



# Developing Volitional Readers Requires Breadth and Balance: Skills Alone Won't do it

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## Abstract

The learning and teaching of reading continues to be a source of contention in New Zealand education. In recent years, proponents of structured literacy approaches have argued for more attention to be paid to what they term the “science of reading”. They have emphasised skill development and argued against the inclusion of other approaches. A singular focus on skill development comes at a cost however, as being a reader requires more than simply being able to read words. When we consider a broader view of what it means to be a reader, we need to consider the reader as a whole person, and their place in a wider social context. This article discusses the “science of reading” in relation to Self-Determination Theory and considers how pedagogical approaches can contribute to, or work against, the development of children’s feelings of autonomy, relatedness, and competence in reading and their subsequent desire to read. A restricted focus and related pedagogies will have negative long-term impacts on individuals’ ability to access the many and varied benefits of truly being a reader. Some of the approaches being promoted will likely exacerbate existing concerns such as declining rates of volitional reading and achievement. While necessary, being technically capable is not enough, children must also see the value in reading and its outcomes if they are going to choose to do it.

**Keywords** Reading for pleasure · Reading pedagogy · Reading achievement · Literacy · Self-determination theory

## Introduction

Renewed concerns about achievement levels amongst school students in New Zealand on international assessments have rekindled the ongoing debate about how reading should be taught in schools (Hood & Hughson, 2022b; McNaughton, 2020). As in the past, this debate has focused on the teaching of reading skills, with the

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Science of Reading (SoR) receiving significant attention. Drawing on both personal experience and theory, I argue that we need to broaden our view beyond developing technical competence and consider how we support children to truly become readers.

Over many years as a teacher, I worked with learners from ages 5 to 13 across a wide range of literacy abilities. As a literacy leader within the school, I worked with several students in their 6th, 7th, and 8th years of schooling who were struggling with literacy, reading in particular. What struck me about these students was that while they could read, they did not want to and/or misunderstood the purpose(s) for doing so. For these students, the issue was not one of decoding. They were perfectly capable of doing that. The problem was they did little else. In fact, many of these students were more accurate than their peers who achieved more highly on standardised tests of reading. Unfortunately, when these students described the literacy instruction they received in their classes, they described being encouraged to focus more on decoding, something which exacerbated rather than addressed the issues they were facing. This experience is unfortunately all too common for struggling readers who are subjected to what can be termed pedagogies of poverty (Hempel-Jorgensen et al., 2018) that focus more on skills than ideas. Such approaches only serve to further alienate learners from the benefits and joys of reading. My experience with these students reflects what we have known for around 20 years, for most students around age 15 with lower achievement seen in PISA results the problem is one of comprehension, not decoding (Lai et al., 2004; McNaughton, 2007). In addition, we know that styles of reading (Milne, 2021) and perspectives on what reading is (Kuzmičová et al., 2022) associated with less proficient reading are focused on decoding accuracy. We need to take account of the “Science of Reading” (SoR) in terms of skill development, and we need to think beyond that to avoid the issues I encountered.

In the next part of this paper I will outline what I am referring to when I discuss readers, what we know about good readers, and how that understanding relates to the SoR. These sections will also introduce Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as a framework to consider the psychology of readers as this can be useful tool for understanding readers in a more holistic fashion (Svrcek & Abugasea Heidt, 2022). The remainder of the paper will discuss the psychology of readers, particularly self-regulation and motivation, using SDT, how the SoR (as it applies to the learning of skills and strategies for reading) fits within a broader psychological view of reading, and what that means for the learning and teaching of readers.

## **A Focus on Readers, Not the Mechanics of Reading**

Proponents for the SoR have been vocal in their support of structured literacy approaches to teaching reading and have gained the attention of politicians and media. They argue that we have known about the science of reading for some time and sometimes accuse (other) academics, policy makers, and teachers of wilfully ignoring the information in front of them (e.g. Castles et al., 2018; Seidenberg, 2017). Often cited as evidence for that is the report of the National Reading

Panel (2000) in the US which is used to support claims that teaching of phonics should be the basis of early instruction. It needs to be noted that while the full report (not the summary written by different authors for a different purpose) did recognise the importance of decoding for reading, it showed that the teaching of phonics had only moderate effects on reading achievement, and then only in the first year of schooling. The report stated, “Phonics should not become the dominant component in a reading program, neither in the amount of time devoted to it nor in the significance attached.” (p. 97) and went on to say “...it is important to emphasise that systematic phonics instruction should be integrated with other reading instruction to create a balanced reading program. Phonics instruction is never a total reading program.” (p. 97). In addition, the other aspects considered in the report were limited to other cognitive skills and strategies, factors beyond that were still not considered. Those that argue that we have known what works for some time and that we just need to implement it are not entirely wrong. What they do not acknowledge is that what works is far more complex than they would have us believe.

There is no doubt that the development of phonemic awareness and the ability to decode text is a requirement for effective reading. However, given the issue is one of comprehension, it seems unlikely that an early focus on decoding will be a panacea for our literacy issues, and may result in a move towards the pedagogies of poverty mentioned earlier. This is not an argument for ignoring what science can tell us about the development of reading skill and the best ways to support that development. Rather I am arguing that we need to consider the *sciences* of reading (Afflerbach, 2022) and broaden our definition of what counts as success in reading (Milne et al., 2023). Part of doing that is that we need to acknowledge that teachers are not teaching reading, they are teaching *children* to read, what Afflerbach (2022) calls teaching readers not reading.

To teach readers, we must consider what we know about children and young people as learners and volitional actors within their social contexts. In order to develop readers as opposed to individuals competent in the mechanics of reading, we will need to consider a wider range of concepts related to how individuals respond to instruction and the literature they encounter. To become a nation full of readers who can not only read words but who choose to engage fully with reading because they see and understand the value of doing so, we need to ensure children’s intrinsic motivation for reading is supported and maintained. SDT is a useful tool to help us understand and contextualise motivation (Svrcek & Abugasea Heidt, 2022), and consists of three components that contribute to the development of intrinsic motivation: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020). At its simplest, autonomy is about an individual’s ability to exercise choice and control over what they do. It is related to better self-esteem, higher levels of persistence, engagement and motivation (Svrcek & Abugasea Heidt, 2022). Competence is “a feeling of mastery, a sense that one may grow” (Ryan & Deci, 2020, p. 1) and so is more than simply feeling able to do something. In the context of reading, relatedness is more than connections to other people, it is also about a reader’s connections to what is being read (Svrcek & Abugasea Heidt, 2022). This article will argue that while the SoR can contribute to competence on some level, we must consider whether those

potential benefits may come at a cost in terms of autonomy and relatedness, and therefore intrinsic motivation.

## The Science of Reading in the Context of Readers

Before we can make judgements about the value of a reductionist view of reading and the skills and cognitive activity associated with that, we need to understand what we are talking about when we say “reading”. The science of reading as generally presented when proclaiming an end to the reading wars (e.g. Castles et al., 2018) is fundamentally tied to the Simple View of Reading (SVR) originally developed by Gough and Tunmer (1986). The SVR reduces reading to a product of decoding and linguistic comprehension. Although Castles et al. (2018) also recognise the importance of a wider range of experiences with reading, this is an overly simple conception of the reading process. The brain pathways associated with this conception do not take sufficient account of the complex interplay between skills, strategies, and other aspects of a reader’s self. The reductionist SoR prevalent in arguments for skill-focused learning and teaching of reading emphasises the decoding part of this view, and the brain pathway connected to that. The rationale is that if we can only teach children to lift words off the page then they will become readers (provided they have the required linguistic comprehension ability).

In the SVR, decoding processes are separate from comprehension processes and the model leads to the inevitable conclusion that decoding must be taught before learners are able to become readers. In addition, perhaps because of the nature of the difficulties faced by those with dyslexia, many of the neuroimaging studies referred to in support of the SoR are restricted to pathways active when decoding single (and often pseudo-) words (Ellis & Bloch, 2021). This narrow focus results in representations focused on the Visual Word Form Area (VFWA) and associated dorsal pathway. Reading is more than that, and good readers are engaged in a much more complex activity that this view would suggest.

Other pathways are also active in purposeful reading, some related to reading itself, and others to individuals’ responses to reading and the meaning that comes from it. An overly reductive view of the SoR that only considers the brain activity related to decoding of words simply cannot depict the complexity of meaningful reading (Ellis & Bloch, 2021). While useful in understanding the pathway associated with decoding, brain images depicting decoding are not representative of brain activity when reading texts for meaningful purposes (Ellis & Bloch, 2021), and are therefore not representative of everything that is happening when reading.

Research relating to a reductive SoR and the SVR is heavily reliant on studies focused on dyslexia (Ellis & Bloch, 2021) and the assumptions connected to the SVR that have subsequently informed neurological studies relating to reading are potentially problematic when a wider view of readers is adopted. Drawn from the SVR is the idea that early reading is limited by decoding ability and so teaching of the code should take precedence in the early years of schooling (e.g. Castles et al., 2018). The difficulty with this view lies in the implication that decoding can be dealt with separately from comprehension, which may not need to be addressed at all if a

learner has sufficient language skills. There follows a subsequent lack of attention to the characteristics of good readers that will be discussed in the next section. This lack not only ignores children's autonomy and relatedness, SDT indicates that the result of this is likely to be a lack of motivation for reading.

### **Depicting Good Readers (not reading)**

Understanding any complex human endeavour involves more than just an understanding of the skills required to complete the task involved, although those are obviously important. To get to grips with what it means to be a reader and understand the experience of reading we need to understand the wider psychological aspects involved in the successful undertaking of meaningful reading. In this article reading is considered broadly. Here, reading is viewed as a “consuming, continuous, and complex activity, but one that is satisfying and productive” (Duke & Pearson, 2002, p. 206). Good readers are those who engage with text in this way, feeling a sense of engagement with texts that engenders both cognitive and affective responses.

Around the late 1990s and early 2000s several studies into reading and readers identified features of good readers that remain largely accepted since (e.g. Block & Pressley, 2001; Duke & Pearson, 2002; National Reading Panel, 2000; Pressley, 2002; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). In summary, those characteristics refer to the active and volitional nature of reading and the intentional and strategic way in which readers approach texts and manage the reading process. These things are not considered within the SVR—because here we are considering not just the task of reading but the reader themselves.

Approaching reading from the perspective of understanding readers, rather than simply considering the task of reading and breaking that down into its component parts reveals a more complex picture. Considering readers as active and volitional means we need to take account of models of self-regulation and the components of those—things such as how individuals define the task of reading, the goals they set, and the way in which they make decisions about the best way to achieve those goals (Winne, 2001). Considering readers as volitional means a need to consider motivation (or the reasons for wanting to do something) and engagement (the feeling of being immersed in something in the moment) and doing that brings affect into play.

In studies that have investigated the subjective experiences of children and young people's reading, good readers do not mention or report decoding-related activities. For example, the styles of reading experienced by good readers (Milne, 2021) and the perspectives they have of reading (Kuzmičová et al., 2022) are about meaning and the connections they make. In contrast, the perspectives and styles of poorer readers (Kuzmičová et al., 2022; Milne, 2021) are focussed on decoding and accuracy. Similarly, and reflecting that difference in focus, good readers are not necessarily interested in maintaining accuracy in their reading (Flurkey et al., 2008) and may make more decoding errors than poor readers who can decode but have weak comprehension ability (Milne, 2021). Good readers are only concerned with accuracy when it impacts on their ability to make meaning. For poor readers reading is

about being accurate, while for good readers decoding is only a means to an end, not reading itself.

For readers to feel competent as referred to in SDT they need to be able to manage these broader aspects of the reading process themselves as well as decode (Svrcek & Abugasea Heidt, 2022). Good readers exercise their autonomy through the choices they make in reading, in terms of what they read, the approach they take to reading, how they interpret it, who they talk to about their reading. They relate the ideas they encounter to their own lives and to those around them. Good readers do not simply respond to others' (e.g. teachers) imperatives.

### **The Science of Reading in Relation to Good Readers**

The reductive view of the SoR that is used to support arguments for a heavy focus on skill development in the early years of reading instruction has severe limitations in its depiction of reading. As a result, it ignores the fact that while we may be teaching some aspects of reading to children by focusing on decoding and skill, we are at the same time teaching them *about* reading and what it should be. Considered in relation to SDT, an early focus on skills may help students feel competent in dealing with written words, but the structured nature of that learning, including the use of “decodable” texts that use a limited range of phonemes, limits the opportunities for autonomy and relatedness through learners choosing texts that are of interest and meaningful to them. It is unlikely to support an intrinsic motivation for reading.

If, whether by accident or design, we promote the idea that good reading is about accuracy then we are encouraging children to develop the perspectives and styles of reading that are indicative of poor readers. Those poor readers are not motivated to read and when they must, they engage with text at a surface, word level (Milne, 2021). This is likely to exacerbate concerns seen in comprehension focused assessments such as the PISA and PIRLS and the concerns expressed about literacy achievement in NZ (Hood & Hughson, 2022b; McNaughton, 2020), as well as declining rates of reading for pleasure (Boyask et al., 2022). Some proponents of the science of reading and structured approaches are explicit about the need to focus on decoding letter by letter and claim that using other cues (as good readers do) is problematic and even counterproductive (e.g. Abadzi, 2017; Dehaene, 2009; Spear-Swerling, 2019). Teaching beginning readers to read in this way is teaching them to view reading in the way that poor readers do (Kuzmičová et al., 2022) and to adopt a reading style that is associated with unmotivated, poor reading (Milne, 2021).

In addition, Vacca (2002) has described the majority of students in the middle grades (from about age 12) as being skilled in the mechanics of reading but insufficiently strategic in exploring text and developing meaning. This has been supported in a New Zealand context by studies conducted following earlier PISA results that caused concern that reported students receive instruction in comprehension strategies but are not able to use them independently (Lai et al., 2004; McNaughton, 2007). The importance of strategic decision-making in successful reading is largely absent in the SVR. What is not considered by the SVR and a reductionist view of the SoR is how readers manage and control the skills and strategies at their disposal.

Many of the studies that are used to support a skills focus assess only what they teach directly—skills (e.g. Chapman et al., 2018). They do not adequately assess the broader impacts of their interventions, including comprehension.

Studies have also shown that there are plenty of students who have age-appropriate decoding and language comprehension ability and yet have poor reading ability (Duke & Cartwright, 2021), something which Gough and Tunmer (1986) themselves suggested would invalidate the SVR. Around 40% of the variance in reading comprehension ability is not explained by decoding or linguistic comprehension (Hjetland et al., 2020). Clearly, more needs to be considered.

None of this discussion is intended to negate the importance of phonemic awareness, decoding ability, and skill development. The argument posed in this article is that it needs to be kept in perspective. We need to consider wider psychological aspects of readers from the very earliest stages of reading, including before formal teaching of reading begins. They must have a sense of competence to engage with texts fully (not just decode them or answer a teacher's questions), have opportunities to make choices about what and when they read, and be able to connect to those texts in meaningful ways that they can relate to themselves and the world around them. There is ample evidence those who choose to read do better in myriad ways, not just academically (Boyask et al., 2021). SDT tells us that competence in skills and strategies will not itself develop intrinsically motivated readers.

## **Managing and Maintaining Reading**

The next two sections expand on a few key aspects of good readers that have been introduced earlier: self-regulation, motivation, and engagement. Moving beyond a focus on cognitive skill and strategy development means we need to consider what it is that readers do with those skills and how they manage the process of reading.

### **Self-Regulation**

Like any goal-directed activity, reading can be considered as a self-regulated action (Kaplan, 2008; Milne, 2014) and therefore models of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) such as that developed by Winne (2001) can be useful in understanding good reading. SRL models indicate the importance of goal setting in the subsequent behaviours of readers. The goals that readers set will determine the actions that follow and the choices readers make, including where the limited resources available to working memory (Pressley, 2002) are directed. That raises another potential issue with an over-emphasis on skills. If early readers believe that what matters is the ability to dissect individual words into their component sounds and then reassemble them accurately then that is what they will aim to do, allocating their cognitive resources to that task. This was evident in the difference between the accuracy focused styles of poor readers and the meaning driven reading of those who are more able (Milne, 2021). Once accuracy becomes the way an individual defines good reading (Kuzmičová et al., 2022) then their reading behaviour is motivated by the search for accuracy rather than meaning



or enjoyment. This is exactly the scenario that I mentioned at the start of this article concerning my experience working with students who saw no reason to read. There was nothing in it for them as it was seen as simply a series of puzzle challenges. They may feel competent according to their definition of reading, but they do not feel a sense of relatedness and they exercise their autonomy by choosing not to read if that is at all possible. Unfortunately, because of lower assessment results, what often happens for students in this situation is that they receive more skills-focused instruction that further alienates them from the meaning and enjoyment that can come from reading (Hempel-Jorgensen et al., 2018). SDT can help us to understand why these pedagogies of poverty (Hempel-Jorgensen et al., 2018) have the negative impact they do. The skills-focused teaching they receive is often more teacher directed. Such approaches have less scope for autonomy as texts are chosen by the teacher based largely on difficulty, and that results in learners feeling unconnected to the texts they are reading and therefore to the act of reading itself. It is not seen as something that relates to who they are (Svrcek & Abugasea Heidt, 2022).

From the very beginning of reading instruction then, children need to be taught explicitly that true reading is meaning related, and that the purposes for which we read are greater than simply to get it right. Without a meaningful context, students will learn to read in a manner quite different to those who do learn in a meaningful context (Cambourne, 2002). Purpose leads to a task definition (Magliano et al., 1999; McKoon & Ratcliff, 1992; Winne, 2001), so taking the extreme approach suggested by Abadzi (2017); Dehaene (2009); Spear-Swerling (2019) and others is encouraging children to define the task of reading in terms of accuracy and set goals accordingly. Those that advocate strongly for a systematic approach to phonics instruction taking priority early in schooling view this approach as being “compromised” (Chapman et al., 2018, p. 107) by meaningful texts based on natural language, the very things that promote meaning-related goals, relatedness, and autonomy as well as a broader competence.

A key aspect of viewing reading as a self-regulated action is that the task definition and the goals that are set largely determine the strategic approach to remainder of the task. Prioritising decoding too much at an early stage and restricting young readers to “decodable” texts that prioritise repeating phonemes rather than developing meaning may help children learn to decode words, and it will also promote the idea that accuracy is what matters. Once a reading task has been defined in terms of accuracy, and a goal set that reflects that then reading becomes a search for accuracy. This can result in readers devoting considerable amounts of time to decoding single words that are not significant in terms of the meaning of the text, and then continuing without any attempt to reconcile meaning (Milne, 2021), an illustration of the low importance given to meaning when an accuracy focused perspective (Kuzmičová et al., 2022) is adopted.

## Interest and Motivation

Alongside the concerns about literacy achievement levels, there are concerns about declining rates of interest and engagement in reading for pleasure (RfP) (Hood & Hughson, 2022a; Horizon Research, 2021; Medina & McGregor, 2019). This is of concern given the benefits to individuals of RfP such as better achievement and



wellbeing (Boyask et al., 2021; Mak & Fancourt, 2020), and to society more generally (Wilhelm & Smith, 2016). Ultimately, choosing not to read reflects a lack of intrinsic motivation to read which is easily explained through SDT as discussed earlier. We cannot assume that technical skill will lead to ongoing motivation for reading and in fact there is evidence that it does not (Kirkby et al., 2022).

Motivation is sometimes presented as a binary (intrinsic vs extrinsic motivation), but the reality is that we should view motivation as a continuum (De Smedt et al., 2020), and consider whether our actions as teachers are likely to help the children we work with move towards being intrinsically motivated, or away from that goal. SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2020) provides a way of understanding how individuals can move within this continuum. Experiences that promote a personal sense of value in an activity through developing autonomy, competence, and relatedness concurrently will promote intrinsic motivation (see Fig. 1). Skills focused instruction will address at least some aspects of competence if done well, but it is unlikely to support feelings of autonomy and connectedness to the texts they read (especially decodable ones) and nor to others in their social networks. For that, children need to see the personal value in reading through viewing themselves and their worlds in the texts they encounter, and have an ability and purpose to discuss them with others and on their own terms.

The factors discussed so far result in some questions in relation to their impact on reading outcomes via an individual’s motivation for and engagement with reading, which are in turn affected by the impact of instructional approaches on the 3 components of SDT. These are outlined in Fig. 1. If our desired outcome is to develop readers rather skills then we need to ensure that the practices we engage in are consistently promoting positive outcomes in all three components.

**Pedagogical Implications**

Where children are choosing not to read for pleasure and/or are not enjoying it, then we need to consider motivation and engagement as part of the reading process, and therefore how instructional practices may impact on the levels of both as

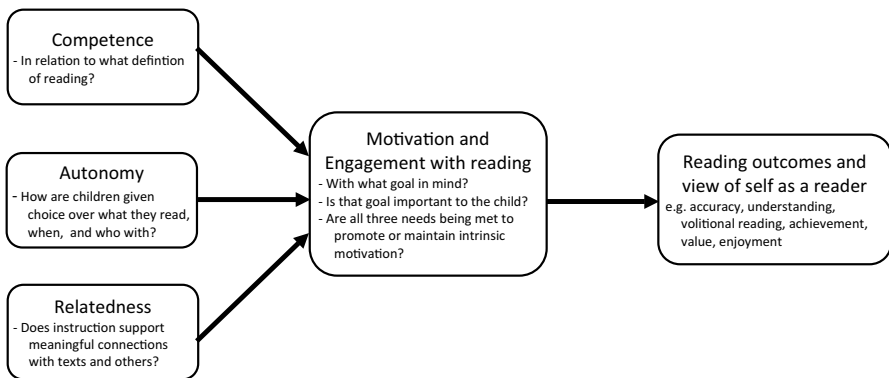


Fig. 1 Components of SDT and reading outcomes

experienced by children. Practices that support those needs being met and the development of intrinsic motivation are complex and multi-faceted (Svrcek & Abugasea Heidt, 2022). To support the development of children who can and want to read we need to be mindful of far more than the skills they have developed. We need to ensure we consider the whole child and support them to develop a view of reading that is meaning-focused, to enjoy reading, and therefore to prioritise it in their leisure time.

An individual's level of intrinsic motivation is tied to the value placed on a particular activity and/or its outcomes, and the extent to which a task is deemed relevant and meaningful (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2017). In developing the Engagement Model of Reading Development (EMRD), Guthrie and Wigfield (2017) identified five characteristics of learning and teaching they view as crucial for the development of ongoing reading motivation: success, collaboration, importance, relevance, and choice. These characteristics can be seen as practical representations of the three components of SDT. While it is not as clear cut as this, the first relates to competency, importance and choice to autonomy, and collaboration and relevance to relatedness. Teaching and learning that has those characteristics would be consistent with SDT and likely to promote intrinsic (or autonomous (De Smedt et al., 2020)) motivation. The teacher-directed learning evident in pedagogies of poverty and very structured approaches to literacy would not. The characteristics of EMRD (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2017) and SRL models (e.g. Winne, 2001) provide useful frameworks for considering the questions in Fig. 1.

Technical skill contributes to competence at a basic level but if we consider the impact of accuracy-focused lessons on feelings of autonomy and relatedness and therefore the value placed on reading then there are some potential concerns. If reading becomes yet another exercise in getting it right at school, then we cannot expect children to read independently where recognition of accuracy is not forthcoming and intrinsic benefits are limited. Guthrie and Wigfield (2017) say that “students read extensively because they enjoy it, or want to share it, or believe it is vital to them, or have goals to master the content” (p. 61), not to get a bunch of words right.

Frequent recreational reading is a strong predictor of reading achievement and should therefore be an important consideration in the design of reading programmes from an early age (Boyask et al., 2022). Making the choice to read when there is a myriad of other options available is dependent on the value of the activity and the affective responses associated with that. When considering motivation, we can also consider what Guthrie and Wigfield (2017) call motivational opposites – the inverse of the desired focus (e.g. valuing vs devaluing, social vs antisocial etc.) that will have a negative impact on the overall level of motivation and engagement. Motivation and engagement are complex, multifactorial things (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2017) that are impacted by affective responses which need to be considered in the teaching of reading as well as cognitive factors (Kirkby et al., 2022). For children to reap the benefits of independent reading they need to want to do it. Many of those that advocate for phonics first approaches also promote the need for children to be reading independently to develop and practise fluency and that what teachers can do will be minor compared to what children can do on their own (e.g. Castles et al., 2018). This is true, and it means children must want to read. Despite this, affect is often not

considered within a reductionist SoR, resulting in a potential devaluing of reading. Given what we understand about the development of intrinsic motivation from SDT, this is a considerable failing.

## Conclusion

In summarising the discussion above, I am going to draw on what has become a loaded term in recent years: Balance. Recently, the term “balanced literacy” has been used in ways that suggest it is an unscientific approach that should be rejected in favour of structured literacy approaches. Considering the focus on children as readers in this article, the characteristics of learning and teaching identified by Guthrie and Wigfield (2017), and the need to ensure all 3 components of SDT are developed, balance is required to ensure we are supporting children to become capable *and* enthusiastic readers. This is not a call to reject what the SoR can tell us about learning the skills of reading as that would continue the pointless oppositional debate. It is an appeal to consider that alongside what the broader sciences of reading can tell us so we are teaching readers not reading (Afflerbach, 2022).

We need to consider what children need to learn, when, and how to ensure that reading is enjoyed and valued by children and young people, as well as developing the necessary skills. It cannot be a simple case of teaching children skills and hoping for the best. We must ensure from the very beginning that children feel competent as they engage with the ideas in texts, have opportunities to exercise their free will and choice to develop autonomy, and that they feel connected to the texts they interact with so that reading relates to their personal and social lives and identities. That requires a range of concurrent approaches if we are to promote the necessary skills without risking negative impacts on the intrinsic desire of children to read and engage with stories and the world around them. A failure to answer the questions in Fig. 1 in appropriate ways while focusing on skill development will not result in positive outcomes for individuals or society.

The students I described at the beginning of this article had not been involved in teaching that supported all three components of SDT. The perspective (Kuzmičová et al., 2022) towards reading they had learnt meant that they saw little value in the activity, and the pedagogies of poverty (Hempel-Jorgensen et al., 2018) they had experienced only diminished their sense of autonomy and of reading as something relevant and important to their lives. If children are to develop the styles and perspectives of good readers, they need to have a balanced understanding of reading from the very beginning and not be constrained and limited by pedagogies of poverty that result from too close a focus on skills. We can't make children become readers by imparting skills alone.

There should not be an oppositional approach to discussing the teaching of reading skills vs enjoyment and other bigger picture ideas. Children need both—dialectic thinking is required. We can give them the skills they need AND help them develop the desire to read.

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