

Estonian language training in a Russian-language basic school

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*Does the organization of
Estonian language training
ensure that graduates of
Russian-language basic
school acquire the
necessary proficiency in
Estonian for further studies
in Estonia?*



Structure of Education Provision in Estonia

State Role: Provides the national curriculum.

Local Government Role: Manages schools.

Until 1 September 2024: Local governments had the authority to establish basic schools with instruction in languages other than Estonian (mostly Russian).

For students attending basic schools where main language for instruction was Russian, **learning Estonian was mandatory** (nearly 1,000 hours of lessons over the course of 9 years).

At the end of 9th grade, **students had to pass a language exam corresponding to level B1** according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

Objective

To assess whether the organization of Estonian-language instruction both at the **state and local government level** ensures that

- basic-school graduates achieve the required level of Estonian and
- supports their further study choices in Estonia.

Auditees and Audit Themes

Auditees:

- Local Governments (LG)
- The Ministry of Education and Research

Audit themes

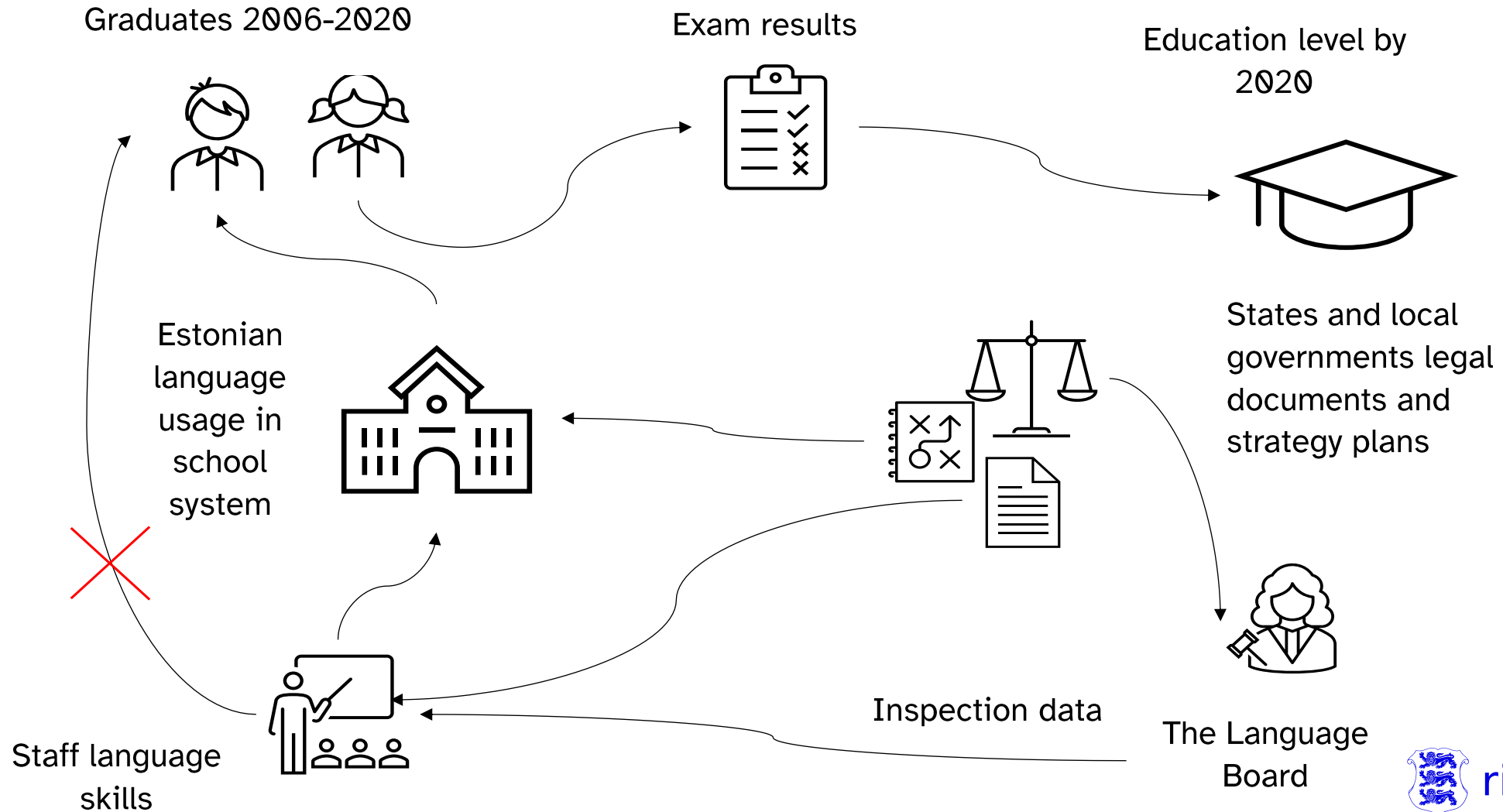
1. Students / graduates
2. School staff: Teachers, Head of schools
3. School management and supervision by: LG and the Ministry
4. The Ministry's transition plan to Estonian-language education

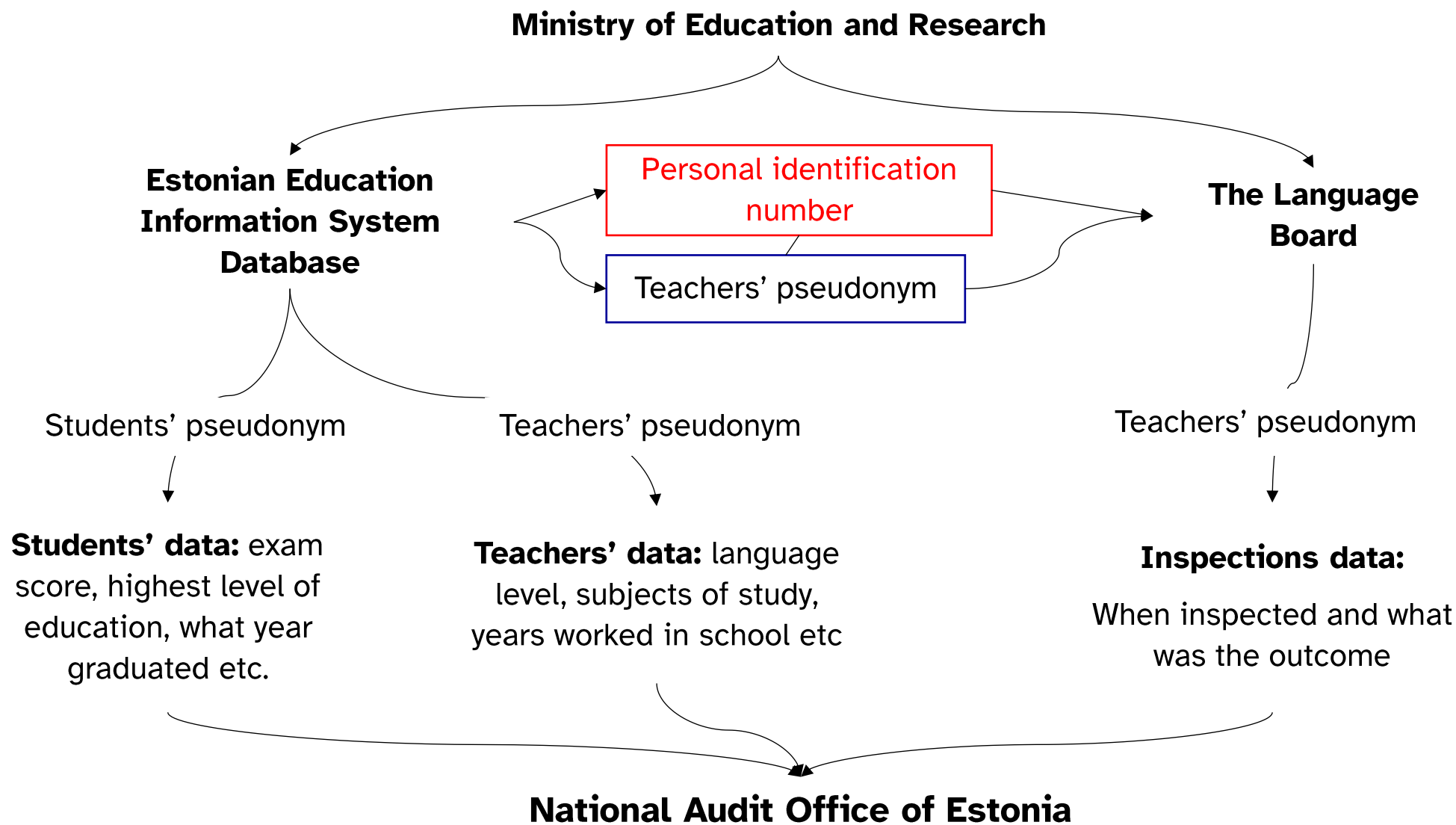
Data Sources and Audit Scope

Based on the **Digital Estonian Education Information System**
(2005/2006 to 2019/2020)

- All schools run by the state or local government
 - Excluded: schools for students with special educational needs
- Only those students who received their basic education in Russian or in language immersion class
 - Included: teachers and directors who worked in those school when they had graduates

Desing Process – Usable Data





Statistical Methods Used

Binary logistic regression to identify:

- which factors influence whether **students achieve B1 level in Estonian** by the end of basic school
- whether Estonian language exam results predict the likelihood to continuing education and obtaining a higher degree

Survival analysis to examine whether reaching B1 Estonian level by the end of basic school is linked to achieving higher education

Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis to test whether Language Board inspections are associated with starting a language course or taking the language exam

Other Analytical Methods Used

Case Study Method to identify a typical local government

- standardized content analysis of municipal development plans
- semi-structured interviews with local governments and the schools they manage

Data Quality

Good:

- Student's exams results
- Student's highest level of education

Not usable:

- Teacher's in-service training data

Questionable:

- Teacher's language proficiency – formal level vs actual level
- The Language Board stores its inspection reports on paper.

Audit Results (1)

- The Estonian language proficiency of graduates of Russian-language basic school has been below expectations for many years.
- The Ministry of Education and Research has not purposefully directed the achievement of the national goals of Estonian-language education in Russian-language basic schools, nor has it regularly supervised the organisation of Estonian language training.
- Teachers and heads of school who do not meet the language requirements have been able to continue in their positions for a long time.

Audit Results (2)

- Local governments do not obligate school staff to improve their proficiency in the Estonian language.
- The potential of effective language training methods is not taken advantage of enough.
- The transition to Estonian-language education is a necessary reform. For the reform to be successful, it is essential to plan systemic activities that take the actual situation into account.

Thank you for listening!

Questions?