

# How to Reform the Content of Education in Slovakia



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One of the biggest economic myths is the notion that a functional, efficient, and ordered social system must be the result of conscious human design. If one found a watch, intuition would say (correctly) that it probably should be attributed to a specific designer, that it was accompanied by a detailed operation manual, and if it breaks, a watchmaker could fix it. However, people have a tendency to automatically apply ideas and knowledge from the domain of mechanical systems to the domain of social problems. They see the work of a conscious designer (a minister and his advisors) behind social order and call for their intervention when social problems appear. That, however, is a false belief.

The origins and behavior of a functional social order resemble a bird more than a watch. Both contain signs of order and purposefulness; watches keep time and fit perfectly on a human wrist whereas birds have an aerodynamic shape, hollow bones, and wings, which allow them to fly. However, there is no conscious designer of the latter. Rather, it is a result of the spontaneous power of evolution. A similar power is behind the social order.

Social order is the result of spontaneous processes comprising activities of millions of people (without them intending to contribute to this order) and does not require the presence of a central coordinating authority. Adam Ferguson observed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century that social structures are often “the result of human action, but not the execution of any human design”<sup>1</sup>. In other words, the order does not need a planner, minister, or engineer. Nevertheless, it works as if it were designed by the best planner with

perfect knowledge and the best intentions. Evidence can be found all around us. Nobody plans the IT industry and no individual is responsible for coordinating millions of people whose decisions shape it on a daily basis. Even though there is no coordinating center and no “minister for IT,” the industry runs like clockwork. There are ever newer and better-quality products and efficiency puts downward pressure on prices. The same is true with food, cars, clothing, housing, and so on.

However, this is not the case with education today. Education systems in societies around the world have a top-down form and most people expect solutions to come from the top. When there are poor-quality schools, outdated curricula, or old teaching techniques, we expect the Minister of Education and his advisors to resolve these issues. They are the ones who will propose reforms to modernize the education system. They will legislatively define what a good school should look like, create a new curriculum, and prescribe new teaching techniques based on the newest findings from pedagogy or cognitive neuroscience. However, there is a vast gap between how idealists think they can design the system and the reality of it.

Our proposed reforms, which can potentially deal with the present problems in education in Slovakia, do not consist in prescribing exact solutions but rather in creating institutional conditions favorable to generating these solutions. We, as a society, do not need the exact answer; rather, we need an algorithm for generating correct answers in an ever-changing environment.

A decentralized model of reforms (also known as the market mechanism) is so far the best-established algorithm for gener-

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<sup>1</sup> Ferguson, A. (1767) *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*.

ating innovations, order, and progress. Its functionality and efficiency, and the lack of a market mechanism in education, are the real reasons why the educational system is relatively behind in performance. In other words, schools changed only slightly whereas the world around them changed dramatically.

### ROOTS OF THE PROBLEMS OF THE SLOVAK EDUCATION SYSTEM

The so-called “regional education” in Slovakia consists of primary, lower secondary, and secondary education. Children start primary school at six years old and go through four grades (grades 1-4). Then children continue (often in the same school) in lower-secondary education for



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the next five years (grades 5-9). Compulsory education ends in the first year of secondary education which lasts from two to four years depending on the difficulty of education.

The present shape of the primary, lower secondary, and secondary education system in Slovakia is essentially defined by two reforms. The first took place in 2003 and consists of two acts which decentralized the financing and governing of schools. The second is a content reform enacted in 2008 (by Minister of Education Jána Mikolaj) that intended to further increase the autonomy of regional education. However, as we shall see, it only entrenched the reformers’ beliefs about the shape that education should take.

Formally, Slovakia has a decentralized education system where local authorities control the financing and governing of schools. In addition, so-called normative financing, where destination of funding is determined by parents’ and pupils’ decisions, was established. In theory, that should be enough to promote competition among schools and pressure on them to improve quality. However, education remains centrally governed and primarily shaped by ideas from politicians, the Slovak Ministry of Education, and education experts from various institutes.

No matter the declared intentions of the education reforms, experts and institutions of the public sector are *de facto* micromanaging the content and form of education in Slovakia. The main documents which define the content of education in Slovakia are the State Education Programs (SEPs). They are binding for all schools and determine the general learning objectives and key competencies which education should build. They also contain compulsory core subjects which are included in all individual fields of education. Furthermore, all learning objectives and education standards are described in detail for each subject. They include specific content (what each pupil should know) and performance (what level of proficiency they should reach)

standards. Eventually, each school bases its teaching heavily on these SEPs. Thus, whoever controls the state curricula controls what is taught in schools.

Let us illustrate with an example of such micromanagement of education from the center. By the end of the first half of the fourth grade of elementary school (10-year-olds), each pupil is expected to name all planets of the Solar System in the right order, define a constellation as a visible grouping of stars with a discernible figure, identify the main constellation of the winter (Orion) and the summer (the Big Dipper), and graphically illustrate the configuration of the Solar System.

Experts from the State Pedagogical Institute (SPI) also regulate how many dictations testing pupils' writing each fourth-grader should take. Specifically in the fourth grade, 10 dictations focus on correct spelling, conjugation, and declension, among others. There is even a detailed marking scheme of the dictations in the SEP (0-1 mistake = A, 2-4 mistakes = B, 5-7 mistakes = C, 8-10 mistakes = D, 11 or more mistakes = F) and a note saying that the same repeated mistake in the same word counts as one mistake. On top of that, the length of these dictations is regulated for each grade as well.

The number of lessons that each school can dedicate to natural sciences or the Slovak language in each year is stipulated in teaching framework plans. It contains binding allocation of time to each subject for each stage of education and recommended time for each grade. For example, each fourth-grader should have two lessons of natural sciences per week. The plan also delineates the number of optional lessons which each school can specify in its school education plan. The number of those lessons was reduced by the latest



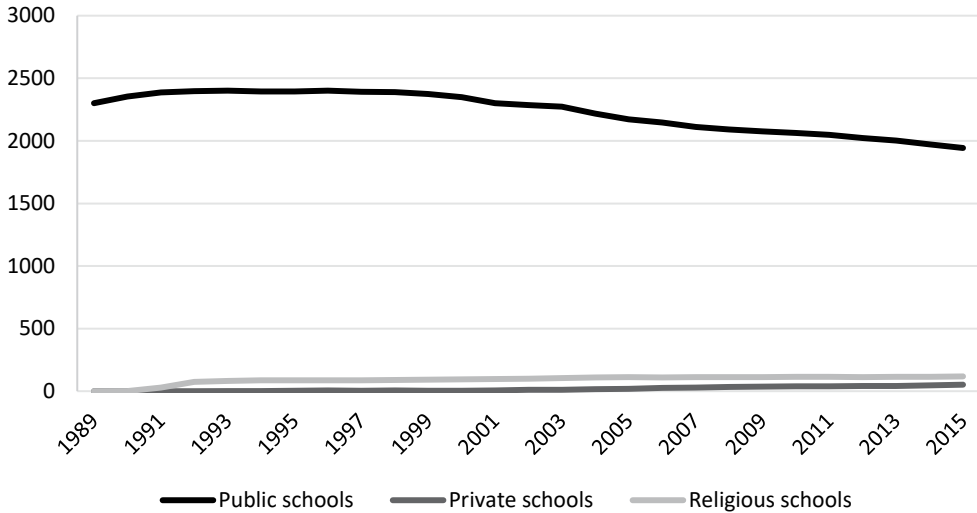
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legislative amendment in 2014. In primary schools, the number fell from 20 lessons to eight lessons out of 96 lessons available. Therefore, schools have direct control over about 8 percent of teaching time<sup>2</sup>. On top of that, the SPI recommends using the available lessons for teaching compulsory core subjects, which many schools do. The purpose of all these examples is to demonstrate how micromanaged the process of teaching is. This micromanaging makes it difficult for teachers to show their value and teach children in the best possible way – according to their local knowledge.

The Ministry of Education and civil servants from the State Pedagogical Institute decide very particular details of what children learn and when they learn it. State

<sup>2</sup> SPI 2016.

Figure 1: The number of elementary schools in Slovakia



Source: Centre of Scientific and Technical Information SR

Education Programs with teaching frameworks have hundreds of pages and each one has to be approved at an advisory meeting with the Minister of Education. Individual documents are even signed by their respective authors. These people have literally determined what hundreds of thousands of children learn every year in school.

Besides delineating how much funding goes to education in general, individual schools in particular, and how much teachers earn, the present system also specifies the maximum and minimum number of children that can be in each class, when each lesson starts and how long it takes, which subjects are taught, what is taught in individual subjects, which textbooks can be used, and what pupils in each year have to know. This micromanagement has recently been strengthened by standardized testing of all pupils in the fifth and ninth grades, which gives more control over education to the center and suppresses all experimentation.

Even though the Act of 2008 defines “experimental verification” as a possibility to test new “goals, methods, and means of education,” only a small fraction of schools make use of it. Fewer than 30 out of more than 3,000 schools participated in it during the 2015-2016 school year. Therefore, official experimentation takes place in less than 1 percent of Slovak schools. The experimentation, too, is quite constrained. According to the law, it is approved and directed by the Ministry of Education separately for each school, while each experiment has to have a pedagogical faculty or (most frequently) the State Pedagogical Institute – the authors of State Education Programs themselves – as an advisor.

Furthermore, there is limited presence of private schools in Slovakia, where the overwhelming majority of education is provided by the public sector (municipalities and self-governing regions). For example, even though the number of private elementary schools is increasing over time (Figure 1), private providers cover only 2.5 percent of

Table 1: Comparison of the centralized and decentralized models of reform

	Centralized Model	Decentralized Model
<b>Preparation of the reform</b>	Lasts for decades, requires long discussions	Lasts for months, requires ideas of one person
<b>Implementation of the reform</b>	Only one reform can be active at a given time	Hundreds of parallel reforms can be active at a given time
<b>Feedback</b>	Evaluation takes years, no simple interpretation of results	Evaluated within months, easy to interpret
<b>People involved</b>	Responsible individuals do not bear decision costs	Responsible individuals bear decision costs

Source: INESS

elementary schools today (52 in total), with the rest provided by the public sector (92 percent, 1,943 schools) and the church (5.5 percent, 118 schools).

Drafting of the schooling laws was based on the assumption that educational content has to be accurately defined by experts in the field and if anything important is left out from the law, pupils will not learn it. The law thus attempts to precisely define what children should know and at what point in time. This assumes that state officials will know everything that is important to know. In addition, it aims to define technical and organizational requirements and to outline teachers' work in detail. On top of that, ministerial micromanagement is even encroaching on school cafeterias where, for example, former Minister Juraj Draxler prepared recommended recipes containing ingredients such as tofu, bulgur, Hokkaido squash, and asparagus. The present leadership of the Ministry of Education has also initiated a fight against salt that has made salt boxes disappear from cafeterias.

Over the years, all the mentioned controls of educational content have borne its fruits in the form of incompatibility between the outside world and the world inside schools. New technologies are developed every day, production and services are modernized, jobs are changing beyond recognition, and we have access to an infinite amount of knowledge on the internet. Yet in schools, blackboards with white chalk were replaced by whiteboards with black markers and some children are given tablets, which they can operate better than their teachers. The question remains how to bridge the gap and how to ensure that education can adapt to changes in the outside world.

## TWO APPROACHES TO REFORMING EDUCATION

The current level of centralization inflexibility of the primary, lower secondary, and secondary education system in Slovakia are clear reasons for its reform. The question is not whether to introduce it, but how to go about it. There are essentially two ways of reforming education.

The first is a centralized, top-down approach that produces a new design of educational content for the whole coun-

try. Its formation is based on a “society-wide discussion” and looks for compromise among diverse opinions. Politicians and civil servants fighting for voters’ support are responsible for the process. The reform is implemented through legislative action and feedback consists mostly of institutional inspections and evaluation of results several years after the implementation.

The second is a decentralized, bottom-up approach that produces new mechanisms and processes that endogenously generate new educational content. Its formation is based on decisions by individual schools that try to satisfy local demand for education. Founders and headmasters of individual schools fighting for customers’ support are responsible for the process. The reform is implemented through internal school policies and feedback consists of pupils’ willingness to attend a given school<sup>3</sup>.

The latter model operates like the model of the private economy. It produces cars, computers, food, telecommunications services, transportation, entertainment, and professional courses.

In the following section, we shall closely describe these two approaches to reforming education and show their systematic tendencies [See Table 1].

### PREPARATION OF THE REFORM

Preparation of the reform in the centralized model lasts for decades. It is extremely difficult to produce mandatory educational content for the whole country and

hundreds of thousands of children. Societal debates on reforms rarely yield a single compact solution and tend to polarize opinions in society. It is hard to create a product suitable for everyone. Moreover, such a comprehensive reform requires more time than the four-year electoral cycle allows. As a result, new governments start from scratch.

Slovakia is a case in point. During the last 26 years, 18 ministers led the Ministry of Education and each of them brought their own vision and reform proposal. Therefore, a new minister was appointed, on average, every 18 months and restarted the process.

As a result, the old education law of 1976 was in force for almost another 20 years after the 1989 revolution. The new education act was passed only in 2008. The world had changed beyond recognition over these 20 years, but the educational system was frozen in the last millennium. A fresh discussion on a reform has begun recently, after almost 10 years, but it remains uncertain what the result will be and when it will be visible. Even though the present education law is regularly amended, these changes reshape the existing system only partially, which is hardly enough for keeping up with the pace of the world around us.

On the other hand, the decentralized approach to reforming education has minimal time and staff requirements for preparing the reform because it takes place on the local level and does not require society-wide discussion. The resultant reform proposal resembles a business plan in educational services.

Furthermore, preparation of such a reform is not subject to electoral cycles and political pressure. Consequently, the situation where the reform process has to start from scratch and the education system remains

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<sup>3</sup> Relative effectiveness of educational systems which embraced some of these principles is shown in A.J. Coulson’s *Comparing Public, Private, and Market Schools: The International Evidence* (2009), <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.175.6495&rep=rep1&type=pdf>



PARISH  
OF ST. JACOB





## EDUCATION IS A COMPLEX SYSTEM AND IT IS HARD TO ASSESS THE IMPACT OF A REFORM AND ITS INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS ON PUPILS' PERFORMANCE

frozen for decades does not occur. We can expect prompt response of reforms to changes in the environment under the decentralized model.

### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REFORM

The main characteristic of the centralized model is the fact that only one uniform reform can be in force at any one time. Alternative reforms take place only in a series, one after another. Therefore, under such circumstances, there cannot be competition among different reforms. Such a competition exists only in the preparation stage in the form of society-wide discussion which suffers from all the problems outlined above. In the end, only one reform can be victorious.

A lack of real competition and an inefficient feedback system create an environment prone to mistakes and shortcomings. These mistakes are even more dangerous in the centralized model because they have the potential to affect all schools and hundreds of thousands of children. They

are also harder to fix because the system is so centralized and time-consuming to change. Thus, any error has potentially enormous consequences. On top of that, these mistakes and shortcomings are often hard to identify because teachers and pupils cannot compare the system with different approaches in the same country.

These deficiencies can be seen in textbook policies, which are highly centralized in Slovakia. The Ministry of Education has a monopoly over calling for tenders for new textbooks, picks the winner, and grants accreditation. The Ministry also provides distribution via a central editing portal. As a result, every September, schools lack numerous textbooks and get only excuses from the Ministry of Education (in 2016, schools received only 84 percent of textbooks they ordered). Even schools which get access to textbooks often cannot choose from different options but are forced to use the one approved textbook<sup>4</sup>.

On the other hand, thousands of parallel reforms can be active at any one time under the decentralized model. Real competition creates opportunities to discover new processes in education, teaching methods, teaching content, school organization, classes, and lessons. It allows people to discover the ideal mix for education.

Due to the fact that many reforms take place simultaneously, there is room for trial and error, the key component of natural adaptation of any system. The "trial" in this context means that there should not be any center dictating the who, what, how, and when of education, but that there should be freedom to attempt to satisfy demand

<sup>4</sup> Čunderlíková, J. (2016) *Aktuality*, "Dodávky učebníc viaznu. Siestakom chyba geografia, druhakom matematika," September 19, 2016, <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/373550/dodavky-ucebnic-viaznu-siestakom-chyba-geografia-druhakom-matematika/>

for education without seeking permission. This stands in contrast to the centralized model where approaches to teaching are given to schools beforehand.

However, the “error” is even more important. Without mistakes and their identification through feedback, the innovative process would be flooded by countless ventures without the opportunity to achieve progress. Indeed, we have to let schools try and innovate freely, but we also

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have to have a mechanism for discarding bad ideas and conceptions. This is the role of feedback, the integral part of which is a properly working spontaneous order.

It is important to emphasize that, when mistakes occur in the decentralized system, they do not have such tragic consequences as they do in the centralized system. Under the decentralized model, errors have only local negative effects and there

is motivation to quickly identify and correct them. That enables schools to innovate and adapt to new conditions.

The decentralized model also solves uniformity problems in the centralized system, mainly in the form of sensitive, ethical, and religious questions. There is no artificially enforced uniformity in the decentralized system, but there is large diversity in these sensitive areas.

### FEEDBACK

Feedback and evaluation in the centralized model are relatively difficult. Education is a complex system and it is hard to assess the impact of a reform and its individual components on pupils’ performance. Central reforms open the space for numerous and often contradictory interpretations of results. What is more, these results can often be reviewed only several years after the implementation of the reform, which complicates the situation even further.

It is in fact possible to conduct a continuous evaluation, but it generally focuses only on adherence to the predefined processes. A case in point is the present-day work of the State School Inspection in Slovakia, which is not interested in real results of different methods but in their accordance with the State Education Program and education law.

Feedback and evaluation are much simpler under the decentralized model. Simultaneous operation of multiple reforms facilitates their comparison at a single point in time. We do not have to wait several years for results, and the room for interpretation is narrowed down by the direct comparison of various approaches in different schools.

Moreover, evaluation of these results is in the hands of individuals best suited to do it – customers. Hundreds of thousands of

parents and children judge thousands of different schools based on their services. Providers offering high-quality services attract more customers and other schools then emulate them. In contrast, schools which fail to meet the expectations of parents and children have losses and their approach to education disappears.

Of course, this type of feedback is not perfect (parents make mistakes and it takes time for low-quality schools to disappear). Nevertheless, it is a mechanism responsible for the modernization and increasing quality of basically all goods and services that we use every day. Parents make mistakes (experts on education make mistakes too), but under the decentralized model, there are self-correcting mechanisms that help parents learn from their mistakes and rectify them.

### PEOPLE INVOLVED

Under the centralized model, the individual or team responsible for the reform bear limited costs of their decisions in the political market. A politician who proposes a bad education reform does not have to be afraid that pupils will stop attending their school in one or two years and they will go bankrupt. As already mentioned, evaluation of the reform takes even longer and there will be different interpretations of the outcomes. Regardless, a politician's electoral cycle lasts four years and their re-election is influenced by other factors.

It is a mistake to assume that the only motivation of the Minister of Education and their employees is to improve the education system. Politicians and bureaucrats often have their own incentives which do not necessarily coincide with the public interest. Corruption, interest groups, and clientelism are a part of the public sector, including education<sup>5</sup>.



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Furthermore, voters often do not sufficiently pressure politicians into devoting more time to improving the education system. However, this apathy of voters and politicians toward education is not a failure, but a property of the system responsible for its provision. Voters are rationally interested only in topics that affect them personally. The same

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obrátky: Takto sa šafári v školstve," January 29, 2016, <http://www.pluska.sk/spravy/z-domova/skandal-pre-drazenymi-pomockami-nabera-obratky-takto-safari-skolstve.html>;  
<https://www.postoj.sk/19440/preco-je-skolstvo-pre-sns-rezortom-za-miliony>

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<sup>5</sup> Pluska, "Škandál s predraženými pomôckami nabera



person in the role of a customer can spend hours picking a toaster for making breakfast but will remain ignorant about everything involving the Ministry of Education and the education system in their country.

In doing so, the person behaves rationally. When picking a car, the choice is decisive and binding. However, no matter how much effort they put into analyzing different education methods and the behavior of politicians, in the end it will have no impact on policy decisions in the centralized system and it will bring them no tangible benefits. One voter is one grain of sand in the desert of voters.

The situation is completely reversed in the case of decentralized reform. However, the reason for this difference does not lie in the types of people making the decisions. Reformers on the decentralized level do not have better HR managers, nor are they more determined and ambitious than people in government ministries. The difference is in the incentive structure facing the agents of the decentralized reform.

Under the decentralized model, there is a direct responsibility of all people involved. Reformers on the decentralized level experience all the benefits and costs of their decisions. They realize that if parents do not see the results of their work, they will change schools and their resources will leave with them. In contrast to centralistic reformers, they cannot afford to idle. Thus, pursuing their self-interest leads them to provide high-quality services for the consumers. That is the only way they can prosper. They will also face more severe punishment if they fail or cheat. Consumers remember people from their community or city. Politicians, however, are more quickly forgotten.

The same is true for parents and students who choose schools that they pay for (or give their education voucher) and, therefore, demand results and are interested in what the school is doing. Their decisions have a direct impact on their well-being, which cannot be said if their preferences are expressed through voting. Therefore, in the decentralized system, decisions are taken from the hands of apathetic voters and given to choosy customers.

### **INDIVISIBILITY OF THE DECENTRALIZED REFORM**

It is important to emphasize that the characteristics of the decentralized model work only if all its components are present together:

- If there are no legislative or bureaucratic barriers to innovation in education (such as a mandatory, national curriculum) and individual schools have sufficient autonomy.
- If there is real competition between schools and no preferential treatment (i.e., various subsidies).
- If parents and children have a true right to choose the school they want.
- If it is the customers' choice, not the decision of a state school inspection, that determines which schools prosper.

If we omit any part of the decentralized reform, we thwart the correct operation of its algorithm that generates solutions in a changing environment. For example, if a civil servant, not individual schools on the local level, is responsible for educational content and prescribes mandatory performance standards, neither competition among schools nor feedback from parents will help the education system adequately adapt.



## CHANGES IN EDUCATION IN SLOVAKIA

Having highlighted a few advantages of the decentralized approach over the centralized approach, let us identify and propose changes which can help the education system in Slovakia move from the centralized, rigid model toward the decentralized, adaptable model.



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First, it is important to abandon the idea that educational content can be defined in laws or State Education Programs. This is because no one in the world knows exactly what the correct educational content looks like in the same way that no one knows what the right car,

cell phones, computer, or coffee machine looks like. These questions have to be answered through the process of decentralized discovery where customers' willingness to attend schools puts different methods to the test and identifies the best ones.

However, we cannot expect that it will be possible to abolish all regulation contained in the education laws, State Education Programs, framework teaching plans, and standards after several decades of this centralized approach. The change toward the decentralized model should be more evolutionary than revolutionary. Therefore, all barriers to decentralized reforms in the laws have to be abolished first of all.

This means that all the legislative regulations defining the present approach should not be removed from one day to the next, but should be made voluntary. Today's education system in Slovakia has great inertia and not every school and every teacher will be willing or able to innovate and improving upon their teaching methods. However, due to the fact that the decentralized reform will by definition not bring any new methods or content to these schools and teachers, they will continue to follow the traditional methods.

On the other hand, the decentralized model has to offer institutional support to those who are willing to innovate and improve their teaching methods. These teachers will not be told what to teach or how, but they will be allowed to teach what they consider best. There might be few schools and teachers willing to take this chance at first. However, the decentralized model does not offer immediate answers and results, but processes and discovery that need time.



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If the state wants to create a framework for what schools should teach on the grounds that it spends public resources on them, it should not take place with an *ex ante* dictation of curricula, but by *ex post* testing of minimal standards. Therefore, there will be minimal standards for what children should be able to

do (hence not what information should the student know), defined for a given period of time (e.g., one or two years). These minimal standards will contain rough guidelines of what schools are expected to teach.

However, changes should take place on the side of customers, which will increase parents' and children's motivation to carefully choose their school and offer good feedback. The best way to achieve that would be to introduce education vouchers which are issued for every student to be given to their school of choice. As a result, parents and children will become more aware of the importance and weight of their choice.

## CONCLUSIONS

Slovakia is not the only country which is still looking for the optimal type of education reform. Education systems suffer from various problems in all countries of the world. Problems in these countries vary in size, but in principle, they cannot optimally react to changes in the world around us. There are large differences in the performance of education systems in different countries, but these are often influenced by factors outside of the education system such as social values attributed to education and the love of reading (for example, an average person in Finland visits a library 10 times per year and borrows 18 books, magazines, etc.; education is a frequent topic of family discussions)<sup>6</sup>.

The difference between the centralized and decentralized approach to education reform should be generally applicable re-

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<sup>6</sup> Finns are avid readers and library users. Read more: <http://okm.fi/OPM/Verkkouutiset/2012/04/kirjastotilas-tot.html?lang=en>; To find out more on the importance of education in Finland see: <http://www.cps.org.uk/files/reports/original/150410115444-RealFinnishLessonsFULLDRAFTCOVER.pdf>

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WHAT THE SLOVAK EDUCATION SYSTEM NEEDS TODAY IS CUSTOMERS FILTERING OUT TEACHING METHODS, TEACHERS, AND SCHOOLS THAT ARE NOT INTERESTED IN PROVIDING HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION, BUT ONLY IN TEACHING WHAT THEY ARE TOLD EVERY YEAR

ardless of cultural and historical background of individual countries. The decentralized approach should work across different cultures in the way that the market mechanism provides groceries efficiently in the United States, the Czech Republic, and Japan. A recent meta-analysis of 65 studies comparing different education systems across all continents tries to

isolate their effect and finds that freer and more decentralized systems produce better results<sup>7</sup>.

This result is no coincidence. The centralized approach has a tendency to be delayed, rigid, lacking in innovation, employ unmotivated people, and lack sufficient feedback. In contrast, the decentralized approach offers flexibility, innovation, motivated people, and direct feedback. However, moving from the centralized to the decentralized model will not improve quality and efficiency of education on its own. It will only create conditions favorable to such improvements.

What the Slovak education system needs today is customers filtering out teaching methods, teachers, and schools that are not interested in providing high-quality education, but only in teaching what they are told every year. Many people will have to leave the education system and many old structures will have to be broken. This process of reconstruction cannot be supplemented by top-down reform; it has to be done organically. However, if an institutional environment in the form of the decentralized approach to reforms is not created, this process will never start. ●

<sup>7</sup> Coulson, A.J. (2009) "Comparing Public, Private, and Market Schools: The International Evidence", [in:] *Journal of School Choice*, 3, pp. 31–54.



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