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# Amount of Text Read at School and the Motivation for Reading.

A Large Scale Study in Grade 6 and 9.

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[General description on research questions, objectives and theoretical framework \(up to 600 words\)](#)

This paper reports on some preliminary results from the project “To read or not to read: A study of reading practices in compulsory school” funded by the Swedish Research Council. The aim of the project is to develop knowledge of existing reading practices and to find out what kind of teaching that promotes such practices in a way that enables students to learn from reading. The decline in students’ reading literacy is something that concerns and worries many European and other Western countries. But surprisingly it is difficult to find large scale studies focusing on how much students read at school. To be a good reader one needs to practice (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Campell et al., 2001); it takes more than 5000 hours of reading to achieve a well-functioning reading capacity (Lundberg & Herrlin, 2005). To learn from text one needs to be able to read a longer text (Topping et al., 2007; Merisuo-Storm & Soininen, 2014). Prior research in the field further shows that it is important for students to read different types of texts (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003) and thus develop vocabulary and reading skills in many subjects (see, for example, Biemiller, 2001). The amount of reading, at school or at leisure, correlates positively with reading ability (Anderson et al., 1988; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Taylor et al., 1990). In our study we therefore are interested in the total amount of coherent and continuous text students read during an average school day in all their subjects, with a particular focus on reading habits in Swedish (L1), English (L2), Chemistry, and History. We also want to find out how the amount of reading correlates with the students’ self-assessed motivation for their school-initiated reading activities. In the first part of the project there is a predominantly quantitative focus in which we seek to find out the extent to which students read continuous prose texts – fictional as well as non-fictional – as part of their everyday school work, and how their reading is related to different types of motivation. The second part of the project has a predominantly qualitative focus where a limited number of groups will be selected for a series of closer classroom studies of teachers as well as students through observations, interviews and questionnaires in order to find out what characterizes the reading practices of these schools and classes. This paper will report on some preliminary results from the first part of the project where the following research questions are to be answered:

- To what extent do students in years 6 and 9 read continuous prose text—fiction as well as nonfiction— as part of their school work?
- What kind of motivation do students express for reading nonfiction and fiction texts in different school subjects?
- What is the nature of the relationship between students’ reading motivation and the extent of their reading in school?
- What differences in the interest of reading and in the reading habits among females and males, between school years 6 and 9, and between schools can be detected?

The overall framework of the study is the didactic triangle and the meeting between the teacher, the student and the subject matter in terms of meaning making and reading activities that occur in this meeting (Uljens, 1997; Hudson & Meier, 2011; Liberg et al. 2002.) We also draw on motivation theories that stress the importance of constructing classroom practices that support student reading motivation by fulfilling the basic needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2008; De Naeghel et al, 2014)

### Methods/methodology (up to 400 words)

Data were collected by a web-based questionnaire, distributed to schools with grade 6 and grade 9 in a mid-Swedish region. Links to the questionnaires were distributed to students by their teachers, who also allotted time from their teaching for the completion of the questionnaire. In total 3408 students from 113 schools and 18 municipalities responded, 6 % of the total number of municipalities (290) in Sweden). After data cleaning, a total of 3286 students remained, 1683 in grade 6 (48% females, 0.1% unknown) and 1606 in grade 9 (51% females, 2% unknown). Students answered questions on how many coherent and continuous pages of fiction or non-fiction they had read in class during the day they completed the questionnaire or as homework to that day. Moreover, they were asked to indicate their interest in their respective school subjects, and what type of motivation they had for reading in school and at home (for homework). Items on students' motivation were adapted from a subset of the Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ-A; Deci & Ryan, 1999), intended to measure the extrinsic-intrinsic motivation continuum in self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT distinguishes between external, introjected, identified, integrated and intrinsic motivation, along a continuum toward increasingly autonomous regulation of one's behavior. For this paper, items measuring external and introjected motivation types were merged into a single category, *controlled regulation*, while items capturing identified and intrinsic motivation were analyzed together under the category *autonomous regulation*.

### Expected outcomes/results (up to 300 words)

One-way ANOVA indicated that students' general interest in the school subjects differed significantly between schools for all the examined subjects; English, Chemistry, History and First language (Swedish). Furthermore, female students reported a significantly higher general interest in reading both fiction and school literature in grade 6. In grade 9 this difference only remained for interest in reading fiction. The total number of pages students had read in class on the day of the questionnaire were, for non-fiction English (M=1.43; SD=3.56), First language (M=2.94; SD=8.01), Chemistry (M=1.05; SD=1.82), and History (M=2.34; SD=3.84). For fiction, the corresponding numbers were: English (M=0.83; SD=3.80), First language (M=7.19; SD=12.78), Chemistry (M=0.28; SD=1.09), and History (M=1.34; SD=5.2). The standard deviations indicate large differences in reading habits between students in several of the subjects. Orthogonal partial least squares analysis showed that the relationship between students' motivation for reading and their amount of reading in class was weak, with motivation only explaining between 2 – 6% of the number of full pages read during class. In general, autonomous regulation was a positive predictor of the numbers of non-fiction pages read in class, while controlled motivation was an insignificant predictor. However, for English, controlled regulation (introjection) became increasingly important for predicting in-class reading in grade 9. For chemistry, a mixture

of autonomous and controlled regulation predicted in-class reading in grade 6, although their importance for the prediction was low (barely significant). In contrast, controlled regulation was highly significant for predicting reading in grade 9, while autonomous regulation was insignificant.

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### 3 - 5 keywords

Reading, nonfiction, fiction, school subjects, motivation,