

# Finnish Lessons



What can the world  
learn from educational  
change in Finland?

**Pasi Sahlberg**

Foreword by Andy Hargreaves  
Series Foreword by Ann Lieberman

the  
series on  
school reform

## The 2013 Grawemeyer Lecture

**Pasi SAHLBERG, PhD**

Helsinki FINLAND

**University of Louisville**

Louisville, KY, USA

10<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2013

[pasisahlberg.com](http://pasisahlberg.com)

Twitter: [@pasi\\_sahlberg](https://twitter.com/pasi_sahlberg)

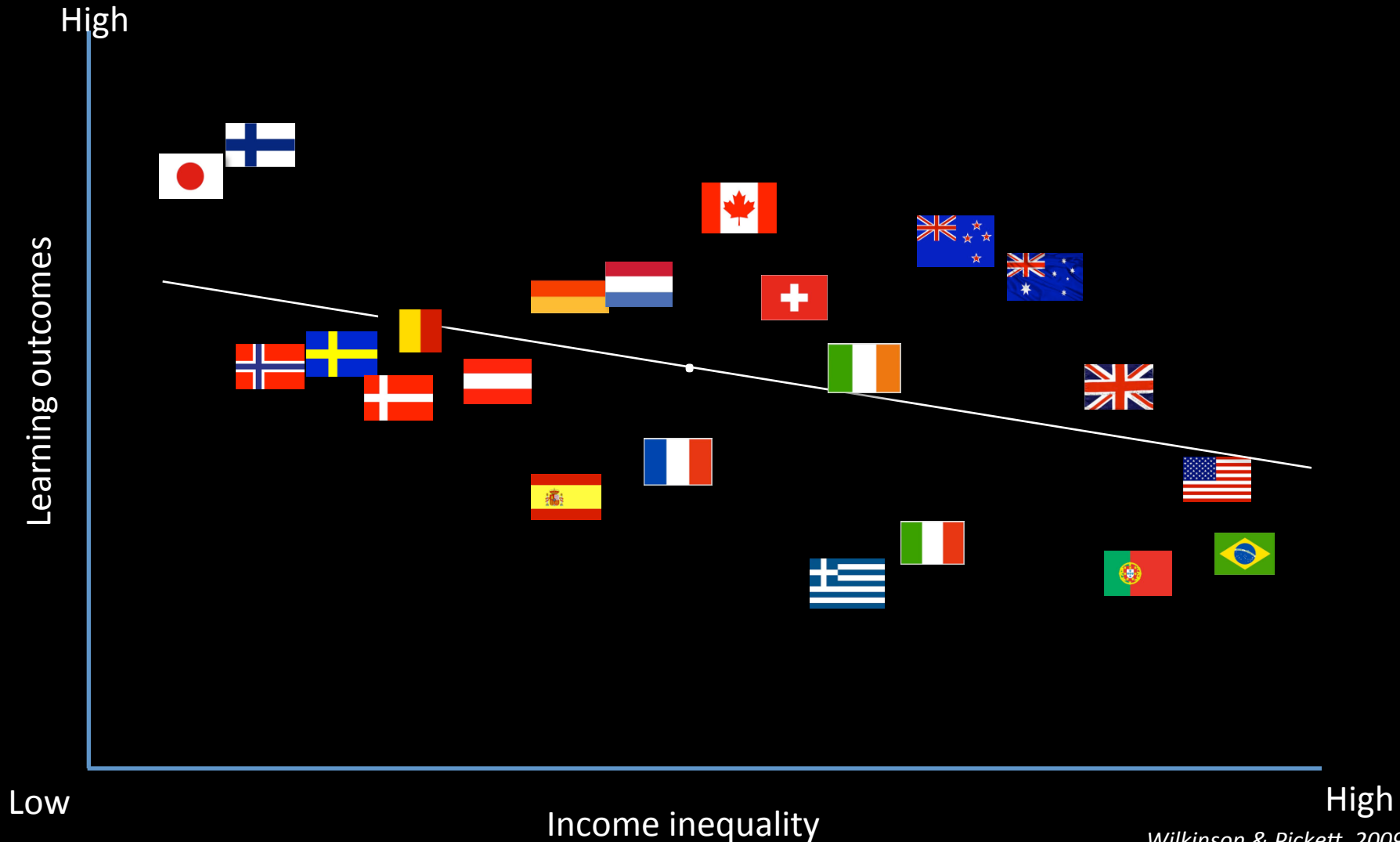
# Five things you didn't know

(1) Finland has never aimed to be the best



# Five things you didn't know

## (2) Low income inequality



# Five things you didn't know

(3) The most important accomplishments

## **Public school system**

Winter War

Universal suffrage

Welfare State

WW II

# Five things you didn't know

(4) The most trusted public institutions

Police (90%)

**Education system (89%)**

Army (83%)

Health care system (72%)

Legal system (72%)

# Five things you didn't know

## (5) Finland is a high-performer overall

Economic competitiveness

Finland #3

United States #7

Technological Advancement

Finland #3

United States #5

Prosperity

Finland #1

United States #9

Corruption Perception Index

Finland #2

United States #24

Global Innovation Index

Finland #4

United States #10

Least Failed State

Finland #1

United States #19

Global Equity Index

Finland #2

United States #48

Child Poverty Rate

Finland 4%

United States 22%

The UN Happiness Index

Finland #2

United States #11

Income Inequality Rate

Finland 5.6

United States 15.9

Global Gender Gap Index

Finland #2

United States #22

Child Wellbeing

Finland #4

United States #26



“The sad joke these days is: If you want to live the American Dream, move to Finland.” (2011)

Why?



# Global Educational Reform Movement

COMPETITION

STANDARDIZATION

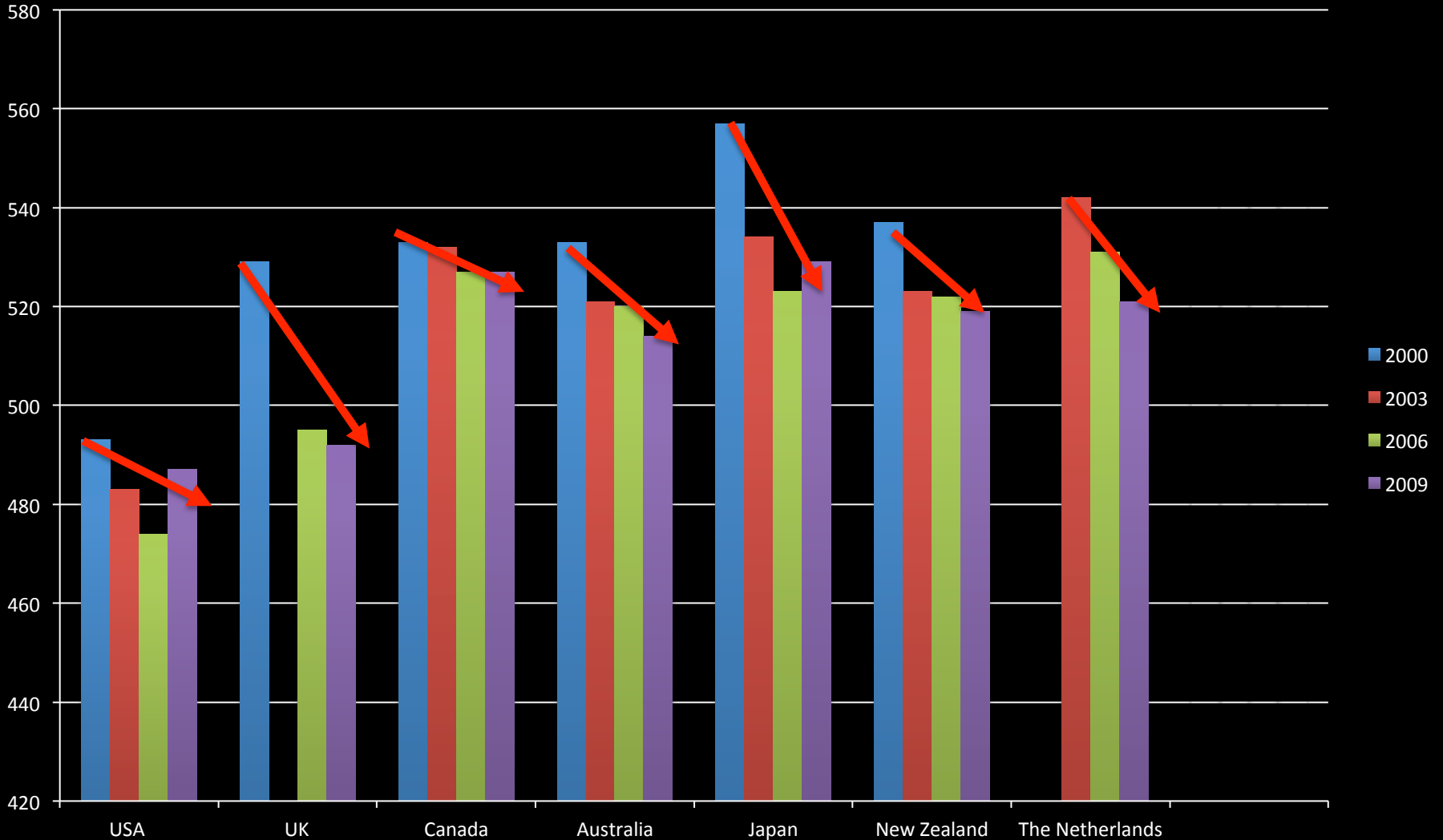
TEST-BASED  
ACCOUNTABILITY

PRIVATIZATION

Marketization

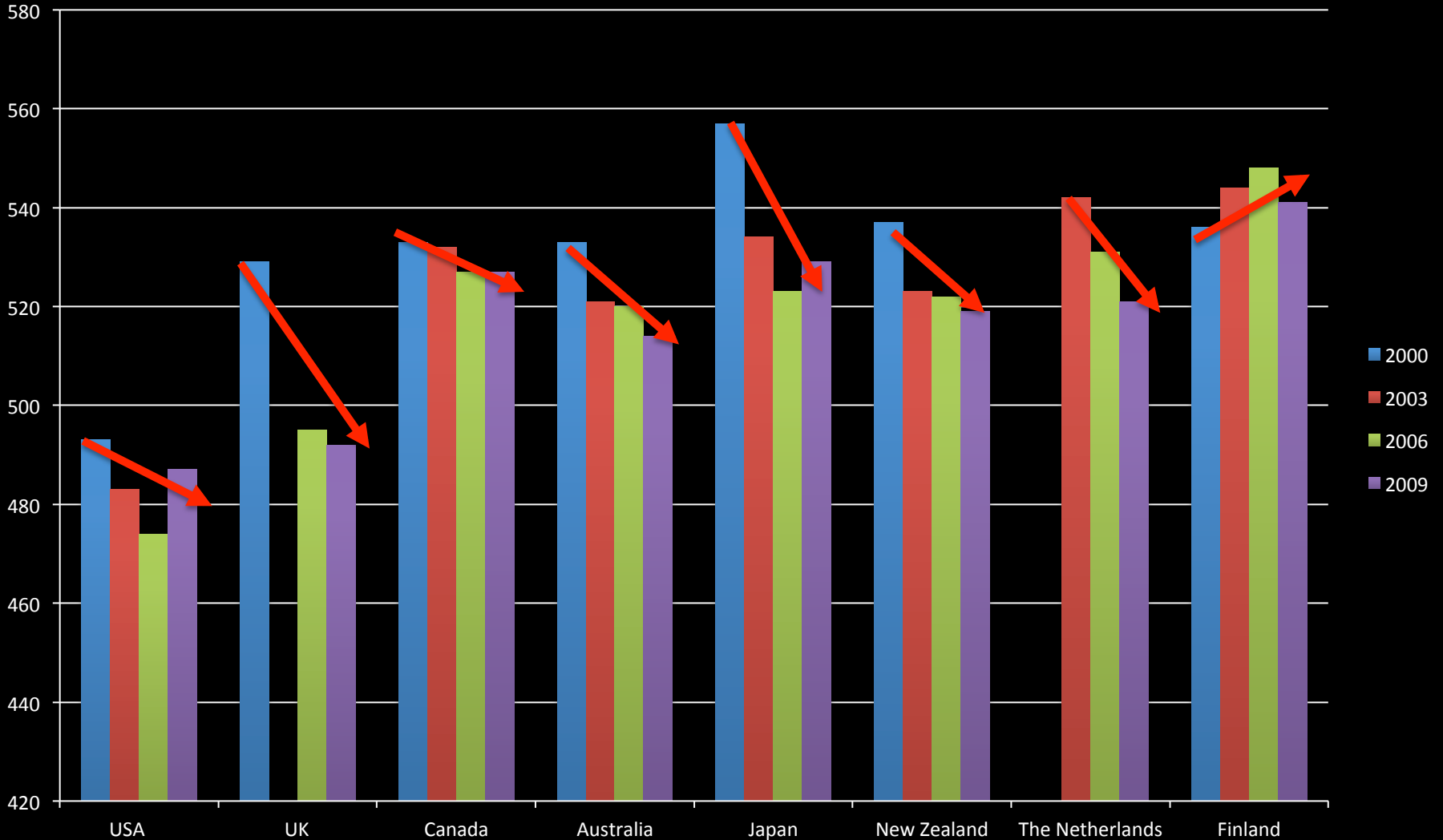
# Impact of **GERM**?

National averages of 15-year-old students learning outcomes in mathematics 2000-09



# Impact of **GERM**?

National averages of 15-year-old students learning outcomes in mathematics 2000-09



Source: OECD

# Global Educational Reform Movement

COMPETITION

STANDARDIZATION

TEST-BASED  
ACCOUNTABILITY

PRIVATIZATION

Marketization

# The Finnish Way

COLLABORATION

PERSONALIZATION

TRUST-BASED  
RESPONSIBILITY

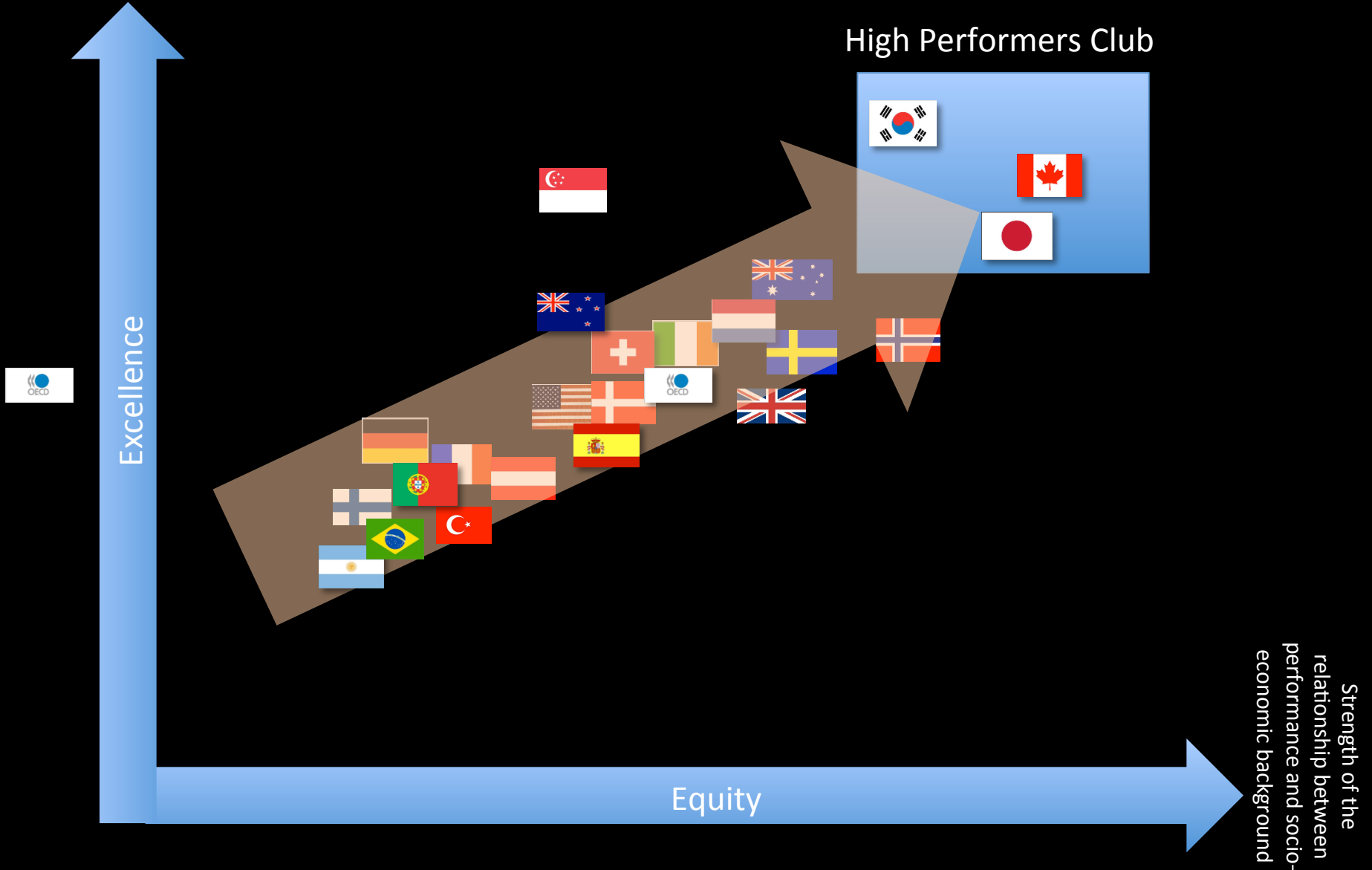
PUBLIC GOOD

Professionalization

Education policies for success

Students' performance in reading, mathematics and science (e.g. PISA)

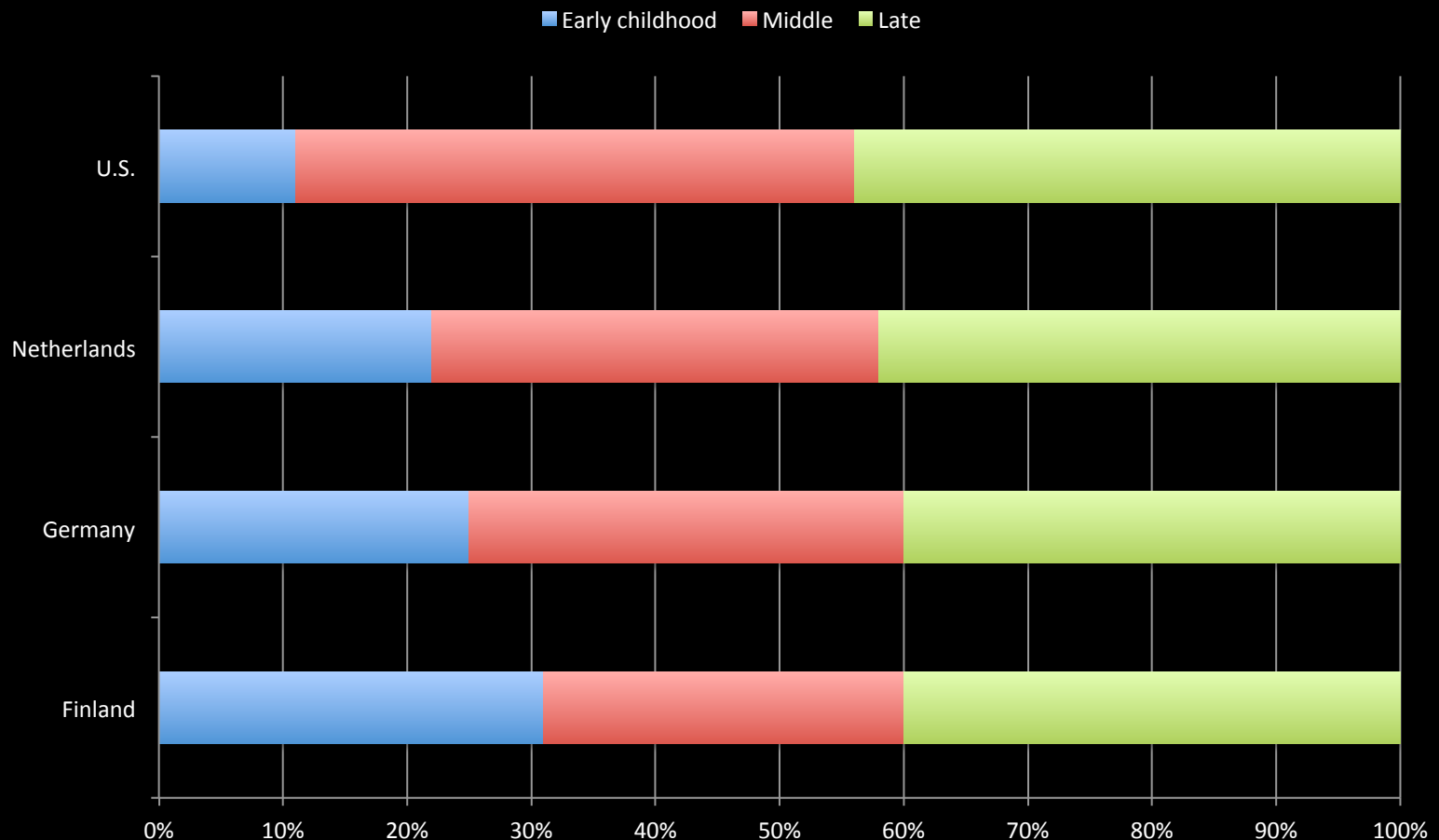
# Key Policy #1: Better equity



Source: OECD

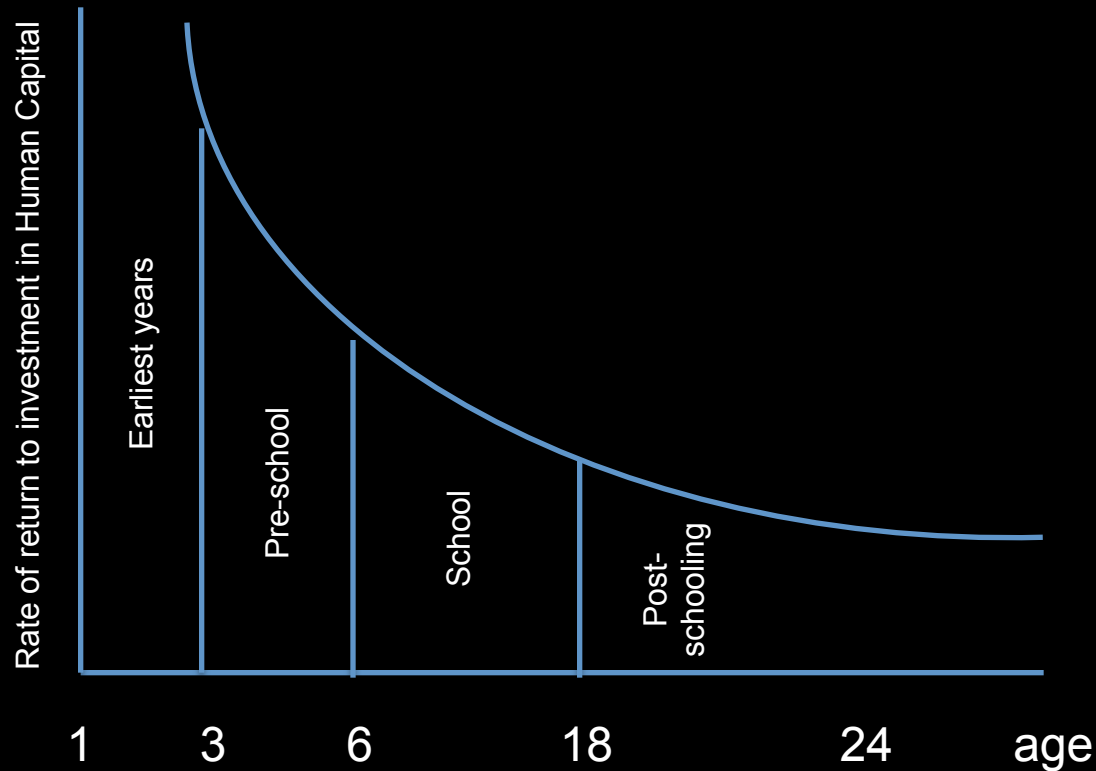
# Key Policy #2: Invest early

## Share of government spending on children



# Key Policy #2: Invest early

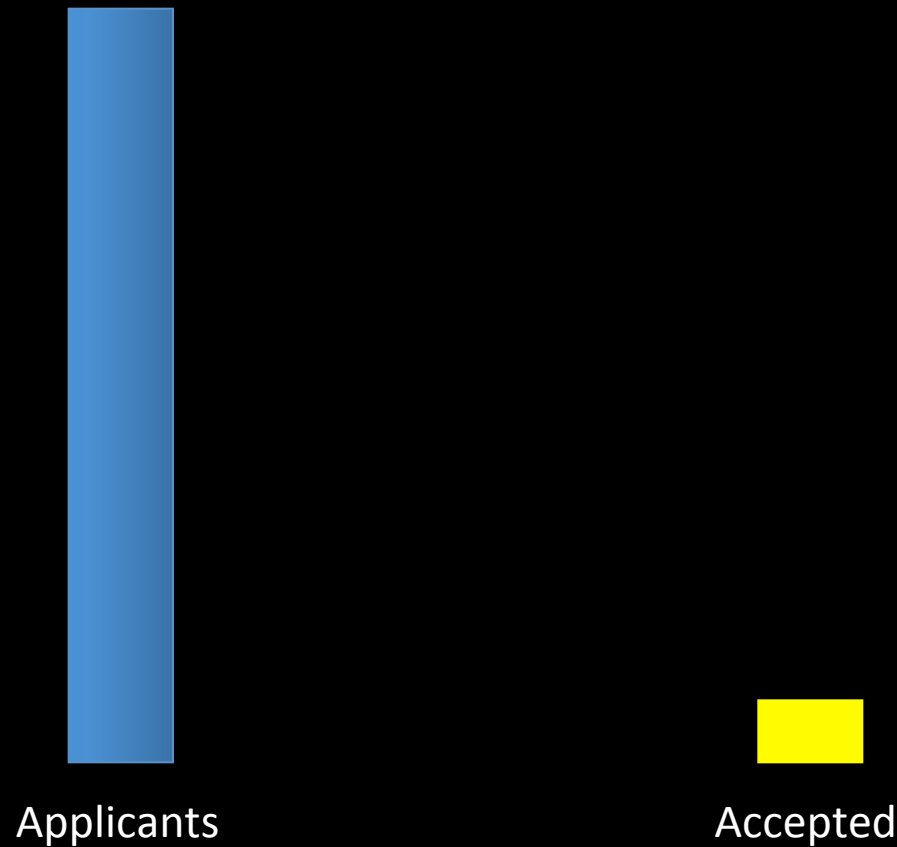
Returns to a unit dollar invested



Source: Heckman & LaFontaine (2007)



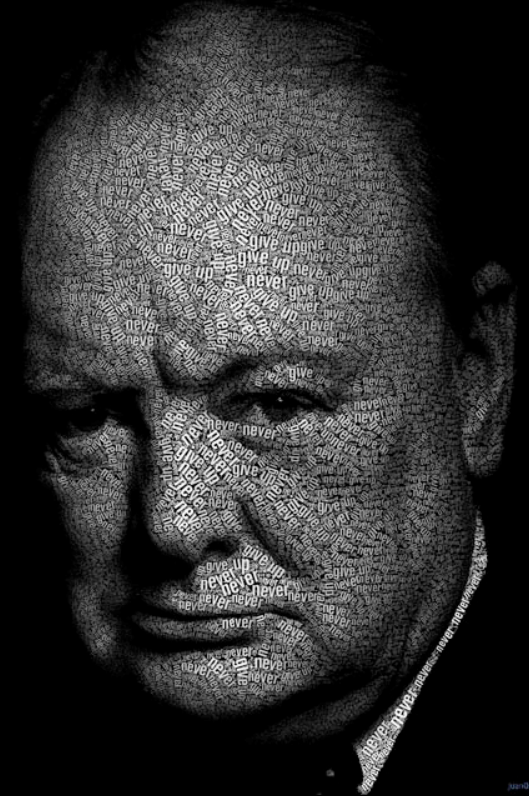
# Key Policy #3: Teacher Professionalism



Applicants and accepted to primary teacher education in the University of Helsinki in 2012

*“Doing a wrong thing **righter**”*

*“You can always count  
on Americans to do the  
right thing - after they've  
tried everything else.”*



# Lessons from Finland

# Finnish Lesson #1:

*“More collaboration, less competition.”*

## Finnish Lesson #2:

*“More play time, less stress  
time.”*

## Finnish Lesson #3:

*“More evidence-based policies,  
less experimentation with people.”*

Thank you!



**Kills 99% of GERMS!**

[pasisahlberg.com](http://pasisahlberg.com)

Twitter: [@pasi\\_sahlberg](https://twitter.com/pasi_sahlberg)