

# The Influence of Instructional Practices on Reading Motivation in Finland

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**Author: Marja-Kristiina Lerkkanen**

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interest in reading.

- Differences between individuals in terms of development of reading skills and interest in reading start before entering school.
- Educational contexts that promote children's autonomy to initiate tasks and complete them, without applying strict performance criteria, have been shown to strengthen children's interest in reading.
- Motivation combined with effort is the key to success at school.
- While intrinsic motivation involves students' thoughts, ability, beliefs, and emotions in learning situations, extrinsic motivation often works only while external reward is available.
- The value aspect of achievement motivation includes three components: attainment value, utility value, and intrinsic (or interest) value.
- Students' interest in reading is typically high at the beginning of school but often decreases during the elementary school years.

### **Defining intrinsic motivation**

- This is motivation that comes from within the individual, and relates to engaging in interesting, challenging, and joyful activities that provide internal satisfaction.

### **Defining extrinsic motivation**

- Extrinsic motivation is derived from external sources (such as a reward system in the classroom) that is unrelated to the learning of the skill itself.

### **Gender differences**

- Girls typically demonstrate higher levels of interest and a stronger self-concept of ability concerning reading. They also typically outperform boys in most literacy tasks at school.
- There is greater variance within groups of boys and within groups of girls than there are differences between genders.

### **Child-centred practices**

- Based on the work of Piaget and Vygotsky, child-centred practices recognise children as active knowledge constructors.
- Teachers assist and facilitate children's learning by providing them with both guidance and opportunities to direct their own exploration of objects and academic topics; thus, teaching is like a partnership between the teacher and the children.
- Child-centred classrooms are characterised by a shared responsibility for management and learning, active teacher support for children's learning efforts and social skills, and teaching practices that are sensitive to children's needs and interests.



### **The study**

The findings of a large-scale First Steps study on how Finnish teachers' instructional practices are associated with children's interest in reading are summarised in this study.

Research question:

- How do teaching practices and the quality of teacher-

child interactions observed in classrooms influence children's motivation in reading, particularly among boys and at-risk children in the early school years?

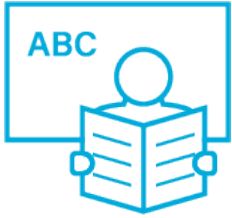
Participants in the First Steps study were originally approximately 2000 children and their parents and teachers from 4 municipalities in Finland. The study includes several yearly assessments of students' academic performance, motivation, social skills, and wellbeing.



## Findings

- Reading interest declined from kindergarten to Grade 4.
- Girls were more interested in literacy learning than boys.
- Poor readers had lower reading interest.
- Children at risk of reading difficulties had poorer pre-reading skills, reading achievement and motivation. Moreover, parental expectations and beliefs about their abilities were lower, and they received less parental support for reading at home.
- In kindergarten classrooms (where teachers predominantly applied child-centred teaching practices), children showed more interest in reading than in classrooms characterised by predominantly teacher-directed teaching practices.
- The higher the quality of classroom organisation, the greater the children's motivation in that particular classroom.
- The quality of emotional and instructional support from the teacher related to children's motivation, which was related to phonological skills.

- The more stress a teacher reported, the lower the children's motivation.



## **Implications**

Teaching practices that are sensitive to the development of children's autonomy, self-efficacy, and social interactions with peers can support their interest in reading.

Raising children's curiosity (by giving them choices and supporting their autonomy to make choices themselves) can support students to sustain their interest in a task or activity.

Teacher's positive verbal reinforcement toward a child's (deserved) effort rather than toward their intelligence may increase intrinsic motivation.

Mistakes and misunderstandings should be considered learning opportunities.

Teachers need to support children's connection with others in the classroom. High-quality classroom interactions should be emotionally supportive, caring, and respectful.