

## Beware of school voucher risks

[David N. Cox](#) | Posted: Friday, October 7, 2011 12:01 am |

Recently there has been an increase of interest in school vouchers or tuition tax-credits, and there are bills being written for the legislature to implement them next year. There are things we can learn from other countries as we consider adoption.

Sweden's adoption in 1993 of vouchers, following Milton Friedman's advice, made it universal and simple. The funding follows the student regardless of the parents' income. Any school, nonprofit, for profit or religious, can receive the government funding at the same amount as a public school. The school has to be all-inclusive, provide national standards, and have its performance monitored. They may not charge their students fees beyond the voucher. Private school enrollment has increased from 1 percent to about 15 percent. This is all according to Sweden's former State Secretary of Schools, Odd Eiken, in *The Daily Caller*.

This month's *Liberty Magazine*, whose mission is to protect religious freedom, is reporting that there are new sweeping additions to their educational system this year. Among other things, the national curriculum will now include a very explicit sex education class for 11-year-olds. Home schooling will be outlawed. As a result, many home-schoolers are fleeing the country in order to preserve their control over their children's education.

"In addition to the new home schooling restrictions, Wallqvister [Swedish Education Ministry political adviser] explained that all nongovernment-run schools -- already financed by the state [vouchers] -- will now be forced to adopt the national curriculum. No more praying, no more alternative teaching approaches, and no more options." What was that about vouchers providing "choice"?

After almost 20 years these private schools cannot now afford to pull out either. This certainly was not on the horizon for the private schools when it was implemented. Now their only "choice" is to obey or fold.

Indiana passed the first statewide voucher program in the U.S. this year. According to Adam Schaeffer, a policy analyst at Cato Institute's Center for Educational Freedom, "The voucher program will not only expand state control over and homogenize participating schools by requiring adherence to a single state-designed test, evaluation, and curriculum, it will also cut into the market for non-accredited [non-voucher] schools.

The likely effect is a serious loss of education freedom and diversity of options in the medium-term and a near-total loss in the long term.

"The voucher law places private schools under the supervision of the state Department of Education, making them accountable to career bureaucrats and political appointees for performance on government standards and curriculum. It is an authorization and framework of accountability to the state, rather than to parents and taxpayers directly."

If you read his article, you can see the absurdity of what will now be required of private schools in Indiana accepting a voucher, and how it will push out those who wish to remain free by not accepting the voucher.

Think of the form of government of all the countries that have adopted vouchers. They're all socialist! Vouchers and tuition tax credits allow the governments more control over the private schools, which prevents competition! Conservatives must not be taken in by the voices claiming competition and choice, for neither will be provided with vouchers or tuition tax credits.

As Schaeffer stated, "School choice is meaningless if all the choices are the same." In countries that have adopted voucher-type programs, private schools have had to adopt the politically correct "standards" of the government in power, employee unions, and end up pushing out those who refuse the voucher. After a while, if adopted, there will be neither competition nor choice!

• **David N. Cox**, of Lehi, is a teacher and former Utah state legislator.

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