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# Principalship in Finland

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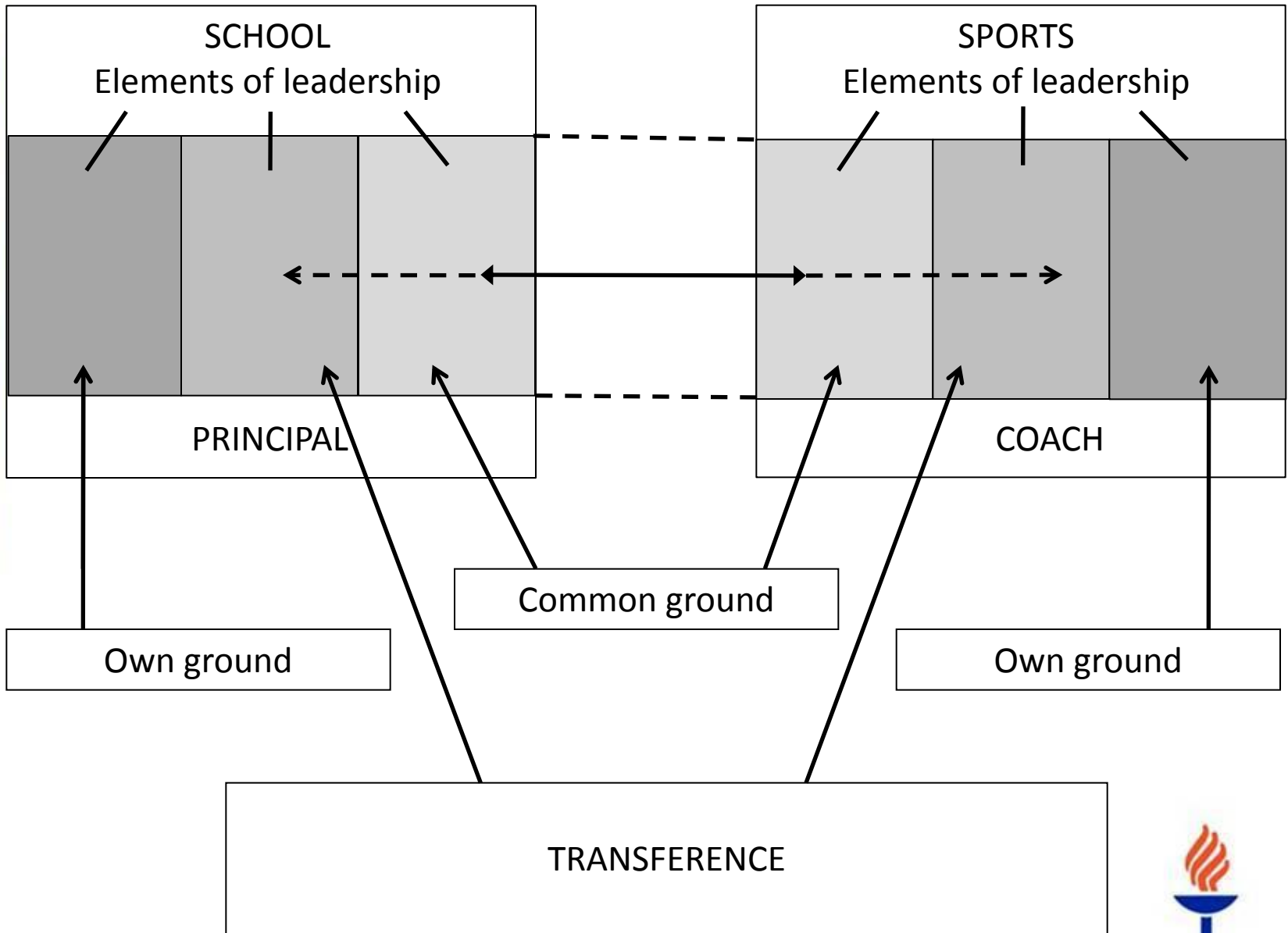
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# My Background



- Education: PhD, MA (PE), IVBF Coach (volleyball).
- The name of my doctoral thesis: The Significance of Coaching Background in Principal's Work, approved on 5.2.2011
- Work experience: Principal for 14 years, 8,5 in upper secondary school and 5,5 in secondary school
- One year as a development manager in education (Äänekoski city)
- 16 years as a PE teacher
- 38 years as a coach, 25 years in volleyball and 13 years in floorball, 14 years as head coach of national teams; 6 in volleyball (Team Finland) and 8 in floorball (Team Finland and Team Canada)
- Student at IEL 1997-2011, from basic studies to Doctoral Degree
- Part time lecturer, mentor, tutor, etc.... 1999-2012
- Full time researcher and lecturer since 1.8.2012





# Institute of Educational Leadership



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Institute of Educational Leadership

# Principal Training Programs at IEL

- Principal Preparation Program (1996-)
- Advanced Leadership Program (2000-)
- PhD Program (2002-); International cohort (2010-)
- International Master's Degree Program (2007-)
- Online International Master's Degree Program (2010-)
- Taylored in-service programs
  - Osaava-program

(Risku, 2012)



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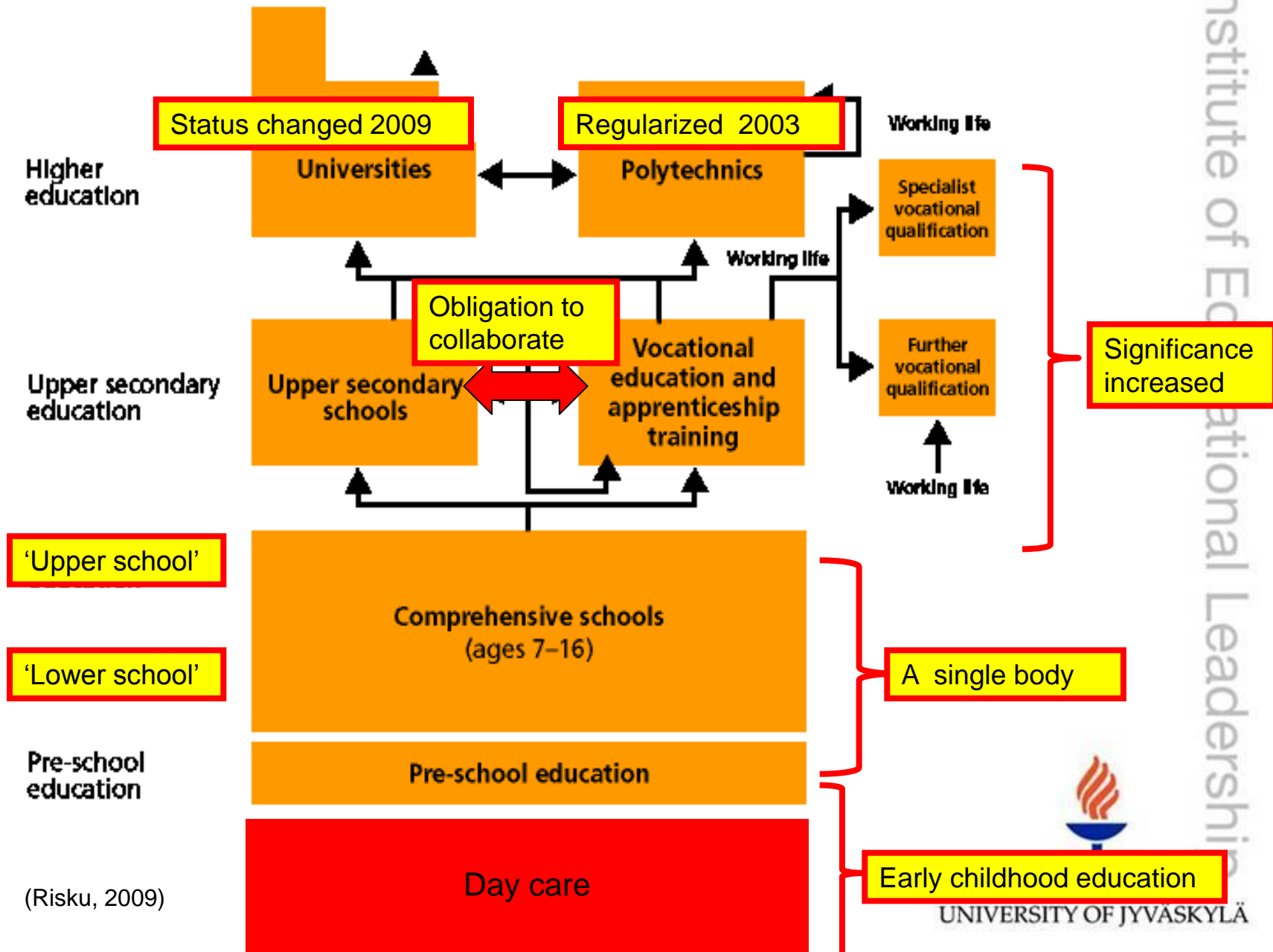
# Finland



A small country can be big



# THE FINNISH EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM



## Government

- \* Sets national goals
- \* Decides allocation of time
- \* Determines qualifications

## Ministry of Education

- \* Grants licences
- \* Decides allocation of money

## National Board of Education

- \* Draws national core curricula
- \* Evaluates education system

## Municipality

- \* Main education provider
- \* Draws local curricula
- \* Conducts local evaluation

# Local authorities

- Give the school annual budget
- Elect principals
- Arrange local evaluation
- Decide school network
- Keep up legacy control
- Build vision and strategy in school policy



# School

- Decision making at school : collaborative, participative leadership in schools
- Trust in and between teachers, principals, parents, community
- Materially well equipped schools
- No core subjects, no standardized tests until final year in upper secondary, no ranking, **NO TEACHING FOR TESTS**
- Mandatory self evaluation since 1994, no inspectors





Teachers are highly appreciated  
in Finland.



# Teacher's profession is valued and popular

- Finnish scholars consider teachers and medical doctors the most valuable professions

(Taloussanomat, 2011)

- For upper secondary school students teacher's profession is the number one dream profession

(Helsingin sanomat, 2004)

- Only 1 in 10 applicants admitted in class teacher training

- Main reasons for deciding profession

- Interest 70%, secure job 40%, salary 25% and career opportunities 20%

(Risku, 2011)



# Teachers are well-educated

Age	School Form	Teachers' Qualification
0-6	Kindergarten	Kindergarten Teachers (BA)
6	Optional Pre-school	Kindergarten teachers (BA) or class teachers (MA)
7-15	Comprehensive School	Class teachers and subject teachers (MA)
16-	Upper-secondary, 3 years	Subject teachers (MA)
16-	Vocational schools	Vocational teachers and subject teachers (MA)
19-	Higher Education	Teachers with higher academic degree

(Jakku-Sivonen & Niemi, 2006; Green, Korpinen, Alava, Lehtomäki & Husso 2011)



# The Goal of Teacher Education

- is to develop
  - experts who are
    - life-long –learners and
    - researchers who
      - see themselves as

**FUTURE CREATORS**

*(Curriculum for Teacher Education, University of Jyväskylä, 2010; Risku, 2013)*



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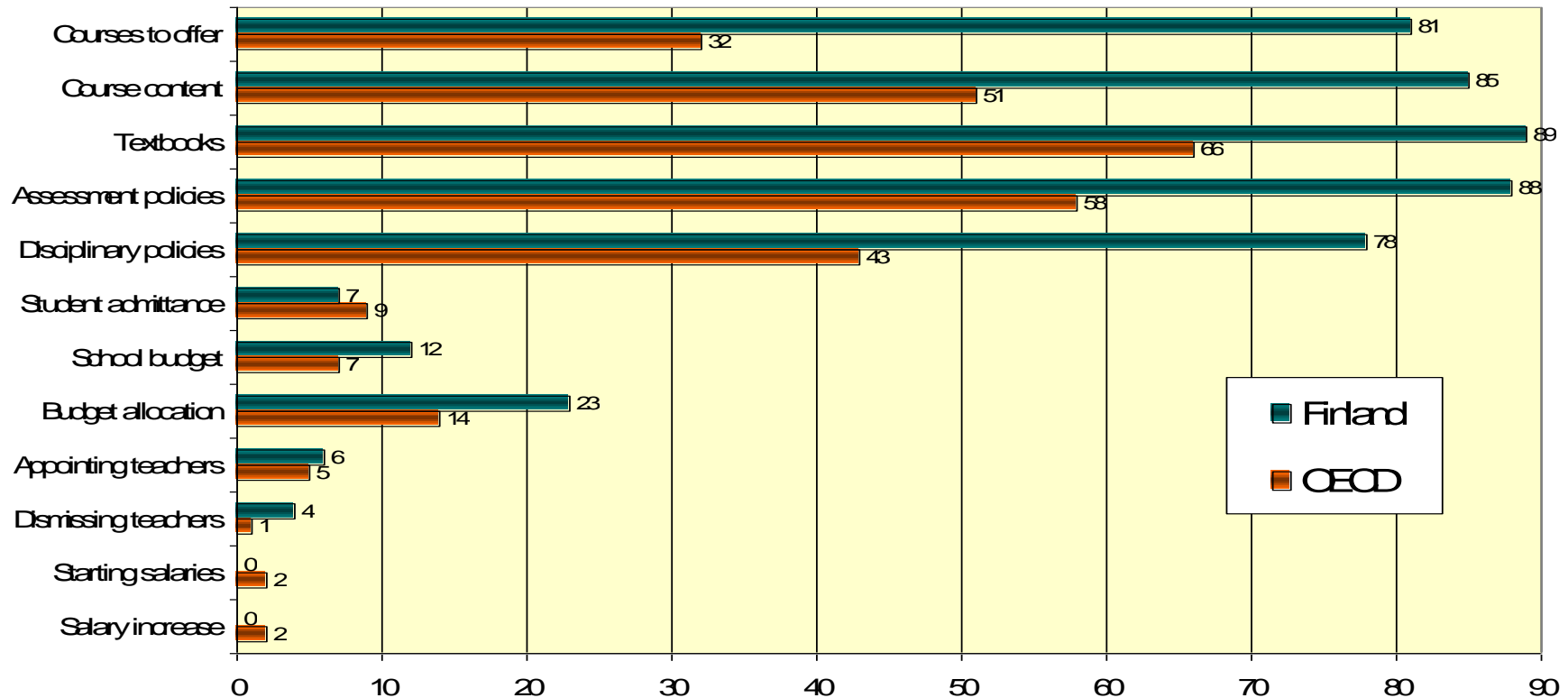
# Teachers

- Develop their own subject's curriculum
- Decide together with the principal their annual working hours
- Decide the learning methods by themselves
- Working without any inspection – it's very unusual that even principals follow the lessons



# Teacher leadership in OECD countries

## Teachers have responsibility



(Väljörvi, J. PISA and Finland. European School Head Association Conference. Copenhagen, Denmark 11.9.2008; Risku, 2009)



# Principals

- Recruit teachers and supporting staff in their school!!
- Leading the pedagogical work very independently
- Leading the schools development work
- Running the school budget
- Running local, national and international programs independently
- Take care of teachers work and training
- Works closely with students and parents



# Principals' education

- ❏ Teaching qualifications in relevant school form
- ❏ Certificate in Educational Administration OR completion of a university programme in educational leadership (25 ECTS)
- ❏ As a general rule, principals are recruited from among quite experienced teachers

(Taipale, 2012; FNBoE 2012:12; Risku, 2013)



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# Principals' work

- obligation to teach
- responsible general managers of schools
- pedagogical and distributed leadership central
  - legislation obligates education provider
    - no school or text book inspection
    - national tests do not rank
    - criteria based assessment
    - obligation to local evaluation



# Leadership system

- The Finnish school leadership system is based on shared leadership
- The principal is supported by one or two assistant principals, leadership team, class counsellors (head teacher), guidance counsellor(s), subject groups and school secretary
- Leadership by *top down* and *bottom up* principle and based on situation



The Finnish school leadership system is based on shared leadership

## LEADERSHIP TEAM (example)

### Leadership team:

- Principal
- Assistant principal
- Assistant principal
- 3 teacher representatives
- Representatives from other personnel groups

### Working:

- The leadership team's term of office is two years. It meets weekly.



# The Student Welfare Group

## MEMBERS OF SWG

**School Principal, chair of the group**

**School Psychologist**

**Meets every second week.**

**Main targets:**

**School Nurse**

**\*physical and psychological well-being of pupils**

**Social Worker**

**\*successful learning**

**\*good learning environment**

**And according to the topic:**

**Main tasks:**

**Special Ed. Teacher**

**\*solve acute problems**

**\*discuss multiprofessionally**

**Class Teacher**

**\*make decisions**

**\*organize**

**Guidance Counsellor**

**\*do precautionary work**



# FINNISH WAY 1

## Low hierarchy between teachers and principals

- Same academic background
- Strong personal independence – strong systematic autonomy
- Very flat administration – more things to do, more demands outside
- Principals are really school leaders – not only “headteachers”
- “No need for the head to look after everything”

## FINNISH WAY 2

- Principal`s point of view whole staff is a great leading potential
- Participative leading need a strong commitment and trust
- It need a new kind of informatic leading, discussions and patient
- It give a great opportunity to learn together and made a school truly a learning community
- Leading possession has becoming important part of teacher recruitment

# SYSTEM OF TRUST

- The equal opportunities for all students between ages 6 – 16
- High respect between different school levels
- Very good co-operation between schools
- Very good relationship between schools and educational officials – no inspectors – own responsibility
- Building the team – recruiting teachers ->principal has (almost) total freedom to choose anyone



# Vision

- The Principal must have a vision of the school.
- Seeing the big picture is one of most important abilities of today's principals (Fullan 2005; Pulkkinen 2011).
- He is like a Captain of the ship who must direct the ship to reach its right destination. It needs:
  - Decision making
  - Shared leadership
  - Mixture of realism and idealism

**”If we don't know where we are going,  
we will end up anywhere”**



# PRINCIPAL'S KEY WORDS

by Ari Pokka, ICP president elect 2014 and president 2015-2016

- Develop your school
- Make resources
- Give a direction
- Be innovative and creative
  
- Be near
- Be judicial
- Be fair
- Take care of your students and teachers



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Ready  
Steady  
Go !

Thank  
you 😊