not be available to people because of the inefficient distribution of income and capital (whether it be financial, social, geographic, human or other) that currently exists in this country. If we have got that wrong in this case, and as a matter of fact I agree with the Lords that we have, then tax is not being used to best effect and change is necessary.

To put it another way, whenever a situation is looked at, and whatever question is asked, the criteria for judgement is does the resulting action reduce inequality and provide more opportunity for those who are otherwise excluded? If the answer isn't yes in both cases then there is something profoundly wrong.

It's not rocket science, but it sure as heck works.