



For Immediate Release

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University of Helsinki Collaborates in Multinational Study of How College Learning Experiences Influence Students' Life Goals

Helsinki 13.8.2014 – The University of Helsinki is collaborating in a three-year, multinational research study on how educational experiences can help students find a strong sense of purpose for their lives. Professor Kirsi Tirri at the Department of Teacher Education, University of Helsinki, is the principal investigator for the University with a 66 000 USD subaward from Clark University, USA, funded by The John Templeton Foundation, USA.

Dr. Kirsi Tirri is a Professor of Education and Research Director at the [Department of Teacher Education](#) at the [University of Helsinki](#), Finland. She is the Chair of Doctoral Programme [SEDUCE](#) (School, Education, Culture and Society). She is also a visiting scholar with the [Stanford Center on Adolescence](#), USA. Her research interests include school pedagogy, moral and religious education, gifted education, teacher education and cross-cultural studies which is an ideal fit for this collaboration.

“I expect excellent cooperation with the partners whom I already know and I have already worked together with them. I believe that the results of the project will benefit both the international and national research community as well as the professional development of young teachers. The training period, at its best, can reinforce the professional identity of young teachers and give them a certainty of that their profession basically is a service trade in which teachers can give their own contribution to society and to the care and education of future citizens,” Kirsi Tirri says.

Dr. Kirsi Tirri joins lead principal investigator Seana Moran, research assistant professor of psychology at Clark University, USA, co-principal investigator Jenni Menon Mariano, associate professor in the College of Education at the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee, USA, and four other researchers from countries in Asia, Europe, and South America.

“Given that the world is becoming more interconnected, a study of international scope is both timely and important,” Moran said. “We are fortunate that we have the opportunity to work with a growing cadre of scholars around the world who are also examining youth purpose.”

“We are pleased to be collaborating with the University of Helsinki on this research,” said Mariano. “The University of Helsinki communicates a distinct mission to promote the well-being of humanity, and this focus, along with its strength in research, makes it an excellent site for studying how collegiate learning can promote young people’s purposes to contribute to the common good. Our partnership will help build cross-cultural understandings of how to promote positive life purpose development among youth.”

The work builds an international conversation on optimizing higher education’s contribution to purpose development by engaging distinguished scholars worldwide. This collaboration will jointly collect data for the first-of-its-kind multinational dataset linking experiential education to the development of life purpose. In addition, researchers will jointly produce an edited book and two webinars to develop a wider international community of scholars addressing this important educational issue.

Professor Jari Lavonen, Head of the Teacher Training is happy about the many international partners in the project. “ I once participated in an EU-funded project for the development of teacher training. I noticed that the shortest period for subject teachers was in Greece. There was no training period at all. The longest period was in Portugal where the training period lasts a year. And, of course, there is everything in between. In Finland the period is relatively short. The supervision is of good quality and we really invest in it,” Professor Lavonen concludes.

About the University of Helsinki:

The University of Helsinki is one of the best multidisciplinary research universities in the world. The high-quality research carried out by the university creates new knowledge for educating diverse specialists in various fields such as social decision-making and the business sector.

The University of Helsinki is an international academic community of 40,000 students and staff members. It operates on four campuses in Helsinki and at 17 other locations.

Founded in 1640, the University of Helsinki wants to strengthen its position among the world's leading multidisciplinary research universities and to actively promote the well-being of humanity and a fair society.

Website: <http://www.helsinki.fi/university/>

About the John Templeton Foundation:

The John Templeton Foundation funds independent research and public engagement, pursuing breakthrough discoveries to expand our current knowledge about the universe, the full potentials of humanity, and life's ultimate purpose. The Foundation's motto, "How little we know, how eager to learn," exemplifies its support for open-minded inquiry, commitment to rigorous scientific research and related scholarship, and encouraging civil, informed dialogue among scientists, scholars, theologians, and the public at large. www.templeton.org

Acknowledgement:

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