



STOCKHOLM NETWORK

The leading pan-European think tank and market-oriented network

As parents signal willingness to run schools themselves, think tank launches DVD calling for school vouchers

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In the wake of increasing numbers of parents taking matters into their own hands and setting up independent, no frills schools (*The Daily Telegraph*, 'Parents set up their own primary', page 10, 02/04/08), the Stockholm Network offered its vision for British education in 2020. Launching a new film on the internet, Stockholm Network CEO, Helen Disney said:

"The State should continue to fund most primary and secondary education, but such money ought to follow pupils in the form of a voucher and be spent in a much more competitive and open market of independent providers. Learning from the Swedish policy agenda which has greatly encouraged school choice, parents and teachers must be allowed to set up their own schools where there is a critical mass of local support."

Launching the DVD: ***Back to School: How Choice and Competition could make Britain's future brighter***, which explores market reforms in education, the Stockholm Network recommends three key policy changes that it believes will greatly improve school standards and outcomes:

- 1) Money to follow pupils via a voucher which can be spent in any school;
- 2) All schools to be set free from Whitehall control and therefore to be in the independent for-profit and not-for-profit sector by 2015;
- 3) All schools to initially work to a national curriculum with the possibility of later deregulation and flexible opt-outs.

To view the documentary please visit:

http://www.dailymotion.com/relevance/search/gregoryjude/video/x4b7ax_back-to-school_politics

Following the example of the New Model School Company, set up to make independent education available to a wider range of families by keeping fees below £5,000 per annum, the Stockholm Network wants to see traditionally over-priced public schools competitively challenged by an influx of new market entrants:

"It is vital that the supply of independent schools increases in response to the growing demand, in order to stimulate competition. The independent schools sector should be able to cater for the children of low- and middle-income parents, as well as the rich. The reason that many of the leading independent schools have been able to increase their fees by nearly 100% in the last ten years in that they reside in an essentially ossified market, without genuine competition," explains Robert Whelan, Managing Director of the New Model School Company, which runs Maple Walk School in Kensal Town.

Commenting on the debate that will be sparked by the new film, Helen Disney concludes:

"This DVD fires the starting pistol on the education debate for the next general election. I have no doubt that the idea of state money following the pupil will be attractive to a vast majority of voters. I also believe that once set free from

Whitehall, state schools will thrive in a new and universal market of independent provision. The time is now right for politicians to allow competition to drive up school standards and to do so not just for the well-off but for everyone.”

- ENDS -

For quotes and commentary on the above, please call Cara Walker, Head of Media and Communication on 00 44 20 7354 8888 or cara@stockholm-network.org

Notes to Editors:

The Stockholm Network is the leading pan-European think tank. It offers a unique network of 130 + market-oriented think tanks across Europe providing access to the best European policy thinking.

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