

Education is our country's future. And the outlook is scary

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Imagine a future where 30% of the population do not have the basic education necessary for employment. Imagine a lack of high-quality job applicants, soaring unemployment and related increases in social security payments. That's the future we are heading for.

There is no need to panic yet, just to step back and reflect on the brutal facts of reality. Like these: 15% (1995), 20% (2003), 27% (2012). These are the percentages of children who, when they leave the school system, have not attained even the basic education necessary to succeed in life and employment. Isn't this scary? Actually, when I recently learned this, it scared me so much that I quit my business career and ventured into education.

When we analyze why this is happening, just as in all of our organizations we find out that the root cause behind any success or failure is the quality and motivation of people. For 20 years we have worked relentlessly to repel talent from education. OECD countries only pay teachers (primary and

secondary education at public schools) 10-20% less than other university graduates, in order to still be competitive in attracting talent into education. In Slovakia, young people interested in a teaching career will receive 55% less than they would in other professions. I do not see any benefit in this strategy.

We also systemically under-invest in education. We invest only 4% of GDP in education compared to an OECD average of 6%. And education is a competitive race just like business, only it is played by countries. Imagine what future your organization could expect if your competitors had budgets 50% bigger than yours.

Over the last 20 years, we have fallen from being strong performers in this global race (top ten in mathematics in 1995) all the way to the bottom, or as the study puts it "significantly below average" (23-29th place in mathematics and 32nd place in reading literacy out of 34 OECD countries in the latest results).

Probably, this problem has not yet hit your HR departments to its fullest extent. It's no surprise,

because at our doors we only see the end product of the education system – which takes up to 15 years to "manufacture". But the fact that it's not visible does not mean it is not happening right now. Sadly, this invisible decay is coming gradually, and so nobody acts on it, just as the frog does not jump out of the water slowly being heated to boiling point.

So who can change this, who is responsible for change? Many rely on teachers. But this is wishful thinking, teachers are actually not part of the solution, but part of the problem. And politicians? They are judged by voters on four-year results, why would they care about an impact which will materialize in 15 years' time.

Leaders of change can only be those who understand the value of education, and their interests are linked to its quality. Those who have the influence and resources to mobilize change. I believe we business leaders are those best positioned to drive education change in our country. What do you think?

BIOGRAPHY

WORKING EXPERIENCE

- Founder and CEO at Teach for Slovakia (2014 – present)
- Co-founder and Chairman of the Board at Nexteria (2008 – present)
- Member of the Board at Slovak Chamber of Teachers (2015 – present)
- Founding Curator of Global Shapers Bratislava at World Economic Forum (2012 – 2013)
- Co-founder and Partner at Aspipro (2009 – 2013)
- Head of Project management office at Poštová banka (2005 – 2008)
- Consultant at McKinsey & Company (2000 – 2003)

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