



Kasvatus 2018 Vol. 49 No 4

The Finnish Journal of Education

Vasalampi, Kati – Torppa, Minna – Eklund, Kenneth – Ahonen, Timo – Lerkkanen, Marja-Kristiina – Poikkeus, Anna-Maija. 2018. Change trends in seventh-graders' school motivation and school well-being – a cohort study across three points of time. *The Finnish Journal of Education* 49 (4), 272–286.

This cohort study examined whether the levels of school motivation and school well-being of seventh-graders have changed across years (2007, 2010 and 2014). Three samples from two research projects were used: the samples concerning years 2007 (N = 339) and 2010 (N = 266) were part of the Jyväskylä Longitudinal study and the sample concerning year 2014 (N = 1167) was part of the First Steps study. The results showed that seventh-graders' motivation in math has increased from year 2007 to 2014, whereas motivation in literacy has decreased. Students' educational aspirations showed a change across the years: in 2014 seventh-graders more typically aspired to enter university and less typically vocational school than in 2007. Moreover, on average, girls were more motivated than boys to study mother tongue and literacy, while math was valued more highly among boys than among girls. Finally, although girls reported overall higher school enjoyment than boys, particularly boys' enjoyment had increased from year 2007 to 2014. The level of school burnout had not changed across the years.

Descriptors: motivation, burnout, well-being, adolescents, education

Kallio, Eeva – Utriainen, Jukka – Niilo-Rämä, Mikko – Räikkönen, Eija. 2018. Connections of upper secondary school achievement and university starting age to students' academic performance and progress in university studies: A follow-up study. *The Finnish Journal of Education* 49 (4), 287–296.

This study investigated the extent to which students' upper secondary school achievement explains their academic performance and progress in university studies. The data consisted of the study records of 120 students having started their university studies in 2006 (in sport sciences, languages). The data covered their marks at upper secondary school and their performance and progress in university studies were followed until 2015. The data were analysed by means of correlation and regression analyses. The regression analysis showed that the average of the student's grades in the school-leaving certificate as well as university starting age explained variation in the average of university grades. The higher the average in the school certificate and the older the student was when starting at university, the better the grades received in the university studies. The higher the average, the better the grade for the Master's thesis and the more likely the student also graduated by 2015. The grade average of the matriculation examination did not explain variation in the grades of university studies or the grades given for Master's theses.

Descriptors: upper secondary school achievement, school-leaving certificate, matriculation examination, academic performance in university studies, follow-up study, progress in university studies

Pitkämäki, Harri. 2018. Mixed-methods approach inspired by critical realism. *The Finnish Journal of Education* 49 (4), 297–309.

This article discusses the mixed-methods approach by relating its methodological objectives to the ideas of critical realism. The methodologists of critical realism have criticised not only other philosophies of science, but also the conventional and routine-like practices applied in so-called mono-method research. It seems that the advocates of mixed methods have been interested in different epistemologies and various research data, accordingly. The conception thus obtained on the phenomenon under investigation is verified, complemented and diversified, but it offers often only a partial view of the whole, in other words, the phenomenon appears to us as a static and “captured”. So far the task descriptions of mixed-method approaches offer but little evidence of the methodological construction of critical realism, where explanatory mechanisms are traced e.g. by means of frequent process documentation and researcher-constructed narratives. By combining the ideas of critical realism and the mixed method approach, two different possibilities for systemic and broad-based mixed-method research designs were developed: a) pre-systemic and static and b) full-system and dynamic process research. Specifically, the full-systemic design attempts to perceive the phenomenon as a generating process, ‘in motion’.

Descriptors: methodology, mixed methods, critical realism, humanities, educational science

Kivioja, Alina – Soini, Tiina – Pietarinen, Janne – Pyhältö, Kirsi. 2018. What is essential in the process of a curriculum reform? *The Finnish Journal of Education* 49 (4), 310–325

The study examines what the experts participating in the process of the latest core curriculum reform for basic education in Finland perceive as the most central factors in that process. The data used in this study was a part of a larger survey data collected through electronic questionnaires twice during the process. The data comprises the responses of 48 experts to the open-ended questions in both survey rounds. The data was analysed by means of content analysis. The results show that one of the highly essential factors in the reform process, as perceived by the experts, was shared understanding about the educational principles to be written into the core curriculum. Moreover, pedagogical development work in schools and teachers’ motivation and activity were emphasised as important for a successful curriculum reform. However, sense-making processes at the local and school level were not identified as essential for the success of the curriculum reform.

Descriptors: basic education, curriculum, reform, content analysis