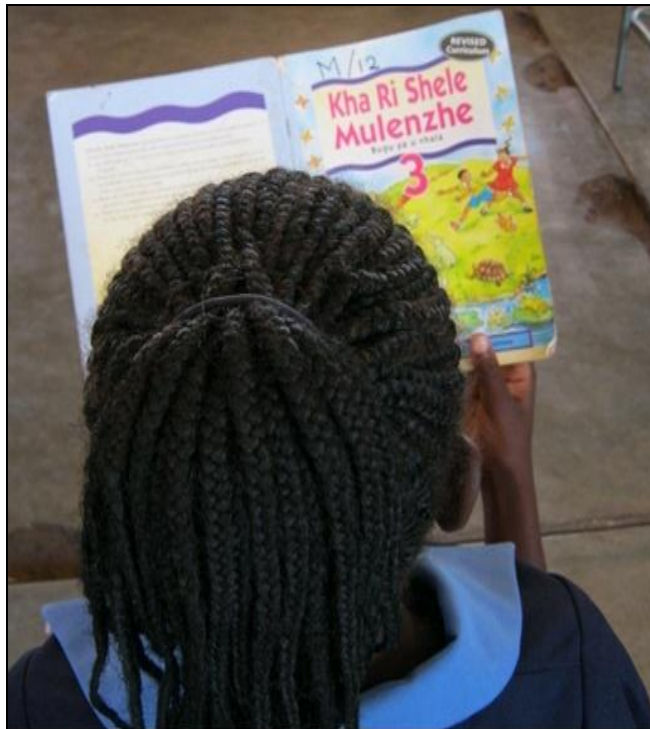# TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION
TO GRADE 3 TSHIVENDA-SPEAKING LEARNERS

NDILELENI PAULINAH MUDZIELWANA

2012

TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION TO GRADE 3 TSHIVENDA-SPEAKING LEARNERS

by

NDILELENI PAULINAH MUDZIELWANA

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR

Department of Early Childhood Education
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PRETORIA

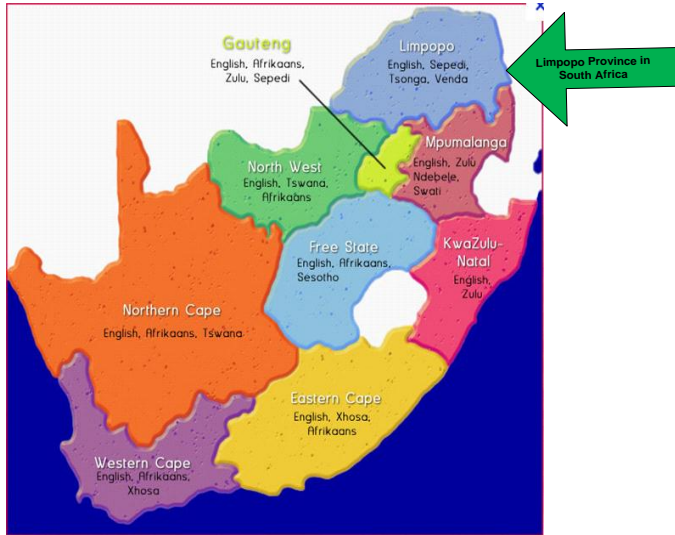**CASE STUDY SCHOOLS**

SCHOOL A

SCHOOL B

SCHOOL C

MAP OF SOUTH AFRICA WITH LIMPOPO PROVINCE AS ONE OF THE PROVINCES

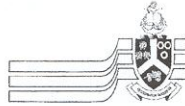Map of Limpopo Province, with the Vhembe District in the North

Vhembe District Map

ETHICS CERTIFICATE

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**CLEARANCE NUMBER :**	EM 10/06/02
DEGREE AND PROJECT	PhD	
	Teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners	
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Ndileleni Paulinah Mudzielwana	
DEPARTMENT	Early Childhood Education	
DATE CONSIDERED	27 February 2012	
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	APPROVED	

Please note:

For Masters applications, ethical clearance is valid for 2 years

For PhD applications, ethical clearnace is valid for 3 years.

CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE	Prof L Ebersohn
DATE	27 February 2012
CC	Jeannie Beukes
	JC Joubert

This ethical clearance certificate is issued subject to the following conditions:

1. A signed personal declaration of responsibility
2. If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, a new application for ethical clearance must be submitted
3. It remains the students' responsibility to ensure that all the necessary forms for informed consent are kept for future queries.

Please quote the clearance number in all enquiries.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to:

My husband and my children for the support and love they gave me during the arduous journey of putting this research project together. Without your invaluable tolerance and patience this work would not have been accomplished. Your support is greatly valued and appreciated.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere and deepest gratitude goes to all the people who proved to be indispensable in the selfless way they supported me throughout my studies. I am sincerely indebted to the following people for their advice and support during my journey on this road that at times seemed to be long and lonely. They are:

Dr Ina Joubert and Dr Nkidi Phatudi, for help and intervention, pointing me in the right direction, going through the work and making invaluable inputs. Dr Joubert and Dr Phatudi furthermore helped me during the critical phases of the project in the gathering of data and making sense of the maze of data in front of me. I will always be indebted to you.

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My mother who taught me the value of education and the importance of working hard to achieve objectives in life. My dear husband Tshitereke Ronald Mudzielwana, for his tolerance and understanding of my absence from home when working on the project. My children, Mukhethwa, Mudzunga, Khathutshelo and their families for the understanding and support given to me in pursuit of this study.

I am also greatly indebted and thankful to the following people:
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- The principals and teachers who participated in the study
- The education officials who gave me permission to access the schools
- My colleagues

Above all, I thank God, the Almighty, who sustained me throughout my studies. Praise be to HIM! Psalm 28:7.

The following poem by Antjie Krog (from her speech delivered at UWC Principals' Evening, April 2006) opens the research project by illustrating how reading is important in the lives of children.

A CHILD WHO READS

There is not a single thing that one can teach a child
that has such prevailing value as to teach a child to read.

No matter how poor
a child who reads is a privileged child.

No matter how bad the education
a child who reads is a well educated child.

No matter how neglected or abandoned
a child who reads is a natured child.

No matter how degraded and deprived the surroundings
a child who reads has a moral support.

No matter how lonely or rejected
a child who reads has many friends.

No matter how intolerant a society
a child who reads will be a child who understands.

No matter how mean and aggressive a neighbourhood
a child who reads will be a generous child.

No matter how impoverished and destroyed the area
a child who reads lives in luxury.

No matter how dangerous a neighbourhood
a child who reads is in a safer place.

No matter how mentally challenged a family
a child who reads will become an intelligent and informed child.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Ndileleni Paulinah Mudzielwana, declare that the thesis hereby submitted to the University of Pretoria for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university, that it is my own work in design and execution, and that all material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

I understand that all rights with regard to intellectual property in the work vest in the University of Pretoria who has the right to produce, distribute and/or publish the work in any manner considered fit.

My supervisors and I agree that, subject to the authorisation of the university as owner of all intellectual property rights in the work, the approved version may be placed in the UPetd archive with the following status: *Release the entire work immediately for worldwide access.*

NDILELENI PAULINAH MUDZIELWANA

30 March 2012

ABSTRACT

The main objective of this research was to explore how teachers teach reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. The research was prompted by the low performance of reading amongst these Grade 3 learners in this area.

This study was a qualitative study. The paradigmatic position of the study was the interpretive paradigm. Data was collected through individual teachers' interviews, focus group interviews, classroom observations and content analysis. Interviews and focus group discussions were taped, transcribed, analysed, and data was categorised into themes. Three schools, each with two Grade 3 classes, were selected. Learners were involved because the main aim was to observe teachers teaching reading comprehension to them. This study did not attempt to measure learner performance, but investigated the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. The aim of this was to investigate how teachers teach reading comprehension in their classrooms.

The study developed a conceptual framework from the literature review, consisting of five phases. These phases were identified and developed as it became clear that, in order to teach reading comprehension effectively, various parties involved in schools need to be actively involved in the different phases when teaching reading comprehension education of learners. In addition, the learning and developmental theories consulted in this study were related to the conceptual framework. The research implies that reading comprehension can be taught and learnt, which further supports the development of the conceptual framework for this study.

The findings of the study revealed that the participating teachers had limited understanding of reading comprehension strategies. They regarded teaching comprehension as a challenge as they do not know what comprehension strategies are and how to apply them. Additionally, they are stressed, confused and frustrated, because learners cannot read and understand the text. Furthermore, responses showed that teachers are uncertain of how to teach reading comprehension.

Teachers spent little time on reading comprehension with learners, with no uniform approach amongst them on how to teach reading comprehension. Guided practice and time to practise comprehension strategies were absent in classrooms. The teachers also showed a lack of theoretical knowledge and practical experience about teaching comprehension strategies, which seems to result in teachers' developing a negative attitude towards their learners (who struggle to read). Interviews and classroom observations revealed that, although the participating teachers said they understood what reading comprehension was, there was no correlation between what they said and what they did in practice in their classrooms. The results measured against Zimmerman's (1998) applied social model of self-regulated learning, show that teachers lack the theoretical knowledge of teaching reading comprehension.

In addition, participants were not satisfied with the intervention strategies and policies provided by the Department of Education. They felt neglected because guidelines were only in English and not in African languages, like Tshivenda. As such, no guidelines to teachers written in Tshivenda with Tshivenda examples exist. Workshops had not been helpful to Tshivenda teachers either. The study also revealed a lack of learning support materials, no variety of reading materials for learners and, in some schools, no readers at all. Lastly, the study shows that these teachers do not have access to research literature on the teaching of reading comprehension and rely on their own experience.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

FP	Foundation Phase
GET	General Education and Training
HL	Home Language
FAL	First Additional Language
DoE	Department of Education
LDoE	Limpopo Department of Education
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
LiEP	Language in Education Policy
FFLC	Foundations for Learning Campaign
NRS	National Reading Strategy
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Progress Statement
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
C2005	Curriculum 2005
LO	Learning Outcomes
ASS	Assessment Standards
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
SASA	South African Schools Act
NPDE	National Professional Diploma in Education
ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
SACMEQ	South African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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CHAPTER 1
OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

'A student's academic progress is profoundly shaped by the ability to understand what is read. Students, who cannot understand what they read, are not likely to acquire the skills necessary to participate in the 21st century workforce'

(Butler, Urrutia, Buenger & Hunt, 2010:1)

1.1   Introduction

A child's success at school and throughout life depends largely on the ability to read and understand the texts. Teachers, especially those teaching in the Foundation Phase, have the profound challenge of making reading a reality for all learners.

Reading skills acquisition is the process of acquiring the basic skills necessary for learning to read, that is, "the ability to acquire meaning from print" (Verhoeven, 2000). The reading acquisition skills required for proficient reading fluency, the ability to read orally with speed, accuracy, and vocal expression. The ability to read fluently is one of several critical factors necessary for reading comprehension. If a reader is not fluent, it may be difficult to remember what has been read and to relate the ideas expressed in the text to his or her background knowledge (Verhoeven, 2000). This accuracy and automaticity of reading serves as a bridge between decoding and comprehension vocabulary. A critical aspect of reading comprehension is vocabulary development. When a reader encounters an unfamiliar word in print and decodes it to derive its spoken pronunciation, the reader understands the word if it is in the readers spoken vocabulary.

This study focused on the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners at the General Education and Training (GET) level in South African primary schools. These classes are studying Tshivenda as a home language (Home Language or First Language) in the Foundation Phase. The research is presented as a case study of three schools in a rural district, namely, Vhembe, Limpopo Province, South Africa.

The focus for the study was selected for two reasons:

- Reading comprehension has been identified as a major weakness of South African learners. Recent surveys have indicated that the problem is ongoing (PIRLS, 2007; ANA, 2011). It is critical therefore, that research is carried out to establish possible reasons for this situation in South African schools.
- Reading in their mother tongue is a critical skill for learners and this can assist them to understand other languages, since the majority of these school learners, especially in areas like Vhembe, use Tshivenda as a Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT). They need to be able to read and understand texts in order to pursue knowledge in a wide range of texts outside of the classrooms.

There are a number of ways in which reading can be researched. A number of international and South African studies (see Ch. 2) have focused on measuring learner performance to read in Home Language (L1) and First Additional Language (L2). Others have measured the effects of interventions carried out to improve reading skills (Williams, 2007).

This study did not attempt to measure performance. A qualitative case study investigated the teaching of reading comprehension that may be affecting the teaching of reading comprehension amongst Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. While the focus was on Grade 3 learners, the study may well be relevant in some ways to intermediate learners. It investigates the classroom practices of Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking teachers when teaching reading comprehension in reading lessons. It did so in order to find out how teachers teach reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. For learning to become more effective, learners have to be exposed to more reading in the language of learning and teaching. The teaching of reading comprehension exposes learners to read various texts to assists them in gathering more information and provides them with skills to read for various purposes. It also assists them to acquire knowledge, skills, values and attitudes in the learning of the language (NCS, 2002). The language of learning becomes crucial in the learning and teaching process.

This study focused on literature and the empirical research. The empirical study was divided into teachers' individual interviews, focus group interviews and

classroom observations. It is for the above reasons that I was prompted to conduct this study.

1.2 Rationale

International and local studies (The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS, 2006;SAQMEC,2004; The Times, June29, 2011) show beyond any shadow of doubt that South African learners' reading literacy performance falls far below the required standard. The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS, 2006) describes trends of reading achievement. The study provides international comparisons for the reading achievement of Grade 4 learners, their competencies in relation to goals and standards for reading education, the impact of the home environment and how parents foster reading literacy, the organisation of time and reading materials for learning to read in schools, as well as curriculum and classroom approaches to reading instruction.

PIRLS (2006) measure learner performance in literacy at Grades 4 and 6. The findings reveal the low level of reading literacy in both grades in South Africa. PIRLS (2006) focuses on three aspects of reading literacy, namely processes of comprehension, purposes of reading, and reading behaviours and attitudes. The study confirms that more than half of the learners who speak English and Afrikaans, and over 80% of African-language speakers in South Africa do not even reach the lowest international benchmark. This means that there are a high number of learners without basic reading skills and strategies for coping with academic tasks. The Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ, 2004) revealed that children in Grades 1 to 6 are reading two grade levels below their own in English and their mother tongue.

South Africa participated in PIRLS between 2004 and 2007. Learner assessment occurred in all 11 official languages, including Tshivenda. The study assessed learners who had just completed Foundation Phase schooling. This means that the Grade 4 results were a true reflection of the Foundation Phase learning experiences of the learners. In an analysis per language, the study revealed that Tshivenda learners also fall below the international mean in reading literacy (PIRLS, 2006:27).

It is therefore clear that there is a serious problem among Tshivenda learners regarding reading literacy.

In view of this state of literacy, the Limpopo Department of Education (LDoE) conducted a study in Grade 1-4 on literacy in 2008, as most of Tshivenda speakers are living in the Limpopo Province. The aim of the study was to improve the quality of literacy teaching in the province. When the study commenced, I used the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). In the meantime, the new Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) came into effect. I refer to it in the final chapter of this study. The study revealed that the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) of the Department of Education (2002) emphasises the importance of teaching reading literacy. However, the curriculum document does not explain the mechanics of literacy teaching which teachers are expected to apply (Reeves, Heugh, Prinsloo, MacDonald, Netshitangani, Alidou, Diederick & Herbst, 2008:xx).

Concerning mother tongue teaching and literacy skills, a study on evaluation of literacy teaching in primary schools of Limpopo Province identified the following (Reeves *et al.,* 2008:xxvii-xxx):

- Learners' poor academic achievement from Grade 4 onwards cannot be attributed to learning in English only, but also to ineffective mother-tongue literacy and language teaching practices in schools and classrooms from Grade R onwards.
- Teachers are uncertain about how to approach the teaching of reading and writing and what strategies to use for teaching literacy.
- There is insufficient evidence of teachers directly and explicitly developing learners' literacy skills.
- Most learners in the Foundation Phase are not receiving adequate opportunities to develop strong literacy either in the mother tongue or in English.
- Learners are not doing enough writing and reading in the home language or the first additional language.
- Learners are not provided with sufficient opportunities to practise reading extended narrative or expository text aloud through individual guided

practice, and to construct their own sentences and/or produce their own extended text.

- There is a lack of books and a reading culture in schools and classrooms, and limited opportunities for learners to handle and read a range of books exist.

- Teachers are not keeping track closely enough of each learner's reading and writing ability and progress to have comprehensive knowledge of individual differences. Most teachers do not have reading and writing assessment records that provide on-going, constructive and useful information and notes specific to the status of individual learners' literacy skills.

- Most teachers said they had received little or no specialised practical training on how to teach reading and writing in classrooms from the Limpopo Department of Education.

- Learners are not doing enough writing and reading in the home language or first additional language (the first language is the home language and the first additional language is any language taught other than the learners' home language).

The study on evaluation of literacy teaching in primary schools of Limpopo Province revealed that there is a need for the LDoE to support Foundation Phase teachers with literacy development in the home language and the first additional language (FAL).This literacy development includes the teaching of reading comprehension.

Despite the recommended changes to Curriculum 2005 (DoE, C2005) to develop an improved curriculum for the 21stcentury, South Africa still faces reading literacy problems at the Foundation Phase(DoE, 2008; ANA, 2011). Concerns about learners' development of basic literacy skills at the foundational levels of education (Bloch, 1999; Lessing & De Witt, 2005) are consistently reflected in local and international research (Howie & Van Staden, 2007;Fleisch, 2008; SAQMEC, 2004; Howie, Venter, Van Staden, Zimmerman, Long, Scherman & Archer, 2006).

In 2000, a Sunday Times headline proclaimed that South African children were the 'dunces of Africa' (16 July 2000:1). The article reported the findings of a comparative study of literacy and numeracy rates of primary school children from 12 countries in Africa, with South African children faring poorly in comparison with their

African peers on both literacy and numeracy measures (Pretorius, 2000; Pretorius &Ribbens, 2005). This was further supported by the then Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, who pointed out that many schools in South Africa were experiencing reading problems, especially in the Foundation Phase (DoE, 2008). The minister referred to the data obtained from the PIRLS (2006) as shocking. She pointed out that the grade-by-grade reading strategy for the development of reading literacy skills was being implemented at a very slow pace.

As education is a major concern of this study, some aspects of teaching reading are highlighted here. The Department of Education (DoE, 2008:8) explains that many teachers in South Africa have an underdeveloped understanding of teaching literacy, reading and writing. Many teachers simply do not know how to teach reading. Too often, teachers know only one method of teaching reading, which may not suit the learning style of all learners. Teachers do not know how to stimulate reading, inside and outside the classroom. Although much has been said about improving teaching and learning in South African schools, Jansen (2002) argues that to make a real difference, a teacher's knowledge base has to be expanded, textbooks have to be distributed equally and instruction has to be better utilised. In their study, Howie *et al.*, (2006:48) point out those teachers were not able to implement strategies they have gleaned from professional training to the most effective level.

Pandor (2007) reiterated that the speakers of African languages had low average scores in the 2001 and 2007 surveys. The average literacy score for Tshivenda-speaking learners was 26%. This further illustrates the educational crisis in South African education. The 2001 audit by the South African Department of Education (DoE) to assess literacy levels across all nine provinces showed that only 38% of Grade 3 learners could read at that grade level in their mother tongue. The minister ascribed this problem to teacher quality and ability, lack of sufficient support for African language learners, large class sizes, lack of resources and lack of quality leadership in schools. Additionally, in his state of the nation address, South Africa's President, Jacob Zuma (2010), said that classroom instruction has to change to address the low level of reading literacy of learners (www://blogs.timeslive.co.za/ Hartley/2010/02/11).

The above is an indication that the state of reading literacy among Foundation Phase learners needs urgent attention. It indicates that South Africa is indeed lagging behind in terms of introducing reading literacy skills to learners, even though the importance of literacy is explicitly highlighted in the National Curriculum Statement (DoE, 2002).

The academic rationale of this study, which evolved from my personal interest and a survey of the literature (such as, Pretorius, 2000; PIRLS, 2006;DoE, 2008;Ramphele, 2009) was to investigate, by means of interviews and observations, the teaching of reading in the classroom, as there is evidence that teachers are not able to teach reading comprehension effectively (DoE, 2008). A further motivation for this study was sparked when I joined the University of Venda and took up a lectureship in the Bachelor of Education Foundation Phase (BEdTEF) programme and National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE). During school visits and when providing support for BEdTEF and NPDE students, it concerned me deeply to find that many learners in the Foundation Phase lacked basic reading comprehension skills. As a lecturer for the Foundation Phase, I decided to explore the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. I decided to approach the topic from the perspective of teachers' use of reading comprehension strategies before, during and after reading. I furthermore approached the study by looking at how the strategies influence teachers' classroom instruction when teaching reading comprehension. Against this background, I decided that my study should focus on the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners.

1.3 Research questions and sub-questions

Collected data to answer this research project was aimed at documenting the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. The study used an interpretive paradigm to understand which strategies teachers employ in teaching reading comprehension. The study was framed by the following main research question:

How do teachers teach reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners?

The sub questions that assisted me in answering the main question were:

a) How do teachers understand reading comprehension?

b) What do teachers regard as important when teaching reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners?

c) Which strategies do teachers use when teaching reading comprehension?

d) What strategies can teachers use to improve reading comprehension?

These research questions guided me throughout the study. The data generated by these questions were instrumental in understanding the processes and strategies that the teachers use in teaching reading comprehension.

1.4   Explanation of core elements in the study

This section clarifies the key concepts of the research topic and my interpretation thereof for application in this study. These concepts are the teaching of reading comprehension, reading comprehension strategies, mother tongue (Tshivenda), first additional language to Foundation Phase and Grade 3 learners.

1.4.1   Teaching

Teaching is one of the means by which education is achieved. Teaching is an activity that aims at presenting specific learning content to somebody in such a way that those persons learn something from it. Learning, on the other hand, is an activity in which the person being taught actively benefits from teaching and absorbs a particular content. These activities result in teaching-learning events during which the processes of teaching learning are linked (Fraser, 1990:30).

According to Carr (1996), teaching is also characterisable as an intentional activity. It is undertaken with the purpose of bringing about learning, which is why we can barely grasp what it is to teach in advance and what it is to learn. I believe the purpose of teaching is not to teach learners how to memorise facts, or to know all the answers, but to get learners to understand the text. Therefore, teachers need to be aware of how to apply reading comprehension strategies effectively.

For the purposes of this study, teaching is defined as skills and/or knowledge that a teacher needs to employ the most effective reading comprehension strategies to enable learners to read the text with understanding.

1.4.2   Reading comprehension

In recent years, efforts to recognise the complexity of comprehension have resulted in expanded definitions, such as the definition used by the RAND Reading Study Group (2002), a group charged by the United States Department of Education with developing a research agenda to address pressing issues in literacy. To guide its work, RAND (2002) defines comprehension as "the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language." It consists of three elements, namely, the reader, the text, and the activity or the purpose of reading (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002:11). According to this definition, the three elements are interrelated and shaped by the larger social and cultural context in which the reading occurs. Reader, then, refers to the actual person who performs the action of reading, either to themselves or to others.

The National Assessment Governing Board (NAEP, 2004) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (Campbell, Kelly, Mullis, Martin& Sainsbury, 2001:3) have developed similar definitions of comprehension as a process that requires the coordination and interaction of multiple factors. Based on these definitions, reading comprehension is a multi-dimensional process that involves factors related to the reader, the text and the activity.

Reading comprehension thus has several definitions and it has been found that it involves more than 30 cognitive and metacognitive processes (Block & Pressley, 2002). Comprehension can then be defined as a process in which readers construct meaning by interacting with the text through a combination of prior knowledge and previous experience, information in the text and the stance the reader takes in relationship to the text (Pardo, 2004:272;Antunez, 2002:5;Sweet &Snow, 2003:1;Klingner, Vaughn &Boardman, 2007;Brand-Gruwel, Aarnoutes &Van der Boss, 1998:65;Roe, Stoodt-Hill & Burns, 2004; Roe, Smith &Burns, 2005;NRP, 2000).

According to Pardo (2004), Duke (2003) added two concepts to the definition of comprehension, namely navigation and critique, because she believed that readers move through the text during the reading process, finding their way and evaluating the accuracy of the text to see if it fits the teacher's personal agenda.

Harris and Hodges (1995:39), McLaughlin and Allen (2002), and Pearson (2001) state that reading comprehension is the acquiring of meaning from written text, with text being defined as a range of material from traditional books. In this meaning-making process, the reader interacts with the print and is involved in making sense of the message. Readers comprehend text by acquiring meaning, confirming meaning and creating meaning. This implies that the reader uses different strategies in order to understand the text.

Shanahan (2006:28) regards reading comprehension as the "act of understanding and interpreting the information within a text." This means that reading comprehension involves word knowledge, as well as thinking and reasoning. In order for comprehension to take place, words must be decoded and associated with their meanings in a reader's memory. Phrases and sentences must be processed fluently so that the meaning is derived from one word and the phrase or sentences are not lost before the text is processed (Nel, Dreyer &Kopper, 2004). Sweet and Snow (2003) suggest that the reader must monitor this construction process, solving strategy problems and making repairs as needed. It is therefore critical that learners should have an idea of what they are reading and monitor themselves to check their comprehension during the reading process.

Brand-Gruwel, Aarnoutes and Van der Boss (1998:65) state that "reading comprehension is a highly complex process which operates on decoded language at various linguistic levels." This indicates that reading comprehension is a process which needs to be taught and learnt. Reading and understanding what is read is critical. When the reader engages in reading, he or she is constructing meaning in relation to his or her prior knowledge. When one engages with any information the context within which one does this is based on what one knows and how one relates to one's knowledge (National Reading Panel–NRP, 2000). Teachers should,

therefore, take note of learners' prior strategy knowledge when teaching reading comprehension (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007).

Readers construct meaning, that is, they use their reading abilities and their knowledge of the world to create their interpretative frameworks and comprehend text leading to constructivist reading theories. It is therefore critically appropriate for teachers to understand how comprehension works, for example, Durkin (1993) defines comprehension as "intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and reader." This implies that reading comprehension is a problem solving process that requires the reader to be actively involved.

However, definitions do not adequately capture the complexity of reading comprehension. How well a reader is able to construct a meaning from a text is influenced by many factors. These are factors such as the nature of the reading activity, the abilities and skills the reader brings to the activity, the nature of the text being read, its genre, its subject matter, the density and quality of its writing and the social and cultural factors that make up the context of the reading (NRP, 2000; Pardo, 2004).

Without comprehension, reading words is reduced to mimicking the sounds of language. This is because the main reason for reading is to comprehend the text and use the information in different situations. Yet, Bos and Vaughn (1994), as well as Durkin (1993), maintain that reading comprehension is often called the "essence of reading." It is of vital importance that learners must understand what they read.

Within the context of the study reading comprehension is understood as the ability to read any text with understanding, and where difficulties occur, learners must use comprehension strategies.

1.4.3   Reading comprehension strategies

Researchers have found that the use of strategies during reading comprehension can help the reader to understand the text (NRP, 2000; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), 2000; Williams, 2007; Crawford & Torgesen, 2006; Adler, 2004; Gibson, 2004).

Reading comprehension strategies provide a language around comprehension processes. It gives readers a vehicle for expressing their thinking and monitoring their thoughts as they are reading the text. "A strategy is a plan; you are to be thoughtful when you do it, and often adjust the plan as you go along to fit the situation. Therefore, good readers use many strategies," for example, predictions, question generating and question answering (Duffy, 2002; 2003; Duffy & McIntyre, 1982). This enables them to independently understand, discuss the text and to relate it to other situations. Afflerbach, Pearson and Paris (2008:368), as well as Pereira-Laird and Deane (1997), define reading comprehension strategies as specific, deliberate mental processes or behaviours, which control and modify the reader's efforts to decode a text, understand words and construct the meaning of a text. According to Anderson (1991), what is important is that readers should know what strategies there are, and how and when to use them. In addition, the reader must also know how to apply the strategy successfully in different contexts.

Reading comprehension strategies, then, are "conscious plans – sets or a set of steps, e.g., making connections, creating mental images (visualising) or questioning that good readers use to make sense of text; and help(s) learners become purposeful, active readers who are in control of their own reading comprehension" for example, self-monitoring (Armbruster, Lehr & Osborn, 2003:49).

According to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) (2002), comprehension strategies are procedures that guide students (learners) as they attempt to read and write. In the same vein, Trabassco and Bouchard (2002:177) maintain that comprehension strategies are specific, learned procedures that foster active, competent, self-regulated and intentional reading. It is therefore of the utmost importance that teachers must encourage learners to use strategies independently throughout their reading activities. Schumm (2006:229) added by saying that reading comprehension strategies are processes that are controlled by the reader, are metacognitive, are intentional, are flexible, and emphasise reasoning. This means that, during reading comprehension, teachers must teach learners a combination of strategies and to use them flexibly in order to become strategic readers.

Mayer (2003:34) regards reading comprehension strategies as "techniques for improving students (learners) success in extracting useful knowledge from text." This means that teaching learners' comprehension strategies may enhance the learners' understanding.

For the purpose of this study, reading comprehension strategies are useful tips teachers plan and teach learners to use when reading a text to ensure understanding when reading the text.

1.4.3.1 Metacognitive strategies and cognitive strategies

There is empirical evidence (NRP, 2000; Singhal, 2001; Mayer, 2003; Trabassco & Bouchard, 2002; Philips, Norris &Vavra, 2007) in the literature that the use of metacognitive strategies leads to better reading comprehension performance in learners.

The research done by Mokharti and Reichard (2002), Pressley (2002), Anderson (2000), Taberski (2000) and NICHD (2000) in the area of reading comprehension has led to an increasing emphasis on the role of metacognitive awareness, which has been defined as the perceived use of reading strategies while reading. Metacognitive strategies are higher-order executive tactics that entail planning for learning, monitoring, identifying and remediating causes of comprehension failure or evaluating the successes of a learning activity; that is, the strategies of self-planning, self-monitoring, self-regulating, self-questioning and self-reflecting (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Zimmerman, 1998). O'Malley and Chamot (1990) emphasise that the lack of metacognitive approaches in learners results in a lack of direction and an inability to self-monitor their progress, accomplishments and future learning directions. Research in the area of reading comprehension has led to an increasing emphasis on the role of metacognitive awareness, which has been defined as the perceived use of reading strategies while reading (Mokharti & Reichard, 2002; Pressley, 2002).

Metacognition can be furthermore be defined as "thinking about thinking" (Philips, Norris & Vavra, 2007:4). Metacognitive strategies activate one's thinking and lead to improved performance in learning (Anderson, 1991; 2002). Good readers use

metacognition strategies to think about their own reading and have control over this process, for example, before reading, learners might clarify their reason for reading and previewing the text (Pressley, 2002). During reading, they might monitor their understanding, adjusting their reading speed to fit the difficulty of the text and fixing up any comprehension problems they have. After reading, they check their understanding of what they read.

Cognitive strategies are closely related to reading comprehension as they involve direct interaction with the text and contribute to facilitating comprehension, operate directly on incoming information, manipulating it in ways that enhance learning (Anastasiou & Griva, 2009). Cognitive strategies include the strategies of underlining, using titles, using the dictionary, writing down, guessing from the context, imagery, activating prior knowledge, summarising, using linguistic clues, using text markers, skipping the difficult parts and repeating phrases (Anastasiou & Griva, 2009).

1.4.3.2 The Role of metacognition in reading comprehension

Metacognition is a term created by Flavell in 1979. In the context of reading, it refers to thinking about and controlling one's reading. Metacognition is an advanced cognitive process. However, there is ample evidence that young children plan, monitor, revise, and regulate reading. According to Philips, Norris and Vavra (2007:1), the role of metacognition in reading comprehension may be described on two levels:

- At the macro-level (the level of text organisation), readers rely upon the author's organisation of the text (headings, paragraph length, main ideas and summaries) to get a sense of how to interpret the text (Philips, Norris & Vavra, 2007).

- At the micro-level (the level of sentences), readers endeavour to understand individual words and idea units in the context of their use, and to make sense of phrases and sentences in order to connect the text information with their relevant background knowledge (Philips, Norris & Vavra, 2007). These connections require readers to attend to and monitor their sense of interpretation. Readers use a variety of strategies to make decisions, such as whether to be tentative, to reread, to question, to shift focus, or to continue

(Philips, Norris& Vavra, 2007). Each of these decisions requires selective use of a reader's cognitive resources in order to monitor whether interpretation is successful and to shift their focus in cases where it is not (Philips, Norris & Vavra, 2007). In such cases, there are numerous possible strategies controlled by metacognition.

What seems to be important in reading comprehension is for the reader to be aware of strategies, for example, knowing how, when, and where to use a particular strategy. Examples of this is when to reread because something is not making sense, when to remain tentative until more information is provided, and when to shift focus because the vocabulary choice made does not seem to make sense in the context of the story being read. Teachers must teach learners to set a goal for their reading, and to monitor and check regularly whether they understand what they are reading (Zimmerman, 1998).Teachers should also teach learners to use alternative strategies (Zimmerman, 1998), for example, if learners come to an unknown word, teach them to reread, to use pictures as clues, and to think about what would make sense based on what they have read. In addition, teachers need to teach learners to reflect on their reading in order to assess whether they have met their reading goal, to identify what caused a problem and to think about how to read differently next time (Philips, Norris & Vavra, 2007).

Cognitive strategies refer to integrating new material with prior knowledge. Cognitive strategies involve direct interaction with the text and contribute to facilitating comprehension; they operate directly on oncoming information, manipulating it in ways that enhance learning (Anastasiou & Griva, 2009:284). Cognitive strategies that learners use to acquire, learn, remember, retrieve and understand the material while reading includes rehearsal, elaboration, and organisational strategies (Pereira-Laird & Deane, 1997:190).

These two concepts are important in reading comprehension and, even though they seem to be different, they both complement each other. Cognitive strategies are necessary for learners to be able to perform the task of reading, while metacognitive strategies are necessary to understand how the task has been performed. Aarnoutse and Schellings (2003), and Van Keer (2004) indicate that good readers

employ different cognitive and metacognitive strategies before, during and after reading text.

In the same vein, Lenz (2005) and Armbruster *et al., (*2003) state that the most practical way of thinking about teaching reading comprehension is to organise instruction according to how the teacher would want learners to think about strategies. The Texas Education Agency (2002), Lenz (2005:2) and Armbruster *et al.*, (2003:45-57) list three ways of organising comprehension strategies and thinking about strategies that one might use. These include, before reading (phase 1), during reading (phase 2) and after reading (phase 3).

Phase 1: Before-reading strategies

Before-reading consists of those strategies that a learner learns to use to get ready to read a text selection. These strategies help learners to get an idea of what the author might be trying to say and how the information might be useful, and to create a mental set that might be useful for taking in and storing information. These strategies could include previewing headings, surveying pictures, reading introductions and summaries, creating a pre-reading outline, creating questions that might need to be answered, making predictions that need to be confirmed (Lenz, 2005:2; Armbruster *et al.,* 2003:45-57).

Phase 2: During-reading strategies

During-reading consists of those strategies that learners learn to use while they are reading a text selection. These strategies help the learner to focus on how to determine what the author is actually trying to say, to match the information with what the author is actually saying and then to match the information with what the child already knows. These strategies should be influenced by the before-reading strategies because learners should be using or keeping in mind the previews, outlines, questions, and predictions (Lenz, 2005:2; Armbruster *et al.,* 2003:45-57).

Phase 3: After-reading strategies

The after-reading process consists of those strategies that learners use when they have finished reading a text selection. The aim is to help the learner to look back and think about the message of the text and determine the intended or possible meanings that might be important. These strategies are used to follow up and

confirm what was learnt, for example to answer questions or confirm predictions from the use of the before- and during-reading strategies. However, after-reading strategies also help the reader to focus on determining what the big, critical, or overall idea of the author's message is and how it might be used before moving on to performance tasks or other learning tasks (Lenz, 2005:2; Armbruster *et al.*, 2003:45-57).

In this study, a reading strategy consists of the appropriate skills and the knowledge that teachers teach the learners for understanding the written text.

Insofar as the teaching of reading comprehension strategies is concerned, various authors suggest many ways of teaching reading comprehension in the primary grades. All these different views have in common the notion that reading comprehension can be taught. What is important is to make learners aware of how and when to use a strategy before, during and after reading.

1.4.4   Mother tongue

Luckett (1992:5) and Kreshen (in Moswane, 2002:10) defines the mother tongue as the primary language of the family which is dominant in the immediate community. He refers to the mother tongue as the expression of the primary identity of a human being. It is the language through which a person perceives the surrounding world and through which initial concept formation takes place. The mother tongue is also the medium through which the child establishes kinship with other children and with the adults around them. Mother tongue may be used synonymously with the concept first language (home language) and refers to the language the child has learnt, usually from the parents (Langtang & Venter, in Du Plessis, 2006:21).

South Africa has 11 official languages and the Constitution of the country allows learners to be educated in any of these languages as a first language/mother tongue (DoE, 2002). For the purposes of this study, mother tongue refers to 'Tshivenda', a dominant language in the Vhembe district of Limpopo Province. Tshivenda as the home language and is the language of teaching and learning. It is the language that most residents know best and have learnt first or with which they choose to identify themselves.

1.4.5   First Additional Language

In South Africa First Additional Language (FAL) is the language learned in addition to one's home language (DoE, 2002:6). Learning a first additional language promotes multilingualism and intercultural communication. Fist Additional Languages provide for levels of language proficiency that meet the threshold levels necessary for effective learning across the curriculum, as learners may learn through the medium of their First Additional Language in the South African context. This includes the abstract cognitive academic language skills required for thinking and learning (DoE, 2002:6).

Learners in South Africa are required to start with a First Additional Language from Grade 1 (DoE, 2002), which usually consists of English if English is not the first language. First additional language assumes that learners do not necessarily have any knowledge of the language when they arrive at school. The curriculum starts by developing learners' ability to understand and speak the language. On this foundation it builds literacy. The learners are able to transfer the literacies they have acquired in their home language to their First Additional Language.

1.4.6   Foundation Phase

The Foundation Phase is the first phase of the general education and training (GET) band and includes Grade R (the reception year) and Grades 1, 2 and 3 (DoE, 2002:54). It focuses on primary skills, knowledge and values and lays the foundation for further learning (DoE, 2003:19). The broader aim of the Foundation Phase is to provide learners with sufficient opportunities to develop their full potential as active, responsible and fulfilled citizens (DoE, 1997:4). For the purposes of this study, the Foundation Phase includes learners from age six (in schools that have grade R) to age nine.

1.4.7   Grade 3 learners

Grade 3 learners are normally between nine and ten years old. Learners at this stage are in the concrete operational stage (Piaget, 1967:38-41). During this stage, learners begin to apply logic to concrete experiences with the result that they begin to move beyond one-dimensional thinking. According to Mwamwenda (2004:103),

the concrete operational stage hails the beginning of logical thinking based on experiences and concrete evidence. The Grade 3 class is the exit level from the Foundation Phase, Grade R, 1, 2 and 3 to the Intermediate Phase, from Grade 4, 5, 6 and 7.

For the purposes of this study, Grade 3 consists of learners between nine and ten years.

1.5   Significance of the study

The issues of reading acquisition are topical educational discussion points in many countries across the world, as well as in South Africa. Reading skills acquisition is the process of acquiring the basic skills necessary for learning to read, that is, "the ability to acquire meaning from print" (Verhoeven, 2000). The reading acquisition skills required for proficient reading fluency, the ability to read orally with speed, accuracy and vocal expression. The ability to read fluently is one of several critical factors necessary for reading comprehension. If a reader is not fluent, it may be difficult to remember what has been read and to relate the ideas expressed in the text to his or her background knowledge. This accuracy and automaticity of reading serves as a bridge between decoding and comprehension vocabulary. A critical aspect of reading comprehension is vocabulary development. When a reader encounters an unfamiliar word in print and decodes it to derive its spoken pronunciation, the reader understands the word if it is in the readers spoken vocabulary.

Low levels of reading amongst learners, especially in the Foundation Phase, triggered my interest in conducting this research on the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners as a specific focus within the teaching of reading. The arguments being that the development of literacy in the Foundation Phase is not properly laid in Grades 1 to 3 and that Foundation Phase teachers simply do not know how to teach reading comprehension (DoE, 2008; LDoE, 2008).

Although this might be part of the problem, there may be other factors, for example, not all schools have readers for the learners and teachers are not adequately

trained (DoE, 2008; Scheepers, 2008). A survey of 93 Foundation Phase teachers done by Lessing and De Witt (2001) indicate that more than half of the teachers were not satisfied with their initial training for teaching reading and indicated a need for further training to become competent in their classrooms.

No similar study has been carried out in the Vhembe district of the Limpopo Province. This study would therefore add knowledge about the problems teachers encounter in the teaching of reading comprehension. It is also hoped that this study can contribute to the body of knowledge about the teaching of reading comprehension strategies to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. The study intends to benefit learners and teachers, and learners' parents indirectly. I hope that teachers will realise the importance of teaching reading comprehension strategies in their classrooms. They will plan the comprehension lessons strategically and engage learners using the comprehension strategies to understand the text. Indirectly, the study may influence the Department of Education and schools in realising the importance of the five phases of teaching reading comprehension as explained in the conceptual framework. This would improve the chances of learners to have a good foundation and become proficient readers who could read the text with understanding. The study could also be of value to teachers in other contexts that are similar to Vhembe district.

1.6 Research design and methodology

The study was underpinned by various research questions.

Main research question:
How do teachers teach reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners?

The sub-questions that assisted me in answering the main question are:
1. How do teachers understand reading comprehension?
2. What do teachers regard as important when teaching reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners?
3. Which strategies do teachers use when teaching reading comprehension?
4. What strategies can teachers use to improve reading comprehension?

The method of research chosen for this study is predominantly qualitative, using a case study from three schools as a research design. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials (Denzin& Lincoln, 2000:3). In simple terms, qualitative research is the gathering and analysis of data to obtain insights into situations of interest that would not be possible using other types of research (Gay, 1996:208). Creswell (2008:2) defines qualitative research as "an enquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting."

The qualitative researcher gains in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation by using a variety of data collection strategies. In this study, I interviewed individual teachers, held focus group interviews and conducted classroom observations, and performed content analysis. By using different instruments at various points in the research process, I could build on the strength of each type of data collection and minimise the weaknesses of any single approach (McMillan &Schumacher, 2001:408; Swanson & Holton, 1997:93).

By means of the literature review, I develop a conceptual framework consisting of five phases (figure 3.1) that represent the most important arguments of the study based on the concepts and theories, and their relationship with reading comprehension as dealt with in Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the study.

1.6.1   Sampling

The research study is a case study of Grade 3 teachers in three schools in order to explore and understand the teaching of reading comprehension in the Dzindi circuit of Limpopo. I decided on purposive sampling as a method of selecting the unit analysis. Three government schools, each with two Grade 3 classes, participated in the study. The study was confined to three government schools and to two teachers per school in the Vhembe district of Limpopo Province. Thus, not all Grade 3 learners and teachers at the schools of Vhembe district were included in the study. I took a purposive sample that included three schools that were situated close to the University of Venda where I work.

1.6.2   Data collection methods and instruments

According to Kamper, Schulze and Goodwin-Davey (1999:295), methods for data collection in qualitative research cannot be prescribed. In their view, Kamper *et al.,* (1999:295) and Mouton (1996:156) strongly support the principle of triangulation (the use of multiple sources of data collection) as it enhances the reliability of the study.

I employed the following instruments for primary data collection in this research project:

- **Individual teacher interviews**

  Individual interviews with teachers were conducted. The individual interviews gathered in-depth information about teachers' knowledge and strategies on reading comprehension. They also provided an important level of professional reflection, and increased the credibility of the classroom observation.

- **Classroom observations**

  I adopted a naturalistic approach to studying teachers' techniques of teaching reading comprehension in the classroom at several occasions. It allowed me to observe what actually happened in the classroom pertaining to reading comprehension overtime. I chose to be a non-participant observer because I did not want to have an influence over the participating teachers. I wanted to give myself a chance to observe the interactions in the classroom without influencing the teachers, giving them a chance to can act more realistically.

- **Focus group interviews**

  Focus group interviews were conducted with the six teachers who participated in the study. School B which was situated at the center was chosen as the venue where I conducted the focus group interviews. Both teachers' individual interviews and focus group interviews were conducted after school. Focus group interviewing is increasingly being used in qualitative research studies (De Vos, 1998:48). Focus group interviewing is particularly effective for obtaining information about **why** people think or feel the way they do. It was hoped that through focus group interviews, the participants would provide information-rich data relevant to the study.

- **Content analysis**

  Literature and documents on the teaching of reading comprehension were reviewed, as these documents informed me about the emphasis on the teaching of reading comprehension in the South African context. A content analysis (Mouton, 2001) carried out of South African policy documents on the teaching of reading comprehension in the Foundation Phase. The main emphasis was on the Revised National Curriculum Statement (DoE, 2002), the Foundations for Learning Campaign (FFLC, DoE, 2008), the National Reading Strategy (NRS, 2008) and *Teaching Reading in the Early Grades* (DoE, 2008). The content analysis of the policy documents assisted me in answering my research questions

1.7 Data analysis

I applied the guidelines for constructivist theory analysis as described by Charmaz (2000:509-535) in the analysis process of my study as the research paradigm. As an interpretive researcher, I used both inductive and deductive data analysis approaches. I studied the authentic data gathered through the constructivist grounded theory analysis. The data from interviews, classroom observations, focus group and policy document were transcribed. Concepts that emerged from all the data sources were identified, coded and then grouped together to form different themes and categories. This process helped me to understand the teachers' response to the teaching of reading comprehension.

1.8 Outline and organisation of the study

The study is organised into six chapters. The ensuing chapters broadly cover the following aspects:

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 sets the background to the study and outlines the features of the research project. It describes the research questions that were investigated. The paradigmatic perspective underpinning this study is discussed and contextualised. The methodology and the data collection methods are also outlined.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 discusses the literature review. This chapter sets the basis and context of the study. The teaching of reading comprehension in the international and South African context was reviewed for constructing my argument. Most of the literature I used was from international sources.

Chapter 3

In Chapter 3, a review of the literature relating to the strategies teachers use before, during and after reading a text was undertaken in order to establish a theoretical understanding of and a basis for developing research instruments.

Chapter4

Chapter 4 elaborates on the research design and methodology choices of the study. Key features of the chapter are justification for and discussions of the strengths and weaknesses of the data collection methods. Interviews, classroom observations, focus group discussions and content analysis were used in the data gathering process.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the results of the data and key themes that emerged from the data gathered through the methods discussed in Chapter 4. The results are analysed according to themes. An interpretation is offered for each theme and the themes are discussed to offer a holistic understanding of the result and the findings.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 offers recommendations for teachers and policy makers. The recommendations are discussed in detail and offer suggestions for improving the situation regarding reading comprehension.

1.9 Conclusion

Chapter 1 has given a comprehensive overview and outline of the state of reading comprehension globally, the approaches and strategies to reading comprehension facing South Africa. It positions South Africa in terms of other countries. South Africa is regarded as the leading country in Africa. Therefore, the state of reading comprehension of learners is viewed with urgency. Comprehension is foundational to the learners and later in their lives.

In Chapter 2, I review literature related reading comprehension in the national and international contexts.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW: READING COMPREHENSION IN THE INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL CONTEXTS

'Teachers have to learn how to teach reading comprehension strategies and procedures. Teachers can do this by becoming more aware of, and being prepared on the procedures and processes of good comprehension of text. Teachers need to learn how to interact with students during the reading of a text to teach them reading comprehension strategies at the right time and right place'

(National Reading Panel - NRP, 2000:4-94)

2.1   Introduction

In Chapter 1, I gave a short overview of reading comprehension to conceptualise my inquiry. In Chapter 2, I will offer a literature review, by providing a summary of empirical studies related to aspects of the teaching of reading comprehension in the international and South African contexts. I will comment on some of the current debates concerning the teaching of reading comprehension. Although a formidable body of knowledge exists on concepts like models of teaching reading comprehension, metacognitive and cognitive strategies when using reading comprehension strategies, I will identify aspects of reading comprehension relevant to my study and identify gaps in the literature. Reading strategies can be useful to help learners become proficient readers. Decoding is also one of the most important foundational skills. Learners should be able to recognise the types of relationship between written and spoken words. If teachers can be aware of this relationship, they will teach learners during reading activities. Usually, where there is a comprehension problem, at the root of that difficulty is a decoding problem. In essence, teaching learners proven decoding strategies such as teaching them sound and letters provides them with a strong foundation to ensure reading success. Therefore, if children are still struggling with readings skills in the third grade, odds are, they will be struggling the rest of their lives (Wren, 2001:12).

In the next sections, I will thus give a brief summary of empirical studies done internationally and nationally in order to highlight their importance to the teaching of

reading comprehension. I will commence with an explanation of reading acquisition as a process, as reading comprehension cannot take place without it. Thereafter, I will present a discussion of studies on this topic in the international context. This study does not attempt to measure learner performance, but investigates the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners in order to explore how teachers teach reading comprehension in their classrooms.

In this chapter, some older sources are referenced to indicate the long road that has already been travelled to improve reading comprehension in learners. The United States, for example, is the one country in the world where reading research has been done for many years. Additionally, for a variety of historical, political and theoretical reasons, American's views of comprehension of text have changed. Text is no longer regarded as a fixed object that the reader is supposed to depend on as closely as possible as he or she reads. Instead, the text is viewed as a blueprint for meaning. The reason being that according to their view no text is ever fully explicit, no text ever specifies all the relationships among events; this means that readers play a much more active and constructive role in their own comprehension (Pearson, 1985:726). An active and constructive model of comprehension has enormous implications for the role of the classroom teacher in promoting comprehension. This is because a teacher can no longer regard the text as the ultimate criterion for defining what comprehension is, but must view the text along with learners' prior knowledge, learners' strategies, the task or task given to learners and the classroom environment (Pearson, 1985:726).

2.2 The reading acquisition process

There are five stages of how reading is acquired, namely pre reader, emergent reader, early reader, developing reader, early fluent reader and independent reader (DOE, 2008:10-11):

- During the pre reader stage, the learner is expected to hold the book and turns pages correctly, recognise the beginning and the end of the page, listen and respond to stories, interpret the pictures, pretend to read loudly and silently, know some letters and show interest in print and point at them whenever they see signs and labels, and create stories out of pictures;

- The emergent readers uses pictures to tell stories, know some sounds and some letters that could make a sound, are aware that reading strategies from left to right, like to join someone who is reading, recognise some words, and read some familiar books;

- The early fluent reader knows some letter sounds and names, recognises some common words, can retell a story, uses pictures to make meaning of the written text, reads alouds when reading to self, reads word for word loudly, reads early readers and picture books with pattern, repetition and rhyme;

- The developing reader uses pictures to make reading, uses knowledge of sentence structure, uses phonics to decode words, combines words into phrases, retells the beginning, the middle and the end of the story, can also give some details of the story, use punctuation marks, reads silently, corrects himself/herself, reads books with large prints.

- During the fluent reader stage, learners move from learning to read, to reading to learn. In this stage, the reader builds up a substantial background of knowledge of spelling. The learner recognises most familiar words on sight, reads fluently at least 60 words per minute, use punctuation to enhance comprehension, stops at all full stops, and begins to understand implied meaning.

- Learners in the independent reader stage read fluently and read more advanced books. They read and understand the implied meaning of the text.

2.3   Comprehension in the international context

There are various international studies conducted on reading comprehension indicating that there can be no doubt that learners' reading comprehension performance has been a concern to teachers. In America, more than ever before, they are devoting much intellectual and emotional energy to helping learners to read and understand the texts in their schools (Pearson, 1985: 724).

For a variety of historical, political and theoretical reasons, Americans' views of comprehension of text have changed. Text is no longer regarded as a fixed object that the reader is supposed to depend on as closely as possible as he or she reads. Instead, the text is viewed as a blueprint for meaning. The reason being that

according to their view no text is ever fully explicit, no text ever specifies all the relationships among events. This means that readers play a much more active and constructive role in their own comprehension (Pearson, 1985:726).

An active and constructive model of comprehension has enormous implications for the role of the classroom teacher in promoting comprehension. This is because a teacher can no longer regard the text as the ultimate criterion for defining what comprehension is, but must view the text along with learners' prior knowledge, learners' strategies, the task or task given to learners and the classroom environment (Pearson, 1985:726).

Durkin (1979) states that the meaning of the text does not reside in the words on a page, but is constructed in the mind of the reader supports this view. That is why proficient readers actively use a set of comprehension strategies to help construct meaning as they read, while struggling readers are less aware and have less control over their comprehension process when reading. As a result, a number of strategies to increase reading comprehension were recommended by the National Reading Panel in America (NRP, 2000; Snow, 2002; Noles & Dole, 2004).In this study, I shall review these strategies as they were research-based, for example, monitoring, graphic and semantic organisers, questioning, question answering, and question generating (NRP, 2000).

Durkin (1978) did a related study in America in fourth-grade classrooms through observations. One of the goals of this study was to determine when and how often teachers are engaged in direct, explicit instruction for comprehension skills, that is, what do teachers tell learners about how they should perform the various comprehension tasks assigned on the myriad of worksheets and workbook pages.

The study revealed that very little time is spent in the classrooms on explicit reading comprehension instruction. In the seventy-five hours of reading that Durkin observed that year, teachers devoted less than 1% of the time to teaching learners how to comprehend and learn new information from reading (Durkin, 1978). It was discovered that teachers only monitored learners' comprehension by asking questions after they had finished reading a text instead of teaching specific strategies to help learners develop comprehension skills (Swanson & De La Paz,

1998). Much of the time devoted to reading instruction went into giving and checking written assignments or filling in workbook and ditto sheets, with the assumption that readers would simply discover the inherent meaning in printed texts and then transmit this knowledge.

Durkin (1981) then conducted a similar analysis of manuals to assist the teacher with basal readers, looking for instances of comprehension instruction, which the readers fell short of what Durkin calls "substantive instruction" for the teachers. Durkin (1981:515-544) further stated that "there was rarely much in the way of modelling, guided practice, or substantive feedback suggested in their classroom observation." It seemed as if there was little guidance provided for the teachers on how to teach reading comprehension.

Armbruster *et al.,* (2003:53) provide guidelines on how to teach reading comprehension strategies. They state that the reading comprehension lesson should take various steps. These include direct explanation, where the teacher explains to learners why the strategy helps comprehension and when to apply the strategy, and how to determine a strategy that is relevant to the understanding of the text. Modelling is where the teacher models, or demonstrates how to apply the strategy, usually by thinking aloud while reading the text that the learners are using. Guided practice is where the teacher guides and assists learners as they learn how and when to apply the strategy. Application is where the teacher engages learners in discussion about how they are applying the strategy and provide the necessary corrective feedback.

To support these steps, the question may arise as to how teachers can embed all the strategies. Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998), Shanahan, Callison, Carriere, Duke, Pearson, Schatschneider and Torgeson (2010), and Snowball (2005) emphasise that teachers should explain how strategies can help learners learn from the text as opposed to having them memorise the strategies. In addition, they should learn how to use the strategies effectively. This implies that teachers must first tell learners why and when they should use strategies, what strategies to use and how to apply them before starting to read the text. Learners need to be taught explicitly the use of comprehension skills when they read (Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Mistretta-Hampson & Echevaria, 1998; Pressley, 2000). It is not enough that teachers should

ask questions and supervise the completion of exercises; they need to explain to learners how expert readers make sense of the text. Teachers have to teach learners the skills that could help them to understand the texts and they need to learn how, when and where to use these skills (Pearson, Roehler, Dole & Duffy, 1992).

Tregenza and Lewis (2008) conducted a yearlong classroom observations action research project. The study was on teaching reading explicitly, and on how to use and reflect on a range of active comprehension strategies. During their classroom observations, the study showed the following: reading comprehension strategies can be taught and by doing, to help and build the learner's reading comprehension. Learners reusing strategies until they become familiar may be helpful in developing fluency and autonomy in using such strategies. The explicit teaching of reading comprehension strategies into shared and guided reading sessions should be part of the whole-school approach to learning to read (Tregenza & Lewis, 2008).

Pressley *et al.,* (1998) did another study related to my research project. The study examined reading instruction in 10 fourth-grade and fifth-grade classrooms. The study revealed that there was little comprehension instruction and an emphasis on assessing comprehension, but not on the teaching of reading comprehension strategies. Taylor, Peterson, Pearson and Rodriguez (2000) had similar findings when they observed literacy instruction in 88 classrooms with Grades 1 to 4. Pearson and Duke (2002) assert that many primary-grade teachers have not emphasised comprehension instruction in their curriculum. In the same vein, during their classroom observations, the RAND Reading Study Group (2002) executed in America, revealed little evidence of comprehension instruction in the primary grades.

In their study of the implementation and effects of explicit reading comprehension instruction in fifth-grade classrooms, Andreassen and Braten (2010:520) found that elementary school teachers in America, as well as in Europe, still seem to be unsure about how to teach reading comprehension. Consequently, these teachers often test rather than teach comprehension by just concentrating on asking learners questions about text content after reading. In the United States, according to the research review in comprehension instruction conducted by Butler *et al.*(2010), one

learner in four lacks basic grade-level reading skills in public schools' eighth grades. In addition, these learners do not understand grade-appropriate materials (Butler *et al.,* 2010).

Evidence from the 1996 National English Literacy Survey in Australia indicated that the proportion of year three and five learners in their schools that did not meet the minimum performance standards of reading required for effective participation in further schooling was estimated to be as high as 27% at year three and 29% at year five (Masters & Forster, 1997). In 2003, the percentages of Australian learners not achieving the minimum national benchmarks for reading were 8% (year three) and 11% (year five and seven). In Australia, according to Lyon (2003), there is evidence from the National Center for Educational Statistics that 38% of fourth graders (nine year olds) nationally cannot read at a basic level, and cannot read and understand a short paragraph similar to that in a children's storybook. A similar situation exists in South Africa, as reported by the PIRLS (2006) report.

In Canada, according to results from yearly provincial assessments conducted by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), the educational system has not prepared all learners for a life in a literacy-rich society. For instance, the results from the May 2002 tests show that 50% of the provinces' Grade 3 learners scored below grade-level expectancy in reading (Hamilton Wentworth District School Board Results, 2004). This relates to the South African context as revealed by the PIRLS (2006) report. In addition, according to Jamieson (2009), in Canada many student teachers complete their university teacher preparation programmes without learning the basic scientific principles behind the development of reading skills and effective reading instruction. As a result, the substantial body of knowledge on how to teach children to read, how to identify children who have failed to acquire specific reading skills, and how to intervene effectively is not being applied in many Canadian classrooms (Jamieson, 2009:6).

Another study was done regarding reading comprehension in Argentina with learners in the last year of the primary grade. Learners took part in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2000). The results revealed that learner performance was relatively at a very low level. Studies showed that 70% of the individuals achieved under the international average and that almost 54% of the

students who were assessed had only mastered the most general aspects of reading competence.

However, there are countries that are doing very well in reading literacy in Grade 3 and across all grades. Finland scrapped its old education system, which placed learners into either vocational or academic tracks at the end of the fourth grade and developed a system of free public education from Grade 1 to Grade 9.In 2003, Finland ranked first among 40 industrialised nations in reading literacy. According to PISA (2006), Finland also boasts the smallest gap between its best and weakest learners, and the second smallest difference amongst individual schools' performance. In order to become a teacher across all grades, the requirement was at least a Master's degree. This means that there is emphasis on qualifications for teachers in Finland. Another important aspect in Finland's education system, which Moore (2003) highlighted, was that classes were small, averaging 20 to 25 learners. This result is an indication that there is a need for urgent attention in teaching reading comprehension.

Singapore also participated in the PIRLS study of 2001 for the purpose of international comparison of reading skills. The results ranked Singapore 15th out of 45 countries. Five years later, in 2006, Singapore once more participated in the PIRLS study. The results then ranked Singapore as one of the three top performing countries out of 45 countries. Factors that contributed to the positive results include aspects such as high percentage of learners who had pre-school education, the increasing proportion of students who used English at home, well-resourced schools, an English language syllabus with strong emphasis on language use, a nationwide professional development oriented towards teaching within the syllabus (Singapore Government, 2007). Based on the above results from PIRLS, Wong (2006; 2007) conducted a study in thirteen Grade 3 classrooms in Singapore. The aim of the study was to find out more about the teaching of reading. Pedagogical practices in the teaching of reading lessons in the third grade were examined, focusing on what was happening in reading lessons that might account for Singapore's positive results.

The study by Wong (2006; 2007) revealed that teachers used an Initiation-Response Evaluation (IRE) pattern for classroom interactions. The IRE pattern is a

teacher-led, three-part sequence that begins with the teacher asking a learner a question or introducing a topic to find out whether the learner knows the answer (Hall & Walsh, 2002). In the IRE pattern the learner's answer is evaluated by the teacher, who makes a brief reply such as 'good' or 'no, that is not right' (Hall & Walsh, 2002). According to Wong (2006), there was an emphasis on answering worksheet questions, with little if any meaningful, authentic talk. Concerning comprehension, Wong (2006) found that absent from teacher led lessons was an in-depth discussion of audience, authorship, or meaning beyond the most basic level. Evidently, the picture revealed by the studies conducted in different countries indicates that there can be no doubt that learners' reading comprehension performance is a concern.

It is clear that there are different educational situations in different countries regarding the teaching of reading comprehension. There are countries that are doing very well in teaching reading comprehension and those that are in similar situations as in South Africa. In every situation, there are lessons to be learnt. From the countries with very low score, we gain information. Those that are doing well can become our model – we can learn from them. We can take the best and adapt it to our own context to address our problems. In the context of the study, this information can help teachers to become more informed about the teaching of reading comprehension. In the next section, I discuss reading comprehension in the South African context.

2.4 South African policies and the teaching of reading comprehension

I examined a number of empirical studies and reports on reading comprehension related to primary grades in the South African context. Few studies have focused on measuring learner performance in reading their mother tongue (L1) and there is little research on the topic of the teaching of reading comprehension, especially in the African languages. International and national studies, which focused on systemic evaluation, have shown that South African learners are below international standards in both mathematics and literacy. With regard to reading, SACMEQ 11 (2004) found that the overall reading level of Grade 6 learners in South Africa to be at level 3, which is referred to as basic reading. PIRLS (2006) also showed that South African Grade 4 and 5 learners performed second below the international

mean of 500 points at 302 points. Also, the South African Department of Education's systemic evaluation (2007) showed that grade achievement scores for literacy were 36%, which is an indication that large numbers of South African learners cannot understand what they are reading.

According to The Sunday Times (2000:1), South African learners were once referred to as the 'dunces of Africa.' This was because of the findings of the comparative study on literacy and numeracy rates of primary school learners that was conducted in 12 countries in Africa. These results are an indicator of poor performance by South African learners as compared with their African peers on both literacy and numeracy measures. Another study related to my study was the 2001 audit undertaken by the South African National Department of Education (The Star, 2008:7) to assess literacy levels across the nine provinces of the country. The survey showed that only 38% of Grade 3 learners could read at grade level in their mother tongue. This implies that reading comprehension is indeed a challenge to teachers.

In 2002, a school-based report (DoE, 2002) was published on research done on learner performance in literacy. The research was commissioned by the Western Cape Education Department. It conducted standardised literacy and numeracy tests for Grade 3 (DoE, 2002).The study revealed a low level of reading performance amongst learners.

In their study, Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1997) raised the concern that quite often the teacher makes no effort to treat the comprehension text as a communication in which learners can develop the strategies that will enable them to make sense of comprehension text as communication. According to them, a typical reading comprehension lesson may follow the following steps:

- The teacher may explain or teach the vocabulary and then read the text aloud;
- The learners may then read the text silently alone;
- The teachers may go through the set question with the learners who may respond orally or by imitating and thereafter answers are checked.

However, Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1997:167) are against this method of reading and point out that the method has many weaknesses. Examples of these are that the comprehension passage may not be a text that has been written primarily for its communicative value, but it might have been written to exemplify a single grammatical structure, and therefore may not be suitable for effective reading comprehension. This means that the question can be answered using the exact words of the passage, whereby the learners bypass any meaningful comprehension and merely depend on recognition of linguistic and lexical items that are common to other questions.

According to Cooper (2000), Duke and Pearson (2002), Marzano, Pickering and Pallack (2001) and Tompkins (2001), the reading comprehension lesson may follow various steps, namely:

- Explanation, where the teachers explain to learners why the strategy helps comprehension;
- Modelling, where the teacher models or demonstrate how to apply the strategy, usually by thinking aloud while reading a text;
- Guided practice, where the teacher guides and assists learners as they learn how and when to apply the strategy;
- Application, where the teacher helps learners to practise the strategy until they can apply it independently.

The 2007 PIRLS study relates closely to my topic as Tshivenda- speaking learners were also included in PIRLS. This study makes an important contribution as it describes trends and international comparisons for literacy performance. It started in 2001 and included three countries, which increased to 40 countries in 2006 (PIRLS, 2007).Because of the importance of PIRLS to my study, it is appropriate to give a synopsis of the PIRLS study. The PIRLS study was a quantitative research with the aim of describing trends and international comparisons for the following:

- The reading achievement of Grade 4 learners;
- Learners' competencies in relation to goals and standards for reading education;
- The impact of the home environment and how parents foster reading literacy;

- The organisation of time and reading materials for learning to read in schools;
- Curriculum and classroom approaches to reading instruction.

Campbell, Kelly, Mullis and Sainsbury (2001), Mullis, Martin, Gonzalez and Kennedy (2003), and Mullis, Kennedy, Martin and Sainsbury (2004)state that PIRLS focuses on three aspects of reading literacy, namely processes of comparison, purposes of reading and reading behaviours and attitudes. The PIRLS study revealed that South Africa with its vast resources scored the worst out of 40 countries that took part in the study. Almost 80% of South African primary school learners did not reach the lowest benchmark. Overall scores place South Africa at the bottom of the list for reading achievement. South African learners performed better in informational texts (316 points) than literacy texts (299 points). The study showed that the relative difference between the two scores was one of the highest of all countries. Concerning reading comprehension processes, learners achieved a score of 307 in retrieving and making straightforward inferences; and this placed South African learners among the poorest performers. This study further indicated that 86-96% of children who speak an African language did not reach the lowest benchmark. It is important to note that the low marks were not caused by inadequate knowledge of English, since the tests were carried out in all 11 official languages. This might indicate that the problem in South Africa is a reading problem, not specifically a language problem.

According to Van Staden and Howie (2008), the importance of the PIRLS study is to establish nationwide empirical data that can be used to inform decisions on curriculum and language policy. The concern from this international study was that South African learners cannot read and write, and are unable to execute the tasks that demonstrate key skills associated with literacy and numeracy. However, many researchers indicated that the PIRLS study did not give a clear explanation of how young children are taught to read and comprehend the text and what is needed to improve the reading literacy of young children in South Africa. According to Long and Zimmerman (2008), the PIRLS 2006 study only focused on the implementation of the reading literacy curriculum in the Foundation Phase and not on the teaching thereof. This implies that there are a high number of learners without basic reading skills and strategies to cope with academic tasks in schools. In an analysis per

language the PIRLS study revealed that Tshivenda learners also fell below the international mean of 560 on reading literacy. The results for learner performance in the National Systemic Evaluation (NSE) were appalling. The overall result for Grade 3 learners was a score of 54% in the literacy test. The study showed that, with regards to reading, all provinces scored less than 50%, except KwaZulu-Natal.

In addition, NSE (2010) found that learners performed better in multiple-choice questions as opposed to free-response questions. According to the study, the results were an indication that learners struggled to produce their own written answers. The study identified contributory factors, such as teachers' lack of training in the fundamental theories of child development, learning language acquisition schema formation and practical methodology involved in teaching reading successfully, lack of communicative language teaching; little or no personal experience of reading, lack of the ability to model literacy activities or to create a print-rich environment that will motivate the learners to value reading; and lack of textbooks in vernacular languages. In the same vein, Scheepers (2008) confirms that there is a dearth of both fiction and nonfiction titles published in indigenous languages and, as a result, learners have limited opportunities to develop vocabulary in their home language.

Another study related closely to my research project is on the evaluation of Grade 3 learners conducted across the country by the Department of Education (DoE, 2008). It revealed that most of the learners in the primary grades could not read and that only 36% of Grade 3 learners could read or count. Concerning literacy, the lowest ranking province was Limpopo, which scored only 29%. Against this background, the then Minister of Education stated that "we are falling short of our target of 50% mean performance in the country. In my view, this is just not good enough. Our learners deserve more and are capable to achieve much more" (DoE, 2008).

The significance this research has for my study is the finding that Limpopo scored only 29% in literacy. Some of the reasons given for low reading and counting were associated with language problems as the study regarded it as invalid that English and Afrikaans learners scored higher than those who learnt in indigenous languages. In addition, the study of Reeves *et al*., (2008: xx) revealed that teachers

were uncertain about how to approach the teaching of reading and writing and what strategies to use when teaching reading. Most teachers say they have received little or no specialised practical theory on how to teach reading and writing from the Limpopo DoE.

According to The Times, "literacy and numeracy test scores are low by African and global standards" (13 June 2011:8). Recently, ANA (2010) showed that Grade 3 achievement scores for literacy stood at 36%. In the ANA study, Mpumalanga and Limpopo fall at the bottom on the list (The Times, 29June2011:5). Based on the results the Minister of Basic Education confirmed that the results were an indication that there had been an under-emphasis on the development of the basic skills of reading and that the education sector needed to focus more on its core functions of quality learning and teaching in schools. This implies that up to now, despite the intervention strategies, South African learners still cannot read and understand what they are reading. In the following sections, I shall describe the intervention strategies which were implemented by the DoE to address reading instruction and reading comprehension.

It is clear that South African learners' level of reading comprehension is very low and needs urgent attention. It seems to be good to have studies, surveys and annual national assessments as a country to gauge our learner performances and to know where we are as a country. There is however, a need for change in the classroom so that learners can enjoy reading and construct meaning from the text. Within the context of my study, the findings from the various studies and national assessment will assist me in recognising the importance and seriousness of my topic of enquiry.

2.5   The policies and the teaching of reading comprehension

International policies provide insights into what is happening in other countries regarding the teaching of reading comprehension. In the South African context there are many policies designed to address reading in the Foundation Phase.

In this section, I elaborate on the relevant South African policy documents as recommended for the primary grades. With the first South African democratic

elections in 1994, various changes in the education system of South Africa came to the fore. These changes brought about the South African Schools Act of 1996 (DoE,1996), which indicates that all schools should be self-governing. The current South African curriculum for teaching reading in Grade 3, which was introduced in 2002, is guided by various documents. Two policies were launched, namely the Language-in-Education policy and the Norms and Standards regarding Language Policy. According to the Department of Education (DoE, 2002) the Language-in-Education policy document should be seen as a continuous process. Concerning the curriculum, the constitution was the main basis of the transformation and development of the curriculum. The government adopted a multilingual language policy that recognises11 languages as official, Tshivenda included. The constitution of South Africa recommended that the home language should be used for teaching where possible in the Foundation Phase, in which learners learn to read and write. The South African situation is not exceptional. There are other countries that have experienced similar problems, for example, in Namibia, the MEC recommended that all learning in the early stages, wherever possible, the mother tongue should be through medium of instruction as the MEC (1993:22) expresses the importance of mother tongue as follows:

> All learning in the early stages is done best in the mother tongue, and this also provides the best foundation for later learning in another language medium. Therefore, wherever possible, the medium of instruction must be the mother tongue or the familial local language.

This statement shows that South Africa and Namibia share the same experiences and the view that the mother tongue is foundational for learning. The learner can proceed to Level 2 after he/she has gained basic communication in the mother tongue.

2.5.1   The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS)

To improve the quality of teaching the National Curriculum Statement was later revised to be the Revised National Curriculum Statement (DoE, 2002). With regard to reading comprehension strategies the NCS for Home language (2002) stated that teaching strategies must enable the learner to "read texts alone, and uses a variety of strategies to make meaning."With regards to reading comprehension the RNCS

(DoE, 2002:72) Learning Outcome 3: reading and viewing requires learners in the following: "The learners will be able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional contexts."

Therefore, the learner must "read a printed text fluently with understanding" (DoE, 2002). More emphasis was placed on communicative language and literacy teaching (Prinsloo & Janks, 2002) and more teaching time was allocated to language and mathematics.

When analysing the critical outcomes, it became clear that reading comprehension remains the critical aspect throughout the curriculum, because learners could collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information, communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes. Therefore, teachers must be effectively taught how to teach reading comprehension. According to the DoE (2002), the critical outcomes are implemented through the learning outcomes as illustrated by the language policy and the development of learning programmes in the Foundation Phase. The reading comprehension skills are emphasised as learners are expected to read various texts with understanding and to use this information in various situations. However, there seem to be no clear guidelines for teachers as to how reading comprehension should be taught in schools, which strategies to use before, during and after reading the text. Mankveld and Pepler (2004) confirms that the RNCS only stresses the importance of language development especially in the primary grades, but does not provide guidelines on how to teach and facilitate literacy acquisition at this level. This is an indication that the teacher envisaged by the policy is not the teacher that is currently in the classrooms.

2.5.2   The National Curriculum Statement (NCS)

From 2006 the RNCS was again revised and renamed the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (DoE, 2006).The NCS was introduced in an attempt to improve the teaching of reading. It provided more time for the teaching of reading and gave guidance on a balanced approach to the teaching of literacy. The NCS contains the learning programmes, work schedule, lesson plans and the assessment guidelines for the specific subjects. The outcomes describe the knowledge, skills and values

that learners should acquire and demonstrate during the learning process. With regard to languages, the learning outcomes are clearly specified, namely, listening, speaking, reading and viewing, writing thinking and reasoning, including language structure and use. Each of the learning outcomes has criteria that collectively describe what a learner should know and be able to demonstrate. For this study Learning Outcome 3, reading and viewing, is applicable and it states: "The learner is able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts" (DoE, 2002: 72).

The Learning Outcomes describe what knowledge, skills and values learners should achieved at the end of the phase and is achieved through the assessment standards. In order for us to know that learners have achieved Learning Outcome 3, reading and viewing, the assessment standards states that the learners are able to:

- Use visual cues to make meaning;

- Make meaning of written text;

- Read text alone and use a variety of strategies to make meaning;

- Consolidate phonic knowledge;

- Read for information and enjoyment.

However, it seems as if the abovementioned learning outcomes and assessment standards have not been achieved. PIRLS (2006) revealed that learners are developing reading comprehension at a very slow pace. According to Scheepers (2008:33), very little explicit attention is given to vocabulary acquisition in schools and little attention is paid to meaning. This was supported by the study conducted in Limpopo by Reeves *et al.,* (2008), which also indicated a low level of reading amongst the learners.

According to JET Education Services (2010), the principal weakness identified in the NCS is the lack of specificity and example. While curriculum documents are designed to give broad guidelines, JET Education Services (2010) indicates that in South Africa teachers have been asked to develop a learning programme based on the NCS. Due to the poor qualifications of many teachers, the majority have not been able to do this successfully. The crippling result has been a lack of logical progression of teaching and learning in schools that need it most. Another problem is the interpretation of the language in education policy and implementation of the

NCS. Many learners are taught and assessed against the English first additional language curriculum in the Foundation Phase and are expected to develop English home language proficiency overnight as they move into the Intermediate Phase. Because of the problems identified in the NCS, the DoE introduced different campaigns to improve literacy and the teaching of reading as part of the governmental response to low performance of learners in schools.

2.5.3   Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS)

In 2012, the new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) will be implemented in the Foundation Phase (Department of Basic Education (DBE)). It is important to note that the CAPS is a refinement of the NCS. However, to reach the outcomes is not spelled out. In this document, there are no clear guidelines for the African language teacher about reading comprehension strategies, which strategies to use before, during and after reading the text. The CAPS for the Foundation Phase divides the requirements for reading into shared reading, group reading, paired and independent reading and phonics. Concerning comprehension, the CAPS (2012) only explains to the teacher that during the reading lessons the teacher must engage the learners in a range of thinking and questioning activities. The CAPS explains that the teacher may use various ways to start questions that will help to develop lower-order and higher-order comprehension skills, namely literal comprehension, reorganisation, inferential, evaluation and appreciation. Teachers are expected to model reading, and work on metacognitive skills to teach learners to monitor themselves when reading. This could bring an improvement in the teaching of reading comprehension. However, there are no clear explanations of the strategies which teachers must use to develop the metacognitive skills, when to use each strategy (before, during and/or after reading) and the reason for using it. The question that one may be tempted to ask is: Will the CAPS provide Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking teachers with guidelines and relevant examples that they can use to improve the teaching of reading comprehension?

2.5.4   The Foundations for Learning Campaign (FFLC)

The FFLC, as the first intervention, was launched by the then Minister of Education in 2007(DoE, 2008). The aim was to improve learners' performance in the area of

literacy and numeracy amongst Foundation Phase learners. However, JET Education Services (2010) state that the foundations for learning should offer more guidelines that are specific to teachers. Four documents were produced that include directives regarding the use of particular methodologies when teaching literacy, designing the timetable, resourcing the classroom and assessing learners, and documents on the teaching of reading in the early grades, assessment framework books, and quarterly assessment activities. Assessment activities for literacy and numeracy Grades 1-3 including lessons were made available. According to JET Education Services (2010), the key disadvantage of the campaign was the overwhelming number of documents the teachers had to coordinate to plan instruction. This process was further hampered by a lack of documents in languages other than English, new terminology, a disjuncture between some milestones and the NCS as well as poor phonics progression.

2.5.5   Teaching Reading in the Early Grades

A teachers' handbook, *Teaching Reading in the Early Grades* by the DoE (2008) was the second intervention strategy used to meet the crisis of reading amongst the learners as part of the Foundation for learning project. The handbook covers various aspects of reading: characteristics of skilled readers, the stages of reading development, phonemic awareness, word recognition (phonics and sight words), comprehension, vocabulary and fluency. The teacher is required to involve learners in shared reading, guided reading, reading aloud and independent reading. Although I deal with learning theories in Chapter 3, I refer to their relevancy when describing the teaching of reading comprehension in the early grades, for example, learning theories are critical as I regard them as foundational for any teaching profession. In their classrooms, teachers work with different learners and they do not learn at the same pace. It is important for the teachers to know these learning theories in order to help learners. There are several approaches to teaching reading comprehension such as shared reading and guided reading. During shared reading, guided reading, independent reading and read-aloud sessions, the teacher can teach learners comprehension strategies and how to apply them (Taylor, Pearson, Peterson & Rodriguez, 2002; Van Keer, 2004, Trogenza & Lewis, 2009).

2.5.5.1 Shared reading

In a shared reading session, the teacher reads with the class or group using a large storybook that has big, bold print (DoE, 2008). Learners share the reading task with the teacher and gradually learners take over the task of reading (DoE, 2008).The purpose of shared reading is explained as follows: The teacher models reading strategies to learners using Big Books and addressing specific skills in reading.

During the lesson, the teacher leads a discussion of the cover and some of the illustrations in the book to place the text within the context of learners' prior knowledge, and encourages learners to predict what will happen in the story. The teacher reads using a pointer to point at the words as she/he reads. After reading, the teacher checks the learners' understanding of the text through discussion or questions.

The benefits of shared reading are that the teacher models different reading comprehension strategies for the learners. The planned activities should cater for different learners' abilities by allowing them to join in wherever they can and the environment must be non-threatening for learners to experience success. During shared reading the teacher is expected to teach learners while they read certain kinds of texts, how they read the text, the expression and intonation (tone of voice) suited to the text, how to respond to the text, the text level, word level or sentence level features in the text and model.

The teacher is expected to teach a variety of reading strategies and promote comprehension through differentiated questioning and discussion (DoE, 2008).

2.5.5.2 Group guided reading

Group guided reading is regarded as one of the key components of a balanced language programme (Hornsby, 2000; Cunningham & Alington, 1999; Pressley, 2002) and is a teacher-directed activity (DoE, 2008). It involves using carefully-selected books at the learners' instructional level. In group guided sessions, the learners can be grouped according to their reading abilities. The benefits are that it gives the teacher the opportunity to observe reading behaviours, identify areas of

need and allow learners to develop more independence and confidence as they practice and consolidate reading behaviours and skills. During the process, the role of the teacher is to bring learners to a higher level by demonstrating, modelling, explaining and encouraging learners during reading (Opitz & Ford, 2001).

The steps of the guided reading can be linked to the theory of Bruner's scaffolding process leading to independence. Teachers prepare ahead of time. Before reading starts, the teacher has to spend some time talking about comprehension strategies, introducing difficult words that are contained in the text and assisting individual learners to practice strategies for comprehending the text (Fountas & Pinnel, 2001). It provides opportunities for the teacher to integrate learners' growing knowledge of the conventions of print, letter-sound relationships and other foundational skills in context.

During guided reading, learners are exposed to reading aloud and shared reading. Simultaneously, the teacher is able to teach learners how to construct meaning from the text by using strategies to self-pace, self-direct and self-monitor under the teacher's guidance. This kind of support is linked to Vygotsky's (1978; 1986) view that learners learn more as they get support from knowledgeable others.

The South African government regards guided reading as the solution to the low level of literacy. However, according to a study on an evaluation of guided reading in three primary schools in the Western Cape, Kruizinga (2010) states that teachers had a superficial understanding of guided reading and that it was difficult for teachers to implement the steps for guided reading in their classrooms. However, the purpose of guided reading is to assist learners to become independent readers who can read the text for enjoyment and be able to get the meaning from the text.

2.5.5.3 Independent reading

Independent reading is important in reading comprehension. During this activity, learners learn to apply the comprehension strategies independently that they were taught during guided reading (Biddulph, 2000).

According to the DoE (2008), independent reading is a purposeful planned activity. The teacher has a structured daily time during which learners associate themselves with books. Learners choose their own books according to their own interest and ability. However, learners should be guided to choose the texts that they can read with a high degree of success.

During this session, the teacher should listen, observe and gather information about learners' reading behaviour. Learners are able to listen to themselves as they read and cross-check while they practice the strategies (Fountas & Pinnell, 1999). Fountas and Pinnell (1996) and Zimmerman (1998) support the view that learners learn best when they are responsible for their own learning.

The goal of teaching reading comprehension strategies is for the learners to become self-managed readers who can take over the process themselves. However, Taberski (2000) argued that during independent reading, frustrated learners do not sustain their reading long enough to practice the skill. This is because they are unable to decode the words and do not understand the text. Therefore, independent reading could become a meaningless exercise.

2.5.5.4 Reading aloud

Reading aloud is another approach that can have a positive effect on the development of reading comprehension (Lane & Wright, 2007). Read-aloud times should be a well-planned activity and not impromptu (Sipe, 2008). The teacher should be well-prepared, read to the whole class or to a small group, using material that is at the listening comprehension level of the learners (Teale, 2003). Reading aloud is regarded as the best motivator for instilling the desire to read in learners. In read-aloud sessions, the teacher reads to the whole class or to a small group using material that is at listening comprehension level of the learners.

The benefit of this approach to the learners is that it helps them to develop a love of literature, motivates them to read various kinds of texts on their own and increases their vocabulary (Lane & Wright, 2007). The speaking skills of the learners are enhanced by hearing good pronunciation and language use, as well as their

thinking skills through their comprehension of the text and experience with cause and effect including logical sequencing.

According to the DoE (2008), reading aloud should occur every day to stimulate learners' interest in the written text. Several key activities take place before, during and after reading. With regard to the teaching of reading comprehension, the DoE (2008) emphasised that teachers should keep a close check on learners to ensure that they are not barking at print, but reading with understanding. They must also be able to interpret what they read in various situations. Involving learners interactively while reading aloud help to improve comprehension. The after-reading discussions encourage learners to link the story events to their personal experiences (Sipe, 2008).

The teachers' handbook, *Teaching Reading in Early Grades,* briefly explains to the teacher how to develop comprehension, but does not explain how comprehension should be taught and which strategies to use before, during and after reading in a Home Language classroom. Therefore, there are no clear guidelines in the teachers' handbook about the teaching of reading comprehension to Tshivenda-speaking learners. Heugh (2005) concurs, stating that "while the teachers' handbook for teaching reading in English has been developed and widely distributed across South Africa schools, the DoE has still not published one handbook for teaching reading in any other African languages." Therefore, there is a need for guidelines to be developed to assist the African languages teachers in the languages they understand and with examples that they can use in their teaching.

2.6   The National Reading Strategy (NRS)

The National Reading Strategy (NRS) was the third intervention strategy for promoting reading in South African primary schools (DoE, 2008). The vision of the NRS was that every South African learner would be a fluent reader who reads to learn and reads for enjoyment and achievement. The purpose of the NRS was to put reading firmly on the school agenda. It was meant to clarify and simplify curriculum expectations. Furthermore, it was meant to promote reading across the curriculum and to affirm and advance the use of all languages. This process will encourage reading for enjoyment and to ensure that not only teachers, learners and

parents, understand the role of improving and promoting reading but also the broader community.

However, according to the DoE (2008), there were many challenges with regard to the implementation of the NRS, namely teacher competency, a lack of libraries, teacher conditions, the print environment, language issues and inclusive education. In addition, the NRS states the following (DoE, 2008:8):

> Many teachers in South Africa have an underdeveloped understanding of teaching literacy, reading and writing. Many teachers simply don't know how to teach reading. Too often teachers know only one method of teaching reading which may not suit the learning style of all learners.

Therefore, teachers are expected to be competent to teach reading comprehension and be able to create an atmosphere which is conducive for reading to the learners. Because teachers have not been explicitly trained to teach reading, it is difficult for them to assist learners.

2.7   Reading Comprehension in the Primary Grades

Comprehension is the goal of reading and listening. We do it every day, often without being aware that we are doing it. However, the reader needs comprehension strategies in order to accomplish the task of reading most effectively, efficiently and meaningfully. Reading comprehension seems to be a complex process. Successful comprehension enables readers to acquire information, to experience and be aware of other worlds, to communicate successfully and to achieve academic success.

Comprehension strategies are very important in reading. They reflect a purposeful, intentional, on-going, and adaptable plan, procedure, or process to improve reading performance, because without it, learners have virtually no means to increase the sophistication of their reading (Philips, Norris & Vavra, 2007). According to Shanahan (2006:28), comprehension strategies are intentional actions that a reader can take to increase their chances of understanding or remembering the information in a text. Comprehension strategies are important in that they provide the reader with knowledge of how to use the strategies appropriately and understand the text

(NRP, 2000; Pressley *et al.,* 1998; Shanahan *et al.,* 2010). This implies that teaching reading comprehension is basic for comprehension.

As far as practical application is concerned, there are cognitive and metacognitive strategies. According to Flavell (1976:232), metacognition means awareness of one's thought processes in the act of carrying them out. The human being then uses this awareness to control him/herself. Metacognition makes the person aware of the way in which he/she is thinking. Good readers use metacognition strategies to think about and have control over their reading, for example, before reading, they might clarify their purpose for reading and preview the text. During reading, they might monitor their understanding, adjusting their reading speed to fit the difficulty of the text and fixing up any comprehension problems they have. After reading, they check their understanding of what they read (Beck, McKeown, Hamilton& Kucan*, 2003).

Metacognitive strategies are higher-order executive tactics that entail planning for learning, monitoring, identifying and remedying causes of comprehension failure or evaluating the successes of a learning activity, that is, the strategies of self-planning, self-monitoring, self-regulating, self-questioning and self-reflecting (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Zimmerman,1998). Metacognitive strategies involve planning, monitoring and evaluating before, during and after any thinking act such as reading comprehension.

Cognitive strategies involve direct interaction with the text and contribute to facilitating comprehension, and operate directly on incoming information, manipulating it in ways that enhance learning (Anastasiou & Griva, 2009:284). Cognitive strategies include the strategies of underlining, using titles, using dictionary, writing down, guessing from the context, imagery, activating prior knowledge, summarising, using linguistic clues, using text markers, skipping the difficult parts and repeating phrases (Anastasiou & Griva, 2009:284).Good readers employ different cognitive and metacognitive strategies before, during and after reading a text. Given the complexity of comprehension, it seems likely that learners may fail to understand what they have read for a variety of reasons; hence, teaching reading is critical. Therefore, comprehension strategies are needed if one is to accomplish the task of teaching reading comprehension.

To understand written text, learners need to decode printed words and access their meanings. The question is whether teachers are doing enough to help learners to read, evaluate information and use it in their daily lives, and when the teaching of reading comprehension should begin. Should it begin when children are still very young, when they are older or even in the adolescent years? I believe that we must start in the early childhood years. In fact, teaching reading comprehension should be the goal of the primary grades. I believe that by the time learners are in Grade 3, they should be able to read the text and grasp its meaning, and be able to use the information in other situations in their lives. Zimmerman (1998) is of the opinion that learners at all levels are significantly influenced by the type of opportunities they are given. If they are given tasks that make them think, and thinking is mediated, they will do so, but if they are not given tasks in which they can practice any comprehension strategies then they will not do so. I believe that the earlier we start teaching learners comprehension strategies, the better.

The alternative, that is, not teaching comprehension strategies, would be to believe that comprehension and thought processes are a function area of heredity and are fixed when the child is born. Cognition is a function of both heredity and environment, and environmental factors can be manipulated to influence comprehension. In this regard, if comprehension strategies are really patterns of behaviour, then we might expect that practice would still have a positive effect on learners. Practice will lead to competence in intellectual functions, some of which will take place automatically in appropriate contexts. This does not mean that there is nothing more that affects the development of reading comprehension, but it means that practising strategies is the most important aspect.

Children adapt themselves to their environment through assimilation and accommodation (Piaget, 1950; 1953). As they do this, they learn to think and comprehend because they are striving to maintain a state of equilibrium between themselves and the environment. Although Piaget is not really trying to prove that comprehension can be taught, his theory seems to support it, because it implies that cognition can develop by interacting with the environment. This leads me to the assumption that if the environment is manipulated with the aim of improving the learner's thinking, then comprehension can be taught and learnt; and then comprehension strategies can be taught.

Relating to Piaget's theory, my insight is that teaching reading comprehension evolves through stages, meaning that there may be certain comprehension strategies that can be taught at Grade 3 and some that cannot, due to the maturational levels of these learners. However, cognitive psychologists have found that young children can perform cognitive tasks that were originally regarded as being too advanced for them and, therefore, can be taught comprehension strategies that were supposedly too advanced for them, for example, it has been found that children can understand cause and effect more than Piaget had given them credit for. Different authors on the subject concur that reading comprehension can be taught to Grade 3, as long as they are given suitable tasks and appropriate information and mediation (NRP, 2000).

2.8 Reading comprehension strategies that can be taught to Grade 3 learners

Comprehension strategies are important in the lives of learners. Philips, Norris and Vavra (2007) and Kirby (2007) confirm that without them, learners have virtually no means of increasing the sophistication of reading. Teachers need to employ research-based strategies in the classroom because they have scientific evidence of success stories. Comprehension is not just something that just happens it needs to be taught. According to Shanahan (2006:31), drilling and repetition will not help in the teaching of reading comprehension. However, sound explanation of comprehension strategies and their importance is central.

It is thus believed that training teachers in how to teach reading comprehension remains an important aspect. Teachers need knowledge and skills to monitor learners' comprehension and teach learners comprehension strategies. That means before reading, the teacher carries the responsibility by providing a demonstration. According to Shanahan (2006:31), the demonstration must include a clear explanation of the strategy, a description of how and when to use it, and lastly an explanation of why it is useful. This relates to the theory of Vygotsky (1987), that for the child to develop to a stage where they can learn, they have to be in the company of a role model. The most important people in the context of this study are the teachers. If they do not serve as positive role models, the learner will never develop and become able to read and understand the text. During shared reading,

group guided reading, independent reading and reading aloud, the teacher must use various strategies for example summarising, story structure to teach reading comprehension.

From the discussions above, there seems to be a wealth of research evidence showing that reading comprehension can be improved by teaching learners comprehension strategies. According to Lenz (2005:2) and Armbruster *et al.,* *(*2003:45-57), it would be appropriate and easier for teachers to follow the three ways of organising comprehension strategies and to think about strategies that one might use, before reading (phase 1), during reading (phase 2) and after reading (phase 3). This is because reading comprehension is a process, and as such, it has various stages at which different tasks need to be performed.

The purpose of the before-reading strategies is to activate prior knowledge for text comprehension. Before reading, learners learn new information by connecting it to what they already know about a topic and the structure of a text (Pressley *et al.,* 1998).

During reading comprehension, learners read books and stories from the past, and use language to write their own bibliography. Learners should be able to read with understanding, and where difficulties occur, be able to initiate repair strategies if comprehension breakdown is detected. During reading comprehension, learners read nonfiction stories, big books with various topics in, for example, nature, explaining simple facts, simple weather forecasts, and stories about the sun and moon. Learners activate prior knowledge, make connections among important ideas, construct and test hypotheses, paraphrase key points, and try to resolve any comprehension difficulties that may arise (Pressley *et al.,* 1997).

After-reading helps learners to clarify any unclear meaning and where learners maybe required answering questions in writing – either comprehension questions at the end of a chapter or questions handed out by the teacher.

In this study, I employed the view that reading comprehension is a cognitive process that involves a deliberate, strategic problem-solving action of the reader as he or she engages with a text. In this process, readers use their prior knowledge,

reading comprehension strategies, knowledge of language and print, experience and perceived purpose of reading. From the theoretical point of view, if the knowledgeable teacher actively involves learners, the teaching of reading comprehension can increase the chances of understanding or remembering the information in a text. The teacher's knowledge of teaching comprehension strategies and willingness, and the classroom learning environment may influence the way the learner views the text. In the context of the study, it implies that the teacher should be able to teach strategies as a way to help the learners to comprehend the text. Learners come from home into contact with the teacher who is required to teach learners how to construct meaning from the text by using the strategies for before, during and after reading. My argument is that the teachers' use of reading comprehension strategies may influence reading comprehension positively.

According to Noles and Dole (2004:179), the teaching of strategies empowers readers, particularly those who struggle, by giving them the tools they need to construct meaning from text. They further explain that instead of blaming comprehension problems on learners' own innate abilities for which they (learners) see no solution, explicit strategy instruction teaches learners to take control of their own learning and comprehension. Loranger (1997:31) found that learners who were trained in the use of strategies showed greater focus of engagement during reading groups, improved knowledge use of strategies, and improved achievement in comprehension (Zimmerman,1998).

In the same vein, Dreyer (1998:23) used the reading comprehension strategies to train learners in reading comprehension in her study, and the results showed that instruction in reading comprehension strategies can and do make a very important contribution in improving the reading comprehension of learners. These research studies demonstrate that reading comprehension strategies can be taught and that they can contribute to improve learners' reading comprehension abilities.

In America, because of the low level of reading comprehension amongst the learners, the NRP (2000) examined research studies that focused on learners in K-12(Grades R-12) and concluded that there was sufficient evidence supporting the teaching of seven comprehension strategies. These strategies are comprehension

monitoring, graphic and semantic organisers, question answering, question generating, story structure, summarising and multiple strategies.

Within the context of my research project based on the low performance of Grade 3 learners, in particular Tshivenda-speaking learners, there is a need for the teachers to teach comprehension strategies to help learners to read with understanding. My argument is that these strategies, if used in a Tshivenda classroom, may help teachers to teach the learners how to unlock the code of written text with ease. In the following section, I present the primary reading comprehension strategies based on research evidence as identified by the NRP (2000). These comprehension strategies are relevant as they can be used within the context of my study. If applied correctly, they may be effective in teaching reading comprehension to Tshivenda-speaking learners.

2.8.1   Comprehension monitoring

The teaching and monitoring of comprehension strategies are important to assist the reader to become aware of and realised that when they read they understand what they are reading. This refers to learners' knowledge about and use of reading comprehension strategies, and is a form of metacognition. Routman (2000:134) defines comprehension monitoring as "a metacognitive process which is affected by person strategy and task variables." Routman (2000:134) adds to this by stating that comprehensive monitoring is essential for reading as it directs the reader when trying to make sense of a text. Good readers use metacognitive strategies to think about and have control over their reading, for example, before reading, they might monitor their understanding, adjusting their reading speed to fit the difficulty of the text and 'fix-up' any comprehension problems they have. After reading, they check their understanding of what they read. Examples of fix-up strategies are identifying where in the text the difficulty occurs, restarting a difficult sentence or passage on their own and looking back (or forward) through the text (Lehr & Osborn, 2005:18).

According to Lehr and Osborn (2000:18) readers learn how to be aware of understanding their material during comprehension monitoring (NRP, 2000:15). Lehr and Osborn (2003) regard the reader's thinking as important during the comprehension processes. Specifically, it teaches learners to notice when they

understand, to identify what they do not understand, and to use appropriate fix-up strategies to resolve the problems when they do not understand something they read (NRP, 2000; Armbruster *et al.,* 2003; Lehr & Osborn, 2005). This implies that when learners monitor their comprehension, they understand that reading must make sense; and when it does not they try to use appropriate different fix-up strategies to resolve the problems. The goal is to develop awareness by readers of the cognitive process involved during reading and teaches learners to be aware of what they do understand. The NRP (2000) suggested that monitoring comprehension strategies could help learners to become more aware of their difficulties during reading comprehension.

In teaching comprehension monitoring strategies, the teacher needs to demonstrate awareness of difficulties of understanding words, phrases, clauses or sentences. Learners are taught to think about what is hampering their understanding. They think aloud, reread, slow down, and look back in text to try to solve a problem (Armbruster *et al.*, 2003:6-7).

Context clues are also an important part of comprehension monitoring. Learners can use this strategy during reading when they encounter an unfamiliar word in text, for example, when a learner stumbles on an unfamiliar word, she/he needs to know how to use all word identification tools in their mental toolbox to decode the word. Learners look to see if they recognise any part of the word and then say the beginning sound of the familiar part of the word, and then read the rest of the sentence. If learners cannot say the correct word, then the teacher asks them to think what would make sense there, reminding the learners to use all clues.

2.8.2   Graphic and semantic organisers

Another comprehension strategy that is important to reading comprehension is the used of graphic and semantic organisers. These tools enable learners to examine and visually represent relationships and help learners write well-organised summaries. These organisers illustrate concepts and interrelationships among concepts of text, using diagrams or other pictorial devices (Armbruster *et al.,* 2003:50).Graphic and semantic organisers are found in many forms, for example, semantic maps, expository maps, story maps and graphic metaphors. These allow

the reader to represent graphically/visually the meanings and relationships of concepts and their relationships with other concepts (Armbruster *et al.,* 2003; Lehr & Osborn, 2005). Lehr and Osborn (2005:19) expand the description by saying that graphic and semantic organisers allow the reader to represent graphically/visually the meanings and relationships of the ideas that underlie the words in the text and to improve a reader's memory of what they read. By using the strategy of graphic and semantic organisers, readers focus on concepts and how they are related to other concepts. In teaching the use of graphic and semantic organisers, the teacher must ask learners to construct an image that represents the content.

2.8.3   Questioning

The strategy of asking and answering questions seems to have been used for many years and is still used by teachers to guide and monitor learners' learning. Questions appear to be effective for improving learners' reading comprehension. They provide learners with a purpose for reading, helps learners to focus attention on what they are to learn, help learners to think actively as they read, encourage learners to monitor their comprehension, and help learners to review content and relate what they have learnt to what they already know.

In her study, Durkin (1978) criticise the asking and answering questions as a reading comprehension strategy. She points out that the manner in which teachers ask questions is more of an assessment of comprehension rather than teaching of the reading comprehension process, and regards it as 'interrogation'. However, it is important for teachers to ask various questions to develop learners' critical thinking. Bloom (1986) and Joubert *et al.,* (2008) agree that the type of questions learners become accustomed to can shape their understanding of the text, for example, when learners are constantly asked literal questions, they will obviously focus on these during reading comprehension. Routman (1996:137) maintains that teachers need to ask higher-order questions and show learners how to find answers, and this requires interactive settings in order to achieve high levels of reading comprehension. The teacher's questioning strongly supports and advances learners' learning from reading, keeps the learners engaged and enhances understanding (Feldman, 2003).

Analysis by Zimmerman and Hutchins (2003) on questioning as a strategy indicates that "questions lead readers deeper into a piece, setting up dialogue with the author, sparking in readers' minds what they care about. If you ask questions as you read, you are awake, you are interacting with words" (Zimmerman & Hutchins, 2003:73).

This implies that questioning during reading becomes a strategy to help learners to learn to interact with the author of the text and so remain focused throughout the text. Teachers must ask a combination of questions and show learners how to find answers. This can be done by discussing the different types of questions that exist with the learners (Raphael & Au, 2005) and using the information to locate the answer.

In order to succeed, Taylor, Pearson, Peterson and Rodriguez (2002) and Bloom (1968) found that learners must engage in high levels of questioning and do so in highly interactive settings to achieve high levels of comprehension. In a way, it is critical that instruction should help learners understand that active readers question the author, the text, and themselves before, during and after reading.

Raphael and Au (2005) maintain that in order for learners to be able to answer higher-order questions, they need to be able to understand the relationship between the question and the answer. Under questioning as a comprehension strategy, there are two different strategies, namely question answering and question generating.

2.8.3.1 Question answering

During reading comprehension, the teacher expects the learner to read and understand the text and answer questions, and to use the information when needed. The teaching of the question-answering strategy is helpful for the learners as they become aware of what is important in the text and learn to answer the questions.

During question answering, the reader answers questions posed by the teacher and is given feedback for correctness. It gives learners a purpose for reading, focuses attention on what they are to learn, encourages them to monitor and helps them to

review content and relate what they have learnt to what they already know. Learners learn to distinguish questions that can be answered based on the text from those based on prior knowledge. They are encouraged to learn to answer questions better and therefore acquire more knowledge (Armbruster *et al.,* 2003:49-53). There are different types of questions, for example, answering instructions, which simply teaches learners to re-examine the text to find answers to questions that they could not answer after the initial reading. Another type of questions help learners understand the relationship between questions and where the answers to those questions are found. In this instruction, readers learn to answer questions that require an understanding of information.

Questioning during the guided reading phase is intended to scaffold learning for learners and to check learners' understanding. Such questioning is meant to instruct, guide learners along the pathway to independence (Dewitz, 2006).

When teaching the question answering strategy, teachers need to ask learners questions during and after reading passages of text. Teachers ask learners to look back. Within the context of this study, 'looking back' is when learners articulates and process their understanding of what they have read and to find answers after reading. Teachers ask learners to analyse questions with respect to whether the question is tapping literal information covered in the text, information that can be inferred by combining information in the text, or information in the reader's prior knowledge base (NRP, 2000).

Concerning the type of questions to be asked, Joubert *et al.*, (2008) recommend Bloom's and other taxonomies as useful tools for helping teachers to engage learners in higher-order thinking when they read. We can also relate this higher-order thinking with the applied model of self-regulation of Zimmerman (1998). Teachers must identify each learner's abilities and match their profile to a variety of reading comprehension strategies rather than teach in a rigid manner. If learners apply higher-order thinking, they are able to draw more meaning from what they learn and apply the learning in more sophisticated ways. Although thinking skills alone do not make a learner an effective reader, they are essential for reading comprehension.

2.8.3.2 Question generation

Teachers expect learners to become independent and lifelong readers. Readers who attain this learn to ask themselves questions about various aspects of the story (NRP, 2000; Lehr & Osborn, 2005).

Question generating encourages the learner to be actively involved and learn to own the reading text, and thus improves comprehension ability (Routman, 1994:139). In their view, Lehr and Osborn (2005) confirm that teaching learners to ask their own questions improves their active processing of text and improves their comprehension. By generating questions, learners become aware of whether they can answer the questions and if they understand what they are reading. Learners learn to ask themselves questions that require them to integrate information from different segments of text, for example, learners can be taught to ask main idea questions that relate to important information in a text. Question generating teaches learners to become involved in the text, independently. They learn to become active readers and self-questioners and to become aware of whether they understand the text or not. As a result, their overall comprehension improves (Duke &Pearson, 2002).

In teaching the question-generating strategy, teachers need to ask learners to generate questions while reading a passage. The question should integrate information across different parts of the passage. Teachers ask learners to evaluate their questions, checking that they covered important material, were integrative, and whether they could be answered based on what was in the text. Teachers provide feedback on the quality of the questions asked or assist learners in answering the question generated (Armbruster *et al.,* 2003:11).

Question generating also assist learners to increase their awareness of whether they are comprehending text (NRP, 2000; Armbruster *et al.,* 2003). Questioning can be applied before, during and after reading. Pearson (1984:727) suggests that during reading comprehension, teachers should make sure that guided reading questions (asked either during or after stories) include many inference questions to enhance both story-specific inferential comprehension and comprehension of new stories. Secondly, adding a pre reading set for evoking relevant prior knowledge

and predicting what will happen in a story, coupled with discussion of why it is important to do so, results in even better inferential comprehension and even helps literal questions.

2.8.4   Story structure

During reading comprehension, the reader continuously asks questions in order to understand the text. Teaching learners to look at the story structure is important in reading comprehension.

According Lehr and Osborn (2005:18), the story structure is "the way the content and events of a story are organised into a plot." This is where readers ask themselves questions about various aspects of the story (NRP, 2000). In the same vein, Lehr and Osborn (2005:18) state that learners who can recognise the story structure have greater appreciation and understanding of and a memory for stories. These strategies train learners to learn to ask themselves question during reading about the basic components of stories as they read. Learners learn to identify the categories of content, namely, setting, initiating events, internal reactions, goal attempts and outcomes and how this content is organised into a plot (Lehr &Osborn, 2005:18). This implies that during teaching reading comprehension, teachers need to ask and answer five questions: Who is the main character? Where and when did the story occur? What did the main character do? How did the story end? How did the main character feel? This will help learners to learn to understand about, that is, the, who and what, where, when and why of stories. They learn to identify what happened and what was done in the story, for example, learners should recognise the story structure through the use of story maps. They also learn to identify the main character of the story, where and when the story took place, what the main character did, how the story ended, and how the main characters felt. Learners learn to construct a story map recording the setting, problem, goal, action and outcome over time (Armbruster *et al.,* 2003:11-12). A type of graphic organiser shows the sequence of events in simple stories. Instruction in the content and organisation of stories improve learners' comprehension and memory of stories.

2.8.5   Summarising

Another strategy that can be used in teaching reading comprehension is summarising. This requires learners to determine what is important in what they are reading, to condense information and to put it into their own words (Armbruster *et al.,* 2003:53). This implies that during reading comprehension, teachers must teach learners to read the text and synthesise the information. Routman (2000:140) refers to summarising as the ability to state the main ideas in a text in a clear and coherent manner. This involves paraphrasing and reorganising text information. It requires readers to sift through large units of text, differentiating important from unimportant ideas, and the significant from the insignificant (Armbruster *et al.,* 2003:13) and then synthesise those ideas and create a new coherent text that stands for, by substantive criteria, the original (Dole, Duffy, Roehler & Pearson, 1999:244). In the same vein, Klinger and Vaughn (1999) and the NRP (2000) maintain that summarisation can be taught effectively and that the ability to summarise can improve comprehension recall.

According to the NRP (2000), during summarising learners are taught to integrate ideas and generalise from the text information. Summarising involves identifying the main idea in a paragraph or composing a concise statement of the main concepts from a long passage; this helps learners to focus on the main ideas or and encourage learners to reread as they construct a summary (Kamil, 2004). Summarising requires learners to determine what is important in what they are reading, to condense this information, and to put it into their own words (Lehr & Osborn, 2005). In so doing, learners identify or generate main ideas, connect the main or central ideas, and remember what they read. They learn to make connections among main ideas through the text. However, "summarising sounds difficult and the research demonstrates that, in fact, it is a difficult task" (Dole *et al.,* 1999:244).

Teachers therefore need to give learners opportunities to practice the summarising strategy before they apply it. Summarising will enable learners to process the text more deeply and better retain their knowledge of the text. In teaching summarising as a strategy, teachers need to teach learners to summarise main ideas and leave out the less important aspects.

2.9 Conclusion

Reading comprehension is a challenge worldwide. However, there is agreement that teaching reading comprehension can enhance learners' understanding of texts. There are research-based comprehension strategies which the teacher must know and model during reading. Teachers must monitor learners' understanding and ensure that they use the strategies correctly. The literature revealed that South Africa still lacks the theoretical base to guide teachers on the subject and that more research on the subject is needed.

In this chapter, I gave an overview of the international and national contexts of the teaching of reading comprehension. I briefly discussed various strategies and their importance in teaching reading comprehension. It is evident that reading comprehension is a process. Teachers should organise their comprehension teaching in the three phases of reading lesson namely before, during and after reading as discussed in this chapter, to help learners understand the importance and the correct use of strategies. It is clear that before teaching comprehension, teachers must first examine the text for rigour, level of questioning and vocabulary. During reading, teachers must deepen the learners' level of understanding by modelling the reading text. They must provide multiple opportunities for the learners to read and interact with the text. I explained that it is important during reading to deepen learners understanding by asking them open-ended questions at various levels and not only yes and no questions. Teachers must teach learners to read the text and be able to generate questions from the text.

Teachers must monitor learners' understanding and ensure that learners use the strategies correctly. After teaching, teachers must be able to reflect on learners' responses to instruction and plan for deeper teaching opportunities. It is clear that reading comprehension teaching needs a strategic teacher who is competent and knowledgeable, for example, the teacher must know that before reading he/she must teach learners to learn to set a purpose for reading, provide questions and connections to motivate learners to be involved in their own learning. In addition, the teacher must pre-teach key vocabulary concepts, link learners' background knowledge and experiences relate the text to learners' lives and teach learners text features and how to use them. The same strategies may be used during and after

reading, for example, the teacher must teach learners how to monitor understanding through demonstration and think aloud, provide questions to consider while reading, help them draw inferences from text, ask them to summarise the main ideas of a paragraph and to confirm, disconfirm, or extend predictions and generated questions.

Teachers have a pivotal role in helping learners to acquire these skills and preparing them for independent learning. Capacity building for teachers is therefore needed, with appropriate guidelines on how to teach reading comprehension. It is clear that comprehension is a problem-solving process. That is why it is critical for teachers to have a substantial knowledge of the strategies and how best to teach and help learners to acquire and use strategies appropriately. Indeed, teachers need to respond to the individual learners' needs and provide various reading experiences to foster their ability to use strategies correctly and progress to self-regulatory learning.

The literature review revealed that the best time to lay a strong foundation is to teach reading comprehension strategies from an early age when children start school, instead of attempting to teach them later in their school years when the harm has already been done.

CHAPTER 3
LITERATURE REVIEW: READING COMPREHENSION,
DEVELOPMENTAL LEARNING THEORIES AND
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

'Comprehension is not just something that just happens;
comprehension needs to be taught' (NRP, 2000:17)

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of Chapter 3 is to present a theoretical and conceptual framework which will determine the direction of this study. An extensive review of the literature assists in building a theory and understanding of reading comprehension. The theoretical and conceptual framework is directed by the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. In Chapter 2 and 3, I gave an historical account of the relating to the teaching of reading comprehension to young children.

Ever since education began and became formalised it appears that teachers have been engaged in determining how children develop and learn. For this reason, several educationalists and psychologists have developed systemic, yet contrasting, theories of learning. Each learning theory implies a set of related classroom procedures. Apparently, teachers' teaching practice maybe influenced by these psychological views on the teaching of reading comprehension. Consequently, teachers who support a specific learning theory make professional decisions based on this theory, which in turn, affects their classroom procedures.

In their view, Bigge and Shermis (1999) define learning theories and their importance in teaching and learning as:

> Designed for the development of a pattern of ideas accompanied by a
> planned procedure carrying it out. Hence, it is a policy proposed and
> followed as a basis for action. A learning theory, then, is a systematic
> integrated outlook in regard to the nature of the process whereby people
> relate to their environment in such a way as to enhance their ability to use

both themselves and their environments in a most effective way (Bigge & Shermis, 1999:2-3).

My study focuses on the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. In this chapter, I explained the interconnectedness of the different theories applicable to the teaching of reading comprehension to learners. These theories relate to the focus of the study and serve as background and also as the basis for developing an observation schedule, focus group discussions that were used as data gathering instruments. The study is informed by the assumption that a learner is a social being that can learn to read and understand only if there is guidance from the more knowledgeable adult. The constructivist learning theories are important because they indicate that teachers cannot provide learners with knowledge. In a learning situation, learners must be able to construct knowledge in their own minds (Slavin, 1994). In this research project, the act of comprehending texts was seen as both a cognitively and socially constructed process. This is the reason why the four mentioned theories Piaget (1983), Vygotsky (1978), Bruner (1986), Ausubel (1963) and Bandura (1977) serve as a basis of the study. Constructivists encourage children to constantly use prior knowledge to understand new information.

The various theories discussed in this chapter serve as a point of reference for appreciating the various stages and processes of the child and how these stages affect their development and learning capacities (Mooney, 2000). These theories assisted me to explore the research-based strategies that brought about success stories in other countries. These strategies could be helpful to the teachers because learners do not learn at the same pace. The theories may assist teachers to consciously plan and teach learners how to use strategies independently. These theories have influenced current notions of the teaching of reading comprehension and have also informed this study. The questions that can be asked are: should reading comprehension be left to the learners, or should there be guidelines for the teachers on how to teach learners not just to bark at print, but to read the text with understanding and therefore become proficient readers?

Although the work of Piaget (1983), Vygotsky (1978), Bruner (1986), Ausubel (1963) and Bandura (1977) varies greatly, each articulates a similar context of

learning and development. Eggen and Kauchak (2001) state that while constructivists see learning as an active process that requires learners to construct meaning, social constructivism suggests that knowledge exists in a social context and is initially shared with others instead of being represented solely in the mind of the individual. This study enabled me to employ Zimmerman's (1998) applied social-cognitive model of self-regulated learning will be dealt with. The concept of self-regulated learning is developed within the framework of social-cognitive theory, through observing and imitating social models, and then internalising the skill to achieve self-control and eventually self-regulation (Schunk& Zimmerman, 1997). The four theories of Piaget (1983), Vygotsky (1978), Bruner (1986), Ausubel (1963) and Bandura (1977) formed the basis of Zimmerman's applied model of self-regulated learning and can be applicable to the teaching of reading comprehension. This model links with reading comprehension because learners should be able to use reading comprehension strategies independently such as self-monitoring during reading (Zimmerman, 1990:4-5).

3.2   Developmental learning theories and reading comprehension

Knowledge of child development is important when planning to teach reading comprehension. It is essential for the teacher to understand the particular life stage of the individuals for which learning interventions are planned. Haas and Parkey (1993:108) endorse this when they state that being conversant with developmental theories provides "a point of view with reference to learners: they should be studied as individuals so that the programme of institutions can be shaped in part, by the individuals' own nature and needs." It is important for the teacher to understand the learners' individual, physical, emotional, social and cognitive abilities and limitations so that appropriate teaching strategies related to reading comprehension can be implemented.

Though all aspects of human development are important and interdependent, the cognitive development of the learner in the Foundation Phase should be taken into consideration. It pertains to the learners' mental capacities and specifically the intellectual abilities that are involved in thinking, knowledge and problem solving, in relation to the age of the individual and the information to be imparted (Mwamwenda, 2004:89). Cognitive development occurs progressively as it builds

on previous experience and teachers should provide reading comprehension strategies, such as problem-based learning experiences.

The family is the most important early influence on the socialisation of the learner. Social development starts in the home and expands as the child's interpersonal contacts extend outside the family. Children begin to learn how to adapt to other people at home, and then apply their skills to the schools and broader community environment as they venture into the outside world. The early influence of values, attitudes, worldview and modes of adaptation at home directly affects how children cope with the environment of the school (Mwamwenda, 2004:55-56). Social experience is important, because at school the learner is expected to relate to the teachers, follow a new set of rules, make new friends and learn to get along with them successfully.

Learners need to acquire the cognitive and behavioural skills necessary for school success. These skills and others are learnt in and outside of the classroom, at home and in the community (Cortese & Middleton, 1994:166; Louw, 1993; 1991:13). Cooperative learning is one strategy to use to encourage learners to work together on a particular reading comprehension project (Bender, 1997:72-73). Emotionally, the Foundation Phase learners are greatly influenced by the interpersonal climate in the school. They may experience fear if the school atmosphere is unfriendly and hostile and if they are humiliated, shouted at or physically punished. Walsh and Murphy (2003:14-15) state that a negative atmosphere which also includes exclusive competitiveness and is associated with poor academic performance of the learners.

3.3 Developmental approach and learning theories

To understand the issues that affect the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners, it is necessary to understand the development of children in the early childhood years. Knowledge of the learner is important when implementing a curriculum where developmental and learning theories play a major role in guiding the planning of teaching programmes and can influence the choice of teaching and learning strategies. Learners act as they do primarily because of their stage of development or because of what they have

previously learnt are appropriate ways to act in a given situation. Content is chosen because it meets the learners' needs, is age-appropriate and within the cognitive abilities of the learner (Pollock & Middleton, 1994:15). There are many developmental theories, but I have chosen those that are most relevant to reading comprehension. Even though the chosen theories are different, each could have an influence on the teaching of reading comprehension.

3.3.1   Piaget's theory of cognitive development

Jean Piaget (1968) has provided one of the most comprehensive descriptions of children's cognitive capabilities and development. Piaget's theory is based on a number of assumptions, which underpin the way in which he believed children learn (Kail, 2001:150-152).He maintained that children use schemes to organise, categorise and understand the world. As children grow older, these schemes become increasingly abstract as new experiences are assimilated into the existing schemes. Piaget used the term 'accommodation' to refer to the process of reorganising existing schemes to improve the new information so that equilibrium is achieved. If accommodation does not occur, then disequilibrium occurs and children have to organise their schemes to achieve equilibrium. Piaget states that experiences and interaction with the environment, and not only maturation, that facilitate the development of cognitive structures (Lieberman, Clark, Krone, Orlandi & Wynder, 1992:392). According to Piaget, children's cognitive development progresses sequentially through a series of stages which are linked to certain age ranges. The transition from the sensory motor stage through the preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational stages can be seen as a continuum on which children move from subjective to objective realisation (Gage & Berliner, 1992:105-116).

For Piaget, learning is a process of internal construction. Learners must construct knowledge in their own minds through the guidance of more knowledgeable others. In the context of the study, teachers must teach learners to acquire self-regulatory competence by observing and hearing their explanations, for example, when the teacher is demonstrating the use of the strategy, guiding and giving constructive feedback the learners use the self-directing, self-pacing and self-correcting strategy

and learn how to adjust their skill to change personal, behavioural and contextual conditions to optimise their own learning during reading.

For this study, attention is given to the concrete operational stage lasting from seven to eleven years of age as promoted by Piaget. During this stage, children start to use logical thought processes, such as reversal of concepts, multiple classifications and mental ordering, to begin to solve problems limited to real, observable objects. Centralisation is no longer present during this stage as children begin to realise that there are many sides to a particular problem (Mwamwenda, 2004:95-100; Biehler & Snowman, 1993:61-66; Vasta, Haith& Miller, 1995:35).

Piaget's theory has implications for teaching reading comprehension, as each individual child's current stage of cognition development must be taken into account when the teacher plans learning activities. The theory helps teachers to understand that learners at this level have reached a new level of self-development that allows them to understand some of the ways in which they are related to people. Through interaction with the teacher and other persons, and during play, learners are able to understand the physical and the social world. Here, realistic fiction may encourage learners to interact with characters who are involved in a conflict situation, during reading comprehension. Knowledge about this stage will assist the teacher to understand that the learners are ready to listen to stories and to read about real-life heroes and stories which move between the past and present, such as legends.

The knowledgeable teacher is aware that learners in this stage begin to apply logic to concrete experience, so that they begin to move beyond one-dimensional thinking. Concerning reading comprehension, this enables learners to relate one event to a system of interrelated parts. They gradually start perceiving an event from the beginning to the end and from the conclusion to the beginning. It is therefore important that the environment should be rich to encourage learners to learn and reason about what they read. Learners at this stage have the ability to understand picture storybooks, folk tales, and books written for bibliotherapy. It is critical is for the teacher to guide learners on which strategies to use, showing them when and why and how to apply each strategy correctly.

Piaget's theory relates to this study because reading text should match the developmental stages of learners. Learners should construct the meaning of the text and be able to use it in contexts other than the classroom. Learning activities should match the level of the conceptual development of the learners. The teacher must use the stages as a way to gauge and monitor learners' pace of learning. Piaget's view is that learners must be self-initiated and actively involved in learning. In reading comprehension, teachers must be able to model good behaviour of reading with understanding so that learners will ultimately take responsibility for their own learning. Piaget also emphasised the importance of the environment in learning, particularly the social environment. In reading comprehension, the comprehension development may be influenced by interactions with others. The learners see and hear the teachers and peers reading and then internalise and model what they see and hear. In the following section, I report on the theory of Vygotsky and how it relates to my study.

3.3.2   Vygotsky's socio-historical theory of cognitive development

Lev Vygotsky (1978) attributed cognitive development to the social environment of the child. He noted that children begin learning from the behaviours, attitudes, values and skills of the people around them. The social world and one's culture determine which stimuli occur and are attended to. Vygotsky emphasised the role of adults in influencing the cognitive development of children. Development is enhanced when children work cooperatively or collaboratively with adults and other children. Cognitive development proceeds from behaviours regulated by others to self-regulated behaviour (Zimmerman, 1998). To help children move from a social to a personal psychological form of knowledge, adults should determine the child's actual development level by learning about his capacity to solve problems when working with or without adult help.

According to Vygotsky, when a child is working independently, we see the actual development level of the child. When the child is working with an adult, we see the potential development of the child, under optimal circumstances, while learning with a competent nurturing mediator. The difference between these two levels of functioning is referred to as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Biehler

&Snowman, 1993:63; Gage & Berliner, 1992:122-123).In regard to the importance of the ZPD, Vygotsky (1998:137-138)emphasised:

> Everything that the child cannot do independently, but which he can be taught or which he can do with direction or cooperation or with the help of leading questions, we will include in the sphere of imitation... Thus, in studying what the child is capable of doing independently, we study yesterday's development. Studying what the child is capable of doing cooperatively, we ascertain tomorrow's development.

The area of immature, but maturing processes makes up the child's ZPD. When children are faced with challenging situations, they can seek help from their teachers and peers, which is termed 'scaffolding' (Woolfolk, 1995:50).

Vygotsky believed that language is an important tool because it is internalised by the child to affect thinking and problem-solving (Bukatko & Daehner, 2001:27; Shaffer 1996:279). The role of the adult is to assist children to acquire language in ways that enable them to take control of their own learning (Engelbrecht & Green, 2001:84). Teachers can focus on effective communication, meaning, comprehension and respect for language in the classroom. Vygotsky's theory has implications for teaching reading comprehension because in facilitating learning, the teacher must take the cultural context of the learners into consideration as it influences their thinking and actions. Learners can be given problem-solving activities with instructions, for the task of reading comprehension. Thereafter the learner should work independently using his or her own knowledge and skills with the guidance received from the teacher. Two approaches are pertinent to teaching reading comprehension, based on the views of Vygotsky, namely reciprocal teaching and scaffolded support.

3.3.2.1 Scaffold support

Scaffolding involves the provision of support that is focused on a learner's particular capacities within Vygotsky's ZPD. When teaching comprehension strategies to Grade 3 learners, teachers need to shift the responsibility to the learners at some time, gradually releasing responsibility to learners so that they learn to master their own learning. Teachers take all the responsibility for applying a newly introduced

strategy by modelling. Learners in turn must observe, imitate practices and then self-regulate themselves and create meaning from the written text by using the strategy appropriately. As time goes on and learners get more exposure and practice using the strategies, teachers slowly withdraw their responsibility. This is to enable learners to manage their own learning by making use of the strategies. Teachers work collaboratively with the learners and the strategy, giving and taking as much as necessary to create meaning. Eventually, learners take more and more responsibility as they become confident, knowledgeable and capable. Finally, they are able to work independently (Pardo, 2004:278; McMahon & Oliver, 2003:5). Shanahan (2006) refers to the gradual release of responsibility as the 'I do it–We do it–You do it' approach to teaching reading comprehension. According to Shanahan (2006), this can benefit the learners if the teacher provides guidance beforehand. What is important is the support given to learners, the available resources and appropriate activities for engaging them.

3.3.2.2 Reciprocal teaching

Teaching reading comprehension has been a challenge for decades. To address the challenge, Palincsar and Brown (1984) developed an approach to teaching reading comprehension called reciprocal teaching. Reciprocal teaching is an instructional procedure to improve learners' comprehension skills and is related to Vygotsky's ZPD and scaffolding (Lysynchuk & Vye, 1990). This approach has three main components, namely, dialogue between learners and teacher, each taking a turn in the role of dialogue leader. Reciprocal interactions is where one person acts in response to other and structured dialogue using four strategies, namely generating one's own questions, summarising parts of the text, clarifying word meanings and confusing text passages, and predicting what might come next in the text.

Reciprocal teaching takes place through scaffolded instruction of four comprehension-fostering and comprehension-monitoring strategies. In reciprocal teaching, these strategies pertain to ongoing dialogues with a dialogue leader, who can be a teacher or a learner who models the use of the strategies, provides conditional knowledge about strategy use, and helps learners to apply a strategy to a passage. As the learners in the group become familiar with the strategies and the

procedure, the dialogue leader's involvement lessens and learners take turns as discussions leaders. The assumption is that by applying the strategies in a group process, poorly self-regulated learners can learn from their highly self-regulated peers.

The overall goal of reciprocal teaching is to promote self-directed and flexible use of the learnt strategies through scaffolding instruction collaboration (Sporer *et al.,* 2009:273).According to the NRP (2000), reading comprehension is the construction of meaning of a written text through the reciprocal interchange of ideas between the reader and the message in particular. It has been described as a gradual release or transfer of control or responsibility (Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Shanahan, 2006).

According to the NRP (2000), the focus of reciprocal teaching is upon the actual teaching approach, which is relevant to this study. Reciprocal teaching involves four instructional procedures for explicitly teaching four strategies namely summarising, questioning, clarifying and predicting (Palincsar & Brown, 1984).The NRP (2000:22) explicitly describes the reciprocal teaching procedure. The teacher begins with a group of learners discussing the text. The teacher starts by modelling each strategy. The demonstration includes a clear explanation of what the strategy is, a description of how and when to use it, and an explanation of why it is useful for enhancing understanding. After explaining and modelling the strategy, the teacher asks learners to read, providing an abundance of guidance and support (Zimmerman, 1998; Shanahan, 2006). The teacher must gradually release the leadership role to learners, encourage cooperative learning and peer support amongst the learners. Reciprocal teaching is an approach that can assist learners from guided practice to gradually taking on responsibility and development and using strategies appropriately. During this process, the teacher monitors learners' use of the strategy, reminding them where necessary to apply the strategy, repeating much of the explanation from demonstration.

After some time, the teacher's support is reduced and learners progress to self-regulated learning. Learners take turns to lead the discussion about specific parts and applying the strategy. One learner serves as the discussion leader, asking questions about key ideas in the text, and other learners answer the questions and ask questions of their own. The learner leader helps the group clarify difficult words

or passages that might hinder comprehension. Next, the leader summarises the text that had just been read and predicts what might come next. The process continues for each part of the text, with learners taking turns leading the discussion. In this way, learners are actively involved in their own learning.

3.3.3 Bruner's theory of learning and development

Jerome Bruner (1986) developed a theory of cognitive development in which he maintained that thinking and reasoning are integrated into a single process. He stated that a child passes through several stages of development which he termed the inactive, iconic and symbolic modes. The inactive mode is seen in infants when they reach and grasp objects. In the iconic mode, the child will give meaning to previous experiences as he thinks about these experiences. The child then proceeds to the symbolic mode, which is regarded as the highest form of thinking wherein the child can attach names to objects or items in his surroundings because of his increased language ability (Mwamwenda, 2004:104-105). Bruner's theory advocates learning through discovery and active learning where the problem-solving skills of learners are encouraged. Bruner's theory is important for my research project. He regards human beings as primarily information processors, learners, thinkers, creators and storytellers (Bigge & Shermis, 1999:133). Like Piaget and Vygotsky, Bruner regards social and cultural factors as important in cognitive development (Driscoll, 1994:208). These aspects are relevant in the teaching of reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning (Snow & Sweet, 2003:1). This implies that the purpose of reading is to read the text with understanding.

The implications of this theory for teaching reading comprehension is that new concepts should be presented repeatedly, initially at a simple level and overtime at an increasingly difficult level, a concept Bruner referred to as the 'spiral ordering of content'. By applying this theory, the teacher is able to deal with important reading comprehension issues. A supportive environment will encourage learners to share information with their peers and to develop their problem-solving skills. Making use of problem-solving activities would also be a way of utilising Bruner's theory when teaching reading comprehension.

3.3.4 Ausubel's cognitive field theory

For meaningful learning to occur learners must be ready and willing to relate new concepts to their current experience, and the new material should have the potential to be related to what the learner already knows. Meaningful learning occurs when learners actively process the information they are asked to learn. Ausubel (1963) refers to his theory as verbal learning, because most of what is learnt in the classroom is based on language as a means of communication, whereby learners are presented with all possible information on a given topic in its final form. Another concept of Ausubel (1963) is called 'reception learning', which means that learners receive information, think about it deductively and then apply this information. Ausubel believed that learning occurs because of the relatedness of what learners know and what they learn. Information is said to be meaningful if it can be related in some way to the learners' present, past or future experiences (Haas &Parkay, 1993:144).

Ausubel's theory has implications for teaching reading comprehension because teachers must be aware of the fact that certain minimal levels of intellectual maturity are necessary before various subjects can be taught with a reasonable degree of efficiency and with hope of success. Therefore, teachers must use the existing interests of learners, consider their point of view and take into account their limitations in the command of language and their grasp of concepts.

3.3.5 Bandura's social learning theory

Bandura (1977) developed a social learning theory in which he postulated that children use rewards, punishment and imitation to understand the working of the world (Kail, 2001:459). According to Bandura (1977), the environment plays an important role in the child's life, because this is where he/she interacts with people who can provide important information about the world. These people can also act as role models to the child.

The child's interaction with other people is based on observing their norms, values and beliefs within the context of a particular society and the child is most likely to imitate adults with whom he or she has an emotional or nurturing bond which

Bandura calls 'naturant models'. In his theory, Bandura (1977) refers to this concept as 'modelling', which means that learners learn positive or negative behaviour patterns from observing behaviour. When the learner interacts with people, he/she is being socialised and as a result, he or she adopts and lives according to what has been seen (Mwamwenda, 2004:203).

Another concept in Bandura's theory is that "experience gives learners a sense of self-efficacy, which refers to learner's beliefs about their own abilities and talents" (Kail, 2001:16). This means that learners will have a good sense of what they can or cannot do and therefore will mostly not imitate the actions of someone if they feel their own abilities are not similar. The imitation of a model is important in a classroom situation; learners are expected to pay adequate attention to what the teacher says so that they can understand what is being taught. With memory, what is being observed must be processed into short-term and long-term memory for storage, so that it can be retrieved when such information is needed. Observation is important because the behaviour displayed by the model should be reproduced. For an observed behaviour to be reproduced perfectly, practice is important. Reinforcement also plays an important role and if modelled behaviour is rewarded, the chances of this behaviour being repeated are high (Hjelle& Ziegler, 1981:246-249; Engler, 1985:391-401).

This theory is very important for reading comprehension because learners imitate what they see other people doing, be it parents or teachers. Teachers are regarded as good models as they usually have positive and nurturing relationships with the learner. They should therefore display positive reading comprehension strategies so that learners can imitate and internalise these.

The above-mentioned theories formed the foundation of Zimmerman's applied social-cognitive model of self-regulated learning. For example for the learners to become independent readers who could master of their own learning they should be actively involved in their own learning, think independently, recall, analyze information and construct meaning from the text. Learners should gain confidence through regular practice which involves modelling.

3.3.6 Zimmerman's applied social-cognitive model of self-regulated Learning

According to Zimmerman (1989; 1990), self-regulated learning involves the regulation of three general aspects of academic learning. Firstly, self-regulation of behaviour involves the active control of the various resources learners have available to them (Garcia & Pintrinch, 1994; Pintrich, Smith, Garcia & McKenzie, 1993). Secondly, self-regulation of motivation and effect involves controlling and changing motivational beliefs such as self-efficacy and goal orientation, so that learners can adapt to the demands of a course. Thirdly, self-regulation of cognition involves the control of various cognitive strategies for learning and these strategies result in better learning and performance than learners showed previously (Palincsar & Brown, 1989; Garcia & Pintrinch, 1994; Pintrich, Smith, Garcia & McKenzie, 1993).

In the context of the study, teachers must motivate learners to be actively involved in reading with understanding instead of memorising words on the page. It is important for teachers to encourage learners to think positively about reading comprehension and believe that they can read and understand the text, and to condition their satisfaction to reach their goals. Thus, poor motivation can impede acquisition of self-regulatory competence (Zimmerman, 2000). In addition, learners can learn how to control their emotions and apply positive ways to improve their learning. Literature suggest that self-regulation of cognition involves the control of various cognitive strategies for learning, such as the use of deep processing strategies that result in an improved learning performance (Garcia & Pintrich, 1994; Pintrich *et al.,* 1993).

The teacher must teach learners to acquire self-regulatory competence in order to become independent readers and learn to read and use the appropriate strategies needed for the text. These processes are planned and adapted to support the pursuit of personal goals in changing learning environments. Zimmerman (1998) proposed the idea of learners themselves being the source of plans, intentions, strategies and the emotions that are necessary to create meaning from the written text. According to Zimmerman (1998), teaching multiple strategies is important, since the self-regulatory strategy will not work for all learners and using a few

strategies will not work on all tasks. Zimmerman (1998;1990) and Zimmerman and Hutchins(2003) suggest multiple self-regulatory strategies rather than a single strategies and states that learners can be taught to become more self-regulated. This view is linked to the constructivist theory where learners should be able to construct meaning from the written text. By learning to self-regulate a skill from peers, parents or teachers, each new generation of learners can build on the achievement of prior generations and avoid the mistakes of the past (Zimmerman, 1998).

According to Zimmerman (1989), self-regulated learning involves the regulation of three general aspects of academic learning. Self-regulation of behaviour involves the active control of the various resources learners have available to them, such as their time, their study environment and their collaboration with others, such as peers, to help them (Garcia & Pintrich, 1994; Pintrich *et al.,* 1993).

In her view, Zimmerman (1998) postulates that the applied social-cognitive model of self-regulated learning can be organised within a learning cycle based on three types of self-effective thoughts. This includes the following (Zimmerman, 1998):

- Goal-setting and strategic planning;
- Self-monitoring of one's accuracy in implementing a selected strategy;
- Self-assessment of strategy outcome and task performance.

These processes are considered cyclic because each process entails information that can lead to changes in a subsequent step of the cycle, and they are integral to reciprocal teaching. These processes qualify as self-reflective cognition activities and the associated corrective processes are central features of each step included in the cycle (Sporer *et al.,* 2009:273). Drawing on Zimmerman's applied model of self-regulated learning, during reciprocal teaching, learners are engaged in cognition and metacognitive activities, and they alternate between prompting, using a strategy, applying the selected strategy, and monitoring its accurate implementation (Sporer *et al.,* 2009:273). A self-regulated learning perspective on learners' learning and achievements has profound implications for the way teachers should interact with learners and the manner in which schools should be organised. Zimmerman's social-cognitive model of self-regulated learning provides a theoretical basis for suggesting the effects of strategy instruction and reciprocal

teaching, namely, strategies are taught and how they are taught and practiced effectively. In the context of the study if teachers can be exposed to Zimmerman's applied social-cognitive model of self-regulated learning may enhance reading comprehension of their learners.

3.4 Conceptual framework

In Figure 3.1, I present the conceptual framework and relevant theories that directed this study. Figure 3.1 is a visual representation of the most important arguments based on the concepts and theories, and their relationship with reading comprehension as dealt with in Chapters 1, 2 and 3. In the following paragraphs, I describe the concepts in-depth with reference to related theories.
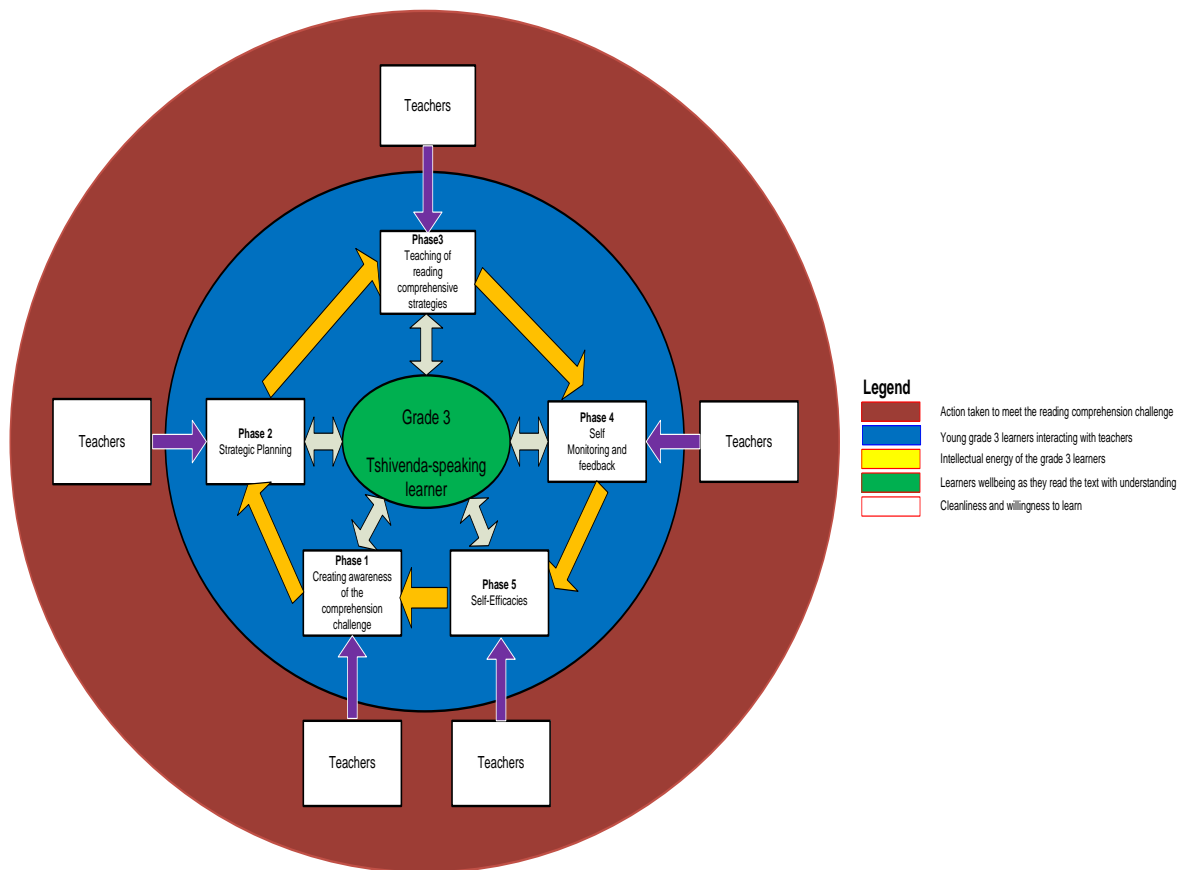
Figure 3.1: Conceptual framework related to the teaching of reading comprehension

3.4.1 Overview of the framework

From the literature it became clear that to teach reading comprehension effectively, principals, heads of departments and teachers need to be actively involved in the education of their learners. The teacher needs theoretical knowledge and be strategic in planning, creating an atmosphere conducive for learning. Teachers should be able to motivate learners to participate actively in the reading comprehension process. Teachers need to develop skills, knowledge, and self-regulatory strategies to support learners until they can read independently. It is critical that teachers must be aware of the fact that to practise research-based strategies in the classroom may assist learners to read the text with understanding. Activities must be planned accordingly, with more emphasis on self-monitoring activities coupled with constructive feedback.

As depicted inFigure3.1, I intend to refer to these concepts and theories when seeking answers on how teachers teach reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. The literature of Shanahan (2006), NRP (2000),Van Keer (2004) and Oczkus (2004) about concepts and theories indicates that the teacher must be strategic, know about cognitive processes in reading and how and when to teach reading comprehension strategies before, during and after reading the text as discussed in Chapter 2. This implies that teachers should be competent and clear about the use of strategies. The teacher has to demonstrate such strategies to the learners and give them opportunities to use each strategy until the learners can use them independently. This implies that reading comprehension can be taught and learnt. Learners can construct meaning from the text by means of using strategies before, during and after reading of the text, and so become self-regulated, strategic readers.

3.4.2 Structural description of the framework

The model depicted in Figure 3.1 is cyclical and is adapted from the theories promoted by Piaget (1983), Vygotsky (1978), Bruner (1986), Ausubel (1963) and Bandura (1977), as discussed in sections3.3.1-3.3.4. Zimmerman's (1998) applied social-cognitive model of self-regulated learning as described in section 3.1 informed the study. The five theories and Zimmerman's applied social-cognitive

model of self-regulation forms the framework for understanding the teaching of reading comprehension.

The conceptual framework related to the teaching of reading comprehension for Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners as depicted in Figure 3.1, starts with the teachers on the outer circle (red) which represents the seriousness of the reading comprehension challenge and that the teachers are willing to take action and contribute towards each phase within the inner circle.

The inner circle (blue) represents that it is important for teachers and learners to interact and this includes all the phases towards effective teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. Each phase leads into the other. Teachers will employ baseline assessment to evaluate current status quo of reading comprehension challenges. The assessment will form the basis of discussion during strategic planning to address the challenges identified in the baseline assessment. Teachers will then implement those strategies as per planning in phase 2. In phase 3, teachers should teach learners reading comprehension strategies. This is followed by phase 4, where teachers monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the comprehension strategies taught during phase 3. In phase 5, teachers evaluate their self-efficacy levels to ensure they teach with confidence.

The arrows (yellow) represent the intellectual energy of the teachers and movement from one phase to another in order to help learners to read the text with understanding. The green colour in the centre represents the well-being of the Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learner who should be able to read and understand the text if all the phases have been carried out well.

All five phases, namely, creating awareness of the reading comprehension challenge, strategic planning, teaching of reading comprehension strategies, self-monitoring and feedback and self-efficacy are interdependent and form a continuous cycle.

Each phase is discussed below.

Phase1: Creating awareness of the reading comprehension challenge

The objective of this phase is for teachers to identify the reading comprehension challenges, to develop learners' awareness of the reading comprehension process and reading comprehension strategies.

To address this, teachers will do reading comprehension checks across the Grade 3 classes, for example, they should conduct baseline assessment to find out the learners' levels of ability.

During their cluster meetings, Grade 3 teachers must discuss methods they think will be appropriate in building reading comprehension skills in the classrooms. When this phase has been implemented properly, teachers will be able to plan strategically for the next phase.

Phase 2: Strategies planning

Strategic planning involves planning and motivation. It is important for teachers to plan, and, most importantly, to know how to motivate the learners. Teachers can foster reading comprehension in learners by motivating them to read. The simplest way to do this is by modelling enthusiasm for reading. It should be noted by teachers that if they show excitement about their own reading, learners also will become enthusiastic about reading. Teachers must create time to talk with the learners about importance of reading and what benefits the learners can if they read with understanding, for example, for enjoyment, pleasure and for information.

In addition, teachers must choose texts that are age appropriate and could speak to the learners' lives. Graded readers should move from simple to complex text in order to encourage independent reading level. As such learners' comprehension skill will become stronger and stronger.

The objective of phase 2 is for the teachers to understand the challenges and to identify the necessary support to address the challenges. The teachers should take the necessary decisions for their individual classes and determine how they can encourage learners to master their own reading comprehension (Zimmermann, 1998).

The role of the teacher is to plan a reading programme that incorporates and emphasises the teaching of reading comprehension strategies. The teacher should gain a deeper understanding and practical knowledge of teaching reading comprehension. This can be attained by reading literature and research done on this subject. Armed with this knowledge, the teacher is able to address reading comprehension challenges in the classroom by incorporating some of these practices and strategies during the actual teaching of reading comprehension.

If this phase is well done, during the next phase, teachers will be able to plan the reading comprehension lessons and focus on teaching reading comprehension strategies with better results in mind.

Phase 3: Teaching of reading comprehension strategies

Since reading comprehension is a challenge, therefore, it must be taught. It is true that in most classes in nationally and internationally, learners cannot read and understand the written text (PIRLS, 2006; Reeves e*t al.,* 2008). Learners need to be instructed in a variety of reading comprehension strategies. It is important for the teachers to give learners opportunities to practice various strategies in a variety of texts. For this reason, as depicted in Figure 3.1, and as explained by theorists, the partnership between teachers and learners plays an important role. In Chapter 2,it was discussed that teachers should work with learners as a whole class, in guided reading groups, on one-on-one to foster individual skills.

In order to foster learners reading comprehension of the variety of texts they will encounter, teachers need to equip learners with research-based reading comprehension strategies to draw from when needed.

The objective of phase 3 is for the teacher to plan and facilitate reading comprehension lessons. Learners have the opportunity to listen to the teacher reading the comprehension and using the reading comprehension strategies before, during and after reading the text.

The role of the teacher is to teach comprehension strategies explicitly to assist learners to understand what they are reading. The teacher incorporates before, during and after reading comprehension strategies. Research confirmed that

learners who have been trained by modelling specific regulatory techniques, describing their form, and improving enactive feedback are better and competent readers than learners who have not been trained (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1994).

Before reading, teachers should teach learners how to activate background knowledge, establish a purpose for reading, generate questions, and make predictions. During reading, teachers should model how to engage with the text, use metacognitive ad cognitive strategies, verify and reformulate predictions, integrate new information with prior knowledge, self-monitor comprehension, construct a graphic organiser and summarise the text. During reading comprehension, the learners should be able to monitor, pace and direct themselves by making use of different strategies, for example fix-up strategies, to understand the reading text. Learners could connect personal experience to something that happened in the book. After reading, the teacher should teach the learners how to reflect on what they read, evaluate predictions, examine questions that guided reading, respond to text through discussions, retell or summarise the text.

If phase 3 is done successfully, learners will be able to become masters of their own learning. They will be able to regulate and monitor their own reading comprehension by making use of reading comprehension strategies and when problems occur, they can use fix-up strategies, for example, they will know when and how to use self-directed strategies.

The framework in Figure 3.1 reflects a pathway in which teachers must provide support to the learners. This means the challenge of reading comprehension should not be left to the Grade 3 teachers only, but the learners should be responsible for their own learning (Zimmerman, 1998). Teachers must be accountable for creating a conducive atmosphere for the learners to read and know how to use comprehension strategies effectively during reading. The learner develops understanding of the reading text within the historical, cultural and social context. In the classroom, Grade 3 teachers must interact with the learners and facilitate learning. Reading comprehension strategies must be taught in a social context with a variety of interesting texts that learners may interact with and that will increase their understanding (Vygotsky, 1978). This may influence learners' comprehension in a positive manner. Learning then becomes a dynamic process in which learners

play an active role, constantly interacting with the environment and people around them. The teachers and learners must participate actively in all the phases.

Phase 4: Self-monitoring and feedback

Teachers must be able to develop and implement self-monitoring and feedback intervention strategies. This will change teachers' behaviour and attitudes towards teaching of reading comprehension. Here the issue of professional development as discussed also in the findings and recommendations becomes prominent. Teachers should be aware that self-monitoring and feedback is a two way process. It involves both teachers and the learners. That is the reason why teachers should be trained to in order to improve their skills of teaching reading comprehension in the class.

During this phase, the teacher must make a record of teaching reading comprehension, for example, how they approach their teaching, what kind of teacher they are in a real classroom setting and what they can do to improve their practice. Do they involve all the learners during the reading comprehension? This can be a private record. This process allows the teacher to judge him/herself and to identify what works and what does not work well with the learners. The objective of phase 4 is for teachers to monitor their own teaching and to give feedback in a form of report or discussions with colleagues; and to determine learners who are in need of intervention strategies.

A feedback mechanism is built into phase 4, for example, if the learners are experiencing reading comprehension problems, this is where the teachers assists the learners, making them aware of the importance of reading comprehension and give them proper guidance (Bandura, 1977; Vygotsky, 1978). The interactive view of reading comprehension regards reading as the interaction between the learner, his background knowledge and frame of reference places the learner at the centre of the framework.

Phase 5: Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy has its foundation in social cognitive theory and can be applied to the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. Social cognitive theory originates from the works of behaviourism and social psychologist.

Social cognitive theorists see people as active participants in their own contexts. People can be changed by constantly by other factors.

This can be applied in teaching reading comprehension. Learners can learn to read and understand the written text by observing the more knowledgeable others. Self-efficacy does not measure the skill that one has but a belief about what one can do under different sets of conditions with whatever the skill one possess (Bandura,1997:37). Self-efficacy can allow the spirit of promotion and success in schools. That is why Bandura (1994) makes the following suggestion:

> *Schools in which staff members collectively judge themselves capable of promoting success imbue their schools with a positive atmosphere for development that promotes academic attainments regardless of whether they serve predominately advantaged students.*

Self-efficacy can improve or decrease teachers and learners' belief in themselves. That is why it is important for teachers to monitor their teaching sothat they can improve their skills of teaching reading comprehension if they have low self-efficacy.

It is important and helpful to the teachers to introduce peer observation amongst themselves. However, for the teacher to be observed by a peer he/she should be comfortable otherwise this will be a fruitless exercise. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people think, feel and how they can motivate themselves and behave accordingly. According to theories of learning and development, teachers must understand the stages of child development know and understand the reading comprehension strategies as well as implementing. Teachers need to be comfortable and confident in their ability to work with the learners and to assist them to become proficient readers. Teachers with high self-efficacy may influence their learner because they belief that they can do their job well and reach each individual learner in the class. Teachers who believe strongly in their ability to promote learning may create mastery experiences for their learners (Zimmerman,1998; Bandura,1997). In the classroom, teachers must teach learners how to use to read and use strategies to understand the text.

The objective of phase 5 as shown in the conceptual framework is for the teacher to check on their capabilities of teaching reading comprehension and the correct use of comprehension strategies.

Part of the tools and techniques of this phase include referring to the baseline outcome completed in the first phase and determining how that is linked to validate the self-efficacy levels at this phase.

During this phase, the teacher's role is to:
- motivate learners to self-regulate their own learning, for example by using comprehension strategies when difficulties occur (Zimmerman,1998).
- check if they have achieved the goal they have set in phase 1 and if they have the capabilities for attaining the set goals.
- assess if they are good or bad to fulfil the task of teaching reading comprehension.
- identify gaps and misunderstandings and think critically as to what must be done to remedy the situation.
- reflect on how certain or confident they are now to teach reading comprehension, hence self-efficacy by Zimmerman (1989;1990;1998).

Finally, if all the phases are well done, the following are some of the indicators (Zimmerman, 1998):
- Learners become intrinsically motivated and actively involved in reading comprehension;
- They are positive about reading and where there are a variety of books, they choose to read difficult text because they can understand the text;
- They are able to show a sense of agency to motivate their learning through the use of self-regulatory process such as goal setting, self-monitoring, self-evaluation and correct use of various comprehension strategies, for example, before reading they use predictions by thinking about the pictures.

The process will start again and the teachers will support the learners to attain autonomy, which will lead to competency and self-regulatory learning as depicted from the conceptual framework. It is important that teachers must be equipped with

skills to teach reading comprehension, as indicated in Chapter 6 below. The learners must acquire the comprehension strategies that will enable them to interact and construct meaning from text (Vygotsky, 1968) and that are the "essence of reading" (Durkin, 1993).

3.5   Summary

The conceptual framework shows teachers the steps to be followed when teaching reading comprehension. The aim is for teachers to improve learners' reading comprehension level.

The framework in Figure 3.1 reflects a pathway to enable teachers to provide support to the learners. This means the challenge of reading comprehension should not only be left to the Grade 3 teachers only, but the learners should also be accountable for their own learning (Zimmermann, 1998). The learner develops understanding of the reading text within the historical, cultural and social context (Bandura, 1977). In the classroom, Grade 3 teachers must interact with the learners and facilitate learning.

Reading comprehension strategies must be taught in a social context with a variety of interesting texts that learners may interact with and increase their understanding (Pardo, 2004). This may influence learners' comprehension in a positive manner. Learning then becomes a dynamic process in which learners play an active role, constantly interacting with the environment and people around them (Engelbrecht & Green, 2001). In the applied social-cognitive model of self-regulated learning, the teachers and learners move together to each phase, proving that the teaching of reading comprehension is a power-sharing relationship (Zimmerman, 1998).

The circular shape of the framework indicates that the reading comprehension process continues and moves from one phase to the next. The teachers are critical role players in the phases of the framework, driving the teaching of reading comprehension process to a success. The teachers should internalise the skills, theoretical knowledge and be able to function autonomously in order to help learners to attain self-regulated reading comprehension strategies. In my view, this may motivate the teachers and enhance reading comprehension to learners.

The framework (Figure 3.1) reflects five phases that follow one another consecutively namely creating of the reading comprehension challenge, strategic planning, teaching of reading comprehension strategies, self-monitoring and feedback and self-efficacies. The phases are continuous and each one is based on the previous one, moving in a circular pattern. Teaching of reading comprehension requires competent teachers who are committed and have practical and theoretical knowledge about the teaching of reading comprehension. The teachers have a direct impact on the language of the learner, because within the school context the learner develops linguistic ability and knowledge of reading, and is taught comprehension strategies and their role in understanding the reading text (Garcia& Pintrich, 1994). If the learners are experiencing reading comprehension problems, this is where the teacher assists them, making them aware of the importance of reading comprehension strategies (NRP, 2000; Dole, 2000).

What emerged from the conceptual framework is that reading comprehension is a social event in which the teachers and learners should collaborate (Dewitz, 2006; Bandura, 1977).

It emerged conclusively that reading comprehension cannot take place in a vacuum. Learners need to be taught comprehension strategies and how to apply them correctly (NRP, 2000). The applied social model of self-regulation of Zimmerman encourages the teacher to give learners opportunity to become involved in their own learning. Then teachers should release their responsibility gradually so that learners can own their own learning.

3.6   Conclusion

What emerged from Chapters 2 and 3 is that teaching reading comprehension is a complex task and that it involves metacognitive and cognitive processes. However, the combination of theoretical and practical knowledge of learning theories and reading comprehension strategies can help teachers to teach reading comprehension effectively. The discussion in Chapter 3 demonstrated my understanding of the five theories discussed and how these theories can be helpful in teaching reading comprehension especially to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners.

Because reading comprehension is a thinking process, the theories of Piaget (1986), Vygotsky (1978), Bruner (1986), Ausubel (1963) and Bandura (1977) are relevant to the discussion of teaching comprehension and help to explain the cognitive concepts formed by Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. Learners construct their own meaning as they are actively participating in reading activities (Piaget, 1986), as depicted from the conceptual framework.

Reading comprehension is based on behaviours modelled and supported by competent adults (Vygotsky, 1978). As a result, this will encourage learners to change and refine the reading comprehension to a proficient and independent reader who can use both cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies, for example, cognitive strategies emphasise development of thinking skills and enhance comprehension while meta-cognitive strategies enable learners to benefit from instruction and correct use of cognitive strategies effectively. In addition, Zimmerman's (1998) applied model of social-cognitive theory can be useful for the teaching of reading comprehension because in the process of teaching reading comprehension, learners should become independent readers and be able to master their own reading comprehension.

It is important for teachers to use the idea as explained in the conceptual framework. This view is in agreement with the theory of Piaget (1986), Vygotsky (1978), Bruner (1986), Ausubel (1963) and Bandura (1977). My understanding is that the teacher and the learner should play an active role during reading comprehension. Therefore, it is critical that the teacher should integrate theories and practice to meet the individual reading comprehension needs of the learners.

Chapter 4 delineates the empirical process of the study. The research design and methodology are explained in detail and the procedure outlining how data was dealt with will be highlighted. Within the context of the study the participants and the sample selection are dealt with.

CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

'We encourage all teachers to explore the research, open their minds to changes in their instructional practice, and take up the challenge of helping all children become successful readers'

(Armbruster, Lehr &Osborn, 2003: iii)

4.1   Introduction

This study set out primarily to explore and record the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. Constructivism is the underpinning research paradigm of this study. The reason for this is because I attempted to construct multiple realities during the teaching of reading comprehension in Grade 3 classrooms. This study is qualitative in nature and used an interpretive paradigm to understand which strategies teachers employ in teaching reading comprehension.

The study was divided into three phases. The first phase of the study entailed individual interviews with six Grade 3 teachers. The second phase involved classroom observations. During the classroom observations, I acted as a non-participant observer. The objective of the classroom observations was to establish whether what the teachers had said during the individual teachers' interview sessions was borne out in practice. I observed four reading comprehension lessons per class to determine which strategies teachers used before, during and after reading. I used a classroom observation checklist. I accessed the original checklist from Henk *et al.*, (2000) about a reading lesson observations framework for elementary teachers, principals, and literacy supervisors which I adapted to suit the context of the study.

The third phase of my research project involved a focus group interviews with the six teachers who participated in the study. The discussion was centred on teachers' understanding of the concept of reading comprehension and the strategies they

used to teach reading comprehension before, during and after reading. The research questions that framed this study are discussed below and linked to the research methodology.

The paradigmatic considerations of this study are concerned with interpretivism. In this chapter, I have described the informal and formal phases of the study and explained the methodology of individual teachers' interviews, classroom observations and focus group interviews with the teacher participants. In addition, I explained the content analysis that relate to the teaching of reading comprehension. Then I discussed the data analysis process and the strategies employed to enhance validity of the study.

4.2   Research questions

The research questions are important for understanding the choice of the methodology and the direction the study took. The research questions were derived from the aim of the study, which was to investigate the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. The process of collecting data was informed by content analysis, individual teachers' interviews, classroom observations and focus group interviews with the participant teachers. Each instrument helped me to answer the research questions. The research questions are dealt with individually and linked to the methodology for data collection.

Main research question: How do teachers teach reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners?
This question was the key to the study. It provided an understanding of how teachers approach and facilitate reading comprehension in the classroom. Individual teachers' interviews, focus group interviews and classroom observations were employed with the Grade 3 teachers.

The purpose of conducting individual interviews focus group interviews and classroom observations was to identify the method and strategies they used for teaching reading comprehension. Interviews were audio-recorded and this provided rich data. The focus group interviews consisted of six teachers, two from each school. A content analysis was carried out of all policy documents related to the

teaching of reading in the primary grades. These include National curriculum Statement (NCS), Foundations for Learning Campaign (FFLC), *Teaching Reading in Early Grades* and National Reading Strategy (NRS).

I discerned how teachers understood the teaching of reading comprehension. The teachers were asked about their familiarity with the concept of reading comprehension and the teaching methods and strategies they used to teach reading comprehension. By focusing on the teachers' classroom practice, I gained insight into their beliefs and theoretical base. This was particularly important because there is an integral relationship between beliefs and actions. I believe that teachers' beliefs play a major role in their decision-making about the teaching of reading comprehension. My attempt to answer my main research question led me to pose a number of sub-questions. Three sub-questions guided me to focus on the most appropriate research methodology.

Sub-question 1: What do teachers understand by reading comprehension?
This question was key to understanding teachers' knowledge of the concept of reading comprehension. Therefore, through individual teachers' interviews and focus group interviews with the Grade 3 teachers, I gathered information on how the six teachers that participated in the study conceptualised reading comprehension.

Sub-question 2: What do teachers regard as important when teaching reading comprehension?
This sub-question is linked to what teachers regarded as important aspects when teaching reading comprehension. It probed the teachers' knowledge base and understanding of the concept of reading comprehension, teaching strategies and the relevant policy documents. I conducted two individual teacher interviews and focus group interviews.

Sub-question 3: Which strategies do teachers use in teaching reading comprehension?
The third sub-question was a key to understanding the provision and position of government policies in addressing the teaching of reading and reading comprehension. A content analysis was carried out on all major and minor policy documents in South Africa. The main emphasis was on the NCS (DoE, 2002), FFLC

(DoE, 2008), NRS (DoE, 2008) and *Teaching Reading in the Early Grades* (DoE, 2008), and their role in helping teachers in teaching reading comprehension to Tshivenda-speaking learners.

Through two sessions of individual teachers' interviews and two sessions of focus group interviews, I had the opportunity to listen to the teachers and find out their views regarding the teaching of reading comprehension. Classroom observations were done in three government schools, each with two Grade 3 classes and where Tshivenda is used for teaching and learning. Through classroom observations, I saw and observed how teachers teach reading comprehension, which strategies they use in teaching reading comprehension in the real classroom setting. Classroom observations were conducted to explore and to find out if what they said during the interviews and focus group discussions match or not.

Sub-question 4: What strategies can teachers use to improve reading comprehension?

The fourth sub-question was also key to understanding the provision and position of government policies and the availability of literature in addressing the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda teachers. Relevant national and international literature was reviewed on the subject. However, little research exists on the teaching of reading comprehension in South Africa. Because of that, most of the sources in Chapter 2 are from America and other countries. From the literature, South Africa can learn about the teaching of reading comprehension, and which strategies teachers can use to improve reading comprehension to the learners.

The conceptual framework on Chapter 4, Figure 3.1, shows teachers the steps to be followed when teaching reading comprehension. The aim is that learners should improve their reading comprehension level. The framework in Figure 3.1 reflects a pathway to enable teachers to provide support to the learners (see Chapter 3, sections 3.4.1; 3.4.2; 3.5).

4.3   Paradigmatic considerations

4.3.1   Qualitative paradigm

Creswell (2008:2) defines qualitative research as "an enquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting." In other words, qualitative research is concerned with the meaning of human behaviour and experiences, and of its social functions. This view is further advanced by Merriam (2002:12), who defines qualitative research as "an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible."

To enable the researcher to gain in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, qualitative research makes use of a variety of methods and data collection strategies. In this study, I used classroom observations, individual teachers' interviews and focus group interviews with the teachers and content analysis. This helped to make the results credible and valid. By using different methods at various points in the research process, I could build on the strength of each type of data collection and minimise the weaknesses of a single approach (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:408; Swanson & Holton, 1997:93).

There are many features attributing to the qualitative research approach. One of the features I considered was that qualitative methods are naturalistic. Participants are seen in their 'natural setting' with all its complexities and ambiguities. I wished to gain insight into the teaching of reading comprehension by observing it in the natural setting of the classroom. The qualitative approach has the potential to uncover how and why people do things. In my study, I wished to uncover the teachers' teaching of reading comprehension and the strategies they used to teach reading comprehension. I chose the qualitative approach because it aims to study situations in their natural settings in an attempt to interpret phenomenon in terms of the meanings that people attach to them.

Another reason that motivated my selection of qualitative research was the nature of the research questions. A research question that requires detailed, in-depth information regarding a certain matter is among those regarded as suitable for qualitative research (Mertens, 1998:162). As in-depth information about teaching reading comprehension to Grade 3 learners was required, the research question of this study needed qualitative research methods. By using qualitative research, I collected an abundance of data that helped me to understand how teachers teach reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners.

4.3.2   Interpretive paradigm

This research is interpretive, descriptive and explanatory, which gives me an opportunity to understand and give meaning to the topic of the research. Teachers and learners interact with each other, giving meaning to what they are doing and why they are doing it. The paradigm helped me to understand and interpret teachers' actions when teaching reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. The paradigm also shaped my understanding of teachers' knowledge and experiences about teaching reading. According to Jackson (2003), the interpretive paradigm involves interpreting and understanding human action. Bassey (1999:40) also sees interpretive research as a category of empirical research. He describes interpretive research as research that focuses on data collection. Human action must be interpreted to give it meaning. In my case, I listened, observed teachers' actions when teaching reading comprehension and tried to understand how they taught reading comprehension through their actions. During observation, I was able to see and understand their actions when teaching reading comprehension in their classrooms. Subsequently, I explored the relationship between their knowledge, experiences and actions by analysing what I had observed in the classroom.

In the light of the above, I regard myself as an interpretivist who wanted to interpret and give meaning to the data I collected on the teaching of reading comprehension in Grade 3 Tshivenda classrooms.

4.4　Research design

I used the case study design (Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1998). Yin (2003:5) defines a case study as an "empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident."Stake (1995:3) defines a case study as "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances." In other words, the case study is a way of investigating an empirical topic by following a set of pre-specified procedures. I used the case study methodology because I was dealing with a single case, looking at a specific grade and a specific number of participants in a particular area and community.

According to Opie (2004:74), the purpose of the case study is to maximise understanding of one phenomenon to provide greater insights into an issue or to improve theoretical explanation. Furthermore, the case study emphasises the evolving nature of qualitative research, which corresponds with the exploratory and descriptive approaches and inductive and deductive interpretation. I focused on a real situation (teaching), with real people (learners and teachers) in an environment familiar to myself (classrooms) in order to answer my research questions. I studied the interactions of events, human relationships and other factors. Merriam (1998:27) refers to a case as the object of study. She defines it as "a thing, a single entity, and a unit around which there are boundaries." To her, a case can be a person such as learners, a teacher, a school, and a community, even a specific policy. For Creswell (2008:439), a case means a single individual, several individuals separately or in a group, a programme, events or activities. In line with all these definitions, I identified the case of my study as the experiences of teachers and learners during the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners in the Vhembe district.

Merriam (1998:40) explains that the value of a particular research design is intrinsically related to the motivation for selecting it as the most appropriate plan for addressing the research problem. She argues that one of the advantages of an instrumental case study is that unlike experimental, survey, or historic research, it does not favour any particular method for collecting or analysing data. Any method,

from testing to interviewing, can be used in a case study to gather data (Merriam, 1998:28). For me that was a definite advantage because it opened up the possibility of obtaining information from a variety of sources. Merriam (1998:33) highlights two more advantages. A case study may be selected "for its very uniqueness, for what it can reveal about a phenomenon, knowledge we would not otherwise have access to." Merriam (1998:41) also states that a case study offers a way of "exploring complex social units with numerous variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon." This is of value in my study where the complex nature of a phenomenon like reading comprehension is examined.

On the other hand, Merriam (1998:42) claims that case studies are limited by the investigator's sensitivity and integrity. She also asserts that although rich, thick description and analysis of a phenomenon may be desired, a researcher may not have enough time or money to devote to such an undertaking. There are other limitations involving the issue of reliability, validity and generalisability. However, I share the opinion of Merriam (1998:41) that "because of its strengths, [the] case study is a particularly appealing design for applied fields of study such as education." In this study I wished to capture the teachers' teaching of reading comprehension without having to first deconstruct the component elements or their relevance, a process I hoped would only emerge later. The recognition of the "embeddedness of social truths" in a case study approach had a special appeal to me and created an expectation that some elements of such social truths might be uncovered through this case. I gathered data through various methods that enabled me to have an in-depth description of my case, which was valid as the findings can be transferable.

4.5   Research sites and participants and research

The research consisted of investigations at three schools. The schools (A, B, and C) were situated in the Dzindi Circuit, Vhembe District (see the map in Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 Limpopo province showing Vhembe district

I chose three schools with two Grade 3 classes each, which gave a total of six teachers who participated in the study. The reason was to ensure that the data generated by such a number of participants would be manageable given the limited time in which I had to conduct the research (Mugo, 2006). I selected three government schools situated within 10 to 15 kilometres of each other.

Maxwell (2005:88) defines purposeful selection of cases as "a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that cannot be forgotten as well from the choices." This study used purposeful selection of cases because purposeful selection of the schools. The teacher participants were selected from public schools where Tshivenda is the language of teaching and learning. The easy accessibility to the schools increased the study's feasibility as the schools are close to my workplace. Maxwell (2005:26) defines the choice of cases as "decisions about where to conduct the research and whom to involve, an essential part of the research processes." He adds that the choice of cases usually involves people and settings, events and processes. McMillan and Schumacher (1997:434) define purposeful selection of choices of cases as "a strategy to choose individuals likely to be knowledgeable and

informative about the phenomenon of interest."This implies that a convenience choice of cases refers to the selection of an accessible geographical area. I used pseudonyms to protect the schools and teachers' privacy and to maintain confidentiality. During selection of cases, consideration was given to variables that were rationally relevant for the study.

4.5.1   Profile of the three schools

The three schools in the study are situated in a rural setting. Each had two Grade 3 classes. School A's classes ranged from Grade R to Grade 7, whereas schools B and C had classes from Grade R to Grade 4.

In this research project, the focus was on the teaching of reading comprehension. Learners were also primary respondents because I could not observe how teachers teach reading comprehension without the presence of the learners in the classrooms. Schools have been categorised into quintiles 1, 2, 3 and 4, for example, school A is referred to as quintile 1, while schools B and C are referred to as quintile 2. Schools under quintiles 1 and 2 are both no-fee schools. These schools cannot ask parents for any payment at all. In terms of funding from the department, quintile 1 gets more funding than quintile 2. Most of these learners speak Tshivenda because their parents grew up in this area and they speak Tshivenda as their home language.

School A is a primary school with an enrolment of 534 learners. There are 17 teachers in the school, teaching classes from Grade R to Grade 7.It was the only school that had classes up to Grade 7. There were six teachers in the Foundation Phase, two Grade 2 classes and two Grade 3 classes. The other teachers rotated from the Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase. Each Grade 3 class had 39 learners. The school is 52 years old and the building that we see in the picture on page (iii) is a new building that is 12 years old.

School B is a primary school with an enrolment of 564 learners. There were 22 teachers teaching classes form Grade R to Grade 4. There was no school library. The school is 28 years old and the building that we see in the picture on page (iii) is a new building that is 11 years old.

School C has an enrolment of 491 learners, with 19 teachers teaching classes from Grade R to Grade 4.There was no school library. The school is 52 year old and the new building in the picture on page iii is 12 years old. School C is 58 years old and the new building that we see from the picture on page iii is a new building, which is 15 years old.

What is interesting about the case study schools is that they have come to realise that Foundation Phase is important. The new classes have been provided for the Foundation Phase learners.

4.5.2   Profile of the teacher respondents

The profile of the participating teachers as my participants enabled me to gather important information on the teaching of reading comprehension, for example, their academic and professional qualifications were an indication of the high calibre of the respondents I worked with. It also provided me with a picture of the level to which these teachers were likely to understand the dynamics of teaching reading comprehension within their context. This was pertinent because I needed to know this when gathering and interpreting the data. My teaching experience also assisted me in determining whether the views and opinions of respondents were appropriate and in line with their knowledge of the job.

The selected teachers were all qualified to teach in the Foundation Phase, with the exception of one teacher from School C who held a senior teacher's diploma (STD). In order to gain an even deeper understanding of the respondents, I collected data on their teaching experience, age, qualifications and experience in teaching Grade 3. The findings to this effect are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Teacher respondent profiles

Respondent	School	Age	Gender	Qualifications	Experience in Grade 3
Respondent 1	School A Grade 3A	46	Female	JPTD, ACE	6
Respondent 2	School A Grade 3B	43	Female	JPTD	6
Respondent 3	School B Grade 3B	53	Female	PTC, HED, BED	12
Respondent 4	School B Grade 3B	47	Female	JPTD, BA, BED, MED	8
Respondent 5	School C Grade 3A	48	Female	STD,BA, BED	9
Respondent 6	School C Grade 3B	52	Female	JPTD,BA,BED	6

Key to qualifications

JPTD: Junior Primary Teacher's Diploma;

ACE: Advanced Certificate in Education;

PTC: Primary Teacher's Certificate;

HED: Higher Education Diploma;

BA: Bachelor of Arts;

BEd: Bachelor Honours in Education;

MEd: Master's in Education;

STD: Senior Teacher's Diploma.

Table 4.1 shows that the age range of the informants in this research project was 43-52 years. The teachers who participated in the study were quite mature in age. The fact that these teachers were mature might have an influence on their views of the teaching of reading comprehension.

Table 4.1 shows that the teachers who participated in the study were all females. This may simply mean that in many schools most teachers in the Foundation Phase are females. These teachers were not selected but randomly sampled as coincidentally were found to be in Grade 3. Since the focus of the study was on Grade 3, I had to focus on those teachers only.

Overall, the participants in the research were qualified, with four of them holding university degrees. Of these, one had a Master's degree in education. Only one teacher – teacher 2 from School A, had a three-year Junior Primary Teacher's Diploma (JPTD). Teacher 1 from School B had a three-year JPTD and an ACE in Learner Support. She claimed that her JPTD and ACE gave her credit equivalent to a bachelor's degree. She had furthermore registered with a university for a BEd. Teacher 3 from School B, the oldest of the six participating teachers had a two-year professional certificate previously known as the Primary Teacher's Certificate (PTC). The PTC was specifically meant for primary school teachers. Teacher 5 at School C had a professional qualification, the Senior Teacher's Diploma (STD), meant for teaching from Grade 4 to Grade 7.

Teacher qualifications were important for this study, because teachers all need quality education and training in order to meet the learning needs of the learners in South African schools, especially in the Foundation Phase. With adequate professional and academic qualifications, teachers may be able to promote efficiency in their classrooms. In addition, it is well known that teachers in possession of professional degrees are perceived as being better qualified for the teaching profession than those with diplomas and certificates only (Naidoo, 2001). I assumed that these teachers with their wealth of experience and professional qualifications were likely to give valuable responses. Therefore, if educational qualifications are a factor in teaching reading comprehension, then one may conclude that these teachers are better informed in so far as teaching reading comprehension to Grade 3 is concerned. This implies that the presence of well-qualified professional teachers therefore acts as an enabling factor as far as the teaching of reading comprehension is concerned.

The table also shows that the respondents had extensive teaching experience, ranging between 6 and 12 years in Grade 3. They were all experienced in teaching in the Foundation Phase as none of the participants had fewer than five years of teaching experience in Grade 3. This suggested that the participating teachers in this study were generally mature and experienced in the Foundation Phase, in particular in Grade 3. This characteristic thus became an enabling factor in terms of the research questions of this project, because the longer the teaching experience of an individual in a particular class, the better he/she is likely to understand the

methods and strategies of teaching reading comprehension and its related issues and be able to facilitate them effectively. Based on their teaching experience in Grade 3, I assumed that these teachers were information-rich and would provide valid and meaningful data that would contribute to an understanding of how teachers teach reading comprehension.

4.5.3   Research process

In this section, I present an account of the informal and formal phases of my data collection strategies (Evans, 2005:51-52). A preliminary literature review on the teaching of reading comprehension indicated that extensive research exists on the subject (NRP, 2000). However, the literature confirmed that minimal research had been done on the teaching of reading comprehension, in particular the teaching of Tshivenda-speaking learners as the focus of the study.

4.5.3.1 Informal data collection strategies

I commenced this research project by conducting a pilot study during the teaching practice period at my university, where I had an opportunity to interview teachers for about 30 minutes, observe in classes and conduct focus group interviews with both teachers and student teachers on teaching reading comprehension. I conducted the pilot study with teachers whose schools did not participate in the study. The reason for this was that I did not want to prepare those who would participate in the study about the aim of the study.

Although I have experience of teaching in the Foundation Phase, I was initially still indecisive on how interviews, a classroom observation schedule and focus group discussions with teachers should be conducted and how to assist teachers to express themselves to provide data for answering my research questions. After consulting the literature on the teaching of reading comprehension, I constructed an interview schedule, classroom observation schedule and focus group interview schedule. After consulting with my supervisors, I conducted individual interviews, classroom observations and focus group interviews with the teachers in the pilot study. The results of the pilot study assisted me to identify some gaps in my

instruments. The pilot study also gave an indication of what teachers were thinking in regard to teaching reading comprehension.

4.5.3.2 Formal data collection strategies

During the formal data collection period, I used individual teacher interviews as the first data collection instrument (see Appendix C). The reason was that since a focus group interview involved a group I wanted to first listen to the individual teachers without being influenced by colleagues before the focus group interviews. This was followed by classroom observations and then teachers' focus group interviews. I selected these tools as they were directed by my research questions. I wanted to find out from my research participants how teachers taught reading comprehension and which strategies teachers used in teaching reading comprehension. I regarded my tools as guiding principles towards interpreting the information gathered. The tools further brought out the qualitative nature of these interactions and helped me to comprehend the 'why' and 'how' of teaching reading comprehension in Grade 3 classrooms.

The four research instruments, namely individual teachers' interviews, classroom observations, focus group interviews and content analysis, were used for triangulation in the study. Since the focus of the study was on the teaching of reading comprehension, I thought it would be appropriate to review the relevant policy documents and analyse them. This was a way to find out if there was any policy document in place that explained to the teachers how they should teach reading comprehension in a Tshivenda classroom. Since this study was an in-depth case study, using the four instruments helped to validate the findings, since the findings from all the instruments could converge to inform one phenomenon, namely the teaching of reading comprehension of Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners.

4.5.3.3 Personal role in research process

During the research process, I established a good relationship with the teachers. Prior to any data collection process I obtained official permission to perform research and adhered to ethical research principles. This was followed by the application for permission to conduct the research at the schools identified. I went to

the schools and sought permission from teachers to conduct my research in their classrooms. They agreed and signed consent forms. After these meetings I started with my formal data collection sessions. When collecting data I made an attempt to be as objective as possible. I collected data by means of individual teachers' interviews, classroom observations and focus group interviews, applying triangulation to establish trustworthiness of the data. During the two sessions of teachers' individual interviews I had a meeting with each teacher after school. I used field notes and listened to the audiotape recordings in order to transcribe the raw data. During classroom observation, I acted as a non-participant observer. I sat and recorded live observation of reading comprehension lessons in the time agreed with each school. The role of non-participant observer assisted me to record everything that I saw and heard without interrupting the teacher. The only time that I discussed anything with the teachers was after the lesson for clarification. The time spent in each classroom observation lesson was one hour and 30 minutes per session. The time for reading was 30 minutes (DoE, 2008). My focus was on the teaching of reading comprehension. I subsequently listened to the audiotape recordings of the lesson observed.

After three sessions of classroom of observations per class, I conducted a first session of focus group interviews with the teachers (see Appendix D). Raw data was transcribed and then analysed. As part of my data collection, I kept field notes which supplemented my classroom observations, and I referred to my schedule list throughout the study. I listened to the audiotape recordings of the discussion. This also assisted me to add on the classroom observations schedule. I also reviewed the current policy on the teaching of reading comprehension. From the literature, I realised that reading comprehension is a broad area and that I could not rely on existing research on the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners, as there was no evidence of such research.

4.5.4   Data collection methods and instruments

In this study, the principle of triangulation for determining validity and reliability was applied as a wide range of data collection methods were used in this study (Schurink, 1998:253). The triangulation principle of hypothesis-generating, writing theoretical memos and theoretical sampling was applied.

I first develop an objective and constraints of the problem. The hypothesis-generating phase involves a careful review of data and careful studying of the phenomenon in question. It furthermore indicates the set of data that may be relevant to the investigation.

I kept the record of theoretical memos. These can be anything written or drawn in the constant comparison that makes up a grounded theory (GT). Theoretical memos are important tools to both refine and keep track of the experiences just after they happen.

I collect data, codes, and analyses and then decide what data to collect next and where to find it in order to develop theory. Charmaz (2000) suggests that theoretical sampling is best used when key concepts have been discovered. Initial data collection is commenced with a fairly random group of people, who have experienced the phenomenon under study to begin to develop concepts. Theoretical sampling is then used to generate further data in order to confirm and refute original categories.

Content analysis was reviewed to determine what is understood by the teaching of reading comprehension. In the next paragraphs, each data collection instrument is discussed in detail.

4.5.4.1 Interviews

I conducted two sessions of individual teachers' interview. During the interviews, I engaged the teachers' three broad questions on the phenomenon of enquiry. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994:353), the individual teachers' interview is "a conversation, the art of asking questions and listening." They state that interviewing is one of the most common and powerful ways we use to try and understand our fellow human beings. Individual teachers' interviews were conducted after school and not during school hours. This was to avoid disturbing the teaching schedule. The reason for the individual teachers' interviews was to get information from the participating teachers themselves, thereby ensuring getting relevant and credible data.

I also considered the way in which the data would be employed, the kind of information needed and resources available (Patton, 1990). The interviews were face-to-face and took a semi-structured, in-depth form, as the intention was to gain access to teachers' experiences of teaching reading comprehension. May (2002), notes that the advantage of an in-depth interview is to encourage full disclosure by the participants. I used open-ended questions to avoid getting 'yes' or 'no' answers as they do not yield much information in connection with the subject at hand. Open-ended questions are flexible and allow the interviewer to probe (Cohen, Manion& Morrison, 2000). At the beginning of each individual teachers' interview, I greeted the interviewee and chatted briefly with her to enable them to relax and to set the mood for the interview. I stated the purpose of the interview and the research question, which formed the basis of discussion. Interviewees were informed that their identity and that of their schools would not be revealed. I asked permission to tape the interviews and to use the information in my research. I also ensured that before the interviews started the tape recorder had been switched on, a lesson I had learnt during the pilot interview phase. I listened attentively to the interviewees as they relayed their experiences. Whenever I realised that a question had not yielded much information, I followed up by asking another question that would elicit more details. Probing was used throughout the interviews so that the interviewees would outline their experiences in connection with the subject under discussion (see Appendix F for an example of transcripts of data).

I listened to the interviewee, attempting to question and probe in ways that I would gather the best data, and trying to manage the process so that I knew how much time had passed, and how much time was left. The time allocated for the individual interviews was 30 minutes. I used semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix C).Cohen *et al.*, (2000:279) view the semi-structured interview as one in which the content and procedures are organised in advance, and the sequence determined by means of a schedule. I also prepared my interview questions in advance, studied them, and started practicing how I was going to carry out the interview. At the end of the interviews, I thanked the interviewees and promised that I would contact them again to seek clarification on issues raised if the need arose and to give them an opportunity to verify that what I had transcribed was in line with what transpired during the interviews.

The advantage of using individual teachers' interviews for this study was the rich data gathered from the interviewees. I noticed that through the interviews, new understandings on teaching reading comprehension were obtained because of the relationship that developed between the teachers and me. However, the disadvantage of interviews is that they are prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer and can distort what the respondents really mean (Cohen *et al.,* 2000). To correct the possible bias of the individual interviews, I taped and transcribed the interviews and I also conducted focus group interviews to collect more data.

4.5.4.2 Focus group interviews

A focus group interview was conducted with all six teachers. The focus group interview data complemented the individual teachers' interviews and the classroom observations. This is according to Krueger's (1994:16-20) opinion that multiple focus groups interviews with similar participants are needed to detect patterns and trends across groups. The results obtained from a single group could be unreliable as one group could be unresponsive and reluctant to participate. Mertens (1998:174) supports Krueger by saying that several focus group interviews are needed when the research is highly structured and exploratory. By bringing together small groups of Grade 3 teachers, I obtained information regarding the nature of problems related to the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 learners and in particular in respect of my research question. I hoped that through questions, the conversation would develop naturally. Each session lasted no longer than one hour. However, focus group interviews have their own limitations in that some participants are reluctant to contribute; however, in my study the participants willingly participated. In addition, I employed classroom observations.

The objective of the focus group interviews was to find out about the teachers' understanding of reading comprehension and what strategies they employed in teaching reading comprehension. The focus group interviews were valuable for this study because the participants interacted with one another rather than the interviewer. At the end of the session, the participants' agenda predominates and not that of the interviewer (Cohen *et al.,* 2000:288). Because the focus of the study

was on the teachers teaching reading comprehension, the focus group interviews were particularly effective in providing information about why teachers thought or felt the way they did about teaching reading comprehension. I intended that through the focus group interviews the participants would provide information-rich data relevant to the study.

Another goal was to uncover some of the emerging themes that affect the teaching of reading comprehension. The focus group interview design expanded on my research knowledge about teaching reading comprehension and provided practical information about the issues that affect teachers that teach reading comprehension. I made notes of the teachers' responses in a notepad, and audio recordings were made. This strategy allowed me to concentrate on the topic and the dynamics of the interview.

The focus group interviews were guided discussions where I had a list of questions in order to ensure coverage of important issues related to the topic. The questions allowed for flexibility in responding to concerns raised by the group. Interviews were conducted more than once when insufficient information was obtained from the session. This was used to verify information obtained from the first interview. This gave me the opportunity to get to know the teachers better as they became free and more confident.

4.5.4.3 Classroom observations

In this study, I conducted classroom observations. I adopted a naturalistic approach to studying teachers' techniques of teaching reading comprehension in the classroom. I wanted to gain insights into the strategies teachers employed in teaching reading comprehension. I hoped that I would be able to understand more fully how teachers taught reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. Through this method I could observe what was actually happening in the classroom when reading comprehension was taught, and which strategies teachers used for teaching reading comprehension. As a non-participant observer, I wanted to give myself a chance to observe the interactions in the classroom freely without influencing them. I planned what was going to be observed and had a clear purpose. The reading lesson observation framework included blanks to indicate the

teacher being observed, the evaluator, the school year, the date of the observation, the observation number, and which phases of the lesson and strategies apply, namely before, during and after reading. The checklist was divided into six components that are relevant to the teaching of reading comprehension.

Under each component, a series of items were included that represented criteria for evaluating the component's characteristics.

Component 1:

The classroom climate component dealt with the physical setting, children's access to authentic reading materials, the provision of a designated reading area as well as an area for small-group instruction, learners' active engagement and social interaction, and practices that signified that literacy was valued and promoted.

Component 2:

The pre-reading phase included items such as the encouragement of previewing, the activation of prior knowledge and the stimulation of interest, and vocabulary instruction.

Component 3:

During-reading phase. This phase involved items such as the conformation of predictions, retelling, critical judgements, application of new vocabulary and continued teacher monitoring of learner comprehension.

Component 4:

The after-reading phase, which involved aspects such as reading aloud and confirmed or disproved predictions based on prior knowledge, explaining, summarising, retelling, and examples of modelling provided by the teacher.

Component 5:

Strategies of modelling, giving clear explanations of what the strategy is and why it is useful (explicit teaching), contextualisation of skills, reading strategy use, teachers' release of responsibility and scaffolding.

Component 6:

Teacher's practices of effective teaching comprehension strategies.

I systematically recorded what I observed. I observed four lessons per teacher, which gave me a total of 24 lessons to be analysed. Merriam (2002:101) argues that observations are the major means of collecting data in qualitative research. She further says they offer a first-hand account of the situation under study and when combined with interviews and content analysis, allow for a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated. Classroom observation assisted me to answer my research question. The advantage of classroom observation was that it assisted me to actually see what the teachers were doing rather than what they said they were doing. I could replay the audio tape to listen to how the teacher was teaching and ask follow-up questions. The disadvantage of classroom observation was that I was very close to the teachers during their lesson presentation. I realised that this may have led to subjectivity on my account that could jeopardise the factual reliability of the data (Merriam, 1998:95).

The classroom observations took four weeks. The longer I stayed in the classroom, the more I became part of the classroom environment. A special detail from these observations was discussed during each classroom observation. During classroom observations, I used a checklist. Having a checklist of classroom observation criteria assisted me to focus on aspects I wanted to investigate in the classroom before, during and after reading (see Appendix E).This classroom observation data was coded, transcribed and integrated to the themes emerged from interviews and focus group interview discussions.

4.5.4.4 Content analysis

Throughout the study, I comprehensively reviewed current literature and official policy documents with provision on the teaching of reading comprehension. I used documents such as policies and other related documents.

A content analysis was carried out on policy documents in South Africa pertaining to the teaching of reading comprehension in the Foundation Phase. The main emphasis was on the NCS (DoE, 2002), FFL (DoE, 2008), NRS (DoE, 2008) and *Teaching Reading in the Early Grades* (DoE, 2008). The content analysis helped me to understand school policies and to see what might be informing the teachers'

practices, and their role in helping teachers to teach reading strategies to Tshivenda-speaking Grade 3 learners. Although documents are a good source of data for numerous reasons, they have also some disadvantages.

A limitation is that I could not interview the authors of these documents as they were mostly written by teams commissioned by the government. Fortunately, these documents were easily accessible, free and contained information that supported my subject of enquiry. Merriam (2002) confirms that documents are a particularly good source of information for qualitative case studies because they can ground an investigation in the context of the problem being investigated. In this study, analysis of this data source lent contextual richness and assisted me to ground my inquiry within the setting. These documents assisted me to validate my study as they were based on reality and were guided by research questions and goals.

In Table 4.2 provide an overview of data collection methods and data collection instruments and I subsequently explain each aspect.

Table 4.2: Data collection methods and data collection instruments

Methods of Data Collection	Type	Instrument Assisting Data Collection	Prompt	Data Capturing Method
Interview	Individual interview	Researcher interviewing teachers Interview schedule	Discussion about teaching reading comprehension to Tshivenda-speaking learners and their experiences as teachers	Informal field notes Audio tape transcription of interviews
Focus group interviews	Small group discussions	Researcher involving teachers in discussions. Researcher asking questions	Discussion about the teaching of reading comprehension to Tshivenda-speaking learners and their experiences as teachers	Focus group discussion schedule. Transcription of discussions. Audio tape, informal field notes
Observation	Classroom observation	Researcher observations. Observation schedule	None. Used 'natural field setting'	Informal field notes
Content analysis	Official policy documents with provision for teaching reading comprehension	Researcher collecting the policies	Discussion about teaching reading comprehension to Tshivenda-speaking learners as explained in the policy documents	Researcher reviewing the literature Grounded theory Thematic analysis

4.5.4.5 Field notes

The data collection methods selected for the research project included field notes. During classroom observations, I took field notes of the experiences I had during the process of data gathering. Lessons observed were taught in Tshivenda. The field notes assisted me to gain a better understanding of how teachers taught reading comprehension. According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994:74) the importance of field notes can be described as follows:

> The keen observations and important conversations one has in the field cannot be fully utilized in a rigorous analysis of the data unless they are written down. The qualitative researcher's field notes contain what has been seen and heard by the researcher, without interpretation. In other words, the participant observer's primary task is to record without inferring feelings to the participants and without inferring why and how something happened.

In addition, the field notes also assisted me to access the subject and to record what I heard and observed in an obtrusive manner. The highlights of my field notes and their supporting literature are set out in Appendix L.

4.6   Data analysis

Wiersma (1991:85) maintains that qualitative data analysis requires organisation of information and data reduction. I employed the systemic guidelines of grounded theory analysis as described by Charmaz (2000).According to Maree (2011:78), data analysis, based on grounded theory, focuses on constant comparison of the data leading to coding and then categorisation of the data. Data analysis proceeded simultaneously and in progression of the data collection and data capturing processes.

Analysis commenced from individual teachers' interviews, classroom observation and focus group interviews. The actual words of the teacher participants were analysed and interpreted. Themes and categories emerged from the teachers' responses to the research questions. I suspected there would be a repetition of certain themes. This entailed transcribing the data in verbatim form. I read the entire

transcript to get a global impression of the content and look out for themes emerging from the text. I highlighted units of meaning with markers of different colours to denote related themes.

In this study, themes and categories were teachers' responses, in which they reported on their live experiences, meanings and the reality which they attached to teaching reading comprehension. According to Braun and Clark (2006: 81), 'thematic analysis can be a method that works both to reflect reality and to unpick or unravel the surface of reality'. I incorporated categorised, related codes. These categories reflected themes, which I shall use in the discussion of the topic.

From an interpretive paradigm, I compared my findings with guiding ideas and expectations. I checked the relationship between the research findings and the textual data. I presented the findings of each instrument in relation to the research questions. With my final analysis and interpretation, I presented the case study in a rational and coherent order in an impressionistic style. In my final chapter, I integrated the findings with the literature reviewed in order to substantiate evidence in answering my research questions.

4.7   Strategies for enhancing the validity of this study

In this section, I address issues of validity as a standardised component of the process of qualitative research (Merriam, 1998:198-219). The data collection was carried out according to the research design developed for this study and throughout the research process, I was conscious of enhancing the validity of the study.

I conducted the research in an ethical manner by involving the teachers in the research process. In order to make the teachers comfortable I asked for their approval before engaging in the instruments. I applied for permission through official channels and obtained informed consent of all role players like school principals and district manager. I requested to see all the teachers who were to take part in the research project and assured them of the confidentiality for their contribution. I asked for permission to sit in the classroom, observe the teachers while teaching

reading comprehension. This period assisted me to validate the observations that informed me in designing the instruments.

This study is based on real-life experiences, obtained through probing and in-depth interviews, focus group interviews with the teachers and classroom observations. One may argue that this study may be considered as truthful interpretations or descriptions of the respondents' experience. I piloted my research during 2010 in schools that were not part of the study. The pilot study assisted me to develop and test the adequacy of my research instruments; and to develop my research questions.

To ensure that accuracy was achieved, I taped all my individual teachers' interviews and the focus group interviews to capture the exact words of the respondents. I took field notes on those important moments during all my interviews, focus group interviews and classroom observations. I had two sessions of interviews and focus group discussions. I employed member checking by availing the transcriptions of the interviews to the respondents so that they would be verified. Part of this data was collected through individual interviews with each teacher who participated in the study.

To ensure trustworthiness of findings, I employed different procedures during the analysis and interpretation phases of this study. I analysed all the classroom observations, field notes, individual interviews and focus group interviews of each teacher to acquire a clear interpretation of their expressions and perceptions in an attempt to maximise authenticity. In addition, I compared the findings of certain instruments by requesting the participants' corroboration. Another procedure I employed was triangulation to ensure trustworthiness of my findings I therefore used classroom observations, teachers' individual interviews and focus group interviews to collect data.

I used multiple data collection instruments to provide data in order to strengthen a crystallisation of meaning and interpretation. This resulted in the construction of a thick description of the teachers' real experiences concerning the teaching of reading comprehension.

As the instruments assisted me in the data collection processes they provided the textual data which was at the core of my research. I report on the limitations and constraints of the data collection methods and my corrective efforts to enrich validity in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Data collection methods, limitations and enrichment of validity

Methods for data collection	Limitations	Enrichment of validity
Prompt used to motivate teachers to participate	Imposing the researcher's own views and hindering the teachers' free expression of their perceptions	I built up a relationship of trust with the teachers
Individual interview	Teachers are inhibited to model Teachers can be shy to participate and model	I built up a relationship of trust with the teachers Teachers were assured that they could contribute freely I gained their trust and they felt free to participate
Focus group interview	Teachers can be shy to participate in a group The most verbal teacher can take over the conversation	I built up a relationship of trust with the teachers Teachers were assured that they could contribute freely. Teachers were assured that they could contribute freely either in English or Tshivenda and that everything would be confidential
Classroom observation	Teachers can be shy to participate Unequal power relationship can inhibit teachers to 'act' naturally	Teachers were assured that they could contribute freely and that confidentiality would be observed Teachers were assured that they could contribute freely either in English or Tshivenda Special attention was paid to each of the teachers for their contributions, which were documented in their presence

4.8   Conclusion

In Chapter 4, I explained the research methodology adopted in this study. The chapter locates the study in the qualitative research paradigm. As part of a naturalistic approach, I employed qualitative research because the study sought to examine teachers' understandings, experiences of, and responses to the teaching

of reading comprehension. The chapter has defined the study as a case study of three schools, each with two Grade 3 classes.

Consistent with qualitative research, the data was analysed as an ongoing process in which a multi-mode approach to data collection was adopted. This approach was in keeping with the traditions of qualitative research, whose strength lies in triangulation.

In this chapter, I have summarised and described the methods, instruments and texts used in my enquiry. I explained how I attempted to improve the validity and reliability of the data collected through various methods. The various methods were chosen for their suitability for the research project. In addition, this research was in almost all instances informed by the theories of Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner, Ausubel and Zimmerman's applied social model of self-regulated learning.

I trust that the reader may gain insights into the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. It seems critical that teachers should be encouraged to explore the research on teaching reading comprehension and the importance of the quotation at the commencement of this chapter. This will open their minds to changes in their instructional practice, and take up the challenge of helping all learners to become successful readers.

In Chapter 5, I present the data and the analysis thereof.

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 2	F F	6 6	JPTD, ACE, JPTD	46 43
B **Grade 3** **C and D**	3 4	F F	12 8	PTC, HED, BED JPTD, BA, BED, MED	53 47
C **Grade 3** **E and F**	5 6	F F	9 6	STD, BA, BED JPTD, BA, BED	48 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**
		Teachers' varied opinions, beliefs and understanding of reading comprehension *There are two words, [namely reading and comprehension] the reader must read and thereafter comprehend*	**Identified roles of both the teacher and the learners** *The one who is teaching reading comprehension must be ready, have the love, know his/her learners*	**Challenges of teaching reading comprehension** *The challenge has been highlighted and this is serious*
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 &Reutzel, 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 need 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. Teachers1, 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 step1, 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 • Reading comprehension is not done across the learning programmes • No Tshivenda guidelines • There are no readers for learners • Time allocation is a challenge	x x x x - x	x x x x x x	x x x 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	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. 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. 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). 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 *et al.,* 2007).
Support	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. 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 *et al.,* 2010).
Contradictions	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. The literature (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Carter, 2000) confirmed that the teaching of reading comprehension strategies is not taught in the primary grades.
Silences	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. Conversely, they expressed their willingness to learn and to attend workshops in order to become competent teachers of teaching reading comprehension to Tshivenda learners.

New insights	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 *Teaching reading in early grades* 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.
	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 *et.,* (2010), JET (2010) agree that teacher training should develop a module on the teaching of reading comprehension with Tshivenda examples.

In Chapter 6, I present possible answers to my research questions. I also provide a summary, conclusions and recommendations for this study.

CHAPTER 6
SYNTHESIS AND SIGNIFICANCE FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

*'The best way to pursue meaning is through conscious,
controlled use of strategies'* (NRP, 2000:4-46)

6.1   Introduction

In Chapter 5, I explored the significance of my findings as they emerged from the data. I presented the findings through themes, which emerged from the data collected through various instruments. The themes emerged from teachers' voices and from my observations of learners in the classroom. During the individual interviews, the participating teachers expressed their understanding of reading comprehension as the ability to read text with understanding.

Most of them expressed their concern about their learners who struggled to read and had difficulties in understanding the text. They also reported that the teaching of reading comprehension was important, although a challenge for them. The teachers were critical about the intervention strategies provided by the government, viz. the NRS and FFLC, and the handbook *Teaching Reading in Early Grades* that was provided for them. The participating teachers of the research study did not find these documents very helpful for Tshivenda teachers as they were in English. They expressed dissatisfaction about the lack of guidelines on how to teach reading comprehension to Tshivenda learners.

During the interviews and focus group interviews, I noticed that the teachers had conceptualised the concept of reading comprehension in the context of Grade 3 literacy teaching. However, during the classroom observations it was apparent that the strategies they spoke about were absent in their teaching. As a result, most learners could not read and therefore could not comprehend the meaning of the text. Therefore, as an interpretivist, I concluded that the participating teachers in my case study had reason to regard themselves as stressed and frustrated because of this situation.

6.2 Implications of the findings for the inquiry

The curriculum aims to develop the full potential of each learner as a citizen of a democratic South Africa. It seeks to create a lifelong learner who is confident and independent, literate, numerate and multi-skilled, compassionate, with a respect for the environment and the ability to participate in society as critical and active citizens(NCS, 2002:8).Learning Outcomes describe what knowledge, skills and values learners should achieve, for example at the end of the phase. In Learning Outcome3: reading and viewing, learners must be able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values of the text (NCS, 2002:93). The study shows that learners should know various comprehension strategies that will assist them to read and understand the text. In the next paragraphs I answer the main research question by addressing each sub -question.

6.2.1 How do teachers understand reading comprehension?

Since the focus of the research study is on reading comprehension, the research sought to gauge the extent to which teachers understood reading comprehension as concept. The teachers were asked to indicate how they understood reading comprehension. While responding to this question, they also touched on what they regarded as important when teaching reading comprehension, which will be addressed in research sub-question2. Data gathered during interviews (ITI) and focus group interviews (FG) revealed that the participating teachers said they understood the concept of reading comprehension. This clearly emerged as Theme 1, which I presented as **'There are two words which the reader must read and thereafter comprehend'**.

As I mentioned, when teachers were responding to the question they also expressed what they regarded as the importance of teaching reading comprehension to the learners and these emerged as category 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 of Theme 1. There was a general feeling among the teachers that reading comprehension entailed reading with understanding. The following remarks from teacher 1 of School A, teacher 3 of School B and teacher 6 from School C bear testimony to the above:

FGT1-SCH A, Q1:   *'The reader must read and thereafter comprehend'*
IT/T3-SCH B, Q1:   *'What you read you must be able to understand'*
FG/T6-SCH C, Q1: *'Learners must read, and as they read, they must understand'*

Based on their expressions one would expect that they were teaching learners self-regulating learning strategies. However, the findings from the classroom observation revealed that although the participating teachers said they understood what reading comprehension was, there was no correlation between what they said and what they did in 'real life' situations in their classrooms. During my classroom observations, I observed that reading comprehension was taught haphazardly and with little time allocated for this activity. The teachers spent more time in asking questions than in teaching reading comprehension. According to Ehri and Sweet (1991), the NRP (2000) and Oczkus (2004), teachers should provide ample time for teaching reading comprehension with all the various facets, since comprehension cannot just happen, it should be taught. In addition, more opportunities should be provided for learners to practise the use of the strategies while reading the texts.

During the teachers' individual interviews and focus group interviews, the participants in the case study expressed a common understanding of the concept reading comprehension, yet in the classroom they did not clearly apply their knowledge of reading comprehension and its importance in the lives of the learners. Reading comprehension was not taught in their classrooms in line with what they averred during interviews and focus group interviews as their practice (Appendix E, classroom observations checklist, component 5-6).

Clay (1993), Cohen (1996), and Parker and Harry (2007) concur that teachers sometimes report significant changes and great progress in their instructional practices, whereas in their actual classroom situations they had not changed their behaviours at all when viewed against theoretical principles and instructional goals. It was clear that they were in practice failing to encourage learners to become independent readers. McLaughlin and Allen (2002) and Learning First Alliance (1998) emphasise that teachers must not only teach learners to understand text on a literal level, but also on an interpretive and evaluative level.

In many instances, my observations indicated that learners were answering the questions on a literal level and could not relate the text to something similar or to their lives. In schools A, B and C it was very difficult for the learners to evaluate the text and explain their critical judgement, and to express different points of view about the text (Appendix E, classroom observations checklist, component 2). The teachers declared that they understood reading comprehension during interviews and focus group interviews. However, their understanding was not evident when they were teaching. In their study of teachers' use of questioning and modelling comprehension skills in primary classrooms, Parker and Harry (2007) found that in the 51 interviews they had with teachers,48% of the inferences to direct teacher questioning were at the literal level and only 2% at the evaluative level during comprehension sessions.

Limited time was devoted to the teaching of reading comprehension. The respondents also highlighted this during the interviews and focus group interviews. Respondent 6 from school C made the following remark:

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'*

In their studies, Durkin (1978), Pressley *et al., (*1998) and Taylor *et al. (*2002) report that teachers did not give good attention to the teaching of reading comprehension. However, this implies that allocating ample time and practising can enhance reading comprehension to the learners.

The teachers of my case study seemed dissatisfied by the time allocated for reading comprehension. They taught comprehension hurriedly and in such a way that the actual teaching of reading comprehension was lacking. Fielding and Pearson (1994:1) state the following concerning the benefit of spending ample time for reading comprehension with learners:

The first benefit of time for reading is the sheer opportunity to orchestrate the skills and strategies that are important to proficient reading-including comprehension. As in sports and music, practice makes perfect in reading too. Second, reading results in the acquisition of new knowledge, this in turn, fuels the comprehension process.

This statement is important for my study. It illustrates the consensus in various research studies that time should be allocated for teaching reading comprehension. However, if teachers are not committed to teaching reading comprehension, it will never take place.

A print-rich classroom is one in which learners are able to interact with a variety of reading materials (Joubert e*t al.*, 2008), for example, newspapers, magazines, books and labels (Joshua, 2001). Concerning the physical environment during my classroom observations, in all three schools the resources available were not enough to enhance reading comprehension for learners, for example, I did not find any evidence of resources such as phonic frieze posters, action pictures, or words in Tshivenda (Appendix E, classroom observation checklist, component 1).

In school A, there were not enough readers for the learners. Teachers sometimes used workbooks to replace readers. There was no school library. In the classrooms, there was no variety of reading texts or a reading corner. The only time that learners read, was when the teacher called them to the front to sit and read. They do not have Big Books. Reading took place during the reading session only.

The two classes were very different. In Grade 3A, teacher 1 had pictures and phonic frieze posters on the wall that she had made herself. Because readers were so few, she sometimes made copies from one reader that she had for the learners. In the same school, teacher 2 in Grade 3B seemed to be unconcerned. She relied on the workbooks as readers. This did not give learners an exposure to a variety of reading texts. She had a few pictures, which were not clear.

In school B, there was no school library. However, unlike School A, there were enough readers for the learners so that at least they could share, but there was no variety. Each class had 39 Grade 3 learners. The only time they read was when the

teacher called them to the front to sit and read. As in School A, they did not have a reading corner in the classrooms. Just like School A, reading took place during the reading session only. They did not have Big Books. In class A, teacher 5 had English phonic frieze posters on the wall instead.

In school C, there was no school library and no reading corner in the classrooms. The only time that they read was when the teacher called them to the front to sit and read. They had few readers available for the learners. They did have one Big Book that the teachers used on occasion. Just like schools A and B, reading took place during the reading session only. There was no variety of pictures or photos, and no Tshivenda phonic frieze posters on the walls.

In school B, teacher 3 had English posters pasted on the walls, possibly because only the English ones were available to her.

Carter (2000), McPherson (2007), Wessels (2010), Joshua (2001) and FFLC(2008) emphasise that reading corners and classroom libraries are important for exposing learners to a language-rich environment which can motivate learners and enhance their reading comprehension. During my classroom observations, the classrooms had no evidence of reading corners, a library or a small group reading area at all. What I noticed was that during reading, teachers put a rug in the front, and the whole class sat on it and the lesson proceeded. Learners were only called to sit in front on the rug during reading sessions and that was the only time they could handle readers. There were very few pictures, posters and sentence strips on the walls.

The lack of newspapers and magazines may be due to teachers' lack of knowledge of the importance of a print-rich environment to enhance reading. There are currently no magazines and newspapers in Tshivenda. However, teachers can make action pictures by cutting out pictures, pasting them on the walls and writing in Tshivenda under each picture. The same applies to phonic frieze posters. The classroom and the physical setting of the classroom are important to encourage learners' access to authentic reading materials (Green, 1999; Alexander, Jetton &Kulikowich, 1995; Shany & Biemiller, 1995; Pardo, 2004). Grade 3 learners should

be exposed to different kinds of text such as comics, magazines and newspapers. Learners in the schools in my case study were missing these opportunities.

Piaget regarded the physical appearance of the classroom as important for enhancing reading comprehension. Learners must be able to see the classroom with a variety of books, and see and hear the teachers or peers modelling the good behaviour of reading and the use of strategies. This idea is echoed by Vygotsky (1978) and is relevant to reading comprehension.

During reading comprehension the learners learn from the behaviours of the people around them, which in the context of the study, are teachers and peers (Chapter 3 on reading comprehension, developmental learning theories and conceptual framework, section 3.3.1, and Vygotsky's socio-historical theory of cognitive development in Chapter 3, section 3.2;3.3).

6.2.2 What do teachers regard as important when teaching reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners?

As I indicated in 6.3.1, teachers responses to the question on their understanding about reading comprehension, when they reported on what they regarded as important when teaching reading comprehension to the learners. An important point that came to the fore was that teachers' responses to sub-question 2 came as an elaboration of Theme 1. Category 1.1 of Theme 1, states that learners should read and understand, and be able to apply the information in their daily lives.

The first part of the response of teachers from Theme 1 is the explanation of what reading comprehension is, and the latter part of the response relates to the importance of teaching reading comprehension. The following responses from teacher 1 from School A and teacher 3 from School B can help to illustrate this aspect:

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'*

This is in agreement with Durkin (1979), who said that reading comprehension is important academically and throughout learners' lives. Important as it may be, the teachers seemed to be concerned that there were learners in their classrooms who could not read and understand a text provided to them. The responses are in agreement with the RAND report (Snow, 2002:27), which state that "capacities to read with comprehension for the purpose of learning, applying knowledge, and being engaged is the highest priority." Therefore, it is important that learners should be taught to read and construct meaning from the text.

The participating teachers of my case study also emphasised the importance of teaching reading comprehension to enable the learners to read any text and know how to interpret it. This is found in Theme 1, category 1.2. To elaborate on this category, teacher 2 from school B made the following remark:

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'*

The teachers who participated in the study felt that reading comprehension was important to the learners because it helped them to see the relevance of the story they read to their own lives. This insight 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 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'*

From these responses, it is clear that learners must be able to read the story and distinguish what is important and what is not from the text. In the literature, authors such as NAEYC (1998), Block, Gambrel and Pressley (2002), Armbruster and Osborn (2003), and Harvey and Goudvis (2007) state that if readers can read the words but do not understand what they are reading, they are not really reading.

My understanding is that the aim of reading is to read the words on the pages, to understand them and to be able to make meaning of the sentences in the text, as well as to comprehend the meaning of the whole text and apply and relate the information when needed. Harvey and Goudvis (2007:13) concur, arguing that "if the purpose of reading is anything other than understanding, why read at all?"

In essence, having a clear purpose for reading in mind keeps the reader engaged (Gersten, Fuchs, Williams &Baker, 2001). However, from my classroom observation checklist, I did not find the teachers explaining the purpose of reading the text in Tshivenda, teaching learners how to apply the content in other situations and how to answer questions appropriately.

The teachers indicated that teaching reading comprehension was important so that the learners could gain deeper knowledge about the written words. This idea emerged in Theme 1, category 1.4. The following comments from teacher 2 from school A and teacher 5 from school C were noteworthy in this regard:

IT/T2-SCH A, Q2:   *'Grade 3 learners should be able to read on their own in order to find 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'*

Van der Schoot, Vasbinder, Horsley and Van Lieshout (2008) support these responses, stating that reading comprehension involves the formation of a meaning-based and coherent representation of the text that is read. So, in my understanding, meaning-making becomes the central aim of reading comprehension, and reading comprehension strategies are necessary to assist the reader to do so.

6.2.3   Which strategies do teachers use to teach reading comprehension?

This sub-question revealed whether what teachers said during the interviews and focus group discussions was put into practice. While answering this research question, the teachers also used this opportunity to discuss and express their challenges and confusion that I thought should be noted and will be discussed.

The classroom observation checklist was composed of six components. The objective of the observation sessions was to determine whether what teachers said about the teaching of reading comprehension was actually taking place. I present a brief description of the components of the classroom observations checklist and key aspects that I analysed from these data sources as explained in Chapter 4. This included a supportive classroom climate, the pre-reading, during-reading and after-reading phases, modelling of strategies and teacher practice of comprehension strategies.

A strategy is "instructional mental actions during reading that improve reading comprehension," deliberate efforts by a reader to better understand or remember what is being read (Shanahan *et al*., 2010:11). It is critical that teachers know strategies and apply them in their classrooms. However, the participating teachers in my case study showed a lack of knowledge about teaching reading comprehension strategies during classroom observations (Appendix E). Zimmerman (1998) supports the view that teachers must be strategic and accurate in the implementation of the strategy so that it can be helpful to the learners, for example, learners should be motivated to read the text.

The following remarks from 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'*

Ben-Ari and Kedem-Frederich (2000), McEwan (2004) and Slavin, Cheung, Groff and Lake (2008) suggest that during reading comprehension, the teacher must provide a clear explanation of the structure of the strategy to be learnt and explain why strategies are used. This implies that teaching strategies is critical for enhancing reading comprehension. In addition, Palincsar and Brown (1984), Trabasso and Bouchard (2002) and Henk *et al., (*2000) suggest that teachers

should have knowledge of multiple strategies. In my understanding, if the participating teachers had the knowledge base, they would have taught the learners how to read with understanding.

However, the teachers of my case study showed that they did not have a theoretical knowledge of comprehension strategies. The findings of this study show that learners could not read and understand the text. Torgesen *et al.*, (2007) have pointed out that third-grade learners must be taught and supported in the correct use of reading comprehension strategies in order to constructing meaning from the text. In order to maintain and continually increase learners' ability to comprehend the text, the teaching of comprehension strategies becomes foundational.

I learned that participating teachers of the research study expressed different views when asked about which strategies they used in teaching reading comprehension during the individual interviews and focus group interviews. Learners should learn to use these strategies before, during and after reading the text in order to self-regulate their own learning (Schunk& Zimmerman, 1994; Pintrich, 1995; Zimmerman, 1998; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Carter, 2000, Puustinen & Pulkkinen, 2001). Pre-reading activities are essential to prevent learners from "barking at print" (Wessels, 2010). This implies that teachers must teach learners the importance of pre-reading activities and their use for enhancing reading comprehension.

During the classroom observations, the teachers asked learners during the pre-reading phase to predict what would happen in the story. In all three schools, the teachers asked learners to preview the text and talk amongst themselves, make predictions (Theme 2, category 5, 4.3). However, the most commonly used strategy was to discuss the illustrations. Talking about illustrations is important because it can create the desire to read a book (Wessels, 2010). What I did not observe was teachers linking the predictions made during the pre-reading phase with the content (Appendix E, component 3).

During the interviews and focus group interviews in all three schools, it was apparent that during the pre-reading phase teachers asked learners to preview the text, talk amongst themselves and make predictions. However, during my

classroom observations I did not find any evidence of teachers telling learners why they should preview the text before they started with the actual reading of the text.

Teachers from schools A, B and C highlighted the aspect of previewing during the teachers' individual interviews and focus group interviews.

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

FG/T5-SCH C, Q 3:   *'They can predict what will happen']*

IT/T4-SCH B, Q 3:   *'Learners predict what will happen in the story'*

6.2.3.1 Guided reading phase

The guided reading phase was not evident during my classroom observations. The term 'guided' implies a structure that is first modelled to the learners by the teacher, then practised with learners and eventually demonstrated by the learners themselves (Flynt & Cooter, 2005).

Even though not all learners were given a chance to read individually, there were few who were asked by the teacher during the reading lesson to read individually. In most cases, it was only the ones who could read and not the struggling readers that were asked.

There may be reasons for this as the teacher was well aware that most learners in the class could not read and understand the text. Another reason might be my presence as an observer. During the interviews and focus group interviews, the teachers said that learners could not read and understand the text. 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'*

One may conclude that the teachers of my case study were aware of the learners who could not read. The literature confirmed that primary grade teachers are failing to teach learners the strategies for becoming proficient readers (Harvey &Goudvis,

2007; NRS, 2008; Shanahan, 2006). This implies that reading comprehension is a complex task and that it is necessary that teachers should be supported to make it happen in the classrooms. In addition, Ivy and Fisher (2007:9) support this view when they state that educators are flooding the professional learning community with requests for strategies that work to improve the teaching of reading comprehension.

6.2.3.2 Questions

Asking questions to the learners or learners asking questions is an important strategy for teaching reading comprehension (Parker & Hurry, 2007). During the classroom observations, questions were asked frequently as indicated by the teachers below. They preferred to ask learners questions, but the learners struggled to give the correct answers because they could not read and understand the text. The following responses from teachers from schools A, B and C 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-SCH A, B, C, Q3: *'I ask them questions'*

From these responses it is clear that these teachers preferred to ask learners questions. However, most of the questions were at a literal level, possibly because most of the learners could not read and understand the written words in Tshivenda. A very challenging situation to both teachers and the learners was that during a test, teachers would read the questions for the learners because they could not read the questions.

Cummings, Steward and Block (2005), Reutzel, Smith and Fawson (2005), and Paris and Paris (2007) support the view that teachers should teach learners various reading comprehension strategies and their use for understanding the text. In addition, McNeil, 1992, Miller (2002), Reynolds and Brown (2001), and Goetz (1990) strongly suggest the use of strategy as beneficial for reading comprehension. Williams (2005:6) says the following about the importance of teaching comprehension strategies:

A rationale for teaching comprehension strategies is that readers derive more meaning from text when they engage in intentional thinking. That is when people run into difficulties in understanding what they have read; the application of specific strategic cognitive processes will improve their comprehension.

I selected this statement to remind the reader about the importance of teaching comprehension strategies. Most of the literature confirms that the teaching of reading comprehension strategies is important for enhancing reading comprehension in learners. The participating teachers of my case study said that they were not aware of comprehension strategies, that they regarded teaching comprehension as a challenge and that they were frustrated because they had learners who could not read and understand texts. One may conclude that this could cause frustration and stress amongst teachers.

In her study on reading comprehension, during classroom observation, Durkin (1979) found that teachers did not teach learners comprehension strategies and their application but they concentrated more on asking learners questions instead of teaching learners on how to comprehend a text. One might say this may be due to the lack of knowledge about the use of reading comprehension strategies by the teachers. What I noticed was that because of the lack of understanding, learners failed to answer higher-order questions, even though the teachers asked questions at various cognitive levels. The reason may be that learners could not read and understand the text. Surprisingly, there was no evidence of questioning from schools A, B and C. The teachers did not ask learners to generate questions about the text themselves (Appendix E, classroom observation checklist, component 3).The 51 interviews conducted by Parker and Hurry (2007) confirmed their findings during classroom observations, namely that only three passages mentioned strategies to encourage learners to generate questions.

6.2.3.3 'Fix-up' strategies

'Fix-up' strategies are strategies that learners should use to monitor their comprehension and when the text does not make sense, learners use them (Lehr & Osborn, 2003). These are identifying where in the text the difficulties occur, looking

back through the text, asking oneself, reminding learners to make use of their knowledge of the text structure.

I did not find any evidence that the teachers encouraged learners to use 'fix-up' strategies. Keene and Zimmerman (1997), the NCS(2002), Palincsar and Brown (1984), Oczkus (2004), and Hedin and Conderman (2010) argue that 'fix-up' strategies are important because they assist learners to pay attention to whether they understand what they are reading, and when they do not. If they do not, to reread and use of strategies will help learners to understand what they have read (Shanahan *et al.*, 2010:12). This implies that 'fix-up' strategies may enhance reading comprehension for the learners.

During the classroom observation there was little or no evidence that the teachers encouraged learners to use the strategies of self-monitoring, self-pacing and self-directing to decode words at various points during the process of acquisition (Appendix E, classroom observation checklist, component 2, 3, 4).

During the interviews and focus group interviews, the respondents indicated that during reading they preferred to start the reading comprehension lesson by asking learners to learn the difficult words.

FG/T3-SCH B, Q3:   *'I can start by explaining difficult words'*
IT/T1-SCH A, Q3:   'Learners underline the new difficult words'

The literature agrees that teaching learners the meaning of difficult words is an important reading comprehension strategy because by the time learners read the text, they already know the words (Armbruster & Osborn, 2003). In the same vein, researchers in the area of reading strategies, such as Yuill and Oakhill (1991), Van der Schoot *et al., (*2008), and Cain, Oakhill and Bryant (2004), found that decoding skills predict the ability of reading comprehension in children. Pressley (2000) strongly agrees that understanding of a text presupposes knowledge of the meaning of most of the words appearing in it.

The importance of teaching learners comprehension strategies is critical for enhancing reading comprehension. The NCS (2002:35) in Learning Outcome 3

emphasises that Grade 3 learners "should be able to read text alone, and use a variety of strategies to make meaning." This implies that strategies are important to help learners to read the text alone and with understanding. In the same vein, The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 1998) and NRP (2000) indicate that the 9-year-old child (Grade 3 learners) should be able to use a range of comprehension strategies when drawing meaning from text, make critical connections between texts and read fluently and enjoy reading. In addition, the NAEYC suggested that the aspect of reading the text with understanding should be integrated across the curriculum.

6.2.3.4 Modelling the correct use of this strategy

During classroom observations, I did not find any evidence that the teachers were modelling the correct use of this strategy. According to Wilhelm (2001), Duffy (2002) and Miller (2002), the importance of modelling strategies during comprehension is that learners get opportunities to learn and to see how strategies should be incorporated by watching expert comprehenders physically modelling the strategies. It is therefore necessary that teachers be competent, since they are required to model and practice a given strategy and to give learners an opportunity to apply the strategy on their own (Sweet & Snow, 2002; Pressley, 2002; Texas Education Agency, 2002). In the same vein, Piaget (1978) emphasised the guidance of more knowledgeable others as important to the learners to enhance reading comprehension, since they learn from teachers or peers (see Chapter 3 on reading comprehension, developmental learning theories and conceptual frameworks, as well as section 3:3.1).

With regard to the after-reading phase of the text, in all three schools the teachers asked learners to read aloud and to retell what they had read. Sometimes the teachers reminded learners to concentrate on major events or to summarise.

However, I did not find any evidence of teachers' asking learners to read sections of the text fluently that substantiated answers to questions they had made based on prior knowledge and to confirm or disprove predictions they had made based on prior knowledge. The absence of this may be owing to the lack of teachers' theoretical knowledge of the use of reading comprehension strategies and the

importance of prior knowledge for reading comprehension. This resulted in learners' inability to become what Zimmerman (1998) refers to as "masters of their own learning."

As an interpretivist, I conclude that the absence of these aspects may be due to the teachers' lack of knowledge about the importance of reading comprehension strategies, as they indicated during the interviews and focus group interviews. This insight is related to Ausubel's theory (1963), as discussed in Chapter 3, because the learner should connect the known information to new information in order to understand the text. The role of the teacher is to continuously throughout the lesson, remind learners to confirm or disapprove predictions made during the pre-reading phase and based on their prior knowledge.

With regard to modelling strategies, the data revealed limited evidence of teacher modelling strategies (Appendix E, classroom observation checklist, component 1-6),for example, when asked which strategies they use in teaching reading comprehension during interviews, teacher 5 from confirmed that she did not know what to say, what to name it [reading comprehension strategies] (Chapter 5 Theme 3, category 5.4.2.3 and 5.4.3.1).

This may be a contributing factor to the low level of reading comprehension among the learners. Wessels (2010), NRP (2000), Shanahan *et al.* (2010), and Keen and Zimmerman(1997) emphasise that it is important for teachers to model good behaviour of reading and most importantly to model the strategies before reading. This is to ensure that learners could use strategies during their independent reading and when they experience problems, such as talking about the illustrations and the heading when previewing the text.

Across all instruments, only one teacher, teacher 5 from school C, indicated what she did before the start of reading comprehension:

IT/T5-SCH C, Q 3: *'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'*

From my findings, the participating teachers did not seem to be aware of comprehension strategies, because they did not explain the strategy and their use in comprehending the text to the learners. Vygotsky's (1968) theory is relevant because for the learners to become independent readers who can read and understand the text. Learners should be assisted and guided by a role model, which in this context is the teacher. There was no evidence of teachers' encouraging learners to talk and use strategies. There was no evidence at all of teachers modelling during the teaching of comprehension strategies (Appendix E, classroom observation checklist component 5).

Reasons for the absence of modelling may be teachers' lack of theoretical knowledge about the concept of teaching learners' comprehension strategies as well as not being given opportunities to observe an expert teaching reading comprehension in Tshivenda. Parker and Hurry (2007) argue that teachers must be aware that teaching learners strategies is an important tool for improving reading comprehension. This implies that teachers must not turn the reading comprehension lesson into a show where learners sit and watch them modelling the strategies. Strategies need to be taught and practised by the learners in the actual time allocated for reading the text. In their study on the effects of teaching reading comprehension strategies used, Parker and Hurry (2007)found that learners who were trained to use strategies became more proficient than those who were not trained.

The literature reveals that comprehension strategies should be taught and learnt (Van den Broek & Kramer, 2000; Farrel, 2001; NRP, 2000; Durkin, 1993; Myers, 2005). Therefore, the responsibility falls on the shoulder of teachers (Shanahan, 2006). The teaching of reading comprehension was indeed a challenge, as expressed by the teachers during the focus group interviews (Chapter 5, Theme 3, category, 5.4.3.1). Blachowicz and Ogle (2001), Armbruster and Lehr (2001), Fountas and Pinnell (2001), Mooney (1999), Pressley (2001), and Harvey and Goudvis (2000) agree that in order to prevent reading comprehension difficulties, teachers should teach learners reading comprehension strategies. Consequently, teachers will develop a positive attitude towards their work and learners will read the words and understand what they are reading.

The findings of this study revealed that the participating teachers lacked knowledge of the concept of self-regulated learning as described by Zimmerman (1998) in Chapter 3 and exhibited in my conceptual framework. None of the six teachers who participated in the study indicated any process or plans for supporting the learners, for example, they did not indicate if they planned the reading comprehension lesson as well as how they taught learners reading comprehension strategies. They did not indicate any skill they taught the learners that would enable them to control their own learning. They did not seem to realise that learners could self-regulate their learning through acquiring specific strategies.

Self-regulated learning could assist to decrease teachers' negative attitude as this might lead to better learning and improve the performance of the learners. This idea relates to Zimmerman's (1998) idea that self-regulated learning assists learners to become "the source of plans, intentions, strategies and the emotions that are necessary to create meaning from the written text." In addition, Ausubel's (1963) theory of active learning is important, because in reading comprehension learners should be actively involved in their own learning.

In the context of the study, the knowledge of Zimmerman's applied social cognitive model of self-regulated learning is important to account for the low level of reading comprehension amongst the learners of this research study. The model suggests that during reading comprehension, learners must be actively involved in their own learning. Therefore, it is important that teachers should put them into practice in their teaching of reading comprehension. According to Zimmerman (1998), as learners became capable of choosing and using the strategies, teachers may gradually hand over the responsibility to the learners.

However, even though the teachers in my case study acknowledged that learners could not read and understand the text, they appeared to be unaware of reading comprehension strategies. What is critical in the context of the study is teachers' expertise and best practice. Best practice should be adapted from countries that are doing well, as explained in the literature review (Chapter 2 sections 2.2, 2.5.1-2.5.4.4 and Chapter 3 sections 3.3.6). Teachers should be encouraged to conduct research and to study related literature to gain a deeper understanding of the

subject of teaching reading comprehension (Ivy & Fisher, 2005; Shanahan, 2006; Shanahan *et al.*, 2010).

During the interviews and focus group interviews, the teachers complained about little time given for teaching reading as indicated in the policy document *Teaching Reading in Early Grades* (DoE, 2008).It was apparent from the responses that more time was needed for reading comprehension for learners to be able to answer questions on the text. Participating teacher 6 from school C made the following remark:

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'*

From this and similar responses, the teachers indicated that time for reading should be increased since reading comprehension was a challenge to them. This shows that they were concerned and worried about those learners who could not read and understand the text. In addition, this confirms the findings of Moyles, Hargreaves, Merry, Pell and Esarte-Sarries (2007) that teachers are acutely aware of time pressures to meet objectives within the literacy hour. They say that when such teachers are under pressure they tend to use a more directive form of teaching with less emphasis on active learning, which in turn influences the teaching of reading comprehension negatively.

Participating teachers agreed that learners could not read and understand the text. During interviews and focus group interviews, they also highlighted their challenges, concerns and frustrations. The remarks by teachers 2, 3, 5 and 6 from school A, B and C were 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*

From these and similar responses, it became clear that the lack of theoretical knowledge and practice seems to result in teachers' developing a negative attitude towards their learners. The fact that teachers are aware that there were learners in their classrooms who could not read and understand the text created stress and frustrations. This was indicated during the focus group interviews, and my findings from the classroom observations confirmed this (Appendix E, classroom observations checklist, component 5). The NRS (2008) confirmed that South African teachers are failing to teach reading [reading comprehension].

6.2.4   What strategise can teachers use to improve reading comprehension?

In all three schools, I failed to find evidence about the teachers' teaching or discussions of strategies with the learners. They do not seem to be aware of the strategies. These teachers did not plan the reading comprehension lesson. In essence, it was not clear if they knew what they should do when planning reading comprehension and their roles in teaching learners to read the text with understanding.

The conceptual framework (figure 3.1) shows teachers the steps they can use in order to improve the teaching of reading comprehension (see chapter 3:3.5). From the conceptual framework, self-regulated learners are meta-cognitively, motivational and actively involved in their own reading comprehension lessons. However, if teachers lack confidence in performing their job in school, then learners will not be able to self-direct and self-monitor their own reading. It is a matter of urgency to equip them with skills and knowledge to enable them to do their job well. As

depicted from the conceptual framework teachers must be aware of the reading comprehension challenge, plan strategically the reading comprehension lessons, teach reading comprehension strategies, be able to self-monitor, self-evaluate their own teaching and judge themselves if they have the capabilities to teach or not. Where there are gaps they should seek for assistance before they start again from phase 1.

It takes time for them to gain considerable experience and to establish their own image among colleagues in school before they could feel confident enough to teach reading comprehension in schools. Knowing reading comprehension strategies is not sufficient; what is important is to know how and when to use the particular strategies to assist learners to construct meaning from the written text. It may be a good idea to implement the strategies in stages, starting with explanation, modelling and application of the strategies. Lessons need to be learned from successful countries.

The NCS (DoE, 2002) Learning Outcomes 3: "Reading and viewing, stipulates that Grade 3 learners must be able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values of the text." This is done through the assessment standards. In addition, how could the teacher experiences and the intervention strategies inform their understanding of the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners? What do the findings mean in terms of the expectations required in teaching reading comprehension? How best can teachers develop and sustain self-regulated learners in their classrooms? How can teachers draw from theory of what works and share these experiences among themselves? It is therefore important for the teachers as shown in conceptual framework to understand that the process of teaching reading comprehension is a cyclic process.

According to Zimmerman (1989; 1998), self-regulated learning requires the interaction between teachers and learners. During reading comprehension teachers must teach learners to be strategic also and be aware of their learning outcomes and their use of comprehension strategies to understand the text.

6.3 Possible suggestions resulting from the findings

6.3.1 The extent to which policies address the teaching of reading comprehension

During the interviews and focus group discussions, the participating teachers complained about issues such as the lack of teachers' guides for teaching reading comprehension in the Tshivenda language. Heugh (2005) supports the idea that the DoE should provide the teaching guides in Tshivenda when stating that while a teachers' handbook for teaching reading in English has been developed and widely distributed across South African schools, the DoE has still not published a single handbook for teaching reading in any other African language. The absence of Tshivenda guidelines for the teachers may be a contributory factor to the low level of teaching reading comprehension in schools.

The participating teachers of my case study may not understand the content of the guidelines as it is written in English which is not their home language of the teachers. Having to read the guidelines that are written in English may create problems. It is therefore imperative that the DoE provide guidelines of teaching reading comprehension in Tshivenda.

All six teachers from schools A, B and C confirmed that the guidelines for teaching reading in early grades had been provided, but only in English. They indicated that there was a need to develop a textbook of teaching reading comprehension in African languages and especially in Tshivenda, since teachers currently had to rely on the English version. The Limpopo department of education should provide Tshivenda teachers handbook for teaching reading comprehension.

6.3.2 Lack of trained teachers to teach reading comprehension

Teacher training has a strong influence on practice (NRP, 2000; Shanahan, 2006; Torgesen *et al.,* 2007). Teachers are the key role players in teaching learners to read and comprehend the text because they spent most of their time with the learners. When any components have to be taught to learners, teacher training is essential, as teachers are the implementers of a curriculum.

Throughout the interviews and focus group discussions teachers indicated that teaching reading comprehension was a challenge and that they needed more information to teach learners to read and understand. Teacher training should focus more the aspects of reading comprehension and strengthen their content focus in the literacy module in order to involve the teaching of reading comprehension so that students' teachers should have benefitted by the time they complete their programme. Long and Zimmerman (2008) confirmed this, when they say "South Africa is still behind in introducing appropriate reading skills and [*comprehension*] strategies in different grades when compared with other countries." According to the NCS (2002), learners must be taught various strategies that help them to read with understanding and unlock the code of written text. Interactive self-regulatory learning is best for achieving the good results that we all hope for and for avoiding the mistakes of the past.

6.3.3   Unavailability of books and readers

The NRP (2000), Torgesen *et al.*, (2007), Fleisch (2008), and Fawson and Reutzel (2000) attach great importance to the availability of a variety of readers for the learners. My research findings revealed that there were not enough readers in schools. The teachers taught reading from a chalkboard and few readers were available in the classes.

According to the NCS (DoE, 2002) and FFLC (DoE, 2008), the most important task of the Foundation Phase teacher is to ensure that all learners learn to read and understand the text. The lack of a variety of reading texts and readers may be a contributory factor in low reading comprehension.

Teachers 1 and 2 of school A indicated during the interviews that they did not have enough readers for the learners and that they relied on a photocopier. There is a great difference between what happens on the ground and what the literature says, for example, in Learning Outcome 3: reading and viewing, one of the assessment standards expresses that learners should be able to read a wide variety of fairly complex texts such as fiction and non-fiction books (NCS, 2002). Some schools do not have readers for the learners, for example, School A. This may be a cause of confusion amongst the teachers. While the curriculum emphasises teaching reading

comprehension, there are still schools with no readers for the learners. The DoE still does not provide books and readers for the learners (Heugh, 2005).

During my classroom observations there were few readers for the learners. In School A there were no readers for the learners at all as the teachers rely on the photocopier machine to produce reading materials. The absence of readers forced the teachers to use the workbooks as readers. The workbook cannot replace the reader because it is for the learners and cannot be used as a reader (Durkin, 1979). This situation may discourage the teachers, causing them to feel demotivated and consequently give less time to reading comprehension. The teachers have no access to readers. There was no evidence of graded level books to use during guided reading. The literature states that a lack of readers can discourage teachers to teach (Fawson & Reutzel, 2009; Guastelle & Lenz, 2005). This was not the case in the schools of my case study, for example, school A did not have readers for the learners yet the teacher continued teaching. On the other hand, learners may develop a low morale about reading because there is no variety of books available to encourage them to read; learners may not develop a love for reading and their reading vocabulary may not develop. Most importantly, this situation could hamper the development of comprehension among learners. This situation may fail to support both teachers and learners and ultimately learners would not reach their full potential.

According to the NRS (DoE, 2008) and Carter (2000), shared reading is a practice that should be carried out in the classroom, and this teaching method requires a learner to have a book (Joubert *et al.*, 2008). During this session, the learners join in reading where they feel comfortable to do so. Teachers must organise a shared reading session with the learners. None of the teachers did shared reading. The experience of shared reading is lacking for these learners due to the lack of books.

The DoE noticed the problem of lack of books in schools. In 2008, the DoE stated that there were classes without books and that it was rare to find books in well-used general libraries. In addition, books written in African languages are scarce so learners do not have the opportunity to read in their home language. Bruner (1986) believes that schooling is responsible for the growth of the mind and this can be enhanced by exposing learners to books and therefore influence the reading

comprehension of the learners. It is important that teachers should be encouraged to write books for Tshivenda-speaking learners.

6.3.4 Contradiction between theory and practice of teaching reading comprehension

During the individual interviews and focus group discussions, the teachers indicated that they understood reading comprehension and they regarded it as important to the learners in schools and in their daily lives. The classroom observations, however, indicate that the teachers were not clear about how to teach reading comprehension and which strategies to use when teaching. According to the data from all the instruments, the teachers hardly indicated any strategy, for example, teacher 3 from School B said that she told learners to make a summary. This is an indication that participating teachers of my case study seem not aware that reading comprehension strategies must be taught for the learners to understand the text. The language they were using was teacher-centred and not learner-centred. Nowhere did the teachers indicate that they (teachers) first explained the purpose of reading, the strategy and how to use it.

In their classroom observations Pressley (1998) and Kin (2006) confirmed that while teachers provided learners with opportunity to practise, but if learners had not been taught, neither the strategies nor the utility value of applying them could be achieved. As a result, many learners do not know how to use reading comprehension strategies.

During the individual teacher interview, only teacher 5 stated that she first explained the strategy before the reading comprehension lessons were mentioned. Even though she said that, she did not teach strategies during classroom observations. As an interpretivist, I concluded that the teachers did not know how to teach reading comprehension. This finding is related to the literature (NRS, 2008; Myers, 2005; Taylor, Clarke & Walpole, 2000) which confirmed that primary teachers do not know how to teach reading (reading comprehension).

During my classroom observations, the teaching of strategies was not evident. In addition, Durkin (1981:515-544) revealed that during the time of her classroom

observation, "there was rarely much in the way of modelling, guided practice, or substantive feedback suggested in their classrooms."

The general picture is that these teachers were not comfortable during the individual interviews and focus group interviews to answer the question on how they taught reading comprehension. The teachers revealed a lack of knowledge about reading comprehension strategies. Teachers said that they need to be trained and provided with guidelines for Tshivenda learners and relevant examples to their language. The document *Teaching Reading in Early Grades* would be more appropriate if the examples were in Tshivenda. Heugh (2005) confirmed that the DoE has not yet provided any guidelines to the teachers on the teaching of reading in African languages. The teachers were also aware that they had a role to play in the classroom.

6.4   Recommendations

This study employed three schools to investigate the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. The results of the case study can therefore not be generalised to include other contexts. However, I have described the case in-depth, as the aim of this study was to investigate and understand how teachers teach reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners for possible transferability purposes (Silverman, 2005). Therefore, this case study could be used to provide a research-based model for exemplary practices in the teaching of reading comprehension.

I have formulated recommendations about issues that need to be addressed in the light of the findings of the study. These recommendations emerged from the responses of the teachers who participated in the study, as well as my new insights gained as indicated in Table 6.1:

- Teachers should have ongoing professional development. Teacher development should become an integral part of the teaching of reading comprehension. Research showed that quality ongoing professional development has a strong impact on learners' performance (NRP 2000; Moats, 2000; Shanahan, 2006; Torgesen *et al.,* 2007).

- Teacher training institutions should develop and offer a module on the teaching of reading comprehension as part of a literacy programme or course. This module should include practical experience for students to teach reading comprehension to learners in the Foundation Phase. Such a module could assist graduate students to complete their training with the knowledge and expertise for competently teaching reading comprehension.

- Guidelines for the Tshivenda teachers are a necessity to improve the situation in Grade 3. According to the DoE, teachers should use a variety of strategies in order to meet the individual needs of learners. The teachers' theoretical, practical knowledge and their understanding of reading comprehension strategies should be improved. Participating teachers of my case study indicated that the policy documents were inadequate in assisting them to teach reading comprehension. In addition, they did not receive enough training to teach reading comprehension; therefore, more training is critical.

- Regular workshops overtime should be organised. The DoE should organise more workshops to help Tshivenda teachers to become strategic in their teaching (Zimmerman, 1997; 1998). The workshop series should focus on comprehension, scientific reading research on comprehension and the types of comprehension strategies that increase learner achievement and some theories and models for improving comprehension. An expert or an experienced teacher who has good reading results in class to model reading comprehension strategies needs follow-up and regular classroom visits.

- More time should be devoted to the teaching of reading comprehension.

Each aspect of reading comprehension should be dealt with explicitly and with caution in order to improve the situation. In their intensive research study on reading comprehension, the (NRP) recommended that "comprehension is not just something that just happens; comprehension needs to be taught" (NRP, 2000).

Literature on first language studies (Baker& Brown, 1984; Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Hattie, 1992) confirms that the use of various strategies has been found to be effective in improving learners' reading comprehension. In my understanding, what is important is that teachers must have the necessary skills and knowledge to facilitate reading comprehension to Tshivenda-speaking learners effectively.

- Books and graded readers: Schools must have adequate materials to support high-quality reading sessions. The DoE should make sure teachers and learners have access to a variety of material. Therefore, a variety of interesting, graded readers written at different levels in Tshivenda should be available in every school.

- In order to develop self-regulated learners, teachers should be knowledgeable about the phases of teaching reading comprehension in Tshivenda as explained in my conceptual framework. In Figure 3.1 the strategies that teachers can use to improve reading comprehension are depicted and discussed.

- Tshivenda-speaking teachers together with colleagues from institutions of high learning should develop Tshivenda guidelines for the teachers. The importance of empowering Foundation Phase teachers to develop graded readers is critical. The importance of self-efficacy is critical as explained in phase 5 of the conceptual framework.

- Teachers need foundational knowledge and skills to teach reading comprehension that goes beyond the curriculum.

- I finalised my study in 2012 and therefore studied the NCS (DoE, 2002) in-depth. The CAPS is an improvement of and replaces the RNC, Grades R-9 (NCS) of the DoE (2003). It states that learners must reach a high level of communicative competence and be able to read well by the end of Grade 3 (DBE, 2010:7-9) [with understanding].More time should be allocated to teaching reading comprehension.

6.5 Ideas for further research

In the light of the above discussions, I therefore recommend the following for further research:

- Professional development is essential for teachers to develop knowledge of reading comprehension. Research has to be done on how to support teachers on the teaching of reading comprehension and indicate which strategies to use when teaching reading comprehension before, during and after reading. Teachers should know how theories should link with practice during teaching reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking classrooms and why strategies can assist learners to construct meaning

independently from the text. My argument is that 'one size fits all' guidelines may not be helpful to all teachers; there is a need for specific guidelines to be developed for the teachers of African languages.

- More research on the impact of reading material, time, language and workshops is critical. Teachers need in-depth, hands-on training and also guided practice for developing lessons and activities using their content material to teach strategies to Tshivenda-speaking learners. They also need to know the basis or precursors of comprehension and how reading comprehension develops. This could be achieved if grades readers in Tshivenda are developed for the teachers.

- More research is need in schools that are doing well in reading and document their use of strategies and insights to be copied to other schools.

6.6   Conclusion

There is a critical need for a quality reading comprehension programme to be given a higher priority in the Foundation Phase. What teachers know about professional development affects their practice in the classrooms. Learners' ability to read the text with understanding depends on many factors. The main research question of this study is: How do teachers teach reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners at three primary public schools in the Vhembe district?

I acknowledge that this is a case study and as such, it is hard to draw conclusions that can be generalised. However, this study does reflect the state of teaching reading comprehension and underscores that reading comprehension is poorly taught in schools, partly because of the lack of theoretical knowledge and guidelines for the African language teachers (DoE, 2008; Fleisch, 2008; Heugh, 2008). In addition, because this is a topic under discussion globally, it can be argued that other communities facing similar difficulties can use the results of this study to their advantage. This can be achieved by examining whether the teaching of reading comprehension in those communities is caused by similar reasons, and if the causes are similar, apply the results and recommendations of this study to those situations.

This study, thus, found that the teachers who participated in this study expressed a very limited knowledge of teaching reading comprehension. This raised the question as to why the teaching of reading comprehension seems to be difficult to the teachers. I identified some obstacles to the effective teaching of reading comprehension in this research project during individual teachers' interviews, focus group discussion, and classroom observations. The intervention strategies on teaching reading comprehension outlined in the NRS (DoE, 2008), FFLC (DoE 2008) and *Teaching Reading in the Early Grades* (DoE, 2008) seem to have failed to support African-language teachers, in particular Tshivenda teachers. Teachers' understanding of the policies available also has an effect on the teaching of reading comprehension. The lack of practical examples to help Tshivenda teachers and unclear government documents contributed to the problem.

Without a clear explanation of proper guidelines and practical support, it is unlikely that teachers will improve their classroom practices. Teachers' lack of understanding of the concept of reading comprehension and when to use and how to apply it is apparent. Lack of resources is a challenge; a variety of readers or reading materials was not available for the learners, for example, during classroom observation in School A, the teachers sometimes used workbooks as a reader. A workbook is a book with exercises in it, often with spaces for learners to write answers in, to help them practice what they have learnt. Readers are books arranged in order or in groups according to difficulty. In my observations, there were not enough readers in the classes. Even where they were available, as in schools B and C, there were not enough for each learner. In addition, these teachers did not know the difference between a reader and a workbook, when to use a reader and when to use a workbook. In my opinion, a workbook is for the learners and cannot replace a reader. Teachers are supposed to spend quality time reading the readers and not the workbooks to the learners. This is a serious concern. The resources to improve the reading comprehension of learners should be made available.

This research study was my attempt to investigate the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. I hope to have contributed at least to the indigenous body of knowledge in order for Tshivenda-speaking learners to become "intelligent and informed" (Antjie Krog, 2006).

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APPENDICES

APENDIX A

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

P. O. Box 1443
Sibasa
0970

The District Senior Manager
Department of Education
Private Bag x2250
SIBASA
0950

Dear Sir / Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOLS AT VHEMBE DISTRICT

I humbly request permission to conduct research for my PhD degree in the above-mentioned district.

I am registered with the University of Pretoria. I would be very grateful if you will allow me to use your schools as my research site for the research report which I am required to write.

The topic of my research study is The Teaching of Reading Comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda –speaking learners.

If I am allowed to conduct my research at your three schools each with two Grade 3 classes. I will further ask the school principals for permission to go into schools and conduct this research. Furthermore, teachers with whom I will be working with will be requested to be interviewed.

Classroom observations for about two weeks per class shall be conducted. After each lesson observation, some discussions vis-à-vis the lesson shall be held with the teacher's concerned. Some documents will be analyzed. The interviews and discussions shall be tape recorded for transcription thereafter.

The school and teachers are assured of anonymity in the final research report, and thetranscription shall be returned to the teacher involved to proof read and for making finalcomments.

I hope that this request will be granted. Should you have any further concerns and/or queries about this request, please contact me at 083 257 32 43 .

Thanking you in anticipation

Yours faithfully

Ndileleni Paulinah Mudzielwana

P. O. Box 1443
SIBASA
0970

The Circuit Manager
Department of Education
Private Bag x2250
SIBASA
0950

Dear Sir / Madam

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I am registered with the University of Pretoria. I would be very grateful if you will allow me to use your schools as my research site for the research report which I am required to write.

The topic of my research study is The Teaching of Reading Comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda –speaking learners.

If I am allowed to conduct my research at your three schools; each with two Grade 3 classes. I will further ask the school principals for permission to go into schools and conduct this research. Furthermore, teachers with whom I will be working with will be requested to be interviewed and participate in the focus group discussions.

Classroom observations for about two weeks per class shall be conducted. After each lesson observation, some discussions vis-à-vis the lesson shall be held with the teacher's concerned. Some documents will be analyzed. The interviews and discussions shall be tape recorded for transcription thereafter.

The school and teachers are assured of anonymity in the final research report, and thetranscription shall be returned to the teacher involved to proof read and for making finalcomments.

I hope that this request will be granted. Should you have any further concerns and/or queries about this request, please contact me at 083 257 32 43.

Thanking you in anticipation
Yours faithfully

Ndileleni Paulinah Mudzielwana

Faculty of Education
Department of Early Childhood Education

P.O. Box 1443
Sibasa
0970

Dear Grade 3 teachers

I am registered for a PhD with Pretoria University.

To qualify for my Doctoral Degree I am required to write a research report that specifically looks at the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners.

In this case, I will be required to answer the following main research question: Which strategies do teachers use in teaching reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners?

During the study the following method will be employed:
1. Classroom observation will be conducted for about three weeks.
2. An interview will be conducted.
3. Focus group interview with the teachers and will take 45 minutes.
4. Document will be analysed.
5. I will humbly request your photo and that of your school.

I request that you allow me to conduct individual interviews, classroom observations and focus group focus discussion.

Your anonymity in this research is guaranteed.

Thanking you in anticipation

Yours faithfully
……………………………………………

Ndileleni Paulinah Mudzielwana
Tel. 083 257 32 43

APPENDIX B

PILOT STUDY.28AUGUST –SEPTEMBER 2010

At first I was not sure of my research design. However, after reading texts on qualitative study I then realized that a qualitative study was appropriate choice for the reasons already stated. Although I have experience of teaching in the Foundation Phase, I was still indecisive about the employment of the interviews, classroom observation schedule and focus group discussions with teachers and the level of difficulty to assist teachers in self expression in providing data to answer my research questions. After a long discussion with my supervisors Drs Du Toit and Joubert , and consulting literature on the teaching of reading comprehension in the Foundation Phase , I constructed an interview schedule, and classroom observation discussion with teachers. I struggled to find a detailed structure of a classroom observation checklist of reading comprehension in the Foundation Phase. When I was searching through the internet I found a Reading Lesson Observation (RLOF) of primary schools by William A. Henk, Jesse C. Moore, Barbara A. Marinak, Barry W. Tomassetti. My supervisors agreed that I should adopt it. They suggested that I should go out and do a pilot study. The pilot study was conducted with the teachers who will not be part of the study. Through pilot study, I would detect any' peculiar deficiency' (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:166).

I then performed a pilot study to verify my three instruments.

LESSON LEARNED FROM THE PILOT STUDY

 In my initial plan I indicated that I will start with classroom observation, followed by individual teachers' interviews then lastly focus group discussions. **I learnt that I should start with interviews, classroom observation then end with focus group discussions with the teachers.**

Reasons for doing pilot study:

- To enable me to make adjustments to the questions that were not clear
- To give rise to a revision of the questions.
- It was necessary for me to make adjustments to the questions that were not clear and focused to the topic of the study.

I started with teachers interviews, where I asked 6 teachers from different schools to be randomly picked and interviewed. This was done to avoid bias. I used the planned interview

schedule (see Appendix.) in the teachers home language. I found that teachers prefer to mix both Tshivenda and English. The duration of interview took approximately 45 minutes per teacher . During the discussion, I was amazed by how teachers regard reading comprehension differently. I documented the teachers' responses to each question.

APPENDIX A: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

The second session was the classroom observation with the 8 teachers mentioned above. Again this was to verify the observation schedule before the actual classroom observation.

Since it was during teaching practice, it was convenient for me to sit and observe them. I received oral consent from the teachers as it was during teaching practice at university. So I had all the time to listen to them teaching reading comprehension. I first explained and showed the teachers the checklist. I then briefly explained the components and key aspects.

The reason for classroom observations was:

To establish whether what teachers said during the individual interviews was borne out of practice.

Lessons learned.

It will be appropriate if I could do my classroom observation the first two hours of the school day.

Teachers gave me the following reasons:

- Learners are still very fresh and can concentrate
- Teaching comprehension can be difficult.
- Two hours per observation will be appropriate for teachers to have enough time to teach
- Learners will be able to understand the comprehension because it is difficult for them.

I learnt that I should also design a form of field notes which will be divided into columns in which I will record parts of the lessons which will not be clear to me during the teachers' presentation. Then after the lesson, I can have time to discuss the unclear areas with the teacher.

I realised that the themes on the observation schedule seem to be too many and that I have read them and refined them again. **I changed and refined the themes see the new Observation schedule. I will write field notes during observation to add on to my classroom observation schedule.**

APPENDIX B: TEACHER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: BROAD QUESTIONS

Teachers will be asked the following common questions:
More questions will be individual questions emanating from classroom observation sessions.

I interviewed 8 teachers from different schools.

1. What is the importance of reading comprehension strategies?

Teachers responses to questions were:

In regard to question 1 understanding of the content, to be able to know the approach toward comprehension, to test ability of reading with understanding, to understand and know the content of the story, to promote understanding of the topic, words and enjoyment of reading

2. How do you teach reading comprehension?

Teachers' responses to questions were:

I will paste the picture, ask learners to look at the picture and predict and phonic the difficult words and then read together with the learners

Discuss the outer page of the text, discuss about the pictures and new words, I read the comprehension with the whole class

I will paste the picture on the board, ask learners to think about the picture and say what they think about the picture. I will then read the story to the learners and phonic the difficult words

I will allow learners to analyse the topic and predict what the text is all about, I will allow learners through questioning sothat they know what is expected of them. Will then identify

the difficult terms. Then read with the learners while analyzing important issues. Ask learners to read silently and then ask them questions

I read and then ask them questions

First I can explain to the learners, and then I read to them and then ask questions

3. Which strategies do you employ in teaching reading comprehension and why?

Teachers responses to questions were:

Oral by pasting pictures. I prefer whole class, small groups and individual. Learners read the story and then answer the questions

Reading of questions about the story first. This is to give learners a n idea of what is expected of them and what they should know.

They first read the story and then answer the questions

I will group them, first by teaching the whole class, then individual.

Lesson I learned

The interview schedule should be in both English and Tshivenda Home language as I indicated in my initial plan that I will ask the specialist to transfer it to English as it will be easier for the teachers to respond. **(what do you think about this one??)**

APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

1. **What do you understand by the term reading comprehension?**
   Teachers responses to questions were:

   Understand and know the content, read the story and understands what the story is about, reading with understanding and able to answer questions from the comprehension, to read the story given to read, reading with understanding and develop vocabulary

2. Can you give examples of reading comprehension strategies that you use in your class?
Teachers responses to questions were:

I will ask the whole class questions and then individual learners read the story when the class listens. Then I will ask learners questions individually, whole class in groups and in pairs.

I will ask the whole class to read at the same time or ask individual learners to read paragraph by paragraph silently for 3 minutes depending on the length of the paragraph that is browsing through the paragraph. Then ask questions to test their understanding

Ask learners individually, whole class and in small group and in pairs.

Identification of difficult terms and defining them through the passage with concentration;   reading the questions and answering them.

3. Which reading comprehension strategies do you use before, during and after reading?

Teachers responses to questions were:

I will ask learners to tell me what they see in the cover of the book or text, I will ask learners to look at the cover during the lesson, ask learners questions related to the story given, I will ask the learners to tell me what they see in the out cover of the book, browsing through and then read with concentration, asking questions related to the story, give learners questions to discuss about the story, only one teacher out of the 8 who responded that before reading I will ask learners to predict the picture, during reading I will ask learners simple questions, and after reading I will ask learners to analyse the story and then answer the questions.

4. Which strategies do you like to use and why?
Teachers responses to questions were:

 whole class teaching strategies, strategies may be questioning, reading on individually, individual and small groups reading, analyse the passage and answer the questions to stimulate their understanding.

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5. How do you teach and model the correct use of reading comprehension strategies to the learners?
Teachers responses to questions were:

I will teach the RC in groups of 4 learners, will tell them to read allowed in groups of 4-6, explain he comprehension to the learners and help where it is difficult for them, I will group them in 4 or 5, ask them to read in groups, give them little time to read the passage and then to answer the questions, by explaining the comprehension, monitoring. help learners where they have difficulties, if there is a picture I ask learners to predict what the story is about, learners identify difficult words and help each other. The teacher read with learners in groups and then individually. Read through the questions and answer them.

6. What in your opinion are the main reasons for the problems regarding the teaching of reading comprehension of Grade 3?

Teachers responses to questions were:

main reason is that the grade 3 learners know how to read, the F.P learners learn to read a new words, learners are taking too much time to learn new words and to answer the questions. grade 3 learners have a problem of word recognition, cannot concentrate, take too much time to understand. Teachers are impatient and unprepared

7. How do you think the problem regarding the teaching of reading comprehension can be resolved?
Teachers responses to questions were:

to teach learners to read words correctly, to tech learners to read and form sentences, to group them in small groups, individual and whole class, through storytelling and then asking them questions and then later read individual paragraphs, I use small group, pair , time management, preparation of the lesson.

Lesson learned

The advantages of the focus group discussions are:

Teachers become more relaxed than in an individual interview session

ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS:

1. Most teachers defined or explained the importance of reading comprehension, not reading comprehension strategies.

2. Most teachers explained generally procedure they use in class. When they teach reading comprehension some follow some aspects of prereading procedures but not in order or in a more focused manner. It is done hapharzardously. It also does not seem to be clear whether the teachers are aware of these reading comprehension teaching phases and the strategies that take place within each.

   Some seem to follow as many strategies as possible, but others just focus on reading text and learners answering questions.

3. Teachers do not know the difference between a reading comprehension strategy and teaching and learning strategies. They regard for example individual, group, pair work, small class and whole class as reading comprehension strategies.

Problems

Varied responses were suggested by teachers. Most teachers' responses blame the learners. Only one response places responsibility on the teaching.

Suggested Solutions:

A variety of solutions were given by teachers. Teachers suggested the use of variety of teaching and learning strategies. Also they suggested that they needed workshops on the use of reading comprehension strategies and their use in the Tshivenda home language classroom. In a way this is acknowledgement on the teachers' part of their lack of knowledge on reading comprehension strategies and how to employ them.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

The classroom observation was packed and I edited it to suit the context see appendix B.

1. Because teachers do not know the appropriate procedure to teach reading comprehension, they use any strategy and in any way they can. The most common activities are; reading, either by the learners and the teacher, and learners responding to questions based on the comprehension. Types of questions were not varied. They are mainly low order questions, not medium or high order questions.

2. Modeling is done at a very minimal scale. It is not really clear if teachers understand what modeling entails and what and how to model.

3. Teachers do not explain the strategy to learners

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

1. In this session teachers seemed to understand the term reading comprehension
2. Teachers are not able to distinguish teaching and learning strategies from reading comprehension strategies.
3. Some teachers know the prereading, during reading and post reading strategies.
4. Teachers are able to give teaching and learning strategies that they use in class. However, there are no reasons given for the choice of strategies
5. Teaching and modeling correct use of reading comprehension is not done in an orderly fashion. Teachers do not seem to have a set format they follow for teaching reading comprehension.
6. Teachers complained that learners take too much time to learn new words and answer the questions. I think teachers do not explain and model vocabulary to learners. These are very few teachers who mentioned explanation of vocabulary during their teaching reading comprehension. Learners need to understand words as used in context often and even out of context.
   However, I do agree with those who say that teachers are impatient and unprepared to teach reading comprehension.
7. **Different views were suggested regarding solutions to the reading problems. Teachers are** aware that learners need to be taught vocabulary, to be able to read words. It is hoped that teachers will not focus only on the correct pronunciation of words but also their meanings in context. Teachers are also aware that they have to plan reading comprehension lessons and know when and how and where to use the strategy at different phases of reading.

APPENDIX C:
TEACHER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Teachers will be asked the following common questions:
More questions will be individual questions emanating from classroom observation sessions.

1. What is the importance of reading comprehension strategies?
2. How do you teach reading comprehension?
3. Which strategies do you employ in teaching reading comprehension and why?

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours faithfully

Ndileleni Paulinah Mudzielwana
Tel. 083 257 32 43

INTERVIEW NO 2: ADDED RESEARCH QUESTIONS:
INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

1 What do you understand by reading comprehension?

2 What do you regard as the importance of teaching reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners?

3 How do you teach reading comprehension?

4 Which strategies do use when teaching reading comprehension?

4.1 What do you do before reading?

4.2 What do you do during reading?

4.2 What do you do after reading?

DATA SOURCE 1

QUESTION 1: What is the importance of Reading Comprehension?	
RESPONDENT	**RESPONSES**
RESPONDENT 1	Reading Comprehension is important. Learners need to read and understand, and apply it in daily lives
RESPONDENT 2	Learners will be able to understand what they are reading. Learners will be able to understand the text.
RESPONDENT 3	What you read you must be able to understand what you are reading about/ be able to relate what you have been reading/be able to explain what you have been reading
RESPONDENT 4	To make learners understand written words in the picture/learner must in understand/ interpret the picture/have more deeper knowledge about the written words.
RESPONDENT 5	To assist/ help the learners/ to learn how to understand. They are important/ have something in place to follow and help learners.
RESPONDENT 6	The reading comprehension is important to the learner because can read any text and know how to interpret it and at the end they can implement it in their daily lives. After reading learners can answer questions which are directly related to the text

QUESTION 2: How do you teach Reading Comprehension	
RESPONDENT	**RESPONSES**
RESPONDENT 1	Start by showing them pictures talked about them/ outside cover/little brows/talk about pictures. I start by phonic king/ pick some difficult words.
RESPONDENT 2	I identify the word which i assume learners do not know/ teach them words/ read/explain to the learners/ask learners questions to find if they have understood the text. Some learners do understand what they read.
RESPONDENT 3	I explain to the learners/think about the pictures/ look at the cover of the book so that they must be able to understand/ when you look at the pictures/ you look at the pictures/you must able to understand about the picture.
RESPONDENT 4	I tell learners to look at pictures/read the comprehension, after reading i ask them questions/ stop/ predict what will happen next. I am going to ask them questions/different questions/not yes/ no questions. Questions that can evoke their minds/ make them think creatively
RESPONDENT 5	Explain why the strategy helps/demonstrate how they can apply the

	strategy independently.
RESPONDENT 6	When I want to teach reading comprehension I start by reading comprehension while learners are listening; after that I request the learners to look at the pictures and talked about them, the pictures are on the next page, also check the title. EEISH!Then I pick words which I think the learners can interpret the meaning as some of them cannot read properly in Grade 3.

QUESTION 3: Which strategies do you employ in teaching Reading Comprehension.	
RESPONDENT	**RESPONSES**
RESPONDENT 1	I am using shared reading/ then we do language words level/ sentence level for 2 weeks. Some learners will understand/ be able to answer questions/ the problem is learners cannot read and write in Grade 3. Learners talk about pictures from the out cover/predict the content of the story.

I read with the learners/i start with phonics/I pick words which are difficult to the learners/then we read.

I let learners retell the story/ after the circle of 2 weeks/ask questions during the reading. If we can have a clear indication of what to do when we teach reading comprehension it will do/for now some learners can read but when we ask questions they cannot answer/means they did not understand the text. |
| RESPONDENT 2 | I am so confused/ there are many documents/with different strategies/ so many providers comes with another strategy. I talk about pictures/ then i read and they read after me. I read for them they listen to me.
I do not know the names of the RC strategies, I just teach. I read/they read after me/they read in groups/they read individually then i will be listening to them, and assisting them. Sometimes let the learners pick up some words which I have phonicked to write in their dictionaries. I do not have anything to say /today you start this way tomorrow you start this way/ tomorrow you start way. |
| RESPONDENT 3 | When one wants to read, one must be able to understand the picture when the reader first understand the topic which is given, you already know what is going to happen after reading 2-3 sentences, one can be bale to predict what is going to happen. Maybe people who are going to read will be able to exchange ideas the first one stops/the second continues/ the one continuing will be able to understand what is going to be read. There is not only one strategy/one need to employ different strategies/ there must be a combination of strategies in order to make reading successful. The one who is teaching reading must be ready/ have the liking/know your learners/reading must be according to learners ability |
| RESPONDENT 4 | I can employ different strategies for learners to understand comprehension/ I use strategies which will help learners to know the sounds/phonics the beginning sound and the end sound sothat they understand the different words used in the comprehension. If the word is repeating I will focus on it |

	sothat learners will e able to understand the comprehension. After finishing the text I ask questions 2-3 learners to read after reading I ask then questions. I will focus on the learners who were not participating in answering the questions and those who did not understand the comprehension. Then I will reteach them
RESPONDENT 5	A bit tough, I do not know what to say, what to name it. I do not know whether there is any. What I do with the learners I motivate them/ask them questions about the cover page, title of the book. That helps them to understand what the book is and the title to expose them to title of the book and the pictures. I show the learners pictures during reading/ I ask what they see so that they will participate/ they express their own mind as the see the picture during reading. I ask questions that will make them talk about the main idea/ main concept of the story, how the story ended/ who the main character, like and dislikes. It is important, when you are reading to get them actively involved in the message it helps them to think in the message, it helps them to think in the box instead of doing exactly what the teacher is asking them so that learners have the mind of their own.
RESPONDENT 6	I do not know because I do not use strategies, I just teach them how to read comprehension and answer the questions, hnnnn as it is difficult to us as a teacher to be sent to training again. I talked about the picture with learners after that I reread the comprehension again. Hnnn Then I ask the learner questions to se if they understand what we are talking about. I just teach as long as learners are listening and we discuss about the picture and later identify the word from the text that learners will interpret the meaning.

ADDED TEACHERS INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

RESPONDENT NO. 1

1.   What do you understand by reading comprehension?

Reading comprehension is reading with understanding. Reading with understanding means that learners read the comprehension word after word underlining all the difficult words. After underlining all the difficult words the educator will ask each learner to read all his difficult words to the whole class. When learners are reading the words the educator will write all the words on the board. After writing all the words on the board the educator will ask the learners to read the words, individually; in groups and the whole class.

The educator will help learners who experience difficulties in reading words. The educator will teach learners to pronounce the words .after reading all the words, the educator will ask learners to record all difficult words in their personal dictionary. After recording the words in their dictionaries the educator will ask learners to find the meanings of words from the dictionary and write the meaning in front of the word. In conclusion the educator will ask learners to take out their exercise books; the educator will dictate all difficult words to learners so that they can write in their books to taste their spelling understanding. After that the educator will make corrections with the learners.

2.   What do you regard as the importance of teaching reading comprehension to grade 3 Tshivenda speaking learners?

What I regard as the importance of teaching reading comprehension to grade 3 Tshivenda speaking learners is word pronunciation. Grade 3 Venda learners are able to read in Venda so during comprehension learners must be encouraged to underline difficult words. As grade 3 is a transition to intermediate phase the educator must see to it that his learners excel in the mother tongue. The educator must read first and learners read after him. After that the educator must let all learners read   independently but being guided by him. The educator must teach learners the meaning of words from the comprehension learners must also be taught the title of the comprehension.

3.   How do you teach reading comprehension?

When teaching reading comprehension I start by asking the learners to identify what they see in the picture if there is any one. From there I will teach them that the heading of the comprehension is called the title, people or animals in the comprehension are called characters. From there i will ask learners to mention the characters of any story they have read.

I also ask learners or teach learners to identify difficult words from the comprehension and how to record them alphabetically in their personal dictionary. From there I will record all the words in the board and ask learners to read all the words on the board.

When learners are reading i will guide them. They will read after me. From there I will allow learners to read independently so that i can check learners who are unable to read and learners who are unable to read will be given more reading lessons in order to improve their understanding of reading.

4.   Which strategies do use when teaching comprehension?
- guided reading-learners read guided by educator.
- 2 word and sentence reading –educator read word by word and learners read after him.

- 3 independent reading.
- whole class share time.

4.1 What do you do before reading?

Before reading i ask learners to identify all the pictures that are the in comprehension and write all what the learners are seeing on the board. I will again ask the learners to find the title of the comprehension and ask them what they think we are going to read about. I will tell the learners that all the people in the comprehension are called characters. Learners will know that where the story's talking placeis called setting

4.2 What do you do during reading?

During reading i help learners on how to read difficult words. As an educator I will ask each learner to read loudly standing in front of the class facing the learners. When learners are reading i will record difficult words on the board. During reading in will ask learners to identify the title of the story ; characters of the comprehension and the setting of the comprehension I will allow the learners to read individually as a group and as a class. During reading I will ask learners to follow punctuation marks. I will make sure that learners are following the rules. Learners who are excellent readers will be given extra work and learners who are behind will be given individual attention.

4.3 What do you do after reading?

After reading I ask the learners to retell story or the comprehension. Each learner will stand in front of class retelling the story after each learner has retell the story i will ask them to pick up the main ideas in the comprehension. Learners will use the main ideas in the comprehension to make their own summary about what they have read. They will again read their own summaries to their educator so that he can make correction.

After that I will divide my class into three groups, learners who read fluently and learners who cannot read. The grouping of learners will enable me to know my learners and how am i going to help those who cannot read.

RESPONDENT NO. 2

1. What do understand by reading comprehension?

- Reading comprehension

- By reading comprehension I understand that learners or readers should read with understanding.Fir To comprehend or understand he meaning.

- To understand the main points of story.

- To be able to understand the plot.

- To understand the different meaning of the words.

- Readers (learners) should be able to follow the step i.e.

- what comes first.

- What comes second, third, forth and the ending.

- Readers (learners) should also understand the background. In real life what is the meaning of the story. While reading(readers)should list the main key words.

- They should also know where when which how, who i.e.

- where did the story happen.

- Where did the story happen (time) and of the year

- which are the tools used.

- Who are the characters?

- How did other things happen?

2. What do you regard as the importance of teaching reading comprehension to grade 3 Tshivenda speaking learners?

- Grade 3 learners should be able to read on their own in order to find the meaning of the story.

- Educator should first collect the key words on the story and put them on the flash cards.

- Educator let learners to read the paragraph (first) and give the learners the questions. The questions should have the key words so that learners can build up the story. He (educator) should like wise in the entire paragraph. When the story is done learners should be taught to build the words. Learners then write the story in summary.

3. How do you teach reading comprehension?

- I prepare the story in pictures as cartoons. I write the difficult words and the key words on the board or flash cards.

- I explain the story to the learners explain the key words showing some on the cartoon. I explain the difficult.

- Learners read the paragraph and i ask them questions, and rest of the paragraphs.

- Questions are given to learners to understand the story. Learners are grouped in groups. Presenters present the story. Learners answers the questions.

4. Which strategies do you use when teaching comprehension?

4.1 What do you do before reading?

- Make sure that everyone has a book .

- Everyone has a pen and paper

- Setting a learning calm provoking environment in the room.

- Drawing a cartoon about the story to be read.

- Ask learners to read paragraph by paragraph and explain and ask questions.

4.2 What do you do during reading?

- Asking the questions as time goes on to make them remember. The story should be repeated so that learners are all at the same place. learners should be able to retell what is said.

4.3 What do you do after reading?

- After reading learners should be able to retell the story. Learners should be able to explain the difficult words.

- Learners should be able to explain the key words from the keyword they must be able to tell the story.

- Learners answer the questions from the comprehension test.

- Learners can also dramatise the story or to present to the class.

RESPONDENT NO. 3

1.   What do understand by reading comprehension?

*   Reading comprehension means reading with understanding. As a teacher I need to keep a close check as to when learners are reading they don't just read loud looking at what is printed but they should read with real understanding and interpreting what they're reading
*   From an early age say grade R and GR I they should start reading with understanding; it should not be left until learners are able to break words down or until they can read a certain number of words

2. What do you regard as the importance of teaching reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda speaking learners?

*   The idea is;
*   To use the stories read, tell, and listen to as basis for thinking activities to express own opinion draw conclusion based on the information provided in the text summary text, providing a different ending etc.

3. How do you teach reading comprehension?

*   In foundation phase we activate pre knowledge in new text we let learners activate pre know ledge self in intermediate phase.
*   Reading aloud to learners- i read aloud to them and they discuss meanings. Their impression having them guess.
*   Help learners to use clues and illustration, in and around the text. Clues include cover, photographs, headings, bold word, contents and the index. Draw their attention to illustration, photographs tables, graphs and cartoons appearing in pages the are important as they help readers make meaning. Develop decoding skills -unfamiliar difficult words, as most new text contain new words. Developing fluency, increasing vocabulary. Developing learner's ability to apply high order thinking skills like analysing evaluating and interpreting.

4.   Which strategies do you use teaching reading comprehension?

- First reading for them, let them read the flash cards.

4.1   What do you do before reading?
- Activate pre-knowledge or prior knowledge by encouraging them to come up to the party (participate).

4.2   What do you do during reading?
- While reading i may ask questions which lead them to given what will happen and also discussing the meaning of difficult words.
- May also help learners to use clues and illustration in and around it text (written or cover) paragraph, readings, sub-headings, bold words content ad index.
- Are can teach learners to monitor their own understanding of a text by knowing what the text doesn't make sense, stop a re-read the sentence or paragraph. By trying to link problem to what they sentence of what they already know about the topic title of the manning of the sentence. Read on and check whether what you read now makes sense. Check the meanings of words by using a dictionary or cycle for help.

4.3   What do you do after reading?
- I ask question about the comprehension text read to see how well they understood the massage of the text be it from a story, newspaper article or information book i will vary my question from low to high order thinking. The best way to develop these skills in my learners is to ask questions that get them to think. Even grade R and grade1 learners are capable of developing high order thinking e.g.
- Do you think this story well make people change?
- Why do you think the girl is brave?

RESPONDENT NO 4

1.   What do you understand by reading comprehension?
   - Comprehension is the piece of work that learners must read to show their understanding. Comprehension helps learners to increase their reading skills and understanding.
   - It also helps learners to relate characters in the story.
   - It helps learners to create their own stories. It expands learners thinking skills.

2.   What do you regard as the importance of teaching reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda speaking learners?
   - The importance or reading comprehension to grade 3 learners in Tshivenda is to help learners to understand the content of the work that they read.-it helps them to analyse how the characters in the comprehension differ and how they relate to each other.-they also learn different parts of speech and how to identify the verbs, adverbs, conjunctions, proper names .e.tc. in the comprehension and in their daily lives.-they can formulate their own stories based on the comprehension.

3. How do you teach reading comprehension?
   - I start by identifying difficult words in the comprehension and explain them.
   - If there are pictures, learners can start by doing guided reading through incidental reading and read the comprehension.
     -I can read the whole story with learners underlining the difficult words.
     -learners can also identify the main character in the story and tell us about him/her.
     - Learners can underline all the words and we can elaborate more on them.
     -They can try the answer the questions based on the comprehension.

- Fast learners can narrate the story to the whole class and other learners can add what has been left out.

4. Which strategies do use when teaching comprehension?

4.1 What do you do before reading?
- Explaining the difficult words to learnersif there are pictures we do incidental reading with learners (where learners are reading with help of pictures).

4.2. What do you do during reading?
- I read the story aloud while learners are listening showing them how to observe all the punctuations and using body language after reading I ask learners questions that relate to the story, if not,
- I reread the story paragraph per paragraph posing for questions until they understand.
- I pair learners who understand with those who do not understand to help each other understand the story.

4.3 What do you do after reading?
- Eish,I ask learners questions about the story.
- And learners write the summary of the story after they have been given time to talk about the story. They must go home and tell their friends about the story, it is not easy answer questions about the comprehension in their books.

RESPONDENT NO. 5

1. What do understand by the term comprehension?
- By reading comprehension with understanding first you read the question. Then read word with understanding. The teacher or the learner can read.
- By so doing the teacher will help learners when they need help.

2. What do you regard as the importance of teaching reading comprehension
Grade 3 Tshivenda speaking learners?

- Does my story have a title.

- Did I plan my story before I started reading

- Who are the main characters in my story

- where took place, does my story have an ending

3.How do you teach reading comprehension?

- By talking about what they see in the story or by talking about the main topic of the story

- The must know the topic and understand the meaning of words

- They must know the title of story they must learn to understand. So that at the end they can name the main character of the story.

- They must learn to listen to one another

- They must learn to speak.

- They must report back. They must enjoy being part of the group. They must learn to read on their own.

4. Which strategies do use when teaching reading comprehension

- They must read, help them.

4.1   What do you do before reading?

- I start by asking questions.

4.2   What do you do during reading?

- They must learn to read loud so that I can help them. They can read in their groups.

4.3   What do you do after reading?

- I start by letting them seat in their groups, they talk about their topic and by so doing they help each other.

- I give them chance in their group to report or to tell the whole class in other words they show their understanding.

- The teacher will ask question about the story.

- After reading with them they must learn to ask questions.

RESPONDENT NO. 6.

1. What do you understand by reading comprehension?
    *   To know the purpose of the text
    *   To distinguish whether the text is fiction or not fiction
    *   Be able to complete activities based on the text after reading
    *   Thinking about language used in the text
    *   Identifying difficult words that would need to use the dictionary

2.What do You regard as the importance of teaching reading comprehension to grade 3 Tshivenda speaking learners?
    *   Every learner should have her or his own text.
    *   Use picture story that would explain better
    *   Cause pictures make the text easier
    *   Use the text that is written in medium letters rather than written in small tiny writings

3. How do you teach reading comprehension?
    *   Read the text while learners follow
    *   Now they read on their own as a whole
    *   Read in groups and as individuals while others are looking and listening
    *   Talk about new words and explain them and paste on the wall for learners to read later
    *   Read questions together and answer orally

    Explain group the question e.g. what is your name? Learners respond

(1) When were you born?=I was born in 2000

when (answer must be the time:day,season,year week clock)

(2) Who drives the car? Maria drives the car

who (answer must be name , object or thing)

(3) Where (answer must be the place)

these can be the first group of questions to train them.

Learners can answer questions asked about the text in their exercise books

4. Which strategies do use when teaching reading comprehension?

4.1What do you do before reading?

- Looking at the picture of the story

- Predict what the story will be talking about

- Look at the name/title of the story

- Read a prediction through questioning

4.2   What do you do during reading?

- Write difficult words on the chart or the board.

- Pause and ask questions

- Walk around to see if all are reading

- Ask one to read the next sentence or line to check whether you are together.

4.3 What do you do after reading

- Ask learners to pick up difficult words and explain them

- Paste new words on the wall for them to read in their spare time

- Then answer question asked in the text and write in their exercise books

QUESTION 1: What do you understand by Reading Comprehension?	
RESPONDENT	**RESPONSES**
RESPONDENT 1	Reading comprehension is reading with understanding. Reading with understanding means that learners read the comprehension word after word underlining all the difficult words. After underlining all the difficult words the educator will ask each learner to read all his difficult words to the whole class. When learners are reading the words the educator will write all the words on the board. After writing all the words on the board the educator will ask the learners to read the words, individually; in groups and the whole class. The educator will help learners who experience difficulties in reading words. The educator will teach learners to pronounce the words .after reading all the words, the educator will ask learners to record all difficult words in their personal dictionary. After recording the words in their dictionaries the educator will ask learners to find the meanings of words from the dictionary and write the meaning in front of the word. In conclusion the educator will ask learners to take out their exercise books; the educator will dictate all difficult words to learners so that they can write in their books to taste their spelling understanding. After that the educator will make corrections with the learners.
RESPONDENT 2	By reading comprehension I understand that learners or readers should read with understanding. First to comprehend or understand he meaning. To understand the main points of story. To be able to understand the plot. To understand the different meaning of the words. Readers (learners) should be able to follow the step i.e.

	what comes first.
	What comes second third forth
	and the ending.
	Readers (learners) should also understand the background. In real life what is the meaning of the story. While reading(readers)should list the main key words.
	They should also know where when which how, who i.e.
	where did the story happen.
	Where did the story happen (time) and of the year
	which are the tools used.
	Who are the characters?
	How did other things happen?
RESPONDENT 3	Reading comprehension means reading with understanding. As a teacher I need to keep a close check as to when learners are reading they don't just read loud looking at what is printed but they should read with real understanding and interpreting what they're reading from an early age say grade R and GR i they should start reading with understanding; it should not be left until learners are able to break words down or until they can read a certain number of words
RESPONDENT 4	Comprehension is the piece of work that learners must read to show their understanding. Comprehension helps learners to increase their reading skills and understanding.
	It also helps learners to relate characters in the story
	It helps learners to create their own stories. It expands learners thinking skills.
RESPONDENT 5	By reading comprehension with understanding first you read the question. Then read word with understanding. The teacher or the learner can read.
	By so doing the teacher will help learners when they need help
RESPONDENT 6	To know the purpose of the text

	-To distinguish whether the text is fiction or not fiction
	-be able to complete activities based on the text after reading
	-thinking about language used in the text
	-identifying difficult words that would need to use the dictionary

QUESTION 2: What do you regard as the importance of teaching reading comprehension to grade 3 Tshivenda speaking learners?

RESPONDENT	RESPONSES
RESPONDENT 1	What I regard as the importance of teaching reading comprehension to grade 3 Tshivenda speaking learners is word pronunciation. Grade 3 Venda learners are able to read in Venda so during comprehension learners must be encouraged to underline difficult words. As grade 3 is a transition to intermediate phase the educator must see to it that his learners excel in the mother tongue. The educator must read first and learners read after him. After that the educator must let all learners read independently but being guided by him. The educator must teach learners the meaning of words from the comprehension learners must also be taught the title of the comprehension.
RESPONDENT 2	Grade 3 learners should be able to read on their own in order to find the meaning of the story. Educator should first collect the key words on the story and put them on the flash cards. Educator let learners to read the paragraph (first) and give the learners the questions. The questions should have the key words so that learners can build up the story. He (educator) should like wise in the entire paragraph. When the story is done learners should be taught to build the words. Learners then write the story in summary.
RESPONDENT 3	The idea is to use the stories read, tell, and listen to as basis for thinking activities to express own opinion draw conclusion based on the information provided in the text summary text, providing a different ending etc.

RESPONDENT 4	The importance or reading comprehension to grade 3 learners in Tshivenda is to help learners to understand the content of the work that they read.-it helps them to analyse how the characters in the comprehension differ and how they relate to each other.-they also learn different parts of speech and how to identify the verbs, adverbs, conjunctions, proper names .e.tc. in the comprehension and in their daily lives;they can formulate their own stories based on the comprehension.
RESPONDENT 5	Does my story have a title. did I plan my story before I started reading who are the main characters in my story where took place does my story have an ending
RESPONDENT 6	every learner should have her or his own text. use picture story that would explain better cause pictures make the text easier use the text that is written in medium letters rather than written in small tiny writings

QUESTION 3: How do you teach reading comprehension?

BEFORE,DURING,AFTER READING:WGHICH STRATEGIES DO YOU USE?

RESPONDENT	RESPONSES
RESPONDENT 1	When teaching reading comprehension I start by asking the learners to identify what they see in the picture if there is any one. From there I will teach them that the heading of the comprehension is called the title, people or animals in the comprehension are called characters. From there i will ask learners to mention the characters of any story they have read. I also ask learners or teach learners to identify difficult words from the comprehension and how to record them alphabetically in their personal dictionary. From there I will record all the words in the board and ask learners to read all the words on the board.

	When learners are reading i will guide them. They will read after me. From there I will allow learners to read independently so that i can check learners who are unable to read and learners who are unable to read will be given more reading lessons in order to improve their understanding of reading.
RESPONDENT 2	I prepare the story in pictures as cartoons. I write the difficult words and the key words on the board or flash cards. I explain the story to the learners explain the key words showing some on the cartoon. I explain the difficult. Learners read the paragraph and i ask them questions, and rest of the paragraphs. Questions are given to learners to understand the story. Learners are grouped in groups. Presenters present the story .Learners answers the questions.
RESPONDENT 3	In foundation phase we activate pre knowledge in new text we let learners activate pre know ledge self in intermediate phase. Reading aloud to learners- i read aloud to them and they discuss meanings. Their impression having them guess. Help learners to use clues and illustration, in and around the text. Clues include cover , photographs, headings, bold word, contents and the index. Draw their attention to illustration, photographs tables, graphs and cartoons appearing in pages the are important as they help readers make meaning. Develop decoding skills -unfamiliar difficult words., as most new text contain new words. Developing fluency, increasing vocabulary. Developing learner's ability to apply high order thinking skills like analysing evaluating and interpreting.
RESPONDENT 4	I start by identifying difficult words in the comprehension and explain them. if there are pictures, learners can start by doing guided reading through incidental reading and read the comprehension.-I can read the whole story with learners underlining the difficult words. learners can also identify the main character in the story and tell us about

	him/her. Learners can underline all the words and we can elaborate more on them. They can try the answer the questions based on the comprehension. Fast learners can narrate the story to the whole class and other learners can add what has been left out.
RESPONDENT 5	By talking about what they see in the story or by talking about the main topic of the story The must know the topic and understand the meaning of words They must know the title of story they must learn to understand. So that at the end they can name the main character of the story. They must learn to listen to one another They must learn to speak. They must report back. They must enjoy being part of the group. They must learn to read on their own.
RESPONDENT 6	read the text while learners follow now they read on their own as a whole read in groups and as individuals while others are looking and listening talk about new words and explain them and paste on the wall for learners to read later Read questions together and answer orally explain group the question e.g. what is your name? Learners respond (1) When were you born?=I was born in 2000 when (answer must be the time:day,season,year week clock) (2) Who drives the car? Maria drives the car who (answer must be name , object or thing) (3) Where (answer must be the place) these can be the first group of questions to train them. Learners can answer questions asked about the text in their exercise books
QUESTION 4: WHICH STATEGIES DO YOU USE TO TEACH READING COMPREHENSION?

BEFORE,DURING,AFTER READING	
RESPONDENT	**RESPONSES**
RESPONDENT 1	1. guided reading-learners read guided by educator.
	2. word and sentence reading –educator read word by word and learners read after him.
	3. independent reading
	4. whole class share time.
	4.1 What do you do before reading?
	Before reading i ask learners to identify all the pictures that are the in comprehension and write all what the learners are seeing on the board. I will again ask the learners to find the title of the comprehension and ask them what they think we are going to read about. I will tell the learners that all the people in the comprehension are called characters. Learners will know that where the story's talking placeis called setting
	4.2 What do you do during reading?
	During reading i help learners on how to read difficult words. As an educator I will ask each learner to read loudly standing in front of the class facing the learners. When learners are reading i will record difficult words on the board. During reading in will ask learners to identify the title of the story ; characters of the comprehension and the setting of the comprehension I will allow the learners to read individually as a group and as a class. During reading I will ask learners to follow punctuation marks. I will make sure that learners are following the rules. Learners who are excellent readers will be given extra work and learners who are behind will be given individual attention.
	4.3 What do you do after reading?
	After reading I ask the learners to retell story or the comprehension. Each learner will stand in front of class retelling the story after each learner has retell the story i will ask them to pick up the main ideas in the

	comprehension. Learners will use the main ideas in the comprehension to make their own summary about what they have read. They will again read their own summaries to their educator so that he can make correction. After that I will divide my class into three groups, learners who read fluently and learners who cannot read. The grouping of learners will enable me to know my learners and how am i going to help those who cannot read.
RESPONDENT 2	Which strategies do you use when teaching comprehension? 4.1 What do you do before reading? • Make sure that everyone has a book. • Everyone has a pen and paper • Setting a learning calm provoking environment in the room. • Drawing a cartoon about the story to be read. • Ask learners to read paragraph by paragraph and explain and ask questions. 4.2 What do you do during reading? Asking the questions as time goes on to make them remember. The story should be repeated so that learners are all at the same place. learners should be able to retell what is said. 4.3 What do you do after reading? • After reading learners should be able to retell the story. Learners should be able to explain the difficult words. • Learners should be able to explain the key words from the keyword they must be able to tell the story. • Learners answer the questions from the comprehension test. • Learners can also dramatise the story or to present to the class.
RESPONDENT 3	First reading for them, let them read the flash cards. 4.1 What do you do before reading? Activate pre-knowledge or prior knowledge by encouraging them to come up to the party (participate).

4.2 What do you do during reading?

While reading i may ask questions which lead them to given what will happen and also discussing the meaning of difficult words.

May also help learners to use clues and illustration in and around it text (written or cover) paragraph, readings, sub-headings, bold words content ad index.

Are can teach learners to monitor their own understanding of a text by knowing what the text doesn't make sense, stop a re-read the sentence or paragraph. By trying to link problem to what they sentence of what they already know about the topic title of the manning of the sentence. Read on and check whether what you read now makes sense. Check the meanings of words by using a dictionary or cycle for help

4.3 What do you do after reading?

I ask question about the comprehension text read to see how well they understood the massage of the text be it from a story, newspaper article or information book i will vary my question from low to high order thinking. The best way to develop these skills in my learners is to ask questions that get them to think. Evengrade R and grade1   learners are capable of developing high order thinking e.g. Do you think this story well make people..eh? Why do you think the girl is brave?

| RESPONDENT 4 | 4.1 What do you do before reading?

Eh, I explaining the difficult words to learners, eh,-if there are pictures we do incidental reading with learners (where learners are reading with help of pictures)

4.2 What do you do during reading?

I read the story aloud while learners are listening showing them how to observe all the punctuations and using body language after reading I ask learners questions that relate to the story, if not, I reread the story |

	paragraph per paragraph posing for questions until they understand.
	I pair learners who understand with those who do not understand to help each other understand the story.
	4.3 What do you do after reading? Okay, -I ask learners questions about the story. **Learners write the summary of the story after they have been given time to talk about the story.** **They must go home and tell their friends about the story** **Answer questions about the comprehension in their books.**
RESPONDENT 5	4.1 What do you do before reading? I start by asking questions. 4.2 What do you do during reading? They must learn to read loud so that I can help them. They can read in their groups. 4.3 What do you do after reading? • I start by letting them seat in their groups, they talk about their topic and by so doing they help each other • I give them chance in their group to report or to tell the whole class in other words they show their understanding • The teacher will ask question about the story. • After reading with them they must learn to ask questions.
RESPONDENT 6	4.1 What do you do before reading? • looking at the picture of the story • predict what the story will be talking about • look at the name/title of the story • read a prediction through questioning

	4.2 What do you do during reading? • write difficult words on the chart or the board. • pause and ask questions • walk around to see if all are reading • Ask one to read the next sentence or line to check whether you are together. 4.3 What do you do after reading • Ask learners to pick up difficult words and explain them • Paste new words on the wall for them to read in their spare time • Then answer question asked in the text and write in their exercise books,

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

TEACHERS FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Introductory questions: warming up questions to make participants to think about the phenomenon inquiry

1. What do you understand by reading comprehension?

2. Which strategies do you employ in teaching reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners?

2.1 Before reading

2.2 During reading

2.2.1 During reading how do you encourage learners to use self monitoring, self pacing and correcting strategies to decode the text?

2.3 After reading

3. What strategies do you think are required for successful teaching of reading comprehension?

Key:

R: Researcher

T :   Teacher

Ts: Teachers

R: Good afternoon teachers

Ts: Good afternoon mum

R: It is my pleasure to be with you this morning. We just want to share some views regarding the teaching of reading comprehension. This is not a formal interview it is just a discussion, an informal discussion where we just want to share ideas and issues that relate to the teaching of reading comprehension so I am going to say out some questions then we take turns to talk about that. We are free to say whatever we want, to contribute, add or subtract to whatever an individual has said.

Question 1: What do you understand by reading comprehension?

R: Yes can we start with you?

T1**:** Ok, May be I will look at it first, when you are trying to read with understanding of the meaning of the texts. Reading with understanding is important. Children must read with understanding.

R: Eh, thank you; do you want to add?

T1 (cont): From the education point of view I think it is important to read and understand, that all I can say.

R: Any other contribution from colleagues lets feel free to add or to subtract

T2: Ok my own view with the concept reading comprehension is that I agree with my colleague that comprehension is about reading with understanding. At the end of the day learners must understand meaning of the texts but now it is difficult.

R: Thank you very much any other contribution or view?

T3: Yes, I agree also that reading comprehension is to read with understanding, but in between we should ask questions whether learners understand the meaning of the text or not that is my view. The question will test if they understood what they were reading.

R: Thank you very much, any other contributor

T4: I think reading comprehension is to read and understand the story it is just like what my colleague has just said reading with understanding the meaning of the text. 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?

R: Ok

T4**:** (Cont) it is difficult for learners to understand the meaning of text, sometimes they act like they understand but not, not at all. Yes, it is difficult to get the message the author is saying but they must find out what the author is saying.

R:Do we have any other contribution on this one, any other views on reading comprehension.

T5: Yes vhana vha tshi khou vhala tshipida tshine vha fanela u vhala ndi toda upfa uri vho zwi pfa naa? Ngauri vhana vha tea u pfesesa . zwino ndi a vha vhudzisa mbudziso nda livhalela uri vha fhindule nga ndila ye nda lavhelela yone. Arali vha sa fhinduli ndi do divha uri a vho ngo zwipfa. Ndi vhona uri vho pfesesa ngau fhindula mbudziso nga ndila yone. That is to read with understanding meaning of the text.

R: Ok, thank you, any other contributor before I proceed to another question?

T6: yes, reading comprehension is to read with understanding and this involve the interaction between the readers, teacher and the meaning of the text. At the end I ask learners questions and learners should be able to use the information in their daily lives. We must get the meaning of the text.

R: Thank you, any other contributor?

T6: (cont): 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.

R: Thank you, any other contributor? Now we shall move to the next question.

Question 1:What do you understand by reading comprehension?
- reading with understanding
- meaning of text
- ask questions

Question 2: Which strategies do you employ in teaching reading comprehension? here ,colleagues you must explain what you do before reading, during reading and after reading the text. let us start with what you do before reading?

R:Let me start with you, mum.

T1: Eh, I show them how to hold a book first, show them how to hold a book first, show them how to read a book, I model how to read and I tell them that I do not want them to point at the words when they read but they must move their eyes. I do not want wet hands, when I say read you must read loudly.

R: Thank you, any other contribution?

T2: Before reading I first hide the story; then they talk about the picture; they predict what will happen in the story.

R: Thank you any other contribution?

T3: Vhana vha saathu vhala bugu ndi vhasumbedza distanceine vha fanela u farisa zwone bugu. Vhana vha khou vhala zwone ngeno zwi si zwone. Zwifanyiso tshinwe tshifhinga zwia xedza kha vhana vha sa koni ngauri vha shumisa zwone u vhala ngazo.

R: Okay, thank you, so you do not need pictures?

T3: Continue, No, pictures are good, but I must be careful with those who put the book very close to their eyes, some are hiding they cannot read, they read using pictures.

R: Do you have those who cannot read in your class.

T4: Yes, some learners are very tearful. I must motivate them. I ask them to look at the pictures, I ask questions, they tell me what they see; and I develop their interest to read. I must monitor them.

R: Okay, thank you any other contributions?

T5: I show them pictures, ask them to talk about the pictures; predict what will happen.

R: Okay, thank you.

T6: Yes, I explain the purpose of reading, we talk about the pictures and predict what will happen in the story. I start my lesson with picture talking where learners talk

about the pictures and predict about what will happen, and then I ask them questions.

R: Okay, thank you. Now any other views before we move to the next question. Right the next question is, you will see that these questions are not entirely independent, certain aspects could have been addressed when you were trying to address the first question;

The next question: Which strategies do you use during reading?

T1: Here we are still using the old method mixing the old and the new. I identify difficult words first, no, no I start with pictures, I show learners pictures and let them talk about them. I ask learners to predict, prediction is to say what will happen; what you think will happen in the story.

R:Ok, Right, any other view?
T1 (cont): In reading comprehension I practice with the learners the difficult words so that they should know the words. Okay, let me tell you: first I read, then I read together with them, they read themselves, I pick few to read then   I ask questions, I vary my questions not who questions but different questions.

R:Yes thank you, just to make a follow up, you seem to be saying that varying questions enhance reading comprehension?
T1(cont): Yes to test their intellectual, I must ask why questions type to provoke their intellectuals especially when the story had colorful pictures; pictures makes them to think and be able to answer questions and when I ask questions I pick a few, those who does not have interest will not raise their hands

R: Eh, thank you any other contributor?
T2:I agree with Teacher no 1, I first read; then I ask them to read in groups of 10,10,10. Then I ask them to read individually. This will help me to find those who were not reading because they were reading. During reading I want them to match their prediction with the content of the story. Ndi a kombetshedzea u dzhia na vhasakoni, ndi itela zwone vha tshi vhala individually

R: Okay, thank you, any other contributions?

T3: I read first, they read, kha group ye nda vha ndi tshi khou I vhalisa, ndi vhudzisa mbudziso nda dzhia vha songo pfesesaho nda vha gudisa ipfi line vhasi li kone nga uri tshinwe tshifhinga nwana u vha a tshi khou balelwa nga ipfi; vhana vha khou balelwa u bula maipfi kilasini a vha koni.

R: Thank you , so what do you do when they cannot decide words? I take note of them quietly; I make a list of their names; I then group them and teach them the sounds.

R: Okay, thank you any contributions?

T4: During reading; I read first, then they read with me. They read together, then I ask them to read individually only a few.

R: Thank you

T5: I want to make a follow up on what my colleagues has said. In my class I do not identify the words; but before I start with the reading; I give them a chance to look at the text and identify difficult words themselves; because sometimes we as teachers we assume the difficult words; sometimes they are not difficult for them; using this misguided logic leads to the erroneous conclusion. Before we deal with difficult words I have to share the LO assessment standards in order to have focus for example if the focus is on comprehension.

I also agree with teacher 1; high order questions stimulate their thinking/cognitive thinking. After reading the story in groups I ask each learner to read sentence 1, 2, 3… I just pick them so that they must not know which sentence they will be reading; but each will read a sentence. This helps me to identify those who have problems. Then I will give them individual attention. Those who can; I give them more challenging work.

R: Ok now I proceed to the next question.

T6: I read, they read, after me, they read together then they read individually. This helps me to identify those who have difficulties; sometimes they cannot read difficult words and they cannot understand when they read.

R: Ok, any other contributions? Now may I proceed to the next question? Okay, do you want to say something different?

T6: Yes, I wanted to say something that strategies this is difficult, because we teach learners to read. We teach them, as long as we teach them.

R: So, thank you. Can they read and understand?

T: No, I do have children who cannot read in my classroom.

R: Okay, thank you, any other contribution before I move on to the next question?

The next question is: Which strategies do you use after reading?

T1: I read, and then I ask them to read. If the sentence is too long I explain and then punctuate it. I ask questions because it is comprehension. When learners answer questions they must speak loudly. I guide them on how to answer the questions such as why, when, who questions.

R: Thank you, any other contribution?

T2: I ask them questions to find out if they have achieved the LO as they will answer the questions, If they did not understand the text.

R: Thank you any other contribution?

T3: I like to ask questions because it helps me to identify those who did not understand the text. Then I help them.

R: Okay, thank you any other contribution?

T4: This is difficult, we have a pressure, there are heavy demands on us to ensure that learners can read and understood. When I ask questions it is difficult for them to give answers.

R: Okay, thank you. Any other view on what do you do after reading the text?

T5: Okay, thank you, we may ask learners to retell the story. We revisit the prediction they made during before reading; and let them approve or disapprove if their predictions match with or does not match with the text. I ask them to analyses the characters and allow learners to brainstorm how relevant the text is for their daily

lives. I ask them questions about such as if you were characters… what would you have done. If the author have suspended us; I ask them questions; how would you conclude the story?

R: Thank you very much any other contribution?

T6: Yes, I strongly feel that teaching reading comprehension is a challenge. Teachers have got a lot of work to do, they have to prepare other records and on top of that they have to teach learners to read and comprehend a text. Learners are not the same, sometimes you do not know what to do with those learners. I start my lesson with picture talking where learners talk about the pictures and predict about what will happen, and then I ask them questions.

R: Right the next question is, you will see that these questions are not entirely independent, certain aspects could have been addressed when you were trying to address the first question; let us move to the next questions,

What are the strategies that are required for successful teachingof reading comprehension?

T1**:** I believe that practice makes perfect. We do not have enough time during school hours. If we give them books parents are not interested to guide their children. I follow English through activity (ETA). We read and after reading we go out and practice. Then I ask them questions to test their understanding.

R: So if I heard you well you seem to be using ETA method to teach reading comprehension?

T1 (cont) : oh yes, because with Gazzette (2008) the time frame is not workable. Teaching reading in early grades does not provide us with steps that we should follow when teaching all aspects of reading, maybe other knows, I do not know them the guidelines.

R: Thank you. So you seem to be saying that there is no guidelines and that there is liittle time you think should be provided to the teaching of reading comprehension?

T1 (cont): Yes, yes,it is true, because I think 2 hours per day will be correct for reading comprehension because even myself if I do not read I become dull, so they must read for 2 hours every day. In a democratic society success depends on reading

a wide of material, so learners must read, understand, interpret and evaluate what they read.

R: Thank you , let us hear from another contributor?

T2: Okay maybe I should ask, hu tou vha na he zwa nwalwa hone naa uri kha Grade 3 munwe na munwe u tou fara yawe kilasi a ethe, because sometimes u a vha a tshi khou balelwa, because it is a problem, children cannot read; but what I do I read , they read but only a few, I ask questions.

R: Thank you very much, any other contributor?

T3: Yes, u avha u tshi khou balelwa, because you do not know the strategies. If you know the strategies vha nga si balelwa u funza. I agree that is why we want to know the strategies.but what I do I read, they read together and a few read because of time and then I ask questions.sometiimes I ask them to summarise, but it is difficult.

R: Thank you any other views?

T3 (cont): No clear guidelines on how to teach RC for example what appears in the milestones document is difficult to understand. I feel very confused in the classroom. Like I said we want to know the strategies to say 1,2 3.

R: Thank you very much, any other contributor before we move to the
next question?

T4: Yes, I agree with teacher 3; there are no clear guidelines to teach RC in Tshivenda, we use Teaching Reading in Early Grades but it does not have clear guidelines to Tshivenda learners. Policy document have been translated and the language even if it is in Tshivenda we need to be work shopped because the terms are difficult to understand. Even the examination we cannot say our learners cannot perform because in the classroom. I use certain terms but in the examination paper they use different terms and the language is difficult for the learners to understand the text and therefore they fail the examination. Those who are translating must workshop us before because they use different terminology from the terminology we know; we cannot understand the policy document in Tshivenda version; it is very confusing. So to understand I have to read the English and if my English is not good I do not understand. During translation some important information gets lost, if you compare for

example the bullets, you will find in the English document there are 5 bullets in the Tshivenda document there are only 2 bullets, where is the other bullets? So it means there are some important information that is missing in the Home Language document and that needs a person who is good in English, because you should read the Home Language document at the same time reading the English version one. That is very confusing and it is taking too much time. This is confusing and we are not happy.

R: Thank you very much, back to our question mum, what are the strategies required for successful teaching of reading comprehension?any other contributor?

T5: Eh, I agree with my colleagues, yes sometimes you can read and cannot understand what is needed in the Home Language version; I am telling you this is very confusing; and the time for reading is too little. With strategies I do not know exactly what you are saying, what I do is I teach . I agree the language is difficult, the terms you know.

R: Thank you very much, any other contributor?

T6:Eh, strategies required? I don't think I have been trained for this because what I do, I teach learners to read, but EEEh strategies that are required that I read, I teach them difficult words and then I answer questions from comprehension. What is important is for them to read as long as they read. I do not have an idea of specific strategies required to teach reading comprehension

R: Okay ladies this is the end of our session and I want to thank you
very much for making this activity possible.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS NO 2 WITH GRADE 3 TEACHERS
Key:
R: Researcher
T : Teacher
Ts: Teachers
R: Good afternoon teachers
T: Good afternoon mum
I: Eh it is my pleasure to be with you this morning. We just want to
share some views regarding the teaching of reading comprehension.

This is not a formal interview it is just a discussion, an informal discussion where we just want to share ideas and issues that relate to the teaching of reading comprehension so I am going to say out some questions then we take turns to talk about that. We are free to say whatever we want, to contribute, add or subtract to whatever an individual has said.

Question 1: What do you understand by reading comprehension?

R: Yes , I may start with you

T1:I think eh, reading comprehension, there are 2 words, eh the reader must read and thereafter comprehend what he nor she has read eh, reading comprehension.

R: Thank you is that all, you may add colleagues; I regard you as experts in the field, that's why I am here, so be free to add.

T1:(continue)NN,Eh they should again be bale to the respond to the text to whatever the text was saying to them, they should be able to respond. 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 everyday so they are able to compare today story with yesterdays story, today story with last week story. Werein 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 interest so they are also able to compare.

T2: Ja, I just want to indicate what we expects or the outcomes of eh RC. We expect, we expects the learner to be able to explain about what she has been reading about in other words the learners must demonstrate that he or she understood what he or she has understood what he has been reading about.

R: Thank you, would you like to add?

T2: (cont)**A**gain I will just add there, maybe by reading as learners they gain or get information they increase their knowledge by reading the text. Because when this word understanding come from my colleague here said they will be able to explain, you cannot explain something which you did not understand, so that means when you read with understanding they will be able to retell. If I can ask them to retell the story they can which means they understood.

R: Thank you let us hear from another contributor
T3:I think when a learner are reading they need to know the information in the comprehension or text and thereafter is then that they will answer the questions with understanding because they have read something.

R: Thank you, let us hear from other contributor.
T4:Ja, I think reading comprehension is to read with understanding sothat after reading they can understand and answer the questions.

R: Ja
T5: They may also, they should be able to indicate or to see the relevancy of the story that they have read activities that they do, with their life what it is, hat, why the purpose of the text the author in that story as to what does it have to do with ourselves as readers and also they are able to add their vocabulary because they are going to encounter new words in the text.

R: Thank you any other contributor. Like I said colleagues feel free to add. Should we move to the next question
T4: Just afraid maybe if we comment further we may end up say something you are still going to ask, but I wanted to add that about Reading and viewing that reading goes with viewing which is learning outcome no 4. When a learner is reading sometimes you find that books have pictures, these pictures helps learners to understand the text. when the learner look at the pictures, the learner look at the

pictures when reading, that pictures helps learners to understand the text.

R: Oh, thank you, let us hear from other contributor, before we move to the next question. The next question is which strategies do you employ in teaching reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners? Colleagues this question may be divided into three sections, so may I ask you to respond in the following way if we agree:

What do you do before reading comprehension, which strategies do you use before reading comprehension?

T1: Yes thank you, here I wanted to say that most of the books that these learners read have pictures, so if we are reading a story we first go through the pages of that story book, the learners look at the pictures in the text and during that activity we shall also ask questions based on the pictures sothat children can guess what will happen in the story. So in that way we are preparing them for the reading that is going to take place.

R: Thank you very much any other contributor? what do we do before reading comprehension?
T2:Ja, we may sometimes tell learners to open maybe the story or the book we are going to read that they may read silently and they should underline maybe the word that they feel they do not know or they think are difficult for them, then we are going to do it together after they read themselves.

R: thank you very much any other contributor? What do we do before reading comprehension?
T3: In my view I think we can start by explaining the difficult words yes, sothat learners can understand them before we start with the reading, the story. and maybe to add, the other thing is that we can ask them to talk about the pictures, but we should start with the difficult words.ith

R: There we are colleagues, starting with the difficult words before reading and using pictures. Any other view?

T4: Sometimes from what I can say and advice you colleagues is that I first identify new words myself and then familiarize the learners with new words first, that is what my colleague has just said and I agree with her. Explaining the new words first, but I write those words on the flash cards then I place them on the board, I read them out for the learners then they repeat them after me, then sothat when they meet those words in the text then they will remember that these words are the words that we have been reading out before because the main purpose was to familiarize the learners with the new words first.

R: Thank you, any other contributor

T4: (cont) If I may add, sometimes when you read the story, in other stories there are songs in between, I think it is advisable to start learning the song first, sothat when you read the story together with the learners when you come to the section where there is a song then you sing it out, it will help them to remember more the story, it makes the story more interesting

R: Thank you, let's hear from another contributor

T5: The other thing is that we may remind them first about the rules as to the distance between, how to hold a book, the distance between a book and the body, things like ground rules as such because we may not agree with learners as to how which or which distance between you and the book, they may not know but we should tell them how to hold the book correctly.

R: Thank you, colleagues you may add, any other contributor

T5: Yes, I want to first add on what my colleague has just said about the ground rules, something came to my mind about the rules of handling the book. I remember in a project called "READ" they said that every time when before you start reading you have to remind

learners that this is the outer cover of the book owing them, this is the spine of the book and then you liken the spine of the book what will you do if someone hurts your spine, it is not good, it will be hurting sothat the learners learn how to hold the book correctly, then they will know that if he or she is doing this he is hurting the book. Another thing is that they should also talk about the pictures, you allow then to brainstorm about what will be happening in the story, if there is a heading, they talk about the heading, they could also predict about what will happen or what will the story be about, they could make their judgments they come with come out with ideas as to what is really happening, the main purpose here is to prepare them about to think about the story using pictures. By the time they read they are ready.

R: Thank you, what shall we say, so if I heard you well you are saying that readers should have pictures; and these pictures assist learners to understand the text? am I right mum?

T5: Yes more especially in the lower grades, pictures assist them to understand more better, they understand more better because it works as an incidental reading as they see the pictures they can predict what is happening there and there are those vha sathomi na luthihi, and those who can familiarize themselves with pictures and read the whole story by heart without knowing.

R: Let me ask you,mum, do we have thse who cannot start to read, do we have them in our classes in Tshivenda? those who can use pictures to as if they are reading the story?

T5: Like a chorus, yes, yes they are there, vha do wana vha khou sokou sumba sumba, another teacher, nne ndi nae asa divhi na vowel and this is frustrating. mum even up to Grade 7 they are there.

R: Okay, what do you do with them? Any other contributor?

T6: Like you heard from the beginning that reading comprehension is frustrating, to have learners who cannot read but yes pictures are

helpful to the learners but some read pictures and make their own story.

R**:** Okay,thank you let us hear from another contributor

T6 (cont): Okay let me add, Eh, may be, I may add to what my colleague has just said, but I do not if it is the right answer**(**R intervened, there is no wrong or correct answer here as I said from the beginning, we are sharing our experiences in regard to the teaching of reading comprehension, you may add feel free, Mum I regard you as experts in the field).Okay, after you explain maybe the difficult words, now the learners are reading, you may find that a learners cannot pronounce the words correctly you may remind them or tell them that go and ask to the learners that you know they know how to pronounce the word, by the time you come to read I want to you to know this word, oh, you will find learners moving around asking learners that know best to pronounce the difficult words or maybe the worse that are there.

R: Thank you, that is in regard to what we do before reading comprehension. Any other contributor or should we move to the next question.

T6 (cont): No,no not yet, we may also say something maybe about telling them how to hold a book, you tell them maybe the name of the book, the author; if you remember we use to read from "Ndededzi" and we did not know who were the authors, so if you start with them from the beginning from the early grades then they will understand, so you say something maybe about the name of the book, the author, maybe even the year even publisher sothat they know this information.

R: Thank you, any other contributor, or should we move to the next question? Still on what strategies do you employ in reading comprehension, but here the focus is on what do you do during reading comprehension, which strategies do you use during reading, that is during the actual reading of the text?

T1: One strategy that one can apply is to read for the learners first sothat the learners are able to learn to pronounce some of the words also they can also learn how to observe the punctuation marks as I am reading because I will also be emphasizing some of the things that I want them to take into consideration. Then after reading for the learners then I will give the learners opportunity to read. You can start maybe by giving the learners to read individually and as they read, eh, eh, I will expect them to read aloud sothat I can hear how they are pronouncing the words, whether they are observing the punctuation marks and thereafter I will reflect on what I have noted sothat I indicate to the learners that this is the things which you should do this are the things which you should not do next time. Secondly I will allow the learners to do pair reading sothat they can assist, one another sothat when the other one makes mistakes the other one will help his or her friend.

R: Thank you, any other contribution?

T2: As my colleagues has just indicated that the educator will read first, read for the learners sothat learners will be listening, they become attentive when one is reading. For all the learners to be attentive we are going to ask them to bank words, I am going to ask them randomly to bank the words, you as an educator you must make sure that you do not ask many words so that you remember who have been banking a word sothat at the end you could say Shumani bank this word for you. After you have read you ask what was the word I ask you to bank for us, so throughout the reading lesson the learners are listening attentively because they know they are banking the words, so they remain attentive because even those who were not asked to bank they are listening attentively because they do not know when you are going to ask them to bank the words.

R: Thank you any other contribution?

T3: Or sometimes you may read aloud while the learners are following you reading, I mean you read a sentence and you stop where the

sentence ends and then they read and another thing is to call a learner to read, eh, the method of pointing is a good method because you can find a learner the topic say or the word say "Kha ri shele mulenzhe", how will I know whether he or she knows the word "Kha ri shele mulenzhe" you call a learner to read you do not mind about others, you are focusing on the very learner to see whether he or she knows the word, like I say the eh learner will just read but from the head, they must point , or else we will never know you know, it is difficult.

R: Thank you, so you are recommending the finger pointing as a strategy to teach reading comprehension; and that you start using it first during reading?

T3: Yes I start with this and it helps.

R: Alright, now I can proceed to another question

T4:I Just wanted to make a followup on the idea of my colleague has just said that when the learners are pointing it also helps the learner himself to learn all the words that he or she is reading and also as an educator if I am standing nearby. I am also able to monitor or to ascertain whether the learner can read all the words but I would also like to say that this strategy should be used only when the learner do the first reading and thereafter as we move further this strategy should should be withdrawn because by ten I will be sure that the learners can read the words.

R: Thank you, just to make a followup; like others you are also recommending finger pointing as a strategy to teach learners new or difficult words and you seem to be saying that fingerpointing is a useful strategy to assist learners to read with understanding?

T4: (cont).Oh yes that's true, especially in Tshivenda, it works. Ja you see I have indicated that I will read for them first neh, and then the learners will read, I will regard that as the first reading then that is where this strategy can be applied but after the learners have read and mastered the words that strategy should be withdrawn.

R: Okay

T5:I wanted to add also on the fingerpointing, but for those learners who cannot read it's not wise to withdraw the strategy too soon, you should prolong it a bit, because this could be the only strategy that you as an educator can be ascertain whether he or she can read because they are very good in memorizing (a nga vha vhalela a sa divh na ipfi na lithihi for example ri nga tea u dzula natsho tshifhinga tshilapfu na u tswela havha vha sa koni u vhala a vha tsweli zwone; ndivho yau tswela ipfi nga tshipidid a li vhuisa buguni yawe zwi khwine u tou guda.then you should say point u wa wana asa i sumbi, so my advice is that we should stay with this strategy for a longtime to help these learners. You should prolong it a bit.

R: Thank you, you seem to be all recommending fingerpointing as a good strategy to help learners to read and be able to understand.

T5 (cont): Yes, as we are doing the individual and pair reading it is good to identify those learners who are experiencing problem sothat I can provide individual support. I may sit with them or ask them to come to the table and read for me sothat I can assist and support that they require.

R: Thank you very much. Let's hear from another contributor.

T6:To add on that there are those learners who are really good in reading and youpair him or her with those who are really good in reading and you tell him or her that this is your child help him or her (danu mu beba ni mugudise) I am telling you that you will see or you will find something different to the learner who do not know how to read (u tou mu gudisa nga mbilu na nga muya vha wana a khou kona, o mu beba thiri. And children like to be praised, u mugudisa u fhira na vhone mudededzi.

R: Thank you very much. So you seem to pair the able learners with the less able learners during reading?

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T6 (Cont): Because these kids who cannot read they really stress us, Eh, we get stressed. You can find an educator develop a negative attitude towards the young girl or young boy. The other thing could be to pause and ask questions. This is where maybe you employ that the colleague strategy of banking the word, by the way which word did I say you should bank, and even to recap the difficult words that you stated with. To add we should not forget about using the dictionary, learners can compile their own dictionaries using the exercise books and write alphabetically.

R: Thank you very much. Any other contributor or should we move to the next question which is: Which strategies do you use after reading the text, which strategies t do you use after reading the text.
T1: Questioning is very critical at all times and in reading comprehension. We may ask questions to see whether the learners have understood the story.

R: Thank you very much, any contributor in regard to what do you do after reading the text. Remember colleagues our focus is on reading comprehension.
T2: You can ask learners how the story was. Tell us about what you heard about in the story. You can ask learners to stand infront, it's not like the question when did this and this happen but to tell us; retell the story after reading.

R: Thank you very much, any contributor
T3: We may also ask learners to say something about the characters of the story.

R: Thank you very much, any contributor
T4: Learners can also dramatise what they have been reading; you pick up the individual in the story ask learners who can be this character and they dramatise.

R: Thank you very much. If I my ask what type of questions do you ask and why?

T5: The questions will be directed by the assessment standards. Maybe you want them to know a process, understand, read for information. So when you ask questions the questions should be directed by the assessment standards and then we ask them to summarise.

R: Thank you very much, any contributor

T6: You know questioning is important, and we use it. But to add on its elated to characters, when they say something about the characters they could identifying and saying whether they dislike or like the character and why, or ask them to write on a topic what if you were one of the character, inwi no vha ni tshi do ita mini? So by that you will ascertain if they did understand the story. Or who wants to be like .. naming a character maybe which was good or which was not good. They explain why whether good or bad; and sometimes you may find that the story involves some logical arrangements of facts; it started this way, followed by this and thereafter this happens.

R: Thank you very much, may we move to the next question. As I indicated these questions are linked to each other.what are the strategies required for successful teaching of reading comprehension?

T1:These strategies should cut across and not to be used by literacy educator or language teacher, but I want to say that maybe that is why children cannot read and understand because, because teachers wait or do reading comprehension during story reading time which is very little, we all know that; let's do it in Lifeskills and Numeracy also.

R: Thank you, I am sure this is something that is coming up, let's hear what other are saying.

T1(cont): I remember one time with the project read: you start looking at the book because this girl Vusi was reading the book was dirty;Stress the reading rules for learners to take care of books: New

words -Explanation of new words when you read, to be fluent read. You must use the dictionary; because you still come it's important to explain the words and their meaning across difficult words. Pre reading activities are very important. You will remember Mrs Mulaudzi and Mrs Rampfumedzi during the workshop we were told that the language that we use in class we should drill the words for example discuss critically. We should teach them. There is a link between language vocabulary decoding and comprehension. The learners should know the words so teaching difficult words first is important them and use them meaningfully; because you cannot respond to the text which you did not understand; sometimes learners respond even if they did not understand; but the educator saw that the learner could not understand the text.

R:Thank you very much what else can we say about RC in Grade 3 class or what are the challenges in RC teaching?

T1: There are many challenges especially those children cannot read and understand.A learner cannot read, yes, she or he is in Grade 1, they just say learners must pass them, she cannot read, and even if you call the mother, she will say vha do zwivhona phanda, u do vulea a tshi ya, now that learners need to read on the board, if he or she cannot read let us say learners must fail even in Grade 1, one they receive you will see the change.

T2: From what my colleague is saying she is encouraging repeat and not retain because you are told to retain a learner for a specific period; the results are painful, because of that just let them go, pass one pass all, even the next class the educator will do the same; let them go, pass one pass all. We are told learners should not be retained for more than 2; even in a phase twice, you see nwana a khou ya u feila luvhili. Even if you retain them may be for the whole year.

R: Thank you. Yes, what about the guidelines for teaching Grade 3 RC. How much support is there for you, are there guidelines?

T3: No I do not know, but I cannot remember a time when we were given? What to follow, how to teach R.C. Now, what is being stressed are the LO and milestones. Time and again we have been attend workshops.

R: What about the Teaching Read in Early Grades, does it gives guidelines on how to teach reading comprehension in Tshivenda Grade 3.

T4**:** Tshivenda do not have guidelines, for an English class but not for a Tshivenda teaching no clear guideline.

T5: The other challenges have been highlighted; and this is serious, Reading is not being done across all the Language Programme and this is very serious because learners cannot only be done wait for the Literacy and Numeracy. When there are breaks in between is a problem. They must read throughout both in Life Orientation and Numeracy.

T6: I think time allocation is a challenge, yes. Numeracy has been given more time than Literacy and whereas literacy needs more time because numeracy is only numbers (and vhathu vha sa vhali vha a konesa numeracy).

R: How much time do you think you should be given for reading comprehension per day? 10 minutes. Read Comprehension has many things, teachers say but 1 hour specifically for reading comprehension because reading comprehension has many aspects. There are those strategies that we said we should go through before reading because we must start with the strategies before reading they must read silently, explain the words, familiarise new words before reading, remember reading rules; you see it takes time, before the actual reading.

Ts: Yes, yes it is too little, Yes 1 hour is good

R: so, it means you are all agreeing that time allocation should be reviewed and you suggest 1 hour specifically for reading comprehension.

T1: but another challenge: I am thinks of a class which is overcrowded challenge: you will find an educator picks only those who are gifted or those who can read; and leave those who cannot, if the class is 70 avho vhana vha do fhelela lini; yes to avoid depress and stress those are the most we pick.

R: Okay colleagues this is the end of our session and I would like to thank you very much for sacrificing your precious time after school.

DATA SET 2 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS NO 2

QUESTION 1: What do you understand by Reading Comprehension?	
RESPONDENT 4	I think reading comprehension is to read and understand the story it is just like what my colleague has just said reading with understanding the meaning of the text. 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. **T4:** (Cont) it is difficult for learners to understand the meaning of text, sometimes they act like they understand but not, not at all. Yes, it is difficult to get the message the author is saying but they must find out what the author is saying.
RESPONDENT 5	Yes vhana vha tshi khou vhala tshipida tshine vha fanela u vhala ndi toda upfa uri vho zwi pfa naa? Ngauri vhana vha tea u pfesesa . zwino ndi a vha vhudzisa mbudziso(asking questions) nda livhalela uri vha fhindule nga ndila ye nda lavhelela yone. Arali vha sa fhinduli ndi do divha uri a vho ngo zwipfa. Ndi vhona uri vho pfesesa ngau fhindula mbudziso nga ndila yone. That is to read with understanding meaning of the text.

RESPONDENT 6	yes, reading comprehension is to read with understanding and this involve the interaction between the readers, teacher and the meaning of the text. At the end I ask learners questions and learners should be able to use the information in their daily lives. We must get the meaning of the text. **T6**: **(cont)** 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	

Question 1

Key

reading with understanding

meaning of text

ask questions

QUESTION 2: Which strategies do you employ in teaching reading comprehension? here you must explain what you do before reading, during reading and after reading the text. Let us start with what do you do before reading?

QUESTION 2: which strategies do you employ in teaching reading comprehension: Before reading?		
RESPONDENT 1	Eh, I show them how to hold a book first, show them how to hold a book first, show them how to read a book, I read showing them how to read and I tell them that I do not want them to point at the words when they read but they must move their eyes. I do not want wet hands, when I say read you must read loudly.	
RESPONDENT 2	Before reading I first hide the story; then they talk about the picture; they predict what will happen in the story.	

RESPONDENT 3	Vhana vha saathu vhala bugu ndi vhasumbedza distance ine vha fanela u farisa zwone bugu hold the book. Vhana vha khou vhala zwone ngeno zwi si zwone. Vha amba na nga zwifanyiso fhedzi zwifanyiso tshinwe tshifhinga zwia xedza kha vhana vha sa koni ngauri vha shumisa zwone u vhala ngazwo.	
RESPONDENT 4	Yes, some learners are very fearful. I must motivate them. I ask them to look,talk at the pictures, I ask questions, they predict tell me what they see; and I develop their interest to read. I must monitor them.	
RESPONDENT 5	I show them pictures, I ask questions,ask them to talk about the pictures; predict what will happen,I ask questions.	
RESPONDENT 6	Yes, I explain the purpose of reading, we talk about the pictures and predict what will happen in the story. I start my lesson with picture talking where learners talk about the pictures and predict about what will happen, and then I ask them questions	

Key

talk about the picture

predict what will happen in the story.

how to hold a book

I ask questions,

I read showing them how to read

QUESTION 3: Which strategies do you employ in teaching reading comprehension: During reading?		
RESPONDENT	RESPONSES	
RESPONDENT 1	Here we are still using the old method mixing the old and the new. I identify difficult words first, no, no I start with pictures, I show learners pictures and let them talk about them. I ask learners to predict, prediction is to say what will	

	happen; what you think will happen in the story. T1: (Cont) In reading comprehension I practice with the learners the difficult words so that they should know the words. Okay, let me tell you: first I read, I identify difficult words then I read together with them, they read themselves, I pick few to read then I ask questions, I vary my questions not who questions but different questions. T1: (Cont) Yes to test their intellectual, I must ask why questions ask why questions type to provoke their intellectuals especially when the story had colorful pictures; pictures makes them to think and be able to answer questions and when I ask questions I pick a few, those who does not have interest will not raise their hands	
RESPONDENT 2	I agree with Teacher no 1, I first read; then I ask them to read in groups of 10,10,10. Then I ask them to read individually. This will help me to find those who were not reading because they were reading. During reading I want them to match their prediction. with the content of the story I ask questions. Ndi a kombetshedzea u dzhia na vhasakoni, ndi itela zwone vha tshi vhala individually, because I must ask them questions.	
RESPONDENT 3	I read first, they read, kha group ye nda vhandi tshi khou I vhalisa, ndi vhudzisa mbudziso nda dzhia vha songo pfesesaho nda vha gudisa ipfi line vhasi li kone(difficult words) nga uri tshinwe tshifhinga nwana u vha a tshi khou balelwa nga ipfi; vhana vha khou balelwa u bula maipfi kilasini a vha koni.	
RESPONDENT 4	During reading; I read first, then they read with me. They read together, then I ask them to read individually only a	

	few, then I ask questions.	
RESPONDENT 5	I want to make a follow up on what my colleagues has said. In my class I do not identify the words; but before I start with the reading; I give them a chance to look at the text and identify difficult words themselves; because sometimes we as teachers we assume the difficult words; sometimes they are not difficult for them; using this misguided logic leads to the erroneous conclusion. Before we deal with difficult words I have to share the LO assessment standards in order to have focus for example if the focus is on comprehension. I also agree with teacher 1; I ask questions, high order questions stimulate their thinking/cognitive thinking. After reading the story in groups I ask each learner to read sentence 1, 2, 3… I just pick them so that they must not know which sentence they will be reading; but each will read a sentence. This helps me to identify those who have problems. Then I will give them individual attention. Those who can; I give them more challenging work.	
RESPONDENT 6	T6: I read, they read, after me, they read together then they read individually. This helps me to identify those who have difficulties; sometimes they cannot read difficult words and they cannot understand when they read. T6(cont): Yes, I wanted to say something that strategies this is difficult, because we teach learners to read. We teach them, as long as we teach them. I do have children who cannot read in my classroom.	

Key

identify difficult words

I show learners pictures and let them talk about them

prediction

I ask question

QUESTION 4: Which strategies do you employ in teaching reading comprehension: After reading?		
RESPONDENT	RESPONSES	
RESPONDENT 1	I read, and then I ask them to read. If the sentence is too long I explain and then punctuate it. I ask questions because it is comprehension. When learners answer questions they must speak loudly. I guide them on how to answer the questions such as why, when, who questions.	
RESPONDENT 2	I ask them questions to find out if they have achieved the LO as they will answer the questions, If they did not understand the text.	
RESPONDENT 3	I like to ask questions because it helps me to identify those who did not understand the text. Then I help them to answer the question.	
RESPONDENT 4	This is difficult, we have a pressure, there are heavy demands on us to ensure that learners can read and understood. When I ask questions it is difficult for them to answer the question .	
RESPONDENT 5	Okay, thank you, we may ask learners to retell the story. We revisit the prediction they made during before reading; and let them talk about what they predicted before reading or does not match with the text. I ask them to analyse the characters and allow learners to brainstorm how relevant the text is for their daily lives. I ask them questions about such as if you were characters… what would you have done. If the author have suspended us; I ask them questions; how would you conclude the story?	

RESPONDENT 6	Yes, I strongly feel that teaching reading comprehension is a challenge. Teachers have got a lot of work to do, they have to prepare other records and on top of that they have to teach learners to read and comprehend a text and to answer the question. Learners are not the same, sometimes you do not know what to do with those learners. I start my lesson with picture talking where learners talk about the pictures and predict about what will happen, and then they read. I can ask them to summarise the story about the characters,or to analyses but only a few here only I ask them questions.	

Key:

I ask them questions

to answer the question

I ask them to analyses

to summarise

QUESTION 5: What are the strategies required for successful teaching of reading Comprehension?		
RESPONDENT	RESPONSES	
RESPONDENT 1	T1:I believe that practice makes perfect. We do not have enough time during school hours. If we give them books parents are not interested to guide their children. I follow English through activity (ETA). We read and after reading we go out and practice. Then I ask questions to test their understanding they must answer questions. T1: (cont) Oh yes, because with Gazzette (2008) the time frame is not workable. Teaching reading in Early Grades does not provide us with steps that we should follow when teaching all aspects of reading, maybe others knows, I do not know them the strategies. T1: (cont) Yes, yes, it is true, because I think 2 hours per	

	day will be correct for reading comprehension because even myself if I do not read I become dull, so they must read for 2 hours every day. In a democratic society success depends on reading a wide of material, so learners must read, understand, interpret and evaluate what they read.	
RESPONDENT 2	Okay maybe I should ask, hu tou vha na he zwa nwalwa hone naa uri kha Grade 3 munwe na munwe u tou fara yawe kilasi a ethe, because sometimes u a vha a tshi khou balelwa, because it is a problem, children cannot read; but what I do I read , they read but only a few, I ask questions	
RESPONDENT 3	Yes, u avha u tshi khou balelwa nwana, because you do not know the strategies. If you know the strategies vhana vha nga si balelwa u vhala vha pfesesa. I agree that is why we want to know the strategies.but what I do I read, they read together and a few read because of time and then I ask questions.sometimes I ask them to summarise the main event, but it is difficult. T3: (cont) No clear guidelines on how to teach RC for example what appear in the milestones document is difficult to understand. I feel very confused in the classroom. Like I said we want to know the strategies to say 1,2, 3.	
RESPONDENT 4	Yes, I agree with teacher 3; there are no clear guidelines to teach RC in Tshivenda, we use Teaching Reading in Early Grades but it does not have clear guidelines to Tshivenda learners. Policy document have been translated and the language even if it is in Tshivenda we need to be workshopped because the terms are difficult to	

	understand. Even the examination we cannot say our learners cannot perform because in the classroom. I use certain terms but in the examination paper they use different terms and the language is difficult for the learners to understand the text and therefore they fail the examination. Those who are translating must workshop us before because they use different terminology from the terminology we know; we cannot understand the policy document in Tshivenda version; it is very confusing. So to understand I have to read the English and if my English is not good I do not understand. During translation some important information gets lost, if you compare for example the bullets, you will find in the English document there are 5 bullets in the Tshivenda document there are only 2 bullets, where is the other bullets? So it means there are some important information that is missing in the Home Language document and that needs a person who is good in English, because you should read the Home Language document at the same time reading the English version one. That is very confusing and it is taking too much time. This is confusing and we are not happy. In my class do I read, they read together after me and a few read then I ask questions sothat they must demonstrate to me that they understood the story but it is difficult.	
RESPONDENT 5	Eh, I agree with my colleagues, yes sometimes you can read and cannot understand what is needed in the Home Language version; I am telling you this is very confusing; and the time for reading is too little. With strategies I do not know exactly what you are saying, what I do is I teach. I agree the language is difficult, the terms you know.	

| RESPONDENT 6 | Eh, strategies required? I don't think I have been trained for this because what I do, I teach learners to read, but EEEh strategies that are required that I read, I teach them difficult words and then I want them to answer questions from comprehension. What is important is for them to read as long as they read. I do not have an idea of specific strategies required to teach reading comprehension | |

Key

English through activity (ETA).

I ask questions

to answer questions

summarise

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS NO 2 WITH GRADE 3 TEACHERS

QUESTION 1: What do you understand by Reading Comprehension?		
RESPONDENT	RESPONSES	
RESPONDENT 1	T1:I think eh, reading comprehension, there are 2 words, eh the reader must read and thereafter comprehend what he or she has read eh, reading comprehension. T1:(cont)NN,Eh they should again be able to respond to the text to whatever the text was saying to them and in their lives, they should be able to respond. 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 everyday so they are able to compare today story with yesterdays story, today story with last week story. Wherein 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 interest so they are also	

	able to compare.	
RESPONDENT 2	Ja, I just want to indicate what we expects or the outcomes of eh RC. We expect, we expects the learner to be able to read and understand the text, explain about what she has been reading about in other words the learners must demonstrate that he or she understood what he or she has been reading about. T2: (cont) Again I will just add there, learners must read and understand maybe by reading as learners they gain or get information they increase their knowledge by reading the text. Because when this word understanding come from my colleague here said they will be able to explain, you cannot explain something which you did not understand, so that means when you read with understanding they will be able to retell. If I can ask them to retell the story they can which means they understood.	
RESPONDENT 3	I think when a learner are reading they need to know the information in the comprehension or text and thereafter is then that they answer the questions with understanding because they have read something.	
RESPONDENT 4	Ja, I think reading comprehension is to read with understanding sothat after reading they can understand the text or story and will answer the questions answer the questions. T4: (cont) They may also, they should be able to indicate or to see the relevancy of the story that they have read activities that they do, with their life what it is, that, why the purpose of the text, the author in that story as to what what does it have to 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.	
RESPONDENT 5	T5: just afraid maybe if we comment further we may end up say something you are still going to ask, but I wanted to add that about Reading and viewing that reading goes with viewing which is learning outcome no 4. When a learner is reading sometimes you find that books have pictures, these pictures helps learners to understand the text. This is reading comprehension when the learner looks at the pictures, the learner look at the pictures when reading, that pictures helps learners to understand the text use the information in his life.	
RESPONDENT 6	Yes, I agree with my colleague , I think reading comprehension, there are 2 words, learners must read and as they read they must understand, then it is to read with understanding, they must not just read, but they must understand, sothat they use the information in their daily lives, that is all I can say.	

Key

to read with understanding

 use the information in their daily lives,

will be able to retell. If I can ask them to retell

to add their vocabulary

be able to respond

they are able to compare today story with yesterdays

explain about what she has been reading

the learners must demonstrate

QUESTION 6: What do you do before Reading Comprehension?		
RESPONDENT	RESPONSES	

RESPONDENT 1	Yes thank you, here I wanted to say that most of the books that these learners read have pictures, so if we are reading a story we first go through the pages of that story book, the learners look at the pictures in the text and during that activity we shall also ask questions based on the pictures sothat children can guess what will happen in the story. So in that way we are preparing them for the reading that is going to take place.	
RESPONDENT 2	Ja, we may sometimes tell learners to open maybe the story or the book we are going to read that they may read silently and they should underline maybe the difficult word that they feel they do not know or they think are difficult for them, then we are going to do it together after they read themselves.	
RESPONDENT 3	In my view I think I must motivate them. I ask them to look,talk at the pictures, I ask questions, they predict tell me what they see; and I develop their interest to read. I must monitor them. we can start by explaining the difficult word yes, sothat learners can understand them before we start with the reading, the story. and maybe to add, the other thing is that we can ask them to talk about the pictures, but we should start with the difficult words.	
RESPONDENT 4	sometimes from what I can say and advice you colleagues is that I first identify new words those that are the difficult words myself and then familiarize the learners with new words first, that is what my colleague has just said and I agree with her. Explaining the new the difficult words first, but I write those words on the flash cards then I place them on the board, I read them out for the learners then they repeat them after me, then sothat when they meet those	

	words in the text then they will remember that these words are the words that we have been reading out before because the main purpose was to familiarise the learners with the new words first; then they can talk about the pictures and I read, then they read and I ask questions.	
RESPONDENT 5	The other thing is that we may remind them first about the rules as to the distance between, how to hold a book, the distance between a book and the body, things like ground rules as such because we may not agree with learners as to how which or which distance between you and the book, they may not know but we should tell them how to hold the book correctly. T5: Yes, I want to first add on what my colleague has just said about the ground rules, something came to my mind about the rules of handling the book. I remember in a project called "READ" they said that everytime when before you start reading you have to remind learners that this is the outercover of the book owing them, this is the spine of the book and then you liken the spine of the book what will you do if someone hurts your spine, it is not good, it will be hurting sothat the learners learn how to hold the book correctly, then they will know that if he or she is doing this he is hurting the book. Another thing is that they should also talk about the pictures, you allow then to predict and brainstorm about what will be happening in the story, if there is a heading, they talk about the heading, they could also predict about what will happen or what will the story be about, they could make their judgments they come with come out with ideas as to what is really happening, the main purpose here is to prepare them about to think about the story using pictures. By the time they read they are ready.	

	T5: Yes more especially in the lower grades, pictures assist them to understand more better, they understand more better because it works as an incidental reading as they see the pictures they can predict what will happen is happening there and there are those vha sathomi na luthihi, and those who can familiarize themselves with pictures and read the whole story by heart without knowing.
RESPONDENT 6	Like you heard from the beginning that reading comprehension is frustrating, to have learners who cannot read but yes pictures are helpful to the learners but some read pictures and make their own story.
	T6 (cont): Okay let me add, Eh, may be, I may add to what my colleague has just said, but I do not if it is the right answer. Okay, after you explain maybe the difficult words, now the learners are reading, you may find that a learners cannot pronounce the words correctly you may remind them or tell them that go and ask to the learners that you know they know how to pronounce the word, by the time you come to read I want to you to know this word, oh, you will find learners moving around asking learners that know best to pronounce the difficult words or maybe the worse that are there.
	T6 (cont): No,no not yet, we may also say something maybe about telling them how to hold a book, you tell them maybe the name of the book, the author; if you remember we use to read from "**Ndededzi"** and we did not know who were the authors, so if you start with them from the beginning from the early grades then they will understand, so you say something maybe about the name of the book, the author, maybe even the year even publisher sothat they know this information.

Key: visual images

the learners look at the pictures in the text

I ask questions based on the pictures

I first go through the pages of that story book

children can guess what will happen in the story/ predict what will happen

read silently

underline maybe the difficult words

 say something maybe about the name of the book, the author, maybe even the year even publisher

QUESTION 7: Which strategies do you use during reading that is during the actual reading of the text?		
RESPONDENT	RESPONSES	
RESPONDENT 1	One strategy that one can apply is to read for the learners first sothat the learners are able to learn to pronounce some of the words also they can also learn how to observe the punctuation marks as I am reading because I will also be emphasizing some of the things that I want them to take into consideration. Then after reading for the learners then I will give the learners opportunity to read. You can start maybe by giving the learners to read individually and as they read, eh, eh, I will expect them to read aloud sothat I can hear how they are pronouncing the words, whether they are observing the punctuation marks and thereafter I will reflect on what I have noted sothat I indicate to the learners that this is the things which you should do this are the things which you should not do next time. Secondly <u>I will allow the learners to do pair reading</u> sothat they can assist, one another sothat when the other one makes	

	mistakes the other one will help his or her friend.	
RESPONDENT 2	As my colleagues has just indicated that the educator will read first, read for the learners sothat learners will be listening, they become attentive when one is reading. For all the learners to be attentive we are going to ask them to bank words, I am going to ask them randomly to bank the words, you as an educator you must make sure that you do not ask many words so that you remember who have been banking a word sothat at the end you could say Shumani bank this word for you. After you have read you ask what was the word I ask you to bank for us, so throughout the reading lesson the learners are listening attentively because they know they are bank the words, so they remain attentive because even those who were not asked to bank they are listening attentively because they do not know when you are going to ask them to bank the words .	
RESPONDENT 3	or sometimes I use shared reading. Sometimes you may read aloud the sentence first while the learners are following you reading, I mean you read a sentence and you stop where the sentence ends and then they read and another thing is to call a learner to read, eh, the method of pointing is a good method because you can find a learner the topic say or the word say "**Kha ri shele mulenzhe"**, how will I know whether he or she knows the word "**Kha ri shele mulenzhe"** you call a learner to read you do not mind about others, you are focusing on the very learner to see whether he or she knows the word, like I say the eh learner will just read but from the head, they must point , or else we will never know you know, it is difficult.	
RESPONDENT 4	I Just wanted to make a follow up on the idea of my colleague has just yes I said yes I read first; when the learners are pointing it also helps the learner himself to	

	learn all the words that he or she is reading and also as an educator if I am standing nearby. I am also able to monitor/monotoring them or to ascertain whether the learner can read all the words but I would also like to say that this strategy should be used only when the learner do the first reading and thereafter as we move further this strategy should be withdrawn because by ten I will be sure that the learners can read the words.
	T4: (cont) Oh yes the finger pointing method that's true, especially in Tshivenda, it works. Ja you see I have indicated that I will read for them first neh, and then the learners will read, I will regard that as the first reading then that is where this strategy can be applied but after the learners have read and mastered the words that strategy should be withdrawn.
RESPONDENT 5	I wanted to add also on the fingerpointing, but for those learners who cannot read it's not wise to withdraw the strategy too soon, you should prolong it a bit, because this could be the only strategy that you as an educator can be ascertain whether he or she can read because they are very good in memorizing (a nga vha vhalela a sa divh na ipfi na lithihi for example ri nga tea u dzula natsho tshifhinga tshilapfu na u tswela havha vha sa koni u vhala a vha tsweli zwone; ndivho yau tswela ipfi nga tshipidid a li vhuisa buguni yawe zwi khwine u tou guda.then you should say point u wa wana asa i sumbi, so my advice is that we should stay with this strategy for a longtime to help these learners. You should prolong it a bit. .
	T5 (cont): Yes, as we are doing the individual and pair reading. it is good to identify those learners who are experiencing problem sothat I can provide individual support. I may sit with them or ask them to come to the

	table and read for me sothat I can assist and support that they require.
RESPONDENT 6	To add on that there are those learners who are really good in reading and you <u>pair reading</u> him or her with those who are really good in reading and you tell him or her that this is your child help him or her (danu mu beba ni mugudise) I am telling you that you will see or you will find something different to the learner who do not know how to read (u tou mu gudisa nga mbilu na nga muya vha wana a khou kona, o mu beba thiri. And children like to be praised, u mugudisa u fhira na vhone mudededzi.
	T6 (Cont): Because these kids who cannot read they really stress us, Eh, we get stressed. You can find an educator develop a negative attitude towards the young girl or young boy. The other thing could be to pause and ask questions. This is where maybe you employ that the colleague strategy of bank the words , by the way which word did I say you should bank, and even to recap the difficult words that you stated with. To add we should not forget about using the dictionary help to increase their vocabulary, learners can compile their own dictionaries using the exercise books and write alphabetically.

Key

Monitoring

ask questions

fingerpointing method

<u>pair reading</u>

to ask them randomly to bank the words

QUESTION 8: Which strategies do you use after reading the text, which strategies do you use after reading the text?		
RESPONDENT	RESPONSES	
RESPONDENT 1	Questioning is very critical at all times and in reading comprehension. We may ask questions to see whether the learners have understood the story. so I ask them questions, sometimes very few who will answer because of the problem.	
RESPONDENT 2	You can ask learners how the story was. Tell us about what you heard about in the story. You can ask learners to stand infront, it's not like the question when did this and this happen but to tell the story; retell the story after reading, summary	
RESPONDENT 3	We may also ask learners questions to say something about the characters of the story; their likes and dislikes; that is I ask them to make a summary about the story.	
RESPONDENT 4	Yes I agree we must ask questions, learners can also dramatise what they have been reading; you pick up the individual in the story ask learners who can be this character and they dramatise.	
RESPONDENT 5	The questions will be directed by the assessment standards. Maybe you want them to know a process, understand, read for information. So when you ask questions the questions should be directed by the assessment standards and then we ask them to summarise.	
RESPONDENT 6	You know questioning is important, and we use it. But to add on it should be related to characters, when they say something about the characters they could identifying and saying whether they dislike or like the character and why, or ask them to write on a topic what if you were one of the character, inwi no vha ni tshi do ita mini, that is to evaluate	

	information? So by that you will ascertain if they did understand the story. Or who wants to be like ….. naming a character maybe which was good or which was not good. They explain. Explanation is also good like why, whether good or bad; and sometimes you may find that the story involves some logical arrangements of facts; it started this way, followed by this and thereafter this happens	

Key strategies teachers say they use after reading the text

Questioning

Explanation

ask learners to retell the story

evaluate information

summarise

ask learners to make a summary

dramatise

QUESTION 9: What are the strategies required for successful teaching of reading comprehension?		
RESPONDENT	RESPONSES	
RESPONDENT 1	These strategies should cut across and not to be used by literacy educator or language teacher, but I want to say that maybe that is why children cannot read and understand because, because teachers wait or do reading comprehension during story reading time which is very little, we all know that; let's do it in Lifeskills and Numeracy also. T1(cont): I remember one time with the project read: you start asking learners to look at the book, outercover because this girl Vusi was reading the book was dirty; stress the reading rules for learners to take care of books:	

New words -Explanation of new words when you read, to be fluent read. You must use the dictionary; because you still come it's important to explain the words and their meaning across difficult words. Pre reading activities are very important. You will remember Mrs Mulaudzi and Mrs Rampfumedzi during the workshop we were told that the language that we use in class we should drill the words for example discuss critically. We should teach them. There is a link between language vocabulary decoding and comprehension. The learners should know the words so teaching difficult words first is important them and use them meaningfully; because you cannot respond to the text which you did not understand; sometimes learners respond even if they did not understand; but the educator saw that the learner could not understand the text.

There are many challenges especially those children cannot read and understand. Yes, I strongly feel that teaching reading comprehension is a challenge. Teachers have got a lot of work to do, they have to prepare other records and on top of that they have to teach learners to read and comprehend a text. Learners are not the same, sometimes you do not know what to do with those learners. I start my lesson with picture talking where learners talk about the pictures and predict about what will happen, and then I ask them questions.

A learner cannot read, yes, she or he is in Grade 1, they just say learners must pass them, she cannot read, and even if you call the mother, she will say vha do zwivhona phanda, u do vulea a tshi ya, now that learners need to read on the board, if he or she cannot read let us say learners must fail even in Grade 1, one they receive you will see the change.

but another challenge: I am thinks of a class which is

	overcrowded challenge: you will find an educator picks only those who are gifted or those who can read; and leave those who cannot, if the class is 70 avho vhana vha do fhelela lini; yes to avoid depression and stress those are the most we pick.	
RESPONDENT 2	From what my colleague is saying she is encouraging repeat and not retain because you are told to retain a learner for a specific period; the results are painful, because of that just let them go, pass one pass all, even the next class the educator will do the same; let them go, pass one pass all. We are told learners should not be retained for more than 2; even in a phase twice, you see nwana a khou ya u feila luvhili. Even if you retain them may be for the whole year.	
RESPONDENT 3	No I do not know, but I cannot remember a time when we were given? What to follow, how to teach R.C. Now, what is being stressed are the LO and milestones. Time and again we have been attending workshops Yes, u avha u tshi khou balelwa nwana, because you do not know the strategies. If you know the strategies vhana vha nga si balelwa u vhala vha pfesesa. I agree that is why we want to know the strategies.but what I do I read, they read together and a few read because of time and then I ask questions.sometimes I ask them to summarise the main event, but it is difficult.	
RESPONDENT 4	No, Tshivenda do not have guidelines for teaching comprehension like step 1,2,3 because that is all we want, we are , you know I do not know. For an English class, yes, but not for a Tshivenda teaching no clear guidelines.	
RESPONDENT 5	The other challenges have been highlighted; and this is	

	serious, Reading is not being done across all the Language Programme and this is very serious because learners cannot only be done wait for the Literacy and Numeracy. When there are breaks in between is a problem. They must read throughout both in Life Orientation and Numeracy.	
RESPONDENT 6	I think time allocation is a challenge, yes. Numeracy has been given more time than Literacy and whereas literacy needs more time because numeracy is only numbers (and vhathu vha sa vhali vha a konesa numeracy). T6 (cont): Read Comprehension has many things, I believe that practice makes perfect. We do not have enough time during school hours. If we give them books parents are not interested to guide their children. We read and after reading we go out and practice. Then I ask them questions to test their understanding. But 1 hour specifically for R.C. because reading comprehension has many aspects. There are those strategies that we said we should go through before reading because we must start with the strategies before reading they must read silently, explain the words, familiarized new words before reading, remember reading rules; read and understand sothat they must answer the questions you see it takes time.	

Key strategies teachers say they are required for successful teaching of RC

you start asking learners to look at the book, outercover

stress the reading rules for learners to take care of books:

New words -Explanation of new words when you read,

strategies required for successful teaching of reading comprehension

they must read silently,

explain the words,

familiarized new words before reading,

remember reading rules;

read and understand

 answer the questions

APPENDIX E

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

<u>The Observation Instrument</u>

The reading lesson observation framework includes blanks to indicate the teacher being observed, the evaluator, the school year, the date of the observation, the observation number, and which phases of the lesson and the strategies (i.e. before, during, or after reading).

<u>The checklist</u>

The checklist is divided into 6 components: a) classroom climate, b) Pre reading, c) Guided reading-during reading d) Post reading-after reading, e) Modeling of strategies,f) Teacher practices of reading comprehension strategies.

 Under each component, a series of items are included that represent criteria for evaluating the component's various aspects.

A brief description of the components and key aspects follows:

- The classroom climate component deals with the physical setting, children's access to authentic reading materials, the provision of a designated reading area as well as an area for small-group instruction, active learners engagement and social interaction, and practices that signify that literacy is valued and promoted.
- Pre-reading phase items include the encouragement of previewing, the activation of prior knowledge, the stimulation of interest, vocabulary instruction
- During reading phase, items involve the conformation of predictions, retellings, critical judgements, application of new vocabulary and continued teacher monitoring of learner comprehension

- Strategies of modelling, giving clear explanations of what the strategy is and why it is useful (explicit teaching), contextualisation of skills, reading strategy use, and teachers release of responsibility and scaffolding
- The teacher practices component includes following the steps for teaching comprehension strategies effectively.

Key   to   checklist

For each item, the lesson observer can indicate one of three responses:

- O = Observed. This component was observed and was judged to be of satisfactory quality
- C= Commendation. This component was observed and was judged to be of very high quality
- N= Not applicable. This component was not applicable that is, does not apply to reading comprehension for example dwelling much on grammatical aspects.

Teacher………………….. Observer……………………….

School year……….. Date: Observation no……… No of learners in the class……..

Observation occurred: Before reading……… During reading…… After reading………

Component 1: A supportive classroom climate	O	C	N	Comments
Many different types of authentic reading materials displayed and are available for learners to read independently				
Newspapers				
Magazines				
Novels				
Non-fiction works				
The walls are filled with				
Pictures				

Photos				
Posters				
Action pictures with words				
Phonic frieze				
Alphabet strips				
Labels				
Sentence strips				
The classroom has a reading area such as a corner where learners are encouraged to go to read.				
The classroom has a classroom library, where learners are encouraged to go to read.				
An area is available for small-group reading instruction				
Component 2: Pre-reading phase	**O**	**C**	**N**	**Comments**
The teacher asked the learners to identify the purpose of reading,				
Preview the text,				
Make predictions,				
Discuss about the text				
Read the title of the selection,				
Look at the illustrations				
Discuss the possible contents of the text				
Learners were encouraged to activate their background knowledge for reading				
Learners were encouraged to make associations or connections with the text.				
By generating a discussion about the topic before reading, the teacher created an interest in the reading text.				
The teacher introduced the new vocabulary words in a meaningful context				
The teacher discussed new words of the story				
The teacher focused on those new words that were				

central to the understanding of the story				
The learners were encouraged to state predictions related to the topic of the reading selection				
The teacher continually assessed learners' pre reading discussion				
The teacher continually assessed learners' pre reading discussion and made appropriate adjustments				
The teacher model the correct behaviour of reading and the correct use of the strategy.				
The teacher model t the correct use of the strategy.				
Component 3: During reading phase	**O**	**C**	**N**	**Comments**
At appropriate points during the reading of the selection, the learners were asked to evaluate their initial predictions about what the text may be about.				
The learners were asked to identify portions of text that confirmed or disproved predictions they had made about selection				
The learners were asked to read aloud portions of text that confirmed or disproved predictions they had made about selection				
The learners were asked use text structure to support comprehension				
An appropriate mix of factual questions were incorporated into the comprehension discussion				
An appropriate mix of higher level thinking questions were incorporated into the comprehension discussion				
The teacher modelled fluent reading				
The teacher encouraged the learners to read fluently and with expression				
The teacher monitored the learners				
The teacher gave proper assistance while they read				
The teacher modelled the use of new words				

The teacher encouraged the use of new vocabulary during discussion				
The learners were encouraged to use appropriate comprehension monitoring strategies.				
The learners were encouraged to use fix-up strategies such as:				
Identifying where in the text the difficulty occurs				
Looking back through the text				
Asking yourself,				
Asking for help during reading.				
The teacher reminded the learners to make use of their knowledge of text structure.				
The teacher periodically assessed the learner's ability to monitor meaning,				
Asking learners questions				
Asking learners to generate questions.				
The teacher periodically assessed the learner's ability to monitor meaning				
The teacher periodically asked learners questions.				
The teacher periodically asked learners to generate questions				
The teacher encouraged learners to use self monitoring to decode words				
The teacher encouraged learners to use self pacing to decode words				
The teacher encouraged learners to use self directing to decode the words				
Component 4: After reading strategies	**O**	**C**	**N**	**Comments**
The learners were asked to read aloud fluently sections of the text that substantiated answers to question they had made based on prior knowledge				
The learners were asked to read aloud and confirmed of disproved predictions they had made based on prior				

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knowledge			
The teacher asked the learners to retell the text they had read			
The teacher asked the learners to retell the text they had read and concentrating on major events			
The teacher asked the learners to retell the text they had read, concentrating on major concepts			
The learners were asked to explain their opinions			
The learners were asked to explain their critical judgements			
The teacher had the learners provide responses to the reading .			
The teacher had the learners provide responses to the reading and determine what is important.			
Learners summarise what they read.			
Learners determine what is important in what they are reading.			
Learners condensed the information.			
Learners interpret the text on literal levels.			
Learners interpret the text on an interpretive level.			
Learners interpret the text on an evaluative level.			
Learners synthesis different points of view of the text			
Learners were encouraged to use new vocabulary orally.			
Examples of modelling were provided by the teacher			
The teacher continually monitored learner's comprehension			
The teacher continually provided appropriate feedback			

Component 5: Modeling of strategies	**O**	**C**	**N**	**Comments**
The teacher provided a clear explanation (explicit strategy instruction) about the structure of the strategy to be learned and described:				

• Why they use the strategies				
The teacher provided a clear explanation (explicit strategy instruction) about the structure of the strategy to be learned and described: • When they use the strategies				
The teacher provided a clear explanation (explicit strategy instruction) about the structure of the strategy to be learned and described: • What strategies to use				
The teacher provided a clear explanation (explicit strategy instruction) about the structure of the strategy to be learned and described: • How to apply the strategies				
The teacher modeled the use of the strategy in action so that learners were able to see how the strategy would be used in an appropriate situation				
The learners were encouraged to use before reading strategies independently.				
The learners were encouraged to use during reading strategies independently.				
The learners were encouraged to use after reading strategies independently.				
Reading strategy instruction moved learners toward independent use through scaffolding				
Component 6: Teacher practice of comprehension strategies	O	C	N	**Comments**
Learners were grouped appropriately and flexibly				
The teacher's management of the reading lesson provided for active learner engagement				
The pace and flow of the various phases of the reading				

lesson represented an effective use of strategies				
The teacher's instruction was sensitive to the diversity of learner's experiences and their social, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic needs				
The teacher encouraged the learners to take informed risks and promoted safe failure and provided corrective feedback				
The teacher used logically the following steps as guidelines during teaching comprehension strategies: • **Explanation:** the teachers explains to learners why the strategy helps comprehension and when to apply • **Modelling**: the teacher models or demonstrates how to apply the strategy, usually by thinking aloud while reading the text. • **Guided practice**: the teacher guides and assist learners as they learn how and when to apply the strategy • **Application**: the teacher helps learners practice the strategy until they can apply it independently				

LESSON N0 1	LESSON NO 2	LESSON NO 3
SCHOOL A GRADE 3 A TEACHER 1	SCHOOL A GRADE 3 A TEACHER 1	SCHOOL A GRADE 3 A TEACHER 1
N01	NO2	NO3
WHAT I SAW	**WHAT I SAW**	**WHAT I SAW**
COMPONENT 1	**COMPONENT 1**	**COMPONENT 1**
Pictures Posters Action pictures Sentence strips	Pictures Posters Alphabet strips Sentence strips	Pictures Posters Alphabet strips Sentence strips
COMPONENT 2	**COMPONENT 2**	**COMPONENT 2**
Preview the text Make predictions discuss about the text Read the title of the selection Look at the illustration Discuss the possible contents of the text Learners were encouraged to activate their background knowledge for reading By generation a discussion about the topic before reading, the teacher created an interest in the reading text the learners were encouraged to state predictions related to the topic of the reading selection the teacher modelled correct behaviour of reading	Preview the text Make predictions discuss about the text Read the title of the selection Look at the illustration Discuss the possible contents of the text Learners were encouraged to activate their background knowledge for reading By generation a discussion about the topic before reading, the teacher created an interest in the reading text	Preview the text Make predictions discuss about the text Read the title of the selection Look at the illustration Discuss the possible contents of the text Learners were encouraged to activate their background knowledge for reading By generation a discussion about the topic before reading, the teacher created an interest in the reading text
COMPONENT 3	**COMPONENT 3**	**COMPONENT 3**
At appropriate points during reading of the selection, the learners were	At appropriate points during reading of the selection, the learners were	At appropriate points during reading of the selection, the learners were

asked to evaluate their initial predictions about what the text may be about The learners were asked to read aloud portions of the text that confirmed or disproved predictions they had made about selection The learners were asked to use text structure to support comprehension An appropriate mix of factual questions were incorporated in to the comprehension discussion The teacher modelled fluent reading Asking learners questions The teacher periodically asked learners questions	asked to evaluate their initial predictions about what the text may be about The learners were asked to read aloud portions of the text that confirmed or disproved predictions they had made about selection The learners were asked to use text structure to support comprehension An appropriate mix of factual questions were incorporated in to the comprehension discussion The teacher modelled fluent reading Asking learners questions The teacher periodically asked learners questions	asked to evaluate their initial predictions about what the text may be about The learners were asked to read aloud portions of the text that confirmed or disproved predictions they had made about selection The learners were asked to use text structure to support comprehension An appropriate mix of factual questions were incorporated in to the comprehension discussion The teacher modelled fluent reading Asking learners questions The teacher periodically asked learners questions
COMPONENT 4	**COMPONENT 4**	**COMPONENT 4**
The earners were asked to read aloud fluently The learners were asked to retell the text they had just read Learners were asked to explain their opinions Learners were asked to explain their critical judgements The teacher had the learners provide responses to the reading and determine what is important Learners were asked questions	The learners were asked to explain their opinions Learners summarised what they read Learners condensed the information Learners interpret the text on a literal level Learners interpret the text on an interpretive level Learners interpret the text on an evaluative level Learners were encouraged to use new vocabulary during phonics teaching Examples of modelling were provided y the teacher Te teacher continually monitored learners' comprehension The teacher continually provided appropriate feedback Learners were asked questions	The earners were asked to read aloud fluently The learners were asked to retell the text they had just read The learners were asked to retell the text they had just read concentrating on the major events The teacher had the learners provide responses to the reading and determine what is important Learners summarise what they read Learners were asked questions Learners interpret the text on a literal level Learners interpret the text on an interpretive level Learners interpret the text on an evaluative level The teacher continually provided appropriate feedback
COMPONENT 5	**COMPONENT 5**	**COMPONENT 5**
NONE	NONE	NONE
COMPONENT 6	**COMPONENT 6**	**COMPONENT 6**
The teacher's instruction was sensitive to the diversity of learner's experiences and their social, cultural,ethnic,and linguistic needs	The teacher's instruction was sensitive to the diversity of learner's experiences and their social, cultural,ethnic,and linguistic needs	The teacher's instruction was sensitive to the diversity of learner's experiences and their social, cultural,ethnic,and linguistic needs
LESSON N0 1	LESSON NO 2	LESSON NO 3

WHAT I SAW	**WHAT I SAW**	**WHAT I SAW**
COMPONENT 1	**COMPONENT 1**	**COMPONENT 1**
Pictures Posters	Pictures Posters	Pictures Posters
COMPONENT 2	**COMPONENT 2**	**COMPONENT 2**
Look at the illustrations Learners were encouraged to activate their background knowledge for reading By generation a discussion about the topic before reading, the teacher created an interest in the reading text the learners were encouraged to state predictions related to the topic of the reading selection	Look at the illustrations Learners were encouraged to make associations or connections with the text By generation a discussion about the topic before reading, the teacher created an interest in the reading text the learners were encouraged to state predictions related to the topic of the reading selection	Preview the text Look at the illustrations Learners were encouraged to make associations or connections with the text By generation a discussion about the topic before reading, the teacher created an interest in the reading text the learners were encouraged to state predictions related to the topic of the reading selection
COMPONENT 3	**COMPONENT 3**	**COMPONENT 3**
An appropriate mix of higher level thinking questions were incorporated into the comprehension discussion The teacher modelled fluent reading The teacher modelled the use of new words Asking learners questions	An appropriate mix of higher level thinking questions were incorporated into the comprehension discussion The teacher modelled fluent reading The teacher modelled the use of new words Asking learners questions	The learners were asked to read aloud portions of text An appropriate mix of higher level thinking questions were incorporated into the comprehension discussion The teacher modelled fluent reading The teacher modelled the use of new words Asking learners questions
COMPONENT 4	**COMPONENT 4**	**COMPONENT 4**
The learners were asked to read aloud fluently Learners were encouraged to use new vocabulary Learners were asked questions	The learners were asked to read aloud fluently The learners were asked to retell the text they had just read Learners interpret the text on literal level Learners were encouraged to use new vocabulary Learners were asked questions	The learners were asked to read aloud fluently The learners were asked to retell the text they had just read Learners were encouraged to use new vocabulary Learners were asked questions
COMPONENT 5	**COMPONENT 5**	**COMPONENT 5**
NONE	NONE	NONE
COMPONENT 6	**COMPONENT 6**	**COMPONENT 6**
The teacher's instruction was sensitive to the diversity of learner's experiences and their social, cultural,ethnic,and linguistic needs	The teacher's instruction was sensitive to the diversity of learner's experiences and their social, cultural,ethnic,and linguistic needs	The teacher's instruction was sensitive to the diversity of learner's experiences and their social, cultural,ethnic,and linguistic needs
LESSON N0 1	LESSON NO 2	LESSON NO 3
SCHOOL B: Grade 3 A teacher 1	Grade 3 A teacher 1	Grade 3 A teacher 1

WHAT I SAW	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I SAW
COMPONENT 1	**COMPONENT 1**	**COMPONENT 1**
Pictures posters	Pictures Posters	Pictures Posters
COMPONENT 2	**COMPONENT 2**	**COMPONENT 2**
Preview the text, Read the title of the selection, Look at the illustrations Discuss the possible contents of the text The learners were encouraged to state predictions related to the topic of the reading selection	Discuss about the text Read the title of the selection Look at the illustration Discuss the possible contents of the text Learners were encouraged to activate their background knowledge for reading By generation a discussion about the topic before reading, the teacher created an interest in the reading text the learners were encouraged to state predictions related to the topic of the reading selection	preview the text Look at the illustration The teacher discussed new words of the story
COMPONENT 3	**COMPONENT 3**	**COMPONENT 3**
The teacher modelled fluent reading Asking learners' questions	The teacher modelled fluent reading Asking learners question The teacher periodically asked learners questions	An appropriate mix of factual questions were incorporated in to the comprehension discussion The teacher modelled fluent reading Asking learners question
COMPONENT 4	**COMPONENT 4**	**COMPONENT 4**
The teacher asked the learners to retell the text they had read Learners were asked questions	The learners were asked to read aloud sections of the text The teacher asked the learners to retell the text they had read The teacher had learners provide responses to the reading Learners summarised what they read Learners interpret the text on literal level Learners interpret the text on interpretive level Examples of modelling reading were provided by the teacher The teacher continually provided feedback Learners were asked questions	The teacher asked the learners to retell the text they had read The teacher asked the learners to retell the text they had read and concentrating on major events Learners summarise what they read Learners condensed the information Learners were asked questions
COMPONENT 5	**COMPONENT 5**	**COMPONENT 5**
NONE	NONE	NONE
COMPONENT 6	**COMPONENT 6**	**COMPONENT 6**
The teacher's instruction was sensitive to the diversity of learner's experiences and their social, cultural,ethnic,and linguistic needs	The teacher's instruction was sensitive to the diversity of learner's experiences and their social, cultural,ethnic,and linguistic needs	The teacher's instruction was sensitive to the diversity of learner's experiences and their social, cultural,ethnic,and linguistic needs

LESSON N0 1	LESSON NO 2	LESSON NO 3
SCHOOL B: Grade 3 B teacher 2	Grade 3 B teacher 2	Grade 3 B teacher 2
WHAT I SAW	**WHAT I SAW**	**WHAT I SAW**
COMPONENT 1	**COMPONENT 1**	**COMPONENT 1**
Pictures Posters	Pictures Labels Sentence strips	Pictures Posters Photos
COMPONENT 2	**COMPONENT 2**	**COMPONENT 2**
preview the text make predictions discuss about the text read the title of the selection look at illustrations Learners were encouraged to activate their background knowledge for reading By generation a discussion about the topic before reading, the teacher created an interest in the reading text	Preview the text Make predictions discuss about the text Read the title of the selection Look at the illustration Discuss the possible contents of the text Learners were encouraged to activate their background knowledge for reading By generation a discussion about the topic before reading, the teacher created an interest in the reading text the learners were encouraged to state predictions related to the topic of the reading selection	Preview the text Make predictions discuss about the text Read the title of the selection Look at the illustration Discuss the possible contents of the text Learners were encouraged to activate their background knowledge for reading By generation a discussion about the topic before reading, the teacher created an interest in the reading text The teacher discussed new words o the story The teacher modelled the correct behaviour of reading
COMPONENT 3	**COMPONENT 3**	**COMPONENT 3**
An appropriate mix of factual questions were incorporated in to the comprehension discussion The teacher modelled fluent reading The teacher monitored the learners Asking learners questions The teacher periodically asked learners questions	An appropriate mix of factual questions were incorporated in to the comprehension discussion The teacher modelled fluent reading The teacher monitored the learners Asking learners questions The teacher periodically asked learners questions	The teacher modelled fluent readin The teacher encouraged the learner to read fluently and with expression The teacher modelled the use of new words The teacher encouraged the use of new vocabulary during discussion Asking learners questions
COMPONENT 4	**COMPONENT 4**	**COMPONENT 4**
The teacher asked the learners to retell the text they had read The teacher asked the learners to retell the text they had read and concentrating on major events Learners were asked to explain their opinions Learners summarise what they read Learners condensed the information Learners interpret the text on an literal level Learners interpret the text on an interpretive level Examples of modelling reading were	The teacher asked the learners to retell the text they had read The teacher asked the learners to retell the text they had read and concentrating on major events Learners were asked to explain their opinions Learners summarise what they read Learners interpret the text on an literal level Learners interpret the text on an literal level Learners were asked questions	Learners were encouraged to read loudly The teacher asked the learners to retell the text they had read The teacher asked the learners to retell the text they had read and concentrating on major events Learners were asked to explain their opinions The teacher had the learners provide responses to the reading and determine what is important Learners determine what is important in what they are reading

provided by the teacher		Learners were encouraged to use new vocabulary
Learners were asked questions		Learners were asked questions
COMPONENT 5	**COMPONENT 5**	**COMPONENT 5**
NONE	NONE	NONE
COMPONENT 6	**COMPONENT6**	**COMPONENT 6**
The teacher's instruction was sensitive to the diversity of learner's experiences and their social, cultural,ethnic,and linguistic needs	The teacher's instruction was sensitive to the diversity of learner's experiences and their social, cultural,ethnic,and linguistic needs	The teacher's instruction was sensitive to the diversity of learner's experiences and their social, cultural,ethnic,and linguistic needs
SCHOOL C TEACHER 2 GRADE 3 B	TEACHER 2 GRADE 3 B	TEACHER 2 GRADE 3 B
WHAT I SAW	**WHAT I SAW**	**WHAT I SAW**
COMPONENT 1	**COMPONENT 1**	**COMPONENT 1**
Photos Phonic frieze Labels Sentence strips	Photos Phonic frieze Labels Sentence strips	Photos Phonic frieze Labels Sentence strips
COMPONENT 2	**COMPONENT 2**	**COMPONENT 2**
Preview Make predictions Discuss about the text Read the title of the text Look at the illustrations Discuss the possible contents of the text Learners were encouraged to make associations or connections with the text By generation a discussion about the topic before reading, the teacher created an interest in the reading text	Preview Make predictions Discuss about the text Read the title of the text Look at the illustrations Discuss the possible contents of the text Learners were encouraged to make associations or connections with the text By generation a discussion about the topic before reading, the teacher created an interest in the reading text	Preview Make predictions Discuss about the text Read the title of the text Look at the illustrations Discuss the possible contents of the text Learners were encouraged to make associations or connections with the text By generation a discussion about the topic before reading, the teacher created an interest in the reading text
COMPONENT 3	**COMPONENT 3**	**COMPONENT 3**
The learners were asked to read aloud portions of text that confirmed or disprove predictions they had made about selection An appropriate mix of higher level thinking questions were incorporated into the comprehension discussion The teacher modelled fluent reading The teacher have proper assistance while they read The teacher modelled the use of new words Asking learners questions	The learners were asked to read aloud portions of text that confirmed or disprove predictions they had made about selection An appropriate mix of higher level thinking questions were incorporated into the comprehension discussion The teacher modelled fluent reading The teacher periodically asked learners questions The teacher modelled the use of new words Asking learners questions	At appropriate points during reading the selection, the learners were asked to evaluate their initial predictions about what the text may be about The learners were asked to read aloud portions of text that confirmed or disprove predictions they had made about selection An appropriate mix of higher level thinking questions were incorporated into the comprehension discussion The teacher modelled fluent reading
COMPONENT 4	**COMPONENT 4**	**COMPONENT 4**
The learners were asked to read aloud	The learners were asked to read	The learners were asked to read

fluently The learners were asked to retell the text they had just read Learners were asked questions	aloud fluently The learners were asked to retell the text they had just read The learners were asked to retell the text they had just read concentrating on the major events Learners summarise what they read Learners interpret the text on literal level Learners were asked questions	aloud fluently Learners were asked questions
COMPONENT 5	**COMPONENT 5**	**COMPONENT 5**
NONE	NONE	NONE
COMPONENT 6	**COMPONENT 6**	**COMPONENT 6**
The teacher's instruction was sensitive to the diversity of learner's experiences and their social, cultural,ethnic,and linguistic needs	The teacher's instruction was sensitive to the diversity of learner's experiences and their social, cultural,ethnic,and linguistic needs	The teacher's instruction was sensitive to the diversity of learner's experiences and their social, cultural,ethnic,and linguistic needs
<mark>LESSON N0 1</mark>	<mark>LESSON NO 2</mark>	<mark>LESSON NO 3</mark>
SCHOOL C GRADE 3 A TEACHER 1	GRADE 3 A TEACHER 1	GRADE 3 A TEACHER 1
WHAT I SAW	**WHAT I SAW**	**WHAT I SAW**
COMPONENT 1	**COMPONENT 1**	**COMPONENT 1**
Pictures Labels action pictures with words posters	Pictures Labels action pictures with words poster	Pictures Labels action pictures with words poster
COMPONENT 2	**COMPONENT 2**	**COMPONENT 2**
Preview	Preview	Preview

Make predictions Discuss about the text Read the title of the text Look at the illustrations Discuss the possible contents of the text Learners were encouraged to make associations or connections with the text By generation a discussion about the topic before reading, the teacher created an interest in the reading text	Make predictions Discuss about the text Read the title of the text Look at the illustrations Discuss the possible contents of the text Learners were encouraged to make associations or connections with the text By generation a discussion about the topic before reading, the teacher created an interest in the reading text	Make predictions Discuss about the text Read the title of the text Look at the illustrations Discuss the possible contents of the text Learners were encouraged to make associations or connections with the text By generation a discussion about the topic before reading, the teacher created an interest in the reading text
COMPONENT 3	**COMPONENT 3**	**COMPONENT 3**
An appropriate mix of higher level thinking questions were incorporated into the comprehension discussion The teacher modelled fluent reading Asking learners questions The teacher periodically asked learners questions	The learners were asked to read aloud portions of text The learners were asked to use text structure to support comprehension An appropriate mix of higher level thinking questions were incorporated into the comprehension discussion Asking learners questions	An appropriate mix of higher level thinking questions were incorporated into the comprehension discussion The teacher modelled fluent reading Asking learners questions
COMPONENT 4	**COMPONENT 4**	**COMPONENT 4**
Learners were asked to read aloud fluently The teacher asked learners to retell the story they had just read The teacher asked learners to retell the story they had just read concentrating on the major events The learners were asked to explain their opinions Learners summarised what they read Learners determined what is important in what they are reading Learners condensed the information Examples of reading were modelled by the teacher Learners were asked questions	Learners were asked to read aloud fluently The teacher asked learners to retell the story they had just read The teacher asked learners to retell the story they had just read concentrating on the major events The learners were asked to explain their opinions The learners were asked to explain their critical judgements The teacher had the learners provide responses to the reading Learners summarised what they read Learners determined what is important in what they are reading Learners condensed the information Learners were asked questions Learners interpret the text on literal level Learners interpret the text on an interpretive level Learners interpret the text on an evaluative level Learners synthesis different points of view of the text The teacher continually monitored learners 'comprehension	The teacher asked learners to retell the story they had just read The teacher asked learners to retell the story they had just read concentrating on the major events Learners were asked to summarise the story Learners were asked questions
COMPONENT 5	**COMPONENT 5**	**COMPONENT 5**

NONE	NONE	NONE
COMPONENT 6	**COMPONENT 6**	**COMPONENT 6**
The teacher's instruction was sensitive to the diversity of learner's experiences and their social, cultural,ethnic,and linguistic needs	The teacher managed of the reading lesson provided for active learner engagement The teacher's instruction was sensitive to the diversity of learner's experiences and their social, cultural,ethnic,and linguistic needs	The teacher's instruction was sensitive to the diversity of learner's experiences and their social, cultural,ethnic,and linguistic needs

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION SYNTHESIS   SCHOOL   A-C   TEACHER   1-6

COMPONENT NO.1: A SUPPORTIVE CLASSROOM CLIMATE

Category for observation	SCHOOL A Teacher 1 and 2	SCHOOL B Teacher 3 and 4	SCHOOL C Teacher 5 and 6
Newspapers	Not available	Not available	Not available

Magazines	Not available	Not available	Not available
Novels	Not available	Not available	Not available
Non-fiction works	Available-FEW not variety	available FEW not variety	available FEW not variety
b. The walls are filled with			
Pictures	There were few pictures pasted on the wall.	There were few pictures pasted on the wall.	There were few pictures pasted on the wall.
Photos	Teacher 1 photos were available and teachers photos not available	Not available	Not available
Posters	Teacher 1 postures were available	Not available	Teacher 5and 6 posters were available
Action pictures with words	Teacher 1 action pictures with words available and teacher 2 available	Not available	Teacher 6 action pictures with words available
Phonic frieze	Not available	Teacher 3 and 4 have phonic frieze for English not for Tshivenda	Not available
Alphabet strips	Teacher 1 alphabet strips available and Teacher 2 alphabet strips not available	Not available	Not available
c. Labels	Teacher 1 and 2 labels available	Not available	Teacher 5 and 6 labels available
d. Sentence strips	Teacher 1 and 2 sentence strips available	Teacher 4 sentence strips available and teacher 3 not available	Teacher 5 and 6 sentence strips available

e. The classroom has a reading area such as a corner where learners are encouraged to go to read.	Not available	Not available	Not available
f. The classroom has a classroom library, where learners are encouraged to go to read.	Not available	Not available	Not available
g. An area is available for small-group reading instruction	Not available	Not available	Not available

COMPONENT NO.2: PRE-READING PHASE

Category for observation	SCHOOL A Teacher 1 and 2	SCHOOL B Teacher 3 and 4	SCHOOL C Teacher 5 and 6
Preview text	Teacher 1 in all four lesson and teacher 2 used two times	Both teachers used preview in three lessons and in the fourth lesson they said it was revision.	Both teachers in three lessons and no explanation given like in school. As an interpretivists I conclude that they are not aware that they should use preview
Make predictions	Teacher 1 makes use of predictions x4 and	Both teachers used in three lessons and in	Teacher 3 not used at all and teacher 4 used

	teacher 2 used x2	the fourth lesson they said it was revision.	x4
Discuss about the text	Teacher 1 used x2 and teacher 2 used x4	Teacher 3 used x2 and for two lesson did not do it and teacher 4 used x1 because one is for revision	Teacher 5 used x2 and teacher 6 used in x4
Read the title of the selection	Teacher 1 used x3 and teacher 2 used x1	Teachers 3 used x3 and teacher 4 used x3 because the other one is a revision	Teacher 5 used x2 and teacher 6 used x4
Look at the illustrations	Teacher 1 usedx4 and teacher 2 usedx3	Both teachers' usedx3 & 1 is for revision.	Teacher 5 used x5 and teacher 6 usedx4
Discuss the possible content of the text	Teacher 1 usedx4 and teacher 2 usedx2	Teachers 3 used x3 and teacher 4 usedx3	Both teachers usedx4
Learners were encouraged to activate their background knowledge for reading	Teacher 1 usedx4 and teacher 2 usedx3	Teachers 3 used x 3 and teacher 4 used x 3	Teacher 5 usedx1 and teacher 6 usedx3
Learners were encourage to make associations or connections with the text	Teacher 1 usedx4 and teacher 2 usedx4	Teachers 3 usedx2 and teacher 4 usedx3	Teacher 5 not done and teacher 6 usedx1
By generating a discussion about the topic before reading, the teacher created an interest in the reading text	Teacher 1 usedx4 and teacher 2 usedx4	Teachers 3 used x 3 / teacher 4 usedx3	Teacher 5 usedx1 and teacher6 usedx4
The teacher	Teacher 1not done and	Both were not done	Both teachers were not

introduced the new vocabulary words in a meaningful context	teacher 2 usedx1		done
The teacher discussed new words of the story	Teacher 1 usedx1 and teacher 2 usedx1	Both were not done	Teacher 5 usedx1 and teacher 6 usedx1
The teacher focused on those new words that were central to the understanding of the story	Teacher 1 not done and teacher 2 not done	Both were not done	Teacher5 not done and teacher 6 usedx1
The learners were encouraged to state predictions related to the topic of the reading selection	Teacher 1 usedx1 and teacher 2 usedx4	Both were not done	Teacher 5 usedx2 and teacher 6 usedx2
The teacher continually assessed learners' pre reading discussion	Teacher 1 not done and teacher 2 not done	Both were not done	Teacher 5 not done and teacher 6 usedx1
The teacher continually assessed learners' pre reading discussion and made appropriate adjustments	Teacher 1 not done and teacher 2 not done	Both were not done	Teacher 5 not done and teacher 6usedx1
The teacher model the correct behaviour of reading and the correct use of the strategy.	Both were not done	Both were not done	Both were not done
The teacher model t	Both were not done	Both were not done	Both were not done

the correct use of the strategy.			

COMPONENT NO.3: DURING READING PHASE

Category for observation	SCHOOL A Teacher 1 and 2	SCHOOL B Teacher 3 and 4	SCHOOL C Teacher 5 and 6
At appropriate points during the reading of the selection, the learners were asked to evaluate their initial predictions about what the text may be about.	Teacher 1 not done1/done3 Teacher 2 done2/ 2 not done	Teachers 3 not done1/ Teacher 4 not done1	Not implemented
The learners were asked to identify portions of text that confirmed or disproved predictions they had made about selection	Teacher 1 not done1/done3 teacher 2 not done2/	Teacher 3 not done1	Not implemented
The learners were asked to read aloud portions of text that confirmed or disproved predictions they had made about selection	Teacher 1 not done2/ done2 teacher 2 done1/not done 1	Teacher 3 not done4 Teacher 4 not done4	Not implemented
The learners were asked use text structure to support	Teacher 1 not done4 teacher 2 done1/not done3	Teacher 3 not done4 Teacher 4 not done4	Not implemented

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comprehension			
An appropriate mix of factual questions were incorporated into the comprehension discussion	Teacher 1 done2 teacher 2 done1/not done3	Teacher 3 not done4 Teacher 4 not done4	Not implemented
The teacher modelled fluent reading	Teacher 1 done4 teacher 2 done4	Teacher 3 not done4 Teacher 4 not done4	
The teacher encouraged the learners to read fluently and with expression	Teacher 1 not done4 teacher 2 not done4	Teacher 3 not done4 Teacher 4 not done4	Teacher 6 encourage fluent reading with expression
The teacher monitored the learners	Teacher 1 not done4 teacher 2 not done4	Teacher 3 not done1	Not implemented
The teacher gave proper assistance while they read	Teacher 1 not done4 teacher 2 not done4	Teacher 3 not done1	Not implemented
The teacher modelled the use of new words	Teacher 1 done3,not done1 teacher 2 not done4	Teacher 3 not done1	Teacher 6 modelled the use of new words
The teacher encouraged the use of new vocabulary during discussion	Teacher 1 not done2,done 2 teacher 2 not done4	Teacher 3 not done1	Teacher 6 use of new vocabulary during discussion
The learners were encouraged to use appropriate comprehension monitoring strategies.	Teacher 1 not done4 teacher 2 not done4	Teacher 3 not done4 Teacher 4 not done4	Not implemented
The learners were	Teacher 1 not done4	Teacher 3 not done4	Not implemented

encouraged to use fix-up strategies such as:	teacher 2 not done4	Teacher 4 not done4	
Identifying where in the text the difficulty occurs	Teacher 1 not done4 teacher 2 not done4	Teacher 3 not done4 Teacher 4 not done4	Not implemented
Looking back through the text	Teacher 1 not done done4 teacher 2 not done4	Teacher 3 not done4 Teacher 4 not done4	Not implemented
Asking yourself,	Teacher 1 not done4 teacher 2 not done4	Teacher 3 not done1	Not implemented
Asking for help during reading.	Teacher 1 not done4	Teacher 3 not done4 Teacher 4 not done4	teacher 5 not done4
The teacher reminded the learners to make use of their knowledge of text structure.	Teacher 1 not done4 teacher 2 not done4	Teacher 3 not done4 Teacher 4 not done4	Teacher 5 not done4 teacher 6 not done4
The teacher periodically assessed the learner's ability to monitor meaning,	Teacher 1 not done4 teacher 2 not done4	Teacher 3 not done4 Teacher 4 not done4	Teacher 5 not done4 teacher 6 not done4
Asking learners questions	Both teachers ask learner questions	Both teachers ask learner questions	Both teachers ask learner questions
Asking learners to generate questions	Both teachers did not ask learners to generate questions	Both teachers did not asking learners to generate questions	Both teachers did not asking learners to generate questions
The teacher periodically asked learners questions.	Both teachers ask learner questions	Both teachers ask learner questions	Both teachers ask learner questions
The teacher encouraged learners	Teacher 1 not done4 teacher 2 not done4	Teacher 3 not done4 teacher 4 not done4	Teacher 5 not done4 teacher 6 not done4

to use self monitoring to decode words			
The teacher encouraged learners to use self pacing to decode words	Teacher 1 not done4 teacher 2 not done4	Teacher 3 not done4 teacher 4 not done4	Teacher 5 not done4 teacher 6 not done4
The teacher encouraged learners to use self directing to decode the words	Teacher 1 not done4 teacher 2 not done4	Teacher 3 not done4 teacher 4 not done4	Teacher 5 not done4 teacher 6 not done4

COMPONENT No.4: After Reading phase

The learners were asked to read aloud fluently sections of the text that substantiated answers to question they had made based on prior knowledge	Teacher 1 not done2/ done1 Teacher 2 not done3/done 1	Teacher 3 not done3/done 1 teacher 4 notdone4	Teacher 5 not done3/done 1 teacher 6 not done4
The learners were asked to read aloud and confirmed of disproved predictions they had made based on prior knowledge	Teacher 1 not done2 /done2 Teacher 2 not done4	Teacher 3 not done3/done 1 teacher 4 not done4	Teacher 5 not done4 teacher 6 not done4
The teacher asked the learners to retell the text they had read	Teacher 1 not done2/ done2 Teacher 2 done3/done 1	Teacher 3 done3/not 1 teacher 4 not done2/ done2	Teacher 5 done4 teacher 6 done4

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The teacher asked the learners to retell the text they had read and concentrating on major events	Teacher 1 not done2/ done2 Teacher 2 done2/done2	Teacher 3 done1/not done 3 teacher 4 not done2/done 2	Teacher 5 done2/not done2 teacher 6 not done4
The teacher asked the learners to retell the text they had read, concentrating on major concepts	Teacher 1 not done2/ done2 Teacher 2 done4	Teacher 3 done3/not 1 teacher 4 not done3/done 1	Teacher 5 not done2/done 2 teacher 6 done2/not done 2
The learners were asked to explain their opinions	Teacher 1 not done1/done3 Teacher 2 not done3/done 1	Teacher 3 done 1/not done 3 teacher 4 not done3/done 1	Teacher 5 not done4 teacher 6 done3/not done1
The learners were asked to explain their critical judgements	Teacher 1 not done2/ done2 Teacher 2 not done4	Teacher 3 not done1/done 3 teacher 4 not done3/done 1	Teacher 5 not done3/done 1 teacher 6 done1/not done3
The teacher had the learners provide responses to the reading .	Teacher 1 done4 Teacher 2 not done2	Teacher 3 not done1/done 3 teacher 4 not done3/done 1	Teacher 5 done2/not done2 teacher 6done 1 /not done3
The teacher had the learners provide responses to the reading and determine what is	Teacher 1 not done2/ done3 Teacher 2 not done2	Teacher 3 done3/not done 1 teacher 4 not done 2/done 2	Teacher 5 not done4 teacher 6 done2/not done2

important.			
Learners summarise what they read.	Teacher 1 done4 Teacher 2 not done2	Teacher 3 done1/not done 3 teacher 4 not done3/done 1	Teacher 5 done3/not done1 teacher 6 not done2/done 2
Learners determine what is important in what they are reading.	Teacher 1 not done4 Teacher 2 not done2	Teacher 3 done1/not done 3 teacher 4 not done3/done 1	Teacher 5 not done4 teacher 6 done1/not done3
Learners condensed the information.	Teacher 1 not done2/ done4 Teacher 2 not done2	Teacher 3 done1/not done 3 teacher 4 not done4	Teacher 5 not done3/done1 teacher 6 not done3/done 1
Learners interpret the text on literal levels.	Teacher 1 done4 Teacher 2 done4	Teacher 3 notdone2/done2 teacher 4 not done3/done 1	Teacher 5 done3/not done1 teacher 6 not done1/done 3
Learners interpret the text on an interpretive level.	Teacher 1 done3/not done 1 Teacher 2not done3	Teacher 3 not done3/not done 1 teacher 4 not done3/done 1	Teacher 5 not done4 teacher 6 not done2/done 2
Learners interpret the text on an evaluative level.	Teacher 1 done3/not done 1 Teacher 2 not done 3	Teacher 3 not done4 teacher 4 not done3/done 1	Teacher 5 not done4 teacher 6 not done4
Learners synthesis different points of view of the text	Teacher 1 done2/not done 2 Teacher 2 not done4	Teacher 3 not done4 teacher 4 not done3/done 1	Teacher 5 not done4 teacher 6 not done4
Learners were encouraged to use	Teacher 1 done2/not done 2	Teacher 3 not done4 teacher 4 not	Teacher 5 not done3/done1 teacher 6 done1/not done3

new vocabulary orally.	Teacher 2 done3/not done 1	done3/done 1	
Examples of modelling were provided by the teacher	Teacher 1 done2/not done 2 Teacher 2 not done4	Teacher 3 done1/not done 3 teacher 4 not done3/done 1	Teacher 5 done1/not done3 teacher 6 not done3/done1
The teacher continually monitored learner's comprehension	Teacher 1 done2/not done 2 Teacher 2 not done2	Teacher 3 not done3/done 1 teacher 4 not done3/done 1	Teacher 5 not done4 teacher 6 not done3/done 1
The teacher continually provided appropriate feedback	Teacher 1 done2/not done 2 Teacher 2 not done3/done 1	Teacher 3 not done4 teacher 4 not done4	Teacher 5 done1/not done3 teacher 6 not done3/done 1

COMPONENT No.5: modelling of strategies

The teacher provided a clear explanation (explicit strategy instruction) about the structure of the strategy to be learned and described: • Why they use the	Not done	Not done	Not done

strategies			
The teacher provided a clear explantion (explicit strategy instruction) about the structure of the strategy to be learned and described: • When they use the strategies	Not done	Not done	Not done
The teacher provided a clear explanation (explicit strategy instruction) about the structure of the strategy to be learned and described: • What strategies to use	Not done	Not done	Not done
The teacher provided a clear explanation (explicit strategy instruction) about the structure of the strategy to be learned and described: • How to apply the strategies	Not done	Not done	Not done
The teacher modeled the use of the strategy in action so that	Not done	Not done	Not done

learners were able to see how the strategy would be used in an appropriate situation			
The learners were encouraged to use before reading strategies independently.	Not done	Not done	Not done
The learners were encouraged to use during reading strategies independently.	Not done	Not done	Not done
The learners were encouraged to use after reading strategies independently.	Not done	Not done	Not done
Reading strategy instruction moved learners toward independent use through scaffolding	Not done	Not done	Not done

COMPONENT NO.6: TEACHER PRACTICE OF COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

Learners were grouped appropriately and flexibly	Not done	Not done	Not done
The teacher's management of the reading lesson provided for active	Not done	Not done	Not done

learner engagement			
The pace and flow of the various phases of the reading lesson represented an effective use of strategies	Not done	Not done	Not done
The teacher's instruction was sensitive to the diversity of learner's experiences and their social, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic needs			
The teacher encouraged the learners to take informed risks and promoted safe failure and provided corrective feedback	Not done	Not done	Not done
The teacher used logically the following steps as guidelines during teaching comprehension strategies: **Explanation:** the teachers explains to learners why the strategy helps comprehension and	Not done	Not done	Not done

when to apply **Modelling**: the teacher models or demonstratehow to apply the strategy, usually by thinking aloud while reading the text. **Guided practice**: the teacher guides and assist learners as they learn how and when to apply the strategy **Application**: the teacher helps learners practice the strategy until they can apply it independently			

APENDIX F NATIONAL CURRICULUM STATEMENT PDF

NCS

APENDIX G: FLC GAZETTE 30880

FFLC

APPENDIX H: TEACHING READING IN EARLY GRADES

Teaching reading in early grades

APPENDIX I: NRS – NATIONAL R.ST

NRS

APPENDIX J: CAPS

CAPS_ENGLISH   CAPS_TSHIVENDA

APPENDIX K: PHASES OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Phase Description of the Process

1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:
Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.

2. Generating initial codes: Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
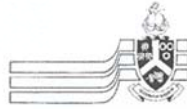
3. Searching for themes: Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to eachpotential theme.

4. Reviewing themes: Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.

5. Defining and naming themes:
Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

6. Producing the report: The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extractexamples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	CLEARANCE NUMBER :	EM 10/06/02
DEGREE AND PROJECT	PhD	
	Teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners	
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Ndileleni Paulinah Mudzielwana	
DEPARTMENT	Early Childhood Education	
DATE CONSIDERED	27 February 2012	
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	APPROVED	

Please note:

For Masters applications, ethical clearance is valid for 2 years

For PhD applications, ethical clearnace is valid for 3 years.

CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE	Prof L Ebersohn	
DATE	27 February 2012	
CC	Jeannie Beukes	
	JC Joubert	

This ethical clearance certificate is issued subject to the following conditions:

1. A signed personal declaration of responsibility
2. If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, a new application for ethical clearance must be submitted
3. It remains the students' responsibility to ensure that all the necessary forms for informed consent are kept for future queries.

Please quote the clearance number in all enquiries.

APPENDIX – FIELD NOTES

Week 1:

I started going to schools. I organised with schools: principals and teachers. I distributed the consent forms to principals, teachers and parents. I discussed with the teachers and drew a timetable for lesson observation schedule. The teachers asked me if I will look at their preparations and their lesson plans. I could see that some of them were nervous. I explained to them that I am not on a fault finding mission. I explained to them that I am here because of the interest and concern about the level of learners' reading which seem to be remarkably low in South Africa including Tshivenda-speaking learners. I explained to them that during classroom observation my role was to observe and listen to their lesson presentation on reading comprehension. They were eager and willing to participate in the study as they too understood and confirmed there was a problem. I explained to them that I have an observation schedule, field notes form and an audiotape recorder. I explained that the observation schedule sheet had six components which I thought will cover relevant information to the study and that my focus was on the teaching of reading comprehension to Tshivenda-speaking learners. I explained that I would observe their teaching of reading comprehension before, during and after reading. I was happy that at the end of every discussion I had, teachers were ready and willing to participate in the study and ready to accept me in their classes. Some teachers were saying that they want to participate because they thought they will get assistance and improve the classroom practice in regard to the phenomenon inquiry. Some pointed out that it is true, teaching reading comprehension is a challenge and that there are learners who cannot read and write in their classes. I clearly explained to them my role in the process and that I was not going to interfere during their lesson presentation as I am a non-participant. My role was to stand to one side and view to experience without interfering. During this week I did not record the lesson.

Week 3:

During this week I observed all three schools; one lesson observation per teacher. During this week, I observed six lessons. I noticed that teachers are starting to be

more comfortable and free. Learners were looking very free; some came to talk to me during break. In some schools, they were reading a reader of which I am the co-author with colleagues and learners were excited to see one of the authors. There is a Government Gazette that indicates how literacy should be taught from Grade 1-3 on a daily basis. However, during classroom observation I noticed that each teacher has a way of introducing the lesson. Only one teacher, teacher 1, followed the steps indicated with oral where they discuss about weather chart before as one of the pre-reading phase activities before they discuss about the cover page for example. Some teachers start directly with the discussions about the cover page. What I can say at the moment is that it seems as if teachers are aware of the pre-reading phase even though they do not explain the purpose of reading to the learners but they engage learners with pre-reading activities for example talking about the illustrations, colours, the title and the names of authors. In one of the classes teacher1, class A, learners were encouraged to start writing in their books. Each learner would think of a title of the book, and not copy someone's title. Each would think about his/her own title. As in week 2, I continued to transcribe the field notes and listened to the audio tape every day after school before I forgot. What I noticed is the little time spent on reading comprehension. Teachers seemingly do not know exactly how to teach reading comprehension effectively. They do not seem to know the comprehension strategies; and they confirmed that indeed comprehension is difficult. They seem to be worried about those learners who can answer the questions correctly orally because they listened but they cannot get the answers from the text and they cannot write. In other words they cannot read and write. One teacher said 'if I can get the remedy for making learners to be able to read and write, then I will be happy'. It was shocking to me, because I could see that the challenge is that they are not aware of comprehension strategies, because they should first know the strategies and then first teach learners the strategies and their use.

Week 4:

During this week I observed two schools, B and C. In a way I had observed two lessons per teacher in all six teachers. Now I had a total of 12 classroom observation lessons. I noticed that the more time I spent in the classroom, the more teachers and learners became more comfortable. I felt I was a little invisible. This assisted me to see what was truly happening in the class. This is the week before recess for Easter

holidays. In the next term I would be able to see what happens over the terms. I then organised with the teachers for a focus group interviews to test the instrument. I explained to the teachers and they were willing to participate and we set up a date for the meeting. I asked for the classroom from the principal in School C, and she agreed. I asked the teacher to indicate which language they will prefer either English or Tshivenda, and they agreed on both. I explained that I would use the audio tape and take notes. This was just to remind them as it was mentioned in the consent form. I explained that on the day that we agreed for focus group interviews, I asked a colleague to accompany me to attend to the sessions. She would help me with taking some action pictures and to do member checking. They agreed because I did this during the classroom observations. What made me feel comfortable was the willingness to of the teachers to participate in the study even during the holidays. I consulted my supervisors Drs Joubert and Phatudi for advice. They suggested that I should go ahead but I should not lose focus of my study which is comprehension. Before the second round of classroom observations, they suggested that I should check the classroom observation schedule again, and that they were happy with component 3 on the schedule. They reminded me to be very careful and should make sure that each component on the observations schedule has some link to reading comprehension. Under each questions during reading I should observe if the teachers are encouraging the following aspects: self-monitoring, self-pacing and self-correcting strategies learners use in decoding the text. I consulted the literature. I found out that there is a link between decoding and comprehension; and that decoding assist learner to be able to connect and engage with the text. In their study, Verhoven and Van Leeuwe (2008) examined the effects word decoding has on comprehension by testing the lexical quality hypothesis. The study confirmed that there is a strong relationship between decoding and reading comprehension. The importance of big vocabulary in enhancing reading comprehension to the learners has also been confirmed. Research has revealed that vocabulary learning cannot be caught, but it should be taught and learned (Christ & Wamng, 2010). There seems to be urgency to providing developmentally appropriate vocabulary learning strategies that will equip learners with the skills and strategies for lifelong vocabulary development. When teachers use rich vocabulary in the classrooms, teach words fully so that their students can develop new word schemas and create an

environment where students can explore and use words, they are giving their students tools necessary for success in school and beyond (Scott & Nagy, 2004). The goal of a primary teacher is to help learners be aware of words they do not know and decide if the word is important to the meaning of the text. This metacognitive approach to word learning encourages learners to think about the unknown word, determine if they have heard it before, try to find the word's meaning from the rest of the sentence or paragraph, and look at the parts of the word in order to determine the meaning. This process is most often taught informally through shared storybook reading (Lubliner & Smetana, 2005). Immersing students in a variety of rich language experiences that allow learners to learn words through listening, speaking, reading and writing is key to an effective vocabulary program. Most of the new words primary grades children learn come from listening and discussion. Teachers of primary grades need to directly build their learners oral vocabularies through interactive oral reading (Graves, 2006). Effective interactive reading includes:

- Using interesting and enjoyable books for children.
- Having adults read with expression to engage children.
- Reading books several times.
- Focusing children's attention to a small number of words.
- Interaction of the reader and children as they discuss and ask questions about the text (Graves, 2006).

There is an overwhelming quantity of words learners need to learn. Teachers cannot teach all of them directly in a school year, but that does not mean they should not teach some of them. Not every word a teacher wants to introduce to learners from a text requires rich instruction and knowledge. Context can give enough information about some words to acquire and maintain meaning. Rich instruction is needed only for words that are necessary for comprehension of the text or that turn up in a wide variety of contexts, or that require more than a brief explanation to be understood (McKeown & Beck, 2004). The expert (Graves, 2006) agree on the following effective ways to teach a new word:

- Use a definition of the word and have students work with the word in context.
- Have learners actively relate similarities and differences of a new word to words and concepts they know and practice using the word in various

- situations.
- Provide multiple exposures to a new word through games, definitions and using it orally and/or in writing.
- Review and remind learners about the word as it occurs in other contexts over time.
- Spend time learning the word.

Effective word learning instruction provides examples of a word used in various contexts and includes discussion what the word means in each context. Children need contextual and definitional information to gain understanding of how the meaning of a word changes in different contexts (Stahl, 2003). Therefore, one must possess the ability to quickly decode words in order for reading comprehension to occur. This means that decoding skills play a pivotal role in reading comprehension. I then added the above aspects (see Appendix C).

Week 5 :

After consultation with my supervisors, they suggested that I should have a focus group interviews before the second term when I start with the second phase of classroom observations. I explained to the teachers and they were happy about the idea. This was a second phase of classroom observations.

Date: 18 April 2011
Time: 15h00
Place: SCHOOL B
Participants: All six teachers

To counteract this unequal power relationship with the teachers and gain trust; I addressed them as colleagues and not as teachers and that I am not going to impose ideas on them but to learn from them. I explained to them that I believed and regarded them as experts in the field. I also explained that during focus group interviews there are no right or wrong answers and that each participant's contribution would be highly valued. We should therefore regard this session as a sharing approach opportunity. I explained that the instruments were designed to assist me to have focus. However, there were questions that emanated from the

discussions. By this, I addressed the ethical issues related to their involvement pro-actively and appropriately.

Week 6:

During the data interpretation, a concern was raised that the main concept of the study is to find out more about the concept reading comprehension and its importance in the lives of the learners. We discussed with the supervisors, and agreed. I then developed an interview schedule. I went back to schools and organised with individual teachers to meet them on their personal time after school. Fortunately they were all willing to participate again (see Appendix C). The interview gave me more information and broadened my understanding as to what they understand about the concept reading comprehension; what teachers regards as the importance of reading comprehension.