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Vainikainen, Mari-Pauliina – Hienonen, Ninja – Lindfors, Pirjo – Rimpelä, Arja – Asikainen, Mikko – Hotulainen, Risto – Hautamäki, Jarkko. 2016. Factors explaining the development of learning outcomes in the lower secondary schools of the Helsinki metropolitan area. *The Finnish Journal of Education* 47 (3), 214–229.

This study addressed individual- and school-level development of learning outcomes and their predictors in the Helsinki metropolitan area from the beginning of the 7th grade until the end of the 9th grade. Multilevel structural equation modelling was applied to longitudinal data covering all the lower secondary schools of the metropolitan area regarding the development of cognitive learning to learn competences. The variation of the ninth-grade results was mainly individual, and besides initial competences it was explained by gender, support needs, immigrant background, mother's education, and student's smoking, which was used as an indicator of health behaviour. The small share of variance explained by school-level variables was consistent with the results of earlier Finnish assessment studies, and it did not support the claims of increasing differences between schools in the metropolitan area. However, schools were to some extent differentiated in the beginning of the 7th grade based on students' background, and that explained a part of the school-level variance. School size or the ratio of students with support needs or immigrant background did not predict the development of school-level learning outcomes. The big cities and the growing municipalities differed positively from the more remote areas of the metropolitan region.

Descriptors: educational assessment, learning to learn, differences between schools, Helsinki metropolitan area, multilevel structural equation modelling

Kosunen, Sonja – Seppänen, Piia – Bernelius, Venla. 2016. Neighbourhood segregation and the differentiated school choice strategies of urban families. *The Finnish Journal of Education* 47 (3), 230–244.

In this article we investigate the connections between school choices of urban families and the socio-economic structure of their neighbourhood, as well as between school admissions and urban segregation. We analyse in a case-area in Espoo, what kinds of school choice strategies the families use and why, from which kinds of residential blocks the choices are made from and how those affect the student distribution across schools and thereby schools' socio-economic profiles. The study leans on research around housing, social class and education in urban areas. We combine (i) content analysis of parental thematic interviews around the city of Espoo about the child's transition to lower-secondary school (n=96), (ii) student flow analysis based on student register data for the age cohort (n=2400) in terms of their distribution across lower secondary schools and classes, and (iii) schools' socio-economic (SES) profiling based on the use of a Statistics Finland Grid Database (MapInfo). We apply a mixed-methods approach. The families used the choice of selective classes (with special curricular emphasis), and distinctive choice and their combination as school choice strategies in order to avoid a school with a bad reputation and to strive for other schools. This double strategy of school choice was applied especially by families living in well-off residential blocks. By comparing the school-estimates and the actual student admissions resulting from school choice, we noticed how the student base of some schools consisted of children from residential blocks with significantly higher income levels than in the neighbourhood in general. Grouping the students by choices of special curricular emphasis or distinctive language selection resulted in socio-economic segregation also within schools across their teaching groups.

Descriptors: urban and school segregation, school choice, mixed methods, Espoo