

**LEAP Action Learning Report 2014**

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| Topic area(What) | Leadership DevelopmentWhat strategies are being used to build the capacity of principals, both from a system's perspective as well as at a more localized level? |
| Context(Where and When) | England – conversations with Simon Knight & Jon Barr (stayed with both prior to official LEAP in Finland).Finland – Pertti Terho, Superintendent for Municipality of Kuhmoinen. |
| Research methods(How) | Interviewed individuals (Superintendents & Principals), small groups (Principals) & large groups (Principals).I had a range of questions for Superintendents & Principals which came from my reading of Pasi Sahlberg’s book “Finnish Lessons” as well as “Finnish Education in a Nutshell” published by the Ministry of Education and Culture, Finnish Board of Education and CIMO.**Note:** These questions, along with the powerpoint presentation I gave at the Finnish Board of Education are in **Attachment A**. |
| Findings(So what) | The following findings need to be seen in the light of two key comments:**1.**The structure & organisation of the Finnish education system at a system leadership level is VERY different to NSW.**2.**The impact of positive & strongly held values & beliefs about education by Finnish society, in my opinion, is enormous.**Key Findings**: **1.**According to the superintendents & principals I spoke to, there is very little work being done by the system to build the capacity of principals.**2.**I believe the Finnish understanding & emphasis on “Trust” has resulted in the system not seeing the need to work on building the leadership capacity of principals.3.There are a number of key ‘external to school’ factors that I believe have contributed to the success of the Finnish Education system. These are:A) The high standards set by the system before students are accepted into an education degree;B) The consistency of the teacher education degree across every university in Finland;C) The fact that teachers must have a Masters’ degree to commence teaching in Finnish schools;D) The value Finnish society places on education; &E) The non-political approach to education in Finland.**Important Point**: I am very conscious that I was in Finland for less than two weeks & only met with a small representation of superintendents and principals, therefore my findings may well be different if I was to spend more time as well as talk with other educational leaders.**Concluding Comments:** Following my conversations with Simon & Jon in England, they felt the English system didn’t have appropriate support structures in place for principals nor strategies to assist build their capacity. My conversations with a number of Finnish principals showed they weren’t able to clearly verbalise specific strategies or structures their system has in place to support them & build their capacity as leaders.As a result of my LEAP experience, I believe the structures & strategies the DEC in NSW has in place has the potential to be extremely effective in both supporting & building the capacity of principals. However, ‘trust’ is a key value & we need to work hard on understanding what we mean by it & then doing all we can to develop it.**Final Concluding Comments**:The English system seems to focus on ‘verification’ with little ‘trust’.The Finnish system seems to focus on ‘trust’ with little ‘verification’.The NSW system must continue to grow in its ability to ‘trust & verify’. |
| The authorFor further information contact: | Name: Mark YoungSchool/work place: Director, Public Schools NSW, Wollemi NetworkContacts:Email: mark.t.young@det.nsw.edu.auPhone: 6755 5000 |