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EXTERNAL PROJECT EVALUATION

Case: RYE Connect

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ABSTRACT

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Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect (RYE Connect), is an international entrepreneurship project, spanning between Finland, Greenland and Ireland. The main objective of this project is to make the Northern Periphery and Arctic region more attractive by supporting entrepreneurship activities among the youth. These activities will in turn create job opportunities in the affected regions.

By evaluating this project, project management theories could be related to practice. In this thesis, the whole concept of project management was examined. More emphasis was placed on the project evaluation because, it is important for the project team to know how well or bad they are doing at every stage of the project so that necessary adjustments can be implemented, in order for the project to achieve its intended objectives.

In summary, the role of good project management was evidently invaluable in the project. Strong leadership enabled RYE Connect project to move forward even in the face of conflicts among the partners due to cultural differences, delay in funds and even managing change in the project. However, the role of culture in the project, especially in multicultural project teams should be addressed from the start of the project to avoid any miscommunication and to ensure that, everyone in the project is speaking in the same voice regardless of which country they come from. This will avoid conflicts and in turn save time, an extremely important, yet scarce resource in projects.

FORWARD

In dreams and in love there are no impossibilities, (Arany, 1893). However, its courage, which is the magic that turns dreams into reality (Okumura, 2008).

Thank you everyone who believed in my dreams and supported me in the only way they knew how!

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Advantage

RYE Connect

NPA

NPAP

ESP

WP

KAMK

KUAS

RDC

EU

Advantage Foundation

Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect

Northern Peripheral and Arctic

Northern Peripheral and Arctic Program

Enterprise Support Platform

Work Package

Kajaanin Ammattikorkeakoulu

Kajaani University of Applied Sciences

Rural Development Council

European Union

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1 INTRODUCTION

In a world that is more competitive than ever, companies, organizations both for- and not-for-profit, individuals and the society at large, are constantly seeking to maintain their competitive advantage. To do this, projects of all kinds and magnitude are initiated every other day. Good project management is evidently what makes the difference between a project's success and failure.

In project management, there is usually a need to understand if everything is moving towards the intended direction or not. By doing so, necessary adjustment can be done to ensure that the project achieves its goals and objectives. By recognizing what went wrong, or right or what could be done better or avoided in totality in the project, future projects can achieve better results. This brings in the concept of project evaluation.

The objective of this thesis work was to externally evaluate a cross-border entrepreneurial project. Here, the project plan and the application documents were evaluated in comparison to the actual development of the project at the time of evaluation. In addition to that, the impact of the project towards its operating regions, stakeholders and target groups, the quality of project management (communications between partners and the beneficiaries, leadership and financial management), as well as the legacy of the project, were examined.

The main goal of this thesis task was to gain a deeper understanding of the project management concept. By carrying out the tasks mentioned in the previous paragraph, this goal was fulfilled. Project management is an important part of the business world today. This is because companies must keep developing new products and services to respond to the dynamic needs of their customers, who are more empowered than ever before and are presented with a wide variety of choice as a result of globalization. For this thesis, the general concept of project management was analyzed, with an emphasis on the project evaluation function.

Evaluation is an ongoing process in any project. Therefore, it is carried out throughout the project's life cycle. The project evaluation function has been discussed in great length in this task. Different types, method and tools of evaluation and objectives for the evaluation at each stage have been clearly explained.

Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect (RYE Connect) project is the project that was used for this task. The main objective of RYE Connect project was to encourage a more entrepreneurial culture throughout the Northern Periphery and Arctic (NPA) region. This thesis work is an external evaluation report by a person who was not part of the RYE Connect project.

To do the evaluation task, questionnaires that were administered to all the project partners and the beneficiaries were designed. In addition to the questionnaires, semi-structured interviews via phone call and video conferencing platforms were conducted. The advantages of these tools have been discussed in details in research methods.

In addition to the interviews with the project partners and the beneficiaries, the application documents as well as the project plan were reviewed. Literature about project management was used to supplement the information collected from the project documents and the project stakeholders. The information received from the stakeholders was analyzed and recommendations to the project manager drawn.

This evaluation was done during the project implementation period. Therefore, it offered an opportunity to see what could be adjusted in the project to achieve the intended project objectives. Thus, it was informative in nature. The project evaluation process took four months.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Project Management

Modern project management era began in the 1950s. Core engineering fields came together and started working as one to be able to realize better results. (Cleland & Gareis, 2006). Today, project management is a well-known discipline. In the wake of globalization and hence, the ability to sell and buy from any corner of the world, competition in the market has vastly increased (Govil & Rashmi, 2013). The dynamic of the needs of the society, coupled with the perceived need for constant self- (and by extension society) improvement, especially among the millennials, has equally increase (Beaton, 2017). These factors have contributed to the thriving of projects, as companies keep undertaking different projects to solidify their competitive advantage. To ensure that these projects realize their goals, project management is an inevitable concept.

Project management is a method and a set of techniques based on the accepted principles of management used for planning, estimating and controlling activities to reach a desired end-result on time, within budget and according to the specifications (Wysocki & McGary, 2003, 18). Project management involves defining the requirements, extent and execution of the project work to be undertaken; allocating resources required to realize the project, such as human resource, machinery, finances and time; monitoring the progress of the activities and adjusting accordingly to accommodate for changes during the project (Munns & Bjeirmi, 1996). How a project manager, who is the person in charge of delivering the project objectives, handles these functions determines the success or failure of any project.

2.2 Project

A project is a sequence of unique, complex and connected activities with one goal or purpose that must be completed within a specific time, within a specified budget and according to defined set of specifications or constraints. (Wysocki & McGary,

2003, 3). A project is unique in the sense that, it is something that has never been undertaken before, and will never be undertaken after, in the same conditions. (Wysocki & McGary, 2003, 4). A certain project might seem familiar to something already undertaken before. However, every time a project is undertaken something changes. This could be the project team members, the partners, the target beneficiaries, the budget allocated to the project, the time frame or the activities involved. These things make every project a unique endeavor. Projects are temporary in nature and are undertaken to achieve specific objectives (Young, 2006).

2.2.1 Characteristics of Projects

Not everything that a company or an individual undertakes qualifies to be called a project. Some of the activities or works undertaken by companies are more of operations rather than projects. (Project Management Institute, 2004, 6). To qualify to be called a project an endeavor must exhibit some distinguishing characteristics.

There has to be a sequence of activities involved. An activity is a piece of work or specified deed. (Dictionary.com, 2017). A project consists of such pieces or chunks of work that have to be completed in a specified sequence. Determining the sequence is done by thinking of the activities in terms of inputs and outputs. The output of one activity becomes the input of the next activity.

The activities of the endeavor have to be unique. The activities of every project are different, thus giving the project the uniqueness character. It has never happened before and will never happen again. Even though events such as delays in the project or project member falling sick are common in projects, they still happen at different times and have different impacts to individual projects. Therefore, each project manager has to react to these situations differently. (Wysocki & McGary, 2003, 5).

The activities have to be complex. Activities in a project are neither simple nor repetitive. In contrast, a project involves intricate and multifaceted activities that lead to something new. (Wysocki & McGary, 2003, 4). The project team should therefore, endeavor to develop their skills to master these activities in order to make the project successful.

The activities of the endeavor have to be connected. Activities in a project are connected in the sense that, there is a logical relationship between pairs of activities. As mentioned before, the output of one activity forms the input of the next activity. The activities in a project should thus, be carried out in some specified order. (Wysocki & McGary, 2003, 5).

The endeavor must have one goal. Projects must have only one main goal. This makes the management of projects easier. Large projects with more than one goal, are further divided into sub-projects, which make scheduling of resources much easier. This also reduces interdepartmental communications while working on specific activities. (Wysocki & McGary, 2003, 5).

There is a specified time for the endeavor. Projects are carried out within a specified period of time and the completion date is binding. This can be set by either the project manager or the customer. On reaching the completion date, the project is considered to be completed, regardless of whether the project work is finished or not. (Wysocki & McGary, 2003, 5). It is therefore, important to ensure that all activities are carried out according to schedule.

There is a specified budget. Resources allocated to a project, that is, the amount of money, number of people or machines, among other things, are usually limited. A project manager is expected to run the project within the limited resources. Even though the resources can be adjusted upwards or downwards, they are still considered fixed to the project manager and therefore, the project manager has no room for luxury. (Wysocki & McGary, 2003, 5).

Lastly, there are specified specifications that have to be met by any endeavor that qualifies to be called a project. The recipient of the project's deliverables (the customer) has a set of expectations from the project. These include the quality, level of functionality, completion deadline among other specifications that the customer

might set. Project managers usually treat these specifications as fixed. However, these specifications could change, owing to several factors. This calls for flexibility to allow for the changes in the project life cycle. (Wysocki & McGary, 2003, 6).

2.2.2 Project Constraints

According to the Project Management Institute (2004), as the person in charge of delivering the project's objectives, the project manager operates under three main constraints. These are cost, scope and time. These are also known as 'the triple constraint'. Figure one below illustrates the triple constraint concept.

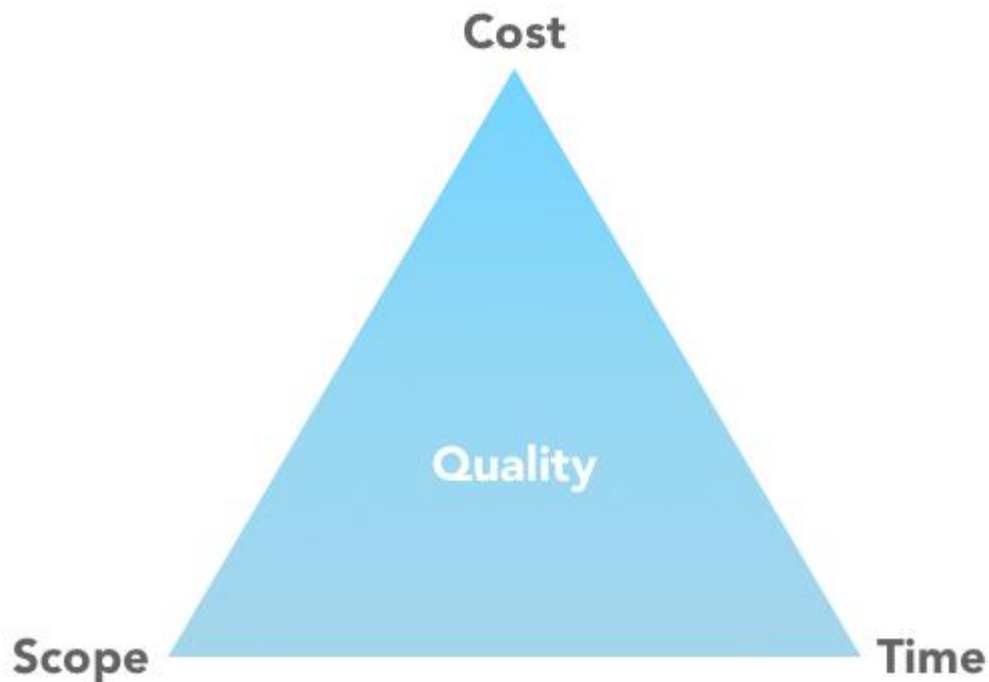


Figure 1: The Triple Constraint (Haughey, 2017).

The first constraint is the scope of the project. This is a statement defining the boundaries of a project. In other words, what will be done and what will not be done in the project.

The second constraint is the cost. This refers to the total amount of money that will be used to implement the project from start to the end. This is also known as the project budget and it is usually fixed. All the activities of the project must be carried out within the allocated budget.

The last constraint is time. This refers to the deadline set either by the customer or the project manager to ensure completion of the project. Meeting this deadline is paramount. As stated earlier, the deadline of the project is binding.

As shown in figure one, these constraints are related and all contribute to the quality of the project. High quality projects are projects that deliver results within the scope, on time and within the allocated budget. This requires balancing the above-mentioned factors. This is because, changes in one of the factors affect at least one of the rest of the factors. (Project Management Institute, 2004, 8).

2.3 Reasons for Undertaking Projects

There are many reasons why companies, organizations, or even individuals undertake projects. Whatever the reasons are, the main objective of projects is usually to challenge the status quo and bring about a beneficial change. In the business world for example, organization undertake projects to constantly secure their competitive advantage by ensuring that they are responding to the rapidly changing needs of the customers, as well as the fierce competition that has come about as a result of globalization and liberalization of markets. It is only the fit that survive in today's globalized markets (Govil & Rashmi, 2013).

At community level, projects are undertaken to for example, make regions more attractive to the rest of the world, to be able to attract tourists, retain the local population or attract investors. Such projects range from improvement of infrastructure, security, cleanliness, creating more jobs through entrepreneurship or building more schools, hospitals, or even sporting facilities. In other words, project bring about a desired state that is missing (Young, 2006). The case project is one such project (Northern Arctic and Periphery Program, 2017).

2.4 Project Life Cycle

Projects have a beginning and an end. A traditional project life cycle consists of five phases (Wysocki & McGary, 2003, 18-19). Dividing the project into phases provides a better management control of the project in relation to the organization or company operations. (Project Management Institute, 2004, 19).

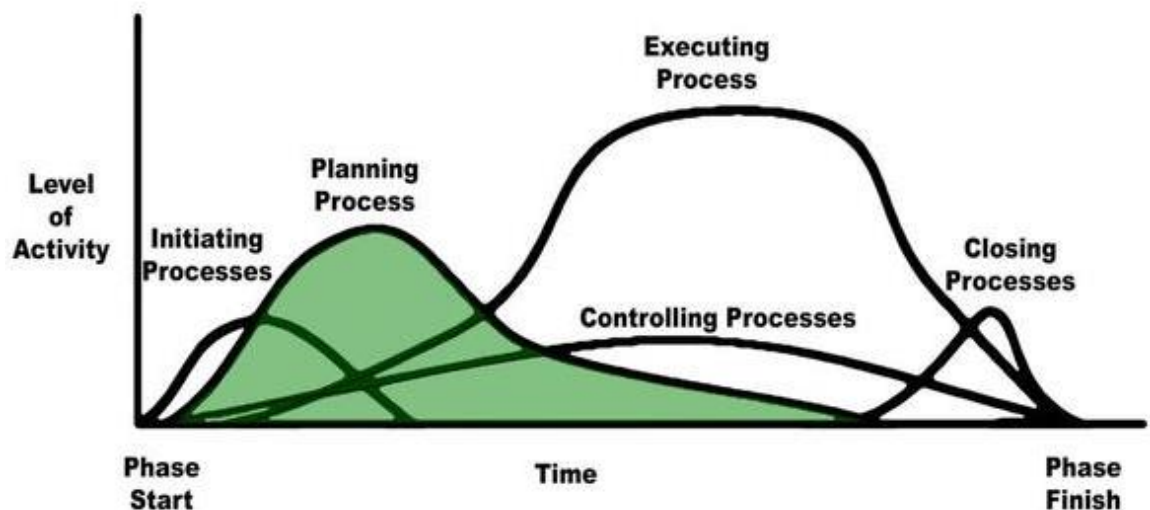


Figure 2: Project life cycle (Adapted from PMBOK guide).

Figure two above shows the phases of a traditional project life cycle. As demonstrated in the figure, the five phases are initiating (also known as the scope), planning, executing, controlling and closing. These phases will now be explained in details in the next few paragraphs.

2.4.1 The Initiating/Scope Phase

At this point the problem to be tackled or the opportunity to be exploited is clearly spelt out. The goal of the project is also identified. A set of objectives to help accomplish the goal are also set. Project evaluation and controlling criterion is determined. All the assumptions, risks or obstacles that could possibly affect the project's success are identified at this point. Even though changes are bound to arise during the actual implementations of the project, setting the scope of the project

sets the basis on which the functions of the project are set. (Wysocki & McGary, 2003, 18-19).

2.4.2 Planning Phase

At this stage a project plan is developed. It forms the roadmap to how the project will be undertaken and therefore, serves as an important decision making tool. It contains the activities of the project, as well as the duration of the activities. It also shows the resources that will be required to undertake the project. These include human resources, finances and time. The expected results of the project are also listed. Besides being a decision-making tool, a project plan offers a basis for evaluating the work planned against the work performed. Planning is important in project management as it reduces uncertainty, increases understanding and subsequently efficiency in the project. (Wysocki & McGary, 2003,19-20).

2.4.3 Executing Phase

Here, the project is launched and its actual implementation begins. During this phase, the project manager determines the specific resources that will be required to accomplish the work defined in the project plan. The project manager also allocates people to work on each respective activity and schedules the start and end of the activities. (Wysocki & McGary, 2003, 20).

2.4.4 Controlling Phase

This phase of the project is meant to monitor and evaluate the project's progress. As indicated in figure two and in principle, it runs from the beginning to the end of the project. It summarizes the completed work measured against the plan and therefore, serves as an important tool that warns the manager of potential problems well in advance. The project manager can thus, revise the project plan or implement change control measures, well before the problems escalate. (Wysocki

& McGary, 2003, 21). Controlling phase involves evaluation of the project to see if it is in the right direction.

2.4.5 Closing Phase

On completion of the project activities or reaching the set final date of the project, the project comes to an end. Closing is an important part of project management. At this stage, important questions such as project results having met customer's expectations, completion of project according to time plan, if the expectation of the project manager have been met, how important information collected will help in future project and lessons learnt during the project should be asked. (Wysocki & McGary, 2003, 22).

2.5 Key steps to project success

70% of projects fail. This is because of the many changes that a project must undergo as a result of the customer's endless trail of change and re-works that project managers do not plan for. The changes arise because of the asymmetric relationship between customer's wants and actual needs. It is important to employ an approach that embraces learning and discovery and therefore, able to accommodate the changes that are due to arise at every phase of the project. (Wysocki & McGary, 2003, xxiv).

To be able to achieve the main goal of the project, it is important to consider each single phase of the project as a step toward successful outcome of the project. All the steps are interdependent and therefore, failure at one step may lead to a failure of the entire project. Similarly, a change in one step may cause a change in the whole project plan.

It is important to ensure that a sound project plan is in place at the beginning of the project. This should be a living document that can be reviewed and adjusted in accordance with the development of the project. In addition to the project plan, stakeholders management as well as risk and issues management also play an

important role in the success of the project, and thus call for constant attention throughout the project's life cycle. (Young, 2006, 37).

2.6 Project Evaluation

Evaluation involves a systematic collection of information about an activity, its characteristics and the outcomes of such an activity in order to determine its worth (Dart ;Petheram, ;& Straw, 1998). Project evaluation is therefore, a systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, to determine the relevance and fulfillment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the project. Evaluation investigates why some aspects of the project have or have not been implemented as planned. (Guidelines for Project and Programme Evaluation, 2017).

2.6.1 Purpose of Project Evaluation

From the definition of project evaluation, it can be concluded that, the main purpose of evaluation is basically to make an objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, its design, implementation and results with the aim of determining its relevance and fulfilment of its objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Information provided by evaluation, such as how goals are being met and on how different aspects of a project are working, is essential for continuous improvement (National Science Foundation, 2017, 1). For that reason, evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful.

The purpose of project evaluation in fulfilling the purpose of the project can be summarized into two points. First of all, evaluation fosters **accountability**. Evaluation can be used to justify the existence of the project, its works and its continuation. Secondly, evaluation highlights areas of the project that need **improvement**. It can therefore, be viewed as a development process that illuminates problems and recognizes good practices. (Hughes & Nieuwenhuis, 2017, 15).

The purpose of evaluation however, goes beyond assessing just how the project fulfills its purpose. In fact, project evaluations are conducted for many other diverse reasons. Whereas the reasons may vary depending on a project, there are some common reasons that necessitate project evaluation that will be highlighted in this report.

Evaluation serves as a **learning-from-experience platform**. During the project, there are chances for success but sometimes even failure. By doing evaluation, it is possible to recognize and interpret these situations. Based on the experience, suitable changes can be made to improve not only the current project, but also future projects.

In addition to learning, evaluation brings **transparency** in the project. Evaluation presents a platform to demonstrate how responsible the project resources have been used by all the project partners as well as the project beneficiaries. In other words, it offers an opportunity for all the stakeholders to see what each one of them is doing with the project resources. This in turn brings more accountability into the project.

Evaluation also **deepens the understanding** of the stakeholders. Evaluation is a tool for deepening the knowledge and understanding about the assumptions, options and limitations of the organization undertaking the project. It also accords the stakeholders a chance to understand each other better by airing out pressing issues and suggesting solutions.

Evaluation **improves communication**. Communication among all stakeholders is paramount for the success of any project. Evaluation intends to foster communication and understanding among the project partners as well as the project beneficiaries. This is important for the success of the project.

Evaluation determines whether the **objectives of the project are met**. Evaluation presents an opportunity to compare the project plan with what has actually been achieved. Corrective measures can thus be implemented while best practices can be recognized and be replicated.

Last but not least, evaluation offers a chance to **review or adjust the management methods and techniques**. If done during the project, evaluation shows the project team if they are in the right direction or not. This presents an opportunity to reflect on the current management styles and techniques and determine if there is a need to adjust them accordingly.

(Guidelines for Project and Programme Evaluation, 2017).

2.6.2 Project Evaluation Tools and Methods

There are many project evaluation tools and methods available for project managers to choose from. The tools chosen mainly depend on the magnitude and type of the project at hand. For this thesis task, three methods/tools that were thought to be relevant will be discussed. These are, the Logframe matrix, questionnaires and semi structured interviews. (Evaluation Toolbox, 2017).

Semi-structured Interview

A semi-structured interview is a qualitative method of inquiry that combines a pre-determined set of open-ended questions. This gives the interviewer an opportunity to explore particular themes and responses further, should it be necessary. It also allows respondents to discuss and raise issues that the interviewer may not have considered. Semi-structured interviews are used to understand interventions and offer room for suggestions on how they could be improved. (Evaluation Toolbox, 2017).

Advantages of Semi-structured Interview

There are mainly two reasons why a project manager will consider using semi-structured interviews to evaluate their project. Semi structured interview provides valuable information from context of participants and stakeholders experiences. Both the interviewer and the interview are not limited to 'yes' or 'no'. This gives both parties an opportunity to expound on issues of importance in the project. In addition to that, the use of pre-determined questions provides uniformity. Since

similar questions are asked to all the participants, it is easy to collect uniform data from all the participants. (Evaluation Toolbox, 2017).

Disadvantages of Semi-structured Interviews

Semi structure interviews are not without challenges. Semi-structured interviews could be time consuming to collect and analyze data. With every respondent giving as much information as they deem necessary, it could be cumbersome to compile the data received. Moreover, semi-structure interviews require some level of training and/or practice in order to prevent the interviewer from suggesting answers. With open ended questions, it is tempting for interviewers without experience in conducting interviews to ask leading questions. (Evaluation Toolbox, 2017).

Questionnaires

Questionnaires are one of the most popular tools used to gather data from a large number of people. A good designed questionnaire can be a powerful tool to inform the evaluation process, while the reverse is true. There are different kind of questionnaires used at different stages of the evaluation. That is, pre- and post-project evaluation and mid-project evaluation questionnaires. Each of these questionnaires should be designed differently because they are intended to collect information for different purposes. Another thing that makes use of questionnaires popular in evaluation is their wide range of ways to deliver them. Questionnaires can be delivered through the telephone, face to face, by mail, or they could even be web-based. For better results, the questionnaires should be kept short and its purpose should be clearly indicated. (Evaluation Toolbox, 2017).

Advantages of Questionnaires Interview

As already mentioned, questionnaires are a popular and common project evaluation tool. This is because they are relatively easy and cheap to develop and distribute and to collect data. Once the scope of evaluation has been decided, it is quite easy to design the questionnaires. Distributing them can also be as easy as clicking a mouse, in the case of web-based or email distributed questionnaires.

Another advantage of using questionnaires to collect data for evaluation is the fact that they allow for many questions in the same questionnaire. It is possible to ask

several questions in one questionnaire. They also provide quantitative data that can be statistically analyzed. With questionnaires, all kind of data can be collected at the same time. Using statistical software, the data can be analyzed with ease if the questionnaire has been professionally developed. What is more, using standardized questions allow for reproducible and comparable questionnaires. Single questionnaire can therefore be duplicated to serve many participants. This saves time and speeds up collection of the data. (Evaluation Toolbox, 2017).

Disadvantages of Questionnaires

Popular as they might be, questionnaires have their own shortfalls. To start with, good questionnaires designing may require an expert's input. This might cost money and time. A poorly designed questionnaire might defeat the purpose of project evaluation. Secondly, reliability of answers is not so high since they might be biased. The participants might understand questions differently and thus give answers that are not so useful for the evaluation process.

Another possible shortfall of questionnaires, is the potentially low responses rates, especially in long-term follow up questionnaires. Where there is no incentive to respond to the questionnaires, the response rate might be too low to enable any reliable evaluation. Moreover, the data input can be cumbersome too. In long questions, with open-ended questions it might be a lot of work to capture all the response correctly.

Questionnaires may fail to capture the intended consequences. Depending on the wording of the questionnaires, the respondent might understand the questions different from the intended meaning, thus failing to collect the intended data. Besides, due to lack of expertise in the development of the questionnaire, the questionnaire might end up irrelevant to the task at hand. Lastly, the length and number of questions is sometimes limited especially when the questionnaire is admitted by phone.

(Evaluation Toolbox, 2017).

Logframe Matrix

It is a document that outlines the key features that lead to a project achieving its goal. It consists of four columns and five rows (see figure 3).

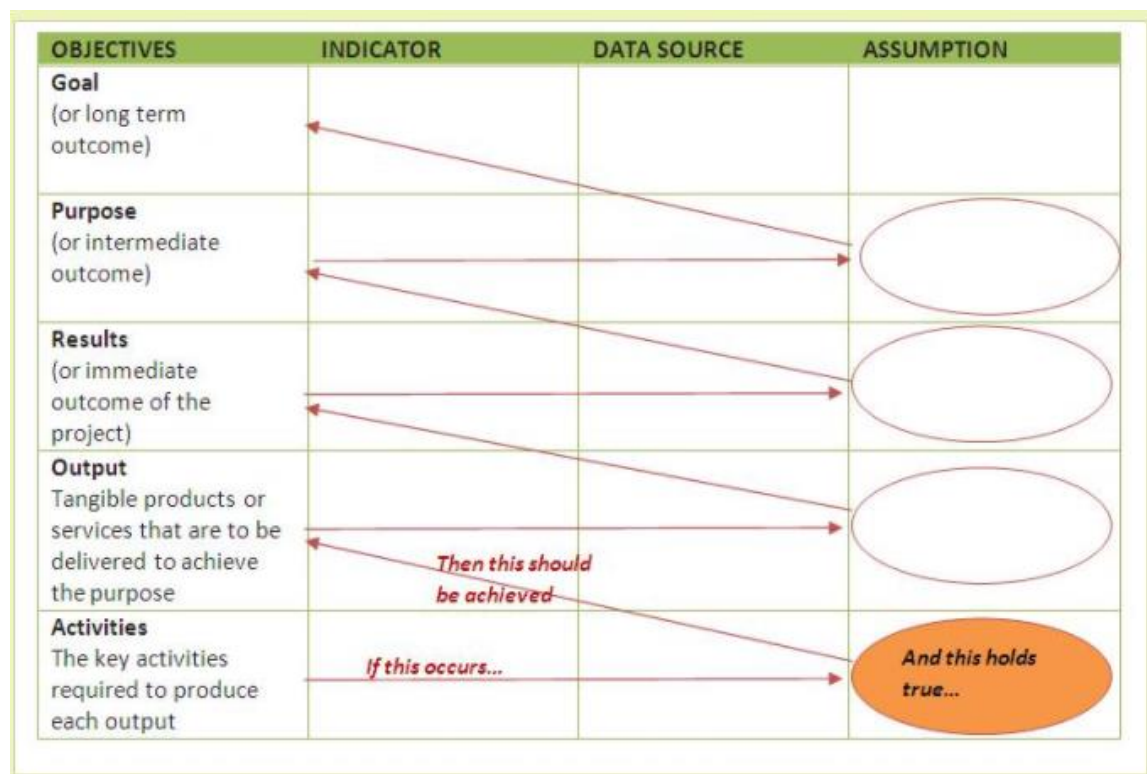


Figure 3: Logframe (Evaluation Toolbox, 2017).

From figure three above, the assumption column represents some of the complexity that projects need to consider. A good example would be finding the staff with the right skills. If the assumptions are not realized, they represent a risk and a risk analysis should be undertaken. The vertical logic connects using the first and the last column and reflects the sequence of steps that lead to the outcomes being achieved. The vertical logic is usually read from the bottom up and the assumptions that are noted in each row must be met for the hierarchy to be achieved. Horizontal logic on the other hand consists of individual rows and represents a concise outline for monitoring and evaluating the project. (Evaluation Toolbox, 2017).

2.6.3 Types of Evaluation

There are several types of project evaluation that a project manager can choose from. These depend on the purpose of the evaluation process. Evaluation types are divided into two major categories: Formative evaluation and summative evaluation. (National Science Foundation, 2017, 7)

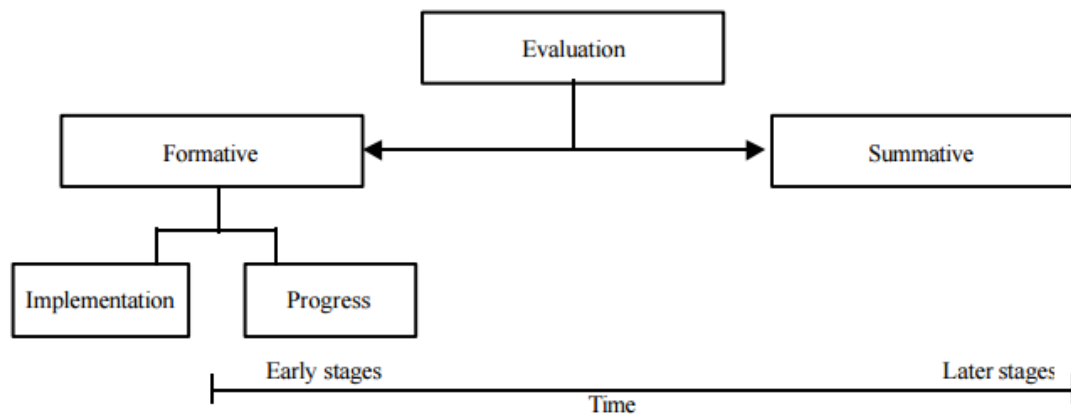


Figure 4: Types of evaluation (National Science Foundation, 2017)

Formative Evaluation

Formative evaluation takes place throughout the project, that is, from inception to end of the project. It serves to assess the ongoing project activities and provide information to monitor and improve the project. It is therefore, done at several points in the developmental life of the project and its activities. In other words, a formative evaluation assesses ongoing project activities. Formative evaluation can be divided into two components: Implementation and progress evaluation. (National Science Foundation, 2017, 8).

Implementation Evaluation

The purpose of implementation evaluation (also known as process evaluation), is to assess if the project is being conducted as planned. It may be conducted once or several times, during the life of the project. The idea behind implementation evaluation is to make sure that the project and the project activities are operating in accordance with the proposed plan. (National Science Foundation, 2017, 8).

Progress Evaluation

As the name suggests, progress evaluation is done with the purpose of assessing the progress of the project in meeting its goals. Information is collected to be able to learn whether the benchmarks of participants' progress were met and to point out unexpected developments. This allows project staff to eliminate the risk of waiting until the end of the project to determine the outcome of the project. With the data collected, the project participants are able to adjust accordingly. (National Science Foundation, 2017, 9).

Summative Evaluation

In contrast to formative evaluation, summative evaluation is conducted at the very end of the project. Its purpose is to assess the project effectiveness in achieving its ultimate goals. Therefore, it is also sometimes referred to as impact or outcome evaluation. Summative evaluation collects information about outcomes and related processes, strategies and activities that have led to the outcomes. Usually, summative evaluation is needed for decision making.

External and Internal Evaluation

Depending on who is engaged in the evaluation process, project evaluation can be either internal or external evaluation. **Internal Evaluation** is evaluation performed by a person who is a member of the project team. **External evaluation** on the other hand, is evaluation done by an independent person who is not a member of the project team.

Advantages	Internal	External
	Timely – Immediately the program/project has information that begins informing program/policy decisions.	Perspective – An external evaluation may provide a view of the program that is considered more objective by the intended users.
	Buy-in – Those involved have the opportunity to have their voices heard, and may want to contribute to the evaluation.	Credible – An external evaluation may be perceived as having more credibility for people outside of the program/project (funding partners, stakeholders, etc.)
	'Insider' perspective – An 'in-house' evaluator may be more familiar with the staff, community, issues, and resources associated with the project/program.	Expertise – An external evaluator or team may possess certain evaluation research skills and knowledge that the internal evaluator may not. S/he may also have exposure to a wider range of issues, methods, and practices that would be useful to incorporate.
Disadvantages		
	Time consuming – Internal evaluations involve staff time that may draw on limited personnel resources.	Cost – External evaluations can be more costly than internal evaluations.
	Bias – There may be a perception of bias if the internal evaluator is 'too close' to the subject matter; this may result in risking the credibility of the evaluation and hindering its use.	Time – It may be difficult to manage an evaluation conducted by an external evaluator.
		Expertise – It may be difficult to find evaluators who understand the region or programming area.

Table 2: Advantages and Disadvantages of External and Internal Evaluation: Source: (Evaluation Toolkit, 2017).

As evident in table one above which shows the advantage and disadvantages of both internal and external evaluation as compiled by Evaluation Toolkit.Org (2017), there are shortcomings and gains for choosing either internal or external evaluation. (Evaluation Toolkit, 2017). Whether to use an internal or external evaluator largely depends on the project needs. The project manager should strive to understand these needs in details before deciding whether to employ external or internal evaluation.

3 RESEARCH CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Northern Periphery and Arctic Program 2014-2020

Northern Periphery and Arctic Program (NPAP) 2014-2020 is a European Regional Development Fund funded program launched in 2014. It consists of nine main partners from Euro-Artic Zone, parts of the Atlantic Zone and parts of the Barents regions. These are Finland, Ireland, Sweden, United Kingdom (Scotland and Northern Ireland), Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland and Norway. These countries have several features in common. These include, low economic diversity, abundant natural resources, low population density, low accessibility and a strong impact of climate change. Due to these factors, it is difficult to attract and retain people in these regions. (Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme, 2017).

The main goal of Northern Periphery and Arctic Program is therefore, to make the regions more attractive for people to visit, live, work, study and even invest. NPAP 2014-2020 is part of the European Territorial Cooperative Objective, in the framework of cohesion policy supported by the European Regional Development. (Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme, 2017). The goal of the program will be achieved by funding a wide variety of projects.

Northern Periphery and Arctic Program envisions vibrant competitive and sustainable communities in the chosen regions. To achieve that, it harnesses innovation, expands the entrepreneurship capacity and take full advantage of the unique growth initiatives and opportunities of the Northern Periphery and Arctic regions in a resource efficient manner. To this end, NPAP has approved 35 main project and 32 preparatory projects in different areas, ranging from innovation, entrepreneurship, energy and sustainability (NPAP 2014-2020, 2017).

Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect (RYE Connect) is one of the projects that has been approved by Northern Periphery and Arctic Program. (Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2014-2020, 2017). The RYE Connect contributes 'to improving support systems tailored for start-ups and existing Small and Medium

Enterprises (SMEs) in remote and sparsely populated areas' program priority specific objective of NPAP.

3.2 Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect Project Description

Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect is a project under the umbrella of Northern Periphery and Arctic Program 2014-2020, that is scheduled to run from 15.4.2015 to 14.4.2018. It consists of partners from the Northern Periphery and Arctic (NPA) regions, namely Finland, Northern Ireland and Greenland (*each of these partners and their role in the project will be discussed under project partners*). Each one of the partners has recruited associate partners to help them deliver the goal of the project. They also act as a center point for their respective associate partners and beneficiaries. (Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2014-2020, 2017).

3.3 Objectives of the Project

3.3.1 Overall Objective

The main objective of Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect is to encourage a more entrepreneurial culture throughout the Northern Periphery and Arctic region. By building on the experiences of the first Rural Youth Entrepreneurship project, RYE Connect intends to promote innovative thinking that inspires young people aged between 16 and 30, to create unique business opportunities across the NPA region. The aim is to support those who are starting their businesses today and at the same time create a more entrepreneurial culture within the target area by developing more entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviors. RYE Connect targets to encourage greater numbers of young people to choose entrepreneurship as a source of employment in the future. (Rural Youth Entrepreneurship, 2017).

3.3.2 Specific Objectives

To achieve the main objective of the project, Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect has set out nine specific objectives. RYE Connect aims to create better transnational opportunities for young people inside the Northern Periphery and Arctic region and at the same time provide a wider support by identifying markets for innovations. It also intends to develop and design a functional enterprise support platform. This is intended to support the young entrepreneurs to professionally plan their businesses and hence enhance investors' readiness to fund their businesses.

Encouraging and supporting the development of a more flexible and supportive enterprise development infrastructure which recognizes the value of place based opportunities to sustainable economic development of the Northern Periphery and Arctic region, is the next Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect's objective. To this end, RYE Connect intends to promote the development of a more entrepreneurial culture throughout the NPA region. This will require a change of attitude and behavior by emphasizing the creation of a more entrepreneurial mindset among the young people.

The results of the development of a more entrepreneurial culture will be a more varied and sustainable economic model in the Northern Periphery and Arctic region. This will support young people from remote and rural areas in developing business ideas that are suitable to their areas and therefore, able to retain the communities living there. Lastly, Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect intends to facilitate sharing of experiences and ideas across the NPA in support of a new approach to economic development in which young people become the driving force for the future, building on the uniqueness of the culture and natural resources of their area to create thriving local communities and economies once more.

(Northern Periphery and Arctic Program, 2015, 11-12).

Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect will take a unique approach to achieve its objectives. RYE Connect intends to support small and rural communities to de-

velop vibrant and sustainable local economies that view their rurality as a key factor to success. This will be achieved by first of all, exposing young people to other cultural experiences to help them develop a greater appreciation of their own cultures. RYE Connect will also promote and support business development ideas that are primarily place-based business opportunities. In addition to that, it will support a wider appreciation of the value of entrepreneurship to remote and rural communities. Moreover, RYE Connect will support young people to start or develop their business as per these values. Last but not least, RYE Connect will support a community or practice among development organizations, that can share and develop best practice in supporting youth enterprise and the place based approach to sustainable economic development and help communicate the value of such approach to regional national policy makers.

By achieving its objectives, Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect will have tackled two issues which are key to the economic and social sustainability of the remote and rural communities of the Northern Periphery and Arctic region. These are migration and unemployment. Entrepreneurial activities will create job opportunities and in turn reverse the outward migration trends from the NPA region's parts affected by the project.

3.4 Project Work Packages

Work packages refers to the breakdown of the work to be executed by the project team in order to accomplish the intended project objective and create the required project results. Work packages divide the project into smaller manageable pieces of work. (Project Management Institute, 2004, 112). To achieve its results and objectives, Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect divided its activities into six work packages.

Work Package (WP)	Name of the Work Package	Main Activities	Partner responsible	Objective
WP1	Project Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Structure responsibilities and procedures for the day to day management and co-ordination ✓ Communication within the partnership ✓ Reporting and evaluation procedures ✓ Risk and quality management 	KUAS	To provide leadership to the project.
WP2	Communication activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Developing external communication tools (promotional materials, publications, business plan gamification, online business guide, public events). 	RDC + Greenland	To ensure interactive communication with beneficiaries.
WP3	Establishment of RYE connect network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Recruiting Associate network ✓ Recruiting entrepreneur network ✓ Recruiting Investor network 	All Partners	To develop a functional and active associate partner network that covers the whole NPA region.

WP4	Design and build of Enterprise Support Platform (ESP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Designing and build of pre-start zone. ✓ Designing and build of start zone. ✓ Designing and build of growth zone. ✓ Designing and build of turn around zone. 	KUAS	To design and build a world-class, cloud based enterprise support platform available across RYE network, that offers support for young people in prestart, start, growth and business turn-around.
WP5	Hothouse Training Program design and delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Creating training programs corresponding to each zone in the ESP. 	Advantage	To design and create a world class enterprise training program.
WP6	Program review and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Self-assessment, monitoring and evaluation of the project progress. 	KUAS	Constant evaluation of the project to ensure that the qualitative and quantitative level of all deliverables are at the best possible level and they have the desired effect on the target group.

Table 3: Project Work Packages; Source: Adapted from the project plan.

Table two (2) above has explains the Rural Youth Enterprise Connect's work packages in details. This has been adapted from the project plan. Whereas all the six work packages are important for the RYE Connect, there are two work packages that stand out in this project. These are work package four (WP4) and work package five (WP5).

Work Package Four (WP4) – The Enterprise Support Platform (ESP)

Towards realizing its objective, the largest output of Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect is the WP4. This is an online business platform, where young entrepreneurs can get a step by step guide to establishing their businesses. That is, from writing the business plan, to finding an investor to fund their businesses and beyond. The ESP is designed into four support zones; pre-start, start, growth and business turn-around. Each of the ESP's compartment has its own output that triggers progression. It contains interactive tools, support packs, dedicated training and mentoring specifically designed for that phase of the business development:

Prestart Zone: Business Action Plan

Start Zone: Professional Business Plan

Turn around: Professional 'Turnaround' Plan

Growth: Professional Growth Plan

Young entrepreneurs can also connect with mentors, referral networks and can access a variety of learning materials that are relevant to the stage of their business. On completion of the program, the Enterprise Support Platform will remain in the public domain and can be used by anyone, as long as it is not for commercial purposes. (Rural Youth Entrepreneurship, 2017).

Work Package Five (WP5)-Hothouse Training Program Design and Delivery

Closely connected to WP4 is the WP5. It is the second largest output of the Rural Youth Enterprise Connect. WP4 and WP5 are interdependent. In the hothouse program, training materials will be designed to correspond to each of the training zones in the WP4, that is, prestart, start, growth and turnaround zone.

The two work packages will interact continuously with a view to ensuring that the young entrepreneurs from the original Rural Youth Enterprise, have access to world class resources that support and consolidate the training on offer. A series of interactive workshops offering a wealth of guidance and innovative training that support each stage of the entrepreneurial process will be created. (Northern Periphery and Arctic Program, 2015,11-12).

3.5 Project Team

Four partners have joined hands to deliver the goal of Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect project. They both bring in different expertise that stand to benefit the project. They are drawn from different countries in the Northern Periphery and Arctic region. These are Finland, Northern Ireland and Greenland, regions that share similar challenges and want to make a difference.

3.5.1 Kajaani University of Applied Sciences (KUAS)

Kajaani University of Applied Sciences, (KUAS), otherwise known as Kajaanin Ammattikorkeakoulu (KAMK) in the national language, is the lead partner in the RYE Connect project. Located in Kainuu, in the North-Eastern Finland, KUAS has a total of 2000 students and 235 staff. KUAS is also an international player in the region as evidenced by the number of international students in the college. It is home to more than 400 international students from all over the world; Africa, Asia, Australia, Russia and almost all countries around Europe. (KAMK, 2017).

Kajaani University of Applied Sciences focuses on combining research and innovation to business. It is a nationally appreciated partner with active international collaboration. KUAS has partners in more than 40 countries across the globe (KAMK, 2017). It also participates in several cross-border projects. Example of international collaboration projects of KUAS include the Sharpen project, (KAMK, 2017) and of course Rural Youth Enterprise Connect.

Kajaani University of Applied Sciences' vision is to become the smartest university in Finland by 2024. To this end, every effort is geared towards achieving this goal. Research and development is the key function of KUAS. It is a true beneficiary of internalization and digitalization. KUAS' core expertise areas are, game development, simulation, vehicle information systems and longer term reliability of embedded electronics, well-being technology, health promotion and tourism. (KAMK, 2017).

As an institute of education and a research hub, Kajaani University of Applied Sciences is an invaluable partner in the Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect project. Apart from providing project leadership, it offers the project a wide range of resources and support. The rest of the project partners attested that, the development of the Enterprise Support Platform profited from KUAS' technical know-how and resources.

3.5.2 Advantage Foundation

Advantage Foundation (Advantage) is an award-winning organization based in Northern Ireland, which provides services for youth around the world. Advantage has worked in over 20 countries over the last 25 years, delivering excellent results in its field. It has worked with different people; from students to graduates to young business owners to prisoners and young people with mental health challenges. Advantage has worked in some of the most challenging conditions such as conflict stricken places for example Iraq and Uganda, geographically hostile environments such as Siberia and the Arctic, and even in prisons, squatter camps, and militarized zones, providing innovative and cost effective approaches to getting the work done. (Advantage, 2017).

Advantage Foundation is an expert in entrepreneurship support tools. It offers entrepreneurs tools and training to start and grow their businesses. As an entrepreneurship project, Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect is expected to benefit from the many years of experience of Advantage in this field.

3.5.3 Greenland Business

Greenland Business is a national agency for promoting business development and entrepreneurship in Greenland. It is the sponsor of Startup Greenland, a competition kind of event intended to inspire current and future entrepreneurs through local workshops and competitions, hosted by experienced advisors. (Greenland Business, 2017).

As a partner in the Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect, Greenland Business' role is to take part in developing new RYE Connect concept that builds on experience from 'Startup Greenland' and similar experiences abroad. The aim of this activity is to take the concept of Startup Greenland further. In other words, not letting the young entrepreneurs go but rather supporting them until they are ready for investment or even make their first sale. (Source: Adapted from the project plan).

3.5.4 Rural Development Council (RDC)

Rural Development Council is a rural development organization for Northern Ireland that supports and encourages integrated rural development actions that recognize and value the contribution of agriculture rural regeneration, the environment and culture in realizing its vision of a living working sustainable and shared countryside. Formed in 1991, RDC is an integral part of the first rural development program for Northern Ireland. Since its inception, RDC operates as the primary independent rural development body for Northern Ireland, managing and delivering European Union, International Fund for Ireland and other funded actions and initiatives in areas such as rural business development, community development, promoting good relations and equality of opportunity and social enterprise. (Rural development Council, 2017).

3.6 Associate Partners

In addition to the partners, the Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect project partners have recruited associate partners. The Associate partners bring in different expertise to supplement the capabilities of the partners in delivering the goal of the project. These are universities, research and development organizations, corporate trainers, and entrepreneurial awareness creating organizations among others. (Rural Youth Entrepreneurship, 2017). At this point, the associate partners have not been involved in the evaluation process.

3.7 Objectives, Scope and Questions of the Thesis

Since it is impossible to accomplish everything wanted, it is important that the objectives of the development work are as clear as possible (Toikko & Rantanen, 2009). The evaluation of the case project was done during the project and therefore, this was a formative evaluation. The objective of this thesis was to evaluate the progress of the case project in relation to the project plan. The progress of the project towards its goals, best practices and areas in need of adjustments in the project were assessed. The aim was to use the results of the research to adjust accordingly with a view to ensuring that the intended project objectives were met at the end of the project.

3.7.1 Scope

The evaluation focused on four different aspects of the project. These are communication, finance management, project leadership and progress towards the objective. The relevant data was collected from all the project partners and a sample of beneficiaries drawn from different countries in the Northern Periphery and Arctic region. The project plan and the project application materials were also used for the evaluation.

3.7.2 Research Question

To cover the scope of the project, the research question is four-fold as follows:

How has the atmosphere developed during the project?

How has finances and communication been managed and what is their impact on the development of the project?

How successful has the leadership of the project been executed?

What adjustments are needed to ensure that the project achieves its results?

To answer the above questions, the evaluation process focused on WP1 and WP2. The impact of these packages on the rest of the work packages was also evaluated. In addition to that, project management theories were used as the theoretical framework of this study to supplement the data collected.

3.7.3 Research Strategy and Methodology

This research was a qualitative research. The theoretical framework of project management theories and concepts were used, followed by empirical part. The data collected was analyzed against the project management theories to identify the link between the theories and practice.

There are three tools that were used to collect the data for this research. These are questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and desk review of the project application materials, project plan, among others. The advantages of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were considered in choosing these two tools (see *table 1*). Three questionnaires were designed; one for the lead partner, one for the rest of the partners and one for the beneficiaries.

The questions were open ended. This was in a bid to give the participants enough room to express themselves so that they could give as much information as possible about every question. For ease of administration the questionnaires were divided into sections, each focusing on one item of evaluation in great length.

The questionnaires were sent to all the partners and beneficiaries by email. This is because the partners and beneficiaries were in different countries. Emails are therefore more convenient to reach them. Emails are cheap and fast enough to deliver the questionnaires timely.

Semi-structured interviews based on the questionnaires were also administered to the project partners. The questionnaires were sent several days before the interviews so that the partners could familiarize themselves with the questions. It was therefore, easy to answer the questions more concisely, during the actual interviews. Skype conference was used by all the partners. Due to technical problems with the internet connections however, telephone calls were used by two partners to compliment the skype.

As for beneficiaries, the questionnaires had to be translated and localized. The questionnaires were also administered by emails. The responses were sent by email as well. On beneficiaries from Ireland and Finland participated in the research.

4 DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Lead Partner Evaluation

It is essential for the project manager to have general management skills as these form the foundation of project management. These are planning, organizing, staffing, executing and controlling the operations of an ongoing enterprise. In addition to that, the project manager should have interpersonal skills, such as effective communication which enables ease exchange of information, influence for the project manager to be able to get things done and of course leadership. Leadership will enable the project manager to develop a vision and strategy and motivate the people working with the project manager to achieve that vision and strategy.

In addition to that, the project manager should be able to motivate the people to achieve high levels of performance and to overcome barriers to change. Not only that, the project manager should possess good negotiating and conflict resolution skills to be able to confer with others to come to terms with or to reach an agreement. Moreover, the project manager should be a problem solver.

(Project Management Institute, 2004, 15).

The above-named skills come in handy during the entire life cycle of the project. They help the project manager to keep moving the project towards its objectives despite the rise of conflicts and misunderstandings in the project. This is achieved by solving problems when they arise and sometimes making tough but necessary decisions.

4.1.1 Lead Partner Evaluation Research Results

Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect project leadership has played a pivotal role in achieving the results realized as at the time of the evaluation. The skills named above were evident in every aspect of the project. Despite the challenges in the speed of funding (*see finance management*), and the delay of the launch of the

Enterprise Support Platform by almost one year (*see project plan*), the project has achieved most of the set targets by adjusting accordingly to accommodate for the changes. Some of the important factors to highlight about this section of the evaluation according to the research results have been discussed below:

First on the list is the degree of the leadership role by the lead partner. In the words of the project manager, Kajaani University of Applied Sciences played its role as a lead partner to the best of their ability. All the project partners attested to this fact. The partners were extremely satisfied with the leadership skills of the lead partner. They termed the project manager as in control of what needed to be done, delivering communication promptly and most importantly sharing the vision of the project, which he was very passionate about.

Another important issue noted was the interpersonal skills of the lead partner. The lead partner had not only promoted good partnership in the project, but also supported the partnership with management of the project. Besides that, the lead partner had developed visual materials and outlined concrete plan of what needed to be done to achieve what, a strong demonstration of their leadership skills. The lead partner had also played a very important role, mediating conflicts and resolving issues without letting them escalate.

Finally, the speed of the lead partner in dealing with issues was commended. Information from the lead partner was usually prompt and clear (*see communication management*). Moreover, the lead partner disbursed funds promptly to the partners once they received the funds from the European Union. This is one of the areas that the partners felt that the lead partner had done extremely well.

4.1.2 Areas of improvement

As mentioned before, the partners were quite confident with the leadership skills of the project manager and the entire lead partner crew. However, there was one area that the partners agreed needed to be improved in order to ensure the suc-

cess of the project. This was ensuring that everyone remained on board and ensuring that everyone is hearing the same message at the same time. What this means is ensuring that all the partners interpret the information in the same way.

4.2 Project Plan

A project can be defined as a formal document designed to guide the control and execution of a project. It is a document that displays the project activities along a timeline. A project plan is the most important document that needs to be created when starting any project and is the key to a successful project. (techopedia, 2017). It is the primary source of information for how the project will be planned, executed, monitored, controlled and closed (Project Management Institute, 2004, 48).

A project plan answers four questions that are extremely important in project management. A project plan gives details of why the project is being conducted in the first place. It also details what activities are required to successfully complete the project, as well as the main results or products of the project. In addition to that, it clearly explains the people who will take part in the project, how they will be organized, as well as their responsibilities. Finally, a project plan shows the project schedule and when each milestone will be completed. (techopedia, 2017). These are important things that should be known to all stakeholders. A project plan, therefore, act like a roadmap of the project to the project team.

4.2.1 Project Plan and Application Process Research Result

The project plan of Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect was clearly laid down, following the above-named principles. What needed to be achieved by when and by whom was clearly set out. Each partner's targets in the various activities are also clearly laid down. All the project partners had familiarized themselves with the project plan and knew what was expected from them as well. According to the results of the interview, the partners agreed that the project plan was quite good

since it is almost impossible to make a perfect plan owing to external factors that are beyond the powers of the project manager and the project team at large.

There were some key points worth noting about the project plan implementation of Rural Youth Enterprise Connect. The Enterprise Support Platform (ESP) was approximately four months late. Even though the original plan was to publish a Beta version of the platform for public use, the partnership decided to wait for the testing and fine-tuning of the ESP and therefore publish the final version. This was in order to ensure that, the final product was user friendly. The final version of the ESP was eventually about one year late.

As a result of the delay of the ESP, there was also a change of time line of other activities and meetings. It was also noted that, some partners came up with their own project plan to supplement the main project plan. Finally, some of the targets for example investor network recruitment had not even been touched by some of the partners. In fact, one of the partners mentioned that, they had postponed the investor recruitment activity in totality.

4.2.2 Discussion

Even though the project plan was quite clear to all the partners, its implementation seemed to be a challenge. All the partners had overachieved in prestart trainings. However, proceeding beyond that seemed to be a difficult task. Some issues raised by the partners as challenges have been discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

The first issue was the need to prioritize the activities. The biggest deviation of the plan was the realization of the Enterprise Support Platform (ESP). The ESP formed the basis upon which most of the activities of the project were anchored. All work packages were closely tied to the ESP. There was thus, a need to give it sufficient lead-time, resources and effort to ensure it was developed, completed and launched on time. The delay of the ESP caused a further delay in other activ-

ities, rightly so, because activities in a project are interconnected. One of the partners reported that, they could not proceed with investor networks recruitment as they did not know what to tell them without the ESP platform in place.

Secondly, some team partners thought that, there needed to be realistic approach of the figures. According to the partner, the numbers in the project plan were over ambitious. They thus called for a need to be more practical with the project plan. They emphasized on the importance of putting into consideration the time and resource factors allocated for the project when coming up with the targets.

Thirdly one of the partners lamented that the indicators were rather unclear to them. The partner felt that the indicators were vague. In their opinion, rather than just give numbers, they suggested that the indicators be clearly explained to all the project participants in the beginning of the project. A detailed plan of how the indicators were to be achieved should also have been agreed upon by all the partners. This would ensure that all the partners were in the same page as the project progressed, avoiding the need for partners coming up with own implementation plan and indicators. This would in turn save time and ensure that targets are achieved within the set time plan.

The last issue was the allocation of human resources. The time allocated for the project seemed to be insufficient to attain the goals of the project. Besides, since the project was a partnership, there was a need to allocate the partners equal working time, so that they all could be able to put the same effort in the project. It was agreed across board that the lead partner could have more time than the rest. To supplement the human resources matter, a PhD student, would also have been attached to the project, to help with the evaluation, research with the latest entrepreneurial issues among other project related matters.

4.3 Project Team

The project team comprises of people who have been assigned roles and responsibilities for completing the project. The team members should be involved as early as possible in the planning process, because this adds expertise and strengthens

the commitment to the project. Organizing and managing project management teams is a function of the project human resource management.

The project human resource management has to deal with several processes to ensure a smooth flow of activities in the project. They have to plan the human resources. This involves, identifying and documenting project roles, responsibilities, and reporting relationships, as well as creating the staffing management plan. The project human resource management also has to acquire the project team. This means obtaining the human resources needed to complete the project. After that, the project team has to be developed. This means, improving the competencies and interactions of team members to enhance project performance. Finally, project human resource management has to plan for the management of the project team. This involves tracking team members' performance, providing feedback, resolving issues and coordinating changes to enhance project performance.

(Project Management Institute, 2004, 199).

4.3.1 Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect Project Partnership Research Results

Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect was a cross-border project, with partners drawn from three different countries. Each of the partners was contented that they had played their role in the delivery of the project objectives. This involved the level they had achieved their targets, the level of participation in meetings, developing the project materials, and playing the specific roles assigned to them in the project. Drawing from the research results, there were a couple of important points worth noting.

Firstly, there was a lot of expertise that the project needed to achieve its objectives within the partnership. As a University of Applied Sciences, Kajaani University Applied Sciences provided a platform for research, developing, testing, and fine tuning of the Enterprise Support Platform. As an expert in entrepreneurship for more than 20 years, Advantage Foundation was endowed with resources and advice on

developing successful business tools. Greenland Business was equally an entrepreneurship advisor. In addition to that, Rural Development Council had been working with the rural areas for more than 20 years and therefore, making it an invaluable partner in dealing with the rural communities.

Secondly, the partners agreed that they had received enough facilitation from the lead partner towards performing their role in the partnership. Through good structures and regular communication, the project partners were able to get support that they required to play their role. However, the rest of the partners were not quite clear what kind of support they expected from each other towards playing their roles in the project.

Thirdly, there was a development of new skills within the partnership. As a result of unforthcoming help from partners with the expertise, some partners had to rely on themselves. As a result, the partners who previously did not have training experience, had developed that expertise and were delivering seminars to their beneficiaries on their own without the need for hiring third parties.

Fourthly, the professional materials and resources for the whole partnership had been developed. In addition to that, the partners had localized the training materials developed. Moreover, the Enterprise Support Platform had also been localized in each respective region.

Finally, there was a challenge in intercultural conflicts that needed to be addressed. The partners agreed this was as a result of the cultural differences. As partners from different countries with different languages, work ethics and cultures in general, it was challenging, but of course not impossible to find a common ground.

4.3.2 Discussion of the Results

From the results, it is evident that the partnership had done a lot towards achieving the project's objective. Project partners had even developed new skills in the pro-

cess. They owed that to effective communication, professionalism and commitment to the objectives of the project. In their own words, they thought that, despite the challenges, the partnership was great. They however agree that there was room for improvement.

For instance, there was a need for clear identification of each partner's role towards the project as a whole. Whereas partners had done great in trying to achieve their targets in their respective regions, there seemed to be a gap in the objective of Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect as a whole. The partners thought that, that should have been addressed at the beginning of the project. There should have also been a focus on what each partner brought into the project as a whole, rather than only what they could do in their respective regions.

In addition to that, there was the issue of skills sharing among the partners. As mentioned before, there was a lot expertise within the partnership. From the research, Kajaani University of Applied Sciences' resources had been useful to all the partners. However, the same could not be said about the rest of the partners. What each partner expected from the rest of the partners needed to be clearly spelt out for the success of the project. Even though it is a good thing to develop own skills and training materials, the truth is, it takes time, an invaluable resource in any project. Since these were resources that were already in the partnership, sharing it to the rest of the partners would probably have moved the project one step ahead.

Another pressing issue was the intercultural differences that need to be sorted out. As cross-border project, there was certain to be cultural differences. This should not necessarily jeopardize the progress of the project. In contrast these very differences can be used to the advantage of the project. By taking time to understand the cultures of the other project partners the project could benefit more. (See figure 5).

Finally, there was a need to develop a true partnership. As evidenced in the research results, the 'we are RYE Connect' element was evidently missing in the project. While every partner agreed that the lead partner was great, the same could

not be said among partners. It was important to be able to find a common ground for the good of the project.

4.4 Finance Management

Project cost management includes cost estimating which involves developing an approximation of the costs of the resources needed to complete project activities. It also includes cost budgeting which is aggregating the estimated costs of individual activities or work packages to establish a cost baseline. Finally, project cost management also includes cost control which means influencing the factors that create cost variances and controlling changes to the project budget. These processes are important since they enable the project to be completed within the approved budget.

(Project Management Institute, 2004, 157).

4.4.1 Finance Management Research Results

Applying the Project Management Institute's principles named above in the Rural Youth Enterprise Connect, the following are the results realized during the research:

The project budget. As for the budget, all the partners agreed it was sufficient, considering the activities and time scheduled for the project. However, they also thought that more time and thus more money would have achieved better results. The partners also thought that, it would have benefited the project if a full-time post (for example project administrator) was also budgeted for, owing to the magnitude of the project.

Disbursement of project funds. Disbursement of the funds from the European Union had been too slow. However, the partner's activities were funded on time. This was attributed to the speedy disbursement of the project funds to the project partners by the project manager, as soon as the funds were received from the EU.

Adherence to the European Union projects accounting standard. Proper accounting procedures had been observed in accounting for the monies disbursed to all the partners. Also, there was no monies that had been used for activities other than those belonging to the project. In addition to that all partners had implemented their activities within the budget lines. In other words, the partners had followed the EU projects accounting standards to the later.

Transparency of financial expenditure across the project partnership. Only the project manager had access to what individual partners in the project were doing with their project funds. This means that other partners were not aware of what others were doing with the project funds allocated to them.

4.4.2 Discussions

Implementation of project activities are subject to availability of funds. It is common practice for disbursement of funds of European Union funded projects to take some time due to the bureaucracies involved. A project should plan how to accommodate for the delay. It is also important to observe the budget lines and limits set for each project activity. Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect project partners were quite comfortable with how the finance management of the project had been handled. However, the project partners made some valuable suggestions, which needed to be addressed going forward in the project and in future.

To start with, there was the issue of transparency of expenditure. More transparency of expenditures among the partners was called for. One way of achieving that, is by each partner giving a budget review and expenditure presentation during the meetings. This way, all the partners would know how other partners were using the project funds. This would also have promoted accountability of the project funds among the partners.

The next issue was the budget form. According to one of the partners, the form was a little bit difficult to use especially at the beginning of the project. The partner proposed that there should be a sheet where activities could be aggregated into categories for each budget line. The budget form should also be developed to

include anticipated activities. This will make it easy to fill in the anticipated activities should they arise.

Another issue to take note of was the exchange rate. There were partners who used currencies other than the Euros in the project team. These partners lost some of the money because of the fluctuations in exchange rates. There was a need to therefore, feature this in the budget.

Finally, there was the speed of disbursement which needed to be improved. As mentioned earlier, the funds took too long to be disbursed from the European Union. Partners in Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect proposed that, the speed of disbursement of funds from the EU should be improved.

4.5 Project Communications Management

Project communications management employs the processes required to ensure timely and appropriate generation, collection, distribution, storage, retrieval and ultimate disposition of project information. Project communication management processes provide critical links among people and information that are necessary for successful communication. It is therefore, important that all the people involved in the project understand how communication affect the project as a whole.

Project communications management involves communication planning, that is, determining the information and communication needs of the project stakeholders. It also entails information distribution. The information needed has to be available to the project stakeholders in a timely manner. Apart from that the stakeholders have to report performance. This means collecting and distributing performance information. This include status reporting, progress measurement and forecasting. Lastly, project communication management involves management of stakeholders. This means managing communications to satisfy the requirements of and resolve issues with project stakeholders.

(Project Management Institute, 2004).

4.5.1 Communication Management Results from the Research

In Rural Youth Enterprise Connect, effective communication was sighted by the all the partners as one of the factors that led to the success of the partnership. In this area, however, there was also a huge room for improvement. The key points drawn from the research about communication management have been summarized below:

The first point, was dissemination and storage of project information. The channels of communication chosen for both internal communication among the project partners as well as externally with the project beneficiaries were emails, Facebook, skype, face to face, and phone calls. In addition to that, the partners also met on a regular basis to update each other on the progress of the project. Project information on the other hand, was stored in Trello.com, google drive and in local computers of the project partners. One of the partners reported that the information sharing platform Trello.com was quite poor.

The second point was the speed and clarity of information received. The information received from the lead partner was quite clear, prompt and timely. Similarly, the information received by the beneficiaries from the project staff was also quite clear, prompt and precise. However, communication among the rest of the partners was rather unclear. This was blamed on the different outlook of issues especially due to their cultural differences.

The third point was the feedback and updates on the progress of project activities from the responsible partners. Communication on progress of activities among partners had not been sufficiently done. A case in point was the development of the hot-house training where the partner in charge just shared the final version without the contributions of the rest of the partners. It should be noted that the hot-house training affects all the partners.

The fourth point was the managing of communication during the meetings. The research indicated that there was a tendency of Anglophones to dominate the meetings. This placed the rest of the partners at a disadvantage since their views sometimes went unheard.

The fifth point was miscommunication. There was reported to be misinterpretation of some messages sent via email. This was as a result of different cultures and of course mother tongue which sometimes affects how we write and attach meaning to texts. Another area of miscommunication was the obviously, lack of a common interpretation of some parameters in the project plan, with some partners coming up with their own parameters.

The last point was the issue of distance and time. Despite the fact that all the partners were in different time zones, this did not play any role in hindering communication. All the partners were flexible to accommodate the differences in time zones. Teleconferences were set in such a time that it was convenient for all the partners to attend.

4.5.2 Discussion

In addition to the internal communication, external communication materials had been developed by the partners charged with that responsibility. The project website is also an important external communication tool and was up and running. As far as the internal communication is concerned, the project partners reported that the channels of communication chosen, the frequency and the speed were all quite efficient and satisfactory. Drawing from the results, some key points were suggested that are useful to improve the communication management in future:

To start with, at the beginning of the project, all the partners should have come together to look at the project as a whole and made sure that, each partner's responsibilities were clear to themselves as well as to the rest of the partners. At the same time, the different intercultural issues should have been addressed. This would have reduced the chances of miscommunication.

As far as communication during meetings is concerned, project partners needed to be reminded of the need to give each partner time to express themselves. This is because each partner's ideas are relevant to the greater Rural Youth Entrepre-

neurship Connect project. Regarding feedback and reporting progress on the activities, it was suggested that there be consultation and sharing of information when tackling matters that affected all the partners.

Last but not least, it was suggested that there be a common information repository center, where all the partners can find the information they need about the project. This saves time and ensures that all information required by the partners is available. Microsoft 365 was suggested as a platform that all the partners could work from.

4.6 Beneficiaries

As mentioned in page seven, the main reason why projects are undertaken is to challenge the status quo and bring about a beneficial change. Those who benefit from such a change as a result of the project, are known as project beneficiaries. There are two types of beneficiaries, namely direct beneficiaries and indirect beneficiaries. Direct beneficiaries are those who participate in the project and therefore, directly benefit from its existence. Indirect beneficiaries on the other hand are those who live within the zone of influence of the project. (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United States, 2017). Depending on the nature and type of the organization, this could be a community, a customer, and employees of a certain company or even a whole country.

It is common knowledge in the business world, that today the customer decides what they want, how they want it and when they want it. The customer's needs are unique and therefore, the one-size-fits-all phenomena no longer works. For that reasons, businesses, both small and big alike, strive to know their customers better, identify what they need and respond to those individual needs fast and precise. By doing so, they gain and even maintain their competitive advantage.

In project management, the project team should think of the beneficiary as the customer. For that reason, it is important for the project manager and the entire project team to know the beneficiaries and understand their needs. Reiterating the triple constraint concept, for a project to be termed successful, its results or the

product should be useful to the beneficiary and be delivered on time as well as on the budget. In other words, the customers or beneficiaries have to be satisfied with the quality of the results. For that reasons, it would be helpful to involve the beneficiaries at every stage of the project.

4.6.1 Beneficiaries Research Result

In this thesis, the focus was on the direct beneficiaries. The target beneficiaries of the Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect were drawn from all the four participating countries in the Northern Periphery and Arctic region. These are youth aged between the age of 16 and 30 years. RYE Connect project supported the youth to start their own business by offering them information they needed at every stage of the business as shown on table two. RYE Connect envisaged to support entrepreneurial spirit in the participating regions with a vision to encouraging self-employment. This in turn was expected to make the regions more attractive and thus able to retain the local population.

From the research results, information about the Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect was readily available in colleges, where the target beneficiaries were most likely to be found. Participants who joined RYE Connect were supported by the project at every step of the business. RYE Connect led the beneficiaries from determining the viability of their ideas to growing fully-fledged businesses. Young entrepreneurs were offered all the information and support they needed steadily and fast. Therefore, young people with no experience in business at all were converted to fully-fledged entrepreneurs.

Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect's beneficiaries were involved and given a chance to air their views freely. Through close cooperation with the RYE Connect staff, beneficiaries had a chance to contribute what they would have liked to see in the project in feedback sessions during the workshops. They were quick to appreciate this opportunity as well as the speedy and smooth flow of communication from the staff who used channels such as emails, social media and telephones to reach the beneficiaries.

The impact of Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect to the beneficiaries was really immense. From the beneficiaries who were members of the project for only six months to those who had been with the project for 18 months, all expressed satisfaction with the project's support in their businesses. They found the workshops, the pitching portal and the entire RYE Connect staff and project quite instrumental in helping them turn their ideas to real businesses. The beneficiaries were thus very happy to recommend the project to their friends and hoped that a similar project was going to come back to their regions so that more people could benefit from it.

Areas of Improvement

From the beneficiaries' point of view, the project was quite successful as at the time of evaluation. However, there were a few areas that improvement was recommended. The beneficiaries suggested that they be kept updated on new or emerging tools and resources in the project. They also wanted to be more integrated in the project and be invited to Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect events. In addition to that, meetings with other young business people trying to set up businesses or those who were already running successful businesses was suggested. This was thought to be a good chance to motivate the young entrepreneurs. Lastly, the three days-session of the business plan were thought to be too short and it was recommended that the time be increased.

4.7 Summary of the Results, Conclusion and Recommendations

From the results of the research, it can be concluded that the project is headed towards the right direction. All the partners in the project are committed to the objectives of the project and the results are evident. In the words of the project manager and all the partners, Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect is optimistic that it will achieve its objectives.

To add a few things on the examined parameters, it is worth noting that the project team as a whole responded quite well to the changes. Change is inevitable in any project due to external factors. How prepared a project team is to handle this

makes the difference between success and failure of a project. Constant communication, flexibility and focus enabled Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect to move forward despite the delay in the launch of the Enterprise Support Platform by one year.

Emphasizing the words of the project manager during this research, running multicultural projects can be challenging. This is obviously due to the different values, beliefs and systems that the different project team members exhibit, which form our cultures and to some extent how as a people we perceive almost everything. For this reason, it is important to be able to come to a common ground while running international project.

4.7.1 Hofstede Cultural Dimension Model

Understanding each other's cultural values could play a big role in bringing a project team closer. For that reason, taking a closer look at the issues suggested in this research results, Hofstede Cultural Dimension Model might be a useful tool to help understand the cultural values of the project team members. It uses six dimensions to compare the cultures of different countries.

Power Distance

This dimension deals with the fact that, all individuals in the societies are not equal. It expresses the attitude of the culture towards these inequalities amongst us. Power Distance is defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.

Individualism

The fundamental issue addressed by this dimension is the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members. This means whether people's self-image is defined in terms of "I" or "We". In individualist societies, people are supposed to look after themselves and their direct family only. In collectivist societies, people belong to 'in groups' that take care of them in exchange for loyalty.

Masculinity

A high score (masculine) on this dimension indicates that the society will be driven by competition, achievement and success, with success being defined by the winner or the best in the field. This value system starts in school and continues throughout the organizational life. A low score (feminine) on the dimension means that the dominant values in society are caring for others and quality of life. A feminine society is one where quality of life is the sign of success and standing out from the crowd is not admirable. The fundamental issue here is what motivates people, wanting to be the best (masculine) or liking what you do (feminine).

Uncertainty Avoidance

The dimension uncertainty avoidance has to do with the way that a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known. The question is should we try to control the future or just let it happen? This ambiguity brings with it anxiety and different cultures have learnt to deal with this anxiety in different ways. The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these is reflected in the score on uncertainty avoidance.

Long Term Orientation

This dimension describes how every society has to maintain some links with its own past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future, and societies prioritize these two existential goals differently. Normative societies, which score low on this dimension, for example, prefer to maintain time-honored traditions and norms while viewing societal change with suspicion. Those with a culture which scores high, on the other hand, take a more pragmatic approach. They encourage thrift and efforts in modern education as a way to prepare for the future.

Indulgence

One challenge that confronts humanity, now and in the past, is the degree to which small children are socialized. Without socialization, we do not become “human”. This dimension is defined as the extent to which people try to control their desires

and impulses, based on the way they were raised. Relatively weak control is called “Indulgence” and relatively strong control is called “Restraint”. Cultures can, therefore, be described as indulgent or restrained.

(Geert Hofstede, 2017).

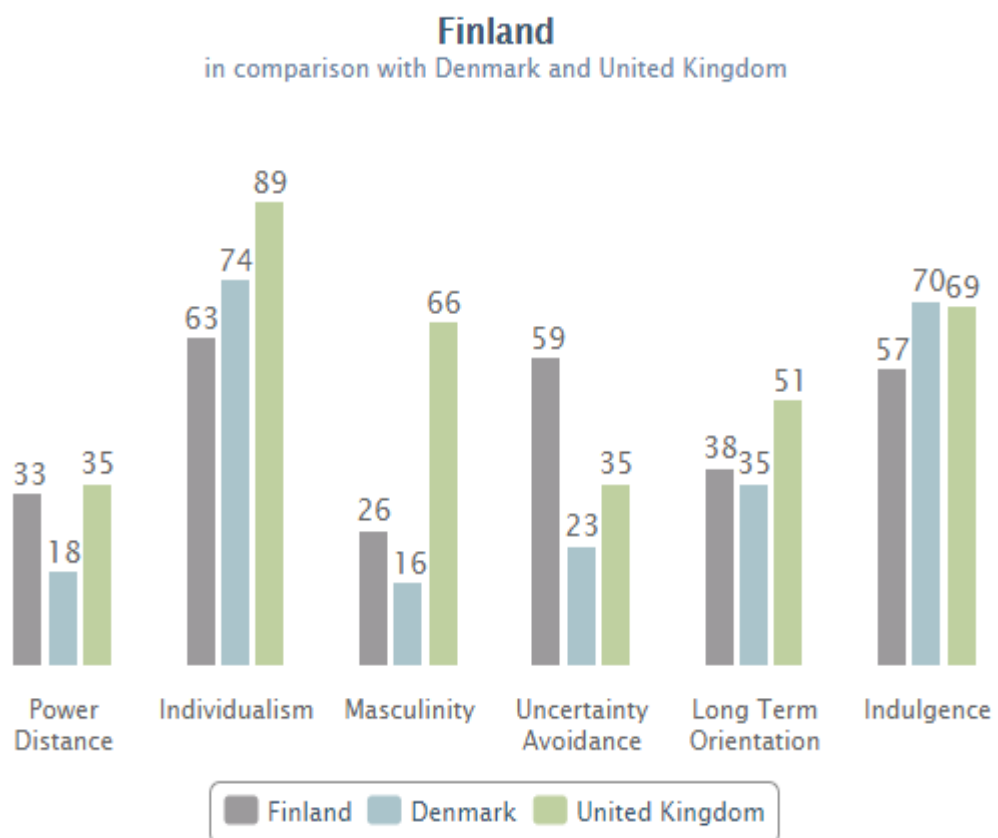


Figure 5: Hofstede Cultural Dimension Mode Adopted from I (Geert Hofstede, 2017).

Figure six, is a chat comparing the partner countries in the Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect project, using the six parameters mentioned above. These factors play a big role in how people handle and perceive most of the things in every day. Even though the model might be inconclusive, it might serve as a guide to understanding where each partner is coming from, hence avoiding miscommunications and over- or under expectation from them.

Another way of bringing people to a common ground that was suggested during the research, is spending time at the beginning of the project to ensure that everyone was in the same page. Planning some activities in the beginning of the project that would have brought all partners to a common ground would have been very beneficial to the project. This could have been a workshop with academic content, the latest science and methods in entrepreneurship for instance, desk studies of what exist already and even a one on one discussion of what competences each partner had and how that was going to benefit everyone in the project. How everyone understood the project plan as well as the rest of the project documents would also have been discussed in such a session.

Lastly, time is one of the constraints of a project. It is therefore important that every effort is put to ensure that, project time is well spent. To this end, one of the partners suggested a reduction of the partner meetings lengths. This can be done by bringing in concrete agendas and being stricter with the time. It could also be achieved by sharing resources that are already in the partnership rather than spending time looking for them from somewhere else.

5 CONCLUSION

Revisiting the relevance of this task, it can be concluded that it has fulfilled its purpose. For the commissioner of the thesis, there were important issues pointed out, which are useful to the project manager and the Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect project. These are also important learning points that could not only be implemented to improve the RYE Connect project but also future projects.

In this thesis, the project management theories of the concept of project management against a real project have been examined. The theories can indeed be related to practice. It is therefore, recommended that project managers and project teams consider these project management theories at every step of project management.

Intercultural conflict is one issue that stood out during the research. The rise in international cooperation at the wake of globalization, has led to the rise of cross-border projects. It is common knowledge that cross-border projects involve people in different geographical locations and different environments. This raises the question of culture, something that vary from one place to another. Through this research, it was evident that it is important for the project partners to understand each other's culture from the very start of the project.

Culture affects many things including communication, which is a vital part of project management. Understanding each other's culture will make the communication easier by avoiding misinterpretation of information. Therefore, it is recommended that the project partners spend time to understand where each other is coming from. An agreed standard of communication that respects and includes all the partners' cultures should then be adopted.

Another aspect that was evidently important during the research as supported by the findings is the importance of good leadership. Without good project leadership, it is impossible for any project to succeed. Keeping everyone focused on the greater goal of the project is an important aspect that the project manager cannot

escape. This was evident in this research, where despite the intercultural challenges the project managed to continue because of its strong leadership. Good management skills as well as good interpersonal skills by the project manager, are an invaluable asset.

Closely related to good project leadership and culture, is change management. The project manager and the project team should be prepared to accommodate changes in the project. Changes are due to arise because of external factors such as delay of suppliers of resources in the project, human resource issues or delay in funds just to mention but a few of issues that were noted during this research. Drawing from the case project, flexibility and constant communication among the project team is important to ensure the project keeps moving forward despite the changes. A good example noted during the research is putting extra effort in areas that are lagging.

The concept of project evaluation cannot be underestimated either. It is important for the project team to know where they stand with the delivery of the project goal all the time. Evaluation is thus an important process in the project, which should continuously be carried out. Through evaluation, the project team can make necessary adjustment to realize their goal. For evaluation to be more conclusive, all the stakeholders in the project have to be involved.

Of great importance and as already stated earlier, is the main purpose of projects. Projects are meant to bring about change of the status quo. Towards this end, it is important to ensure the objectives of the project are realized. Beyond that, the projects results should bring the change that is desired. Commitment to the goal of the project is evidently a must to the entire team project. As realized during this research, the commitment to the goal of the project can make the whole team work together, put their cultural differences aside, accommodate change with ease and move any obstacles that stand in their way and deliver the results of the project.

When all is said and done, it is the results achieved by the project that remain. It is the results that will measure the success of the project. It is important that these results are useful to the customer or the beneficiaries of the project. This calls for knowing what the beneficiaries are really looking for. For this reason, it is important

that the project beneficiaries, who are part of the project stakeholders, are involved in every stage of the project. For this thesis task, the beneficiaries were also involved. It can therefore be concluded that the results of the evaluation involved a greater part of the stakeholders.

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APPENDICES

- Appendix 1. Project Evaluation Plan
- Appendix 2 Questionnaire for the Lead Partner
- Appendix 2. Questionnaire for the rest of the Partners
- Appendix 3. Questionnaire for the Beneficiaries

PROJECT EVALUATION PLAN

Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect External Evaluation

Background

Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Connect is a project under the umbrella of Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2014-2020 that is scheduled to run from 1.3.2015 to 28.2.2018. It consists of partners from the NPA regions, namely Finland, Northern Ireland and Greenland. Each one of these countries has several associates working with them, and act as a center point for their respective associates.

Objective of the Project

The main objective of this project is to encourage a more entrepreneurial culture throughout the NPA region. The mission of RYE Connect is to promote innovative thinking that inspires young people to create unique business opportunities across the Northern Europe and Arctic region. It will contribute to the development of a variety and sustainable economic development models for the Northern Periphery by providing tools to improve the support systems for SMEs

Evaluation

This evaluation is part of control and monitoring of the project, and in accordance to the project plan. To allow for objectivity in the evaluation, an external project evaluator will be conducting the evaluation at this stage. All the project partners will be expected to participate in the evaluation process. A chosen sample of project beneficiaries will also be involved.

Scope of the Evaluation

At this stage the evaluation will focus in the following areas:

- The application process of the project
- The project plan

- Communication and financial management
- Development atmosphere of the project in comparison to the original plan

Objectives of the Evaluation

This evaluation will be formative in nature. Its objective is to:

- Assess the progress of the project toward its goals
- Learn from the best practices so far
- Determine if changes/adjustments are required to achieve the intended results of the project
- And eventually adjust accordingly to be able to achieve the intended results of the project.

Data Collection

Information about the progress of the project will be collected using questionnaires that will be administered to the partners. Emails, skype, phone calls or any other channel agreed upon between the external evaluator and the project partner or the beneficiaries will be used to administer the questionnaires. Open-ended questions have been used in the questionnaire to give the respondents enough space to freely and honestly delve into every question in details. Participants are therefore requested to give as detailed information as they possibly can.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE LEAD PARTNER

1. What is the purpose for this evaluation?
2. What aspects would you like the evaluation to focus on?
 - The Application
 - Financial Management
 - Communication
3. Have there been any changes to the project since it started? If yes, how have you responded to the changes? Were there measures in place to respond to the changes in the first place?
4. How has communication/dissemination of project information been carried out during the project so far? Has it been successful?
5. Have there been any challenges regarding miscommunication so far? How did you deal with it?
6. Is the project running according to schedule so far ie project plan versus the current project results?
7. Have there been challenges in meeting the deadlines of some of the project activities so far? If yes, what kind of challenges?
8. Have the project partners/members offered you the necessary support during the project?
9. How well have you delivered your responsibilities as the lead partner?
10. There are guidelines set regarding running EU funded projects, have you as a lead partner been able to adhere to them? How easy or difficult has that been?
11. In your opinion is the project responding well to the needs of the beneficiaries? To what extent are they involved in the project development?

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE REST OF THE PARTNERS

A. Lead partner Evaluation

1. What is your opinion regarding the lead partner?
2. Do you think that they have played their role?
3. What has the lead partner done exceptionally well?
4. Where has the lead partner done particularly poor?
5. Any recommendations to the lead partner?
6. What would you recommend in general to make this project even better?

B. Project Plan

1. Have you familiarized yourself with the project plan?
2. To this end do you think that the project is running in accordance with the objectives?
3. What aspects of the project plan would you have done better, based on the progress of the project so far?

C. Deviation from the Project Plan

1. Are there any deviations from the project plan?
2. How was the project team as whole and you as a partner prepared to deal with the deviations?
3. How have you responded to the deviations?

D. Role of Project Partner

1. What is your role as a partner in this project?
2. To what extent have you played your role as a partner to ensure its success?
3. Have you been facilitated enough or have you had enough support from the lead partner as well as other partners to deliver your role?
4. As a partner, you had your deliverables, how far are you with this?
5. What have you done particularly well in this project? Any reasons for that?
6. In which area(s) have you done particularly poor and why?

E. Finance Management

1. Do you think that there is enough budget allocated to the project?
2. How fast is the disbursement of funds done in the projects?
3. Have there been cases of misappropriation of project funds? Please give details.
4. What procedures are followed to disburse funds and account for the monies disbursed?
5. As a partner, have you had any problems getting your activities financed? Give details of the instances.
6. Is there any aspect of the financial management that you would recommend improvement?

F. Communication Management

1. What are the channels of communication used in this project?
2. Is the information disseminated to you as a partner always clear?
3. How fast do you obtain information should you need clarification on issues about the project?
4. How frequent do you communicate with each other as partners in the project?
5. What about timing of the communication given that partners are in different regions and time zones?
6. Have there been any challenges with the communication? Please share the instances in details.
7. Share any challenges regarding the costs of communication.
8. Would you like to make any suggestions about any aspect of the communication?

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE BENEFICIARIES

Name of the Surveyor:

Country:

Type of Business:

A. Communication

1. How did you hear about RYE project?
2. What channels do you use to communicate with your project contact persons?
3. Have you received all the necessary information you need to execute your part as the project beneficiary?
4. Has it been easy to receive the information? Give details to your answer.
5. How soon do you get responses to your enquiries?

B. Impact of Project to the Beneficiary

1. How long have you been a member of the RYE Connect?
2. What Impact has this project made in your life so far?
3. Are the entrepreneurship tools provided by the RYE useful to you as a beneficiary?
4. Is there anything you would like to see done to the tools to make them more user friendly?

C. Involvement of the Beneficiary

1. How have you played your role as the beneficiary to make this project successful?
2. Have you been facilitated enough in terms of provision of necessary resources to execute your role in the project as a beneficiary?
3. As a beneficiary, have you been accorded an opportunity to voice your opinion on this project so far? How often, and in what issues?

D. Recommendations

1. What would you like to be improved by the project team while dealing with you as a beneficiary going forward?
2. Would you recommend this project to your friends? Why?
3. Has this project met its objectives so far?
4. Has RYE met your own expectations so far?
5. What recommendations would you make to the project manager or project team regarding any aspect of this project?