

The Finnish PISA Success and the Role of School leaders

**The Fifth International Stakeholder Seminar
on School Management Training (HEAD)**

March the 10th 2006

Jukka Alava

alava@edu.jyu.fi

The effects of leadership to PISA results were not investigated, because

.. according to several international studies the effect of principal to learning outcomes is not direct but indirect.

So, can we say anything about the effects of principals in the Finnish success in PISA?

We can start by asking: "If there were no principals at all in schools?" And we can immediately see the answer.

In Finland history counts:

Female school leaders in urban primary schools (power base by living at school grounds)

Male principals in city high schools (power base from legitimate authority)

School leaders in Finland

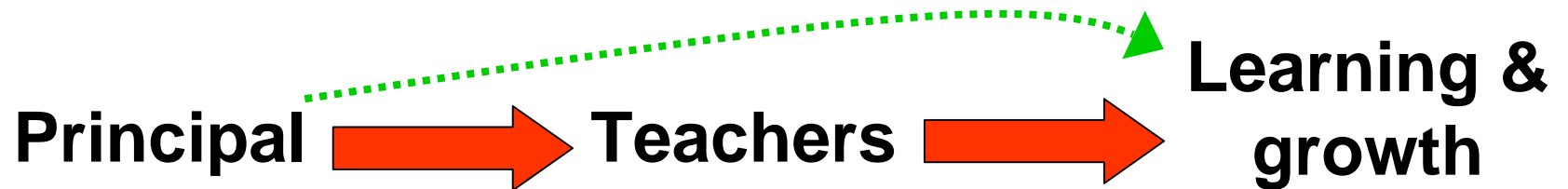
- have been strong leaders**
- have possessed high authority**
- seen as trustworthy people**
- been prominent actors in society at large**

- have been essential 'stabilizers' for decades**
- have been managing school via traditional ways**
- and have succeeded in stable environments**

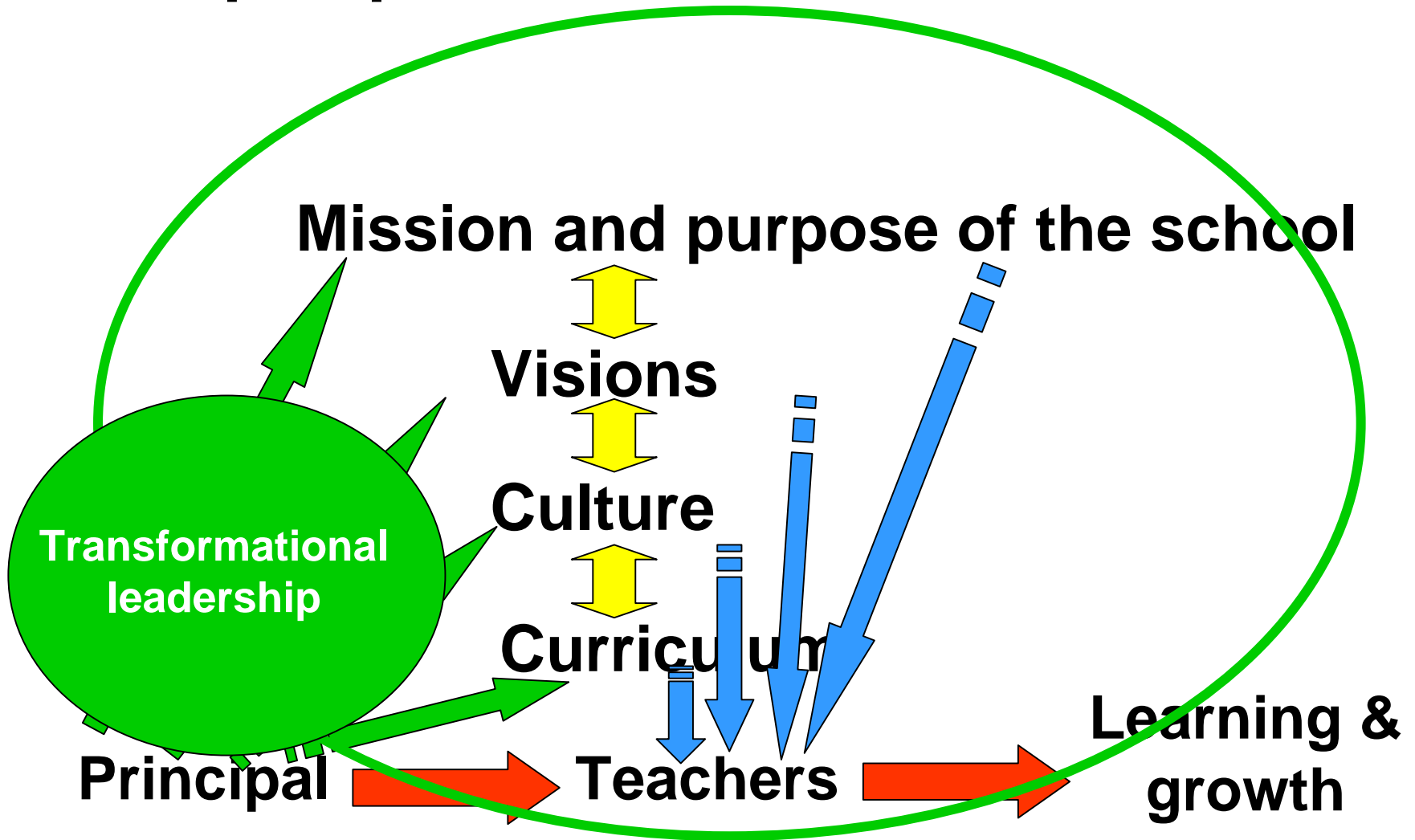
The challenge is the changing environment and the call for transformational leadership

Instructional (pedagogic) leadership

Narrow perspective



Wide perspective



Wide perspective

%-points as seen by principals

Most demanding challenge – now school administration is heavily based on position power and management; change resistance effects school work (FIN 13%; NOR 35%; NL 60%)

mission and pur

Comprehensive school – a pedagogical philosophy and practice – but individual school missions not yet clear enough

Visions

Equality in all aspects high. Learning outcome goal is high – but we are too modest. (Teachers' low expectation; FIN 7%; NOR 20%; NL 39%)

Culture

There is a strong culture of learning and achieving – but 'it is the student's flaw if he/she does not learn'. Teachers want to work alone.

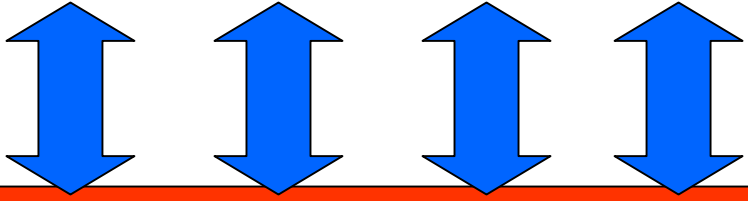
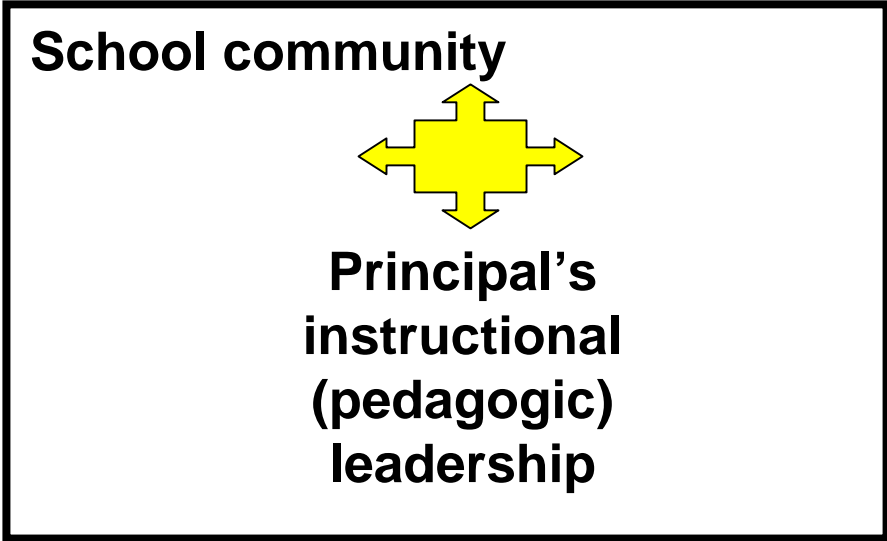
Curric

Refined, somewhat flexible curriculum but the teachers might not individualize teaching as they should. (FIN 35%; NOR 72%; NL 56%). Subjects define the work – not collaboration

Principal

Teacher

Teachers are regarded as highly qualified professionals – but left alone; Teacher absenteeism – FIN 20%; NOR 24%; NL 46%



**Teacher
training**



**Work of the
teachers**

**Teachers'
professional
development**

**Results of the
school**

