Published on *Adam Smith Institute* (http://www.adamsmith.org)

Vouching for liberty in education [1]

Written by **Victoria Monro** [2] | Thursday 25 April 2013

Victoria Monro was the runner-up in this year's Young Writer on Liberty competition.

Regrettably, one of the most sensible, pragmatic, and consequentially sound policy ideas of our time has never made it into policy ? the education voucher.

The best version would be an education voucher, distributed annually to parents for each child, to be redeemed at any school of choice. In some cases, it would cover the full cost of a year?s tuition, in others, it would contribute to the cost with the parent topping up the remainder. The purpose of implementing a voucher is twofold. Firstly, it would provide an introduction of free-market practices to the sector, without being so radical as to be a complete privatisation.

It retains the element of public sector provision that would prevent an outcry ? so-called ?free? provision, whilst enabling the positive consequences that would speak for themselves, and remind the populace that a sector can be productive, successful and efficient without government intervention. Correctly applied across, it could pave the way for the gradual but meaningful movement towards a more economically-free society.

Secondly, the policy would reinforce the choice element of demand. The government would not be permitted to stipulate which institutions the vouchers could be used at, only which child is to be registered for education. New private schools could establish themselves as educational institutions and accept the vouchers as full payment, providing direct competition with the state alternatives. Like other private schools, they would have the ability to earn profit, and so new entrants would enter the market if they felt they could favourably compare both financially, and qualitatively, with the incumbent state comprehensives, whilst turning a profit. They undoubtedly could.

The idea of parents being allowed to choose schools due to location (?catchment area?) would be replaced by a business ethos ? accepting parents and children, rather than turning them away based on their postcode. It would challenge the state-dominated status-quo.

Just like with most other service areas, people choose to purchase what gives them the most for their money. Educational quality is easier to measure than most, given as ?quality? is based on exam results and league tables; this information about a school?s achievements is readily available from numerous sources.

There?s no reason for the State to maintain an iron-grip over how our children learn. Slowly, we can move

to a situation where families choose and pay for the education provision themselves. This is the first step to getting there.

blog comments powered by Disqus [4]

Source URL: http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/education/vouching-for-liberty-in-education

Links:
[1] http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/education/vouching-for-liberty-in-education
[2] http://www.adamsmith.org/authors/victoria-monro
[3] http://disqus.com/?ref_noscript
[4] http://disqus.com