



Lessons from Estonia's Education Success Story

Exploring Equity and High Performance through PISA

Peeter Mehisto and Maie Kitsing

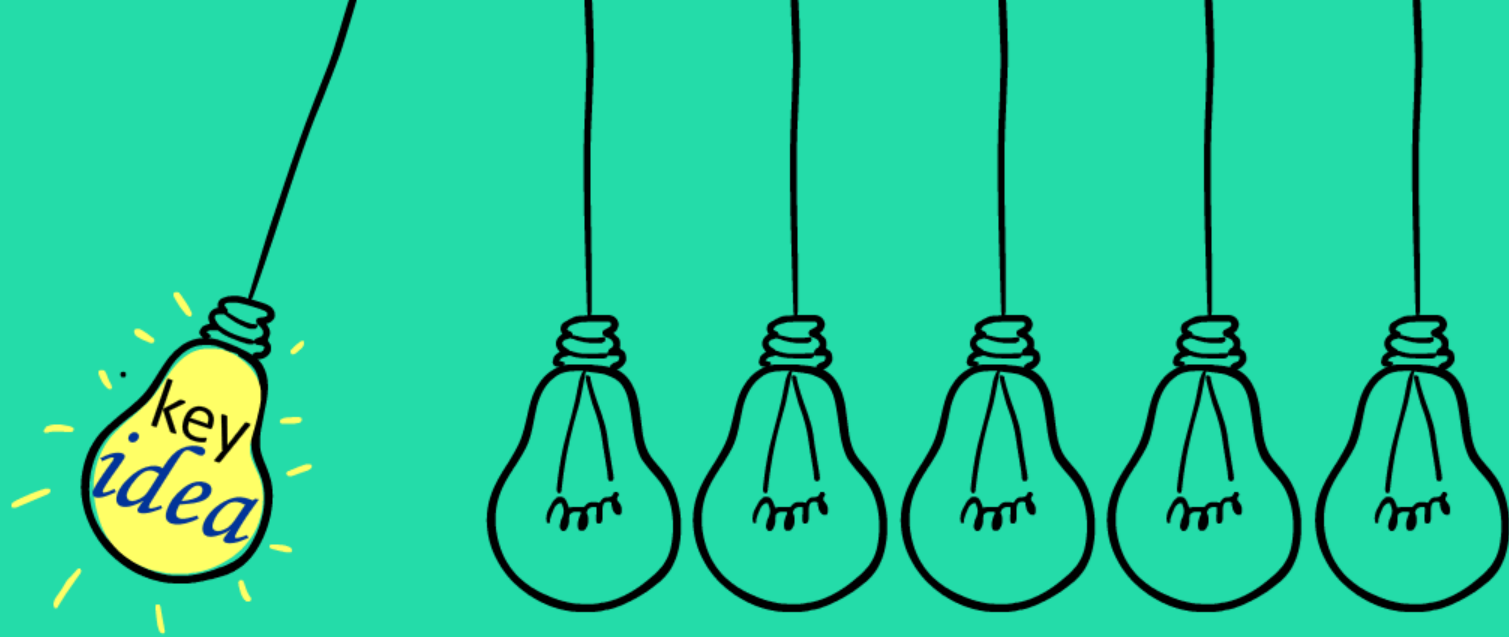


ROUTLEDGE



Peeter Mehisto
University College London
Institute of Education

Maie Kitsing
Estonian Ministry of
Education and Research



equity



EQUALITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION



**The topics
of our times!**

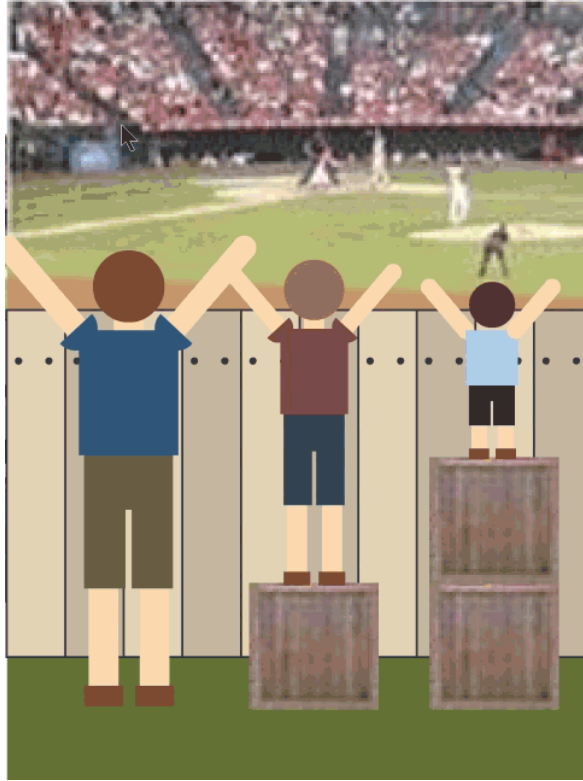


Andreas Schleicher

EQUALITY



EQUITY



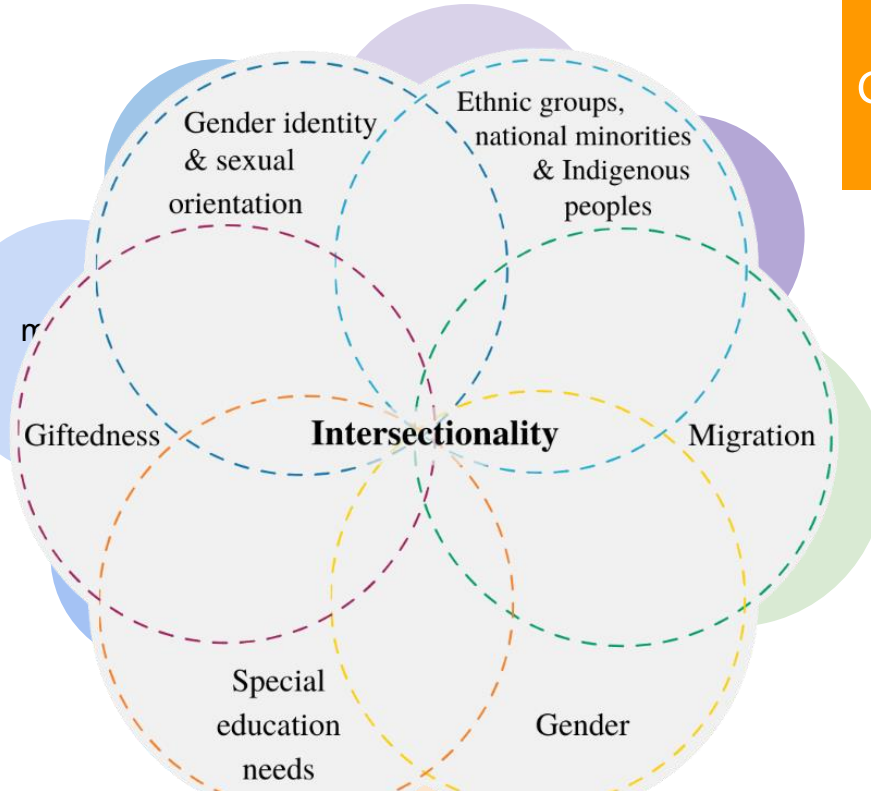
(@cra1g, 2016 adapted by Mehisto and Kärema, 2020)

INCLUSION

inclusion

Socio-economic status

Geographic location



Adversity brought by
disasters

(OECD, 2021)

Equity:

- is a social-justice imperative
- **is a way to use resources more efficiently**
- fuels economic growth
- promotes social cohesion (Schleicher 2018).

High-equity education systems such as Estonia have shown themselves to be the **most flexible in addressing student needs** during the Covid pandemic (Schleicher, 2020).

- **high levels of equity tend to correlate with the delivery of high-quality education**

(Adamson, Astrand & Darling-Hammond, 2016: Sahlberg, 2018).

**What is largely missing from
Estonian education discourse
in reference to the first 9 years
of school?**

**Choosing people, including students,
based on their demonstrated abilities
and merit.**

Meritocracy

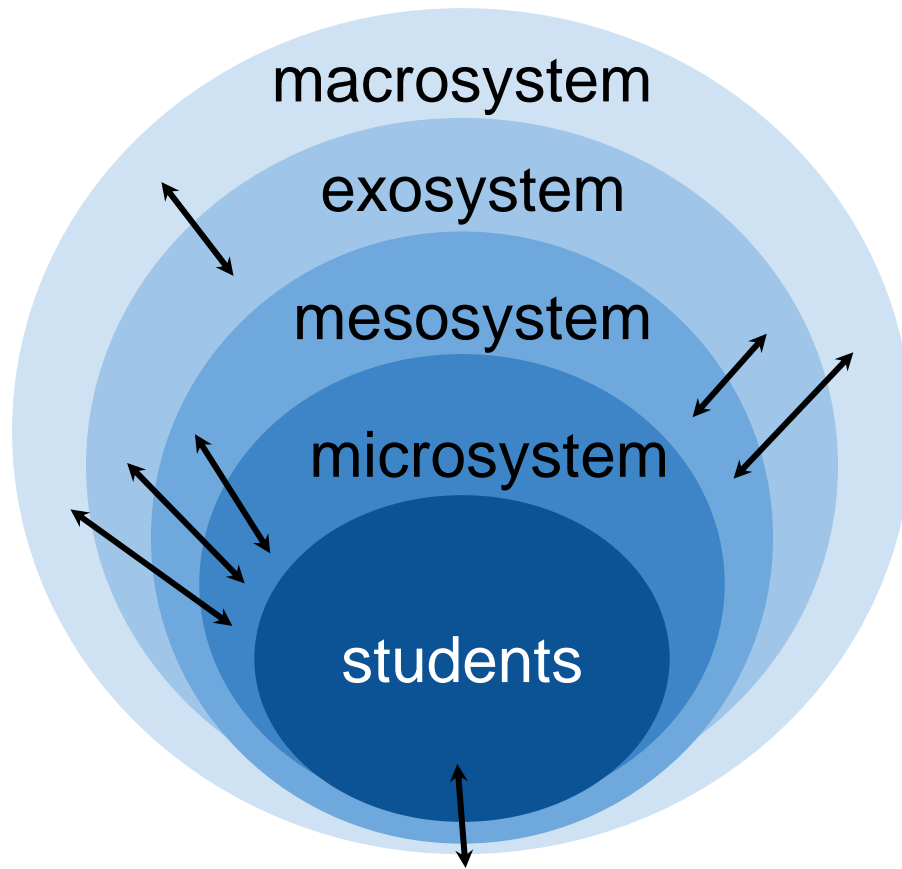
Choosing people, including students,
based on their demonstrated abilities
and merit.

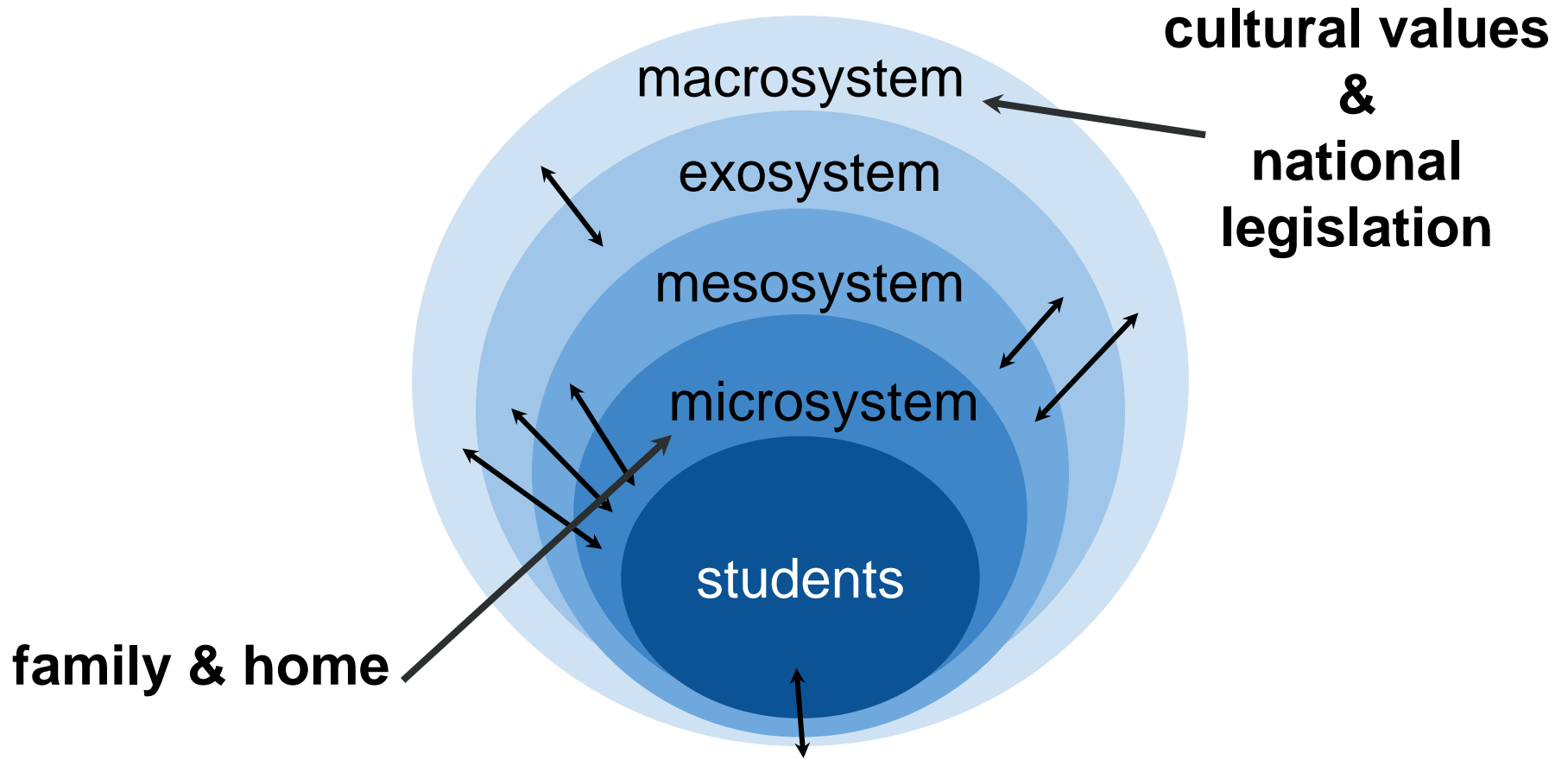
Meritocracy, as a remedy for inequality, is largely
absent from Estonian policy & education discourse.

Choosing people, including students,
based on their demonstrated abilities
and merit.

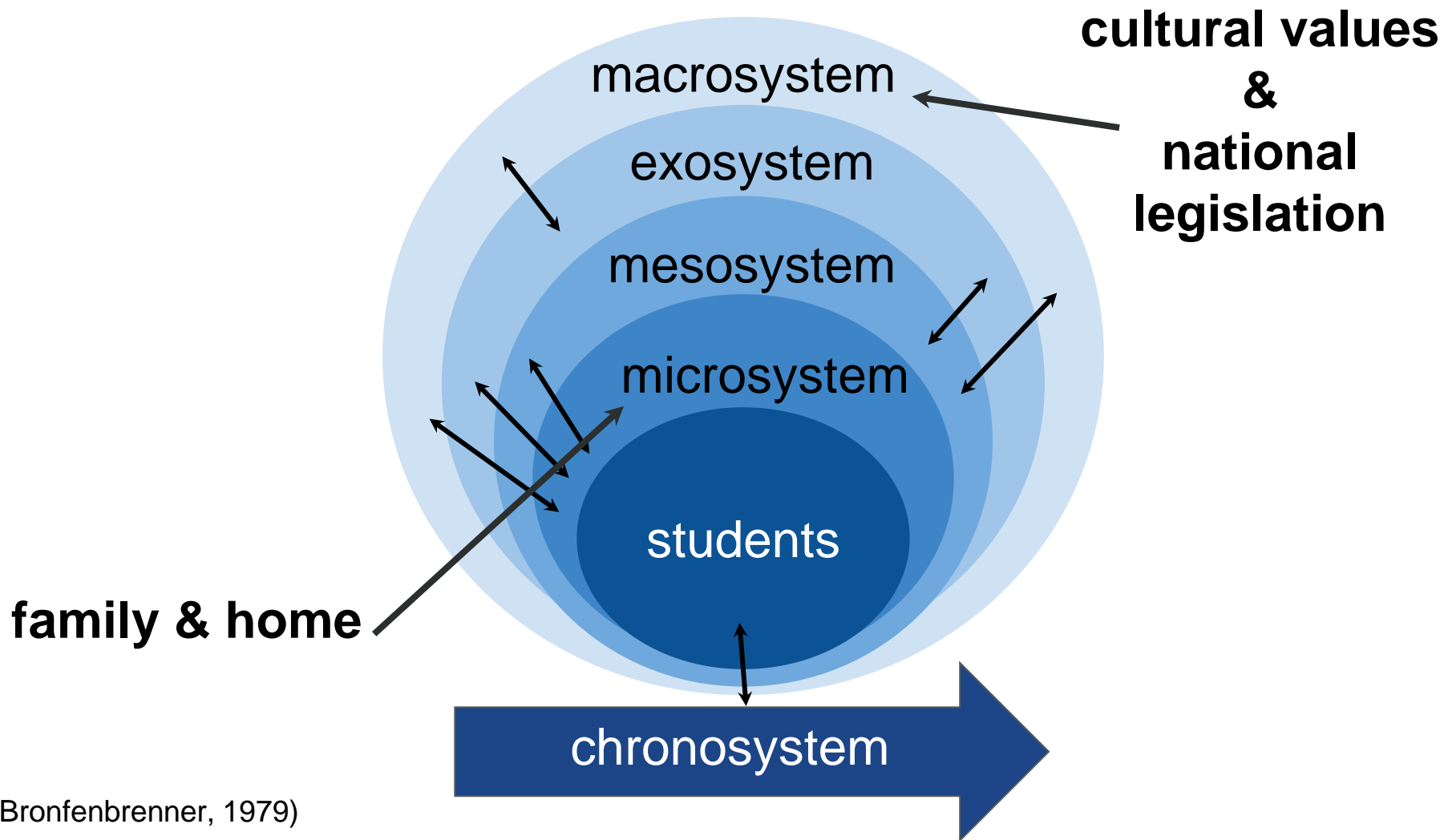
Meritocracy, as a remedy for inequality, is largely
absent from Estonian policy & education discourse.

Sandel (2020) refers to the meritocratic ideal
as “**a justification of inequality.**”

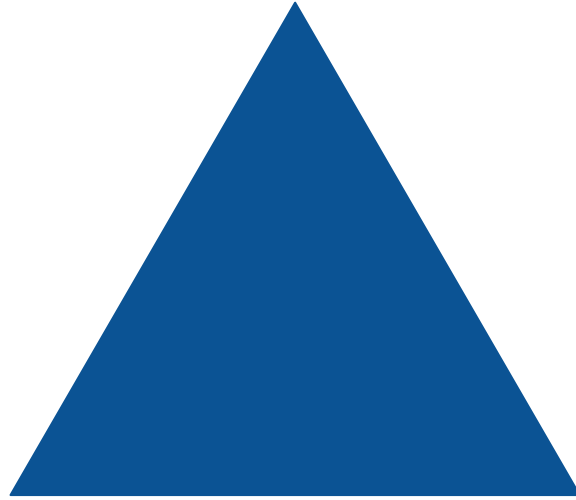




(Bronfenbrenner, 1979)



COUNTERWEIGHTS



**DRIVING
PRINCIPLES**

**CONCRETE
MEASURES**

**DRIVING
PRINCIPLES**

**CONCRETE
MEASURES**

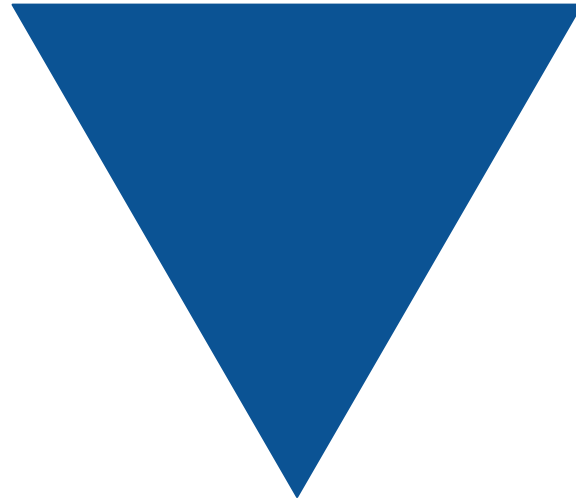


COUNTERWEIGHTS



**DRIVING
PRINCIPLES**

**CONCRETE
MEASURES**



COUNTERWEIGHTS



Driving Principles

have generative-productive force

- equity & inclusion
- stakeholder engagement & professionalisation
- evidence-based decision-making
- student, teacher and school autonomy & accountability
- being improvement & quality-oriented
- alignment
- high status of education & teachers
- transparency in plans

**DRIVING
PRINCIPLES**

**CONCRETE
MEASURES**



COUNTERWEIGHTS



**DRIVING
PRINCIPLES**

**CONCRETE
MEASURES**



COUNTERWEIGHTS



Concrete measures

(mechanisms)

Equity & inclusion

- free school lunches, transport, learning materials
- 18 months of job-protected parental leave
- common core curriculum for all
- Pathfinder centres (easy-access to speech therapists, psychologist, social pedagogues - cost-free for user)
- national results-based strategic & work plans ...
- ...

COUNTERWEIGHTS

keeping the system in balance, operating effectively

DECENTRALISATION

autonomy
accountability
professionalisation
self-evaluation
school-level curriculum

NATIONAL LEVERS

measures &
requirements
user-friendly data
risk-based evaluation
national curriculum





HARIDUS- JA
TEADUSMINISTEERIUM

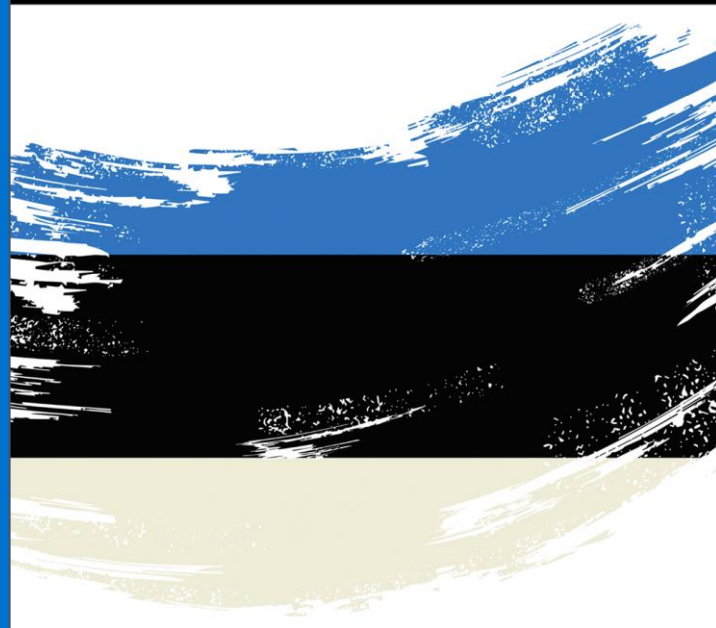
Maie Kitsing

ROUTLEDGE

Lessons from Estonia's Education Success Story

Exploring Equity and High Performance through PISA

Peeter Mehisto and Maie Kitsing



HIGH QUALITY AT THE CORE OF POLICY



<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/825252b4-3ec6-11e8-b5fe-01aa75ed71a1>

HIGH QUALITY AT THE CORE OF POLICY

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/825252b4-3ec6-11e8-b5fe-01aa75ed71a1>

Equality and equity

- High standards
- Support for all students
- Schools curriculum (since 1996)
- Equitable learning environment incl. textbooks
- Equal access to extra-curricular activities/hobby education

Curriculum

- Created through stakeholder cooperation (sharing power)
- National Framework: 1996, 2001, 2011, 2014, 2023

QUALITY AT THE CORE OF POLICY

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/825252b4-3ec6-11e8-b5fe-01aa75ed71a1>

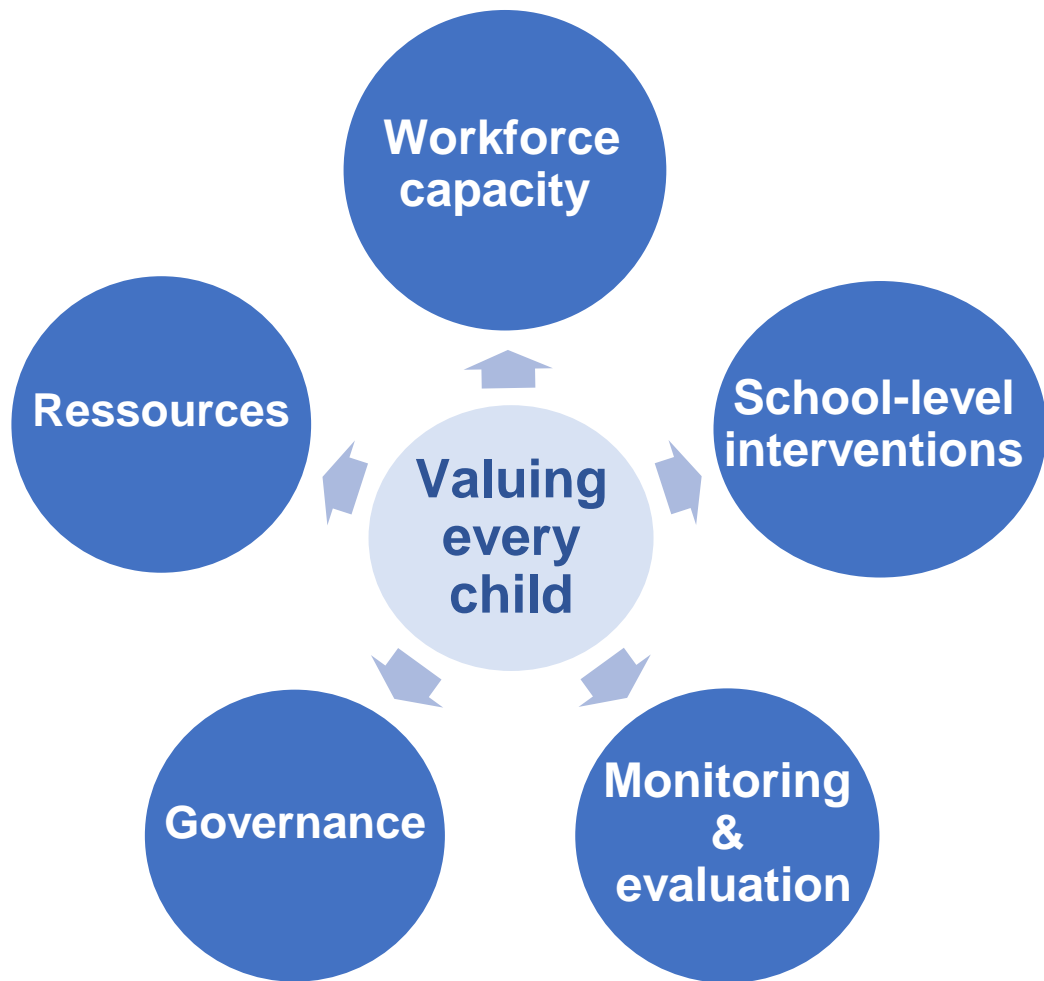
Autonomy & accountability

- Principles of quality management
- Self-evaluation
- Assessment/evaluation/feedback tools
- Databases & monitoring
- Transparency
- Risk-based inspections
- Supporting schools in difficulty
- Criteria for measuring quality (under development)

Monitoring & evaluation

- Only risk-based inspections
- Emphasis on professional responsibility

EQUALITY and EQUITY



<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/825252b4-3ec6-11e8-b5fe-01aa75ed71a1>

EQUALITY and EQUITY

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/825252b4-3ec6-11e8-b5fe-01aa75ed71a1>

- Educational goals and arrangements for equity and inclusion exist in strategic plans and legal acts.
- High expectations for every students and key competences defined (national/school curriculum).
- FW for needs-based financing and supporting - SEN-students, students from immigrant backgrounds, by the ESCS, by school location.
- FW to treat all students equally (school lunches, medicine, transport, extra-curricular activities).
- Program for challenging schools



Governance

EQUALITY and EQUITY

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/825252b4-3ec6-11e8-b5fe-01aa75ed71a1>

- Professional standards incl. for SEN
- Free initial training and in-service training in terms of SEN students.
- Teachers MA level.
- Speech-therapists, special education pedagogues, psychologists have MAs.
- Social pedagogues at least BAs.
- Entry-level requirements for school staff.
- Easy-access to speech-therapists, social pedagogues, special education pedagogues, etc. (cost-free for user).



**Workforce
&
its capacity**

References

Adamson, F., B. Astrand and L. Darling-Hammond (eds.) (2016). *Global education reform : how privatization and public investment influence education outcomes*, New York: Routledge.

Estonian Government. (2014). *National curriculum for basic schools*.

<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/524092014014/consolide>

Estonian Parliament. (2010). *Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act*.

<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/530102013042/consolide/current>

European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture. (2018). *Monitoring the quality of early childhood education and care: complementing the 2014 ECEC quality framework proposal with indicators: recommendations from ECEC experts*.

Publications Office <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/99057>

European Union. (2019). *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning*.

http://www.fi.uu.nl/publicaties/literatuur/2018_eu_key_competencies_III.en.pdf

Estonia: *Education Strategy 2021-2035*. <https://digital-skills-jobs.europa.eu/en/actions/national-initiatives/national-strategies/estonia-education-strategy-2021-2035>

Mehisto, P. & Kitsing, M. (2022). *Lessons from Estonia's Education Success Story. Exploring Equity and High Performance through PISA*. New York: Routledge.

References continued

OECD. (2023). *Equity and Inclusion in Education: Finding Strength through Diversity*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e9072e21-en>

Sandel, Michael J. (2020). *The Tyranny of Merit: What's Become of the Common Good?* London: Alan Lane.

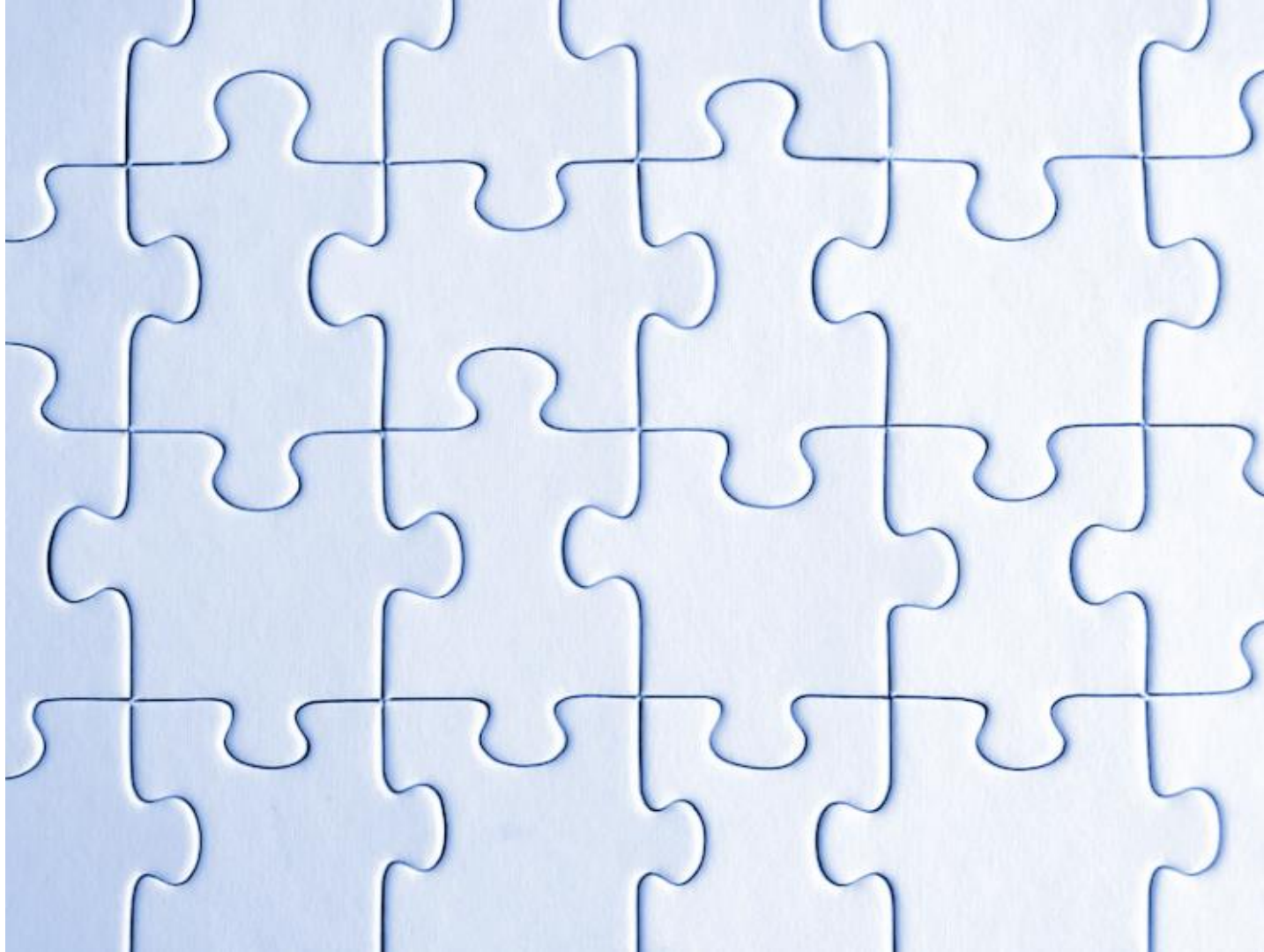
Schleicher, Andreas. (2018). *World Class: How to Build a 21st-Century School System, Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education*. Paris: OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264300002-en>.

Schleicher, Andreas. (2020). *The Impact of COVID-19 on Education: Insights from Education at a Glance 2020*. Paris: OECD Publishing. <https://www.oecd.org/education/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-education-insights-education-at-a-glance-2020.pdf>

Sahlberg, P. (2017). *FinnishED Leadership: Four big, inexpensive ideas to transform education*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.

...

**Estonians
believe
education
is the key
to a better
future for
all.**



Thank you for your attention!

maie.kitsing@hm.ee
peeter@mehisto.eu