

CHAPTER 5 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

'Unfortunately, teachers rarely have easy access to the research literature and when they do, they may have found the research through someone with wrong reasons or very limited awareness and understanding of all research on an issue'
(Shanahan, 2006:3)

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4, I outlined the research methodology and gave reasons for my selection of participants and data-gathering instruments. I used instruments such as individual teacher interviews, focus group interviews, classroom observations and content analysis for collecting data to enable me to answer the research questions. In this chapter, I present an analysis of the data collected and its interrelatedness. The data from the participating teachers' responses, narratives and descriptions about how to teach reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners informed my understanding.

I used the constructivist grounded theory analysis method and research paradigm, as described by Charmaz (2000) in the analysis of the data. The constructivist grounded theory of Charmaz (2000) and the thematic analysis process of Braun and Clarke (2006) became relevant as they aligned with the qualitative research design of this study. Qualitative research emphasises the process of themes and categories as they emerge from the voices of the participants. These methods of analysis are more inductive (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Hopkins, 1996) and move from the specific to the general.

As indicated in Chapters 1, 2 and 3, South African learners display poor levels of reading comprehension compared to other countries. This situation requires urgent intervention strategies to address this problem. This research study was an attempt to gain some insight in the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 learners.

5.2 Respondent profile

The participating teachers of my case study are all well qualified with a wealth of experience in teaching Grade 3 learners. This information is important for analysing the data for better understanding, as teachers' qualification and experience may influence the teaching of reading comprehension. The profile of the teachers is indicated in Table 5.1 in order to explain the coding system I used in my analysis of the data.

Table 5.1: Profile of teacher respondents at the schools

Schools	Respondents	Gender	Experience in Grade 3	Qualification	Age
A Grade 3 A and B	1	F	6	JPTD, ACE, JPTD	46
	2	F	6		43
B Grade 3 C and D	3	F	12	PTC, HED, BED JPTD, BA, BED, MED	53
	4	F	8		47
C Grade 3 E and F	5	F	9	STD, BA, BED JPTD, BA, BED	48
	6	F	6		52

In Table 5.2, I outline the coding system which I used throughout this thesis for easy reference.

Table 5.2: Coding system

Key to Coding	Explanation	School	Question	Teacher No
IT	Individual interviews	A,B,C	Q= Question	T = 1-6
FG	Focus group interviews	A,B,C		
CO	Classroom observations	A,B,C		
CA	Content analysis			

In this chapter, I report on and discuss findings with regard to questions raised in the interviews, focus group interviews and information gathered during classroom

observations. The responses from teachers are consistently reported in two categories: the school category and the number given to each teacher, for example, teachers 1 and 2 fall under school A, teachers 3 and 4 fall under school B and teachers 5 and 6 fall under school C. Each of the three schools that participated in the research study had two Grade 3 classes from which the data was collected, giving six Grade 3 teachers who participated in my study. An example of my coding system is, IT = Individual interviews, FG = Focus group interviews, CO = Classroom observations, CA = Content analysis, SCH = Schools, Q= Questions, T = Teachers.

The key policy documents used for content analysis in my study are listed in Table 5.2.3.

Table 5.3: Key policy documents

POLICY	FOCUS AREAS
National Curriculum Statement (NCS, DoE, 2008)	There are three learning programmes in the Foundation Phase, namely Literacy, Life Skills and Numeracy. The Learning Outcome for reading and viewing is provided with relevant assessment standards for Grade R-3.
Foundations for Learning Campaign (FFLC) (DoE, 2008)	Instrumental in making people aware of the reading comprehension problem experienced in schools.
Teaching Reading in Early Grades (DoE, 2008)	Influential in highlighting the importance of various components of reading, namely phonics, vocabulary, sight words, fluency and reading comprehension.
National Reading Strategy (NRS) (DoE, 2008)	Influential in promoting reading across the curriculum.

For the purposes of this chapter, I refer to the policies that were reviewed although I have dealt with them in my literature review. I reviewed the NCS (DoE, 2008), FFLC (DoE, 2008), *Teaching Reading in Early Grades* (DoE, 2008) and the NRS (DoE,2008). These policies gave an overview of the DoE's strategies for teaching reading amongst Grade 3 learners in general and specifically for Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. Since these documents addressed literacy issues, they were part of the research as they could be helpful to find out what measures were in place. I also wanted to investigate how often they were used in class and whether their use made any difference to the teaching of reading comprehension to Tshivenda-speaking learners. This was addressed during the individual teachers'

interviews, focus group interviews and classroom observation. The following questions were helpful for me in understanding the policy provision on teaching reading comprehension (see Appendix C):

- What is the importance of teaching reading comprehension?
- Which strategies do teachers use when teaching reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners?
- How can OR what strategies can teachers use to improve reading comprehension?

5.3 Data analysis process

This study is a qualitative research study in which I used grounded theory analysis to identify and summarise data gathered through interviews, focus group interviews, classroom observations and content analysis. These theoretical perspectives on data analysis shaped my approach and attempts to make sense of the data.

The teachers' voices during interviews and focus group interviews were recorded with an audio tape and transcribed. I then coded the categories as I read carefully through my transcribed data, line by line and divided it into meaningful analytical units (Maree, 2011). I transferred teachers' responses on a large A4sheet of paper. This assisted me to have the responses for each question grouped together and I could see the ideas emerging. Then, I colour-coded responses that were repetitive to see which themes were emerging from each instrument. I considered inclusion and exclusion categories when deciding on themes and categories as I kept my research topic in mind. When I analysed the data I compared all the data as the comparison across the data helped me to strengthen the already identified themes and categories.

Comparison and categorisation continued until saturation was reached regarding the themes and categories. Three broad foci came to the fore, namely the teachers' varied opinions, their beliefs and understanding of reading comprehension. Identified roles for both the teacher and the learners and challenges to teaching reading comprehension are discussed. The teachers identified these roles. I also looked at categories or sub-themes that appeared repetitively. I present the three themes by using direct responses (quotations) from the data:

- There are two words, the reader must ‘read’ and thereafter ‘comprehend’;
- The one who is teaching reading comprehension must be ready, have the love, know his or her learners;
- The challenges have been highlighted and this is serious.

In the subsequent sections, relevant categories are presented within each theme. In Table 5.4, I present a summary of the themes which emerged from the data analysis and subsequent categorisation. The information in square brackets is my own.

Table 5.4: Summary of themes and related categories

	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3
	<p>Teachers’ varied opinions, beliefs and understanding of reading comprehension</p> <p><i>There are two words, [namely reading and comprehension] the reader must read and thereafter comprehend</i></p>	<p>Identified roles of both the teacher and the learners</p> <p><i>The one who is teaching reading comprehension must be ready, have the love, know his/her learners</i></p>	<p>Challenges of teaching reading comprehension</p> <p><i>The challenge has been highlighted and this is serious</i></p>
Category	1.1 ‘Learners should read and understand and be able to apply the information in their daily lives’	2.1 ‘I explain the strategy first’ [before reading comprehension starts]	3.1 ‘Teaching reading is a challenge’
	1.2 ‘Learners can read any text and know how to interpret it’	2.2 ‘I motivate them before’[reading comprehension starts]	3.2 ‘Reading is not being done across the learning programmes namely Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills’
	1.3 ‘Able to indicate or see the relevancy of the story they have read with their lives’	2.3 ‘I do not know if there is any’ [reading comprehension strategies]	3.3 ‘No, Tshivenda do not have guidelines for teaching reading comprehension like step 1, 2, 3 because that is all we want’
	1.4 ‘Have more deeper knowledge’	2.4 ‘I just want to indicate what we expect [from learners] or the outcomes of reading comprehension’	3.4 ‘I think time allocation is a challenge’

5.4 Results of the theme analysis

In the following sections I present themes and their related categories which emerged from the data analysis. The data was derived from the various instruments I used to collect empirical data. In addition, I refer to the relevant policy documents to assist when I present data. I commence with Theme 1 and provided evidence for the emergence of this theme. Theme 1 is about teachers' varied opinions, beliefs and understanding of the concept of reading comprehension and its importance in the lives of learners. In addition, I present the categories of Theme 1 that came to the fore.

5.4.1 Theme 1: 'There are two words, the reader must read and thereafter comprehend'

Across all the textual data it seemed that teachers understood the concept of reading comprehension and its importance in the lives of their learners. This theme was critically important to the teachers who participated in the study. They understood it and regarded reading comprehension as important during interviews and focus group interviews. Even though they expressed it differently, each of the six respondents explained the importance of teaching reading comprehension to the learners.

Classroom observations assisted me to corroborate what they said was indeed happening in regard to the teaching of reading comprehension in the classroom. Where I discussed classroom observations, I integrated my findings with content analysis. During my classroom observation, the teaching practice of reading comprehension was not visible. The reason might be that I was not always present in the classroom.

From the participating teachers' responses, Theme 1 is: '**There are two words** [*reading and comprehension*] **which the reader must read and thereafter comprehend**'. What seems to be significant to the study is that the participants of the case study said they had a clear understanding of reading comprehension. Categories emerged as expansion and explanation of Theme 1 from the interviews,

focus group interviews and classroom observations. Within this theme, teachers explained that reading comprehension is to read and understand. The following categories emerged from Theme 1 and are subsequently discussed in detail:

- Learners should read and understand and be able to apply the information in their daily lives;
- Learners can read any text and know how to interpret it;
- Able to indicate or see the relevancy of the story they have read with their lives;
- Have deeper knowledge about the written words.

5.4.1.1 'Learners should read and understand and be able to apply the information in their daily lives'

The first category of Theme 1 consists of the teachers' views, opinions and expressions of their understanding of how relevant reading comprehension was to the learners. During individual interviews, focus group interviews and classroom observations, teachers seemed to understand that reading comprehension was important.

Teacher 4 from school B highlighted this when she says:

FG/T4-SCH B, Q1: *'I think reading comprehension is important and to read and understand the story is important; it is just like what my colleague has just said reading with understanding the meaning of the text'*

According to various authors (Dole, 2002; Wessels, 2010; DoE, 2002), reading for meaning is the main purpose of reading comprehension. Therefore, the respondents believed it critical that learners must be able to read and understand in order to use the information in their lives.

This was highlighted by teacher 3 from school B and teacher 6 from school C:

FG/T3-SCH B, Q1: *'I think the reader who is reading should understand the passage. On top of that the reader must understand the authors' purpose; why did the author write this idea, what was the message of the text? What was the idea behind'*

FG/T6-SCH B, Q1: *‘Yah, I want to say that comprehension is to read and understand and use the information in your daily lives. Learner must read and understand the text’*

Understanding is the goal of reading; and if learners read without understanding, then they are not really reading (Lehr & Osborn, 2006; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Armbruster, Lehr & Osborn, 2008). The participating teachers seemed to understand why they regarded reading comprehension as important. They were very much aware that reading comprehension played a significant role in the education of learners. During the individual teachers’ interviews, the teachers expressed their understanding of reading comprehension as the ability to read the text with understanding. Teacher 1 from school A and teacher 2 from school B, who expressed their understanding of reading comprehension in the following manner, highlighted this:

IT/T1-SCH A, Q1: *‘To read and understand written words, a learner must understand’*

IT/T3 -SCH B, Q1: *‘What you read, you must be able to understand’*

Both teachers seemed to relate reading comprehension to the learners, meaning that those learners should be able to interact with the text and read with understanding. Related references to reading comprehension also emerged from the focus group interviews with teachers:

FG/T6-SCH C, Q1: *‘Learners must read, and as they read, they must understand’*

FG/T1-SCH A, Q1: *‘The reader must read and thereafter comprehend’*

From the above statement, it is clear that reading comprehension occurs when a reader reads with the aim of getting meaning from the text. For this reason, reading comprehension involves cognition (Piaget, 1968). This implies that the purpose of reading is to understand the written text (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000); DoE, 2008). Cunningham and Allington (2003), Mayer (2003), Pardo (2004) and Chaote and Rakes (2004) suggest that during the process of reading, the reader actively interacts with the print in making sense of the text.

Concerning Theme 1, the teachers held varied opinions, beliefs and understanding of reading comprehension, explaining that the importance of reading comprehension is to assist learners to read with understanding and be able to relate the information to other situations. Therefore, the teachers regarded comprehension as the crucial link to effective reading and a strong factor in education and in daily life.

The teachers seemed to understand that reading comprehension unlocked the door to a lifetime of reading, recreation and enjoyment, because if learners understood the text well, they would be able to understand the world around them. This fact was also emphasised by the NCS (DoE, 2002). The following remarks from respondents during the interviews and focus group interviews bear testimony.

IT/T1-SCH A-Q2: *'Learners need to read and understand and apply it in their daily lives'*

FG/T3-SCH B-Q2: *'At the end, they can implement it [the information] in their daily lives'*

These responses indicate that the teachers seemed to know the importance of reading comprehension. The respondents seemed to be knowledgeable about reading comprehension as an essential life skill that can assist learners in day-to-day activities (NRP, 2000; Togerson, Hauston, Rissman & Kosanovich, 2007; DoE, 2008). For this reason, reading comprehension must be taught for learners to become independent readers. It is clear from the above comments that reading comprehension involves cognition, because during reading the learner is required to think and control his/her reading by making use of strategies. In essence, before reading, teachers must teach learners the purpose of reading comprehension.

An important point that repeatedly emerged from the responses was that comprehension is the purpose of reading. If learners read with understanding, they can use the information in different situations. This implies that during teaching, teachers need to be aware that reading comprehension involves many aspects. For example, teachers must teach learners not to memorise the words on the page but must strive to help learners to understand what they read (NRP, 2000; Fielding &

Pearson, 1994; Shanahan *et al.*, 2010). Similarly, the NCS (DoE, 2002) supports this by pointing out that when learners are being taught to read, they must be taught in such a way that they will read and make meaning from the written text.

During the individual teachers' interviews and focus group interviews, all six teachers said that they understood the concept of reading comprehension. This was revealed during the individual teachers' and focus group interviews. However, during the classroom observations, it was clear that it was difficult for them to inspire their learners to read with understanding. During the classroom observations, it was not evident that these teachers are aware of the importance of reading comprehension to the learners. For example during the pre-reading phase, teachers did not ask learners to identify the purpose of reading the text with understanding (see Appendix D). This was absent in their facilitation of reading comprehension.

During classroom observations the emphasis was on the 'doing' part. The teachers would ask learners to do something, for example to summarise, retell or explain, instead of teaching them how to do it, how to summarise or how to predict and why they should do this. What was lacking was the teaching of comprehension strategies to the learners.

This category is linked to the next category, which deals with coding. If learners can decode the words correctly, they will understand them. In the next section, I shall expand further on Theme 1 and report on the following category: **'Learners can read any text and know how to interpret it'**.

5.4.1.2 'Learners can read any text and know how to interpret it'

It is clear that the teachers understood reading comprehension and that it was a very important aspect to be taught. Teachers must understand that one can interpret the text only if one can read and understand it, because the reader should think as he/she reads and be able to interpret the text on literal, interpretive and evaluative levels (Fielding & Pearson, 1994; Lenz, 2005; Lyon, 2003).

Across all individual interviews, focus group interviews and classroom observations, most of the teachers complained that learners could not read the text and interpret the information on a literal, interpretive and evaluative level. During classroom observation, most learners struggled to interpret the text on an interpretive and evaluative level (see Appendix E). Teaching comprehension strategies may assist learners to know how to interpret the text correctly by using various strategies to understand the text (Keen & Zimmerman, 1997; Dole, 2002; Bender, 2002; McGregor, 2007; Berry, Hall & Gildroy, 2004). Therefore, comprehension is a skill that must be taught (Mayer, 2003; NRP, 2000; Torgesen *et al.*, 2007). One cannot interpret something one did not understand. Therefore, understanding becomes an important concept in the teaching of reading comprehension.

There is a relationship between the first two categories that emerged from Theme 1. When one understands a text, one needs to be able to interpret the information gained from the text and in the end to explain it to others. Hence, the purpose of reading is indeed comprehension, explaining why a teaching comprehension strategy is so important. The following remark from teacher 2, school B was pertinent:

FG/T2-SCH B, Q2: *'We expect the learner to be able to read and understand the text, explain about and interpret what he or she has been reading about'*

This expression is clearly linked to Theme 1. The argument here is that understanding is the major concept in reading. Teachers must teach learners how to read and how to understand the text (Myers, 2005; Lehr & Osborn, 2006; Torgesen *et al.*, 2007; Wessels, 2010).

This means that learners should be able to perform the task of reading and understanding the content of the text. The use both cognitive and metacognitive strategies are necessary to enhance comprehension to learners. The question that emerged was whether teachers have been trained on how to implement these strategies during the teaching of reading comprehension.

On the macro level (the level of text organisation), readers rely upon the author's organisation of the text, for example headings, paragraph length, main ideas and summaries, to get a sense of how to interpret the text (Adler, 2004; Myers, 2005; Anastasiou & Griva, 2009).

On the micro level (the level of the sentence), readers endeavour to understand individual words and ideas in the text and try to make sense of phrases and sentences in order to connect the text information with their relevant background knowledge (Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Fisher, 1998; Fisher, Frey & Williams, 2002; Wessels, 2010). The following remark was made:

FG/T2-SCH B, Q1: *'You cannot explain something which you did not understand; so, that means when you read, you should read with understanding'*

This response shows the insight of respondent 2 about the importance of reading with understanding. From the responses, most respondents seemed to know that learners must be able to read any text and be able to explain the meaning thereof.

During the classroom observations of all 24 lessons that I observed, learners were asked after reading the text to explain in their own words and to give critical judgements about the text they had read (see Appendix E). What I noticed was that most learners could not read and understand the text. It seems that understanding is the prerequisite for acquiring. Therefore, learners could not explain because they did not understand the text. They just looked down and finally the teacher pointed to those few she knew could respond and then moved on. Teachers confirmed this during the interviews and focus group interviews. It was observed that learners could not express critical judgements over something they did not understand.

The issue at stake here is that learners have to be taught to read and understand; this continuously came out from the responses of the participants. To read and understand is the goal of reading and this is the focus of this study. The next category explains what could happen if learners could read with understanding.

5.4.1.3 'Able to indicate or see the relevancy of the story they have read with their lives'

In the context of my study, a person's ability to figure out the relevancy of texts depends largely on the ability to read and understand written words (NCS, 2002; Lehr, Osborn & Hiebert, 2004). It is therefore imperative to read with understanding and this requires learners' positive attitude towards reading. Consequently, the learners will be able to use the information when needed, because they understood it. This is supported by teacher 2 from school B who said:

FG/T2-SCH B, Q2: *'They should be able to indicate or see the relevancy of the story that they have read, what does it have to do with their lives, what it is, why, the purpose of the text, the author in that story as to what does it have to [do] with our lives as readers and also they are able to add their vocabulary because they are going to encounter new words in the text'*

What is emerging from this category is that comprehension involves interaction between the reader, the text and the context in order to gain meaning (Pearson, 2001; Torgesen *et al.*, 2007). They become critical readers and are able to generate questions about what the author is saying in the text. From the responses when learners were able to indicate or see the relevancy of the story, they seemed to be able to compare and evaluate information and indicate what is useful and relevant to them whether or not the story is liked (DoE, 2002). To support this view, during a focus group interview teacher 4 from school C made the following remark:

FG/T4-SCH B, Q2: *'Definitely, when you give learners a story to read, definitely it is a story, and at the end of the day, they will have to understand and appreciate the story. Because time and again if we give them different stories, the stories won't be the same every day, so they are able to compare today story with yesterday's story, today story with last week story. They can compare now that this was the most interesting. Yesterday story was interesting but this one is more interesting or this one is the most interesting and so, they are also able to compare'*

From this response, it is apparent that the teacher thought learners should read the text and be able to think about and evaluate information instead of believing whatever they read. This idea is linked to Learning Outcome 3 of the NCS (DoE, 2002): “reading and viewing, which states that learners are expected to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts.”

This idea can be related to what teacher 3 from school B highlighted during the focus group interviews when she said:

FG/T3-SCH B, Q2: *‘Why the purpose of the text, the author in that story as to what does it have to do with our lives as readers and also they are able to add their vocabulary because they are going to encounter new words in the text’*

It seems that during teaching, there should be a discussion between teachers and learners about the purpose of reading and thereafter the purpose of the text and how it relates to real-life interests and needs. During the pre-reading phase, learners must be encouraged to make associations or connections with the text and evaluate their initial predictions about the topic of the text. After reading the text, learners should confirm or discard previous predictions (Block & Pressley, 2002; Stahl, 2004; Myers, 2006; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Shanahan *et al.*, 2010).

During my classroom observations, the teachers seemed to be silent about encouraging learners to make associations or connections with the text and evaluate their initial predictions about the text. During the classroom observations, all six teachers asked learners to talk about the illustrations during the pre-reading phase. However, they did not remind the learners of their predictions before, during and after the reading phase so that learners could learn to link their prior knowledge with the actual text, and confirm or discard the predictions they made before reading. Outcomes are dependent on teachers’ understanding and on their theoretical knowledge of how to teach comprehension and the application of comprehension strategies. This category was about learners’ ability to read the story and see the relevancy of the story they have read with their lives. This

requires understanding and can be linked to the following category which indicates that learners must have deeper knowledge about written words.

5.4.1.4 'Have deeper knowledge about the written words'

The six participating teachers in the study indicated that reading comprehension was important for assisting learners to read, understand, and therefore have deeper knowledge about written words. In the context of my study, reading comprehension is when the reader reads the words on the page correctly and shows understanding by explaining and making use of the information gathered to construct and extract meaning from the written text (Sweet & Snow, 2003; Pardo, 2004), and so develops a deeper understanding of the written words (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). This implies that reading comprehension is a way of finding answers or information from the text that one can use in various situations.

Therefore, reading comprehension is what allows the reader to interact with the text in a meaningful way. It is true that reading comprehension cannot develop in a haphazard way. Hence, the importance of activities before, during and after reading to enhance reading comprehension (Fielding & Pearson, 1994; Chia, 2001; Dole, 2002; Allen, 2003; Adler, 2004; Wessels, 2010). Therefore, the teacher should plan strategically before the reading comprehension lesson so that effective teaching and learning can take place.

Teachers must be conversant with theories as discussed in Chapter 3 and comprehension strategies in order to equip learners to develop and apply reading strategies during reading appropriately (NRP, 2000); NICHD, 2002). This enhances learners' understanding of the text because the purpose of reading is to read with understanding, so that one can be able to use the information in various ways. Finding the deeper meaning of the text requires a strategic reader who is able to use comprehension strategies when reading in order to gain the information. Strategies might help learners to monitor the process of comprehension. As a result, the learner develops interest in reading because he/she can make meaning from the written words.

The following quotes from teacher 2 from school A and teacher 5 from schools A and C serve as evidence of what most teachers indicated as the purpose of teaching reading comprehension:

IT/T2-SCH A: *'Grade 3 learners should be able to read on their own in order to find the meaning of the story'*

IT/T5-SCH C, Q2: *'To help learners to analyse how the characters in the comprehension differ and how they relate to each other'*

These remarks suggest that learners should be able to read independently using the strategy the teacher modelled to them. Learners need to become independent readers and be able to seek more knowledge. Therefore, during reading they should be able to identify the different characters and their roles within the text as stipulated by the NCS (DoE, 2002). As a result, learners' reading comprehension is enhanced. This implies that reading comprehension must be taught. It is my understanding that teachers should be helping learners during reading comprehension, although this is not an easy task. They should assist learners to read and understand the text (Torgesen *et al.*, 2007; Crawford, 2006).

In Theme 1, the respondents in my case study seemed to be knowledgeable of the fact that teaching reading comprehension was important. It was evident from Theme 1 during individual teachers' interviews and focus group interviews that the teachers understood the concept of reading comprehension and its importance in the lives of the learners.

However, during classroom observations it was not evident that teachers were aware of the importance of the concept of reading comprehension to the learners. The actual teaching of reading comprehension strategies such as question generating was not evident (see Appendix E). The teachers also seemed to be aware that reading comprehension is an interactive process in which the teacher and the learners together have a role to play (Vygotsky, 1968).

This can be linked to Theme 2, in which teachers are explaining the kind of teacher required for teaching reading comprehension. In Theme 2, the roles of both teacher and learners are discussed.

5.4.2 Theme 2: ‘The one who is teaching reading comprehension must be ready to teach, have the love, and know his/her learners’

Theme 2 is about the role of teachers and learners as identified by the responding teachers. This theme assisted me to understand teachers’ understanding and beliefs about the way in which they taught reading comprehension. The teachers seemed to be aware of their roles and that they had to be committed to their work. In addition, they were aware of the level of readiness and commitment towards their work as a way of enhancing learners’ reading comprehension. They seemed to know that they must be prepared, have love and should know the learners’ individual learning needs and address them.

An interesting dimension that I noticed in the interviews, focus group interviews and in the classroom observations in all the six teachers’ classes was that they did not seem to have a conceptual understanding of strategies and approaches or methods and of the differences between them. They used strategies and methods interchangeably.

The questions during the individual teachers’ and focus group interviews that pertained to Theme 2 were: How do teachers teach reading comprehension, and which strategies do teachers use to teach reading comprehension? The teachers answered differently. In the next section, I report on this theme using four categories that relate to the theme:

- I explain the strategy first [before reading comprehension starts];
- I motivate them before [reading comprehension starts];
- I do not know if there is any [reading comprehension strategies];
- I just want to indicate what we expect or the outcomes of reading comprehension’.

5.4.2.1 ‘I explain the strategy first’ [before reading comprehension starts]

This category revealed teachers’ understanding of the importance of reading comprehension strategies. Most of the participating teachers seemed to lack understanding of what strategies were. However, teacher 5 from school C explained what she did before the start with reading comprehension:

IT/T5-SCH C, Q3: *'I explain to the learners what to do like what must be done, why the strategy helps and demonstrate how they can apply the strategy independently'*

Apart from this single response, no other teacher mentioned this important aspect during the interviews and focus group interviews. This individual teacher seemed to understand the importance of strategies in teaching reading comprehension. The statement explained the role of the teacher, namely to explain to the learners what to do first and why the strategy helped in comprehending what they read. In addition, the teachers of my case study did not indicate if they use the policy documents in teaching reading comprehension.

During classroom observations, in all 24 lesson observations, I did not hear any of the teachers referring to the policy document as a source. However, during classroom observations, not one of the six teachers in the study discussed or modelled the strategy to the learners. All they did was to ask learners to open the book and start to read. It was clear that no teacher at any of the three schools spoke about the strategy and their application. Teachers must provide a clear explanation of strategies, e.g., strategies that are used before-reading, during-reading and after-reading, stating why they use them, when they use them and what strategies to use (Klinger & Vaughn, 1999; NRP, 2000; Dole, 2002; Adler, 2004; Afflerbach *et al.*, 2008).

The negative responses from the participating teachers of my case study made it clear that the teachers seem not to be aware of comprehension strategies and that they did not plan them before the reading comprehension lesson. The aspect of strategies raised mixed feelings amongst the teachers because they expressed different views and understanding about comprehension strategies.

It emerged that there were only a few teachers who concurred that strategies were indeed important and that teachers needed to know them and use them in various situations to address the needs of learners in reading comprehension. To further expand on the theme, the following remarks stood out:

IT/T3-SCH B, Q3: *'There is not only one strategy, one needs to employ different strategies, there must be a combination of strategies in order to make reading successful'*

IT/T4-SCH B, Q3: *'I can employ different strategies for learners to understand comprehension'*

From the above responses, it is clear that the teachers did understand that teaching strategies were vital in reading comprehension. However, this was not observed strongly during the classroom observations because they never talked about strategies or demonstrated their use in reading comprehension to the learners (see Appendix E). What seemed to emerge from these responses is that the teachers seemed to be aware that they taught different learners with different abilities. This requires theoretical knowledge of strategies and their use in order to accommodate every learner's needs in the class. In this way, learners can learn to use strategies appropriately and be able to make decisions as to when and where to use a particular strategy.

However, during the classroom observations, what teachers said during the individual and focus group interviews was not put into practice (see Appendix E). The idea of using various comprehension strategies was highlighted by the following responses from teacher 3 in school B during the individual teachers' interview:

IT/T3-SCH B, Q3: *'Reading comprehension strategies teaching must be [taught] in accordance with learners' ability'*

The response indicates that in their planning, teachers should take into consideration that learners are at different comprehension levels. Using a variety of strategies is important for attending to learners' individual needs (Dole, 2002; Rickford, 2001; Durkin, 1990). Some teachers used comprehension strategies and methods interchangeably. Teachers 3 and 4 from school B indicated the strategy they used in teaching reading comprehension. They responded as follows:

IT/T4-SCH B, Q3: *'For now I am using shared reading'*

IT/T5-SCH C, Q3: *'Sometimes I use shared reading'*

The shared reading method is important for developing learners' reading comprehension because the teacher and the learners look at the Big Book together and discuss the text (Wessels, 2010). The teacher reads the story and learners listen and look at the illustrations, and discuss the text (Pressley, 1998, 2000; DoE, 2008; Joubert *et al.*, 2008; Myers, 2007; Wessels, 2010).

Teachers of my case study do not seem to be aware that shared reading is a method and therefore referred it as a reading comprehension strategy. Shared reading is where the teacher reads with the class or group, using a large storybook that has big, bold print (Wessels, 2010; DoE, 2008). During the shared reading session, teachers have to model good reading behaviour and the correct use of reading comprehension strategies, so that gradually the learners take responsibility for their own learning (Zimmerman, 1998; Au & Raphael, 1998; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Myers, 2005).

It is important for the teacher to create a relaxed atmosphere in which learners become motivated to participate. Learners should be willing to take risks and understand that making a mistake is a way of learning. Therefore, it is critical that learners should see and hear about the strategy and see it in action by the teacher as role model.

During the classroom observations, only teacher 4 from school B used the shared reading activity, but only once. One may conclude that the teachers were not aware of or even unsure about the methods. What is critical was that even though teacher 4 used the method, she did not explain to the learners how to read fluently or how to use strategies in order to understand the text.

What was significant during the classroom observations was that the teachers seemed to do reading comprehension without explaining it to the learners. They did not accord it the weight that they gave it during individual and focus group interviews. Even though it seemed difficult for the learners to read and understand the text, teachers expected from the learners to respond appropriately to the text. The teachers of my case study did not seem to realise that they were not teaching the learners strategies and how to apply them. Learners should be able to use different strategies to make meaning of the text, for example self-pacing, self-

directing and self-monitoring (Mazzoni & Cornoldi 1993, 2007; Clay, 1993; Fisher, 1998; DoE, 2002; DoE, 2008).

In addition to shared reading, the teachers mentioned during the focus group interviews that they used paired reading. This was supported by the following comments from teacher 1, school A and teacher 4, school B when they say:

FG/T1-SCH A, Q3: *'I will allow the learners to do pair reading so that they can assist one another'*

FG/T4-SCH B, Q3: *'You pair him or her with those who are really good'*

These responses seem to indicate that the teachers understood what paired reading was and what its benefits to teachers as well as learners were. The respondents expressed that paired reading assisted them to identify learners who were experiencing problems so that they could provide individual support. The learners assisted one another: "If one makes a mistake, the other one will help a friend." Related sentiments were also captured from the focus group interviews. Teacher 6 from school C commented:

FG/T6-SCH C, Q3: *'You tell him or her that this is your child help him or her; carry him on your back like your baby. I am telling you that you will see or you will find something different to the learners who do not know how to read'*

This teacher evidently understood that cooperative learning is important in reading comprehension. They learnt to read and to comprehend text effectively. The teachers indicated that when they used paired reading, they had an opportunity to attend to individual learners. This seems to be appropriate because when the learners are in pairs, individual attention becomes easier for the teacher to engage them in individual reading. Teacher 2 from school A and teacher 3 from school B support this during the teachers' individual and focus group interviews:

IT/T2-SCH A, Q3: *'If they read individually then I will be listening to them and assisting them'*

FG/T4-SCH B, Q3: *'You can start maybe by giving the learners to read individually'*

In the individual and focus group interviews the respondents indicated that they involved individual learners in various phases of their lessons, for instance at the beginning, during and at the end of the reading lesson.

What is interesting is that they seemed to know the purpose of individual learning, namely, to assist the learners, but in practice I did not observe this. This discrepancy might be the result of a lack of reading books and lack of knowledge on how to facilitate reading comprehension (Fawson & Reutzler, 2000; DoE, 2008). The lack of books is a problem to the teachers.

According to Wessels (2010) and Torgesen *et al.*, (2007), “the more learners are exposed to a large quantity of reading material, the faster they develop their reading skill.” Therefore, reading comprehension can be learnt if there are books available for the teacher to demonstrate practically the use of strategies and for the learner to practise comprehension strategies.

Some teachers prefer other methods to assist learners to become independent readers, especially in Tshivenda, as evidenced from teachers 3 and 4, school B and teacher 5 from school C:

FG/T3-SCH B, Q3: *‘Yes the method of finger pointing is a good method because you can find a learner reading a sentence Kha ri shele mulenzhe. How will I know he or she knows the word if the learner is not pointing at the words’*

FGT/T4-SCH B, Q3: *‘Oh, yes the finger-pointing method, that’s true especially in Tshivenda, it works’*

FG/T5-SCH C, Q3: *‘They must point, or else we will never know, you know, it is difficult’*

The respondents in the study seemed to understand the purpose of the finger-pointing method. Finger pointing is when a learner points at each word during reading. The respondents stated that they used this method in order to identify learners who experienced reading comprehension problems. They do this by asking learners to point at each word while the teacher is monitoring, to see whether the learner is pointing at and pronouncing the word correctly.

From the responses, it becomes clear that the teachers in the study seemed to be confident that finger pointing is a good method when teaching learners to read and understand the text. However, it needs monitoring by the teacher to ensure that the learner is truly pointing at the right word and reading it correctly (Uhry, 2002). These teachers indicated that the finger-pointing method could enhance learners' decoding skills which may lead to effective reading comprehension. The method of finger pointing allows learners to process the print without memorising (Ehri & Sweet, 1991; Uhry, 2002).

In addition, some teachers felt the method of finger pointing should be sustained because according to their understanding, this method was helpful. The remarks by teachers 5 and 6, school C, are pertinent:

FG/T6-SCH C, Q3: *'You should prolong it[method of finger pointing] because they [learners] are very good in memorizing'*

FG/T6-SCH C, Q3: *'Finger-pointing method is good, but need more time, but yes it must be there always'*

Some respondents stated that the finger-pointing method should only be used during the first time and later be withdrawn. Others maintained that because it was a good method to teach reading comprehension to Tshivenda-speaking learners, it should be maintained for a long time.

The teachers seemed to be aware that struggling readers were very good at memorising. The finger-pointing method seemed to prevent learners from rote learning. The teachers regarded finger pointing as a strategy they used especially with Tshivenda learners, to assist those that were struggling to learn to identify the words correctly.

According to these teachers, the method helped learners to grasp the meaning of the words. The implication is twofold. First, finger pointing helps teachers to identify learners who are struggling to decode words; secondly, it helps learners to learn all the words by pointing at each word. The responses indicate that the teachers tended to prefer the finger-pointing method as it gave good results.

It seemed that the teachers were aware that there is a need for learners to be monitored and assisted individually as they read during finger pointing. Another important point raised during the focus group interviews by teacher 3 from school B and teacher 5 from school C is shown:

FG/T3-SCH B, Q3: *'... if I am an educator and standing nearby, it is good to monitor'*

FG/T5-SCH C, Q3: *'Yes, I am also able to monitor them or to ascertain whether the learner can read all the words correctly'*

They therefore checked if the learners were indeed pointing at the correct word. Some teachers indicated that they attracted learners' attention throughout the reading comprehension by asking individual learners to bank words. In this regard, teacher 2 from school A, teacher 3 from school B and teacher 6 from school C stated:

FG/T2-SCH B, Q3: *'For all learners to be attentive we are going to ask them to bank words'*

FG/T3-SCH B, Q3: *'I am going to ask them to bank words'*

FG/T6-SCH C, Q3: *'... this is where maybe you employ the colleague strategy of banking words'*

The teachers who participated in the study seemed to know that monitoring was important during reading comprehension. In order to manage the learners, they asked learners to bank words. Throughout the lesson, learners would be thinking about a specific word, because they did not know when they would get a turn to read. At any time, the teacher might ask them for their word. So it seems as if the teachers wanted to involve learners in the lesson and encourage them to listen attentively during reading comprehension. This idea implies that reading comprehension involves metacognition processes. During the process, learners learn to think about their reading and so they have control over the text (Flavell, 1976; Fisher, 1998; Paris, 2002; Cain, Oakhill & Bryant, 2004; Adler, 2004; Gibson, 2004; Kolic-Vehovec, 2006).

My argument is that for learners to become proficient readers, they should be actively involved during reading comprehension and self-monitor their comprehension by the use of comprehension strategies. Conversely, the method of asking learners to bank words may have a negative effect. Some learners might be fearful during reading, thinking that they are going to be picked by the teacher to bank words and that they may have forgotten the words by the time the teacher asks them. The learners may think about their word instead of understanding the content of the text. Teachers must take care that the learners get the meaning of the text when they use word-banking methods in class.

From the responses, it seems that the teachers were aware of the reading comprehension problem, and that they realised they had to use different methods to help learners to read and understand the text.

From the interviews and focus group interviews, the aspect of comprehension strategies and their use elicited some extensive discussion amongst the teachers. Some seemed to know how to teach reading comprehension and use comprehension strategies; others seemed unsure of how to teach reading comprehension and what the strategies are. The question arises about how they were teaching comprehension in their classrooms.

Some teachers regarded motivation as an important factor in reading comprehension. The following expression serves as evidence.

5.4.2.2 'I motivate them before' [reading comprehension starts]

The motivation to read is essential for actively engaging learners in the reading process. It is the fuel that lights the fire and keeps it burning. Bruner(1986) values the role of motivation as important in learning and this can be applied to the teaching of reading comprehension. From the conceptual framework strategic teachers are teachers who motivate the learners to have the interest to read any text with the aim to understand the meaning thereof. Phase 5 of the conceptual framework emphasise internal motivation on the part of the learners to read any text and construct the meaning. The teachers have to motivate learners before reading and make them want to read for information and pleasure. Learners are motivated

to engage in reading comprehension when they are given opportunities that improve their comprehension ability (Texas Education Agency, 2002; Turner & Paris, 1995; DoE, 2002). Teacher 2 from school B captured this when she stated:

IT/T2-SCH B, Q3: *'I motivate them before' [reading comprehension starts]*

Motivation is the internal force that drives an individual [learner] to move towards the goal after perceiving a plan, for example the need for accomplishment (Lee, 2010:57). It can influence the interest, purpose, emotion or persistence with which a reader engages with text (Butcher & Kintsch, 2003; Scharllert & Martin, 2003).

The response about motivation indicates that the teacher understood that reading comprehension had an emotional value and needed to be developed. Motivation is critical because it can influence and create the interest, purpose, emotion, or persistence with which a reader engages with text and so improve reading ability and comprehension of texts (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Guthrie & Winfield, 2000; Stipek, 2002; Brophy, 2004).

It is important that teachers must motivate learners in such a way that they develop a love for reading. This behaviour can encourage learners to develop positive attitudes towards reading comprehension by motivating them at all times. During the classroom observations, the teachers started the comprehension lesson by reading and asking learners to read. The motivation of learners before the lesson did not come out clearly. It might be because the teachers interviewed said they were discouraged.

During the individual interviews, some teachers indicated that they did not know how to motivate their learners; they were confused because learners could not read and understand the story. Elaborating on the above, teacher 2 from school A said:

IT/T2-SCH A, Q3: *'Yes motivation is good, but these kids, you cannot motivate them, I do not know how'*

Her response indicates that this teacher seemed to be confused and did not know how to motivate her learners. This lack of knowledge may seem to be contributing

towards negative attitudes with both the teachers and the learners. When teachers do not know what to do, it will certainly affect the learners.

The teachers in the study showed a lack of knowledge with regard to comprehension strategies in various ways and across all the data. In the next category, some teachers clearly indicated that they did not know about reading comprehension strategies.

5.4.2.3 'I do not know if there is any' [reading comprehension strategies]

In everything one does one needs tools to use. This is also important in teaching reading comprehension. Teachers must teach learners to use comprehension strategies. Strategies are important since they assist learners when the comprehension process breaks down and restores meaning as they read (Dole, 2000; Zimmerman, 1997; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; NRP, 2000; Myers, 2005). It is important that teachers must have the practical and theoretical knowledge about the various strategies and how to apply them practically in the classroom (DoE, 2008).

However, participating teachers in the study seemed to lack a theoretical grasp of comprehension strategies. Remarks by teacher 3 from school B and teachers 5 and 6 from school C were representative in this regard:

IT/T5-SCH C, Q3: *'I do not know what to say, what to name it' [reading comprehension strategies]*

IT/T6-SCH C, Q3: *'I do not know because I do not use strategies, I just teach them how to read a text and answer questions'*

FG/T3-SCH B, Q3: *'Nothing realistic, I do not have anything to say, today you start this way tomorrow you start this way'*

These statements reveal a general feeling of despondency amongst teachers and as far as reading comprehension is concerned. The responses showed that teachers seemed to be uncertain of how to teach reading comprehension and that there was no uniform approach amongst teachers on how to teach reading comprehension.

It emerged from the responses that some teachers had mixed feelings. They were unsure of what to do during teaching reading comprehension. They did not feel that they had acquired the knowledge base and competencies needed for the proper teaching of reading comprehension.

During classroom observations, teachers did not discuss strategies or teach learners strategies for comprehending the text. Several authors (Kragler, Walker, & Martin, 2005; Pearson & Duke, 2002; Sweet & Snow, 2003; Reutzel, Smith & Fawson, 2005) confirm that many primary-grade teachers have not always emphasised comprehension instruction in their curriculum. Accordingly, in a real classroom situation both constructivist and social constructivist theorists agree that through social interactions with more capable peers, learners develop more sophisticated knowledge and skills. This can be applicable to the teaching of reading comprehension.

Pre-reading activities are important in reading comprehension (Chia, 2001; Robb, 1996; Graves, Juel & Graves, 2001; Wessels, 2010). Some teachers in my case study indicated that before reading comprehension they engage learners in pre-reading activities to prepare them for the reading that was going to take place. Some of the teachers seem to understand steps of engaging learners in pre-reading activities. Teachers 1, 2 and 3 from schools A, B and C expressed their sentiments in this way:

IT/T2-SCH B, Q3: *'I talk about the pictures with the learners'*

IT/T6-SCH C, Q3: *'I request the learners to look at the pictures and talk about them'*

FG/T 1-6-SCH A, B, C, Q3: *'Learners talk about pictures'*

Picture clues are important in reading comprehension (Shanahan *et al.*, 2010; Wessels, 2010). The responses above support my classroom observations because all six teachers used pictures effectively.

During classroom observations, I noticed that each class had pictures on the walls. During reading comprehension, learners were given the opportunity to talk about

pictures from the text before reading the text. The teacher respondents of the study seemed to understand the importance of pictures before reading.

Although they did not know they were practicing a pre-reading strategy, pictures seemed to assist learners to get a picture of what would happen in the text. In this way, pictures activated learners' prior learning as the learners used their experiences to understand the new information in the text before reading.

This is a clear indication that the teachers in my case study attached a great value to pictures. The experiences, the values and understanding the learners bring to the text help them to make meaning from the texts (Sweet & Snow, 2003; Pardo, 2004). Theorists such as Piaget (1953), Bruner (1986) acknowledge the importance of pictures to enhance concept formation and as well as spatial organisation. Concerning reading comprehension, pictures can assist learners to give written words a reality by associating the pictures with the written words about the pictures before starting with the actual reading. From the conceptual framework during phase 3 teachers, can teach and model before reading strategies such as predictions.

In addition to the above responses during the individual teacher interviews and focus group interviews, teachers 1 and 3 from school A and teacher 3 from school B illustrated the point as follows:

FG/T3-SCH B, Q3: *'I can start by explaining difficult words'*

IT/T1-SCH A: *'Learners underline the new difficult word'*

From the responses it seemed that some teachers explained difficult words first before they started with the actual reading, which indicates that they understood that decoding is a prerequisite for comprehension. To elaborate on the above, teachers linked the importance of pictures with prediction. The teachers remarked that they preferred learners to start with prediction. Teachers from schools A, B and C highlighted this during the individual teacher interviews and the focus group interviews:

FG/T1-SCH A, Q3: *'Time is offered to children to guess what will happen in the story'*

FG/T5-SCH C, Q3: *'They can predict what will happen'*

IT/T4-SCH B, Q3: *'Learners predict what will happen in the story'*

Prediction is when the reader makes a guess about what the text may be about (Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Myers, 2006). From the responses, it emerged that the teachers were aware of the predictions and that both the teachers and the learners seem to be involved. The teachers seemed to involve learners, encouraging them to go through the pages, talk about the content in the title, cover pages, and preview the text. This shows that the teachers who participated in my case study regarded prediction as important for motivating the learners to read the text.

In support of these responses, Swaffar, Arens and Byrones (1991) and Chia (2001) emphasise that teachers must encourage learners to use clues and illustrations in and around the text. This may include what is written on the cover, the paragraph or chapter headings, sub-headings and words in bold, the contents page and the title.

During my classroom observations, some teachers asked learners to predict what would happen in the story. However, the teachers seemed unable to link the predictions made by the learners with the actual content (see Appendix E). From my point of view, maybe that is why learners are not able to interpret the text on an interpretive and evaluative level, because the teachers are not showing the learners the importance of predictions and how it can help them to understand the text.

During the focus group interviews, a few teachers remarked that they preferred learners to read silently first, and then together:

FG/T5-SCH C, Q3: *'They [learners] read silently first, then we are going to do it together'*

Silent reading is a time during which a class, or in some cases an entire school, reads quietly together (Gardiner, 2005; Yang, 2007; Wessels, 2010).

From the individual teacher interviews and the focus group interviews, the above teacher was the only one who mentioned silent reading before reading. Learners are given an opportunity to interact with the text themselves before the teacher reads it. The teacher needs to be aware of the fact that in the classroom, there are learners who cannot read; they may get lost and their minds may wander because they cannot make meaning from the text on their own. It may be an unfortunate situation for learners who cannot understand the text to read silently, because they cannot decode the words and therefore cannot make meaning from the words.

In the same vein, Wessels (2010:94) puts it succinctly by saying that “the more teachers allow silent reading in their classes and the more they help learners find the right book at the right time, the more they will be opening doors for the learners.” During silent reading, those who can read could use their prior learning knowledge to understand the new information from the text read (Christen & Murphy, 1991; Tobias, 1994; Droop & Verhoeven, 1998; Butcher & Kintsch, 2003).

Some teachers preferred to start by reading to the learners. The following statements from teachers 2, 3 and 5 from schools A, B and C serve as evidence:

FG/T2-SCH A, Q3: *‘The educator will read first’*

FG/T3-SCH B, Q3: *‘I read aloud the sentence first’*

FG/T5-SCH C, Q3: *‘I will read for them first, neh’*

From the above responses, it seems as if the respondents use the same method when they introduce a reading lesson. The teachers seemed to model fluent reading by first reading aloud to the learners. By the time learners read the text, they already know what is expected of them. For instance, correct pronunciation, punctuation marks and expressions can be learnt from this exercise. However, what the teachers said during interviews and focus group interviews did not come out clearly during the classroom observations. During classroom observations, it was evident that the teachers read the text without, for example, explaining the comprehension strategies and their use during reading. Teachers must read aloud to the learners and model good reading behaviour with understanding to the learners (Walraven & Reitsma, 1993; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Fisher, Frey

&Williams, 2002). This might be the result of teachers' lack of knowledge with regard to the use of strategies as already indicated in Theme 2.

During the individual teacher interviews and focus group interviews, the teachers expressed their views about the importance of questioning when teaching reading comprehension. The following responses from teachers from school A, B and C can help to illustrate the point:

FG/T1-6-SCH A, Q3: *'Questioning is very critical at all times'*

FG/T4-SCH B, Q3: *'Yes, I agree we must ask questions'*

FG/T5-SCH C, Q3: *'Questioning is important, we use it'*

IT/T 1-6-SCHA, B, C, Q3: *'I ask them questions'*

No comprehension strategy has a longer tradition than asking learners questions about their reading (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Criticos, Long, Moletsane & Mthiyane, 2002). From the responses above, questioning seemed to receive an overwhelming preference amongst other strategies. The teachers preferred a questioning strategy. During the classroom observations, all six teachers used this strategy before, during and after reading (see Appendix E).

Teachers need to ask higher-order questions and show learners how to find answers and this requires interactive settings in order to achieve a high level of reading comprehension (Messick, 1995; Kauchak & Eggen, 1998; McDavitt, 1993). As indicated by the NCS (DoE, 2002), learners should be able to demonstrate understanding by answering questions pertaining to main ideas and main characters in the text. In my understanding, this is the goal of reading comprehension.

Questions should be asked at various phases of the reading exercise, namely before, during and after reading the text (Wessels, 2010; Rob, 1996; Pressley, 1998; Chia, 2001; Duke & Pearson, 2002; D'Ambrosio, 2004). To further support the importance of questioning in reading comprehension, one teacher from school B during an individual interview remarked:

IT/T4-SCH, B, Q3: *'Different questions, not yes or no question, questions that will provoke their minds and make them think creatively'*

Teachers must ask learners various questions at different levels. It seems the respondent from school B was aware that the questions which teachers asked should be of quality and that they should avoid rote questions to which learners become accustomed, in order to stimulate critical thinking to shape their understanding of the text and recall. During classroom observations, the teachers asked learners more assessment comprehension questions and fewer questions aimed at teaching the reading comprehension process. Questions were asked, but they were not thought provoking to encourage critical thinking.

During the individual and focus group interviews, some teachers indicated that they asked learners to retell, summarise and dramatise what they had read. The following responses were made by teacher 2 from school A, teacher 3 from school B and teacher 6 from school C:

FG/T2-SCH B, Q3: *'Learners retell the story'*

FG/T3-SCH B, Q3: *'I ask them to make a summary'*

FG/T6-SCH C, Q3: *'They dramatise'*

From their responses, these teachers seem to be aware that learners must retell, summarise and dramatise the story. Learners who cannot read and understand find it difficult to retell, summarise and dramatise the story, because one can only retell something one understands. The same applies to summarising, one can only summarise something that one has understood. Likewise, briefly describing the main ideas requires prior understanding. During the classroom observations, the teachers asked learners to retell and summarise the story after reading, but did not teach them how to retell and summarise. The NCS (DoE, 2008) suggests that teachers should teach learners to dramatise a story and act out the roles in the story, but dramatisation of the story was not evident during the classroom observations. The fourth category is an expansion of the role of the learners as expressed by the teachers.

5.4.2.4 'I just want to indicate what we expect or the outcomes of reading comprehension'

Though it seemed difficult for learners to read and understand the text, the teachers seemed to be aware of what was expected from them even if it was not happening practically in the classrooms. One participating teacher indicated that they would like to see learners reading with understanding as an end result of teaching reading comprehension. A sample of the messages from teacher 2 of school B illustrates the point:

FG/T2-SCH B, Q3: *'Ja, I just want to indicate what we expect or the outcomes of reading comprehension. We expect the learner to be able to read and understand the text, explain about what she has been reading about in other words the learner must demonstrate that he or she understood what he or she has been reading about'*

From her response, the teacher seemed to know what was expected of the learners, namely to read with understanding. However, contrary to what one might expect, it seemed that this was not happening during classroom observation. This emphasises the fact that it is the responsibility of the teacher to support the learners to ensure that they are able to read and understand the text. Learners must read the text alone, and use a variety of strategies to make meaning (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Cain & Oakhill, 1999; Gibson, 2004; Mastropieri, Scruggs & Goetx, 2003; Afflerbach, Pearson & Paris, 2008). The importance of reading with understanding is illustrated by the remarks from teacher 5 of school C:

FG/T5-SCH C, Q2: *'I wanted to add that about reading and viewing that reading comprehension goes with viewing which is Learning Outcome no 3: Learners should be able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values'*

The response shows that this teacher is aware of the Learning Outcome described in the NCS (DoE, 2002). She seems to have read it and is aware of her role and

that of the learners. During my classroom observations, most learners could not read and understand the text and I report on this aspect in Theme 3.

In Theme 2, the participating teachers of the study seemed to know little about teaching research-based comprehension strategies to the learners. They indicated that they did not know which strategies to employ. The teachers' lack of research-based comprehension strategies can be linked to Theme 3. Theme 3 is about the challenges that the participating teachers highlighted during individual and focus group interviews.

5.4.3 Theme 3: 'The challenges have been highlighted and this is serious'

Theme 3 reveals some of the challenges that participating teachers described during focus group interviews. I understand challenges as something that tests someone's abilities and skills. This may be true of reading comprehension. Hodge (2009:1) states:

When you are teaching an elementary student [learner] how to read, it can be tough to get them to really follow through and understand what they are reading. They might be able to read the material, but then they might not be able to tell you what they were reading about. Part of the challenge of being an elementary school teacher is trying to get students to really understand what is being read.

Hodge's statement correlates with the findings of my case study. It is evident that reading comprehension seems to be a challenge to teachers and learners. This has been revealed by the Annual National Assessment (ANA; DoE, 2011), which showed that the Grade 3 achievement score for literacy nationally stands at 36%.

The teachers in my study expressed feelings of concern and fear that instead of improving, the situation has become worse. They seemed to be overwhelmed by challenges they experienced in teaching reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda speaking learners. I will elaborate on the teachers' expressions and their feelings concerning challenges they identified. Theme 3 consists of four categories:

- Teaching reading comprehension is a challenge;
- Reading is not done across the Learning Programmes;

- No, Tshivenda do not have guidelines for teaching reading comprehension like step 1, 2, 3 because that is all we want;
- I think time allocation is a challenge.

5.4.3.1 'Teaching reading comprehension is a challenge'

Within the context of my study, reading comprehension is an act of making meaning out of the written word, and the ability to implement comprehension strategies to assist the learner to make sense of the text (Chafin, Morris & Deely, 2001; Shanahan *et al.*, 2010; Adler, 2004; Yang, 2007; Gersten, Fuchs, Williams & Baker, 2001; Williams, 2002; Paris & Stahl, 2005). The teacher is expected to model good behaviour of reading and teach the learners strategies, which they may use whenever they come across difficulties. As learners become more capable of performing a task, that is reading a text and using the comprehension strategies independently, the guidance or scaffold can be gradually released (Zimmerman, 1998, Vygotsky, 1978).

The responses from the teachers about teaching reading comprehension showed their opinions about learners in their classrooms. Teachers 1 and 5 from schools A and C had this to say:

IT/T1-SCH A, Q1: *'Children cannot read and write'*

FG/T5-SCH C, Q3: *'There are many challenges especially those children who cannot read and understand'*

The teachers seemed to acknowledge that there were learners in their classrooms who could not read, write, and understand the text. The respondents indicated that there were many challenges. However, the most critical one was the learners who could not read. The remarks by teacher 2, 3, 5 and 6 from schools A, B and C are critical:

IT/T2-SCH A, Q3: *'I am confused about comprehension and how to teach it'*

FG/T3-SCH B, Q3: *'... because these kids who cannot read they really stress us, eh, we get stressed'*

FG/T5-SCH C, Q3: *'You will find educators developing a negative attitude towards that young boy or girl'*

FG/T6-SCH C, Q3: *'Like you heard from the beginning teaching reading comprehension is frustrating, to have learners who cannot read'*

It is evident from the responses that the teachers had problems and that learners could not read and understand what they read. It is significant that the teachers seemed to have no solution for this challenge. During the individual interviews, focus group interviews and classroom observations, the teachers expressed their unhappiness about the situation. Instead of feeling motivated, they stated that they were stressed, confused and frustrated to have learners who were unable to read and understand in their classrooms. The use of the plural by respondent 3 during the focus group interviews indicates shared feelings which confirm that teaching reading comprehension is indeed a challenge for the teachers.

The teachers seemed to have a few ideas on why learners are failing to read and understand the text. During the individual and focus group interviews, they expressed their views. These will be discussed in the next category of Theme 1, which deals with the lack of a holistic approach to teaching reading comprehension in schools.

5.4.3.2 'Reading is not done across the Learning Programmes'

Participating teachers in my case study were aware of the reasons for learners' inability to read and understand, and of the problems, it caused. The NCS emphasises that there must be integration across all three learning programmes in the Foundation Phase, namely literacy, numeracy and life skills (DoE, 2002). Reading needs practice and practice makes perfect. As they practise, learners learn to use the comprehension strategies correctly.

It emerged from the study that reading was not applied across the learning programmes, hence the low level of reading comprehension amongst the learners. The following remark by teacher 6 of school C represents these sentiments:

FG/T6-SCH C, Q3: *'Reading is not being done across the learning programme and this is very serious because learners cannot only wait for literacy. When there are breaks in between it is a problem. They must read throughout numeracy and life skills'*

The responses indicate that the teachers argued for the teaching of reading comprehension strategies within and across learning programmes. They stated that they were not teaching reading comprehension across all programmes. It seems that the teachers who participated in my study believed that if reading could be applied across the learning programmes, learners would practise enough and be able to read and understand the text. It is evident from the responses that teacher 6 from school C understood the aspect of integration, namely that literacy should not be taught in isolation. From the response, it seems as if teachers had no time for teaching reading comprehension during life skills and numeracy classes. Teacher 1 from school A supports the view:

FG/T1 SCH A, Q3: *'These strategies should cut across and not to be used by literacy or language teacher during reading comprehension only, but I want to say maybe that is why children cannot read and understand, because teachers wait or do reading comprehension during story reading time which is very little we all know that, let's do it in life skills and numeracy'*

These remarks highlight the lack of integration as one of the reasons why learners could not read and understand. The NCS emphasises that integration across all learning programmes is important to give learners opportunities to read across the curriculum (DoE, 2002).

During my classroom observations, I could not observe integration because I was only available during the literacy sessions as this was the focus of my study. In Theme 2, teachers expressed their challenges concerning the teaching of reading comprehension.

In Theme 3, some teachers expressed the feeling that the system was failing them and their learners by not providing them with the necessary resources. It is

surprising because Grade 3 teachers teach across the board. Why are they suggesting that reading should be taught in Numeracy and Life skills whereas they are responsible for the subjects? This issue is elaborated in the next category.

5.4.3.3 'No, Tshivenda do not have guidelines for teaching reading comprehension like step1, 2, 3 because that is all we want'

It was evident that respondents seemed dissatisfied with what had been provided for them and that the African languages had been neglected. In their views, teachers felt that English language had guidelines to teach reading comprehension. In 2008, the DoE in the *Teaching Reading in Early Grades* handbook provided guidelines on teaching reading in the early grades, in English. The participating teachers of my case study felt there was a need for a Tshivenda guideline written in Tshivenda for Tshivenda teachers to teach reading comprehension to Tshivenda-speaking learners. Teacher 4 from school B had this to say:

FG/T4-SCH B, Q3: *'For an English class, yes, but for a Tshivenda teaching, no guidelines'*

FG/T5-SCH C, Q3: *'Teaching reading for early grades is for those who teach English, yes'*

The implication seems to be that learners could not read and understand Tshivenda and that there were no guidelines for Tshivenda teachers on how to teach reading comprehension in their Home Language. The teachers expressed a concern that the guidelines were helpful to the English teacher, but not to a Tshivenda teacher, and that they were not helping learners. Teacher 5 from school C shares her view:

FG/T5-SCH C, Q3: *'No, I do not know, but I cannot remember a time when we were given, what to follow, how to teach reading comprehension to Tshivenda-speaking learners. Now what are being stressed are the Learning Outcomes and milestones. Time and again we have been attending workshops'*

The respondent refers to the plural (we). It seems the teachers were aware that the handbook *Teaching Reading in Early Grades* provided by the DoE (2008)

addresses the teaching of reading comprehension for English-speaking learners and not for the African languages. As a result, the teachers had no guidelines for teaching reading comprehension to Tshivenda-speaking learners. Although workshops had been conducted repeatedly, they did not experience a positive outcome.

On the other hand, some teachers were of the opinion that more time should be allocated to the teaching of reading comprehension. In their view, time allocation was a challenge and therefore needed to be revised. This view encapsulates the next category of Theme 3.

5.4.3.4 'I think time allocation is a challenge'

Concerns were raised regarding the allocated time for teaching reading comprehension to Tshivenda learners. To justify the one hour suggested specifically for reading comprehension daily, teacher 6 from school C states:

FG/T6-SCH C, Q3: *'Reading comprehension has many things, we need more time for reading comprehension but one hour is needed specifically for reading comprehension because reading comprehension has many aspects. They must read and understand so that they can answer the questions you see it takes time'*

The respondent's remark indicates that teacher needed more time for teaching reading comprehension because it was difficult. The NRS stipulates 30 minutes for teacher-guided reading and independent reading, 15 minutes for shared reading and writing by the whole class and 15 minutes at word and sentence level (DoE, 2008).

However, teachers in my case study still needed more time for teaching reading comprehension. Wessels (2010:93) says the following about this category and its importance to the teachers:

Classroom time, however, is limited and teachers have to find ways and means to encourage learners to become readers. These include reading

exciting passages to learners, talking about a story briefly and displaying illustrations, having book displays to awaken curiosity, and making room for a library corner.

Wessels (2010) illustrates that time allocation for reading is important to enhance reading comprehension. It is clear that even if teachers have ample time, teaching reading comprehension cannot take place without books. Learners should therefore be exposed to the written word. Unfortunately, the teachers in my case study did not have readers or a library corner to motivate learners to read.

5.5 Summary of the responses

The teachers' responses across the themes and categories are summarised in Table 5.5 for the purpose of illuminating on how these teachers taught reading comprehension.

Table 5.5 Summary of teachers' responses across themes and categories

School	SCH.A/T1-2	SCH.B/T3-4	SCH.CT/5-6
Concepts			
Teachers' understanding of reading comprehension and its importance	X X	X X	X X
Strategies for teaching reading comprehension			
• Explanation	X X	X X	X X
• Comparison	- -	- -	- X
• Picture clues	X X	X X	X X
• Motivation	X -	X -	- -
• Shared reading	- -	- X	X -
• Paired reading	X X	X X	X X
• Finger pointing	X X	X X	X X
• Banking words	- -	X X	X X
• Silent reading	- -	- -	X -

School	SCH.A/T1-2	SCH.B/T3-4	SCH.CT/5-6
• Questioning	X X	X X	X X
• Retelling	X X	X X	X X
• Summarising	X -	- -	- -
• Dramatising	- -	- -	X X
• Predictions	X -	X X	X X
Challenges			
• Teaching reading is a challenge	X	X	X
• Reading comprehension is not done across the learning programmes	X	X	X
• No Tshivenda guidelines	X	X	X
• There are no readers for learners	-	X	X
• Time allocation is a challenge	X	X	X

Table 5.5 clearly indicates that there are certain aspects that the participating teachers are in agreement with each other as well as differences in regard to their responses. However, it is interesting to note that the positive responses outnumber those that they disagree upon. Shared responses that are agreed on can thus be taken as a guide in teaching reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking classrooms.

During the individual teachers' interviews and focus group interviews, all six teachers who participated in the study indicated that they knew what reading comprehension was and were aware of its importance in the lives of the learners. However, during my classroom observations, this knowledge was not evident. Therefore, their statements that they were aware of the importance of reading comprehension in the lives of the learners were not convincing.

A few teachers indicated that they used explanation as a strategy for teaching reading comprehension. This was confirmed during the classroom observations. However, it was difficult for the learners to explain what they understood about the text, because most learners in the classrooms could not read and therefore understand the text.

One teacher from school C indicated that she asked learners to compare what they read with other texts they had already read. During my classroom observations, it was confirmed, because she would ask the learners “which story you have read can you compare today’s stories?” This was to help learners to link their prior knowledge with the new knowledge and to compare and evaluate information.

It was clear during the individual and focus group interviews that all six teachers in my case study used picture clues before reading to encourage learners to predict what would happen in the story. This was confirmed during my classroom observations. In addition, classes had pictures and sentence strips on the walls which indicated the use of this teaching practice.

Motivation of learners was regarded as important before reading comprehension starts. However, during the individual and focus group interviews, only the teachers from schools A and B mentioned the importance of motivating learners to read. They were teacher 1 from school A and teacher 3 from school B, who encouraged learners, for example, by discussing pictures and linking the headings with those of other stories they had read.

Teachers 4 and 5 from schools B and C respectively mentioned the shared reading method. During my classroom observations, the teacher from school B used shared reading only once during the time that I was in class. The issue of the shared reading method can be linked with teachers’ understanding of reading comprehension, what it is and how to teach it. The teachers were confused about which strategies to use, for example, in responding to the question *‘Which strategies do you use when teaching reading comprehension?’* Teacher 4 from school B and teacher 5 from school C responded by saying “for now I am using shared reading” as if shared reading is a comprehension strategy.

During my classroom observations, the teachers would ask learners to answer questions, to talk about the illustrations, to explain, to summarise; but they do not teach them, or talk about what to do when one summarises, how to answer questions, or how to identify main ideas in the text. The teachers of my case study did not teach learners how to read and understand the text. They were silent about

the teaching of reading comprehension strategies. I observed in the classes that the teachers asked learners to tell them what happened in the story without making learners aware that when one reads, one should use comprehension strategies in order to understand the text.

The method of finger pointing received an overwhelming emphasis. All six teachers indicated the use of finger pointing as useful to the learners, especially for Tshivenda speaking learners. During the classroom observations, all six teachers asked learners to point at the words when they read. In school A, teacher 1 would stand next to a learner to make sure that the learner was reading the word correctly. Teachers from schools B and C indicated the method of banking words. However, during classroom observations, none of the six teachers used the method of banking words. This was the same with silent reading. It was mentioned during the focus group interviews, but was not used at all during the classroom observations.

Just like finger pointing, another strategy that received overwhelming support was the questioning strategy. All six participating teachers of the research study agreed that they used questioning at all times and it was confirmed during my classroom observations. However, learners were not asked to generate questions about the text themselves and to answer higher-order questions. Most learners could not answer higher-order questions, because many of them could not read and therefore could not respond to these questions.

Participating teachers from schools A, B and C stated that they asked learners to retell a story after reading or to make a summary of the text. During classroom observations, it emerged that there were three different groups of learners in the classrooms. There were learners who could read the words correctly, understand and respond to the teachers' questions appropriately and write correctly. Then there were learners who could only answer the questions orally because they had heard or listened when others were reading, but they could not read or show the answers in the text or write. The third group of learners were those who seemed to be frustrated; they could not read and found it difficult to listen while others were reading. The latter were the majority of the three groups. It was no surprise when all six teachers agreed that teaching reading comprehension was a challenge and that

there were learners in their classroom who could not read and therefore understand the text.

5.6 Synoptic overview of the study

The study focused on three schools in the Vhembe district as the unit of analysis. Each school had two Grade 3 classes. The Grade 3 teachers were the primary respondents of this study. Grade 3 is the final grade of the Foundation Phase. Grade 3 learners are thus regarded as the most mature learners in this phase. The teachers who participated in the study were qualified and had a wealth of experience of teaching Grade 3 learners (see Table 5.1). A clear understanding of the calibre of the respondents (including their qualifications) is imperative if one has to gain a deeper insight into the responses that they made.

According to the participating teachers of my case study, the available intervention strategies did not yield the anticipated results. A case in point is the evidence of the recently published South African Department of Education Annual National Assessment results (ANA,2010), which showed that the Grade 3 achievement score for literacy remains at 36% in Limpopo, where I conducted my research. This information is related to the responses from the participating teachers, as all participating teachers from schools A, B and C indicated that reading comprehension was a challenge and that their learners could not read and understand text.

In Chapter 1, I stated the problem of the study and explained my personal interest in the subject of enquiry. The study seeks to investigate the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. Chapters 2 and 3 explore the literature review in order to compare the best practices and see what research has to say about teaching reading comprehension to nine-year-old (Grade 3) learners.

What emerged from the literature was that research was done in the field of teaching reading comprehension internationally. Knowledge of developmental learning theories and reading comprehension strategies remain critical in helping teachers to become competent in their teaching. Therefore, the literature review assisted me in the following ways:

- Becoming acquainted with the latest developments in the area of teaching reading comprehension in an international context;
- Understanding the facts and theories relevant to the teaching of reading comprehension;
- Gaining insight into the manner in which reading comprehension research can be conducted;
- Interpreting facts, theories and research done and relating it to my research; and
- Gaining insight on what could be done within the context of my study.

Chapter 4 discusses the research design and methodology that was employed in this qualitative case study and a rationale for each of the methods chosen for data gathering. Methods used for data gathering include individual teachers' interviews, focus group interviews and classroom observations. In Chapter 5, I applied the constructivist grounded theory analysis to assist me in identifying three themes and relevant categories.

The findings from this study are described and interpreted against the relevant theories in Chapter 6. Implications for my findings are drawn from the relevant policies reviewed in chapters 2 and 3 and suggestions for further inquiry are presented in this last chapter. From the insights gained from the teachers' experiences and understandings of the teaching of reading comprehension, I have attempted to answer the main research question, namely, how do teachers teach reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners? In order to do this I sought answers to the following sub-questions, namely:

- How do teachers understand reading comprehension?
- What do teachers regard as important when teaching reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners?
- Which strategies do teachers use when teaching reading comprehension?
- What strategies can teachers use to improve reading comprehension?

5.7 Conclusion

The responses by the participating teachers show that they did not have access to the research literature on teaching reading comprehension. Participating teachers in

my case study seemed to have limited understanding of reading comprehension strategies, what comprehension strategies are and how to apply them to assist learners, for example, most teachers could not differentiate between comprehension strategies and activities promoting comprehension. This was confirmed during the classroom observations (see Appendix E).

In Chapter 5, I presented the empirical data clustered in three themes. The themes and relevant categories represent the teachers' voices, beliefs and understanding about the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners.

Theme 1 is about the teachers' varied understanding of the concept of reading comprehension and its importance in the lives of the learners. Theme 2 deals with the kind of teacher envisaged for teaching reading comprehension and the respondents' idea of the roles expected from both the teacher and the learners. Theme 3 was about the challenges that teachers experienced during their teaching of reading comprehension. They saw themselves as being ignored and that the system had failed them. They indicated that most learners in their classrooms could not read and therefore understand the text and that they had no guidelines written in Tshivenda as in English.

The participating teachers in my case study came up with a solution, saying that there should be workshops and training organised regularly by the department to teach reading comprehension for Tshivenda-speaking teachers. They suggested that guidelines for teaching Tshivenda should be provided in Tshivenda. They also suggested that time allocation should be revised.

From the responses during individual and focus group interviews, teachers were concerned that the learners in their classrooms could not read and therefore understand the text. The classroom observations also confirmed that the teaching of comprehension was a challenge and that the teaching of reading comprehension strategies was mostly absent.

In Table 5.6, I provide a summary of what I have learnt from my research study. I draw together my findings and other insights with the literature I have reviewed. I

report on support from the literature for my findings, what I found contradictory to my research insights and the silences I noticed, as well as new insights I gained.

Table 5.6: Summary of findings

Findings	<p>Teaching reading comprehension is a challenge internationally and nationally. However, there are countries that are doing very well, such as Finland and Singapore. South Africans should learn from them and take up this commitment with an emphasis on the prevention of reading comprehension problems.</p> <p>The study revealed the lack of learning support materials, lack of variety of reading materials for the learners. In school A there were no readers at all. Teachers had to rely on photocopies. Guided practice and time to practise comprehension strategies were missing in classrooms. No guidelines written in Tshivenda with Tshivenda examples exist.</p> <p>Teachers do not have access to the research literature on the teaching of reading comprehension and rely on their own experience (Shanahan, 2006; NRP, 2000).</p> <p>Teachers were not actually teaching reading comprehension strategies. Training teachers to better equip learners for developing and applying reading comprehension strategies. This will enhance reading comprehension could be linked to learners' achievement (NRP 2000; Pressley, 2000; Burke, 2000; Pressley, 1998; Torgesen <i>et al.</i>, 2007).</p>
Support	<p>The teachers repeatedly said that learners could not read and understand the text. The teachers said they acknowledged that reading comprehension should be taught but they did not know what strategies were.</p> <p>Literature revealed that reading comprehension cannot just happen, it must be taught and learnt (NRP, 2000; Duke & Pearson, 2000; Harvey & Goudvis 2007). Teachers need to teach learners comprehension strategies so they can control their own comprehension (Myers, 2005; Alfassi, 2004; Pardo, 2004; Zimmerman, 1998; Shanahan <i>et al.</i>, 2010).</p>
Contradictions	<p>The teachers said they knew what reading comprehension was and its importance in the lives of the learners. However, the classroom observations showed no commitment to the teaching of reading comprehension. Teachers did not teach and show learners how to read, which strategies to use, when and how to understand the meaning of the text.</p> <p>The literature (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Carter, 2000) confirmed that the teaching of reading comprehension strategies is not taught in the primary grades.</p>
Silences	<p>If an opportunity availed itself, the teachers could resign from teaching because they were frustrated. However, they did not reveal this fact during the interviews and focus group interviews. Although they were frustrated and stressed about the reading comprehension level of their learners, they did not mention resignation.</p> <p>Conversely, they expressed their willingness to learn and to attend workshops in order to become competent teachers of teaching reading comprehension to Tshivenda learners.</p>

New insights	<p>The teachers said that teaching reading comprehension was a challenge. The teachers were frustrated because learners could not read and understand the text. In addition, they did not know what comprehension strategies were and how to apply them. Workshops had not been helpful to the Tshivenda teachers. The teachers are not satisfied or comfortable about the intervention strategies provided such as the <i>Teaching reading in early grades</i> handbook since it was not helpful to Tshivenda teachers. Teachers needed support and training, not only theoretically; they needed to observe someone teaching learners how to read and how to use strategies in order to understand the text.</p> <p>Participating teachers of the research study requested for intervention strategies that would improve the reading comprehension of Tshivenda-speaking learners. The NRS (DoE, 2008), FFLC, DoE (2008), NRP (2000), Shanahan <i>et.</i>, (2010), JET (2010) agree that teacher training should develop a module on the teaching of reading comprehension with Tshivenda examples.</p>
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In Chapter 6, I present possible answers to my research questions. I also provide a summary, conclusions and recommendations for this study.