Government Key Projects (GKP) as a Tool for the Development of Learning and Teaching in Finnish Universities

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Abstract. Finnish Prime Minister Juha Sipilä's Government Program for 2016–2019 was organized into five strategic priorities (Employment and competitiveness, Knowledge and education, Wellbeing and healthcare, Bioeconomy and clean technologies, and Digitalization and deregulation) which were implemented in the form of so-called *Government Key projects (GKP)*. In this paper, we will discuss the strategic priority Knowledge and education and how it was materialized in the form of the Government Key Project. We approach the strategic priority from three different angles: the national higher education policy and state steering of higher education, the university education leadership, and the implementation of one concrete project. We will first explore the background and goals of the Government's decision, the application process of Government's Key Projects, and the role of the Vice-rectors' forum in the coordination of the application process. The second part of the paper will concentrate on the implementation of the project *Building up the pedagogical and digital teaching and guidance competence of higher education institution staff*; the organization of the project, its leadership, allocation of resources, work of the Steering Group, progress of the sub-projects and steering, and follow-up of the planned actions. Finally, we will evaluate the results of the project, on

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the one hand, in the framework of the goals of the strategic funding for the key projects, and, on the other, in the framework of the theory of project leading/management.

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1. Introduction

When the new Finnish Prime Minister Juha Sipilä started in his office in 2015, the overriding objective of his Government's Program was to raise the employment rate in Finland to 72 per cent through a number of measures promoting employment and entrepreneurship. With this overarching objective in mind, the Government decided on the strategic program which included five strategic priorities in the form of 26 strategic objectives, i.e. key projects. An implementation plan was launched to put the key projects and reforms into action. The plan specified the measures and financial resources as well as the schedule for the key projects. In autumn 2015, the Government decided to allocate a one-off appropriation of EUR 1 billion to the key projects in 2016–2018. EUR 300 million was allocated to some of the *Knowledge and education* key projects (Finnish Government, 2015).

According to Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (2016), in its negotiations concerning the public finances plan for the period 2017-2020, the Government decided to allocate funding to the development of teaching in higher education. The Ministry of Education and Culture organized two calls for applications for projects in order to support the implementation of the Government's strategic priorities and key projects (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016). The call set the aims and objectives but gave a lot of space for higher education institutions to present new and innovative ideas. As a result of the call for applications organized in autumn 2016, funding totaling EUR 25 million was granted to 17 development projects, and, in the call organized in autumn 2017, EUR 40 million to 19 development projects (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016).

The Ministry emphasized that the selected projects create added value for the work of universities and universities of applied sciences through enhanced cooperation both within and between the higher education sectors (Hyvönen, 2017). The Ministry saw the pressure to build joint projects as the best way to support national policy aims, enhance synergies and scalability, and wise division of labor as well as to create even better culture of collaboration and co-creation (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017-2019).

1.1. New way of organizing the application process

The application process started with the Ministry of Education and Culture´s call for applications. The higher education institutions began to plan applications and find partners for development projects. The span of these key projects differed from the previous national development projects. Both the Ministry and

the national Vice-rectors' forum wanted to steer the universities already in the application phase towards closer collaboration and joint development instead of purely institutional project applications.

The prerequisite for the projects was that they should all be collaborative; a single university could not apply for the funding and all universities should have an opportunity to utilize the results of the projects. This approach was partly new for the universities as they were used to competing with each other in different calls for project funding. The application process was jointly organized by the universities and the Vice-rectors' forum for educational issues of the Universities Finland Unifi took a leading role in the process. The vice-rectors started the discussions on the most important and topical themes, decided on the different group of projects as well as on the universities coordinating the different groups and participation in them. The Rectors' Conference of the Universities of Applied Sciences Arene also used an organized application model.

The vice-rectors' forum at Unifi divided the project themes into six 'baskets':
1. development of student admission processes,
2. strengthening of the university teachers' pedagogical competences,
3. development of study skills, well-being and involvement of the students,
4. renewal of learning environments,
5. entrepreneurship and other working life skills, and
6. a basket for collaborative course packages

Later some of the field-specific course packages, e.g. the one for the development of business skills, were formed into separate projects. At the end of the application period, at the end of September, the vice-rectors decided to add two more sub-projects to the basket, but they did not get funding from the Ministry. This was, in a way, a good decision as the funded projects formed a whole since they were planned and owned together (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017a).

The basic principle was that the projects should serve the students and the institutions in general, either the research universities or the universities of applied sciences or both higher education sectors together. A coordinating university was selected for every basket or group of projects and they were responsible for the preparation of the application as a whole. The responsibilities of the participating universities were defined clearly and a road map for the application process was developed. The schedule for the application process was tight, but the applications were discussed in several meetings of the vice-rectors.

A prerequisite for the application procedure was dynamic collaboration, both between the Ministry and Unifi and the vice-rectors as well as between the educational leadership at university level. The way the process was organized was new and required a great deal of work as well as strong mutual trust.

On the other hand, it strengthened the Vice-rectors' forum as a national body responsible for the higher education leadership. There were also negative reactions, especially inside the universities, when the academic staff felt that their opportunities for applying project funding had been reduced. This led to a less steered application process for the second round in autumn 2017.

The decisions on the first call were made at the beginning of the year 2017, and the projects started later during the spring (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017–2019). The Vice-rectors' forum also followed the progress of the projects and the projects have held presentations on their results at the vice-rectors' meetings.

1.2. Project management as a tool for leading a project

When the management of education is examined, it is important to recognize different logics related, directly or indirectly, to the operation of the organization (Pyykkö & Lappalainen, 2017, p. 282). Organizations can be closed, open or dynamic by nature (Ståhle & Åberg, 2012, p. 29). A closed organization is characterized by stability and regularity. The management of closed organizations is based on control, governance, and maximizing the production capacity of the organization. An open organization is self-managing, adapts itself to the developing environment, and is by nature a learning organization. A dynamic organization looks chaotic but produces new information. The management of a dynamic organization needs creativity, culture of change, and reviving ability.

A project is one way of organizing operations. A project's characteristics are goal consciousness, temporariness, and uniqueness (Hyttinen, 2017, p. 13). A project has an exact start, an exact end, and a schedule for operations. There are always complex elements or special competence involved in a project. Projects are funded by supplementary funding, not from the organization's basic funding (Andersen, 2008). Project-based management includes five functions which are organization, scope, time, quality, and cost (Turner, 1998).

When development and re-organizing of organizations are needed, a project model will be used very often (Shenhar & Dvir, 2007). The project model is very useful when seeking innovative ideas, also as part of a public organizations' operations (Ahern, Leavy, & Byrne, 2014). Especially performance-based steering has increased the amount of different kinds of projects (Forsberg, Mooz, & Cotterman, 2003). Performance-based guidance is a tool the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture is using in the governance and steering of higher education institutions.

To manage a project properly requires a well-designed project management structure and adequate operative procedures, and the project management structure has to be designed so that it meets different needs inside the project and is capable to answer challenges that are often encountered in project work (Hyttinen, 2017, pp. 28–29). Bell (2013) has created a simple project management model with five key elements: scope, inputs, projects (divided into initiation, planning, approval, delivery and closure), risks, and outputs.

According many researchers (Belout, 1998; Cooke-Davies, 2002), the social and behavioral aspects of project management have increased during the last 10–15 years. It is noteworthy that people are in a central position in projects, not the processes or systems themselves, and many projects are also very development- and research-oriented (Hyttinen, 2017, p. 14).

Projects have a beginning and an end. They can be divided into smaller parts that help the leading of the processes. There are five steps that every project will go through: Initiating, Planning, Execution, Monitoring/Controlling, and Closing (Andersen, 2016, p. 61). According to Andersen (2016), good management cycle and good management methods help the leader in their work, but good leadership requires also vision and innovative ideas.

In terms of successful project management (Davis, 2014), it is important to ask both at the beginning of the project and during the project how the project management works in practice (Hyttinen, 2017, pp. 33–49). According to Hyttinen (2017), rules have to be agreed upon on grass-root level issues, such as "agreements, legal issues, administrative and financial matters, coordination systems, […] intellectual property rights (IPR), quality assurance of the project deliverables, and communication procedures within the project consortium" (pp. 9, 33). Administrative matters, project funding and reporting have to be taken into account when planning the project management. Taking care of all questions related to budget and funding is extremely important (Chih & Zwikael, 2015).

1.3. Research questions
In this paper, we study the Finnish Governments' strategic program Knowledge and Education from three different angles: the national higher education policy and state steering of higher education, the university education leadership, and the implementation of one concrete key project.

The concrete research questions are: What was the background and the goals of the Government's decision to fund the Key Projects? How the application process was organized? How was the case project *Building up the pedagogical and digital teaching and guidance competence of higher education institution staff* organized and implemented, and what was the feedback on it from the Steering Group of the case project. Finally, we will ask, what is the future of the outcomes of the Government´s Key Projects?

2. Methods

2.1. Structure of the case-project
One of the Governments key projects (GKP) was a project called *Building up the pedagogical and digital teaching and guidance competence of higher education institution staff* (funding EUR 3 million) (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017a). The University of Turku coordinated the project of 14 partner institutions (list of partners in Appendix 1). This GKP is the case of this study.

The leader of the project and the two coordinators were from the University of Turku. The Steering Group supported the project management.

The project consisted of six sub-projects combined into three entities.
1. The *UNIPS* (University Pedagogical Support) project produced independent learning materials on university pedagogy for the online environment in English (coordinated by the University of Turku),
2. The *Updating teachers' digital skills* project developed teachers' digital skills needed for operating in the classroom and online environment, such as flipped learning, digi-tutors and "university developers" (coordinated by the University of Eastern Finland),
3. The *HELLA* (Higher Education Learning Lab) project developed student-centric operating models that support learning within and between higher education institutions. The HELLA-project had three working languages (English, Finnish, Swedish) and was coordinated by the Åbo Akademi University.

The starting points for the project were: (1) an increasing need for collaboration between higher education institutions; (2) diversity of the ways of learning and teaching; (3) digitalization; (4) growing heterogeneity of the student population; (5) changing needs for skills and competences in working life; and (6) alternation of studying and working.

2.2. Research materials
The Finnish Government's and the Ministry of Education and Culture's official documents are used as research material to give background information about the Government's aims to finance special projects in years 2015–2019. Documents from the management process of the case project *Building up the pedagogical and digital teaching and guidance competence of higher education institution staff* are also used as background material (application, decision of the project, agreements with partners, memorandums of the Steering Group).

In addition, a questionnaire to the Steering Group members of the project *Building up the pedagogical and digital teaching and guidance competence of higher education institution staff* was drafted in September 2019. The questionnaire was sent to all nine Steering Group members, and eight of the nine members responded. The response rate was 90, which can be considered high. The questionnaire had 12 open questions. The answers have been analyzed by dividing them question by question into 12 groups. Inside the 12 groups, the answers have been typified into two or three sub-groups. Within the sub-groups, the main ideas have saved by using key concepts. Due to the quite limited number of questions in the questionnaire, the research material was quite easy to keep in mind when analyzing the answers. We decided to use direct quotes of the answerer in this article because they expressed the opinions of the Steering Group members very well. The names of the Steering Group members are not used. The respondent has been given a number between 1 to 10 to identify them. The questionnaire is in the Appendix 2.

3. Results

3.1. Beginning of the project: Challenges of working with new partners

Based on the writers' own experience and the Steering Group members' responses September and October 2016 were a busy time for the partners. It was challenging to form one entity from three separate projects. The solution was to work together from the very beginning even though it was experienced as quite challenging. Apparently, among the key projects, there were also cases where the project coordinator planned and prepared the application and the partners joined the work concretely only later.

In the application process, the partners drafted the plan together and had weekly discussions on Skype. There were many phone calls between the partners every day. The motivation to secure extra funding for the education development process was the motor that gave energy to the collaboration and to finding a compromise for the application. The communication between the separate sub-projects and the coordinator, the University of Turku, was also successful. Later during the project period, the partners commended the coordinator for taking their views into account. Intensive work in October 2016 built a firm base for the cooperation.

Nevertheless, three of the project partners described the application process also as hard and chaotic, as they did not know each other beforehand and had only one month to develop a joint high-quality project plan. The partners had their own background in previous projects and now had to formulate the previous project plans into one a coherent whole while at the same time keeping the original idea visible. All this demanded compromises (Members 2, 3 and 8 of the Steering Group).

After the positive decision (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017a) on the funding in February 2017, the partner universities started to work on a detailed action plan and budget. The work proceeded well as the funding was equal to the amount applied and the partners had already started to work together. The University of Turku was responsible for the general project planning and the university lawyers prepared a model for the agreements between the partner universities. The agreement was signed in June 2017.

From the point of view of the sub-projects, the start of the project was well organized, but, on the other hand, slow. The Ministry transferred the funding to the University of Turku as agreed, but the coordinator could not transfer the funding to partner universities before the agreements were signed and detailed budgets from the sub-projects were received. In the first Steering Group meeting in May 2017, the sub-projects were encouraged to initiate their activities as the funding was secured. Part of the sub-projects started recruitment processes after the meeting. Revision of the final texts of the agreements took time, especially the formulation of copyright issues for online materials. The universities were also considering whether the materials and other products could be commercialized after the project period. The project started concretely on 15

May 2017 with a one-day seminar in Turku. There were approximately 50 participants from all sub-projects in the seminar.

3.2. Organization of the project; role of the Steering Group

The Steering Group of the project has been responsible for project management and follow-up. It consisted of the academic leaders of all main sub-projects, one representative of smaller projects, and a student representative from the Student Union of the University of Turku. The group was chaired by the academic leader of the whole project, Vice-rector for education from the University of Turku, and the Vice-rector for education from the Åbo Akademi University was the vice-chair of the group. The group had also an external expert member from the University Pedagogy unit of the University of Helsinki. The coordinator of the project from Turku has acted as the secretary of the Steering Group, and a budget controller has participated in all meetings. It was also important that the controllers of all partner universities formed their own group that communicated regularly.

The Steering Group had nine meetings (see Appendix 3), 2–4 times a year. The main responsibility of the Steering Group was to decide on the project outlining, follow the progress of the planned actions, and the responsible use of the budget. These topics were on the agenda of every meeting of the Group. Other topics were e.g. communication about the project, its visibility, and collaboration with the other key projects, especially with KOPE (Improve co-operation between the Universities and the Universities of Applied Sciences) and the eAMK (e-Universities of Applied Sciences). Collaboration with these projects was a prerequisite in the funding decision.

Discussions in the Steering Group were lively and the members were very committed to working in the group. According to the members, the quick start of the Steering Group's work was also founded on the fact that the members had an opportunity to get well acquainted already during the application period. The feedback collected in September 2019 from the members of the Steering Group also describes the fruitful work.

In the questionnaire for the Steering Group members, they were asked about the project organization as well as about the work of the Steering Group. They saw many positive things in the Steering Group work.

> "The role of the Steering Group has been very important for the project. It has been useful to hear regularly about the progress of other sub-projects and possible problems in it. It has given an opportunity to discuss own questions, too. The encouraging spirit has supported all sub-projects." (Member 4)

> "Discussion in the Steering Group has been fruitful for our sub-project and given concrete ideas. Hearing about other sub-projects has offered positive pressure and, on the other hand, calmed our minds about the progress of one's own sub-project." (Member 3)

Although the role of the Steering Group has in general been positive and supported the project work, the members also expressed criticism.

> "It has been interesting to participate in the Steering Group and to follow the progress of the project and its sub-projects. Some sub-projects have been more visible, some kept more hidden. I have also been calling for the general message for the project as a whole." (Member 6)

The general message and goals of the project were in focus in all of the Steering Group´s meetings. There were also contradictory feelings in the air as the members of the Steering Group were at the same time representatives and leaders of their own sub-projects.

> "The Steering Group has worked well and actively enough. The discussions have been open and I have felt that I have been heard. The group has supported the sub-projects, but sometimes I have been thinking, is the group too binding for the project activities." (Member 7)

This was an important feedback, although the meaning of "too binding" is partly unclear. Probably some sub-projects would have liked to proceed in a different way than agreed in the Steering Group, especially in budget matters.

Every sub-project had its own management group, chaired by a member of the Steering Group. This model has guaranteed the continuous flow of information both top-down and bottom-up, and a firm progress of the actions. It has also supported the sub-projects in solving the unforeseen challenges that always appear in a project.

From the coordinator's point of view, it seemed that all sub-projects were organized well and worked effectively. Nevertheless, there were also differences between the sub-projects. The UNIPS, the Flipped learning and the Digi-tutors sub-projects were tightly scheduled, had clear goals and a shared vision. They had also worked on these topics earlier. All this led to concrete high-quality results. HELLA was a project between two universities and three universities of applied sciences, all from the same region. Although it had a very clear vision and the work was divided into defined work packages, some participants felt that the division of tasks was not always clear and there was some lack of communication inside the sub-project. A challenge for the small sub-projects in the University of Arts and University of Turku was their size; there was only one person responsible for the sub-project and the bigger picture, and the goal of the entire project was not always clear. Despite of these challenges, both HELLA and the two smaller sub-projects reached their original goals well.

3.3. Activities in the project: one project or an umbrella for separate sub-projects?

In practice, the development work during the years 2017–2019 concentrated on the sub-projects. They organized their own actions under the leadership of the academic leader of the sub-project. The leaders were also members of the Steering Group of the entire project that guaranteed a constant communication between the sub-projects and the project as a whole. In addition to the meetings of the Steering Group, the project organized three whole-day seminars for all members of the sub-projects. These seminars offered an opportunity to discuss common issues and to follow the progress of the sub-projects. The seminars were organized in Turku (15 June 2017), Helsinki (22 November 2018) and Tampere (23 August 2019). During the whole project period, the participants have been informed about events, trainings and seminars organized for all GKPs.

Participation in the seminars was good as there was approximately 50 participants in every seminar. The sub-projects presented their work and had an opportunity to network with each other. Feedback from the Steering Group members about the mid-seminars was positive:

> "The mid-term seminars have been good stopping places for the own sub-project: Where are we? What have we achieved? Where are we going? The seminars have also served as training events for the younger colleagues; they have met national level actors and learned what is going on in the development of higher education. For myself they have been an important meeting point with colleagues." (Member 4)

> "It has been useful to have an opportunity to present the work of own sub-project to the others; preparing a presentation makes things more clear for yourself, too. Every time I have returned to my own university with some concrete issue that I have to clarify or proceed." (Member 3)

The goal from the very beginning was that the project forms one whole although it consists of several sub-projects. Ensuring this was one of the main tasks of the Steering Group. On the other hand, funding was internally allocated to the sub-projects, which in practice maintained the sub-project-based mindset. The Steering Group members were also asked about the project as a whole; does it form one whole or is it rather a collection of sub-projects.

> "Maybe more a collection of sub-projects, but in a positive sense. This is a well-functioning model; the sub-projects are independent but all the time well aware of the other sub-projects close to them." (Member 1 and 4)

> "At first I was wondering if some of the sub-projects were quite separate… the strength of the coordination has also been that the sub-projects have intertwined with one another during the project

period, and the whole corresponds now well to the title of the project. I believe that it has been beneficial that the actors in sub-projects have participated also in other sub-projects." (Member 2)

"A project of this size can probably never consist of only one and the same part. In my understanding three more major initiatives were developed and they have offered a lot to their participants. They were not connected in any strong way, but resulted in many learning occasions." (Member 8)

The project had generous funding, but there were, nevertheless, some challenges with finances. The amount of funding corresponded to the sum applied for the project, which meant that there was no need for re-organization of the activities when the project started. Some sub-projects had challenges in quick recruitment of competent personnel which had its consequences for the project's schedule. The budgets planned during the application phase did not always prove to be functional, e.g. some sub-projects should have allocated more resources for action expenses instead of salaries, and, as the project had an emphasis on digitalization, there was a greater need for technical support than expected. Nevertheless, the sub-projects praised the Steering Group in their feedback for strict monitoring of the realization of the budget and the use of the received funding.

In the questionnaire, the members of the Steering Group commented also on the collaboration with other sub-projects. Some of the sub-projects had recognized common themes and developed them further, both in research and concrete actions. The Flipped learning sub-project clearly connected the developers of learning and teaching in the Universities of Jyväskylä and Turku and in the University of Arts in Helsinki. They became co-developers and testers of the models developed at the University of Eastern Finland. UNIPS joined eight universities in producing modules for the common learning platform. Furthermore, the Flipped learning sub-project and UNIPS had also considerable research collaboration with each other as well as with international partners.

The sub-project HELLA remained, possibly, a little distant from the other parts of the project, which was recognized also by the members of the sub-project themselves. On the other hand, it connected the five member institutions in the Vaasa region tightly. Therefore, strong regional impact was the strength of HELLA, but, at the same time, it closed the sub-project from a wider national level collaboration. HELLA also had international collaboration with the University of Umeå in Sweden.

3.4. The outcomes of the project
As a result of the Government Key Project funding, at the end of the period the project can offer models and concrete tools both for strengthening competences of the university teachers and for supporting them in everyday work. The project's outputs are: (1) trilingual pedagogical training for university teachers (60 ECTS, English, Swedish, Finnish); (2) online English-language UNIPS

learning environment and study materials for higher education teachers; (3) manual and training model in Flipped learning; and (4) tested and piloted models for digi-tutoring and development work in the academic communities. All of these are based on research

The project is still in ongoing but we can with certainty say that the sub-projects will reach the goals promised to the Ministry of Education and Culture. University teachers will have in their use models and concrete tools both for strengthening their competences and supporting them in their everyday work. All this will also support the work well-being of the teachers when they meet challenges in the changing higher education environment. At the very end of project, the key question is how to maintain and spread the good practices, well-functioning learning environments and platforms also in the future.

3.5. Collaboration with other Key projects
A prerequisite for the funding of this project was collaboration with projects KOPE and eAMK led by the universities of applied sciences (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017a). The three key projects organized a workshop in Helsinki in December 2017 where the goal was to find out common lines of action, possible overlaps, and, on the other hand, identify opportunities for collaboration. It was noticed in the workshop concretely that, although the three projects were different, they shared the same challenges and had many things to share. Fascinating group work themes for later co-operation were also collected in the workshop.

In spring 2018, the projects organized a joint webinar on learning badges which was one of the topics recognized in December 2017. The topic of badges is present in all three projects in a way or another. The three projects had also a joint meeting during the Peda-Forum in Turku in August 2018. On the agenda in Peda-Forum were peer-teaching, peer-guiding and peer-tutoring.

In September 2019, these three projects together with the project Toteemi organized a final seminar in Helsinki where the results of all projects were presented. The seminar attracted more than 200 participants, not only members of different projects but also other teachers from higher education institutions. For the entire time, university teachers have been the focus of this project. The feedback collected from the seminar was extremely positive.

4. Discussion
In this article, we have studied the Finnish Government Key Projects (GKP) as a tool for the development of learning and teaching in the Finnish universities. The GKP process has been examined from three different perspectives: the national higher education policy, the university education leadership, and the implementation of one concrete project. The continuity from the Governmental to grass-root level is very extensive and by its nature steering. The process shows clearly that different questions are discussed on different levels of action although the actors share the same reality of Key Projects.

The results show that the goals of the Government steering have been reached as the project has enhanced synergies and supported national policy aims. On the basis of the results and the answers to the questionnaire, the case project could be defined as a combination of open and dynamic organization models: it has been self-managing and has adapted to the developing environment and, especially, been by nature a learning organization. The management of the project has required culture of change and creativity from the leadership. The project structure was able to meet the challenges that appear during project work. It has met the needs of the sub-projects and the entire project quite well. The project has been clearly development- and research-oriented, and the administrative matters have also been handled well.

The goals expressed in the project application seem to be achieved, and the resources are used for the purposes of the development project. The main question both during the whole project period and especially towards the end of the project was how to guarantee that the results will reach the target group of this development work. Will the ordinary university teachers find the models and start using them? How should they be communicated and marketed? Do the institutions have enough interest and competence to disseminate the results after the end of the project period when the project organization is no longer supporting the work? Where could the materials be stored after the project?

In some parts of the project there has been a strong emphasis on research, and several research papers will be published. In our questionnaire, one member of the Steering Group stated: "*…to make research in this project has had an enormous motivational function…perhaps the main key to success*". To the leaders of sub-projects, the project has been a significant step forward and some of them have been promoted in their university career during the project. On the other hand, it was always high on the agenda that the project should guarantee the dissemination of the results also at the grass-root level and in Finnish and Swedish as well as in English to international audience.

All the Key Projects were based on collaboration between universities. This goal seems to have been also achieved as collaboration between institutions and other project members has been fruitful and has deepened during the project. It has also produced new working models and networks that will be used also in the future. Strengthening collaboration is an important result, possibly as important as the concrete materials and models.

At the beginning, the structure of a big project with several sub-projects raised some doubts – could it lead to a situation where every sub-project concentrates only on its own actions, will the collaboration remaining only at the formal level? The collaboration has, nevertheless, worked well. The Steering Group has engaged the leaders of the sub-projects, the members of the team have supported each other in the implementation, and the shared goal has always been visible.

Implementing the project has required educational leadership at the level of the entire project and in the sub-projects. The main means for steering the project have been the meetings of the Steering Group, meetings of the management groups of sub-projects, seminars and other meetings, and continuous communication between the leaders of the sub-projects and at the project level as well as tight collaboration between the controllers of the financial services of all universities. Connecting the financial controllers in each partner university was extremely important as they share a common specialized language and their collaboration made the follow-up of the budget significantly easier.

The main principle of these key projects has been the free use of the project results in all universities after the project period. The goal is ambitious and understandable, as the projects have been financed by public funds. At the moment, when there is still a couple of months left for the projects to finish we do not have a final solution, but it is highly probable that the materials can be stored on a national electronic platform. In general, the main issue now when the projects are ending is how to share the results and to maintain the new forms of collaboration developed in the Key Projects. This requires educational leadership both at national and institutional levels.

The impact of the key projects will be finally measured in the everyday work of the universities and in the implementation of the national Vision 2030 for the Finnish higher education and its roadmaps (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2019a; 2019b).

Impact of the key projects on the national Vision 2030 for Higher Education
From the perspective of the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (2017–2019), the central themes in the selected projects were openness and flexibility of studies, new digital solutions and pedagogy development, cooperation in providing education, and the accelerated transition of students to higher education and working life as well as promoting study ability, wellbeing and participation in higher education institutions. The projects were encouraged to use the opportunities provided by digitalization for supporting year-round studying and flexibility of the studies. Additionally, work-life contacts of students and the development of students' skills for the work-life were supported. Moreover, supporting the development of student admission processes in the universities and universities of applied sciences were taken into account.

From the Ministry's point of view, it seems that the selected projects have enhanced both the strategic priorities of Prime Minister Sipilä's Government and the Vision 2030 for higher education and research, which was built up in broad collaboration with institutions of higher education and various stakeholders (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2019a). Published in October 2017, the purpose of the Vision 2030 is to "formulate a future scenario, which enables the development of a high-quality, effective, and internationally competitive higher education system in Finland by the year 2030" (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017b). The measures suggested in the Roadmap for

Implementing the Vision 2030 (2018) are in large extent included in the current Prime Minister Sanna Marin`s Government programme (Finnish Government, 2019). Already now we can see that the outcomes of several Government Key Projects create elements for the use of the development programs supporting the implementation of the Vision 2030.

Some projects have already shown to have a very clear impact on the implementation of the political agenda. For instance, two projects on the development of the student admission processes have provided effective tools for the implementation of the Ministry and higher education institutions' joint agenda on student admission reform in a way which would not have been possible if each and every institution had worked alone.

The best finding we have witnessed, though, is deepened collaboration between higher education institutions and stakeholders. This work will carry further than until the end of the project periods. Some of the Key Projects will continue until the beginning of 2021. The Key Projects are asked to carry out self-evaluations. In addition, external evaluations and assessments on the results and the effectiveness are to be carried out during the next couple of years.

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Riitta Pyykkö

Professor of Russian Studies, former Vice Rector of the University of Turku (2012-2019). She has been active in the development of higher education as, e.g. a national coordinator for the Finnish Bologna implementation in 2002-2005, a member of the Finnish Bologna Promoters'/Experts' Team in 2006-2013 and several other national working groups and projects. From 2004 she was a member, and from 2008 until 2014, the Chair of the Finnish national quality assurance agency FINHEEC. From 2016 she is a member of the European University Association's Learning and Teaching Steering Committee and from 2017 a member of the Register Committee of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

Birgitta Vuorinen

Birgitta Vuorinen is a director of the Division for Higher Education Policy at the Ministry of Education and Culture. The division is responsible for strategic development of national higher education policy and international co-operation in the field. The tasks include promoting and implementing Government's higher education policy targets, as well as developing higher education system in cooperation with stakeholders. Vuorinen has been working for the Ministry of Education and Culture since 1995. Before her current position as a director, Vuorinen worked as a head of Key Project Group (2016-2018). The Group was responsible for Government's key projects in the area of higher education (e.g. acceleration of transition to working life) http://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/implementation-of-the-government-programme.

Vuorinen holds a Master of Arts in Education with a focus in administration, planning and research in the field of education. She has completed 60 ECTS pedagogical studies (UAS/Vocational Teacher Training). Vuorinen has also experience in teaching. In the beginning of her career she worked as a class teacher for several years.

Minna Vuorio-Lehti

Minna Vuorio-Lehti (PhD, Educational science) is a Head of Learning and Teaching Development in the University of Turku. Her research interests lie in guidance and counselling in higher education, management of higher education and innovative learning environments. She is a trained teacher with experience in higher education.

Appendix 1: List of 14 partner institutions in the Government Key Project
Building up the pedagogical and digital teaching and guidance competence of higher education institution staff

1. University of Turku (coordinator)
2. Aalto University
3. Arcada University of Applied Sciences
4. Hanken School of Economics
5. Lappeenranta University of Technology
6. Novia University of Applied Sciences
7. Tampere University of Technology (2019: University of Tampere)
8. University of the Arts Helsinki
9. University of Eastern Finland
10. University of Jyväskylä
11. University of Oulu
12. University of Vaasa
13. Vaasa University of Applied Sciences
14. Åbo Akademi University

Appendix 2: Questionnaire to the Steering Group members

Dear Steering Group member,

GKP Building up the pedagogical and digital teaching and guidance competence of higher education institution staff is one of the Finnish Government's Key Projects that has had 14 partners and is lead by the University of Turku. The last six months of the project are now at hand.

You have been a member of the Steering Group. We would like to ask you some questions about the project, the project management, and outcomes. Your answers will be completely confidential. We are going to use the responses as a source material when writing the article on the entire process as well as in the final project report to the Ministry of Education and Culture in spring 2020.

Please write your answers on the Word template below. We are kindly asking you to return the questionnaire to the project coordinator at the latest on 3 October 2019. If you have any questions about the questionnaire, do not hesitate to ask.

Questions:
1. The University of Turku has been the leader of the GKP *Building up the pedagogical and digital teaching and guidance competence of higher education institution staff*
   What kind of feedback do you want to give about its role as the coordinator and leader of the entire project?
   How well has the project management succeeded?
   Have you received support from the coordinator when needed (in budget issues, questions related to sub-group management)?

2. The Steering Group of the project has had a central role. It has had 2–3 meetings every year. What is your opinion about the Steering Group?
   Has the collaboration been successful?
   Has the work of the Steering Group supported the sub-projects?

In the Steering Group meetings, you have heard how all the sub-projects are proceeding. Has it contributed to the work in your own project?

3. During the three years of the project, we have arranged three seminars. We organized the kick-off seminar in Turku in May 2017, the first mid-seminar at Paasitorni in Helsinki in the autumn of 2018, and the second mid-seminar in Tampere in 2019. What do you think about the function of the mid-seminars? Were they advantageous to your own project and its progress?

4. The *Building up the pedagogical and digital teaching and guidance competence of higher education institution staff* project has had sub-projects.
What is your experience about the entire project?
Has it appeared to you as one big project or has it been a collection of sub-projects connected to each other by funding?

5. Have you collaborated with other sub-projects in the last three years?
Have you collaborated with partners? If you have, what have you done?

6. When you think about the entire project, what has worked well? You can write your answer on the level of the entire project and on the level of your sub-project.

7. When you think about the entire project, what has been challenging or difficult? You can write your answer on the level of the entire project and on the level of your sub-project.

8. In this Government Key Project, you have developed support models, teaching materials and promoted learning environments.
How can you use these models after the project?
What are the impacts of the project's outcomes?

9. This GKP had significant funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture.
How has the budget been from your point of view?
Has the budget helped you to reach your goals?

10. Has the research you have conducted in this project and the development of teachers' skills and competence supported each other? In what way?

11. If you have published the results of your development work in scientific conferences or journals, you can list them here.

12. Lastly, if you have something you want to tell us about this GKP, we would be very grateful for you feedback. You can write your feedback below.

Thank you very much for your answers and feedback!

Best wishes,

Riitta Pyykkö and Minna Vuorio-Lehti

Appendix 3: The Steering Group summary of the meeting agendas

Meeting 15.5.2017 (Turku)
1. Opening of the meeting
2. Introduction of the members of the Steering Group
3. Definition of the task of the Steering Group
4. Appointing deputies
5. Next meeting, time and place
6. Any other business (AOB)

Meeting 12.10.2017 (Tampere)
1. Opening of the meeting. Greeting of the University of Tampere (Mikko Markkola).
2. Current matters
3. The annual clock of the Steering Group, reporting of the GKP, the project budget
4. Discussing the specified plans of the GKP´s sub-projects
5. Cooperation with GKP`s of KOPE and eAMK
6. The next meeting, time and place
7. Any other business

Meeting 16.2.2018 (Helsinki)
1. Opening of the meeting
2. Current matters
3. Sub-groups budget reports on 31.1.2018
4. Changes in sub-groups budgets. The reply from the Ministry of Education and Culture
5. Instructions for writing the intermediate report to the Ministry by 1.6.2018
6. Cooperation with KOPE and eAMK GKPs
7. Next meeting, time and place
8. Any other business

Meeting 9.5.2018 (on-line meeting)
1. Opening of the meeting
2. Previous meetings´ minutes
3. Intermediate report to the Ministry – discussion and budget reports
4. Any other business (Project and presentations at the Peda-Forum 2018 conference in Turku; Project webpages)
5. Next meeting, time and place
6. Any other business

Meeting 14.8.2018 (Turku),
1. Opening of the meeting
2. Previous meetings minutes
3. Greetings from sub-projects
4. Some notices from sub-projects´ budget reports
5. Mid-seminar at Helsinki in November 2018 – planning of the seminar
6. Any other business
7. Next meeting, time and place

Meeting 12.3.2019 (on-line meeting)
1. Opening of the meeting
2. Current matters

3. Sub-project´s budgets in the end of January 2019. Plans for using project funding during 2019.
4. Final-seminar and final reporting – planning
5. Any other business

Meeting 14.6.2019 (on-line meeting)
1. Opening of the meeting
2. Current matters
3. Sub-project´s budgets in the end of May 2019. Plans for using project funding during 2019.
4. The presentation at UNIFI vice-rectors´ meeting in Jyväskylä on 21.8.2019
5. The mid-seminar at Tampere on 23.8.2019 – planning
6. Final seminar together with three other GKP´s Toteemi, eAMK- and KOPE:n at Helsinki on 30.9.2019 (Haaga-Helia)
7. Final seminar in November or December 2019.
8. Any other business

Meeting 7.10.2019 (on-line meeting)
1. Opening of the meeting
2. Previous meeting´s minutes
3. Current matters
4. Sub-projects´ budgets at the end of August 2019. Plans for using project funding during 2019.
5. Project events during the October-December; Webinars on November, planning
6. Feedback discussion within the Steering Group members
7. Any other business

Meeting 25.11.2019 (on-line meeting)
1. Opening of the meeting
2. Previous meeting´s minutes
3. Current matters: webinars in November and Seminar at Joensuu on 20.11.2019
4. Sub-projects´ budgets in November 2019
5. Project events in November-December
6. Evaluation of the entire project – steps to evaluation