

FINNISH NINTH GRADERS SIX YEARS APART. HOW TO EXPLAIN DECLINING ACHIEVEMENT AND ADVERSE ATTITUDINAL DEVELOPMENT?

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The study is part of a longstanding research project on the formation and fostering of learning to learn competence as part of educational effectiveness (Hautamäki et al., 2002; 2006; 2010). The presentation regards two assessments in a municipality in the Helsinki metropolitan region, in 2004 and 2010, respectively, each encompassing the whole ninth grade cohort of students (à 1800).

Comparison of the results of the 2004 and 2010 assessments revealed a disconcerting result: In 2010, students' cognitive performance and their learning-related attitudes were significantly inferior to those of their age mates just six years earlier (Kupiainen et al., 2011a).

The difference was notable in all measured areas but especially sharp in the cognitive domain (reasoning, reading comprehension and mathematical thinking). The decline was visible in all student groups but strongest among girls in the third quartile.

A parallel adverse change was seen in students' attitudes toward school and learning (e.g., achievement goals, agency beliefs, self-regulation). This development, too, was most prominent among girls in the third quartile but also among the lowest quartile boys. Even students' perception of the value their parents set on education had attenuated somewhat.

The significance of the results is supplemented by a similar development in the results of the 2004 ninth grade cohort's assessment at grade six in 2001, compared to sixth graders in 2010.

Besides the actual results, the presentation will focus on the challenge the findings pose for the school – and for low stakes assessments like PISA.