



UNIVERSITY OF TARTU

Paving the way to a values-based education. Estonian experience

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The Centre for Ethics of the University of Tartu was established in June 2001 as an interdisciplinary unit within the Faculty of Philosophy. Starting from January 1st 2009, the Centre for Ethics is a consortium.

In the sphere of values development our primary aims are:

- To encourage the discussion and formation of a shared understanding about the values the examination and application of which could enable us to address the burning issues in the Estonian
- To close the gap between the rhetorical declarations about values and the actual choices in the sphere of values so that our wishes concerning the development of society could become true.
- To enable the new generation to address the societal issues by helping young people to recognise and overcome the problematic attitudes in the sphere of values.
- To support the values education of children and adolescents in preschools and schools, so that each of them could develop in the educational environment that supports integral personal development, formation of a clear understanding of one's values and of the ability to cooperate successfully in society
- To encourage the society as a whole to support preschools and schools so that all parties in the society would recognise and help to realise the possibilities for addressing societal issues that education can offer.

Context

“We have succeeded in everything apart from recreating the Estonian values system. Next to human losses, moral losses hurt the most. These linger on in our post-soviet manners and undermine our work ethics, values, and honesty.”

Lennart Meri, President of Estonia (1992–2001)

- A shift from survival values over self-expression values? (WVS)
- Values-based curricula (2011, 2023), New Approach to Learning (The Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020)
- Low scores in student well-being/happiness (OECD, PISA), focus on academic achievement (goodness = school performance?)
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- National programme “Values Development in Estonian Society 2009–2013”, 2015–2020 and 2021–2026
Estonian Ministry of Education and Research and University of Tartu, Centre for Ethics

- **Curriculum for basic education** (2011, 2023)

(2) Basic school shall shape the **system of values that serve as the basis for the successful interaction of happiness in personal life and society.**

(3) The values deemed important in the national curriculum derive from the ethical principles specified in the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the basic documents of the European Union. **General human values** (honesty, compassion, respect for life, justice, human dignity, respect for self and others) are enshrined as core values, as are **social values** (liberty, democracy, respect for mother tongue and culture, patriotism, cultural diversity, tolerance, environmental sustainability, rule of law, solidarity, responsibility and gender equality).

- **Values Competence as one of the Core Competences in Curricula** (2011, 2023)

Value competence – ability to evaluate human relations and activities from the standpoint of generally accepted moral norms; to sense and value one's ties with other people, nature, the cultural heritage of one's own country and nation and those of others, and events in contemporary culture; to value art and to shape the sense of aesthetics;

- **National educational vision & strategy „Smart and active Estonia 2035“** (2019)

For a socially coherent and functioning society shared understanding values, an understanding of fulfilling life by its individuals and a collective identity based on shared values is necessary. /.../ Value-based functioning characterizes a complete person. /.../ The most effective and systematic way to deal with value education and value development is to do it through the education system, supporting the upbringing of a new generation and thereby introducing changes in the entire society.

- **OECD „Embedding Values and Attitudes in Curriculum“** (2021). **Country notes about Estonia:**

explicit values and values-based goals in educational policy, curriculum (all levels, subject fields), high school autonomy in adaptation (ex school and preschool curriculum, hidden curriculum)

Example 1. Good School Model

Four areas of school life:

- **CURRICULUM AND LEARNING**
- **SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT**
- **COOPERATION AND RELATIONSHIPS**
- **LEADERSHIP**

EXAMPLE: LEADERSHIP

- Everyday activities at the school are based on consciously set goals and shared vision
- Values are developed systematically by taking into account that all the activities of a school should originate from agreed-upon values; values are daily expressed by the actions of teachers and the management
- The management is open, inspiring and fair and the head of school is a good role model for the entire school
- The head of school motivates the school staff and supports their development
- The management supports implementation of principles that foster learning
- The school staff receives meaningful feedback to their work
- The staff is informed of what is happening in the school
- The school staff is professional and development-oriented, engages in self-reflection and actively participates in trainings and learning communities in and outside of school
- The school is actively looking for additional resources to better the school environment
- Different parties are involved in planning the efficient use of resources (people, time, money etc.)

Moving towards evidence based values analysis

The problem

- Divide between declared (ex school values) and lived (hidden curricula, relationships) values
- Need for evidence-based values development in school life, values-based choices
- Need for quality feedback and -forward

Motivation

- Developing uniqueness („What makes our school good?“)
- Developing skills for values-based school analysis
- Recognition

----> **Values-based self-analysis for schools and preschools (VBSA)** in Good School and Good Kindergarten recognition programmes

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ARE DOING TOO MANY THINGS AT THE SAME TIME



ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE-BASED VALUES DEVELOPMENT

MOVING FROM DECLARATIONS TO PRACTICE, IMPLEMENTING CHANGES

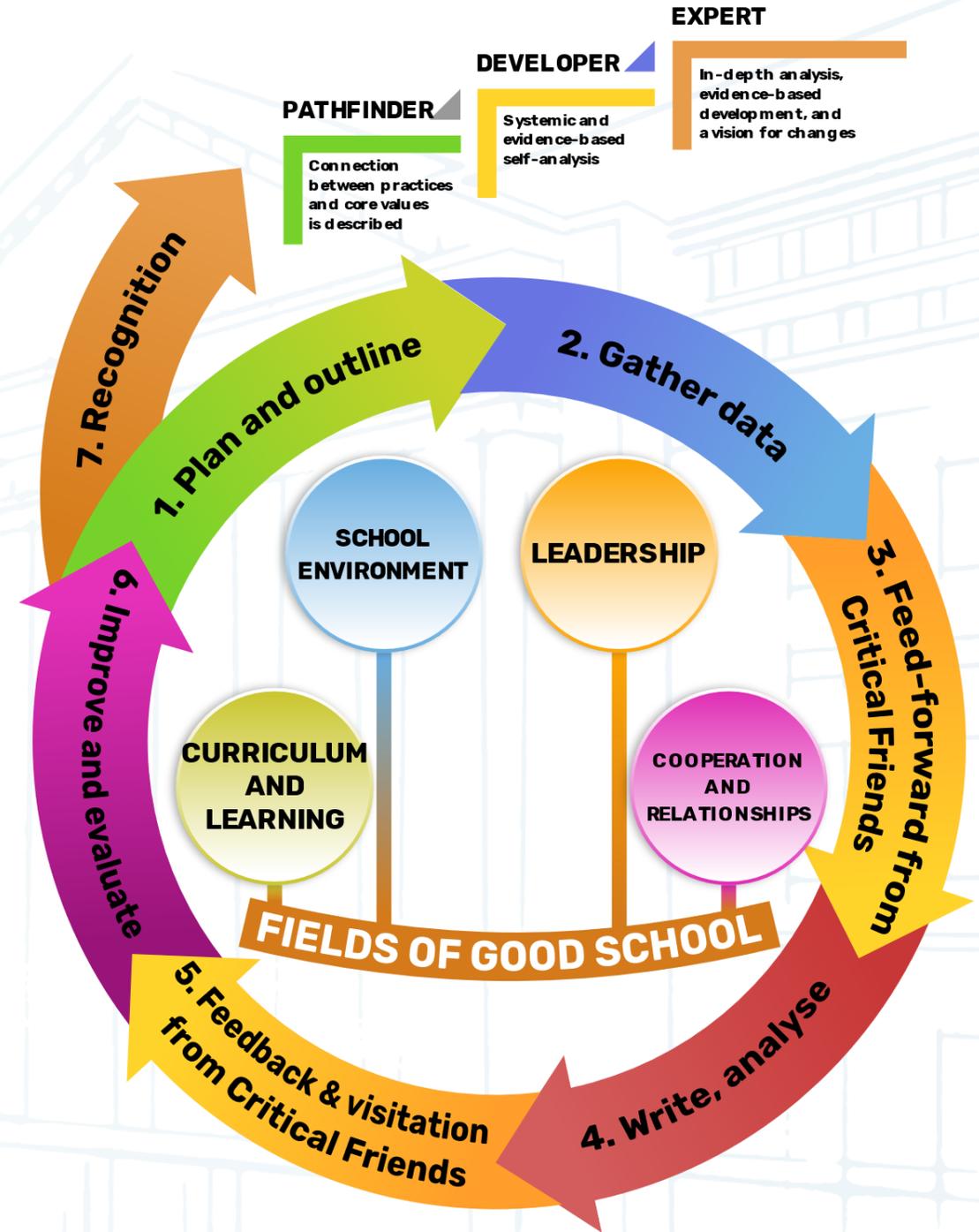
Figure 1: The learning journey of educational institutions and the Centre for Ethics in 2009–2022. (Nele Punnar, Centre for Ethics)

Values-based self-analysis for schools and preschools

VBSA model helps schools and preschools

- realize the values of their organization
- plan action for values-based school improvement
- Based on the **Good School and Good Preschool Model** (Centre for Ethics, partners)
- **Yearly self-evaluation and recognition programmes** „Good School as Values-based School” and “Good Preschool as Values-based Preschool”
- **Structured support in process** (Critical Friends, written feedback, school visits, network roundtables, online courses)
- **Quality badges:** "Good Preschool Pathfinder", "Good Preschool Developer" and "Good Preschool Expert", "Good School Pathfinder", "Good School Developer" and "Good School Expert"

Figure 2: Good School recognition programme (Nele Punnar, Centre for Ethics)







“Things started to become clearer in the third year when we began to think about what to do with the weaknesses in our school life and how to make good things even better. The fourth year of writing was already fun. We received the School of Value title and thought, “Now that we have the title, what should we do next? And we assembled the ideas for the next self-analysis in just one week! In that period, the saying “Sometimes information may be hard to face” was introduced in our institution. Then we got the idea to structure our work the opposite way.

Instead of writing our success story, we wrote down a problem we wanted to solve. What brought this problem to light, how do we notice it?”

Erli Aasamets, head of Kilingi-Nõmme school

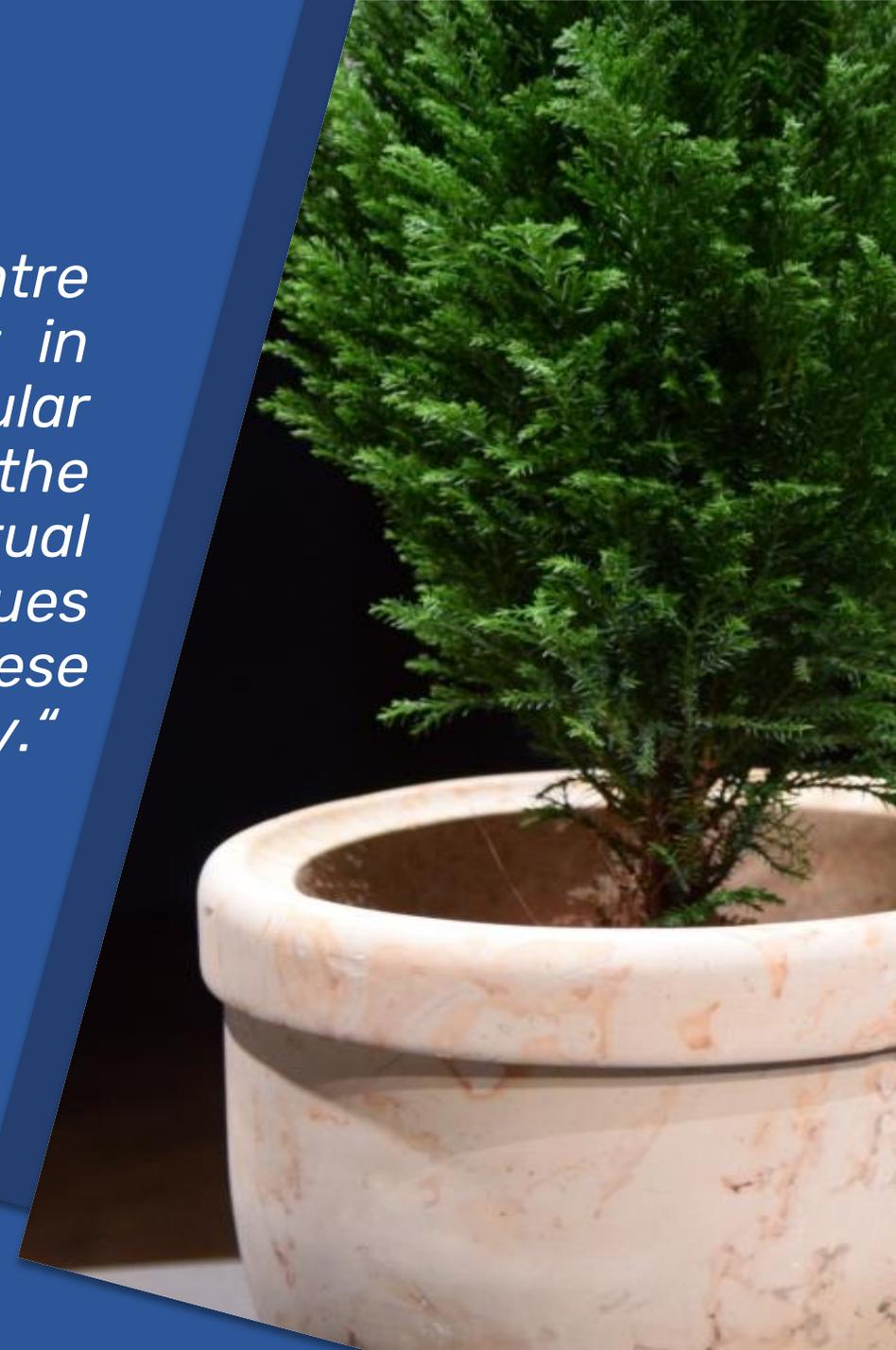
Developments in the Good School and Good Preschool recognition programme in 2009-2022



Figure 3: Nele Punnar, Centre for Ethics

„More than a decade of experiences of the Centre for Ethics confirms that values development in educational institutions is a constant circular process of values clarification: agreeing on the most important values, noticing lived i.e. actual values, forming practices supporting certain values based on self-analysis, critical analyses of these practices, and rewording the values, if necessary.“

Prof. Halliki Harro-Loit, 2020



2009-2022

- 105 schools and 140 preschools with a Good School or Good Kindergarten quality badge
- 19 Good School as Values-based School and 21 Good Preschool as Values-based Preschool title holders

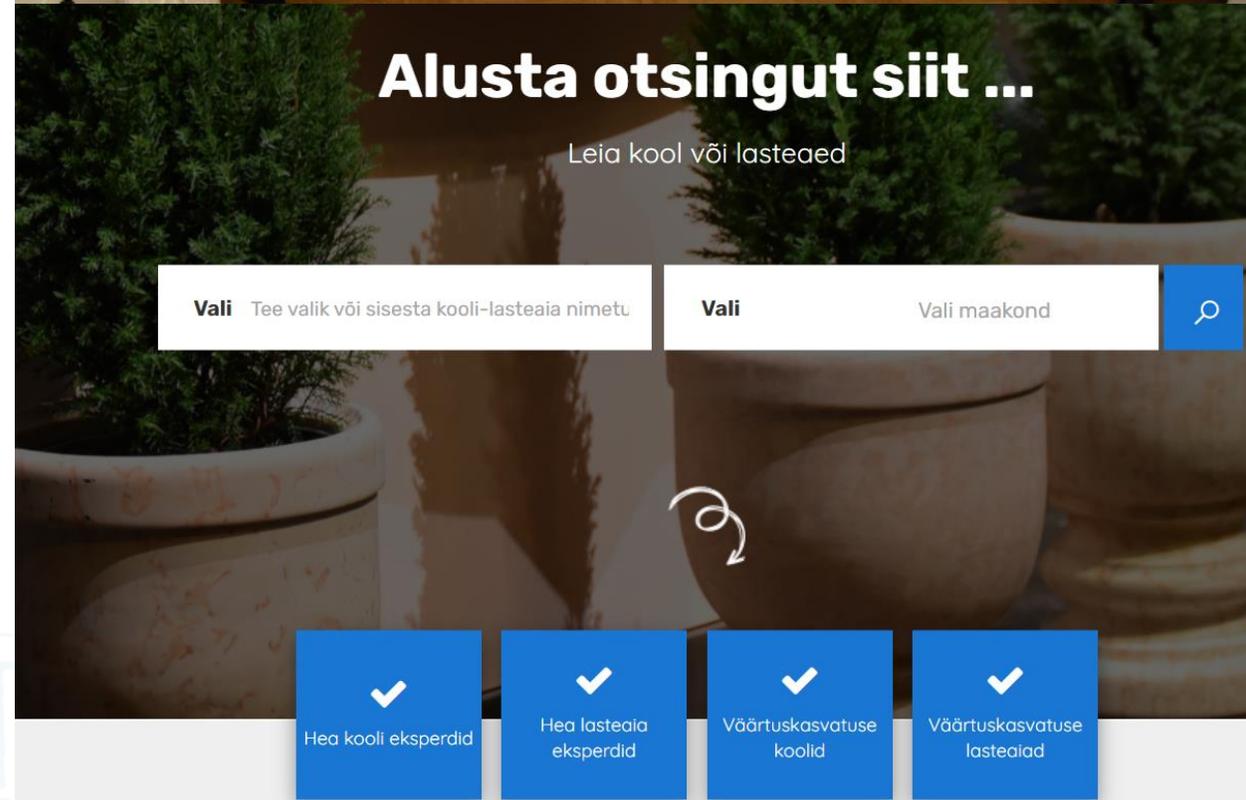
----> Good School and Good Preschool Network

Developments:

- Good School and Preschool best practise database
- Role-based approach (Good Head of an Educational Institution model, Good Homeroom Teacher and Good Preschool Teacher models)

Above: Recognition programmes „Good School as Values-based School 2022” and “Good Preschool as Values-based Preschool 2022”

Below: Good School and Good Preschool best practise database



Sources

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More information about the University of Tartu, Centre for Ethics

<https://www.eetika.ee/en>

<https://www.eetika.ee/en/values-development/paving-way-values-based-education>