

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGENCY AND CONTROL BELIEFS IN GENERAL
CLASSES AND CLASSES WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS FROM GRADE
4 TO 6 IN FINLAND**

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Classes with a special emphasis have become an inseparable part of the Finnish comprehensive school model since 1990s' and many educational actors (i.e. parents, policy-makers, researchers) have speculated the consequences of these selective classes, which have more lessons in certain special subjects (e.g. music or languages) and the right to select their pupils with aptitude tests (Seppänen, Rinne & Riipinen 2012). On a social level these selective classes have been seen as a threat to the equality of the comprehensive school system whereas on an individual level it has been argued that the possibility to choose a class with a special emphasis would increase pupil's motivation. Despite growing interest of school choice research in Finland, research focusing on the effects of emphasized teaching is scarce. This study aims to investigate the development of pupils' motivation in emphasized teaching. In this article the focus is on pupils' agency and control beliefs (Skinner, Chapman & Bates 1988), which can be seen as key elements on constructing pupil's agency and motivation. The aim is to find out how pupils' agency and control beliefs change during elementary years and clarify the role of class type, gender, school achievement and family background in that development. Research questions: (1) How do pupils' agency and control beliefs change from grade 4 to 6? (2) Does studying in a class with special emphasis predict a) the level of pupils' agency and control beliefs at the beginning of the 4th grade b) the change of agency and control beliefs from grade 4 to 6? (3) Are the possible differences in the change of agency and control beliefs between the class types explained by other demographic factors (gender, GPA and mother's education level) or does studying in a class with a special emphasis bring added value to the development of these beliefs? The data (see Lönnqvist, Verkasalo & Vainikainen 2011, for detailed description of the sample) consist of an on-going 9-year longitudinal study, in which pupils' learning-to-learn-skills have been assessed from the beginning of the comprehensive school and will be followed up until the last year of comprehensive school (spring 2016). The data consist of several assessment points and measures. For the present purposes, the data that will be used comprise of learning-to-learn-assessments from grade 4 and 6 (first reported by Vainikainen, Wüstenberg, Kupiainen, Hotulainen & Hautamäki, 2015). At the 6th grade, 28 % of all the pupils in the sample (N=1065) studied in classes with special emphasis. Pupils' agency beliefs of ability and effort declined from grade 4 to 6 but control beliefs increased. Class type predicted only pupils' agency beliefs at sixth grade but the effect disappeared when other demographic factors were taken into account. Class type didn't predict either the level or the change of agency beliefs of effort or control beliefs.

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