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**TEACHERS' INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES OF TEACHING READING
COMPREHENSION IN GRADE THREE: A CASE STUDY OF THREE PRIMARY
SCHOOLS IN THE WESTERN CAPE**

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis titled 'Teachers' Instructional Strategies for Teaching Reading Comprehension in Grade Three: A Case Study of Three Primary Schools in the Western Cape' is entirely my own work. It has not been previously submitted for any other degree or examination at any other university. I also affirm that all sources I have utilised or quoted have been properly indicated and acknowledged with complete references.

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Abstract

This study investigates the instructional strategies employed in teaching reading comprehension in Grade Three. The aim is to address gaps in knowledge by identifying teachers' reading comprehension strategies. A deeper understanding of these strategies contributes to literacy development and enhances our understanding of reading and associated policies.

This study is grounded in the principles of Piaget's cognitive constructivism and Vygotsky's social constructivism. It demonstrates how diverse reading instructional strategies mediate the process of reading, aiming to improve reading skills and foster comprehension. Using a qualitative approach and a multiple case study design, nine participants were purposefully selected from three primary schools in the Western Cape. Data were gathered through document analysis, observations, and semi-structured interviews, with thematic analysis employed for data analysis.

Participants' reading instruction aligns with the goals and aims of the Grade Three Curriculum and Assessment Policy. However, the study findings do not necessarily correlate with improved literacy outcomes. The participants predominately relied on the questioning strategy, with research-based reading strategies not consistently recognized or utilised.

Several factors negatively impacted reading comprehension, including a lack of pedagogical knowledge, motivation issues, and misconceptions about reading comprehension, inadequate support, reading difficulties, comprehension challenges, limited technical support, policy shortcomings, and lack of parental support exacerbated by poverty. The study concludes that establishing a network of support mechanisms is crucial for the success of reading comprehension initiatives.

Keywords:

Foundation Phase – Reading – Reading Comprehension – Grade 3 – Instruction/Teaching – Policy – Strategies – Support

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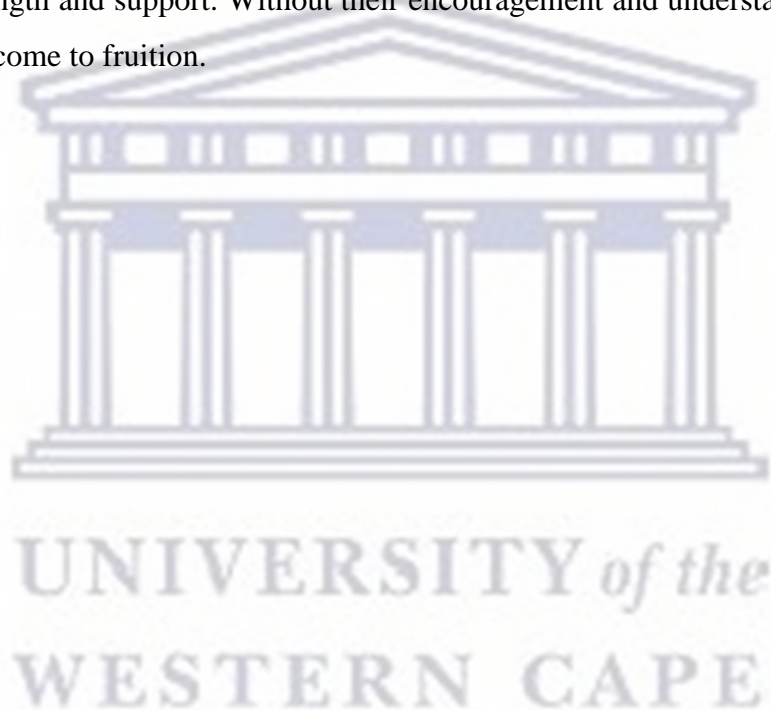


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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations



ANA:	Annual National Assessment
CAPS:	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
DBE:	Department of Basic Education
DPME:	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
EACEA:	European Education and Culture Executive Agency
ECD:	Early Childhood Development
ECE:	Early Care and Education
EAL:	English Additional Language
EFL:	English First Language
EHL:	English Home Language
ESL:	English Second Language
EU:	European Union
FFLC:	Foundations for Learning Campaign
FP:	Foundation Phase
HL:	Home Language
HOD:	Head of Department
L1:	First Language
L2:	Second Language
LOLT:	Language of Learning and Teaching
NEEDU:	National Education Evaluation and Development Unit
NICHD:	National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
PIRLS:	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
RCI:	Reading Comprehension Instruction
RS:	Reading Strategy
SA:	South Africa

SES:	Socioeconomic Status
SMT:	School Management Team
TS:	Teaching Strategy
UWC:	University of the Western Cape
WCED:	Western Cape Education Department
WIL:	Work-Integrated Learning
ZPD:	Zone of Proximal Development



Chapter 1:

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the background for this study, with specific focus on the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, the significance, research aims and questions, limitations, and definitions of key terms and a chapter summary concludes this chapter.

1.1. Background to the Study

Reading instruction has received significant attention in the past decades (Brown, 2017; Pearson & Cervetti, 2017; McNeil, 2011; Grabe, 2009; Pressley, 2008; Koda, 2007). However, many of these studies relate to reading in the Home Language with little research dedicated to teaching Second Language (L2) instruction (Brevik, 2015; Brown, 2017). The act of reading is regarded as an indispensable component of education. In the 20th century, reading was primarily emphasised as a guide for enhancing reading competency and achievement (Pearson & Cervetti, 2017). Over a span of 75 years, research has revealed that the most accurate way to characterise the complexity of reading is by considering the difficulty involved in comprehension (Purcell-Gates *et al.*, 2016; Rand Reading Study Group, 2002; NRP, 2000; Davis, 1944).

Globally, school policies have given reading comprehension special consideration to develop learners' reading skills at their respective grade levels. The worldwide acknowledgment of the benefits associated with attaining early reading skills and the repercussions of early reading challenges is steadily growing (Marais & Wessels, 2020). As a result, the importance of "getting reading right: building firm foundations" in Grade 3 (Spaull & Hoadley, 2017: 77) is presented in international measures. As of 2019, 19 countries have enacted legislation advocating the withholding of Grade 3 learners who do not achieve the required standard of reading skills (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019). The number of English Second Language (ESL) learners who are withheld is greater than English First Language (EFL) learners (Winke & Zhang, 2019). Proposing that additional investigation be given to the existing Grade 3 reading comprehension policy with an emphasis on English Language Learners (Hwang & Duke, 2020).

Teacher training, professional development, and support structures are considered vital components of the National Reading Strategy (2008), which acknowledges that reading problems frequently stem from the Foundation Phase, underscoring the importance of early

intervention. By conducting ongoing research, is it possible to predict learners' reading ability at the appropriate stage of development working with evidence-based interventions, and providing opportunities for teacher advancement at FP (Spaull, 2016).

Many learners who begin their educational journey fail to advance to the twelfth grade. This is demonstrated by the statistic that “48% of Grade 2s in 2009 did not write Matric (full time) in 2019” (Albertyn & Guzula, 2020: 19). Despite a myriad of initiatives and interventions conducted by the National Reading Panel, Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS DBE, 2011). South African learners continue to fail (Howie *et al.*, 2017) despite numerous regulations and guiding principles put in place for reading by the Department of Basic Education in schools. These policies consist of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS DBE, 2011)¹.

Teachers play a critical role in providing reading instruction (Spaull & Pretorius, 2019), as learners' reading abilities greatly depend on the quality and frequency of instruction, as reading is not an innate skill (Spaull & Pretorius, 2019). Palincsar and Schutz (2011) indicated that teachers' understanding of reading comprehension is crucial in ensuring effective reading comprehension instruction (RCI). Thus, the expectation is that teachers get the necessary assistance to implement appropriate comprehension-instructional strategies. Those teachers who have deficits in their professional development are likely to encounter problems implementing comprehension instructional strategies (Zimmerman, 2014; Pretorius, 2010; Block & Duffy, 2008; Pressley & El- Dinary, 1997).

Motilal and Fleisch (2020) elaborates that most FP teachers are either untrained or partially trained. It is found that teachers are poorly informed about effective reading pedagogies; they are unable to teach reading successfully irrespective of their intention to implement it (Taylor, 2014). Therefore, hardly any approved reading comprehension instruction is taking place in South African schools (Zimmerman & Smit, 2014; Zimmerman, 2014; Klapwijk, 2011; Dreyer & Nel, 2003). Based on this, various teachers adopt the implicit method, suggesting that

¹ With complementary official documents such as the programme of assessment, moderation, intervention, reading and phonics curriculum, yearly teaching lesson plans and question sheet, is monitored and prepared (Marais & Wessels, 2020).

teachers fail to teach reading comprehension skills and strategies independently that are transparent, in a specific manner.

It is essential to provide support and instruction on how to employ strategies to improve comprehension, as “meaning does not exist in the text but must be constructed from the text by the reader” (Snow, 2002: 32). The principal aim of engaging in reading is to augment substantive comprehension; however, the process of constructing meaning is often disregarded and lacks the requisite attention (Arya & Yu, 2018). Instead of prioritising meaning and comprehension, teachers often dedicate a substantial amount of time to fostering automatic decoding skills (Prinsloo *et al.*, 2015; Murriss, 2014; Verbeek, 2010; Pretorius & Machet, 2004). As a result, they adopt the belief that learners will naturally acquire comprehension skills by completing tasks without explicit instructional guidance (Beck & Condy, 2017; Zimmerman, 2014). Furthermore, the scarcity of reading resources, inadequate implementation of the curriculum to foster learners’ reading abilities, and disruptive and overcrowded classroom environments all impede the utilisation of effective teaching methods, thereby contributing to learners’ low reading proficiency (Lucas, 2011; Rany, 2013). The aforementioned points indicate that there are factors that contribute to low reading outcomes.

Furthermore, the language policy in South Africa has a significant impact on literacy rates. The choice of language for instruction in schools has been a subject of ongoing discussion and disagreement. In light of this, Pretorius (2015) aimed to bring clarity and emphasise the importance of language and literacy in order to foster positive progress in literacy development. They argue that the principal aim of reading is to grasp the content of a text, this process is characterised by the reciprocal relationship between language and literacy. They highlight the strong bidirectional ties between “oral language proficiency and literacy development (Spaull & Pretorius, 2019: 3). It is supported by the following two skill sets (Scarborough, 2001; Hoover & Gough, 1990):

- (i) oral language comprehension (to understand and use verbal language), and
- (ii) decoding (to read words and decode words outside the text).

Spaull and Pretorius (2019: 12) further explain that the integration of decoding and comprehension skills relies on a strong foundation of “oral language proficiency, which includes vocabulary knowledge, listening comprehension, and morphosyntactic knowledge (i.e., knowledge of grammar).” Without adequate decoding skills, comprehension of text becomes impossible. However, efficient decoding skills alone do not guarantee automatic

comprehension of text (Aryadoust, 2019). Therefore, effective reading comprehension instruction should successfully foster both decoding and comprehension skills in tandem (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). Teaching these components is crucial for the development of reading comprehension (Magnusson *et al.*, 2019).

It is crucial to reinforce language skills during reading comprehension lessons (Nation, 2019), as emphasised by the statement “Language is acquired, reading is taught” (Spaull & Pretorius, 2019: 5). This highlights the significance of providing high-quality reading and language instruction to learners in the Foundation Phase. Assessing the advancement of reading comprehension is imperative, as merely decoding and grasping the text does not guarantee a comprehensive understanding of its content.

Basically, teachers must explicitly teach comprehension strategies, helping learners to progress and address difficulties in reading comprehension (Brevik, 2017; Brevik, 2015). Pressley (2001) recommended employing a variety of strategies to facilitate reading improvement and understanding of written text. While Klapwijk (2012) and Oyetunji (2013) suggest that reading comprehension can improve through explicit instruction of reading strategies. This can be organised taxonomically as “before, during, or after reading,” but their recursive nature allows for the application of similar strategies at different stages (Paris *et al.*, 1991: 611). Furthermore, understanding the developmental trajectories of early reading serves as the building blocks for effective early reading. Therefore, it is essential to investigate the progress of reading comprehension at each educational level, with particular emphasis on Grade 3, as highlighted by Hwang and Duke (2020). Learning to read at an expected trajectory places great emphasis on the FP or prior, before learning deficits decline to dangerous levels as witnessed in the IP due to defective early instruction (Van der Berg, 2015).

Issues relating to teachers' reading instructional strategies are a major challenge and directly impact learners' achievement, which warrants further investigation. According to Pretorius (2015), the outcomes of the PIRLS suggest that our approach is not aligned with the proper methods. Ineffective RCI in the early stages of schooling perpetuates early reading failure, which has devastating consequences. This is apparent in the absence of appropriate reading strategies and reading basics (Lucas, 2011; Rany, 2013). These struggling learners are likely to encounter ongoing difficulties in subsequent years (Mzimane & Mantlana, 2017) and find themselves in a perpetual catch-up position throughout their school lives (Spaull & Pretorius, 2019). Considering the devastating impact of contemporary reading instructional trends, this

research aims to investigate how teachers interpret and teach reading strategies in their classrooms. This study takes a limited perspective, as teachers' instructional strategies are not the sole contributing factor to low reading performance in South African schools.

1.2. Problem Statement

It is a worldwide expectation that on the completion of Grade 3, learners are expected to read fluently with meaning in a particular language (Spaull & Pretorius, 2019). However, a significant proportion of South African learners are not provided with the opportunity to acquire the skills of reading fluently, accurately and with understanding (Pretorius *et al.*, 2016).

More than three-quarters of learners between 9 and 10 years old fall short of the reading skills in South African primary schools (Tofaris & Wills, 2019). As South African learners find it difficult to make meaning from the texts (Pretorius & Lephala, 2012). Numerous studies indicate that South Africa has a reading crisis (Willenberg, 2018; Rule & Land, 2017; Spaull, 2016; Howie *et al.*, 2011). This is supported by research indicating that reading with meaning is at a crisis point in South Africa (Spaull *et al.*, 2016). The Annual National Assessment (ANA) and PIRLS stated that literacy skills amongst the majority of learners are weakening (Howie *et al.*, 2017; Republic of South Africa, 2014). As teachers concentrate on mechanical decoding expertise instead of on meaning-making and comprehension skills (Prinsloo *et al.*, 2015; Murriss, 2014; Verbeek, 2010; Pretorius & Machet, 2004). The instructional methods employed by teachers contribute to the continuation of low reading literacy outcomes, as evident in both national and international assessments.

Although many research studies have been conducted focusing on developing reading skills in South Africa (Statistics SA, 2019; Pretorius & Spaull, 2016; Van der Berg, *et al.*, 2016; Taylor, 2014). Little research about reading instructional strategies on how teachers teach literacy and reading comprehension (Rule & Land, 2017). With limited detailed qualitative research on reading comprehension instructional strategies from the teacher's perspective (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). While policy consensus recognizes the significance of reading comprehension instruction (RCI), a substantial amount of literature primarily focuses on the various components of reading (Spaull & Pretorius, 2019; Paige *et al.*, 2018; Shea & Ceprano, 2017; Pretorius *et al.*, 2016).

There is a scarcity of detailed reports on instructional strategies what teachers do and just how teachers structure comprehension strategies in their classrooms (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016; Magnusson *et al.*, 2019). In addition to how teachers think and act about literacy, how teachers talk about and teach about meaning construction, and how assessment is implemented (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). The manner in which strategies are taught in the classroom settings provides a gap (Magnusson *et al.*, 2019). In response to this gap, the present study provides valuable insights into teachers' reading comprehension instructional strategies (Magnusson *et al.*, 2019) that have been acknowledged as significant throughout grades (Hougen, 2015; National Reading Panel, 2000). Teachers' effective reading comprehension strategies functions as a valuable instrument for addressing the disparity in reading comprehension within the context of the teaching and learning process.

These strategies can act as a springboard to actively engage learners and support them in the process of constructing meaning. The early stages are pivotal for cultivating robust reading abilities. If there is a shortfall in reading literacy proficiency during this phase, it can pose a significant challenge for learners. This, in turn, hampers learners' productivity and educational achievements, thereby negatively impacting the entire educational system and leading to a snowball effect. It is against this backdrop that interest was captured based on the understanding that the development of teachers' reading comprehension instructional practices is significant. The aim is to provide an overview of the reading comprehension strategies used by teachers in schools situated in the Western Cape. To achieve this, the study gathered comprehensive data on teachers' instructional strategies through document analysis, interviews, and non-participant observations.

1.3. Research Questions

The study aims to address the following question: What are teachers' strategies for reading comprehension in Grade 3?

In addition, the following questions will be in this study:

- (i) Which instructional strategies do teachers use when teaching reading comprehension to Grade 3 learners?
- (ii) What are the perceptions of Grade 3 teachers regarding teaching reading comprehension?

- (iii) To what extent do teachers receive support for teaching reading comprehension?

It is important to note that teachers' perceptions and the support they receive may play a significant role in the design and implementation of their instructional strategies (More, 2015; Kwon, 2015; Milinga *et al.*, 2023; McNeil & Polly, 2023; Hinojosa, 2023).

1.4. Research Aims

The main research aim of this study is to determine and examine teachers' instructional strategies for teaching reading comprehension.

This study also seeks the following aims:

- (i) examine the Grade 3 teachers' perspectives of teaching reading comprehension, and
- (ii) to explore to what extent teachers receive support for teaching reading comprehension.

1.5. Significance of the Study

Research studies such as Tiba (2023), Fleisch (2008), and Dreyer and Nel (2003) evoke that there is limited information available regarding teachers' instructional strategies for teaching reading comprehension. Information is even more limited specifically for teaching reading comprehension in Grade 3. This study holds the potential to provide valuable insights to policymakers, teachers, and researchers.

At the policy level, the study provides essential insights into the functioning of Grade 3 reading comprehension, determining the necessary support for teachers. Moreover, understanding teachers' instructional practices in reading comprehension may assist them in improving their teaching. The findings of this study can serve as valuable evidence and contribute as a resource for future research on teachers' instructional strategies in Grade 3-level reading.

1.6. Definition of Terms

This section explores the understanding of different concepts that have informed reading comprehension research instruction.

1.6.1. Reading comprehension

Has been defined in diverse ways (Rafi'i, 2020). Teachers' understanding of reading varies in terms of theory and practice, which can be realised in terms of teachers' reading comprehension instructional practices, therefore teachers must understand what reading is about.

For Renata and Alenka (2018: 105), "reading is primarily reflected as a dynamic meaning-focused interaction in which students are required to build comprehension of a text in a non-linear way." Reading comprehension is defined by Roe (2014: 24) as to "make meaning of what we read." According to the National Curriculum Statement of South Africa, reading comprehension is explained as a "close and critical reading of the text, to understand the text comprehensively" (DBE, 2011: 28). The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) defines reading literacy as "the ability to use and understand those written language forms required by society and/or valued by the individual" (Mullis *et al.*, 2009: 19).

In the field of reading literacy, numerous interpretations of reading comprehension exist. Broadly speaking, reading comprehension has come to encompass an engaged process of constructing meaning, utilising acquired reading skills to achieve a more profound understanding of a text. For the purposes of this paper, I employed and adhered to the definition outlined in the National Curriculum Statement (DBE, 2011).

1.6.2. Define Grade 3

The term Grade 3 is generally understood to mean the fourth year in the Foundation Phase in South Africa. The Foundation Phase in South Africa is from Grade R to Grade 3. As the final year of the Foundation Phase, Grade 3 is where the basics of reading and writing skills are developed. The term refers to numerous cultural organisations, a child is demarcated as a young person who has not to reach maturity (Van Rensburg, 2015). RSA DBE (2001a) uses the term early childhood development (ECD), to denote the education of a child between the ages of childbirth to the age of nine to ensure that they develop and thrive "physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, morally and socially" (Van Rensburg, 2015:4). The progression of early childhood education (ECE) in South Africa encompasses the "Foundation Phase or Grades R to 3" (Van Rensburg, 2015:4), the duration depends largely on when the learner started school.

ECE points to the deliberate team efforts to influence development change in children from school entry (Gordon & Williams-Browne, 2004). Within the South African context, it comprises the formative years and concludes after Grade 3 (Van Rensburg, 2015). The groundworks for further education are established at this juncture (Gordon & Williams-Browne, 2004). The explanation of Grade 3 encapsulates the stage of development and the importance of holistic development laying the groundwork to support future educational experiences.

1.6.3. Reading Comprehension instructional strategies

The term “instructional strategies” is an intricate terminology that requires an explanation (Pearson & Cervetti, 2017). The process of reading comprehension strategies aims to enhance understanding and alleviate reading difficulties (Palincsar & Brown, 1984); these strategies have been called procedural information (information to understand a text) that readers apply as instruments for meaningful, on-going understanding and learning (McNamara, 2011). New studies contend that these intricacies consist of conceptual distinctions between skills and strategies and between strategic reading and reading exercises (Afflerbach *et al.*, 2017; Cohen, 2011; Grabe, 2009; Pressley, 2008; Hilden & Pressley, 2007; Rand, 2002).

Afflerbach *et al.* (2017: 38) defined strategies as “deliberate, goal-directed attempts to control and modify the reader’s efforts to decode text, understand words, and construct meanings of text.” Whereas Brevik (2019: 5) uses the term skills to refer to “the reader’s automatic responses to text; strategies consist of the reader’s awareness of comprehension problems and selection of the most appropriate tool to solve the problems and is the engine that drives comprehension.” Reading strategies are thoughtful, aim directed efforts related to decoding text, identification of words, and creating meanings of the written text (Afflerbach *et al.*, 2008). Whereas, reading skills facilitates better comprehension and learning (Goldman & Pellegrino, 2015; Graesser, 2015). Afflerbach *et al.* (2008) perceives reading skills as automatic processes that facilitate decoding and comprehension swiftly, competently, and fluently. Reading strategies are employed interchangeably in this study, as relationships (where strategies support skills) or to demonstrate developmental advancement (where phonics skills are followed by comprehension strategies) (Afflerbach *et al.*, 2008).

1.7. Outline of Chapters

This study comprises seven chapters organised as follows.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter presents a brief overview of the topic. It presents the introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of this study, significance of the study, research questions, definitions of terms, and chapter summary.

Chapter 2: Literature review and Theoretical Framework

The initial section of this chapter delves into pertinent literature by focusing on the three research questions. The subsequent section provides details of the cognitive and social constructivists as the theoretical framework supporting the study.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter elucidates the research methodology, context of the study, sample and sampling procedure. It describes in greater detail the research instruments, data collection process, and data analysis and procedure, with a brief description of validity, reliability and trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: Data Presentation

This chapter explained the data presentation. It showcases the information acquired through the analysis of research documents, observations, and semi-structured interviews.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis

In this chapter, the analysis of the data including the steps taken in the analysis are explained. I present themes and their related categories emerged from the data collected from documents, observations, semi-structured interviews, how the data was analysed, and the preliminary findings.

Chapter 6: Findings

In this chapter, I discuss findings from the data. These findings were compared and discussed in relation to the findings of previous work.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

In this chapter, a summary is presented and recommendations. Findings are interpreted as the research questions are discussed in tandem with literature.

1.8. Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the background of the study. It focused on the statement of the problem, the significance of the study, research aims and questions, significance of the study, and key terms.



Chapter 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter analyses literature in a thematically-organised format. It examines teachers reading instructional strategies and practices, successes, and limitations from a national and international perspective. The primary aim of this literature review is to illustrate how teachers structure the teaching of comprehension strategies within their classrooms. The first part of the review explores teachers reading comprehension instructional strategies. The second part focuses on teachers' perceptions of teaching reading comprehension. The third part examines reading comprehension support offered to teachers.

2.1. Teachers' Reading Comprehension Instructional Strategies

Recent literature has focused on the teaching of reading in FP, which explains teachers' instructional practices in the classroom. Global research issues surrounding reading comprehension have prompted investigators to focus on early literacy and explore why so many learners are unable to read properly despite having entered school (World Bank, 2018). Studies found that reading with understanding is a worldwide intention, but it does not occur (Shea & Ceprano, 2017). Owing to this, authors have solicited concerns regarding how literacy is conceived and instructed in developing states (Spaull, 2019), and reading studies place a focus on identifying ways to aid textual understanding during instruction (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2012). Essentially, research and theory on comprehension (Irwin, 1991; Zimmerman & Hutchins, 2003; Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Tierney *et al.*, 1995) recognised reading components to achieve comprehension and recommended strategies for achieving this aim (Shea & Ceprano, 2017).

The current reading landscape indicates that reading is a pervasive problem. Internationally, one-third of the 27 EU states at the primary level identified or organised instruction of reading strategies (Shea & Ceprano, 2017); this suggests that the majority of EU states are not implementing research-based reading strategies in the classroom. Despite the significant contribution of reading strategies to RC, learners are rarely instructed in these skills (Muijselaar *et al.*, 2017). From a South African perspective, the international and systemic test results demonstrated that most learners are dangerously underachieving in comparison to different developing states (Wildsmith-Cromarty & Balfour, 2019). One study found that “78% of the South African learners, with an average age of 10.6 years, could not read for meaning or

retrieve basic information from a text to answer simple questions” (Stoffelsma, 2019: 2). Furthermore, an evaluation report (Taylor, 2017: 39) revealed that the typical reading comprehension scores “(in English) of FP learners to be 4.14 out of 20 across a sample of 214 schools and 4,709 learners” (Wildsmith-Cromarty & Balfour, 2019: 306). These studies highlight the critical need to implement reading strategies in the foundational stages. Evidence suggests that more effective reading instructional strategies are required, as reading skills are inefficiently developed during this stage (Shea & Ceprano, 2017).

On a national level, the literacy levels in the country remain precarious (Stoffelsma, 2019). This underscores the importance of focusing on fundamental aspects of reading, such as how, what, and when to instruct reading (Spaull & Pretorius, 2019). Most learners lack the essential skills to read with comprehension (Pritchett, 2013; Muralidharan, 2013; Spaull & Taylor, 2015). Many learners appear to struggle in achieving this goal (Shea & Ceprano, 2017). A possible explanation is that there is widespread confusion between teaching and testing comprehension (Pretorius *et al.*, 2016). Shea and Ceprano (2017) discovered that while teachers extensively evaluate comprehension in the classroom, they rarely teach it. Teachers are inadequately trained to effectively instruct the crucial components of reading (Shea & Ceprano, 2017), which aligns with the findings of Cekiso (2017), Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016), and Klapwijk (2015).

Redirecting our attention to the progress in scientific research, it becomes evident how our understanding of the brain’s processes about reading has advanced (Dehaene, 2009; Seidenberg, 2017). Recent data suggests that analysing current teaching practices from a scientific perspective is necessary to effectively implement teaching approaches (Gentry & Ouellette, 2019). Gentry and Ouellette (2019) provide a critique that explains how science sheds light on teaching through the spelling process, which encompasses methodologies and approaches for reading instruction. They argue that reading with comprehension involves the ability to decode and accurately spell words. Gentry and Ouellette (2019) go on to criticise the National Reading Panel for excluding spelling as an integral aspect of reading, overlooking the significance of orthography and word acquisition. They believe that the whole language and prioritising the Phonics approach contribute to the oversight of learning words (Gentry & Ouellette, 2019). The shortcomings in letter-sound knowledge underscore the limitations of prioritisation, consequently impeding reading proficiency. The incapacity to accurately spell words hampers fluent reading and the capacity to extract meaning from the text.

Furthermore, Gentry and Ouellette (2019) explain why certain teaching practices do not work and how scientific reading can assist teachers to remedy this and eliminate unwitting errors. They maintain that the majority of teachers are untrained in successful literacy instruction procedures, and several have limited access to science-based teaching materials. Therefore, achieving success in reading instruction requires a combination of effective instructional strategies and appropriate resources. Gentry and Ouellette maintain that employing both phonics and whole-word approaches to reading instruction is more efficient than depending exclusively on one of these approaches. Learners need to develop the ability to pronounce, comprehend, and spell words in order to actively engage in the reading and writing process.

Phonics is required for constructing reading skills, while whole-word reading offers an incentive for participating actively in the reading process (Gentry & Ouellette, 2019). In essence, spelling is a useful instructional tool and a crucial step in attaining reading comprehension by boosting learners' vocabulary and reading capabilities. Incorporating spelling and the whole-word approach emphasises the learning of words out of context to facilitate a focus on comprehension by strengthening learners' ability to understand and recall information within context. The proficiency to both spell and comprehend words proves more effective and establishes favourable conditions during the reading and writing processes, as it represents the most suitable means to evaluate learners' comprehension of a text. Gentry and Ouellette, along with Mohr *et al.* (2023); Stoffelsma (2019); Graham *et al.* (2018); and Spaul and Hoadley (2017), highlighted the significance of the writing process, as RC starts with deciphering words from a written text and critically analysing it, followed by constructing information and applying it in written form.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Levesque *et al.* (2018) explored the influence of morphological skills on the advancement of children's reading comprehension. The study aimed to identify which skills predict independent progress in children's reading over time. The results suggested that morphological analysis, rather than relying solely on morphological awareness, contributes to reading development from grade three to grade four. The findings underscore the significance of morphological analysis in children's reading, surpassing the importance of morphological awareness. The results suggested that morphological recognition and morphological analysis contribute collaboratively to reading comprehension.

These findings align with the research conducted by Gentry and Ouellette (2019), underscoring the significance of instructing both morphological awareness and morphological analysis in

reading comprehension (Levesque *et al.*, 2018). However, when dealing with complex word meanings, the study suggests that morphological analysis should be given priority, advocating for a simultaneous instruction of decoding and reading comprehension skills. This supports the approach proposed by Nathanson (2018).

To provide further clarification, delving into scientific research studies sheds light on the concepts of morphological awareness and morphological analysis. Morphological awareness pertains to the recognition and capability to manipulate the smallest meaningful units, or morphemes, in oral language (Carlisle, 1995). Moreover, contemporary studies have revealed that learners make progress through explicit instruction in phonemes and graphemes provided by teachers (Sunde *et al.*, 2019; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). On the contrary, Morphological analysis entails the capacity to deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words that are morphologically complex, relying on the morphemes found in their structural components (Anglin, 1993; Baumann *et al.*, 2002; Deacon *et al.*, 2017). It enables learners to determine the meaning of words through an analysis of their morphological structure. In contrast, morphological awareness functions as a type of metalinguistic knowledge that enables children to identify and manipulate morphemes in language (Levesque *et al.*, 2018).

It empowers learners to attain a profound understanding of language structure and enhances their capacity to contemplate and manipulate morphemes. Hence, differentiating between morphological awareness and morphological analysis, we acquire a more distinct understanding of their individual contributions to reading comprehension. The significance of morphological analysis in reading comprehension is paramount, comprehending the meaning of morphologically complex words is crucial for successful comprehension (Perfetti & Stafura, 2014).

Given that over half of the new words encountered in grades 3 to 9 are morphologically complex (Anglin, 1993; Nagy & Anderson, 1984), learners' ability to comprehend the writer's intended meaning is closely tied to their achievement in comprehension (Tompkins & Blanchfield, 2008). Moreover, the reader's ability to metacognitively process and comprehend individual words in a sentence and consolidate multiple sentences to understand the text (McNamara *et al.*, 2011). This cognitive process involves not only understanding the meanings of individual words but also making connections and inferences at the sentence and discourse levels. By recognizing the importance of morphological analysis and the challenges posed by

morphologically complex words, readers can enhance their comprehension skills and develop a more nuanced understanding of written texts.

Although individual words are important, they alone do not foster the development of reading comprehension. Hwang and Nell (2020) emphasise that the process of constructing a text-based system, which involves decoding words, necessitates fluent decoding abilities for effective comprehension. Teaching the meanings of words to learners contributes to their overall text comprehension. Additionally, Duke *et al.* (2021) suggest that reading comprehension depends on the capacity to read nearly all or every word in a text, by teaching basic word-reading and bridging skills. In other words, a solid foundation in word recognition and decoding is essential for learners to engage with and comprehend texts effectively.

The available evidence suggests that word reading is crucial for reading comprehension, but it alone is not sufficient for advancing comprehension skills (Wright & Cervetti, 2017). Interpretation from the perspective of “saying the words accurately and fluently does not guarantee understanding of an author’s message” (Shea & Ceprano, 2017: 52). Zaman and Asghar (2019) assert that reading is not just about recognising written symbols and alphabets; it is also about acquiring knowledge through a process involving visual and mental faculties and understanding what motivates reading. In summary, while word reading is an essential of comprehension, it is not the sole determinant of comprehension development.

Indeed, word reading plays a critical role in comprehension. Fluency acts as a bridge between the mechanical act of reading words and the understanding (Armbruster *et al.*, 2001). Reading words correctly contributes to comprehension by helping readers construct an understanding of the text. However, it is important to note that even when fluency is strong reading comprehension is not automatic as, “Reading Comprehension Is Not Automatic Even When Fluency Is Strong” (Duke *et al.*, 2021: 665). This is evident in cases where learners may possess good decoding skills and reading fluency but struggle with weak reading comprehension. In essence, understanding a text involves a wide range of “knowledge, strategies, and dispositions (Duke *et al.*, 2021: 665). Building word recognition skills, along with teaching various skills and processes involved in reading comprehension, is crucial. These studies highlight the significance of developing word reading abilities while also recognizing the broader set of skills required for effective reading comprehension.

Reading can be divided into two main skills: “decoding (recognising printed words) and comprehension (understanding the meaning of printed words)” (Motilal & Fleisch, 2020: 11).

Duke *et al.* (2021) suggest that the relationship between word reading and reading comprehension is more synergistic than competitive. This viewpoint supports Nathanson's perspective, as Nathanson (2018) argues that the milestone of reading development lies in the learner's ability to read written text using a problem-solving strategy. Mohr *et al.* (2023) advocate the use of think-alouds to teach inference-making skills that facilitate mental problem-solving during reading and listening. They propose that decoding and comprehension should be taught simultaneously rather than sequentially.

Several studies promote concurrent teaching methods instead of a sequential approach to reading instruction (Duke *et al.*, 2021). However, there is an opposing view that the most effective way to assist readers is to focus on developing the meaning of words rather than solely emphasising the reading process. This contrasting perspective differs from the approach advocated by Gentry and Ouellette (2019).

Researchers provide insights into two different perspectives on teaching reading comprehension. Some studies emphasise the development of word-level skills, while others highlight the importance of considering both decoding and comprehension processes. Scholars who emphasise letter-sound relationships argue that both morphological awareness and morphological analysis contribute to reading comprehension. The significance of words in reading is widely acknowledged in reading performance (Gentry & Ouellette, 2019). This aligns with the approach supported by Gentry and Ouellette (2019), Levesque *et al.* (2018), and Hwang and Nell (2020) who advocate for the spell-to-read method in reading instruction. However, one limitation of this approach is that Gentry and Ouellette (2019) do not fully address the cognitive processes and the development of reading comprehension skills. This contrasts with the approach advocated by Nathanson (2018), Mohr *et al.* (2023), Duke *et al.* (2021), Wright and Cervetti (2017), Shea and Ceprano (2017), and Zaman and Asghar (2019), which emphasises a balanced approach that incorporates both decoding and comprehension. Zaman and Asghar (2019) shift the focus from word reading to the acquisition of information through the reading process. Both Nathanson (2018) and Gentry *et al.* (2019) offer valuable perspectives on reading instruction as learners' exhibit different levels of reading proficiency, skill deficits, and individual needs. Taking these varying viewpoints into account can contribute to a more comprehensive approach to teaching reading.

Nathanson advocates for a holistic, sustained, and systematic approach to reading for meaning that goes beyond reliance on letter-sound relationships and enables learners to independently

decode unfamiliar words (2018). Nathanson's approach prioritises morphological analysis and the cognitive processes involved in reading comprehension instruction. On the other hand, Gentry and Ouellette (2019) place emphasis on the meaning and development of words, sentences, and texts, viewing them as building blocks that develop sequentially. Nathanson (2018) perceives spelling words alone does not guarantee effective reading comprehension but a valuable decoding component that facilitates the transition from decoding to comprehension. Mohr *et al.* (2023) explains that beginning readers must master the alphabetic system, use basic decoding strategies, and develop word recognition and orthographic pattern recognition. According to cognitive scientists, this early focus on word-level skills requires cognitive attention, which can limit the mental resources available for comprehension (Perfetti & Hart, 2002; Stanovich, 1987). Theoretically, cognitive attention is predominantly directed towards decoding until fluency (Wright, 2019). Consequently, some teachers may underestimate the importance of teaching for understanding, leading to shortcomings as reading with understanding requires time, practice, and skill. Nonetheless, when contemplating reading as a comprehensive skill with comprehension as the ultimate goal, it is crucial to prioritise comprehension as the primary objective during reading in the initial phases of literacy development. Reading comprehension should be recognized as an ongoing and continuous process, as highlighted by Mohr *et al.* (2023). To attain this aim, is to place a strong emphasis on comprehension right from the start, even before learners reach a level of proficiency in reading (Oakhill & Cain, 2012; Van den Broek *et al.*, 2011).

Mohr *et al.* (2023) advocate for the teaching of inferences through teacher or parent read-alouds as a method to help young readers develop from the earliest grades. The importance of inferencing as a thinking strategy when engaging with texts, providing guidance on what inference is, why it is important, and how it can be applied. Textual inference, the ability to derive meaning from text, is a crucial comprehension skill that should be explicitly addressed and demonstrated to learners during read-aloud sessions. By doing so, young children can understand that reading is a process of creating meaning that requires mental effort to interpret and contextualise a text (Mohr *et al.*, 2023). Mohr *et al.* (2023) support the incorporation of problem-solving processes and critical thinking skills in reading instruction. This approach encourages learners to actively engage with texts, analyse information, and draw meaningful conclusions.

Scientific research has shown several distinct instructional practices that support reading comprehension development. Reading comprehension involves an either/or approach, illustrated by these two perspectives, respectively: (1) “Don’t teach strategies; build knowledge. “Don’t focus on comprehension; focus on word reading” (Duke *et al.*, 2021: 663). However, this trend does not represent research findings and does not exhaust opportunities for diverse emerging readers’ needs (Duke *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, a meta-analysis of these studies found that teaching only self-questioning strategy instruction was “effective for improving reading comprehension performance across a range of diverse learners and various educational settings” (Joseph *et al.*, 2016: 152)². The questioning strategy has been shown to be advantageous, versatile, and adaptable in teaching learners with different abilities. It is essential to provide opportunities for learners to actively participate in the learning process.

Mohr *et al.* (2023) caution against overloading learners with excessive questions, as this can sometimes be counterproductive and overwhelming, leading to a decrease in their level of thinking (Mohr, 1998). Instead of solely relying on questioning, teachers should provide more modelling and explanation to support learners’ thinking. Interestingly, during unplanned reading lessons, teachers generally ask five times more literal questions than inferential ones when teaching an unplanned reading lesson (Hansen, 1981). Mohr *et al.* (2023) argue that expecting learners to make connections immediately after reading is often futile. Using thinking questions assumes that comprehension has already occurred, which can disadvantage learners who struggle with inferencing. Furthermore, post-reading tasks may not adequately convey to learners that inferencing is an ongoing process. According to Mohr *et al.* (2023), it is more effective to focus on building coherence inference while reading. The construction of inferences should be perceived as a dynamic process, wherein the reader enhances their understanding of the intended message by bridging the gaps. Mohr *et al.* (2023) emphasise the need to strike a balance in questioning, provide modelling and explanation, and view inferencing as an ongoing and dynamic process. By fostering cognitive and metacognitive skills, learners can actively engage in filling the gaps and constructing meaning while reading.

Scientific research has shown that specific teaching strategies can effectively support the development of reading comprehension (Armbruster *et al.*, 2001). Duke *et al.* (2021) propose a differentiated and multifaceted approach to RCI, which is scientifically recommended and

² See also Elleman (2017) for similar findings in inference instruction.

caters to the diverse needs of readers. This instructional model encompasses various components such as overall classroom instruction, literacy and language development, knowledge progression, knowledge construction and activation, text engagement, instruction about the text, and comprehension. Their approach does not view knowledge construction and comprehension strategy instruction as opposing ends of a balance scale. Instead, it allows teachers to adapt the frequency of instruction based on learners' individual strengths and needs (Duke *et al.*, 2021). This approach recognizes the importance of acknowledging and understanding learners' diverse ways of learning and their unique experiences and background knowledge (Swärd, 2013), as well as the significance of differentiated instruction.

While the differentiated and multifaceted approach proposed by Duke *et al.* (2021) is beneficial for reading comprehension instruction, it may overlook the importance of the writing process. Both reading and writing involve “the construction, revision, and editing of meaning” (Thurlow & van den Broek, 1997: 178). It is important for readers to acknowledge that the processes of understanding and exposure are interconnected. The implications of not incorporating writing suggest that it is seen as a separate process, disregarding its role in consolidating and constructing meaning to support reading comprehension.

Various approaches to comprehension strategy instruction involve teaching multiple strategies together. Examples of these multiple-strategy instructional approaches, reciprocal teaching, collaborative strategic reading, transactional instruction, and concept-oriented reading instruction (Duke *et al.*, 2021). A meta-analysis by Okkinga *et al.* (2018) explored the multiple-strategy instructional approaches for comprehension strategy instruction in Grades 3–12 classrooms, and revealed positive outcomes on standardised and academically generated assessments (Duke *et al.*, 2021).

To strengthen these skills, it is important to employ different reading strategies and effectively combine both skills through consistent and explicit reading instruction (Motilal & Fleisch, 2020). According to Pretorius *et al.* (2016), providing various strategies enables learners to advance through a spectrum of structured assistance in the context of reading. Schmidt *et al.* (2021) agree that teaching a variety of reading comprehension strategies can aid in understanding a text. They also argue that adopting a one-size-fits-all approach is inadequate in addressing the needs of learners, particularly those who have not yet developed adequate comprehension skills. By incorporating multiple comprehension strategies through various instructional approaches can enhance reading comprehension.

Paige *et al.* (2018) highlight that skills or proficiencies are foundational to reading comprehension, and teachers should avoid rigid adherence to a single reading approach. The effectiveness of a variety of strategies appears to be more important than a specific set of strategies (Brown & Dewitz, 2014; Brown, 2008; Kamil *et al.*, 2008), which aligns with the findings of Duke *et al.* (2021). Li *et al.* (2021) meta-analysis aimed to examine the impact of strategies on reading comprehension. Teachers can draw upon a diverse toolkit of strategies to effectively support English learners' reading comprehension skills.

The findings indicate that each of the four instructional strategies (scaffolding, graphic organisers, and interactive read aloud, and levelled questions) offers advantages for ELL at different educational levels. Teachers are advised to use multiple instructional strategies in a lesson to have a positive impact on reading (Li *et al.*, 2021). Tong *et al.* (2014) further support these findings by demonstrating that implementing multiple strategies over an extended period has a sustained educational impact on ELLs' reading comprehension. Meta-analyses focusing on the impact of teachers' instruction utilising multiple strategies have also shown positive outcomes (Hall *et al.*, 2016; Shanahan & Beck, 2006; Klingner *et al.*, 2006).

Reading is an intricate process that requires explicit instruction. Several studies have found that teaching reading strategies in the foundational years contributes to the development of comprehension (Solis *et al.*, 2012; Edmonds *et al.*, 2009; Kamil *et al.*, 2008; Gajria *et al.*, 2007; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Additional studies (Beck & Condy, 2017; Cekiso, 2012; Rupley *et al.*, 2009) have highlighted the importance of explicitly teaching reading strategies and higher-order thinking skills. For example, in a study the use of reading comprehension strategies supported Grade 2 reading with understanding (Schmidt *et al.*, 2021). Implementing upper-level reading instructional strategies and creating a positive learning environment positively influenced the development of Grade 2 learners' higher-level thinking skills. These findings highlight the significance of teaching higher-order comprehension strategies to foster the development of skills and understanding of text. It is vital to explicitly teach reading skills and strategies, model them systematically and repetitively, and provide ample opportunities for supervised practice in order to facilitate reading with understanding (Shea & Ceprano, 2017).

According to Cambourne (2004), there is an agreement that teaching reading instructional strategies explicitly and methodically facilitates awareness and the use of upper-level strategies to read with meaning. Therefore, RCI should start at the foundational stages, beginning with

the development of word reading. The idea that teaching should commence at this foundational level and advance towards comprehension.

Academic research substantiates that decoding and reading comprehension should be integrated in reading lessons. “So, when teaching new content and skills to novices, teachers are more effective when they provide explicit support and guidance accompanied by practice” (Kirschner, 2018: 10). Kirschner (2018) and Pearson and Fielding (1991), argue that using reading strategies in conjunction with explicit instruction is beneficial for improving comprehension abilities in the foundational phase, while implicit instruction may lead to confusion and misunderstanding. The importance of teaching reading strategies is further emphasised as the foundational phase learning trajectory is relatively brief and requires accommodating learners with different learning needs and reading abilities (Mzimane & Mantlana, 2017).

Kirschner (2018) argues that teachers should provide clear, explicit instruction rather than solely relying on learners to figure things out on their own. Effective reading instruction is essential because reading is not a self-learning process (Mzimane & Mantlana, 2017). In the absence of explicit strategies for RCI, learners frequently encounter difficulties in extracting coherent and uninterrupted meaning from the text, as highlighted by Cekiso (2012). Reading requires “active thinking and assimilation of an author’s message with interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of its content – all occurring synchronously and generatively” (Shea & Ceprano, 2017: 64). This suggests that optimal learning practices often occur when an expert, such as a teacher, employs direct instruction (Kirschner, 2018) to guide learners in key strategies. By engaging learners in using strategies during reading lessons, their skills can be honed, facilitating learning through reading and enhancing skill development.

The implementation of RS has several benefits, including promoting reading comprehension progress and changing teachers’ negative attitudes towards it. In a study conducted by Mzimane and Mantlana (2017) involving Foundation Phase teachers, it was discovered that although not all teachers were enthusiastic about teaching reading, the use of reading strategies significantly improved reading. The majority of teachers utilised shared reading, reading aloud, and independent reading practices, actively identified reading difficulties, and implemented appropriate interventions (Mzimane & Mantlana, 2017).

Furthermore, a qualitative case study conducted by Mqgqwashu and Makhathini (2017) found that explicitly teaching reading methodologies produced positive outcomes by altering

teachers' negative perceptions of teaching reading comprehension. By employing specific reading methodologies, primary school teachers can transform their understanding of teaching reading explicitly. This approach aims to enhance scholastic achievement by providing teachers with guidance in reading instruction, emphasising the importance of explicit instruction. Through this guidance, teachers are able to effectively assist learners in developing and improving their reading abilities.

Motilal and Fleisch's (2020) qualitative case study revealed that participants demonstrated improvements in their instructional reading comprehension to some extent. The programme facilitated a shift away from traditional teaching methods, such as memorization and reading in chorus, towards the use of reading strategies, reading aloud, shared reading, and group-guided reading strategies. However, many of the foundation phase teachers were either not trained or had partial training in reading strategies, resulting in a limited understanding of the cognitive and metacognitive components of these strategies. This contributed to challenges in effectively implementing the reading instructional strategies, although there were successful transformations in instructional styles.

The study discovered that reading comprehension instruction exhibited similarities to conventional methodologies, and new teachers had limited opportunities for learning and teaching compared to more experienced teachers. Senior participants tended to rely on traditional teaching methods, effectively managed their instructional time, and efficiently covered their lesson content. While participants attempted to incorporate new instructional practices, they lacked subject knowledge and metacognitive understanding. As a result, their implementation of lessons became automated and perfunctory (Motilal & Fleisch, 2020).

Motilal and Fleisch (2020) study indicate that participants lacked decoding skills and did not effectively incorporate "before, during, and after group-guided reading" activities during comprehension instruction (Motilal & Fleisch, 2020: 11). There was a lack of focus on aspects of reading with understanding, and the story was not adequately addressed. Independent tasks and silent reading practices were not effectively utilised during group-guided reading instruction. Spaul's (2019) study also highlighted that independent meaning construction and interpretation of text were randomly implemented, with a preference for collective explanations of the text rather than independent explanations (Mihai & van Staden, 2019), indicating a reliance on traditional teaching methods. Although policy provides a step-by-step instructional

guide for group-guided reading lessons, teachers were unable to execute reading comprehension instruction efficiently (Motilal & Fleisch, 2020).

Inappropriate classroom practices include implicit RS strategies and the favouring of certain strategies while neglecting other strategies. Mihai and van Staden (2019: 437) found that all teachers favoured pictures as the key strategy, and learners read the pictures by “reading what they think based on what is happening in the pictures.” There was no evidence that learners were taught to read with understanding and with minimal constructive advice about the strategies and skills used. Moreover, teachers’ lesson plans delivered prearranged assessments wherein minimal effort or proof of mastery of a skill was anticipated from learners (Mihai & van Staden, 2019). Zaman and Asghar’s (2019) quantitative study entitled Evaluation of Teaching Reading Strategies found that teachers generally focused more on verbal expressions and the meaning of difficult words. Most of them did not use the recommended reading strategies to develop phonemic awareness or the strategies that help text comprehension. Teachers rarely used pre- and post-reading questions, and learners rarely asked relevant questions. Teachers did not implement summarising the text at the end of a lesson (Zaman & Asghar, 2019). These studies point to teachers’ implicit and limited RS instruction that does not promote the development of essential reading skills.

CAPS (DBE, 2011) has attempted to clarify reading instruction by providing comprehensive procedural measures and explanations for implementing reading strategies. However, the controversy surrounding various reading approaches hinders transparency and the effective delivery of reading instruction (Spaull & Hoadley, 2017). After all, teachers cannot effectively teach what they do not understand. Unfortunately, South African teachers have not acquired the necessary expertise in their pre-service and in-service teacher education to teach reading (Spaull, 2017). Research suggests that the lack of detailed guidance, descriptions, specifications, and instructional know-how leads to teacher avoidance and reliance on self-directed tasks.

From a theoretical standpoint, the CAPS (DBE, 2011) appear to be well-structured; however, when it comes to practical implementation, they raise questions. One significant challenge lies in the absence of specific reading instructional strategies outlined in the CAPS document, which results in teachers having knowledge gaps and a lack of understanding regarding how to effectively teach reading. Stoffelsma (2019: 9) confirms that the “South African curriculum for

Grades 1-3... as provided to teachers through CAPS is limited.” These shortcomings within the CAPS document (DBE, 2011) have played a significant role in perpetuating low literacy rates. Most school learners can decode text meaning they can pronounce sounds and words, but they often struggle with comprehending what they read (MacDonald, 1990). Despite the teaching of reading components, these strategies are not effectively translated into classroom practices that guide learners toward understanding the text and performing well on reading tests (Shea & Ceprano, 2017). Teachers generally lack awareness of the key reading components and how to teach these successfully (Stoffelsma, 2019).

Despite the prioritisation of reading by governments, many programs and reading initiatives in South Africa are ineffective in addressing the literacy crisis (Spaull & Hoadley, 2017). Without early literacy intervention, Nathanson (2018) discovered that learners fail to achieve the educational success established in the early stages. Implementing supportive and reading instruction can lead to positive outcomes for struggling readers, enabling them to progress more quickly. However, reading instruction in South African schools continues to lack explicit and sustained classroom instruction (Klapwijk, 2016). Evidence indicates that reading with comprehension remains a neglected practice in schools, with limited supervision (Taylor et al., 2013) and persists as a negligible practise (Shea & Ceprano, 2017), highlighting teachers’ persistent unwillingness to implement it (Mzimane & Mantlana, 2017; Klapwijk, 2016). Furthermore, deficiencies in subject and curriculum knowledge contribute to barriers in implementing effective reading comprehension instruction.

The strategies for reading comprehension instruction, as identified by EACEA/Eurydice (2011), paraphrasing, detecting key ideas, or summarising; responding to questions; “visualising, making predictions or inferences; creating links within the text and beyond; and using graphic organisers” (Boardman *et al.*, 2018: 178). Additionally, monitoring understanding and engaging in cooperative discussions that utilise text structures for organising and recalling information are important aspects of comprehension instruction (EACEA/Eurydice, 2011; Zimmerman & Hutchins, 2003; NICHD, 2000), among others. Comprehension instructional routines are equally important, as they assist in optimising instructional timing (Bodang & Mmegwa, 2020).

Pre-reading, during-reading, and after-reading strategies play a crucial role in reading engagement, comprehension monitoring, and understanding (Scammacca, Roberts, Vaughn & Stuebing, 2015; Shanahan *et al.*, 2010; Kamil *et al.*, 2008; Deshler *et al.*, 2007; Scammacca *et*

al., 2007; National Reading Panel, 2000). Strategies provide structural coherence, foster critical thinking, and assist in the process of text analysis. To effectively implement these strategies, the teacher starts by selecting appropriate strategies, followed by modelled demonstrations or thinking aloud to explain the importance of each strategy (Duke & Pearson, 2001). This is followed by guided practice, where the teacher and learners use the strategy (Duke & Pearson, 2001), gradually releasing responsibility (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). Explicitly teach and engage in guided reading practices that focus on purposeful strategy implementation. This sets in motion a brief explanation of reading instructional strategies that promote comprehension.

2.1.1. Activating prior knowledge

Refers to the information that readers already possess (Priebe *et al.*, 2012; Coiro, 2011; Taft & Leslie, 1985). There are three types of prior knowledge that impact the reading process: lexical knowledge (words), structural knowledge (information about items and concepts), and script/scenario knowledge (information about various circumstances) (Hwang & Duke, 2020). Zimmermann and Hutchins (2003: 50) claimed that “background knowledge is like Velcro. It helps new information adhere.” By reviewing and connecting old and new information in the text, background knowledge makes learning interesting. Numerous studies (Dabarera *et al.*, 2014; Alemi & Ebadi, 2010; Proctor, Dalton & Grisham, 2007) have suggested that scaffolding, which triggers English learners’ prior knowledge, can improve reading comprehension. Thus, by developing a broader background knowledge, teachers can enhance learners’ learning (Cho *et al.*, 2010).

Triggering learners’ prior knowledge is a pre-reading activity that can provide text-specific knowledge, pre-vocabulary words, or pose prior questions. This practice is considered a form of scaffolding (Graves & Graves, 2003). Readers’ prior knowledge, ascertain key ideas and important facts, competently decode words, inferences, “retell, synthesise, and visualise,” have a range of reading skills (Shea & Ceprano, 2017: 53). If learners’ skills and strategies are underdeveloped and they are unable to function independently, teachers can provide explicit instruction followed by guided and independent classroom practices (Shea & Ceprano, 2017). This instructional approach necessitates guided instruction, modelling, repetition, discussions, and supportive feedback through a variety of activities (Stoffelsma, 2019).

An integral aspect of comprehension is the development of concepts and understanding word meanings. Prior to reading, the teacher can highlight new or challenging words through word

webs or graphic organisers to engage in word review and explore the meanings of the words (Shea & Roberts, 2016). New words in the context of a sentence, provide context clues and explain how they provide information regarding meaning, drawing on learners' prior knowledge of the concept or topic (Shea & Ceprano, 2017). Acquiring new knowledge provides learners with the opportunity to integrate existing knowledge with new information, to understand the text (Xie, 2017).

During reading, any words that appear to have been misunderstood, pre-teach words and discuss them when in the text. Words that were discussed during reading to deepen understanding (Shea & Ceprano, 2017). This can be achieved using “web creation that links new to known words, concepts, and images, builds and expands schema on the topic, as well as connects previously acquired background knowledge” (Shea & Roberts, 2016: 81). A dictionary is a common resource used to examine a word's formation, origin, and meaning (Shea & Ceprano, 2017). Other strategies include using word cards or flashcards, displaying word walls in the classroom, opportunities for word repeated exposure through print (Lems *et al.*, 2017).

Blachowicz and Fisher (2015) supports four research-based guidelines for vocabulary instruction. These four guidelines include “provide rich and varied language experiences: teach individual words, teach word-learning strategies, and foster word consciousness” (Stoffelsma, 2019: 3). Gentry and Ouellette (2019) propose a “listen first” approach to spelling and reading instruction, where learners first listen to a word, then say it, write it, read it, and practise it. The CAPS 2011 English FAL and HL promotes the use of vocabulary strategies, for example, “...using personal dictionaries, stimulating independent reading, playing word games, and teaching how to discover word meaning” (Stoffelsma, 2019: 3).

Stoffelsma (2019) urges teachers to teach learners three kinds of word-learning strategies: “the development of morphemic awareness, contextual analysis, and the use of dictionaries” (Stoffelsma, 2019: 4). Building such a range necessitates “direct instruction, modelling, practice, conversations, and supportive, guided feedback” (Shea & Ceprano, 2017: 64). This is to improve a more durable, rich vocabulary. Teachers need more interactive and in-depth instruction (Stoffelsma, 2019). In indirect learning of vocabulary, the first modelling is done through reading aloud to learners, no matter what grade they are; thus, they can learn words from hearing texts of various kinds read to them (Armbruster *et al.*, 2001).

Scholars have established that prior knowledge is an important predictor of text comprehension, and learners who have background knowledge about a topic are more likely to understand a text (Amadiou *et al.*, 2009; Dempsey & McNamara, 2009; Ozuru *et al.*, 2009; Molinary & Tapiero, 2007). Research has shown that with prior knowledge, learners' reading comprehension may improve (Li *et al.*, 2021). However, learners who grapple with reading hardly connect new content knowledge with their prior knowledge (Narkon & Wells, 2013).

2.1.2. Predictions

“Predictions (is what the reader will expect to happen, what information will be presented) set and reset purposes for reading” (Shea & Ceprano, 2017: 61) gathering information of the text and learners' general knowledge. Calkins (2000) describes the discussant's replies to a question like, “On what grounds do you think that” (Shea & Ceprano, 2017: 61)? Predictions usually link (with particular experiences, prior knowledge, or with additional sources) which confirm, discard, or revise as they proceed to read (Shea & Ceprano, 2017). This is achieved when readers construct links while reading (Rog, 2003), using the title, picture illustrations and identifying the purpose of the text to generate ideas. Readers reinforce links using proof, prior knowledge, even when the text does not agree with the reader's anticipations (Shea & Ceprano, 2017). Through explicit instruction, learners make predictions by combining their prior knowledge and text clues by predicting information about what will happen in the text. Teachers are encouraged to pose questions using thinking prompts and graphic organisers to draw conclusions from the text and to discuss the reasons for making such predictions.

2.1.3. Making inferences

According to Stahl (2014: 388), “inference generation makes a strong, unique contribution to reading comprehension.... Intervening early during non-reading activities will increase the likelihood of creating successful, thoughtful readers.” Kispal (2008: 2) defines “inference as the ability to use two or more pieces of information from a text to arrive at a third, implicit piece of information.” Or, it can be as complex as understanding a subtle implicit message conveyed through the choice of particular vocabulary by the writer and drawing on the reader's background knowledge. Mohr *et al.* (2023) defines inferencing as the process of drawing conclusions from a message that are not explicitly mentioned in the message itself. There are

multiple labels for inference types, coherence and elaboration are two key traits (Stahl, 2014; Swinney & Osterout, 1990).

Within-text inferences, also known as coherence, local, or text-based inferences, link disjointed pieces of a text to form a cohesive whole. Lee (2013) describes inference-making as a process where the reader connects their personal understanding and real-world knowledge. Inference-making is a higher-level thinking skill that is crucial for comprehension (Currie & Cain, 2015). Bos *et al.* (2016) support this notion, as their findings suggest that teaching inference-making develops comprehension skills. Current studies propose that weak reading comprehension frequently takes place as

- (i) inference skills have not been taught to learners, and
- (ii) Learners are taught content they do not have knowledge of (Lee, 2013; Hara & Tappe, 2016).

Inferences and links are reviewed or extended depending on new information that is incorporated with prior knowledge (Shea & Ceprano, 2017). Creating mini-inferences and links should be instructed and reflected upon before expecting readers to produce them independently (Shea & Roberts, 2016; Shea, 2006). Mohr *et al.* (2023) warns teachers not to do all the inferencing work. Instead, they should demonstrate the value of making inferences as an essential component of reading and organise learners with ample practice opportunities. Teachers can increase learners' awareness of inferential reasoning, allow them to practise and model making connections within texts, and provide cues and guidance (Mohr *et al.*, 2023). The read-and-think-aloud is a tool because the teacher can show learners how to identify and connect elements that help to create a solid mental model of a chosen text (Mohr *et al.*, 2023). Teachers should gradually transfer the responsibility of inference creation to the learners by instructing them, asking their own inquiries and explaining their links and presumptions (McGee & Johnson, 2003). Dewitz *et al.* (1987) determined that learners who actively engaged in inferencing outshined those who had a well-thought-out overview or had read given material. Teachers should encourage learners to assess the content of the text based on their own personal experiences, and text information (Pinnell, 2000). Make links and explain ideas using questions during group discussions to explain, contribute to, and elaborate on concepts (Hoyt, 2002). Gap-filling inferences are addressed through pictures, introducing why and how questions, and making use of graphic organisers. These approaches require close reading, thinking skills, analysis, evaluation, and integration of ideas (Shea & Roberts, 2016).

These links are effortlessly distinguished in oral discussion, but puzzling with longer text (Shea & Ceprano, 2017: 12). Mini inferences require linking by understanding word referents that refer back to previously mentioned words, phrases, or figurative language. Text inferences and connections are refined as new knowledge is combined with the reader's prior knowledge and experiences (Shea & Ceprano, 2017). Reading comprehension involves strategically integrating and organising various language skills, along with knowledge and experiences (Elwér, 2014). This process is integrated with the personal schema to create meaning that makes "reading a cognitively complex activity" (Shea & Ceprano, 2017: 48), whereby personal learning experiences are influenced by social and cultural practices. Sharing individual views by forming rational deductions about our own experiences and the text through language communication contributes to individual and social perspectives through convergent and divergent thinking processes. This problem-solving activity is achieved through self-talk and accepting diverse views and input from others.

The overall depth and breadth of a reader's prior knowledge is a factor in comprehension (Shea & Ceprano, 2017); that influences the reader's capacity to generate inferences, make predictions, create logical links, and perform other higher-level thinking skills when engaging with texts (Cromley & Azevedo, 2007; Samuel & Braten, 2005). Hwang and Duke (2020) found that Grade 3 science field knowledge, decoding skills, and early attainment of decoding were associated with Grade three reading comprehension. These findings align with previous studies demonstrating the constructive role of prior topic knowledge to reading comprehension in both First language (Priebe *et al.*, 2012; McNamara & Kintsch, 1996; Fincher-Kiefer, 1992; Garner & Gillingham, 1991; Recht & Leslie, 1988; Lipson, 1983), including L2 (Burgoyne *et al.*, 2013; Rydland *et al.*, 2012; Barry & Lazarte, 1998 and 1995; Droop & Verhoeven, 1998).

2.1.4. Identifying main ideas

Another strategy is to grasp the central theme of the text. "The main idea is the overall point the author is trying to make—what the passage is mostly about." (Shea & Roberts, 2016: 37). A central theme is an idea, message, or lesson that the author is conveying (Shea & Roberts, 2016). The ability to distinguish "the main idea, central theme, and significant details from what is less important increases readers' efficiency with understanding," making these through close reading (Shea & Ceprano, 2017: 60) or skimming and scanning strategies. Close reading is an examination of a short part of the text, with readings over numerous reading instructional

lessons. Discussion is used to deeply appreciate the text, how meaning is by context, and find diverse points of understanding (Brown & Kappes, 2012). This is done by reviewing the text using graphic organisers and pictures, highlighting the title and subheadings, examining the first and last sentences of each paragraph, searching for repetitive ideas, and identifying keywords, using a structural framework consisting of hierarchical organisation of story elements, mapping pieces of story schemas, and creating a story map about the theme.

2.1.5. Summarising

“Summarising is when the reader is asked to restate what the author has said in a concise format” (Cohen & Cowen, 2011: 283). Shea (2012: 77) asserts during summarising that “the reader rephrases the gist of the text with a modicum of inference—or none at all.” Summarising develops into a self-initiated metacognitive for readers to question comprehension (Gunning, 2010). Summarisers can hand-pick main ideas, reduce relevant particulars, and paraphrase information logically (Irwin, 2007). This retains information and uses it when participating in upper-level thinking (Shea & Ceprano, 2017). This process necessitates instruction, demonstrations, and repetition (Cohen & Cowen, 2011). The teacher should instruct learners on how to differentiate key ideas and details and to transfer what they learned from the text (Shea & Ceprano, 2017). Collaborative work between teachers and learners can involve posing summary-related questions (Bodang & Mmegwa, 2020), identifying keywords and phrases through activities such as story sequencing and retelling.

2.1.6. Monitoring and metacognition

Monitoring involves the ability to grasp certain aspects of the text and engage in appropriate actions to re-establish meaning construction. Teaching learners to participate with the text by using strategies, discussing their choices of strategies, and monitoring their comprehension will require significant instructional assistance (Bodang & Mmegwa, 2020). Self-questioning facilitates readers’ self-monitoring understanding of the texts. This is where learners develop awareness and re-establish understanding when meaning is absent and action is required (Shea & Ceprano, 2017).

Metacognition is an essential reading strategy that promotes reading independence. Instruction enables readers to create personal meaning in the text through cues and posing questions. This

includes stop-and-think practises, posing questions, rereading, repeating, and visualising, facilitating better understanding and enabling learners to navigate competently through the text. Teachers are urged to implement metacognitive strategies, as this will allow learners to reflect upon their thinking throughout the reading process (Pretorius *et al.*, 2016). By using critical thinking skills and problem-solving strategies, learners can monitor and self-correct their reading experiences.

2.1.7. Questioning

The questioning strategy produces deeper comprehension processes (Soter *et al.*, 2008; Wells, 2007) that “lead readers deeper into a piece” of text (Zimmerman & Hutchins, 2003: 73). Frequently, learners are prepared to do this independently, and occasionally they require teachers to provide cues (Bodang & Mmegwa, 2020: 191): “Can you tell me...? (e.g., who, what, when, why, or how).” Extended open-ended questions require more thinking and imagination from the learners than open questions, and the former are inferential questions (Rose & Martin, 2012). Thick questions demand the need to interpret, critically think, conclude, or make links, while thin questions demand replies or responses that paraphrase information in the text (Harvey & Goodvis, 2000; McLaughlin & Allen, 2000; Tierney & Readence, 2000). Thick questions offer enhanced understanding, while thin questions eliminate confusion in the text. The Survival Guide to the CAPS for the Foundation Phase (Longman, 2020) states teachers must solicit higher-level thinking questions to foster literacy by incorporating broad instructional pedagogies using thinking and reasoning skills (Schmidt *et al.*, 2021).

The questioning strategy facilitates interactions and discussions as a means to assess learners' thinking and understanding. Prompts posed by the teacher developed into models that readers ultimately arranged themselves as guidelines for participating constructively with the text (Shea & Ceprano, 2017). Shea and Ceprano (2017) added that question prompts take on an interrogatory format and usually commence with interrogative pronouns that guide learners' interest in discovering information and creating meaning. Teachers are encouraged to teach learners how to use prompts and explore prompts for themselves (Shea & Ceprano, 2017). Petition prompts is a directive with words; list, describe, outline, report, or explain (Cole, 2009). Bloom's Revised Taxonomy offers a range of directive words that can stimulate different levels of thinking and serve as a means of assessing learners' understanding through

a variety of retrieval questioning techniques. By developing learners' cognitive abilities and progressing from simple to complex cognitive processes, teachers can facilitate growth in learners' thinking skills and move beyond lower levels of cognitive functioning.

Questioning is recognized as an important strategy for reading comprehension, as emphasised by the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). Different levels of questions can help English Language Learners (ELLs) comprehend new concepts (Farahian & Farshid, 2014; Khansir & Dashti, 2014; Taboada *et al.*, 2012). However, learning may be limited when teachers tightly control the flow of interaction and avoid using elaborative or inferential open questions (Ness, 2016). The significance of the questioning strategy and its poor implementation were identified in Mihai and van Staden's study (2019). In their research, teachers simply asked learners to echo what was read without employing sufficient questioning or strategies to assess learners' understanding of the text. Remedies were suggested to improve classroom reading practices or to introduce alternative strategies when existing ones proved ineffective.

Teacher talk is an essential element of education, but it should be transformed into reciprocal dialogue to foster meaningful classroom communication and an extended learning process (Rose, 2018). Discussion strategies, according to Palincsar and Schutz (2011), become indispensable tools that guide both teachers and learners in understanding the text. Teaching linguistic structures supports vocabulary development, strategy usage, and text-based discussions (Bodang & Mmegwa, 2020). Through collaborative dialogue, learners are led to "analyse and appreciate various aspects of the text and how its meaning is shaped by context... and the discovery of different levels of meaning" (Brown & Kappes, 2012: 2), through the identification of text structures using strategies such as story sequencing. Teachers need to navigate complex grammatical structures, text formats, visuals, vocabulary, and other linguistic complexities of academic texts (Elwér, 2014). Discussions create opportunities for role changes, altering both teacher and learner roles (Boardman *et al.*, 2018) through the provision of teacher and peer feedback.

Teaching text structures and features is beneficial for the advancement of reading comprehension. By explicitly teaching text structures during reading, teachers can provide a supportive scaffold for syntactically complex and conceptually dense texts (Duke *et al.*, 2021). The type of text and purpose of reading affects reading. Neuroimaging studies have shown differences in brain activity depending on the type of the text (Jacoby & Fedorenko, 2020).

Furthermore, a meta-analysis revealed that discussions effectively improved learners' literal and inferential comprehension by teaching them to identify and analyse specific sentence structures (Duke *et al.*, 2021; Mesmer & Rose-McCully, 2018).

Educational research highlights the importance of creating an atmosphere of respect, where learners feel asking questions and expressing their feelings (Stronge, 2002). Increased comprehension is achieved when teachers foster a constructive environment that encourages necessary interactions with learners (Cohen *et al.*, 2013). Firdaus (2015) demonstrates that creating an environment in which learners receive verbal praise and positive feedback enhances their self-esteem, leading to increased motivation and participation in the classroom.

Collectively, these studies outline a critical role in teaching reading instructional strategies in FP. Phonics, specifically spelling, is identified as a key component of reading comprehension. The literature consistently emphasises the importance of addressing reading from a scientific perspective, which includes employing phonics, whole-word approaches, or simultaneous instruction of decoding and comprehension. Different theories and perspectives exist in the literature, presenting various positions on the significance of different reading instructional strategies.

The current literature strongly advocates for explicit instruction of multiple reading skills and instructional strategies. Reading proficiency relies on language skills, the ability to understand and process text, and basic reading and cognitive skills. However, there is often an imbalance in teaching, with excessive focus on decoding skills while neglecting meaningful reading and language skills. This results in teaching at a rudimentary level and deficits in knowledge and skills. The absence of reading strategies, the ability to read with meaning does not result in reading advancement and improved performance.

Moreover, the CAPS document (DBE, 2011) provides detailed procedural measures for reading comprehension but lacks clear guidance on different instructional strategies to selectively integrate and enhance reading practices. This perpetuates traditional and basic reading practices centred on decoding skills while neglecting the teaching of essential language skills. Consequently, learners' opportunities to achieve optimal reading proficiency and understanding are limited. A major limitation identified in the literature is the gap regarding teachers' reading strategies in Grade 3. Further research is needed to explore and understand the specific reading strategies, providing valuable insights for instructional improvement.

2.2. Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching Reading Comprehension

Research indicates that reading comprehension difficulties in the FP are often linked to skill deficits. To address the issue, we need to understand teachers' perceptions of reading comprehension, as teachers' understanding is linked to their reading instructional practices. Teachers' perceptions of teaching reading comprehension are documented in the following studies: Venketsamy and Sibanda, 2021; Steinke and Wildsmith-Cromarty, 2021; Govender and Hugo, 2018; Sibanda, 2017; Cekiso, 2017; Pretorius and Klapwijk, 2016; Klapwijk, 2016; and Klapwijk, 2015. A reading crisis might be the disruption that this sector needs to get teachers to rethink how and what they will teach and question what they need to teach to develop learners' reading proficiency.

Venketsamy and Sibanda (2021: 1) explored the strategies teachers use to develop literacy skills and found that they attempted to employ strategies designated in the curriculum policy document. Teachers were not aware that they used up-to-date strategies, namely a “balanced literacy approach, a “play-based approach,” and an “evidence-based approach.” The study highlighted that teachers had a solid knowledge and understanding of literacy but faced challenges due to the lack of experienced staff support and appropriate teacher development and training. The researchers suggested that literacy texts should be contextualised, and teachers require ongoing training, professional development, and sustained support from “school heads of department, curriculum advisors, and subject specialists.” These studies emphasise the importance of equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and ongoing support to effectively teach reading comprehension.

In the qualitative phenomenological study conducted by Govender and Hugo (2018) in KwaZulu-Natal, participants expressed their recognition of the CAPS document as highly pressured and counterproductive. They identified shortcomings in the phonics guidelines, such as an unclear format and structure. Phonics instructional guidelines were poorly formatted (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016) and failed to demonstrate a progression from easy to complex (Govender & Hugo, 2018).

In Sibanda (2017), the eight schools in the Eastern Cape reported that ESL teachers' (mis)perceptions about Grade 3 revealed that the development of vocabulary did not include incidental and contextualised practises. This undervalued learners' ability to independently learn vocabulary. Reading instruction requires a good understanding of reading requirements and stipulations to be executed successfully. In another study, several teachers were

unacquainted with the various strategies (Venketsamy & Sibanda, 2021). The majority of the teachers were either untrained or did not understand the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAPS) document. Poorly trained participants were unable to execute the curriculum effectively and were overwhelmed by the shortage of proper resources (Maharajh *et al.*, 2016). These findings highlight the importance of building teachers' capacity and providing them with adequate training and resources to effectively implement reading instruction. The gaps in teachers' understanding and practice of the curriculum hinder the successful implementation of policies aimed at improving reading instruction. However, this is unattainable as insufficient teacher capacity destabilised policy efficiency as manifested in teachers' reading instructional practises.

These researchers (Govender & Hugo, 2018; Cekiso, 2017; Sibanda, 2017; Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016; and Klapwijk, 2015) have vigorously challenged the CAPS document (DBE, 2011). Consequently, teachers with inadequate teacher training are generally inclined to base their reading instruction practices on personal experiences. This is apparent in teachers' insufficient knowledge of instructional strategies, exactly how to prepare for reading comprehension, and the manner in which to teach reading instruction with understanding. As a reference point, the curriculum has undervalued productivity as flaws and misconceptions in guidelines curtail opportunities for proper instructional strategies. Good policy design requires additional support systems with the aim of achieving strong execution capability.

2.2.1. Links between teachers' practices and perceptions

Teachers play a crucial role in literacy development (Bracefield & Woodgate, 2020) and ensuring that learners understand what they are reading. The Victoria Department of Education (2020) recognizes this responsibility and emphasises that the teacher's ensure learners develop literacy skills. By ensuring that learners understand what they are reading (Pretorius *et al.*, 2016). Teachers are required to be acquainted with several methods to improve learners' literacy skills and to deliver flexible instructive responses (Persaud, 2019). A fundamental function of teachers is to maintain learner-centred learning by allowing learners to participate in decision-making (McCarthy, 2015), which fashions teaching approaches that transfer teaching from the teacher to the learner (Du Plessis, 2020).

Teachers' training, instructional practices, and their perceptions of reading comprehension practices is evident in the qualitative case study conducted by Cekiso (2017) in rural public schools. The study revealed that teachers felt unprepared to teach reading and struggled to

address the needs of learners with reading difficulties. Some participants expressed concerns about their teaching practices and their ability to facilitate positive teaching and reading outcomes. It was found that teachers focused on oral reading skills, neglecting the teaching of meaning-making practices. These findings highlight the need for teacher training and development.

In another study, Govender and Hugo (2018) and Klapwijk (2015) provide valuable insights into the relationship between teachers' perceptions and their reading instruction practices. The findings suggest that teachers' views play a role in shaping their approach to reading comprehension instruction (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). Time constraints, the complexity of comprehension concepts, and the need for proper teacher education were identified as factors that influenced teachers' anxieties about reading comprehension instruction. These anxieties can impact teachers' confidence and ability to effectively teach reading comprehension.

The study by Cekiso (2017) revealed that some teachers questioned whether their classroom practices would lead to positive reading outcomes, indicating a need for further professional development and support. However, the study also highlighted that certain teachers demonstrated a thorough understanding of reading instructional strategies, which they acquired through self-education. This suggests that teachers who actively seek opportunities for professional growth and self-education are more likely to have a deeper understanding of effective reading instruction. Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) emphasise the close link between teachers' instructional practices and their perceptions. Teachers' beliefs and attitudes about reading comprehension influence their instructional decisions and strategies. Therefore, addressing teachers' perceptions and providing ongoing professional development can have a positive impact on their reading instruction practices.

Teachers' perception and interpretation of reading instruction have a great effect on their classroom practices (Kuzborska, 2011). This belief resonates with Richards and Rodgers (2001), that teachers' perceptions influence their aims, methods, materials, classroom interaction, roles, learners, and the schools they work in (Cekiso, 2017).

Teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and interpretations shape their instructional decisions and strategies, ultimately influencing the learning experiences of their learners. The above authors reiterated that teachers' perceptions are perceived as an overriding factor in the manner in which teachers deliver reading instruction, as understanding and instruction are closely connected. Teachers' perceptions must be the prime focus in an attempt to eliminate and initiate

a mitigation plan to counter the unintended consequences of teachers' reading instructional dilemmas.

Furthermore, findings reveal teachers' perceptions of reading, and their reading habits, may impact learners' literacy growth (Klapwijk, 2016). A survey-based study of 30 primary schools indicated that successful literacy instruction is linked to teachers' reading habits (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). Simply put, as good readers, teachers must be knowledgeable with reading strategies to instruct learners explicitly and with a purpose (Klapwijk, 2016: 313). The Zenex Foundation claimed that changing teachers' practices "is trying to change the ingrained behaviours of teachers with whom one has limited contact..." (Taylor, 2016: 2). From this perspective, establishing regular contact and providing support are vital in addressing teachers' insecurities regarding their own reading competency and are necessary steps for initiating the cycle of improvement and implementing change.

2.2.2. *Misconceptions of reading comprehension*

There is a common misconception among teachers that if learners can read and identify a word, they can understand the text. As a result, there is often insufficient emphasis on reading comprehension (Pretorius & Mampuru, 2007; Strauss, 1995). The general assumption perpetuates over time that teachers consider a fluent reader to have sufficient ability to function as a skilled reader (Hurst, Wallace, & Nixon, 2013). Pretorius *et al.* (2016) concur that numerous teachers consider the ability to read out loud without any errors as reading instruction. As the common view is that the natural progression of fluency is reading automatically with understanding, Shea and Ceprano (2017: 64) substantiate that "it has been assumed that once children could say the words, they would understand what was read," and this is the underlying principle that teachers gave minimal attention to creating meaning in the text. However, an instructional approach focused solely on mechanical reading, characterised by a lack of comprehension, is ineffective. Considering that learners are unable to read in the early grades they are unlikely to redress deficits if they have not achieved acceptable reading levels (Rasinski, 2017).

In response to the complexity of reading instruction, reading studies have revealed the importance of teaching the components of reading (Cekiso, 2017) since learners may benefit from successful instruction of reading strategies (Cekiso, 2012; Lai, Tung, & Luo, 2008; Scruggs, 2008; Song, 1998). Pressley (2001) supports Klapwijk (2012) claim that teaching

learners how to apply a range of reading strategies enhances their understanding of the text. Consequently, the process of meaning-making and the implementation of comprehension skills are continuously neglected in mainstream South African schools. As teachers' current pedagogical practises are influenced by a mixture of restraining reading, personal experiences, and old-fashioned and insufficient FP development of teacher-training programmes (Verbeek, 2010), South African teachers need to enhance their reading skills to contribute effectively to reading comprehension advancement (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). The ability to read proficiently and with understanding hinges upon the instruction of skill development through explicit teaching skills and the detection of skill gaps. Taylor (2016: 18) recognises 'inefficient pedagogies' as a major weakness in South African schools. In short, the investigation shows that the present-day South African pre-service teacher-training programme inadequately trains teachers to efficiently teach reading to foundational and intermediate learners (Kotze *et al.*, 2019). Individualised partnerships tailor-made to the specific requirements of the teachers are required (Reid *et al.*, 2020), together with coaching to enable teachers to achieve critical awareness and reflectiveness in their own teaching techniques (Walsh *et al.*, 2020), which is essential for teacher effectiveness.

2.2.3. Teaching effectiveness and reading comprehension achievement

According to Altinok (2013: 2) teacher knowledge in Namibia and South has "a large and significant impact" on learners' accomplishment, of which difficulties reside in the lack of reading comprehension, content knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge (Cekiso, 2017; Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016; Klapwijk, 2015). Too many South African (FP) teachers are clueless as to how to instruct reading. Presently, reading practices are impromptu and disorderly (Cekiso, 2017). Most teachers are unprepared and have not attained adequate awareness to tackle reading difficulties (Moats *et al.*, 2010). Klapwijk (2016) suggests that teachers, despite being skilled readers themselves, unconsciously employ reading strategies without being aware of them and consequently fail to intentionally use them.

Venketsamy and Sibanda (2021) study found that the majority of participants pointed out that they are familiar with the strategies described in the CAPS document; these include "reading aloud, paired reading, shared reading, listening comprehension, thinking and reasoning, vocabulary development, phonics, creative writing, and grammar" (Venketsamy & Sibanda, 2021: 261). Participants' actions are not in contrast to CAPS (DBE, 2011) because the CAPS

document is not candid in stipulating reading strategies except for using a questioning strategy. T2 mentioned making connections by visualising, while the T4 strategy links with Salehi *et al.* (2013)'s approach, which encourages making predictions during reading and comprehending the text. In addition, the implementation of the 5W+H technique is a problem-based learning strategy (Venketsamy & Sibanda, 2021).

Certain teachers were aware of literacy skills, “such as connecting with the text and real-life, visualising, inferring, questioning, and determining the importance and synthesising of written text” (Venketsamy & Sibanda, 2021: 262). Even though there is proof that teachers have a level of understanding in the methods employed in literacy instruction, participants T2, T4, and T6 specified that as Foundation Phase teachers they require training and professional development (Venketsamy & Sibanda, 2021). Teachers have to resort to learning from teaching staff, reading, and the internet; these methods are beneficial. “But proper training by the subject advisors will do us a lot of good” (Venketsamy & Sibanda, 2021: 262). This corresponds with Pretorius *et al.* (2015)'s claims that there is a growing consensus that specialist knowledge is essential for literacy instruction and that further focus should be on developing capacities and teacher development courses aligned with CAPS (Maharajh *et al.*, 2016). These teachers not only identified and acknowledged their limitations but also demonstrated their willingness to learn and grow by actively participating in training programmes to improve and enhance their skills.

In another study, teachers reported that the teacher-training programme did not fully prepare them for reading instruction and learners' reading difficulties (Cekiso, 2017). Teachers' inadequacies leave learners deprived of the basic skills needed to triumph in school (Cekiso, 2017). Teaching training courses have not adequately trained teachers to teach reading in FP; therefore, they do not understand what comprehension entails (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) find that participants generally experience problems articulating their literacy pedagogy in a theoretical structure.

Studies in South Africa demonstrate that the pre-service teacher-training is not training teachers to efficiently instruct reading in the early grades. The inadequate preparation contributes to the teaching of old-fashioned, old-style teaching strategies. Therefore, extra in-service teacher training is imperative. Steinke and Wildsmith-Cromarty (2021) give an account of whether extra training in reading instruction adequately allows teachers to guide learners from the decoding process to comprehension through grades 3 and 4. Given the insufficient teacher

training in early teacher training institutions, extra teacher training is essential but not enough to transform ingrained, deep-rooted teaching methods. The results indicate that in-service reading instruction teacher training is useful but insufficient to guide learners from the decoding process to comprehension, hence urging mentoring by way of coaching along with training (Steinke & Wildsmith-Cromarty, 2021). Pretorius *et al.* (2016) support this by affirming that additional in-service training has not successfully changed outdated instructional styles of teachers.

2.2.4 Confusion elicited by professional incompetence

In Klapwijk (2016)'s study, certain participants used the prior knowledge (APK) strategy. However, "they fail to understand that the goal of the strategy is to activate learners' current knowledge to allow for more effective learning" (Klapwijk, 2016: 305). One participant demonstrated evidence of posing (after-reading) questions; certain teachers either posed questions about the text or learners answered questions. Lesson plans consisted of distributing the text and reading it and either "(1) answering worksheet questions and/or (2) a text dramatisation" (Klapwijk, 2016: 311). Almost none of the participants articulated the importance of engaging genuinely with text, exhibiting a basic level of understanding of the text devoid of meaning by performing a quick reading of the text and concentrating on the more surface aspects of the text like "the title, main characters, and outcome as drivers for their preparation" (Klapwijk, 2016: 311). Teachers' lack of knowledge and understanding about reading contributes to ineffective teaching and learning.

In general, the text did not serve as a tool for generating and ascertaining meaning; instead, it functioned primarily as an instrument for distribution. Lessons were predominately teacher-centred, with limited learner interaction apart from responding to questions. Participants mentioned using reading strategies while reading; however, their strategy usage exhibited an unconscious process and they were unable to execute the strategy in their lesson planning or teaching practices. Not implementing clear reading strategies implies that they unknowingly did not apply reading instructional strategies. Other participants were able to implement strategies due to their good readers' abilities; however, they were uninformed about why they were doing this or just how to explain them (Klapwijk, 2016) to get back to the reading basics.

The lack of suitable literacy instruction in teacher training, the effectiveness of reading strategies, and the impact of teachers' reading practices in their classrooms (Klapwijk, 2016)

were brought into focus. Teachers' perceptions and misconceptions of reading are portrayed in their limited usage and understanding of reading instructional strategies. Teachers' perception has proven to play a vital role in the implementation of RCI; therefore, there is a need for further investigation. Overall, there seems to be some evidence to indicate that this stems from inadequate content and pedagogical knowledge due to deficits in teacher training courses, a lack of understanding of the curriculum, and other constraints. Consequently, certain schools adopt a repetitive oral transmission approach to teaching and learning.

Understanding how teachers think is essential to progress, as their perceptions about reading directly affect their classroom instruction. This is evident in teachers' good and bad reading instructional performances, mindsets, and thoughts regarding their abilities. Unless the department gives teachers due consideration, teachers' misunderstood classroom decisions and ineffective teaching practices may perpetuate due to training setbacks. This emphasises the importance of resetting and supporting a mindset that fosters positive input and creating opportunities for training to improve teachers' present teaching skills.

2.3. Reading Comprehension Support Offered to Teachers

Although studies have been carried out on teachers' support, the extent to which teachers receive support is not fully established. More recent studies (Marais & Wessels, 2020; McKay, 2019; Tebid, 2019; Govender, 2018; Bertram & Christiansen, 2018; Fourie *et al.*, 2018; Mukeredzi *et al.*, 2018; Nel, 2018; Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018; Barends & Nel, 2017; Petersen, 2017; Spaul & Hoadley, 2017; Spaul *et al.*, 2016; van der Berg *et al.*, 2016; and Deacon, 2016) have focused on teacher support with particular attention given to teacher training and alternative support structures.

Here, reading comprehension teacher support refers to teacher training, mentoring, coaching, professional development, policy support, school-based support teams (SBST), district-based support teams (DBST), and school leadership support. Barends and Nel (2017) cross-sectional survey ascertained how certain institutions perceived the function of work-integrated learning (WIL) in supporting FP teachers and pre-service teachers' readiness for reading instruction. Participants included lecturers, learners, and the respective heads of department (HOD). The study revealed that there is a pressing need to draw attention to WIL as it is associated with reading literacy, underscoring the gap between knowledge and quality teaching experiences (Petersen, 2017). Barends and Nel (2017) assert that pre-service teacher training courses should

incorporate formal education (theoretical framework) and workplace training (practical application) to show how participants apply the theoretical knowledge; this emphasises the importance of practical application and the integration of partnerships.

Deacon (2016) reviewed FP teacher training courses at an institution of higher education in South Africa. Findings reveal that there seem to be wide discrepancies among FP teacher training courses. Referring to admission prerequisites, core curriculum, instruction, learning, and assessment practices at the institution of higher education, the extent to which trainee teachers are equipped, managed, coached, and commonly assisted during teaching practice. Consequently, a substantial number of FP teachers seem to have an inadequate grasp of theory and hands-on abilities and lack reading skills in both English and indigenous languages (2016). Spaul et al. (2016) and Deacon (2016) further argue that these deficits in teacher training courses translate into weak teacher performances.

Given South Africa's reading crisis and the absence of research-based strategies, teachers join the queue of despair. Klapwijk (2016) supports Sailors (2008: 647) claims that teacher-training institutions expect learner teachers to naturally develop into competent reading teachers, even though they enter schools "with the understanding of how to teach comprehension [...] based on how they were taught to read." Consequently, teachers teach unsatisfactorily what is unknown to them (Van der Berg et al., 2016). Teachers do not fully understand how to teach reading, and as Aristotle famously said, "Those who know, do. Those that understand, teach." Many teachers struggle to articulate their literacy pedagogy within a theoretical frame due to insufficient knowledge of early literacy development (Gains, 2010).

These claims are supported by South African school leaders and managers observed that novice teachers' battle to cope (Naidoo & Petersen, 2015). They tend to be unrealistic and ill-equipped about their expectations and anticipated experiences (Petersen, 2017). Hence, first-year teacher support structures and interventions are pivotal in accommodating new teachers as they make the transition from higher education institutes to a school working environment. In the absence of this type of support, limited monitoring of teachers at risk of leaving the profession perpetuates reading difficulties and unnecessary challenges. Teachers' shortcomings include new teachers and current teaching staff (Petersen, 2017), exhibiting the impact of existing teacher training and development programmes and the need for concrete instructional guides.

Furthermore, Mukeredzi et al. (2018)'s study gives insight into the dynamics of teachers' development learning programmes in Foundation Phase teacher training courses. This

programme was designed to “enable students to develop disciplinary, pedagogical, practical, and situational learning reflexive competencies” (University of KwaZulu-Natal ACT FP Programme Template, 2012a: 2) and was targeted at incompetently trained FP teachers or FP teachers who were trained to instruct other grades. The study established that teachers experienced difficulties in changing their classroom practices, which were significantly influenced by their motivational knowledge base and the contextual circumstances of their school (Mukeredzi *et al.*, 2018). This emphasises the importance of providing sustained support at a national, district, and school level to improve consequences. Ineffective training is manifested in teachers’ lack of flexible and adaptable skills. While positive behavioural changes are possible, they require time-consuming and action-oriented processes. This highlights the need for continuous professional development that encourages learning, unlearning, and a relearning process through knowledge-sharing engagement. A crucial starting point is to understand teachers’ thinking through effective communication and feedback and provide sustained and ongoing training to harness motivation and learning.

2.3.1. Reading comprehension constraints

Jansen (2007: 7) argued that the root of our educational crisis lies not in older but in the foundation years, “where we fail to provide children with the basics of scientific literacy, which they can build in later years.” This calls attention to the binding constraints experienced in South African schools, the way “learning to read in the Foundation Phase,” which hampers learning (Van der Berg *et al.*, 2016: 5).

The following constraints are binding:

- (i) weak institutionalised functionality,
- (ii) unwarranted union influence,
- (iii) ineffective teacher content information and pedagogic skill,
- (iv) loss of learning time, and
- (v) Inadequate chances to learn.

Given the current situation, there is a clear need to prioritise primary school teachers’ training to inform them exactly how to teach reading (Spaull *et al.*, 2016; Deacon, 2016), as unsatisfactory instruction is the primary cause of reading problems. Research based on FP

literacy and numeracy found that FP teachers are not knowledgeable about exactly how learners come to know how to read (Spaull *et al.*, 2016). In the absence of appropriate training and research-based reading methods, teachers struggle to obtain positive learning outcomes due to inadequate content and pedagogical skill deficits found primarily in impoverished schools (Van der Berg *et al.*, 2016). They are unable to teach reading because they find it too perplexing, irrespective of their reading approaches, skills, and strategies. The current situation resonates with the dictum of Einstein, “Any fool can know. The point is to understand.” Teachers’ level of knowledge and understanding of reading instruction is not in sync, therefore it does not convey a good understanding of a text. The gravity of the situation is pinpointed by McKinsey (2007)’s statement: “The value of schools cannot surpass the value of their teachers” (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). In the face of a reading crisis, teacher training and support are viewed as beacons shaping the future of learners. This raises the importance of training teachers with instructional compensatory strategies to target areas of difficulty. Reading advancement requires steering clear of locked modes of thinking and reading instruction that is ineffective and not conducive to literacy. In an attempt to replace rote-learning methods with meaningful learning practices (Deacon, 2016), the primary aim is to concentrate on improving reading skills in primary school (Van der Berg *et al.*, 2016: 46). Training and development of reading skills can enhance both teachers’ and learners’ ability to gain a better understanding of texts.

2.3.2. Policy implementation deficits

The CAPS document outlines the vision for learners to develop into successful readers who can do the following tasks (Department of Basic Education, 2016): collect, scrutinise, organise, and critically assess information. Additionally, read for both knowledge and enjoyment.

Select and comprehend information for specific purposes. Efficiently apply scientific and technological principles, analysing and resolving problems effectively (Department of Basic Education, 2012). Supplementary policies include the Grades 1-3 National Reading Programme (Department of Basic Education, 2013), regional workplace policies, subject policies, and internal school policies. There are at least five official documents addressing language instruction, including reading (Marais & Wessels, 2020). Therefore, school reading policies are positioned to help teachers in delivering integrated instruction (Wessels, 2011).

However, teachers perceive reading instruction methods and practices as poorly explained and specified in the policy. Although South Africa’s policy aimed at providing conformity with rules and guidelines that specified what to teach and brought about curriculum implementation.

The general perception is that the policy's lack of rule clarification and strategic guidance does not support and guide teachers in reading instructional practices, strategies, methodologies, and decisions, which breeds discontent and brings about poor implementation. Past accumulated curriculum implementation progress shows that the lack of clarity in curriculum guidelines has proven unproductive in enhancing learning capacity (Marais & Wessels, 2020).

Marais and Wessels (2020) found that teachers lacked the skills and knowledge required to execute reading policies and other supporting documentation. This is affirmed by the Minister of Education, Pandor (2008), who emphasised that teachers should receive support in implementing various reading policies, starting with acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary for effective reading instruction. As teachers are incapable of interpreting and implementing diverse reading policies to facilitate learners with the provision of clear guidance (Department of Basic Education, 2008).

Nehal (2013) also added that teachers have identified the diverse methods and pedagogies specified in the policy guidelines but do not know how to apply them when teaching. Even though teachers are aware of what to teach and have good-intentioned reading instruction performances, they do not always result in positive outcomes as they do not know how to achieve this, making them less productive (Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018). This highlights the need for greater support and guidance in translating policy guidelines into effective instructional practices.

Marais and Wessels (2020) qualitative study investigated the understanding and application of policies relating to reading instruction in the Foundation Phase, which illustrated that curriculum deficiencies have not been addressed. The policy document insufficiently guides teachers on how to teach reading together with reading instructional activities. As the CAPS document lacks clear and methodical guidelines in what manner to perform reading instruction and the application of various reading strategies (Marais & Wessels, 2020). Although the policy is well-defined around 'what' to teach, it lacks clarity and an instructional guiding principle on 'how' to conduct reading instruction (Marais & Wessels, 2020: 7).

Interestingly, teachers are encouraged to apply policies in any way they wish (Ndou, 2015). By implication, teachers have the autonomy to apply policies and procedures according to personal preferences and circumstances suggestive of flexibility. However, the implementation capacity is compromised by teachers' limited knowledge, misunderstood content (subject), and conceptual lesson planning errors (Wits Education Policy Unit, 2005). Regardless of the best

intentions, the CAPS-stipulated outcomes have not been realised (Wildsmith-Cromarty, 2012). As a result, professional competencies and inconsistencies in policy-strategic planning remain problematic.

Participants struggled to fully grasp the document specifications and make limited use of the recommendations as they are unfamiliar with how to make sense of them. CAPS's (DBE, 2011) insufficient techniques and strategies guidelines for reading instruction, along with the absence of a methodology and how to practise this during reading instruction, cause difficulties for teachers to transform planning into practice (Marais & Wessels, 2020). The teacher argued that the CAPS document displayed shortcomings in clarity regarding 'how' to understand and implement the policy, along with methodological deficits (Marais & Wessels, 2020). Similarly, Nehal (2013) found that teachers are aware of the various methods and instructions stated in policy guidelines, but do not know how to comprehend and implement them in their instruction, which is presently manifested in their lecturing methods.

Yet, teachers are supposed to understand documented information on their own in the absence of clear guidance on how to apply it (Marais & Wessels, 2020). This compromises the quality of reading instruction and contributes to barriers in curriculum implementation. Ekpien and Francis (2015) study confirm that many of the issues and predicaments in education are problems related to the policy itself and the understanding and application thereof. A crucial objective of the curriculum is to provide more detailed instruction to implement and comprehend the policy (Dunn, 2010), as the effective application of policies is contingent on a thorough grasp of the policy itself (Dorner, 2012; Dunn, 2010).

It is reported as problematic for learners to comprehend the content matter when teachers fail to understand policy specifications and the application thereof (Haris & Ghazalie, 2016). Achieving success in education requires a structured support system that emphasises the importance of curriculum details and their effective application to ensure meaningful learning and understanding of lessons. This emphasises the necessity for continuous professional development and assistance to narrow the divide between guidelines and practical implementation.

2.3.3. Inadequate School-Based Support Team and District-Based Support Team

Emphasis is placed on support mechanisms that guide teachers on how to teach reading and advanced teaching practices in the face of training deficits. However, due to purposeful structural guidelines in Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement and inconsistencies in support mechanisms from SBST (School-Based Support Team) or DBST (District-Based Support Team), reading continues to present challenges. South Africa's poor educational results stem from one of two classifications:

- (i) a deficiency of accountability, and
- (ii) An absence of competency or support (Van der Berg *et al.*, 2016).

Considerable research has investigated teacher support and professional development (Pieterse, 2010; Mahlo, 2011; Gallant, 2012; Weeks & Erradu, 2013; Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2015; Pantic & Florian, 2015), however these do not address on how FP teachers should be supported (Tebid, 2019). In spite the initiatives taken by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and provincial education departments to implement various support strategies for teachers and school leaders, the intended results have not been fully realised (Van der Berg *et al.*, 2016)

The SBST are organised support services within the school aimed at identifying and addressing learner, teacher, and institutional needs (Tebid, 2019). The primary focus must be directed on teacher development and support through training (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Pantic and Florian (2015) corroborate that schools should direct their attention to teachers as agents of transformation. However, the SBST has concentrated mainly on the technical aspects of inclusion, placing significantly less emphasis on teaching methodology (Makoelle, 2014). The SBST lacks the necessary information to facilitate FP teachers with practical methodologies to positively enable them (Tebid, 2019). To illustrate, a deputy principal stated: "However, the question arises as to whether the SBST or learning support teachers translate this support to the classroom teachers who are the core drivers of the policy" (Tebid, 2019: 118).

According to Walton *et al.* (2014), if the SBST is unable to take care of learners and teachers, it is recommended that the DBST step in to provide the additional support needed, along with monitoring its performance (Tebid, 2019). The DBST is accountable for delivering a coordinated professional support provision that makes use of proficiencies in tertiary education and local societies (Tebid, 2019). They are tasked with creating learner support programmes for learners, providing training for teachers to promote shared collaborative support, and ultimately liaising with the DBST (Nel *et al.*, 2016).

Even though participants receive some training, they assert that the training is inadequate given the daily realities (Tebid, 2019). Despite the fact that the SBSTs are actively working to build teacher capacity, there does not appear to be any clear positive effect on teachers. Concerns include the promotion and adjustments in the manner in which assistance is conducted; teacher training on particular proficiencies; standardising the pull-out system; well-organised SBST meetings and workshops; the allocation of time for teachers and SBST to discuss teaching practices; and inclusive education on teachers rather than SBST coordinators and learning support teachers (Tebid, 2019).

Monitoring of teachers' educational responsibilities and a shortage of support from experienced teachers (Petersen, 2017) are issues raised and reflective of weak school-based support teams. Similarly, inadequately prepared school teachers emerged as one of the challenges in support. In addition to a shortage of HODs, there is a shortage of filling many post-Level 1 teaching positions in subject areas where they possess little or insufficient knowledge (Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018). This conclusion is consistent with the findings of research conducted by Bipath and Nkabinde (2015) and Blandford (2000), illustrating that HODs in the Foundation Phase face the dilemma of managing the demanding tasks of administration and teaching tasks (Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018).

Training and support are crucial in facilitating sustained and effective teaching practices (Motilal & Fleisch, 2020). Shared knowledge and opportunities for teachers to clarify their strategies, discuss them with coaches, and engage with other teachers can lead to improved awareness and implementation of reading strategies (Motilal & Fleisch, 2020). A recent study also found that teachers received inadequate developmental support with little or no option for classroom assistance, teaching advice, or supervision to help them in the application of the amended curriculum requirements (Govender, 2018). The low levels of teaching and learning may arise from a deficiency in know-how and monitoring systems (Spaull *et al.*, 2016).

The DBST does not function effectively and has not implemented tasks sufficiently because of the accessibility of human resources and transportation for district officials to visit schools (Makhalemele, 2011). In public schools, teacher support is characterised by inadequate and impromptu weekend workshops or study meetings (Van der Berg *et al.*, 2016). District officials do not check the curriculum coverage, and curriculum advisers do not offer enough support to their teachers (Van der Berg, 2016). Primary schools experience drawbacks in district-level supervision and support structures (Spaull *et al.*, 2016). There is comparatively less district

support for primary schools (particularly Grades 1-3) compared to high schools (Wills, 2016b). Van der Berg (2016) is of a similar opinion, which underscores district support deficits and raises the issue of school instructional leaders.

The study by Nkambule and Amsterdam (2018) highlights the insufficiency of teacher support in a South African school district. Nkambule and Amsterdam (2018)'s study investigated primary school support in a South African school district. Majority of participants stated that they perceived the district officials' school visits as advice, assistance, and mentorship for teachers typically to ensure compliance with guidelines, and rarely concentrated on aspects of support. Participants maintained that agents and officials from the district and national offices focused on the output rather than the input, overlooking the essential purpose of supporting teachers (Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018).

These results are consistent with the views by De Clercq and Shalem (2014), Mavuso (2013), and Van der Berg *et al.* (2011). Experts assert that visits by subject advisors and district officials are almost totally observing functions and are frequently unsuccessful in delivering organised support in the form of mentoring, teaching assistance, and coaching teachers at the classroom level (Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018). The research proposes that teacher support in South Africa largely occurs through training workshops prepared by subject advisors. Although participants expressed concern about scheduled workshops that have occurred in the course of the school day, reducing instructional time and depriving learners, along with the lack of consistency in the district officials' support delivered, along with the lack of monitoring after visiting classrooms and making observations (Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018). These findings underscore the need for more effective and comprehensive teacher support systems that go beyond mere compliance monitoring.

Since the establishment of FFLC, there has been a significant lack of continuous support or career development programmes for individuals (Govender, 2018). According to the Foundations for Learning (FFL) Campaign (Department of Education (DoE), 2008: 22) education district officials are required to visit all schools within the region at least once per term, while schools in need of stronger support for monitoring, guidance, assistance in performance improvement, and collaborative efforts toward achieving agreed-upon targets should receive more frequent visits to work towards achieving the agreed targets.

The Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2011: 9) has set a goal to improve the frequency and quality of monitoring and support services provided by district offices to schools, as

outlined in Goal Number 27 in the Action Plan to 2014. The National Policy on the Organisation, Roles, and Responsibilities of Education Districts (as recommended by National Education Evaluation & Development Unit (2013: 15) suggests that school districts and circuit offices should conduct school visitations to observe classroom teaching, offer advice, hold group meetings, and improve appropriate feedback correspondence. They should also create an empowering environment, arrange for the professional development for managers, teaching and administrative staff, and ensure that schools are held accountable for their performances. From a legislative and policy perspective, it seems that it has presented a structure and expressed intention (Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018). The fundamental aspects of providing and receiving support seem elusive within legislation and policy, as suggested by the research conducted (De Clercq, 2007; Jansen, 1998; Van der Berg *et al.*, 2016).

To ensure effective implementation of reading instruction and policy, teachers need a supportive mechanism that guides them with counter-intuitive strategies. However, most literature on South African education, including works by De Clercq (2007), Jansen (1998), Mahlo (2011), Mashua *et al.* (2008), Narsee (2006), Ramolefe (2004), Sivhabu (2002), and Smith (2011), indicates that teachers do not receive comprehensive, suitable, and adequate support in schools. Van der Berg *et al.* (2016: 26) echoed this concern by stating that “teacher support for teachers is far from adequate in most public education systems.

In the Annual Performance Plan 2014-2015 (DBE, Republic of South Africa, 2014: 22), the DBE revealed that school district officials' school visits do not prioritise support (Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018). Moreover, Kallaway (2007) argued that ignoring teachers' expertise in developing literacy policies leads to unsatisfactory outcomes.

This shows that inflexible packages established on the notion that ‘one size fits all’ do not provide successful literacy instruction (Hall & Harding, 2003). It is impractical to espouse a single approach for literacy instruction in a diversified school context (Lawrence, 2011). Allocating time to engage with teachers to engage with teachers would facilitate a better understanding of teachers' perspectives by sharing their accumulated knowledge, as they are in the most influential position in the classroom to teach reading. By building positive relationships, policymakers may improve work productivity by gaining insight into teachers' professional working environments.

The DBE (2011) considers the GPLMS coaches as literacy specialists who can offer coaching and support to teachers to facilitate the successful implementation of literacy in the classroom.

However, the participants did not view the GPLMS literacy coaches as specialists who were able to support them. The majority of the participants found the reading literacy interventions unsuitable and the workshops uninteresting (Fourie *et al.*, 2018).

The use of schoolbooks as an educational strategy presented by the Department of Education offered teachers pedagogic and content resource assistance to compensate for their difficulties (McKay, 2019). However, some participants felt that the workbooks issued by the department were too difficult and inappropriate for the learners' real levels of development; hence, they perceived them as too perplexing (Govender & Hugo, 2018). While the majority of the participants agreed that the graded readers did not target suitable learner ability levels (Fourie *et al.*, 2018).

2.3.4. Incompetent school leadership: Implications for instructions

Recent studies have highlighted the significance of school instructional leaders as an approach to enhancing learner performance (Kirtman & Fullan, 2015; Sergiovanni, 2015; Sun & Leithwood, 2015; Whitworth & Chiu, 2015; Neumerski, 2013). Moorosi and Bush (2011) and Mbhalati and Jita (2018) supported this notion of how crucial it is for school leaders to have “literacy knowledge, skills, and capacity to monitor, guide, and support literacy teachers” (Mbhalati & Jita, 2018: 105). The qualitative study by Mbhalati and Jita (2018) proved that instructional leaders were incompetent in a chain of capacities. Given the professional capacity and position of school leaders, they play a pivotal role in mobilising supervisory and monitoring support systems.

However, school leaders were unable to provide literacy teachers with the necessary support due to literacy inadequacies, proficiencies, and abilities. The school-based leadership has not fulfilled its responsibilities to support and guide teachers, leading to incompetence in areas such as modelling instruction, classroom observations, and providing feedback. The leadership has also failed to pilot internal training workshops, observe lesson plans, pay attention to difficulties faced by teachers in classrooms, and offer solutions. This lack of support and guidance weakens organisational productivity and job satisfaction, as reported by Spaul and Hoadley (2017).

Lack of competent leadership has implications and negative consequences for teachers as they are unable to spearhead classroom literacy instruction (Mbhalati & Jita, 2018). This situation

is typical of the expression the blind leading the blind. Schools seem saturated with incompetent school leadership deprived of adequate training and proficiency, wherein quantity is given precedence over quality. In the absence of in-house support, the capacity to improve teacher instructional practices is very slim, as aspects of commitment and competency remain unsteady. However, school leaders who strive to make a difference and lead by example can create a self-motivating working environment.

The purpose of this investigation is to analyse reading strategies for improving reading comprehension. The literature reviewed focused on Grade 3 reading instructional strategies is relatively small in South Africa. However, there has been a newly discovered interest. The aforementioned literature underscores that reading instructional strategies are essential but not sufficient to develop reading proficiency in South African primary classrooms. It provided important insights into how reading instructional strategies are implemented and the benefits of teaching reading comprehension explicitly rather than adopting an implicit approach, which reveals patterns of inadequacy. Effective instruction is important as it sets the stage for learning and developing specific reading skills and strategies in the Foundation Phase. Reading with comprehension is essential, serving as a critical link between teachers' effectiveness and learners' reading outcomes. From an evaluative standpoint, studies suggest that teachers are not equipped to teach reading comprehension effectively. Reading classroom practises are characterised by a dearth of vital reading skills, strategies, and understanding. The lack of specific skills, guidelines, and support indicates that teachers may not be fostering learners' basic reading skills efficiently.

Presently, teachers who do teach RCIS reading satisfactorily are not aware of this. RC is characterised by a widespread focus on mechanical skills rather than the meaning-making process, and testing instead of teaching reading is indicative of a product approach. Teachers need to reboot the way they think about reading comprehension since their persistence limits the expected progression of reading development. This is evident in restrictive and repetitive practices that fail to incorporate both decoding and comprehension skills in the classroom, influenced by various factors.

In light of current trends, teachers reading comprehension strategies function as a valuable tool by bridging the gap in reading comprehension in the teaching and learning process. Indeed, reading instructional strategies have had a positive influence on the development and comprehension of reading comprehension. Nevertheless, their non-application has far-reaching

effects on the way learners practise and achieve reading proficiency. In addition, there appears to be an inconsistency between teachers' perceptions of their intended reading instructional performance and their actual teaching performances, which requires further investigation.

Several constraints have played a role in contributing to poor reading performance. Poor RCI training reduces instructional vigour as it makes it harder for new teachers to discriminate between correct and incorrect practises, escalating the danger of failure because of insufficient literacy training courses. In the absence of suitable teacher training courses, literacy teachers are severely disadvantaged, particularly when school leaders neglect to support teachers, which is further exacerbated by the lack of school-based and district support. The implementation of several literacy interventions has provided limited evidence of implementation strategy effectiveness. Poorly planned interventions deprived of teacher input to negotiate expected requirements and monitor them have generated several shortcomings. Taking decisive action is crucial for early reading success, characterised by reading literacy preparedness and response to prevent reading problems before they occur. This highlights the importance of collective and decisive action as a preventive measure, emphasising the need to prioritise early interventions over strategies aimed at addressing reading failure. Considering the current situation, reading difficulties often manifest prior to Grade 3, underscoring the necessity for early intervention to prevent and reduce persistently low reading standards.

The studies revealed significant shortcomings in the curriculum and the insufficient roles and responsibilities of principal actors at the school and district levels, which act as barriers to effective strategy implementation. It is crucial to take corrective action to address curriculum deficiencies and establish appropriate support mechanisms to assist teachers. Corrective curriculum measures, structured collaborative support interventions, and teacher training will continue to play a crucial role in ensuring the functional literacy of our society for both current and future generations. This necessitates professional guidance, active engagement, and well-organised teacher training workshops. The launch of effective teacher support structures can alter the trajectory of reading outcomes in South Africa through evidence-based research and practice. Failure to address issues related to reading comprehension will hinder learners' academic success and perpetuate educational inequalities in South Africa, leaving learners ill-prepared for the challenges of the 21st century.

2.4. Theoretical Framework

Social constructivism and cognitive constructivism form the theoretical foundation of this study. The applicability of both social constructivism and cognitive constructivism is then discussed, providing support for its combined use.

2.4.1. Cognitive constructivism

Cognitive constructivism serves as the study's foundation (Piaget, 1954, 1955, 1970; Piaget & Inhelder, 1971). Piaget's theory presents qualitative distinctiveness of each stage of cognitive development portraying age-specific transitions made from one age level to the next. This is established by the development of structures of cognitive activity (Rubtsov, 2020) associated with subjective experiences (Lee, 2016) fostering psychological development through discovery (Amineh & Asl, 2015). This implies that learners actively create knowledge through experiences which are built on with the acquired knowledge they hold (Lee, 2016). In other words, learners create knowledge and construct meaning using their personal experiences (Sulistyowati, 2019) created through earlier experiences, individual viewpoints, and cultural origin (Braun, 2020). According to Piaget (1970), learners' curiosity plays a significant role in driving learning, and they learn best through practice rather than passive instruction (Mooney, 2013), emphasising the importance of active participation and facilitation.

2.4.1.1. Understanding cognitive constructivism

Cognitive constructivism deems the information as proactively created by the learner, rather than passively absorbed from the environment. Piaget's theory points to the development of knowledge construction through the process of interaction relating to personal experiences and thoughts. Learning involves knowledge construction, comprehension, and application, non-repetition, active participation as opposed to passivity (Sulistyowati, 2019). Active learning occurs when the teacher concludes the lesson and learners are instructed to work on a question or activity to grasp a topic (Andrews *et al.*, 2011). Adapting novel knowledge with existing knowledge and involvement of active engagement results in the construction of information further achieved through the process of questioning, exploring, and assessing what is already known (Bada & Olusegun, 2015).

Kaufman (2004: 304) outlines that learning involves interpreting new understandings through "reading, listening, exploration, and experience," involving three interconnected procedures:

assimilation, accommodation, and equilibrium. Simply put, physical activities and practical experience are needed for learning, particularly for young learners (Adom *et al.*, 2016) through the implementation of cooperative learning approaches, project-based and discovery learning teaching approaches (Slavin, 2019). Novelty of new thinking are shaped by learners' personal experiences and background knowledge, where information is created through assimilation or accommodation (Agarkar, 2019). This is where learners create ideas and worldly information, by using their own experiences (Sulistiyowati, 2019; Aljohani, 2017; Bereiter, 1994).

Learners grasp new information by assimilating information from their daily experiences that represents the existing schema (Mataka & Taibu, 2020). In addition to this they are continually involved in a course of adaption, constantly arranging and rearranging knowledge and personal experiences, leading to the development of more adaptable information within the real world as they experience it (Adom *et al.*, 2016). The previous experiences are assimilated and combined into the current schema or schemata through accommodation. This process results in equilibrium the attainment of novel interpretations, cohesiveness, and cognitive steadiness (Kaufman, 2004) termed as "intellectual adaptation" (Schneider, 2015). To attain equilibrium, teachers need to assist every learner's knowledge construction and to understand learners' thinking, thereby adjusting their reading instructional strategies according to learners' cognitive level (Blake & Pope, 2008).

However, the mismatch between personal background knowledge and unknown experiences are described as disequilibria. This disequilibrium causes the assimilation and accommodation to trigger the rebuilding of a novel, equilibrated cognitive comprehending system to resolve the action and to understand differences (Schneider, 2015). This occurs when the learner experiences difficulties in making clear interpretations about the new text information based on their existing knowledge. Piaget affirms that, "disequilibrium forces the subject to go beyond his current state and strike out in new directions" (1985: 10) promoting higher-order thinking and development. In these situations, teachers are urged to take advantage of disequilibrium because it permits alterations in learners' mental structures (Blake & Pope, 2008).

2.4.1.2. Educational implications of Piaget's theory

Piaget's theory identifies three key characteristics namely active engagement and exploration, unevenness of cognitive development and quality of thought that has a significant impact on

education. Firstly, optimise cognitive development, by providing learners the chance to try things out, experiment, discover, ask questions, discuss, reflect, and solve problems on their own, through active, exploratory processes (Donald *et al.*, 2014). Secondly, the process of accumulating information is inconsistent, there is variability among children, so children switch to different areas of learning at different times. Teachers are inclined to understand Piaget's stages in terms of limitations (inability to have children at this stage) rather than progressive possibilities (which are becoming increasingly possible) (Donald *et al.*, 2014).

The implications of Piaget's theory are adapting instruction and content to the learner's level of development and creating opportunities for learners to learn in a range of classroom experiences (Baken, 2014). Teachers have to view learners as active participants of learning and identify learners' specific cognitive development differences by making provisions and arranging tasks according to learners' intellectual development (Baken, 2014). Teachers must also recognize the importance of differentiated instructional strategies. Learners of dissimilar "English-proficiency levels do not always need different materials; they need teachers who use the materials differentially" (Bodang & Mmegwa, 2020: 190).

Thirdly, teachers need to consider learners' depth of information and their quality of thinking at their developmental stages (Donald *et al.*, 2014) especially when choosing texts and allocating learners to suitable learning ability groups. Placing emphasises on monitoring learners understanding and their level of difficulties by posing questions to assess their understanding, and to foster deeper thinking, encouraging dialogue between groups (Degener & Berne, 2017; McKeown *et al.*, 2009; Ford & Opitz, 2008; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996) thus mitigating misunderstandings as learning efficiency takes place when clarity arises (Powell & Kalina, 2009).

2.4.2. *Social constructivism*

The study is underpinned by Vygotsky's social constructivism theory (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978a) who advocates that the learning process is social action achieved through social contact (Tulgar, 2019) whereby knowledge and understanding are being constructed with other individuals (Amineh & Asl, 2015).

2.4.2.1. *Understanding social constructivism*

Social constructivism, “emphasises that learning takes place through interactions with other learners, teachers, and the world-at-large” (Aljohani, 2017: 97-107). As Vygotsky (1978b) claimed that cognitive development firstly takes place on a social level, and later it can take place internally and then utilised by the individual (Amineh & Asl, 2015).

Vygotsky (1978a, 1978b, 1987 and 1993) maintains that the development of cognition hinges on a social interplay with people in the learner’s life and the provisions of cultural instruments (writing, pictures, and symbols) that aids the thinking process. He considers that learners’ thinking and creating meaning are socially created and arise from their social connections with their setting (Kuafman, 2004). Social constructivism is viewed as an information-sharing process relating to “individual and social knowledge to form a potential team knowledge” (Chou, 2005: 271). Vygotsky (1978b) posited that all mental functions or intelligence need social context embedded in the sociocultural context. In other words, the social environments impact the learning process therefore activities such as discussions, collaborative work, and learner teacher feedback are essential in facilitating learners’ maximum ability (Patang & Machmoed, 2020). Hruby *et al.* (2016), classroom social settings may be adjusted and managed to best promote reading motivation. Motivation is by its very nature social. The upper mental cognitive processes function at an inner psychological level which is created between and among people (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002). Vygotsky (1978a) believed social learning takes precedence over development as all upper-level functions originate as real relations among people (Patang & Machmoed, 2020). What it means is that social constructivism takes into consideration the socio-cultural context and endorses teacher-learner cooperation as a key element of the learning process (Agarkar, 2019). Based on these grounds, learners can construct a particular level of meaning-making independently. However, it can develop significantly together with cooperative involvement within the teaching environment indicative of collaborative work, purposeful tasks and appropriate responses (Sulistyowati, 2019).

In the teaching context, both the teacher and the learner are considered as active participants in the learning process since social interaction mediates learning (Patang & Machmoed, 2020). When children socially interact, they obtain novel information and meanings and adjust old information (Donald *et al.*, 2014) to get an improved understanding. This implies that social connections alter the manner in which they comprehend meanings, “values, customary practices, information, and the ways of understanding the world” (Donald *et al.*, 2014:78). As “Vygotsky’s theory promotes the concept, what is learned must be taught” (Wilhelm, 2001: 8) successfully which places emphasis on social level of learning.

The process of scaffolding is pivotal (Ford & Opitz, 2008). Language usage and shared experience is crucial in successfully implementing scaffolding as a learning tool (Blake & Pope, 2008: 63). Vygotsky asserts that language negotiates higher-level thinking (Vygotsky, 1978b; Wertsch, 1979). Language alters teachers' instructional strategies which is vital to the making-meaning process functioning as a communicative tool (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002) to transfer complex concepts through mediation (Benzehaf, 2016). Language serves two main functions: firstly, it enables learners to acquire knowledge from more knowledgeable individuals, and secondly, it acts as a powerful instrument in the process of intellectual adaptation.

The development of language is a procedure that starts with social interaction and internalised via stages that conclude with the progression of inner speech. Private speech serves as mediation and internalising thought, while the internalisation of social speech leads to higher-level thinking. This is accomplished with collaboration and communication within the learners' context (Benzehaf, 2016). This consists of instructional discussions, questioning, and feedback, cooperative, collaborative and reciprocal teaching strategies. As learners advance with greater control and decision-making skills they are aided using oral regulations of their individual thinking (Kray & Ferdinand, 2013). Individual thinking assists with regulating learners' conduct. It triggers them to think about their actions and develops into greater thinking awareness (Cragg & Nation, 2010; Marcovitch *et al.*, 2008) and understanding.

Vygotsky distinguishes three different kinds of speech: "social, private, and internal" (Blake & Pope, 2008: 1). Social speech refers to the instructional guidance provided by a grown-up to children. Private speech enables the processing and promotion of guided instructional practices with grown-ups for application to related circumstances (Blake & Pope, 2008). Internal speech occurs when the learners silently discuss or have an internal conversation described as "the essence of conscious mental activity" (Wilhelm, 2001: 11). This where self-monitoring takes place allowing the learner to understand his/her own thinking and learning. Inner speech is vital in the initial cognitive development stages, which combines with thought processes; hence, the child develops thinking proficiently through language.

Outer speech used when interacting socially. Outer speech and inner speech are combined as the individual advances novel or altered forms of what they think and understand. Reading is not that different. It involves communication of the external, printed language and opinions of the author, the inner language and ideas of the reader, "it is the interaction itself that is

important, rather than its particular form-spoken or written” (Donald *et al.*, 2014: 78-79). Thus, reading develops into a deep understanding of the text. The reading process is the combined implementation of two kinds of reading tasks and the learners’ cognitive tasks (knowledge construction). The simultaneous joint application of ‘group-learning’ is the most appropriate method whereby teachers function as the facilitator who guides the teaching and learning process (Ardiansyah & Ujihanti, 2018).

The two kinds of communication occur, the author and learner that are text based and the oral interaction between teacher and learner (Thi, 2019). Bakhtin (1895-1975) terms the first kind of communication as “indirect communication” as the reader engages with the literary text; this is what Vygotsky refers to as inner speech. The second kind of communication relates to teacher-learner communication during the lesson. This refers to direct communication-the kind of task-related to Vygotsky’s learning process termed social constructivism (Thi, 2019) which refers to the instructional guidance during social speech.

Consequently, the reading process involves the simultaneous process of construction and communication, while the process of reading literary textual instruction includes constructivist instruction and communication instruction. Constructivism and communication are two types of activities that take place simultaneously, not separately (Thi, 2019). For this reason, social constructivist instructional methods focus on reciprocal teaching methods, such as peer cooperation, mental apprenticeships, problem-based teaching methods that involve collaborating with peers (Shunk, 2000). Social constructivism- which emphasises the social genesis of knowledge- uses reciprocal teaching as its foundation. According to Vygotsky (1978a: 57), “every function in the [learner’s] cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later on the individual level. Social learning process that is built around communication and aids in the transmission and interpretation of written texts is highlighted.

The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is a very powerful notion within Vygotsky’s social constructivism. This points to the appropriate position of task complexity to assist the learning process is the level at which a learner can thrive with suitable assistance (Tracy & Morrow, 2006). Learners function within the zone of proximal development when they actively participate in activities that they were previously unable to perform, however with the help of grown-ups and classmates they are able to perform (Slavin, 2019). This is achieved through scaffolding with the help of grown-up and more capable classmates who offer help at some

stage in the learning process (Tracy & Morrow, 2006), with the help of social interaction and language, learners' progressively advances (Utah Education Network, 2005).

This process is whereby the learner slowly obtains expert skills by interacting with a specialist, whether it is a teacher or better-developed classmate (Slavin, 2019). The attainment of knowledge within the ZPD “depends upon outside social forces as much as inner resources” (Palmer, 2001; Blake & Pope, 2008: 61), this suggests that for a learner to function independently. The learner has to be exposed to social situations where the higher intellectual operation is internalised (Donald *et al.*, 2014) in order to make advancements in learning development.

Active participation, seeking different ways of discovering, acquisition of concepts, inner and outer scaffolding is crucial to the process. External scaffolding helps learners absorb new material more easily, by dividing tasks into manageable chunks, providing model practices, coaching, feedback, and accountability for learners' progress (Slavin, 2019). Suitable question strategies are deemed a key part of scaffolding for text. Teachers may evaluate learners' understanding to detect needed support and to draw attention to important information (Blything *et al.*, 2020). Internal scaffolding involves the reflection process and self-supervision to improve the acquisition of concepts by the learner (Kuafman, 2004). Learners presented with intricate, problematic, real activities with support to complete activities (Slavin, 2019).

Scaffolding refers to the process where learning is assisted or mediated and the teacher is considered as the cultural mediator directing instruction in order for learners to become proficient and incorporate skills that allow for a higher level of cognitive working (Slavin, 2019). Knowledge construction is encouraged instead of the “reproductive” learning process devoid of adaption (Stacy & Bennett, 2017). Mediation during social interaction is the device that promotes development. During this process, the child appropriates or acquires ownership of the cognitive equipment that makes knowledge-building likely (Donald *et al.*, 2014), facilitated through discussion and dialogue.

Vygotsky (1978a) deemed learning as a constant effort which moves from the existing intellectual level to an upper level towards the learner's potential ability. This is achieved by presenting learners with intricate, problematic, real activities with support which assist them to complete activities (Slavin, 2019). Children are not developed enough in order to do this by themselves: “a parent/caregiver, teacher, school counsellor, peer or other person has already acquired those tools, actively, to mediate the process.” This is the point at which mediation

takes place and the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Donald *et al.*, 2014: 79). Placing emphasis on the importance of teachers' guidance in helping learners select suitable learning tasks (Lord *et al.*, 2005; Amineh & Asl, 2015).

Instructional scaffolding is beneficial to learners especially when it results in their progress which eventually leads to learner independence (Wilson & Devereux, 2014). Educational scaffolding may be a difficult task as it should correspond to the ZPD (Taber & Brock, 2018). Instructional reading scaffolds nurture reading comprehension abilities as it effectively impacts the advancement of upper functions and abilities (Safadi & Rababah, 2012).

It directs teachers to suitable problem-solving exercises and determines the level and degree of assistance (scaffolding) learners need to carry out tasks (Kaufman, 2004). Reading instructional strategies ought to model reading and providing detailed explanations; to create concrete learning chances through the usage of pictures, graphic organisers, literacy manipulatives, or think-aloud; breaking down the task; strategies implemented on a stepped basis. This assists in leading to a gradual road of independence (Vaughn *et al.*, 2012).

2.4.2.2. Educational implications of Vygotsky's theory

The understanding of language in cognitive development, social construction of knowledge, mediation, ZPD, and possible mediators that Vygotsky provided is theory's most extensive pedagogical application (Donald *et al.*, 2014: 81).

Social construction of knowledge indicates that knowledge is not fixed. It is transformed by different social contexts and historical epochs and is constructed and communicated through social interactions. Transferring knowledge is a process of social and personal construction and reconstruction by you and your learners. Secondly, language in cognitive development has important implications for education therefore; teachers need to foster linguistic interaction in the classroom.

Thirdly, Vygotsky's insight into mediation processes and his conception of zones of proximal development have direct implications for teaching and learning. Being a teacher, it is important to gauge the potential of each learner in her ZPD and actively guide them through mediation to enhance their cognitive functioning and understanding. In addition, Vygotsky's observation that parents/carers, peers, teachers, and everyone else can be facilitators. For the educational process to be effective, it must consciously involve everyone (Donald *et al.*, 2014).

2.5. Relevance of Social and Cognitive Constructivism to the Study

Piaget (1954)'s cognitive constructivist theory is relevant to the study for several reasons. First, it reveals the importance of appropriate selection of texts and authentic activities based on learners' cognitive development level (DBE, 2011).

Second, scholars indicate that reading comprehension instruction should develop learners' "own individual knowledge construction," by making "connections with the topic and their own life experiences" (DBE, 2011: 13) by activating learners' prior knowledge in line with constructivism. A systematic review and meta-analysis found that promoting reading interest through practical activities, presenting choices, and offering process-oriented responses, created noteworthy, constructive results on learners' motivations and reading comprehension (McBreen & Savage, 2020).

Third, predicting is another reading comprehension strategy that needs to be developed based on learners' prior knowledge through "picture talk or browsing" (DBE, 2011: 13). Teachers should skim through the written texts drawing "attention to captions, chapter headings and any other organisational features such as table of contents and/or subheadings within the text" (DBE, 2011: 13). This allows learners to make predictions about what will occur further on in the story, utilising acquainted texts and visual cues (DBE, 2011).

Next, teachers have to teach inference-reading strategies when presenting new texts. Piaget's ideas of assimilation and accommodation are applied to make sense of new knowledge by using learners' prior knowledge. Teachers can focus upon contextual clues and discuss the "main idea, characters, and plot" (DBE, 2011: 119), using the five wh-word questions (what, why, where, when, and how) (Mascareño *et al.*, 2016; De Rivera *et al.*, 2005). Teachers are encouraged to quickly "talk through the illustrations of the book or the chapter pointing out significant details and raising questions about what might be happening at this point in the text" (DBE, 2011: 13).

Fifth, teachers need to develop higher-level thinking skills, because the equilibration process is the chief factor in motivating learners to shift from low level to an upper level of cognitive development (Simatwa, 2010), by collecting, analysing, organising, and critically assess information (DBE, 2011: 5). Sixth, in terms of constructivist theories, the learner performs the function as the constructor of knowledge and is actively involved (Piaget, 1968; Vygotsky, 1978b).

Teachers are encouraged to foster active participation such as interactive activities, “movement and drama activities or rings,” (DBE, 2011: 39), including the “five-finger strategy” (DBE, 2011: 16). Teachers are expected to deepen their understanding (Foldnes, 2016) through technology by using interactive tasks within an active learning setting (Berrett, 2012) and actively engage learners with text and other learners.

Seventh, the constructivist theory suggests that teachers need to create rich environments so that learners actively, rather than passively construct meaning through “rote and uncritical learning” (DBE, 2011: 4). Piaget (1896-1980) and Vygotsky (1896-1934), both believe that “people actively construct or make their knowledge and that reality is determined by the experiences of the learner” (Elliott *et al.*, 2000: 256; Donald *et al.*, 2014). Teachers should nurture reading comprehension abilities and present rich experiential learning environments wherein the learner actively participates in their own learning. Implementing authentic learning experiences accompanied with a learner-centred learning environment the teacher is able to function as a facilitator offering multiple roles to build interest and motivation. This includes reciprocal teaching, discovery, inquiry, and instructing cooperative learning strategies as “problem-solving environments do not exist in isolation” (DBE, 2011: 5).

Subsequently, Vygotsky’s (1978b) theory of social constructivism is highly relevant to this study because it highlights the importance of social interactions in the learning process. According to this theory, individuals acquire knowledge through the guidance of more knowledgeable people, making learning a social phenomenon (Shepard, 2000). Teachers need to incorporate cooperative and collaborative learning strategies such as the “ability-group reading teaching strategy” (DBE, 2011: 12), because learning is a social process and understanding a text is facilitated through collaboration.

Teachers need to develop text-based discussion, as language is an instrument of mediation. This is achieved through ‘text talk’ by creating opportunities for learners’ to give their responses and contribute ideas “to develop vocabulary, comprehension, decoding skills and text structures” (DBE, 2011: 12-13). In addition, to discuss “the text bearing in mind the range of questions that should be integrated into the discussion to develop comprehension” (DBE, 2011: 13).

Teachers need to use a variety of reading instructional methods to keep learners engaged in different ways. These methods include activities such as shared reading, group guided reading and paired/independent reading” (DBE, 2011: 11). This creates opportunities for a wide range

of perspectives, allowing learners to work efficiently as individuals and as members of a team (DBE, 2011: 5). Additionally, teachers should use different curriculum differentiation strategies (DBE, 2011: 5) to cater diverse learning needs. Collaborative learning is an important process from a cognitive constructivism perspective, involving peer-level mediation (Vygotsky) and the stimulation of cognitive conflict between learners with similar understandings (Piaget) and positive action involvement (Donald *et al.*, 2014).

They also need to develop lessons within learners' ZPD by matching learners and texts at the appropriate instructional level ensuring learning takes place. The ability to read text which incorporates some challenges with ease using decoding or comprehension (DBE, 2011) which then allows for cognitive development. "Central to constructivist pedagogy is the idea of learning as meaning-making and learning as the negotiation of meaning (Kanselaar, 2002: 3). Teachers need to involve learners with intricate activities, assisting them with those tasks and helping them through this process (Hamman *et al.*, 2000; Newmann & Wehlage, 1993) through social negotiation to promote learning.

Furthermore, there is a need to implement instructional scaffolding to allow learners to gradually take charge of their learning (DBE, 2011) through mediation. By modelling reading strategies and skills during the shared reading and guided reading lessons by implementing them with assistance (DBE, 2011). Guided reading is a teaching strategy that helps teachers to instruct and improve learners' reading comprehension skills. Use questions to assess comprehension and foster thinking, and dialogue (Degener & Berne, 2017; McKeown *et al.*, 2009; Ford & Opitz, 2008; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Comprehension-monitoring instruction is necessary for developing reflective thinking skills. Self-monitoring consists of reading together with word identification and comprehension (DBE, 2011) creating opportunities for self-correction. The need to teach metacognitive strategies, by employing "self-correcting strategies when reading: re-reading, pausing, and practising a word before saying it aloud." By creating awareness, identifying and making use of suitable strategies so that learners "ask: 'Does it sound right?' 'Does it look right?' and 'Does it make sense'" (DBE, 2011: 18)?

CAPS informal evaluation activities include (oral and/or practical and/or written) (DBE, 2011: 107). The constructivist assessment principle focuses upon external observable behaviour. What learners can actually show and do, by observing such external behaviour, we can infer how effective the internal behaviour is. From a constructivist perspective, teachers are

frequently concerned with their learners' potential understanding at which learners may be equipped to progress in comprehension and higher cognitive tasks.

This can be achieved through reciprocal action, asking questions, and mediation (Donald *et al.*, 2014). Together with engaging learners in different levels of thinking and questioning by way of, "literal comprehension, reorganisation, inferential, evaluation, and appreciation" questions to enhance both lower and upper-level comprehension skills (DBE, 2011: 12) as well as increasing learners verbal responses (Fitriati *et al.*, 2017). Teachers should integrate a variety of questions with discussions to improve understanding using teacher prompts (DBE, 2011) and critical thinking skills through inquiry-based instruction. The strength of these two theories resides in their capability to deal with the cognitive and social aspects of the reading process. This framework prioritises active learner engagement in teaching and learning. These theories are pertinent in supporting how learning is mediated through the use of various strategies that guide learners to develop intellectual power, not merely distribute information.

Learner cognitive ability and differentiated learning abilities emphasise learners' developmental stage, appropriate instruction, and social interactions to develop knowledge construction which supports the interactive process of reading comprehension. The biological aspects deal with the lower cognitive abilities; culture, teaching undertake the function of enhancing higher cognitive constructions. For this reason, the developmental stage of the learner including the type of instruction works together with intricate interactions to regulate the ZPD (Benzehaf, 2016) which accentuates the importance of both theorists. Both Piaget and Vygotsky underscore the core principles of reading comprehension, which emphasises aspects of meaning construction and communication in an integrative manner-using learner's knowledge, skills, cognitive development, cultural background, and experiences thereby enhancing the thinking and learning process.

Although both theorists support different viewpoints about developmental psychology (Mensah & Somuah, 2014) similarities between Vygotsky and Piaget are substantial (Lourenco, 2012). The implementation of both theories is advantageous. These theories are relevant to the study because the conceptualization of both theories frequently supplements one another and jointly offers a comprehensive standpoint of development and the educational process (Sharkins *et al.*, 2017).

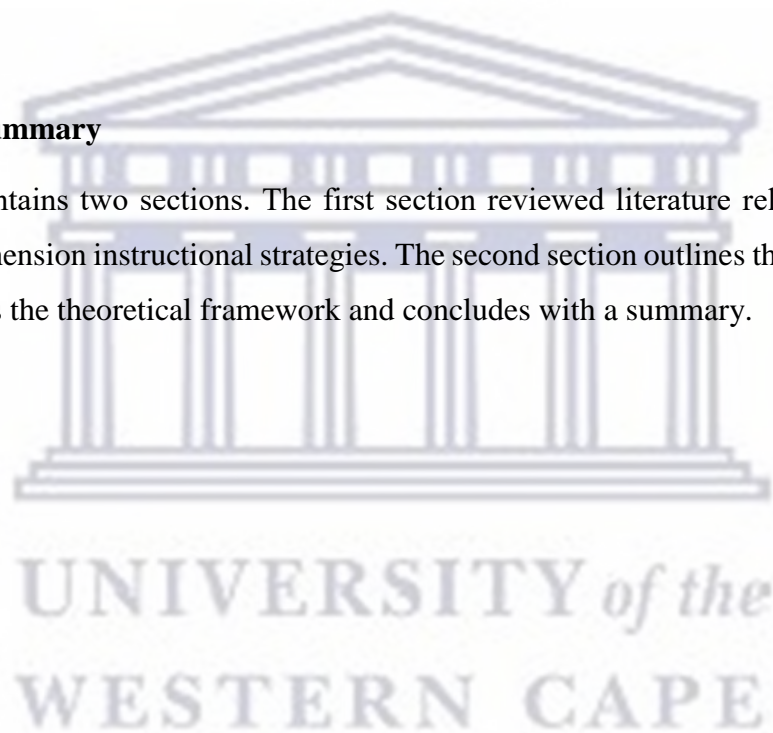
Rather than a one-directional relationship between development and learning, Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories often complement each other and together provide a more encompassing

view of development and learning (Sharkins *et al.*, 2017: 17). Based on the above information both theories can benefit reading comprehension instruction significantly in the classroom. Mensah and Somuah (2014) concurs that the application of these two theories through classroom reading instructional strategies has proven to improve learning, and has the propensity to clarify why the research problem has occurred.

For this reason, the social and cognitive constructivist theories were incorporated into a unified theoretical structure for reading instructional purposes and research study. Basically, data gathered through semi-structured interviews and observations from both teachers and learners. The findings suggest that active participation in the learning process informs the constructivist methodology used.

2.6. Chapter Summary

This chapter contains two sections. The first section reviewed literature related to teachers' reading comprehension instructional strategies. The second section outlines the theorists Piaget and Vygotsky as the theoretical framework and concludes with a summary.



Chapter 3:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology, paradigm, design, research site, sampling procedure, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

3.1. Preliminaries

This study used a qualitative research approach (Kamal, 2019) to gain a better understanding of human ideas, convictions, principles, practices, and circumstances. The purpose was to develop theories that explain these experiences (Holloway & Galvin, 2016; Munhall, 2012; Wuest, 2012; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Qualitative research allowed me to gain clarity of a situation through participants' daily reading instructional practices and how this impacts on learner performance using multiple data methods. Aimed at determining the root cause of the issue by establishing what took place, what drove participants decision-making and how their choices developed to what they ultimately implemented (Yin, 2015; Curry *et al.*, 2009).

The qualitative research method was appropriate for revealing how the participants perceive and give meaning to their experiences, and they construct their world (Merriam, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It also helped in gaining an understanding of the participants' perceptions and experiences (Kamal, 2019). This enabled the researcher to understand participants' perceptions and experiences. By utilising various methods of data collection, I was able to obtain detailed descriptions of participants and their unique situations (De Vaus, 2014; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). Methodological triangulation has produced more comprehensive data. This also presented a clearer picture of how instruction was delivered from a specific context (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). The qualitative research aligns with Mohan's (2012) suggestion for understanding of complex reading (Maxwell, 2012).

3.2. Research Paradigm

This study used an interpretive paradigm wherein social actors engaged in meaning-making practices (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) through teachers' daily instruction. It considers reality as subjective and may vary according to different individuals' experiences (Dieronitou, 2014) therefore I adopted an inter-subjective epistemology and ontological view that reality is socially created. Multiple viewpoints frequently give rise to comprehensive understanding

(Morehouse, 2011) achieved by capturing respondents' viewpoints, including their background and experiences (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2011; Creswell, 2003) that is rooted in social interaction (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). Interpretive paradigm interpretation (Antwi & Hamza, 2015) was achieved through semi-structured interviews and lesson observations. This implied that I obtained knowledge of reality through social constructions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Denzin, 2010). Consistent with an interpretive paradigm this study gives preference to and focus on teachers' instructional practices which is understood from participants' interpretation and experiences within the school context.

3.3. Research Design

This study used a case study design (Creswell & Poth, 2018), which “explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information...” (Creswell, 2013: 97). The research analysis of various cases ascertained just how it affirms the conclusions through or between cases or when it brings the conclusions into question (Bloomberg, 2018). The case study has proven advantages as it tries to understand the phenomenon in question (Mohammed & Molepo, 2017). The benefits reside in its capacity to explore a phenomenon using multiple sources of evidence to clarify the issue currently investigated (Creswell, 2018; Akers & Amos, 2017) and to attain detailed information. This proved to be advantageous when analysing data of the nine participants and research instruments of documents analysis, semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. Triangulation reduced the probability of misinterpretations. It also verified and enriched the research findings through in-depth data which heightened rigour (Houghton *et al.*, 2013a). The development of information derived from the different cases (Vannoni, 2015; Vannoni, 2014) is more compelling and dependable (Baxter & Jack, 2008) as its all-inclusive research method. The multiple case studies are flexible and have proven to be advantageous when exploring new topics and issues (Samy & Robertson, 2017) as it is rooted in real-life situations. It contributes to deep and comprehensive explanations of unexplored phenomena based on exploratory design.

3.4. Research Context

This study conducted research in a public primary school located in the Cape Metropolitan, of the Western Cape. These three English-medium schools primarily serve learners from low socioeconomic backgrounds (SES). The schools are multicultural and multilingual, with isiXhosa, Afrikaans, and English speakers. These three public schools are appropriate as they would give insight into teachers' daily classroom situations and portray their teaching expertise through a multitude of teaching strategies. How to handle learners learning diversities and the support systems to achieve reading comprehension proficiency at school. School A was established in 1972. It consists of 798 learners, twenty-two WCED teaching staff, one SGB teacher, and three grade R practitioners. School B was established in 1912. It comprises 1108 learners and 30 teachers, including Grade R practitioners. School C was established in 1949. It consists of 795 learners and 15 teachers. To maintain confidentiality, the schools were given pseudonyms, namely, school A, school B, and school C.

3.5. Sample and Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling could be a more effective method in obtaining information from the right sort of participants particularly when the sample size is modest (Maul, 2018). I chose a small sample based on what the participants could offer. As Emmel (2013: 154) reiterates, "it is not the number of cases that matters, it is what you do with them that counts." This study's small sample provides detailed knowledge, reaffirming its aims and validating the methodology. The research aims were given due consideration and a purposeful sample was chosen which would best contribute to the success of this study.

This study consisted of nine participants comprising six Grade 3 teachers and three Head of Departments who were selected using purposive sampling procedures (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Purposive sampling is defined as a "selection of participants based on the researchers' judgement about what potential participants will be most informative" (Polit & Beck, 2017: 10). Participants and research sites were selected best suited to achieve the research questions, as they were knowledgeable about a phenomenon of concern (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The participants were selected based on their teaching grade and school position. These Grade 3 teachers' have the expected teaching requirements and share a similar teaching environment wherein they are exposed to learners of a diversity of learning backgrounds and language challenges. This sample provides a glimpse of what is occurring within the school.

3.6. Research Instruments

Document analysis, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews were the three methods used in this study.

3.6.1. Document analysis

Firstly, data was collected using document analysis (Scourfield *et al.*, 2012; Macdonald, 2008). It is a method of qualitative research that makes use of a systematic process to examine documentary proof and solve explicit research questions (Gross, 2018). Document analysis has proven to be valuable in establishing an understanding, developing theory, and attaining a better grasp (Gross, 2018). I have chosen document analysis based on its versatility, efficiency, availability and cost-effectiveness. In addition to offering a backdrop, it contributes to additional data, and is a way of tracking progress, which offers confirmation of results from different databases (Gross, 2018).

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, the Assessment Guidelines, and assessment tools informed the teaching of reading comprehension. It functioned as a criterion to analyse teachers' reading instructional practices. The CAPS document (DBE, 2011) was consulted to identify prescribed Grade 3 reading texts. I have compared the policy document with data collected through observations and interviews. CAPS document (DBE, 2011) is essential for reading comprehension (Govender & Hugo 2018; Magagula, 2016; Weideman *et al.*, 2017). More importantly, document analysis played a crucial role in "methodological and data triangulation" to substantiate trustworthiness (Bowen, 2009: 30). The documents used in triangulation were able to verify or disprove, clarify, or extend results over other data collection resources, this assisted in warding off biases (Gross, 2018) which were beneficial to my study.

3.6.2. Classroom observations

The second phase involves lesson observations, "[o]bservation means that the researcher goes to the site of the study, which may be a school, a staff room or a community meeting place, and observes what is taking place" (Bertram, 2014: 84). In other words, "[t]o collect observational data is to generate first-hand reports: to see, hear, feel and be there personally" (Wästerfors, 2018: 2) the observations provided an in-depth understanding (Wästerfors, 2018) of the reading process. This enabled me to gain direct information on teachers' reading

comprehension instructional strategies and be able to observe how learners respond to teachers reading instructional practices, “instructional styles, and their instructional focus” (Yu *et al.*, 2014: 9).

By witnessing exactly what is happening in a classroom I gained a detailed understanding (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014) what participants say and do and the sequences of their teaching practices and the teaching atmosphere (Wästerfors, 2018). Along with reinforcing findings gathered from document analysis and semi-structured interviews. I positioned myself as a non-participant (Siegel, 2018; Bertram, 2014) adopting unobtrusive measures whereby I limited the impact of my presence on the daily teaching process and minimised any research biases. Three non-participatory observations were conducted during the reading comprehension period extended over forty-five minute to one-hour classroom sessions using an observational schedule, voice recorder, and reflexive journal.

3.6.3. *Semi-structured interviews*

This study made use of semi-structured interviews (Galletta, 2012) to obtain data (Seidman, 2006) by establishing participants’ views and merging stories communicated through individuals’ personal experiences (Patton, 2014). This provided the opportunity to solicit “perceptions and understandings” through the process of “probing and clarifying questions” (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014: 82). The semi-structured interview consisted of nine pre-planned questions using similar wording across participants (Bryman, 2016) and an interview schedule (Nathan *et al.*, 2018).

The interviews facilitated greater flexibility in gaining a better grasp of interviewees’ viewpoints (Daymon & Holloway, 2002) by refocusing the questions, or prompt for additional information if something stimulating or new aroused (Baškarada, 2014). This facilitated greater detail and descriptive information from a small sample size (Roulston & Choi, 2018). Fieldnotes acquired throughout interviews must cover the basics of the interviewee’s responses and data around the procedures of the interviewing session (Flick, 2019). An added advantage was the minimum specialist equipment required for novice researchers (Nathan *et al.*, 2018) to conduct research.

3.7. Data Collection

Data collection was organised in three phases, with each subject or research site being studied individually rather than simultaneously (Merriam, 2009; Bogdan & Bilken, 2007). This research used Gorman and Clayton (2005)'s research plan circle. I commenced with a well-designed research plan, piloted a preliminary data collection process (interview schedule), and reviewed the plan (Yu *et al.*, 2014) which created opportunities for refinement and produced a more efficient and effective plan. A pilot study is described as a preliminary trial of a research instrument conducted before the main study (Majid *et al.*, 2017; Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). The purpose of the pilot study was to examine the appropriateness of the questions and to give the researcher initial guidelines on the viability of the study (Majid *et al.*, 2017) by gathering data utilising a smaller sample size (Maxwell, 2013).

The pilot test assisted in detecting potential errors at the initial phase by recognising possible difficulties and areas that may need changes in the instrument (Dikko, 2016; Watson *et al.*, 2007; Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001) in addition to adding worth and credibility within the study (Van Wijk & Harrison, 2013). This facilitated the process of reviewing and examining the interview process and format modifications best suited to get the best research results. Kallio *et al.* (2016) propose that the questions utilised for field testing could be improved by rephrasing them. Moreover, Chenail (2011) Cridland *et al.* (2015) suggest determining the duration required for each meeting, while Turner (2010) and Chenail (2011) recommend identifying and addressing any other defects or shortcomings in the design. I checked the interview guide to evaluate the questions' practicality and amend them if needed (Kallio *et al.*, 2016).

Document analysis marked the first phase of the data collection procedure by collecting CAPS curriculum guidelines, assessment guidelines, and assessment tools for Grade 3 English Home Language, which supported and strengthened the findings of the interviews and observations (Gross, 2018). Data selection took priority whereby the researcher applied the inclusionary and exclusionary standards to substantiate the authenticity of these documents by narrowing down document types (Gross, 2018) focusing on official documents. These documents were available online and easily accessible from the WCED portal. When collecting data, I used physical or digital copies.

The process of data collection took the form of either a hard copy or soft-copy- electronic source. Documents were administered systematically and a record of choices made, methods

employed, keywords utilised, and results offered an audit trail (Gross, 2018). After collecting data, the document analysis produced data extracts, quotes, or whole passages-which were arranged into key themes (Labuschagne, 2003). This was followed by “coding and categorising, interpretation and thematic analysis” (Gross, 2018: 547).

In the second phase, the researcher observed at least three observations in each class based on teachers’ term planner and convenience. Only six participants were observed in their respective classrooms. The other three participants are HOD’s and do not teach Grade 3 classrooms.

As an observer, I was able to observe participants’ “minor grunts and groans,” gestures and physical reactions (Goffman, 2001: 154-5). The observation process commenced adhering to the “descriptive, focused and selective” observations procedure (Siegel, 2018: 3). Before conducting additional observations, I attempted to understand whatever was observed (Siegel, 2018). This entails observing the activities while engaging intensive field note-taking practices without participating in the location (Siegel, 2018). This positioned me as a non-participant (Siegel, 2018) whereby I limited the impact of my presence on the daily planning and teaching process as unobtrusively as possible.

Data were collected using an observational schedule (Appendix B), voice recorder (Ary *et al.*, 2010), and a reflexive journal (Creswell, 2014) since qualitative observations count on participants’ words to explain situations and activities (Ary *et al.*, 2010; Creswell, 2014). Throughout the observational process, I wrote down field notes, which were “recorded, transcribed, and coded” (Farrell & Guz, 2019: 4). This process consisted of observing activities and engaging intensive note taking without physically participating in the site (Siegel, 2018).

The third phase presented the semi-structured interviews which were guided through Kallio *et al.* (2016: 11)’s five stages. I observed the interview process adapted from (Kasunic, 2010) and made use of the basic criteria for effective interviewing of Bryman (2016). As the researcher I adopted a non-judgmental (Bryman, 2016), thoughtful (Mann, 2011) stance open to different viewpoints and ensured that the participants understood their function (Walmsley, 2003) by clarifying the interview process. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in the classroom after school, based on the availability of participants. The prearranged semi-structured interview sessions were carried out on a one-on-one basis consisting of one-time interview sessions of approximately forty minutes (Yurdakal & Kirmizi, 2019) or multiple interviews (Ary *et al.*, 2010) consisting of two twenty-minute sessions depending on the participants’ availability.

This was achieved through face-to-face interviews and writing down notes in the presence of a voice recorder as it offered “a verbatim record of the responses” (Ary *et al.*, 2010: 439). The interview schedule (Appendix A) consists of open-ended questions and techniques (Braun & Clarke, 2013) that allow for flexibility by modifying questions (Bryman, 2016). This was achieved through the process of slow interview technique through interaction asking questions and writing down notes and a voice recorder. I have consciously chosen this method since I deem it would enhance the data by allocating more time for reflection (Carl & Ravitch, 2018). However, if the need arises questions are added in the form of field notes as the interview process progresses (Merriam, 2009). Information was diarised by keeping a reflective journal (Nathan *et al.*, 2018) and transcribed transcripts of the audio recorder.

3.8. Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006 & 2013). This method involved identifying, analysing, organising, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 2) and conducted in six phases. This approach aims to classify theme areas that contribute to the interpretation and understanding (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

First, I invested a lot of time in carefully reading and transcribing the data explanations and structures to ensure the accuracy of the data. I dedicated a significant portion of my time to examining these transcriptions, analysing and organising my thoughts to identify any potential patterns or meanings in the data, as per the methodology presented by Braun and Clarke (2006). Data collected from the three instruments were stored in organised files administered with specified dates as audit trail (Nowell *et al.*, 2017).

Second, I created preliminary codes and sub-codes by organising the collected data in a purposeful and orderly manner, which provided me with plenty of information coded into smaller meaningful portions (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). I read and acquainted myself with the material, organising data and identified characteristics that shaped into preliminary themes. The process included coding and non-coding parts of the text into themes repeatedly before assembling data with similar codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I used manually operated coding techniques rendering data transcription simpler (Williams & Moser, 2019) which was achieved using thematic networks (Nowell *et al.*, 2017) this assisted with the formulation and representation of themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

Third, I categorised and organised the potential significant coded data excerpts into themes. This phase comprises categorization and the formulation of possible pertinent coded data excerpts into themes. I reserved various codes that did not correspond to key themes in this phase (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These semantic themes developed “explicit or surface meanings of the data” as “what the participants “said” (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 84).

Fourth, I reread the initial themes, altering and changing themes and subthemes where modification deemed appropriate. Certain themes merged into each other whereas other themes were divergent and distinct (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As Braun and Clarke (2006: 91) advised, “[d]ata within themes should cohere together meaningfully, while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes.”

The fifth phase of the refining process involves identifying themes and determining their essence (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 92). To highlight the significance of the study, I have organised the most notable themes into categories. I classified each theme’s importance to determine which themes best encapsulated the study and to define and distinguish between what is and what is not a theme. This was done by looking back on how the themes connected to the entire body of data in relation to the research questions of this study (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The sixth phase entailed the written process producing a report after finalising the themes, which delivered a brief and clear explanation of the data in and through themes. This report presents a brief, clear, and rational explanation of the framing of data in and through themes. The researcher engaged with the data by organising, summarising to identify patterns, followed by interpreting data by putting forward the meanings of patterns and inferences about collected works (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This revealed the meanings of every theme along with the underlying assumptions and inferences of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data analysis process concluded through the process of peer briefing, and an account of the coding and analysis development.

3.9. Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness

This section focused on validity, reliability, and trustworthiness. I used Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) trustworthy criteria which include credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability, which were used to evaluate the research (Shenton, 2003).

3.9.1. Validity

Validity refers to the accuracy of what is assessed or to what is intended to assess or to the concept it argues to assess (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Creswell *et al.*, 2003; Brannen, 1996; Denzin, 1978). Miles and Huberman (1994: 11) claim that validity relates to “the meanings emerging from the data have to be tested for their plausibility, their sturdiness, their confirmability” which is commonly used in qualitative research in place of the term validity (Guest *et al.*, 2012).

Validity was ensured through detailed description, peer debriefing and triangulation (Cypress, 2017). Strategies of verification included the collection and analysis of words through observations, documents, and interviewing (Braun & Clarke, 2013) which provided rich and in-depth descriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kamal, 2019). Triangulation is “a qualitative research strategy to test validity through the convergence of information from different sources” (Carter *et al.*, 2014: 545). This was done through methodological and data triangulation by using three different methods consisting of interviews, observation, and document analysis to determine if the findings of methods match by producing detailed data. The different data sources were recruited from three public schools which created opportunities to assess the research questions from multiple perspectives (Guion *et al.*, 2011) by merging data from semi-structured interviews and observations of all nine data sources.

3.9.2. Reliability

Reliability questions the constancy of the methodological procedure. By staying relatively consistent in time and through investigators or methods espoused (Miles *et al.*, 2014) this deals with the value and credibility of the research results (Golafshani, 2003). The use of multiple sources of data increased research reliability (Stavros & Westberg, 2009) and facilitated data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Lincoln and Guba (1985: 292) said that “Reliability is not prized for its own sake but as a precondition for validity,” “since there is no validity without reliability ... a demonstration of the former is sufficient to establish the latter” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 316). This implies that validity is not possible without reliability (Elton & Johnston, 2002).

I proved that the analysis (test) of the interpretations were valid and reliable by producing the same results each time it was tested which included the analysis of the actual interpretations

(primary data) in a transparent process. Reliability of an analysis (test) was achieved by proving that I was able to arrive at the same results while validity was achieved by testing what is expected to test. This was achieved through replication of research results through careful analysis (Merriam, 1995) through the notion of replicability (Golafshani, 2003; Winter, 2000), repeatability (Morse, 2012; Merriam & Leahy, 2005; Golafshani, 2003; Winter, 2000) of which transparency was established (Aguinis *et al.*, 2018). Recordkeeping and careful implementation of research procedures disclosed the reliability of study procedures and database (Yin, 2012). Consistency was shown explicit development of themes and codes were developed through the process of thematic analysis (Miles *et al.*, 2014; Saldana, 2013).

3.9.3. Trustworthiness

“Trustworthiness refers to quality, authenticity, and truthfulness of findings” (Cypress, 2017: 254) and the degree of readers’ confidence and assurance in the findings are what make a finding trustworthy (Schmidt & Brown, 2015). Trustworthiness is ascertained by the level to which the research transfers information and the process by which the final product was attained (Koch, 1994) by performing the research process properly. Golafshani (2003) claimed that analysis of trustworthiness is vital as it occupied a central position relating to issues validity and reliability (Seale, 1999). Trustworthiness involved peer debriefing, member checks, checking self-perceptions, and employing multiple data sources (Mertens, 2015; Lincoln, 2009) and triangulation (Creswell, 2013).

Peer debriefing sessions consisted of discussions with my supervisor who created opportunities for questions and critique of journals and research undertakings (Cypress, 2017) this gave me the necessary research support and guidance to resolve any uncertainties and to optimise my report by identifying common mistakes and biases in the data. Guba and Lincoln (1989) deemed member checks as a crucial factor to strengthen the study’s credibility. Determining structural corroboration or coherency (Anney, 2014) through continuous data rechecks. Self-perceptions checks were done by practising reflexivity and writing down my thoughts about how my beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions contributed to the research process. Selecting multiple data sources from three different schools, data was verified and validated through “cross verification from more than two sources” (Honorene, 2017: 1). This strengthened my research by gaining a clearer understanding about reading comprehension by comparing different participants’ perspectives.

3.9.3.1. Credibility

Polit and Beck (2012) described credibility as the accuracy of the information provided by the researchers. Strategies to ensure credibility included data triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) method triangulation, and reflexivity (Anney, 2015). An audio-recorder was used to transcribe data precisely to improve the accurateness of the facts (Krippendorff, 2013; Goodman & Evans, 2010; Bryman, 2008) together with quoting the participants' answers verbatim (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). A thorough repetitive data examination and transcripts were reviewed before proceeding to ensure that the participants' views were not incorrect (Nathan *et al.*, 2018).

Triangulation was used as "an attempt to map out, or explain more fully the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint" (Cohen *et al.*, 2000: 254). Triangulation facilitated the cross-checking data and interpretations within and across each of participants cited in different schools and each method (documents, interviews, and observations) this lessened bias and heighten data research credibility (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Yin, 2003; Mills & Huberman, 1994). Different data sources were explored to construct a more detailed understanding of the phenomenon (Morgan & Ravitch, 2018).

The use of different data-gathering methods provided rich data and opportunities for data corroboration and a better understanding of the phenomenon through methodological triangulation. The use of different methods ensured that my data was appropriate and credible. This was verified during interviews. This made it easier for me to work with data that was verified by another tool. Reflexivity was upheld by positioning myself as an outsider with limited impact of my subjective judgments on the research process and created avenues to uncover relevant information. This was done by remaining neutral, aware, and documenting my personal beliefs and attitudes by keeping a reflexive journal throughout the research process.

3.9.3.2. Conformability

Conformability refers to the steps taken by the researcher to demonstrate that findings emerge from the data and not their predispositions (Anney, 2014: 51; Shenton, 2004). This is to establish whether the data and the findings were not constructions of the researcher's thoughts but formed from the data (Tobin & Begley, 2004). It evaluates sources for credibility, reliability, and bias through an audit trail. The audit trail allowed me to review the data analysis

process to authenticate the dataset, wherein I recorded all research decisions and proceedings to show how data was collected, recorded and analysed (Bowen, 2009; Li, 2004).

A reflexive journal kept throughout the research process. As a management strategy, the audit trail provided auditing conformability by tracking my decisions and actions during the data analysis process. Documented evidence of proceedings and measures taken from the beginning to the end. The data analysis facilitated tracking any mistakes or misinterpretations and how the findings were produced back to their source. Recordkeeping consisted of written recordings of the actual interview note-taking sessions and observation schedules including a daily account of the procedures to record further views and thoughts. I maintained reflexivity by continuously guarded against my personal biases, attitudes, beliefs and presuppositions and how they may affect the study (Cypress, 2017).

3.9.3.3. *Transferability*

The degree to which research findings apply outside of the existing context is known as transferability (Noble & Smith, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this instance, the aspect of transferability described the extent to which the findings of qualitative transferred to other contexts with other participants (Anney, 2015). This was performed through purposive sampling method and presenting a detailed description of the study through the presentation of accurate data information (Cypress, 2017) including research methodology, participants' behaviour, experiences and the school context. The in-depth data results ensured transferability and certain significance when implemented to new contexts, circumstances, and participants (Houghton *et al.*, 2013; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003) which was achieved through a transparent link between the data and research findings.

3.9.3.4. *Dependability*

Dependability reflected consistency of the results through the process of repetition the same findings were attained (Shenton, 2004). Dependability relates to the quality of the research results and the researcher's attempt to account for changing conditions in the study, design, or the suitability of the research (Houghton *et al.*, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability was demonstrated with an audit trail (Ary *et al.*, 2010; Schwandt *et al.*, 2007; Chilisa & Preece, 2005; Krefting, 1991). The audit trail demonstrated and outlined my decisions and actions

made throughout the research process by providing detailed reports of the entire data collection, analysis and research interpretations to trace issues of information bias.

3.10. Ethical Considerations

Much of qualitative research depends on gatekeepers as a path of key entry to participants (De Laine, 2000) while the inability to gain access to a research site is deemed as one of the greatest drawbacks (Johl & Renganathan, 2010). To mitigate these challenges and protect participants, this study adhered to the ethical standards of the Declaration of Helsinki; autonomy, non-beneficence, informed consent and confidentiality (Scott, 2013; Neuman, 2011).

The Western Cape Education Department and the University of the Western Cape Ethics Committee granted me ethical clearance with the assistance of my supervisor. I acquainted myself and signed an agreement to adhere to UWC's Code of Conduct for Research. This was achieved through the assistance of my supervisor who forwarded the University Research Ethics Policy and guided my research in conformity with the requirements of the Research policy and the Singapore Statement on Research Integrity (2010).

In terms of beneficence and non-beneficence, this study intended to make a positive contribution and limited any harm to participants (Mertens, 2018). Prior to the data collection process informed consent was obtained. An informed consent form that made participation official, voluntary, and safe for participants to sign was given to them to read and sign (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The consent letters disclosed information that assisted prospective participants to recall information and create opportunities for further discussions should they seek further information about the study. Participants were informed of their capacity to withdraw at any point during the research process and were given the freedom to choose whether or not to participate. Confidentiality and anonymity were upheld by giving schools and participants fictitious names while all personal information was treated confidentially. I adhered to COVID-19 regulations by taking precaution, practising social distancing, and making use of personal protective equipment when engaging with participants at schools.

All research data was used for the sole purpose of this study and research records were protected from any unauthorised access. Aspects of data integrity and information security were ensured through cautious storage of classified documents in the UWC research data repository for a period of five years and destroyed. Privacy obligations were met through record

keeping and processing procedures by upholding University of Western Cape's Data Management Policy.

3.11. Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the research methodology, research paradigm, design, research context, sample, and sampling procedure, data analysis, and the ethical considerations.



Chapter 4:

DATA PRESENTATION

In the previous chapter, I discussed my research methodology for the study and how I conducted the qualitative case study using document analysis, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews. In this chapter, I intend to present data from the document analysis, classroom observations, and interviews. This chapter takes a thematic narrative approach to explain and ascertain Grade 3 teachers' reading comprehension instructional strategies.

4.1. Presentation of Research Sites

The aim of the current section is to present the research sites, which are three different schools. Being aware of the particularities of each school in terms of resources, potential and facilities should contribute to understanding specific data from each school.

4.1.1. *The school environment of three schools*

According to Donald *et al.* (2014), schools are seen as unique systems that comprise various elements, which classify their specific conditions. These systems are considered as part of a broader system and include resources, materials, procedures, and physical infrastructure. Similarly, to how poorly functioning elements have negative effects throughout the system, well-functioning elements also have a positive impact on the entire system, as highlighted by Donald *et al.* (2014). These factors were carefully considered. This includes aspects of human resources, support services, and resources available at schools as illustrated in **Table 1**, **Table 2** and **Figure 1**.

4.1.2. *School A: site information and resource availability*

School A is located in a residential area, which was originally an extensive wetland and farming area. The community experienced forced removals under the Apartheid government. The school was established in 1972 and caters to a disadvantaged community plagued by poverty and the social issues that often accompany it, such as gang activity, domestic violence, and child abuse. It is a non-fee-paying school, school learners come from households where

unemployment is prevalent, relying mainly on the Child Support Grant as their sole source of income.

Foreigners have the option to apply for a concession to learn Afrikaans. Although many learners at school as a mother tongue are placed in English medium classes, making them 100% English Language Learners (ELLs). The school has approximately 798 enrolled learners, along with twenty-two WCED teaching staff, one SGB teacher, and three Grade R teaching staff. Additionally, School A has ten school assistants and seven general assistants appointed by the WCED, as well as parent volunteers.

The school does not utilise teacher assistants or parent volunteers, and they lack professional support personnel staff. The teaching staff is the only trained personnel available to assist both learners and teachers. The facilities at the school include a computer lab and a library, which currently maintains twenty-five computers and a limited book collection, all of which have been donated. The school is presently in the process of equipping ten classrooms with laptops, projectors, and smart boards.

4.1.3. School B: site information and resource availability

School B is located in a residential area green zone and it serves disadvantaged communities in the surrounding area. Due to the Group areas act relocated to the present-day location and was established in 1912. This is a non-fee-paying school. Learners come from homes where unemployment is rife and earn low to no income households. Although English is the medium of instruction, the school welcomes learners from a variety of cultures and backgrounds. They have a large refugee population at school. An approximate 60% percentage is ELL.

There are 1108 learners and a teaching staff of 30 classroom teachers and Grade R practitioners. The school works with the president's youth initiative as well as parents on the reading programme. The district officials support the school unconditionally and school support is limited to the educational assistants. The school has a computer lab that maintains a total of 55 computers and laptops. Resources include twelve (12) FP interactive white boards however, although the school resources are limited to reading materials only in the absence of a school library.

4.1.4. School C: site information and resource availability

School C is a public primary school located within the City of Cape Town, Western Cape and it serves disadvantaged communities in the surrounding area and was established in 1949. This school is a fee-paying school; most of the learners come from poor and socioeconomic backgrounds. The school caters for learners of diverse language backgrounds and accommodates 15% ELL. The school medium of instruction is English however; IsiXhosa language speaking learners are the largest. There are a total of 795 school learners and 15 teachers. Additional staff includes teacher assistants and learner support teachers. The school depends on the WCED as part of professional support personnel.

The only support available to teachers and learners include teacher assistants and learner support teachers. School facilities available include a computer room, Science Lab, and library. The Computer lab consists of 25 computers while the library resources are limited to dictionaries and books.

4.1.5. Teacher profiles of Schools A, B and C

Nine Foundation Phase teachers participated in this study. The sample size consists of six Grade 3 teachers and three HOD's. Their teaching experience varies from five to thirty years, with the expected teaching qualifications, knowledge, extensive experiences as that contributes to the teaching and learning of reading comprehension process.

Table 1 below delineates teachers' profiles in terms of highest qualification, years of experience and grade experience. It should be remembered that A refers to the first school of this study, B to the second school and C to the third school. The names of the nine participants have been replaced by the labels P1 to P9 respectively. The participants' highest qualifications, their number of years of experience as well as number of Grade teaching have been included as rows in **Table 1** below.

School Name	A	A	A	B	B	B	C	C	C
Teacher Name	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
Highest Qualification	HDE III	Hons	HDE IV	B Ed Degree	B Ed Degree	B Ed Degree	Hons	PGCE	Hons
Years of experience	30 years	21 years	30 years	6 years	12 years	12 years	35 years	5 years	33 years
Grade experience	15 years	19 years	30 years	6 years	9 years	12 years	20 years	5 years	22 years

Table 1: Profiles of the participants at the three schools

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Table 2 below exhibits the prevalence of literacy charts in six classrooms at the three schools³.

A comprehensive list of 18 chart elements was compiled, as explained in the section on classroom environment. All six classrooms were identified as print-rich environments, characterised by a wide variety of literacy materials and visually stimulating elements (Morrow & Weinstein, 1982; McGill-Franzen, Allington, Yokoi, and Brooks, 1999). Besides the school readers there was an unlimited variety of books, Neuman (1999) maintains that books play a role in promoting and enhancing literacy skills. However, it was observed that the availability of books in classrooms P4, P5, P7, and P8 was limited. Additionally, P8 did not have a designated reading corner. As a result, many learners resorted to creating their own dictionaries, while others relied on dictionaries provided by teachers. It is worth noting that P4 and P5 do not have access to the school library. Furthermore, P1 and P2 had a homework chart, which was beneficial for revision, while P8 lacked clear classroom rules.

Display charts	P1	P2	P4	P5	P7	P8
Days of the week	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Words matched to pictures	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
High frequency words	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Phonics charts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Alphabet	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Number word chart	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Word types	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Labelled items	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reading corner	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Dictionaries (teacher/ learners)	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
Magazines, newspapers, comics	✓	✓	X	X	X	X
Learners work	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Weather chart	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reading corner	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Library/ computer timetable	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓
Homework chart	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
Classroom rules	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Classroom mat	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 2: Literacy-rich classrooms in the three schools

Figure 1 below displays the seating arrangement of the six Grade 3 classrooms.

³ It should be remembered that only six participants were observed in their respective classrooms. The other three participants are HoD's and do not teach Grade 3 classrooms.

Seating arrangements play a crucial role in the interactions and instructional environment within a classroom.

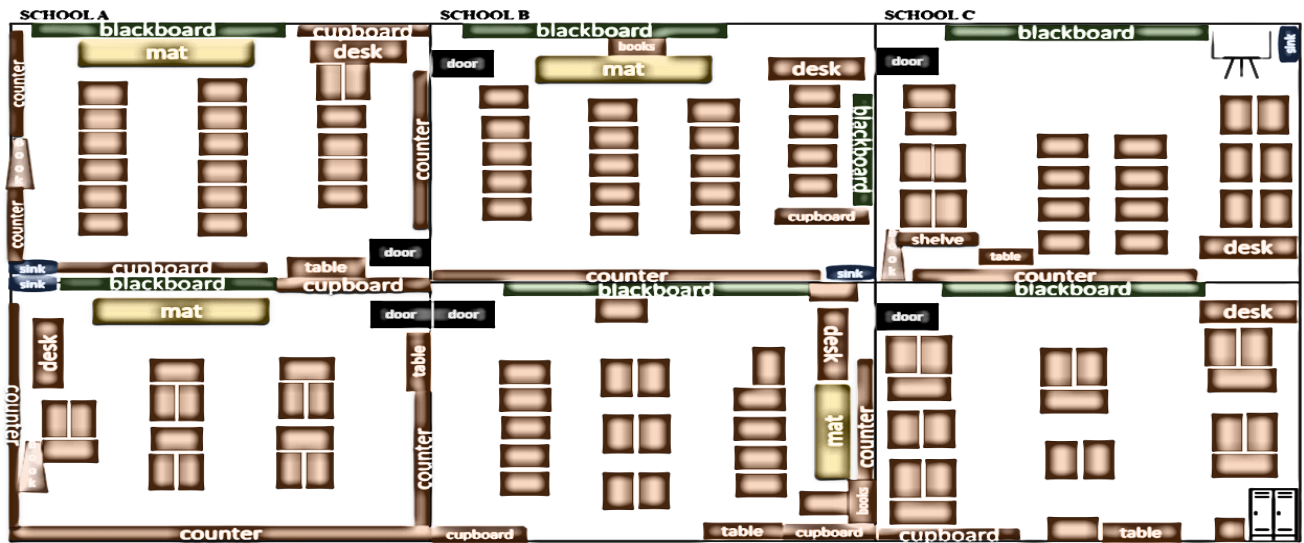


Figure 1: Seating arrangement of six Grade 3 classrooms

4.2. School A: Classroom Observations

4.2.1. P1: Classroom environment

This classroom originally consisted of 36 learners, but only 26 learners were present for the lesson. The classroom itself is spacious enough for the teacher to move freely between desks. The building is in a good condition. Additionally, this well-ventilated classroom is colourfully decorated, adding a vibrant burst of energy and creating an aesthetically attractive area. It is a literacy-rich environment, featuring a reading corner and an abundance of charts and display units as illustrated earlier in **Table 2**. Although this literacy-rich classroom achieved the highest scores, it fell short in terms of the homework chart. The seating arrangements in the classroom consist of rows/columns, with the teacher's desk positioned in the front. This seating arrangement encourages independent work and pair work, although it resembles a traditional pair pods setting, as illustrated in **Figure 1**.

4.2.2. Social environment

The patterns of communication in this classroom resemble an authoritative classroom management style. The teacher maintains a friendly and respectful teacher-learner relationship, fostering an atmosphere of acceptance. The teacher effectively maintains the learners' interest

and attention by working with the whole class. Non-verbal communication is also utilised, such as neutral comments, positive body language, and facial expressions including eye contact, tone of voice, and posture. The teacher demonstrates good management skills and encourages high levels of learner participation. Additionally, the teacher promotes a sense of inclusion and acceptance among different groups. The importance of equality is emphasised, and references to God are made to reinforce these values.

4.2.3. Instructional environment

The teacher actively created opportunities for participation and explanation throughout the lesson. Both learners and teachers had access to various teaching and learning materials, including mind maps, charts, pictures, the South African flag, printed handout notes, and worksheets. These resources were deemed sufficient and effective. The learners' activities effectively facilitated their understanding of the text by utilising various reading strategies. Questioning and worksheets were used to assess comprehension. The participants actively engaged and supported learner interaction. After the lesson, learners were able to work independently with the support provided to the entire class. The learners demonstrated a satisfactory understanding of the work.

The participants used a variety of materials and techniques, such as model work, and enrichment through teacher talk and encouragement, which aimed to develop character and motivate learners to pursue broader goals. The participant had a clear understanding of what they intended to do and how to achieve it. The lesson opened in an interesting and fitting manner, not only achieving the lesson aims but also capturing learners' interest by refocusing their attention after the break. The teacher focused on the lesson and maintained classroom management. It was an interactive lesson, as the participant created numerous opportunities for learner participation. The lesson remained interesting and captured the learners' attention throughout. The instructional strategies, as well as the choice of various activities, provided ample opportunities for participation and engagement.

4.2.4. Reading comprehension instruction: Nelson Mandela

I conducted the second lesson observation for P1 on June 7, 2022, at 10:36 am. Upon arrival, steps were taken to minimise and reduce any further stress triggers by limiting interaction and

focusing on aspects of the situation, such as being in control, managing responses, and remaining optimistic. The participant made the necessary arrangements and settled the learners down. The lesson began once the participant gave permission to start the observation process. The equipment was set-up in the back of the classroom, where I was sitting. The learners appeared comfortable during the observation.

The reading lesson for the observed class utilised the text below, labelled as **Figure 2**. **Figure 2** also includes the comprehension questions related to the text.

Figure 2: Reading Text 1 “Nelson Mandela”

4.2.4.1. Proceedings before reading

P1 began the lesson by captivating the learners with a storytelling activity. It was an effective method for building a knowledge base and motivating learners. P1 employed the questioning strategy to engage with the learners, activating their prior knowledge (APK) and facilitating connections. Additionally, P1 introduced the learners to a mind map, providing them with an understanding of the text structure and setting clear expectations for the lesson. The questioning strategy was used to determine whether the text contained facts or opinions. The participant initiated the lesson by telling the story, followed by introducing the mind map and employing the questioning strategy. **Table 3** below outlines the proceedings prior to the reading process.

Lesson introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once upon time there was a little boy just like your ordinary boy. He was one of the six children and his father died when he was very young so he had to go and stay with his uncle. His uncle put him up. Do you know what he did every day because he stayed in the Eastern Cape? He had to be a little shepherd.
Questioning strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> So, what does a shepherd do? He looked after the sheep every day he took them from the kraal and he went into the area where they could graze and eat and lay like he would take them he

	<i>would do that every day. He would do that and he had lots of time to think.</i>
APK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>He went to school every day because he thought school was important.</i>
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>As he grew up he finished school then went to varsity where varsity is a big faculty where you study to become something and he actually wanted to become a lawyer one day.</i> ● <i>Apartheid means they are going to take you, because you white to stay there in Sea point. I am coloured, I cannot come on Sea point beaches. Everything was separate like the buses everything I could not do there was a white only section on the bus and a black only section on the bus.</i>
Text features/text type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Yes, what do you call that on the board?</i> ● <i>Is it a fable, a story or is it factual?</i> ● <i>What do you call it?</i>

Table 3: School A P1 extract prior reading

4.2.4.2. Proceedings during reading

During the reading process, the participant actively monitored the learners' understanding. They achieved this by dividing the text into manageable parts and numbering each paragraph. The text was read twice, with the learners reading it aloud after the teacher had read it. The questioning strategy was employed as a whole-class activity, where the participant asked questions to assess comprehension. Additionally, the participant explained difficult and unfamiliar words, providing their meanings to support learner understanding. Visual aids, such as visual images or pictures, were used to enhance the visualisation of the text. **Table 4** below outlines the proceedings that took place during the reading process.

Divide text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Therefore, I numbered every cloud. I numbered every cloud. Read one, right read two, read three, four, five, six, seven, eight.</i> ● <i>Can you start it number two?</i> ● <i>So, and he moved to Johannesburg to read number 4.</i>
Cloze reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>He went to school and studied very...</i> ● <i>L: hard</i> ● <i>He spent 27 years in prison and you know what, while he was in prison</i> ● <i>L: he studied</i> ● <i>He became what</i> ● <i>L: He became the first president</i>
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Now a nobel prize is if you are fighting for humanity for a year you are successful about it you will get a nobel prize. Either you will get a medal, or money or you will get a diploma or a certificate because you fend for human beings.</i>

Read aloud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We know that he lived in the city Quno and it is in the Eastern Cape. He was born in Eastern Cape. Number</i>
Questioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>He fought for freedom against apartheid regime because he fought for freedom, what happened to him?</i> • <i>Where was he born, and what happened in his life?</i>
Compare and contrast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Everything was cheap when he was around. One of these days, you as in the future South African leaders you won't even be able to buy a house. So expensive life is going to be even for petrol, stuff, and water, electricity everything is going up. You right things were cheaper then because Nelson Mandela fought for and thought of all the underprivileged poor people. He did not serve rich people. So, while he was in prison he had a dream all his life he had a dream. Number seven 7 which dream?</i>

Table 4: School A P1 extract during reading

4.2.4.3. Proceedings after reading

After the reading process, the participant engaged in a retelling activity, where the learners were prompted to recall and summarise the details of the text in order to seek information. The teacher concluded the lesson by consolidating the key information and expressing concerns and wishes for the learners to embody the qualities of Nelson Mandela. The participant explained words and utilised the questioning strategy to facilitate understanding. As a concluding activity, both the learners and the teacher sang the national anthem together. **Table 5** below outlines the proceedings that took place following the reading process.

Worksheet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I did not say anything about taking my instruction to start a heading Nelson Mandela find the word find the spelling today's date start with number one no talking read the questions answer in full.</i>
Look-back/reread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>You have two reading pieces: can you count, sit. One to question four is given to you now, you are going to do one so you starting you going to find the answers in both pieces read it, the same reading pieces you can find on the board.</i> • <i>Read it now again number one.</i>
Questioning strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>When was Nelson Mandela born?</i> • <i>When he moved to Johannesburg, what did he do?</i>
Lesson closure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I hope that this lesson was truthful to all of you, if doesn't' or didn't touch one of you or all of you. I hope that it touched one of you to become a Nelson Mandela, to become a Nelson Mandela to work hard, study hard and become one day that Nelson Mandela. Think about it, think about it tell yourself in your mind and in your heart I want to become a Nelson Mandela to treat people with respect and all human beings.</i>

Table 5: School A P1 extract after reading

4.2.5. P2: Classroom environment

There are 37 learners in this classroom. Although the movement between desks is somewhat restrictive, it does not hinder instruction. The classroom is spacious enough to accommodate all learners. The building and structure of the classroom are in good condition, creating a conducive learning environment. The learners' noise level was acceptable. The classroom is well decorated and features various toy-based educational tools. Notably, there is a reading corner and a print-rich environment, as illustrated in **Figure 1**. The seating arrangement in the six Grade 3 classrooms resembles group pods of six, which facilitates group activities, as shown in **Table 2**.

4.2.6. Social environment

The patterns of communication observed in the classroom indicate a democratic style. The participant effectively conveyed positive communication through positive comments, such as praising excellent answers. Non-verbal communication was also evident through positive body language, facial expressions, attentiveness, and tone of voice. The participant actively provided opportunities for learner participation and engagement. A respectful teacher-learner relationship was maintained throughout the observation. Moreover, the participants upheld a sense of inclusion and acceptance among the learners. This was evident in the ability group, where the rest of the learners were seated in their desks. P2 proactively addressed classroom group dynamic challenges by assigning tasks to the learners. The learners in the focus group demonstrated visible signs of acceptance and engagement, indicating that none of these learners were discriminated against.

4.2.7. Instructional environment

The participant effectively maintained the learners' interest and attention throughout the lesson. They utilised praise as reinforcement, encouraging learners to participate and answer questions. The participant created numerous opportunities for active participation and established a connection with the learners. Close monitoring of questions and answers was carried out, ensuring that the learners understood the lesson. The participant scaffolded the lesson by providing guidance and modelling the answers to questions, followed by independent tasks.

The learners remained engaged throughout the lesson and demonstrated sufficient mastery of the content.

While the participants primarily used the textbook, they employed a variety of strategies to improve learning. The participant scaffolded the lesson by modelling answers and providing support to a group of learners. Opportunities for enrichment were evident, particularly through the extended language lesson on collective nouns. The participants and learners had access to learning materials, including textbooks and workbooks. The specific resources used during the lesson included the textbook and the Clever Comprehension Book 2 textbook.

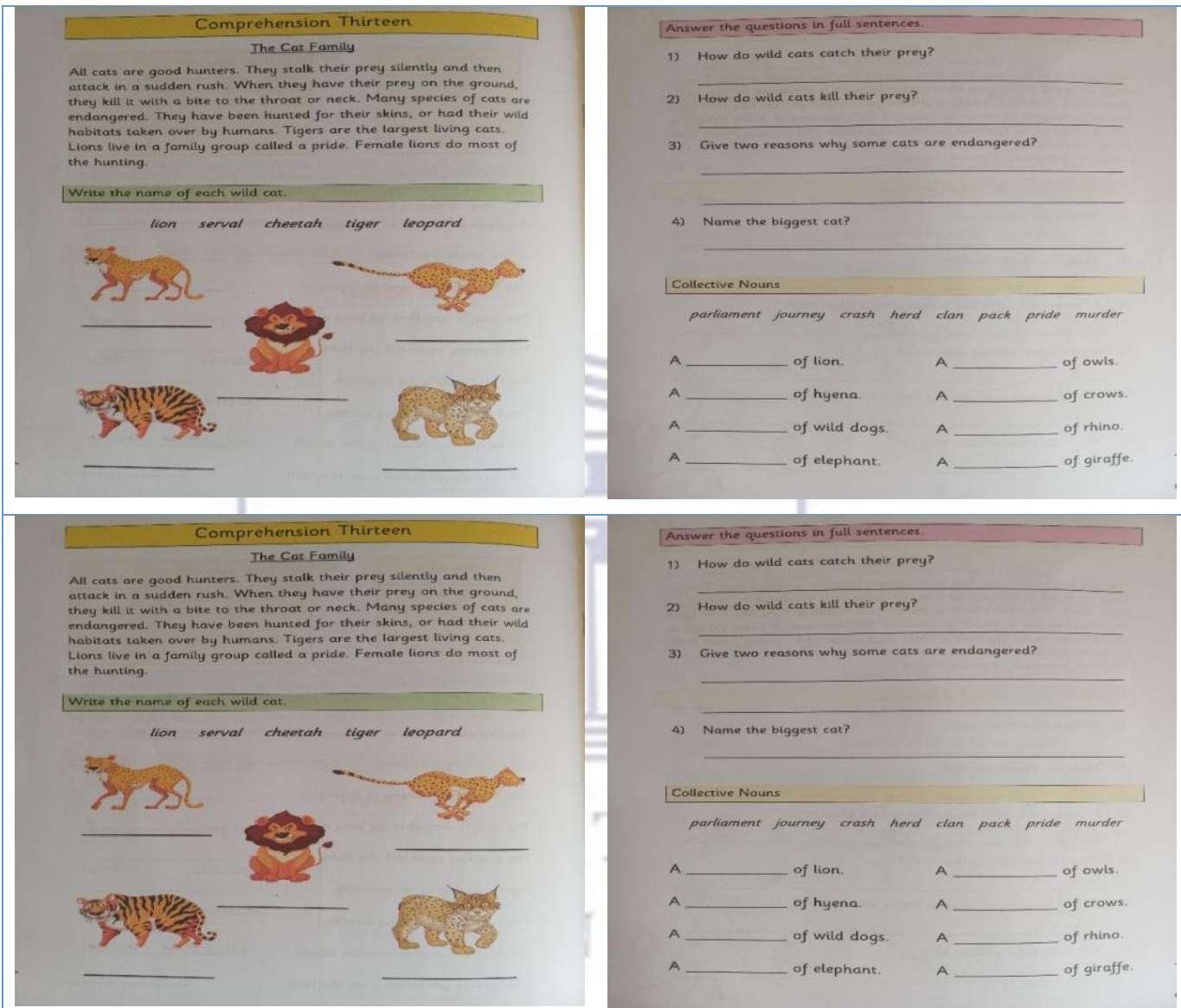
4.2.8. Reading comprehension instruction: *The cat family*

I conducted the second lesson observation for P2 on June 7, 2022, at 9:15 am. When I arrived, P2 greeted me and appeared more relaxed compared to my previous visit. She gave instructions to the learners regarding the work they needed to do. While P2 was arranging the learners, I prepared my equipment. The participant arranged the advanced level learners in front of the classroom on the mat.

Once the participants settled and provided instructions to the lower-level Home Language Learners, the lesson observation began. The participant sat on a chair in front of the classroom, and the learners' seating arrangement resembled a horseshoe shape. With a more focused approach, the participant exhibited better control over the classroom.

4.2.8.1. Proceedings before reading

The participant used appropriate strategies to activate the learners' prior knowledge, by making connections to the prior lesson. They initiated a discussion to explore the learners' existing



knowledge about mammals and asked questions to assess their grasp of the topic. The questioning strategy was used to engage the learners and assess their understanding.

The participant provided direct instruction and explained the expectations of the lesson. They set the purpose of reading, by finding specific information and to answer questions. Before delving into the text, the learners engaged in a brainstorming activity and discussed their existing knowledge about mammals. This served as a foundation for the subsequent focus on the words found in the text.

Figure 3 below displays the reading text that was used for the reading lesson in the observed class. **Figure 3** also includes the comprehension questions related to the text.

Figure 3: Reading Text 2 “The Cat Family”

Table 6 below outlines the proceedings prior to the reading process.

Lesson introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Today, we are going to look at the cat family. Now remember, you may follow with your finger, so you can follow the words while I am reading.</i>
APK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Yes, we did. Grade 3 the last time we looked at mammals and we read all about mammals.</i> • <i>Where do, what did we read, what did we read about mammals?</i> • <i>How do we stalk? Who has seen the cat in the garden trying to catch a</i>
Set purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Let us go to page 28. What we are going to do is. I am going to read the text. Then I am going to ask a few questions. You have to listen and where do we find answers. What do we call when we read a story in the?</i>
Questioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Who can remember what type of animals are mammals? Raise your hand and do not shout out.</i> • <i>What type of animal is a mammal?</i>

Table 6: School A P2 extract prior reading

4.2.8.2. Proceedings during reading

To enhance reading comprehension, the participant identified and discussed all difficult words encountered in the text. The learners were expected to identify two words they did not understand from the text. In order to understand the meaning of a word, learners’ role-play the word “stalk.” This interactive demonstration not only helped the learners process and become familiar with the word, but also enabled them to visualise the corresponding image in the text.

Throughout the lesson, the questioning strategy was consistently employed to engage the learners and assess their understanding. The participant related the text to real-life experiences and to make inferences based on information. The text was read and reread to facilitate the identification of specific information and to answer comprehension questions. The participant actively monitored the learners’ thinking and comprehension through the implementation of the questioning strategy.

Table 7 below outlines the proceedings during the reading process.

Word recognition: sight words and phonics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Now you choose a word prey</i> • <i>Thank you, can we choose another word endangered? I am writing it down endangered.</i>
Read aloud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Cat Family all cats are good hunters, they stalk their prey when they have their prey on the ground they kill it with a bite to the throat or neck. Many species of cats are endangered; they have been hunted for their skins, or had their wild habitats taken over by humans. Tigers are the largest living cats. Lions live in a family group called a pride. Female lions do most of the hunting.</i>
Scanning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>In the text, it tells you what a group of lions called. Who can find it? Who can tell me what is it called?</i>
Teacher reads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>All cats are good hunters. Follow with two fingers all cats are good hunters they stalk their prey and then attack in a sudden rush. When they have their prey, when they have their prey on the ground, they kill it with a bite to the throat or neck. Many species of cats are endangered. They have been hunted for their skins, or had their wild habitats taken over by humans. Tigers are the largest living cats. Lions live in a family group called a pride. Female lions do most of the hunting.</i>
Visualisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A butterfly or a lizard, have you seen how the cat moves and crawling shows us with your body, is the bird you are going to now stalk the bird behind her.</i> • <i>Who wants to try it? Show us the bird, stalk you are the cat so stalk you are going to jump on the prey.</i>
Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Who said a bird, now who think in your head he said a bird you said a dog, a cat.</i> • <i>Who lays the egg. A bird lays an egg because it is not a mammal. Who said that an elephant?</i>

Table 7: School A P2 extract during reading

4.2.8.3. Proceedings after reading

The participant implemented scaffolding techniques by engaging in collective questioning and answering before assigning learners to complete the activity in their books. They reread the text to understand and answer the questions. Learners were encouraged to search for and select specific information in order to respond to the questions. The participant ensured any misunderstandings regarding the text were clarified, and learners were encouraged to personally relate to the text.

The questioning strategy and textbook activities were utilised to gauge the learners' understanding, and the textbook activities were effective in assessing comprehension. The participant provided clear feedback on the learners' question and answer responses, valuing all participants' contributions. However, the participant faced challenges in managing and

facilitating learners of different language groups. Regular monitoring and facilitation were required for learners seated at their desks to manage noise levels.

Based on the learners' responses and observations, it can be inferred that the learners understood the lesson effectively.

Table 8 below outlines the proceedings following the reading process.

Look-back/ reread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Grab a pencil now. We are going to read, check, and write down all the wild animals that relate to the picture for me now. Do that now who has completed, where do get answers from the text.</i>
Questioning strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Thank you, when I say that animals are endangered what do you think that means? Endangered so what does that mean about that animal?</i>

Table 8: School A P2 extract after reading

4.3. School B: Classroom Observations

4.3.1. P4: Classroom environment

There are a total of 37 learners in the classroom, but only 21 learners were present during the observation. The classroom is spacious enough to comfortably accommodate all the learners. The structure of the classroom is in good condition, and the noise level is deemed acceptable.

Table 2 illustrates that this is a literacy-rich classroom, featuring a variety of display charts. However, it lacks resources such as magazines, newspapers, comics, and learners' work, as depicted in **Figure 1**. The seating arrangement in the classroom resembles a traditional pair pods setting commonly found in Grade 3 classrooms.

4.3.2. Instructional environment

The learners remained consistently engaged throughout the lesson, which was achieved by breaking down the text information into five manageable parts or elements. This was facilitated through verbal and written tasks, the use of questioning strategies, and the resolution of problems provided in a carefully supportive learning environment. The participant effectively scaffolded the text by making use of various resource materials, modelling the lesson, and encouraging both whole classroom instruction and independent work.

Opportunities for active participation were created through the use of questioning techniques, allowing learners to respond and engage with the content. The learners actively read and reread

the text, while also focusing on carrying out punctuation marks correctly with the guidance and demonstration provided by the participant.

Several strategies were employed during the lesson, including activating prior knowledge, utilising the questioning strategy, incorporating visualisation (such as drawing pictures of superhero characters), identifying main ideas within the text's five parts or elements, and delivering clear explanations through questioning techniques. Learners were given opportunities to practise these skills by completing tasks, and the participant provided feedback by facilitating the class and monitoring learner work.

The questioning strategy was also used to connect the content of the text to real-life contexts or experiences, reinforcing the understanding of words and the text. The lesson was scaffolded with limited peer interaction, but there were sufficient teaching and learning materials available, including a whiteboard slide of the text, printed handout notes, and learners' books.

4.3.3. Social environment

The participant effectively communicated with clear instructions and adopted a democratic leadership style that encourages learner participation and guided the lesson. Communication was facilitated through the use of questioning strategies, which engaged learners and promoted active involvement in the learning process. The participant also prioritised building positive relationships through respectful and friendly interactions, creating an atmosphere conducive to learning.

Although there was no group work observed during the lesson, the participant was successful in maintaining learner interest. The participant ensured social inclusion by involving all learners in the activities, even without group work. The whole class activities fostered a sense of community within the classroom, as all teachers worked together towards the same learning goals simultaneously.

The lesson followed a logical pattern, with the participant identifying and addressing specific and key information. This cohesive approach provided clarity and structure to the lesson, facilitating learners' understanding and engagement. The participant's effective communication, democratic leadership style, and promotion of social inclusion contributed to the overall success of the lesson.

4.3.4. Reading comprehension instruction: Superhero Joey

I arrived at the school at 8:20 am, and the Deputy Principal asked if I wanted to go to the respective classrooms. I conducted the classroom lesson observation on September 5, 2022, at 10:31 am. Once the participant was ready, I proceeded to the P4 classroom. The participant introduced herself in a friendly manner and offered me her desk at the front of the classroom. However, I declined and requested to be seated at the back to minimise distractions. The participant signed the consent forms before proceeding with the lesson observation. The learners who did not give consent were placed under the supervision of the teacher assistant at the far end of the classroom.

Due to the rainy weather, many learners were absent, and only a small number of learners were present and placed under the care of the teacher assistant. My initial impression was that the participant was expecting my visit, and the classroom appeared to be well-managed.

Figure 4, displayed below, shows the reading text that was used for the reading lesson. **Figure 4** also includes the comprehension questions related to the text.

The figure shows two pages of a reading material. The left page is the story 'Superhero Joey' by Katherine Rollins, featuring a cartoon illustration of a superhero boy. The right page contains five comprehension questions and an extra drawing task.

Superhero Joey
by Katherine Rollins

Joey put on his mask.
He flapped his cape in front of the mirror.
This is the best costume, he thought.
I'm sure to win the contest.

Joey skipped downstairs:

"Here I come to rescue you!" Joey shouted.
"Nice costume," said Joey's dad.
"I'm a superhero," said Joey.

"Joey," said Mom, "I need you to watch Mindy at the party."
Joey looked at his little sister. "But Mom, superheroes don't have kid sisters."

"Well this superhero has a sister," said Mom.
"What will Mindy's costume be?" asked Dad.
"I'm not sure," said Mom.
Joey got an idea. "I know!"

Joey took Mindy upstairs to his room.
He dug through his closets.

Joey found his baby blanket.
He put it around Mindy's shoulders.

At the party, Superhero Joey and his sidekick Supergirl Mindy won first prize!

Name: _____

Superhero Joey
by Katherine Rollins

1. Why was Joey dressed like a superhero?

2. What was Joey supposed to do at the party?
a. fly in the air b. help make the food
c. watch his little sister d. clean up

3. Name all four characters in this story.

4. When does this story take place?
a. at the party b. before the party
c. after the party d. at Joey's house

5. What did Joey put on Mindy when he dressed her up as Supergirl?

Something extra: On the back of this paper, draw a picture of Super Joey and his sidekick Supergirl Mindy.

Figure 4: Reading Text 3 "Superhero Joey"

4.3.4.1. Proceedings before reading

The topic for the reading comprehension lesson is “Superhero Joey.” Before reading the text, the participant used her fingers to show numbers 1, 2, and 3. These numbers served as reminders during reading and helped signal certain punctuation marks and demonstrate how a sentence is constructed and read. The participant encouraged choral reading and guided the reading process by initiating the reading and using a ruler to point at the text. She also helped the learners become familiar with the vocabulary in the text by providing synonyms for certain words.

Table 9 below outlines the proceedings prior to the reading process.

Set purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Right, you are going to do Superhero Joey. You are going to complete and answer the reading piece on your own.</i>
Read aloud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Superhero Joey put on his mask. Joey put on his mask. He flapped his cape in front of the mirror. This is the best costume. This is the best costume, he thought. I am sure to win the contest. Joey skipped downstairs. “Here I come to rescue you.</i>
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Now look at the word contest. What is another word for a contest? What is a synonym for contest?</i> • <i>We are looking. What is another word for closet? Who can tell me another word for a closet a synonym for the word closet</i>
APK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I do not think he was supposed to clean up at the party.</i>

Table 9: School B P4 extract prior reading

4.3.4.2. Proceedings during reading

The participant asked the learners to read the text for a second time, focusing on the tone of voice and exclamation marks. She then posed several questions to the learners, such as:

Who do you know that has a sidekick? Give examples of superheroes that have sidekicks. What does a sidekick do? What does your sidekick do? Who is the sidekick in the class? What does the sidekick in the class do? Does superhero Joey have a sidekick, Super girl Mindy? Is Joey a real superhero?

After the third reading, the participant asked the learners questions related to the title of the story, the main character, the setting, and the problem. The learners were asked to complete and answer these different aspects of the reading piece on their own.

Table 10 below outlines the proceedings during the reading process.

Punctuation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are going to read it one more time, adhere to the commas, question mark, full stop, 66, and 99 this is our last reading.
Look-back/ Reread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First prize now we are going to read it again for the second time fluently with expression You are going to read it one more time, adhere to the commas, question mark, full stop and 66 and 99 this is our last reading.
Questioning strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you think he was looking in his closet? In this story, who was the Superhero? What is the title of the story? Who are the main characters in the story?
Scanning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can read the paragraph so that you can find the solution.
Story structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who are the main characters in the story? Who are the main characters in the story? No, where did the story take place, Park so whom of you said yes it did? At Joey's house right, we have one problem: something did not go as Joey planned. What was the problem? What happened? Did everything go as planned?
Look-back/ reread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First prize now we are going to read it again for the second time fluently with expression You are going to read it one more time, adhere to the commas, question mark, full stop, 66, and 99 this is our last reading.

Table 10: School B P4 extract during reading

4.3.4.3. Proceedings after reading

Prior to teaching the lesson, the participant wrote the title, main character, setting, problem, and solution on the whiteboard. During the lesson, the participant drew focus on these five elements of the story and revisited them. The participant reread the story and instructed learners to draw a picture at the end of the task.

The participant then instructed learners to complete a worksheet related to the story. They were asked to read the story four times and turn to the questions 1-5 on the slide. Learners were expected to complete the worksheet independently, with the participant and teacher assistant acting as facilitators to assist those who needed help.

Two activities were used to assess learners' understanding, and both the participant and the teacher assistant helped and facilitated the learners' work. All questions asked by learners were accepted.

However, it is noted that the text may not have been stimulating and challenging enough for the learners. Despite this, the classroom performed well based on their responses to the questions and tasks completed.

Table 11 below outlines the proceedings following the reading process.

Visualisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Your picture is only going to take your picture is only going to take five lines your picture is only going to take five lines, then you jot down a line.</i>
Clarifying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>He had an idea to fix the problem. He found a solution. He fetched his baby blanket so that Mindy can look like a superhero.</i> • <i>The story took place at Joey's house. You cannot say by Joey's house, you cannot give one-word answers. Let us look at the next one, what does it say here?</i>
Spelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Remember if you cannot spell a word then look for it in the story. The word you need is in your story.</i>

Table 11: School B P4 extract after reading

4.3.5. P5: Classroom environment

Of the total 36 learners, 28 were present in the classroom. The classroom is spacious enough to accommodate all the learners, although there may be some restriction in movement between desks. The building and structure of the classroom are in good condition, providing a conducive environment for learning. The noise level among the learners is acceptable.

The classroom is designed to be print-rich, with a dedicated reading corner located towards the back. There are also display charts available, although there is a lack of magazines, newspapers, comics, and learners' work, as mentioned in **Table 2**. The seating arrangements in **Figure 1** show that the classroom is organised into four rows, with the two outer rows arranged as pair pods and the two middle rows resembling group pods. This seating arrangement is designed to accommodate struggling learners and promote group work.

4.3.6. Social environment

Patterns of communication in the classroom indicate an authoritative teaching style, where the participant takes charge of the instruction. However, opportunities for active participation and engagement from the learners are still evident. The participant maintains a respectful teacher-learner relationship, ensuring that the learners feel valued and included in the class.

The participant effectively maintains the learners' interest and attention throughout the lesson. Verbal praise is used as a form of reinforcement, encouraging learners to actively participate and answer questions. The language used by the participant does not pose a hindrance to the teaching process.

Although no group work took place during the observed lesson, the classroom still displays a sense of cohesion and acceptance. Learners are actively engaged and none of them are discriminated against. The overall classroom atmosphere is inclusive and supportive.

4.3.7. Instructional environment

The participant effectively used the questioning strategy to engage learners and activate their prior knowledge. This strategy facilitated prediction, inference, monitoring, and selection skills. The participant also incorporated activities to enhance phonological awareness, such as clapping syllables of words.

The participant provided explicit instruction and scaffolded the lesson using various strategies, although the specific strategies were not explained. The participant considered the diverse needs of the learners by offering a variety of activities to cater to different learning styles and abilities. The availability of resource materials and worksheets was sufficient to support the lesson.

The learning activities employed by the participant were effective in maintaining learner engagement throughout the lesson. The participant closely monitored learners' responses to questions and answers, ensuring their understanding and providing scaffolding when necessary.

The participant utilised a range of resource materials, including worksheet activities and instructional strategies, to support the teaching and learning process. The lesson was conducted as a whole-class instruction, with the participant modelling the answers to questions and providing independent tasks for learners. Reinforcement was provided to consolidate learning.

Through the questioning strategy, the participant activated learners' prior knowledge, explained the recycling process, and offered concrete examples of recycled products. The availability of learning materials such as interactive whiteboards, printed handout notes, and learners' workbooks further enhanced the learning experience.

4.3.8. Reading comprehension instruction: A Newspaper's Journey

I conducted a classroom observation on September 8, 2022, at School B in a P5 classroom. The participant was friendly and aware of my presence, as expected. Upon entering the classroom, I took a seat in the teacher assistant's area. The participant then instructed specific learners who would be under the supervision of the teacher assistant. While waiting for the observation to begin, I prepared my equipment and asked for any outstanding consent forms to monitor the completion process. I waited for the participant's permission before initiating the observation. During the lesson, the participant requested breaks, resulting in two separate recordings.

Figure 5 below shows the reading text used for the reading lesson above.

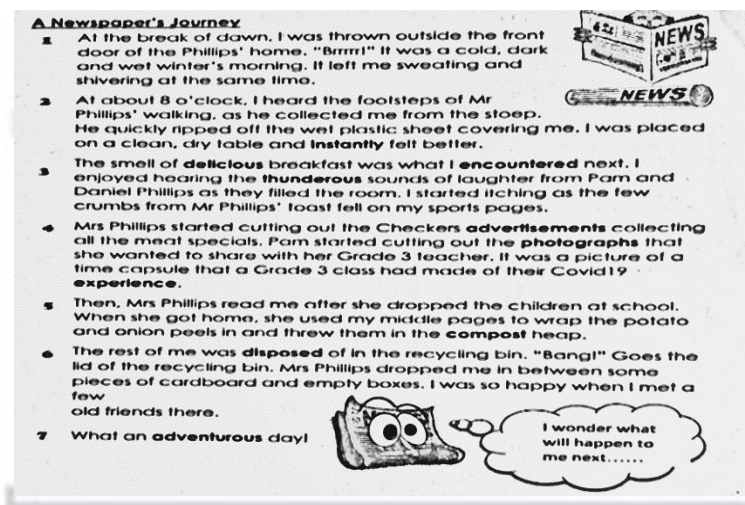
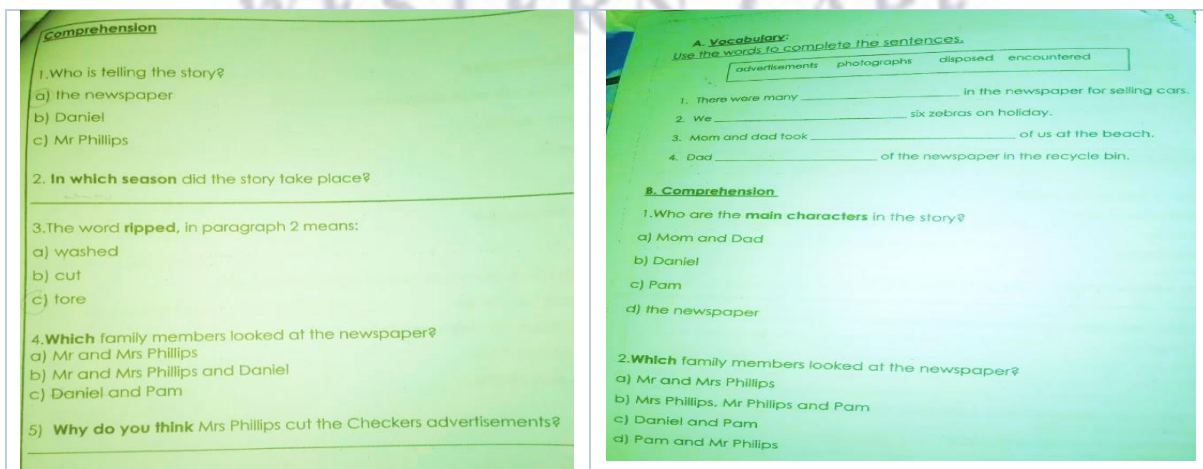


Figure 5: Reading Text 4 "A Newspaper Journey"

Figure 6 below contains the questions necessary for the reading comprehension are included in Figure 6 shown above.



3. **Where** did Mrs Phillips drop the potato peels?
a) in the bin
b) in the recycle bin
c) on the compost heap
d) on the floor

4. **When** did Mrs Phillips read the newspaper?
a) when she woke up
b) after breakfast
c) after she dropped the children off at school
d) before cooking

5) **Who** were the newspaper's friends?
a) cardboard and boxes
b) Pam and Daniel
c) Mr and Mrs Phillips
d) Sam and Fred

6) The word **instantly** in paragraph 2 means:
a) in a few seconds
b) immediately
c) later
d) tomorrow

7) **What** did Mr Phillips have for breakfast?
a) porridge
b) eggs
c) toast
d) coffee

8) **Why do you think** Mr Phillips ripped the plastic off **quickly**?

9) Label these sentences using **1, 2, 3 and 4** to show the correct **sequence (order)** of events that happened in the story.

Mrs Phillips cut out specials.	2
The children went to school.	3
Mr Phillips opened the newspaper.	1
The newspaper met a few friends.	4

Figure 6: Necessary Questions for Reading Text 4 “A Newspaper Journey”

4.3.8.1. Proceedings before reading

The lesson began with the teacher reading the text aloud. After the reading, the participant employed the questioning strategy to engage the learners and elicit their predictions about the title and the content of the story. The participants asked questions to help the learners make educated guesses and speculate on what the story might be about based on the information they read in the text.

Table 12 below outlines the proceedings prior to the reading process.

Teacher reads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>A Newspaper's Journey</i> 1. <i>At the break of dawn, I was thrown outside the front door of Philip's home. "Brrrrr!" It was a cold, dark and wet winter's morning. It left me sweating and shivering at the same time.</i> 2. <i>At about 8 o'clock, I heard the footsteps of Mr Philips' walking, as he collected me from the stoep. He quickly ripped off the wet plastic sheet covering me. I was placed on a clean, dry table and instantly felt better.</i> 3. <i>The smell of delicious breakfast was what I encountered next. I enjoyed hearing the thunderous sounds of laughter from Pam and Daniel Philips as they filled the room. I started itching as the few crumbs from Mr Philips' toast fell on my sports pages</i>
Predictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>I wonder what will happen to me next by looking at the title of the story and by looking at the things in the story.</i>
Questioning strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>A Newspaper's Journey, what will be the title of the story?</i> ● <i>What is the story about?</i> ● <i>What happens to the newspaper early in the morning?</i>

Table 12: School B P5 extract prior reading

4.3.8.2. Proceedings during reading

To enhance reading comprehension, the participant employed a systematic approach by reading the text paragraph by paragraph, ensuring clear distinctions between each section. This strategy aimed to break down the text into manageable portions, facilitating better understanding for the learners. Additionally, the participant identified and explained difficult or unknown words to support vocabulary development. Real-life situations and previous classroom tasks were used to provide context and activate the learners' prior knowledge, helping them grasp the meaning of the words.

To further reinforce vocabulary understanding, the participant engaged the learners in activities such as counting syllables and discussing the meanings of six specific words. Clapping the syllables of words served as a phonological awareness exercise, promoting a deeper understanding of word structure and pronunciation. These activities aimed to enhance the learners' vocabulary skills and overall comprehension of the text.

Table 13 below outlines the proceedings during the reading process.

Set purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>There are some words that you did not understand. I am going to ask you some questions directly related to the actual story. Every time you do a story, you will be asked these questions.</i>
Text feature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Then, there is a talk bubble. A speech bubble looks like that and the cloud is the thought bubble, he is wondering. I wonder what will happen to me next by looking at the title of the story and by looking at the things in the story. What is the story about?</i>
Divide text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>He's thrown away, no that is right at the end of the story, where he was thrown away, now I am going to read paragraph one.</i>
Scanning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Look at the back of the story, find the words "onions, potato peels." I have explained about the compost heap.</i>
cloze reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>No, you sweat a bit, number paragraph number two.</i> At about 8 o'clock, I heard the footsteps of Mr Philips' walking, as he collected me from the stoep. So, there you go so he was lying on the L: Stoep
APK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Oh, or when you are on Facebook, I know many of you on Facebook there are always advertisements that pop up. Or when you on your phone you go to Google searching for something there's always an advertisement coming up.</i>
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Dawn is sunrise, when the sun is just when the sun is rising in and the sky is a little bit orange, just before the sun rises that's dawn so.</i>
Syllables/ repeat syllables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ad-ver-tise-ment</i> • <i>en- coun-tered</i> • <i>Ad-ven-tu-rous</i> • <i>Ex-pe-rie-nce</i> • <i>Pho-to-graph</i> • <i>Dis-pose</i>

Read aloud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>At the break of dawn, I was thrown outside the front door of Philip's home. So, I do not know if any of you have seen in the American movies where there is always a boy on a bicycle with a basket in front, with a pile of newspapers. Then as he is cycling on the bicycle, he takes a newspaper, he throws it, and it lands on the lawn of the people. So, he is a delivery boy. He delivers the newspaper and he is paid to do that so you see these people going to the shop and buying a newspaper. They get their newspaper delivered so they are paid like per month. Every morning they will get their newspaper. Then you will see the rich people will come outside in slippers and their gowns and they open their door and pick up the newspaper and they will go sit at their breakfast table.</i>
Inferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>They probably do some recycling or some they take the potato peels and onions peels you can use to make like compost.</i>
Look-back/ reread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It can be any one of those so you need to go back to the story all the time. Can you read that sentence for me or the paragraph about the potato peels and the onions peels?</i>

Table 13: School B P5 extract during reading

4.3.8.3. Proceedings after reading

The participant effectively scaffold the lesson by initially conducting a collective question-and-answer session before instructing the learners to complete the activity independently. This approach allowed for a collaborative discussion and clarification of any uncertainties. During the post-reading activity, the participant posed key questions and provided scaffolding through a worksheet, specifically questions 1-9. Additionally, the participant prompted learners to consider what happened to the newspaper after the main character found his friends, thereby encouraging critical thinking and inference skills.

To deepen the learners' understanding of the recycling process, the participants activated their prior knowledge and provided tangible examples, fostering a solid knowledge base. The participant further created opportunities for enrichment by inviting learners to write their own version of the story, thereby promoting creativity and personal engagement.

The questioning strategy and the worksheet activity served as assessment tools to gauge the learners' understanding. The participant provided clear feedback to the questions, valuing all answers and posing further thought-provoking questions. Based on the learners' responses and the range of activities performed, it can be concluded that the learners achieved satisfactory outcomes. The activities implemented in the whole class instruction lesson accommodated learners of various reading abilities.

Despite some unexpected interruptions during the class, the participant effectively managed the lesson and ensured that learners remained engaged and actively participated in the activities.

Table 14 below outlines the proceedings following the reading process.

Questioning strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which product did she want to buy that was on specials? • Who are the main characters in the story?
Predictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you can see, the paragraphs are already numbered so that when you do answer the questions you will know exactly where to go to find the answers. He's thrown away, no that is right at the end of the story, where he was thrown away, now I am going to read paragraph one.
Summarise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was a picture of a time capsule that a Grade 3 class had made of their COVID experience, so what happened so far what happened tell me? So, the newspaper gets delivered from out of the system at 08:00 Mr Philips comes and he takes the newspaper from his stoep he goes inside he has his breakfast eating the toast, the crumbs of the toast falling onto the newspaper.

Table 14: School B P5 extract after reading

4.4. School C: Classroom Observations

4.4.1. P7: Classroom environment

Of the 42 learners, 36 were present in the classroom, indicating a relatively high attendance rate. The size of the classroom is sufficient to accommodate all learners comfortably, and it does not hinder the instruction process. The facilities in the classroom are in good condition, providing a conducive environment for learning. The noise level was manageable and well controlled, indicating effective classroom management.

The classroom is designed to be print-rich, as evidenced by the presence of various resources and displays, as shown in **Table 2**. However, it is worth noting that there is a lack of dictionaries, magazines, newspapers, and comics, which could further enhance the literacy environment. Nevertheless, the classroom does feature a distinct reading corner with a decorative selection of books stacked on a table, a bookshelf, and a bookstand, creating a designated library space for the learners.

The seating arrangement in the classroom follows a traditional layout, with two sets of group pods facing each other on either side of the classroom, and the two central rows arranged in pair pods facing the front of the classroom, as depicted in **Figure 1**. This arrangement allows

for both collaborative and individual learning, facilitating different instructional approaches and promoting interaction among learners.

4.4.2. Social environment

The patterns of communication observed in the classroom indicate a democratic teaching style, where the participant actively created opportunities for learner participation. The participants maintained a respectful and positive teacher-learner relationship, fostering an atmosphere of acceptance and inclusion. Learners were engaged and their interest and attention were effectively maintained throughout the lesson.

Although the learners had limited chances to engage with each other due to the absence of group work, the participant implemented activities satisfactorily, utilising a whole class instruction approach that led to independent tasks for individual learners. The classroom displayed general patterns of cohesion and appeared well-managed, contributing to a conducive learning environment.

The participant demonstrated a commitment to inclusivity and acceptance by ensuring that all learners had the opportunity to participate in classroom activities. No learners were discriminated against or excluded during the lesson, reinforcing a sense of fairness and equal treatment. The observed classroom practices align with a democratic teaching style that values learner participation, maintains positive relationships, and promotes an inclusive learning environment.

4.4.3. Instructional environment

The teacher effectively creates opportunities for active participation by employing a questioning strategy and providing clear instruction. The participant engages with the learners by scaffolding their learning, offering support and guidance as needed. The teaching materials used are appropriate and the activities are well-structured and planned.

The participant demonstrates satisfactory preparation, evident in the lesson structure and flow, as well as the availability of printed worksheets and resource materials. The participant appears friendly, prepared, and focused, contributing to a positive learning environment. The use of the same text and assessment tool throughout the lesson allows for consistency and a clear progression of learning.

To accommodate different learning styles, the participant utilises various resources, such as playing an audiobook of the poem and providing a printed version, ensuring learners have multiple ways to engage with the material. The participant also creates opportunities for assessing learning through questioning strategies and worksheet activities.

The lesson follows a whole-class reading instruction approach, encouraging interaction and engagement between the participant and the learners. The participant supports learners by mentoring and checking their understanding using effective questioning strategies and activities. The use of different materials and scaffolding techniques further enhances the learning experience.

The participant has access to various teaching and learning materials, including an audiobook of the poem played on a cell phone, printed handout notes and worksheets, a blackboard and chalk, and learners' workbooks. Through explicit instruction and the implementation of a range of strategies and resources, the participant effectively facilitates the learning process.

4.4.4. Reading comprehension instruction: *Dad and the cat and the tree*

Prior to conducting research at school, I forwarded the proposed observation and interview dates to the school and issued the proposed observation and interview dates to the teachers. The first scheduled lesson observation was scheduled for 22 September 2022. I emailed the proposed time slots to the principal, unfortunately the participant cancelled and rescheduled for today. The participant was polite, friendly, and a bit uneasy and the learners were comfortable during the observation.

When I entered the classroom, the participant said that I could be seated in the teacher assistant sitting area and this is where I prepared my equipment. The participant monitored learners and asked if they had any outstanding forms with them. The participant assisted me by ticking off the learner's name on the class list. Once I calculated and determined this information the participant asked the teacher assistant to supervise learners outside the classroom. The teacher assistant was very helpful in this regard, as she took the responsibility to oversee those learners. Once learners left the classroom, we proceeded with the lesson observation.

Figure 7 below displays the reading text used for the reading lesson above. **Figure 7** includes the comprehension questions related to the text

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Water now where does your cat sleep, the children that have cats you can tell me maybe your neighbour has a cat or your friend has a cat and you will observe where the cat is sleeping.</i>
Questioning strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>You have a dog, what is the dog's name?</i> • <i>What is your cat's name?</i> • <i>What do you feed your cats?</i> • <i>So, what is the name of the cat food?</i>

Table 15: School C P7 extract prior reading

4.4.4.2. Proceedings during reading

P7 employed a questioning strategy to actively engage the learners with the text and assess their understanding. The participant skilfully posed a series of questions related to the text, effectively breaking it down into manageable sections by asking learners to number each stance from 1 to 10. Throughout this process, the participant diligently monitored the learners' progress. Additionally, the participant utilised the blackboard as a visual aid, writing down the dog's name and encouraging learners to spell it out. They emphasised the importance of reading and re-reading the text to comprehend and identify specific information.

Table 16 below outlines the proceedings during the reading process.

Divide text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We will first number the verses we start here 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.</i>
Syllables/ repeat syllables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SP-O-T
Read aloud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>This morning a cat got Stuck in our tree Dad said, "Right, just Leave it to me." The tree was wobbly, The tree was tall.</i>
Teacher reads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Stand Out of the way!" Mum said, "Don't fall Again, O.K.?" "Fall again?" said Dad. "Funny joke!" Then he swung himself up On a branch. It broke.</i>
Clarifying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Yes, dad said how could you say. I am going to fall again. It is a funny joke. Dad was very confident.</i> • <i>He said the cat could jump out of the tree I agree with. Cats can climb very high and they can jump off without even getting hurt. Okay But poor old dad fell off the tree. Could dad jump off?</i>
Visualisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What does it mean "easy as winking?" Wink for me with your eye, wink. If you wink, it is easy, then boys.</i>
Look-back/ reread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lovely, I see you know, go back to your passage, and find the two words.</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Incomprehension you always need to go back to your passage and find the word in the passage.</i> • <i>We need to go back to the passage now, which plan worked?</i>
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Table 16: *School C P7 extract during reading*

4.4.4.3. *Proceedings after reading*

The participant skilfully guided the learners through the comprehension worksheet questions, providing scaffolding by working through the questions and highlighting specific information. They accomplished this by posing the questions and randomly selecting learners to respond, encouraging active participation. By answering key questions and emphasising the importance of reading and re-reading to locate specific information, the participant effectively activated prior knowledge and real-life situations. The participant took the initiative to clarify difficult words in the text and engaged learners in acting out vocabulary words, such as ‘winking,’ to enhance their comprehension. Furthermore, the participant facilitated an understanding and appreciation of different points of view by having learners’ record information in a letter format, allowing them to retell important details and creating opportunities for enrichment.

The worksheet proved to be an effective tool in assessing learners’ understanding. The participant employed questioning strategies in conjunction with the worksheet activity to gauge learners’ comprehension. The chosen assessment methods accurately measured the intended learning outcomes and provided a meaningful interpretation of learners' understanding.

Table 17 below outlines the proceedings following the reading process.

Questioning strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Why did mom say be careful? She was worried he might break his?</i>
Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Who said no? What do you say?</i> • <i>Would you agree with him?</i> •
Lesson closure	<i>They can pack that away, thanks Grade 3’s for interacting.</i>

Table 17: *School C P7 extract after reading*

4.4.5. *P8: Classroom environment*

There are 37 learners in the classroom, although not all of them were present at the time. The class size is sufficient to comfortably accommodate all the learners. The classroom structure is in good condition, providing a suitable learning environment. The participant effectively

managed both whole-class and group work activities, maintaining an acceptable noise level throughout.

As depicted in **Table 2**, this classroom does not have a designated reading corner, but it does have a small cardboard box filled with classroom readers. The walls of this literacy-rich environment are adorned with an extensive selection of posters and wall charts covering a range of topics, including multilingual posters. Although the classroom lacks a distinct reading corner, it is still a literacy-rich environment with classroom rules, as well as access to magazines, newspapers, and comics.

The seating arrangements in the classroom resemble group pods, indicating the facilitation of group work activities, as shown in **Figure 1**.

4.4.6. Social environment

The participant demonstrated clear communication skills and adopted a democratic leadership style, actively involving learners in the lesson and encouraging their participation and guidance. Communication was promoted through effective questioning strategies. The participant built positive relationships by maintaining a friendly and respectful teacher/learner dynamic, creating an atmosphere conducive to learning.

P8 successfully maintained learner interest throughout the lesson. Group work was implemented, allowing learners to assume leadership roles and actively participate. The participant provided ample reinforcement, ensuring that language did not impede instruction or hinder learning. Moreover, the participant fostered a sense of social inclusion by involving all learners in the lesson and encouraging interaction among them during group work activities.

The participant satisfactorily managed the groups, creating an atmosphere of acceptance where none of the learners were excluded during the lesson.

4.4.7. Instructional environment

The participant actively created opportunities for learner engagement through questioning and eliciting responses. Learners were actively involved in reading. The participant scaffolded the lesson and utilised questioning strategies to engage and assess learning. The lesson comprised two activities, with visible peer interaction evident through group work.

The participant effectively employed the questioning strategy to engage learners and assess their understanding. The lesson commenced as a whole-class activity, which then transitioned into independent tasks and group work. Each learner was provided with flashcards containing prewritten questions about the story. Learners engaged in discussions, wrote down their answers, and presented them to the class.

For learners who did not have flashcards, the participant asked personal response questions. Overall, learners demonstrated sufficient mastery of the content. The participant employed a variety of activities, resources, and instructional strategies, effectively modelling the text through scaffolding and creating opportunities for enrichment. There were ample teaching materials available, including a whiteboard, markers, scissors, glue sticks, printed-paper cut-outs, learners' workbooks, and pencils.

4.4.8. Reading comprehension instruction: A surprising friendship

I conducted a classroom observation in P8 classroom on September 22, 2022. Upon arrival, the participant appeared somewhat uneasy but still welcomed me inside. The participant mentioned having a busy day ahead and expressed uncertainty about accommodating me. She informed me that she did not have a teacher assistant available, and the librarian was also unavailable to supervise learners. In response, I took the initiative and asked P7 if her teacher assistant could oversee the learners during the classroom observation. I was relieved when the school provided their support. Once the teacher assistant arrived, she realised there was a task she had forgotten to do and requested permission to complete it. I agreed and told her to take her time.

Following this incident, the participant seemed to become more relaxed and approachable. My initial impression of the participant was that she appeared youthful, uncomfortable, and uneasy in my presence. However, as the day progressed, she became more approachable and relaxed. It was also revealed that she had started teaching at this school only three weeks ago. Considering this information, I recognized the need to be understanding and accommodating of her adjustment period.

Figure 8 displays the reading text used for the reading lesson mentioned above. The necessary questions for the reading comprehension are included in **Figure 8**.

Read
This is a story of a special friendship. Read it with your teacher.

A surprising friendship
In 2004, an earthquake caused a big tsunami in Indonesia. Many animals and people were hurt by the waves. But many people found friends afterwards as they helped and comforted each other. One of the most surprising friendships was between Owen and Mzee.

Owen was a baby hippopotamus. He lived in Kenya, far away from the tsunami, but not far enough. Big waves from the tsunami swept over Owen's river and took him away from his family.

The villagers saw poor, little Owen (quite little – he weighed 270 kilograms!) shivering on a rock out at sea. A thousand villagers worked together for a whole day to rescue Owen with their shark nets. A young French visitor called Owen finally managed to get him, and that is how the hippo got his name.




Owen, the hippopotamus, was taken to Haller Park. He was released into a large wooded pen that contained a pond and an Aldabra tortoise that was 130 years old and weighed 320 kg. The tortoise's name was Mzee (Swahili for old man).

Owen immediately ran to Mzee and tried to hide behind him. Mzee was not sure if he liked Owen at first, but as the days passed, they became good friends. Mzee taught Owen, who was a nursing calf, what to eat and where to sleep. In the first year, the two became inseparable companions who ate, slept, swam and played together.

Owen often played with the old tortoise by jumping on Mzee's back and scratching the old tortoise on the neck.

The two friends surprised scientists with the strength of their bond as well as with the special noises they made to communicate with each other. Owen protected Mzee if anyone new came into the enclosure.

In March 2007, a young female hippo was brought to the park to be Owen's friend. She was a bit rough with the tortoises and so Mzee and his friends were moved to another area in the park. But Mzee and Owen are still good friends, and the park keepers often give them a chance to spend time together.

Activity 1

1. Predict/guess what happened in the story.
2. Who are the characters in the story?
3. Where did the story take place?
4. What happened to Owen?
5. What is the solution in the story?
6. When did the story take place?

Who caused them to be separated?	Where is the Park in the story?
Were Mzee and Owen still good friends?	Who was surprised why?
Where did Owen live?	How did they communicate?
How much did Owen weigh?	What sound did they make to communicate?

Figure 8: Reading Text 6 “Surprising Friendship”

4.4.8.1. Proceedings before reading

The participant effectively employed the questioning strategy to introduce the lesson by following the routine of asking the date, subject, and topic. The participant then prompted learners to make predictions about the title before reading it. The participant engaged learners by asking them to follow along and randomly selecting learners to read aloud.

Table 18 below outlines the proceedings prior to the reading process.

Questioning strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you hear a surprising friendship, what do you think the story is about? Do not read the story, look at the title. What do you think the word surprise means?
APK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English, you are going to guess the topic, for what are you doing. I am going to give you a clue. Go to page number 104 for me, please.
Predictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not read the story yet we see the title said, a surprising friend. Could you tell me what you think of the title, not the story, just the title?
Teacher reads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A surprising friendship, in 2004, an earthquake caused a big tsunami in Indonesia. Many animals and people were hurt by the waves. But many people found friends afterward as they helped and comforted one another.

Table 18: School C P8 extract prior reading

4.4.8.2. Proceedings during reading

The participant skilfully utilised the questioning strategy to ask questions throughout the lesson. They read the text aloud, deliberately pausing to allow learners to fill in the missing words, thereby monitoring their understanding and creating opportunities for whole-class participation.

Moreover, the participant employed the questioning strategy to engage learners in a comprehension activity focused on the “wh” questions (who, what, where, when). This activity involved the use of blank printed cut-out pages in the shape of a head or brain, folded into quarters. The participant encouraged learners to write down these questions and provided guidance as they answered them.

To complete the activity, the participant instructed learners to enter the information related to the “wh” questions onto the cut-out pages, which they then pasted into their books. Throughout this process, the participant actively monitored and facilitated learners’ work.

Table 19 below outlines the proceedings during the reading process.

Cloze reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A surprising friendship, in 2004, an earthquake caused a big tsunami in Indonesia. Many animals and people were hurt by the waves. But many people found friends afterward as they helped and comforted one another. One of the most surprising friendships was between Mzee and...</i> <p>L: Owen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A beautiful river, the villagers saw poor little Owen. He is quite little, he weighs only 270...</i> <p>L: Kilograms</p>
Read aloud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>In 2004, an earthquake caused a big tsunami in Indonesia. Many animals and people were hurt by the waves. But many people found friends afterwards as they helped and comforted each other. One of the most surprising friendships was between Owen and Mzee. Owen was a baby hippopotamus. He lived in Kenya, far away from the tsunami, but not far enough. Big waves from the tsunami swept over Owen’s river and took him away from his family. The villagers saw poor little Owen (quiet little-he weighed 270 kilograms!)</i>
Story structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>When, what do you write in there?</i> <i>The setting of the story, we write in there what, is the?</i> <i>When you hear the word when, it tells you when the story take place</i>
Summarise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>There is one thing I teach you in English. You have to know the story first, have it summarised when you write.</i>
Look-back/ reread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>When, thank you, would you like to read the story one more time class?</i>

Table 19: School C P8 extract during reading

4.4.8.3. Proceedings after reading

The participant incorporated a re-reading of the text, followed by another engaging activity. She had learners write questions about the story on flashcards, creating an opportunity to read the story, write the answers, followed by a presentation. The availability of sufficient resources allowed for effective assessment of learning through the use of questioning strategies,

individual tasks, and group work activities. Learners' familiarity with the text contributed to their successful completion of the activities.

The assessment strategies employed by the participant included the use of the questioning strategy, completion of an independent activity by answering "wh" questions, and a group work activity where learners presented their answers to the class. The participant provided feedback on learners' questions and answers. Overall, the class performed satisfactorily based on their active participation and successful presentations.

However, it is noted that the questions mainly focused on recall and personal response to the story, lacking in challenges that could further enhance learners' critical thinking. Despite this, the classroom performed well based on learners' responses to the questions and tasks completed. As a homework activity, learners were instructed to find examples of two friends who developed a surprising friendship, similar to the story.

Table 20 below outlines the proceedings following the reading process.

Group work (Question/Answer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Who was surprised? Why was my question? The scientist was surprised because they were different animals.</i> • <i>What sound did they make to communicate? They made different noises.</i> • <i>How did they communicate? They made different sounds.</i>
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Table 20: *School C P8 extract after reading*

4.5. Summary of Classroom Observations

Based on the classroom observations, the main strategies employed by the participants were questioning, clarifying, and activating prior knowledge (APK), with the clarifying strategy being implemented implicitly. Participants generally favoured the questioning strategy, but they did not explicitly teach and explain reading strategies, except for certain teachers. Furthermore, metacognitive strategies were not taught by the participants.

The participants used a range of teaching strategies that aligned with the CAPS (Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement) document. They structured their reading lessons into different phases, providing scaffolded instruction with a focus on vocabulary and text reading. All six participants used read aloud strategies, while three participants incorporated close reading strategies. The majority of the participants conducted whole-class instruction, except for P2 and P8. While participants utilised various strategies, they did not explicitly explain how to implement these strategies.

In terms of assessment, the questioning strategy was predominantly used by participants to assess learners' understanding. Worksheets were the most commonly used assessment tool, with all participants employing them, except for P8, who used flashcards. Classroom management strategies implemented by participants included behaviour management, promoting time-on-task, and using extrinsic motivation through verbal praise.

4.6. School A: Interview

4.6.1. P1: Interview environment

At School A, I interviewed P1 on June 21, 2022, at 10:47 am in the staffroom. The interview lasted approximately 18 minutes and 29 seconds. Initially, I had reservations about conducting the interview in the staffroom due to its size and spaciousness, based on my previous experiences. However, the participant convinced me that the staffroom would be the most suitable location for the interview.

4.6.2. Interview responses

During my time at this site, I observed that the participant appeared generally nervous and put a lot of effort into preparing her lessons. She seemed to be a perfectionist, striving for excellence. While the participant understood most of the questions, there were moments where she seemed to think deeply before responding. This gave me the impression that she had some self-doubt and lacked confidence in her abilities. Despite this, she remained eager and approachable throughout the interview. For Question 8, I paraphrased the question to make it clearer, but for Question 7, the participant explicitly stated that she did not fully understand the question. Overall, the participant showed a willingness to engage and participate.

Extract: Q7

Interviewer: In your opinion, do you receive any of the support concerning the teaching of reading comprehension in Grade 3? Could you please elaborate in detail?

Participant: *Yes, we do. A few weeks ago, Grade 3's went to a math workshop and a reading comprehension workshop. All these types of skills, reading comprehension skills and your focus areas came up. Yes, we are actually in contact with each other, planning, and discussing strategies even with my colleagues.*

Interviewer: Could you elaborate more on that please? What support do you get from a classroom and a classroom at a district level?

Participant: *Miss Lettie, our circuit manager, and our superiors organised the workshop at one of the other schools and we attended it. She gave us some pamphlets, reading pieces, and questions and a*

couple of questions: what are higher order questions, what are lower order questions, different types of questioning that we can use in class. Yes, we are getting support from our department.

After providing the participant with additional information, she was able to answer the question. Based on my literature, the responses to Question 8 and Question 9 were the most helpful of nine questions posed. These responses provided valuable insights and information related to the topic being discussed.

Extract: Q8

Interviewer: Let us go to the next question. What are your pressing reading comprehension support needs? Could you please elaborate question eight?

Participant: *We have a need, how can I say, we have a comprehension reader that we use as an intervention; it is quite easy and very short. It is actually, I love the book, little stories, different types of questions for children they can draw in, its lot about comprehension. There is not much support, but I feel that the support must come from the parents, the support really must come from the parents, and support the school for parents should be reading, parents reading.*

Interviewer: You say that you have a book that assists with math reading intervention and you feel that the parent support is important. What other needs do you have or what is lacking right in your classroom to teach reading comprehension effectively?

Participant: *I feel we can actually make it even more interesting for them to read, to have a love and passion for reading, whereas you get lovely stuff on the internet. I got the whiteboard in the class, you call it is not working; it is not the projector is not working and sometimes I just wish before my reading period. I just wish that I can like play a video or song or play it or I have to do it from my phone, various software to engage with them even more so that the passion of reading can come out even more so. That the teacher enjoys reading and the way, I read to them a story, it is also good practice and they will go home and try to mimic that teacher, and you know what I'm saying.*

Extract: Q9

Interviewer: This is the last question. Is there any additional information you like to provide? Regarding the teaching of reading that, I have not covered yet.

Participant: *For me, it starts from the bottom reading comprehension starts from the bottom from Grade R, Grade 1, and Grade 2. If that scaffolding has been done correctly and the foundation has been laid then once they come into Grade 3 they must be able to work with various texts.*

Interviewer: Okay

Participant: *With various texts, like one of my children sees or feels strange with a lot of writing then they shut down and you must actually prepare them because of the systemic overwhelming pages and the children freak out, you know. Right from the beginning, when I do assessments I let my children do it on their own so that I can see that they have the ability to do their work. To know their work and to complete in set time, so it is very important. Now and then, I will read to them a word or two but for me assessments you are on your own. I need to know what your understanding of whatever work is, is put in front of you.*

During the interview, important topics were discussed related to learners' reading levels, the impact of COVID-19 on learners' reading abilities, limited parental support, insufficient school

resources and technology, and providing a solid foundation starting from Grade R. These topics highlight the challenges learners face when their reading levels do not align with the expectations of national assessments. It was noted that learners may become overwhelmed and experience difficulties when the assessments are not designed to cater to their individual levels. These issues emphasise the importance of addressing reading difficulties early on and ensuring adequate support and resources are available to learners throughout their education journey.

Extract: Q2

Interviewer: Which strategies are used to teach reading in Grade 3, for your Grade 3 learners?

Participant: Like I said, for now, because due to COVID gap we had in our children's lives. *With my group one's, group one and two, the needs may vary, I like to teach shared reading, and shared writing and also when it comes to comprehension, shared answering the comprehension. We show them, like, start a sentence with a capital letter and conclude with a full stop all that little things. Now the spelling mistakes, teach the basics so that they can get into it. Once they get into the shared reading and they grasp the concept then they will be able to do it on their own, but it actually takes a lot of practice.*

Interviewer: Miss you said something about shared reading, in shared reading activities what specific strategies do you use?

Participant: *When I do shared reading, we look at the tone of the learner, the speed, how to pronounce the word correctly.*

Extract: Q4

Interviewer: This is the following question. What informs your choice of reading comprehension strategies? Please Elaborate.

Participant: *With the past COVID years now, there is a very big gap in our learners.*

Interviewer: Okay

Participant: *So, it is not like where they get to Grade 3 and I can run with them doing high frequency questions or teach spelling words. We need to do basic things so for these two terms we have been doing basics, because there's a big gap in their learning and also because of, you know there's no parent involvement, no homework being done, no studying at home going over, consolidating there's nothing going on like that at home.*

4.6.3. P2: Interview environment

At School A, I interviewed P2 on June 21, 2022, at 11:20 am in the school library. The interview lasted approximately 20 minutes. The school library provided a splendid venue for the interview, with beautiful decorations, excellent lighting, and a comfortable and quiet environment. It offered a relaxing atmosphere, which contributed to a conducive and focused interview setting.

4.6.4. Interview responses

In some cases, participants may struggle to answer questions or veer off course during the interview due to reasons such as interview anxiety or misunderstanding. To address this issue, I provided participants the opportunity to review the questions and also provided them with a copy during the interview. This proved helpful as participants processed the information both verbally and in writing, helping them track their own thinking and responses.

However, despite these measures, there were instances where participants encountered difficulties with certain questions. In particular, with reference to Q.3, the participant in question experienced difficulties and did not elaborate on the question as expected. Although she did provide an answer, I sensed a certain level of uncertainty and a concern that she might veer off track. This highlights the challenges that can arise during interviews and the need for flexibility and adaptability in order to elicit meaningful responses from participants.

Extract: Q3

Interviewer: From the strategies you have named in 2 above, which one have you found to be the most effective? Please explain in detail.

Participant: *Well the one that I have just mentioned now is effective but...*

Interviewer: Which one is that?

Participant: *When I read the text to them and they answer questions, but, I found that it is better too. For them to be more interactive with the reading text, so it's either see the actual text and they maybe even act out the story and then answer the questions so they have a better understanding of what the comprehension is about.*

Out of the questions asked, I found the responses to Q6, Q7, Q8, and Q9 from the participants to be particularly helpful. These specific responses align with the findings from the literature review. The participants' insights and experiences are consistent with existing research on the topic. It is valuable to have such alignment between the participants' responses and the existing literature, as it strengthens the overall validity and credibility of the findings.

Extract: Q6

Interviewer: In your opinion, is reading comprehension instruction important in Grade 3? Could you please explain in detail?

Participant: *Yes, it is important, if you find a learner is supposed to be in Grade 3. That learner is supposed to be able to read with comprehension and this is where understanding comes in. If that child does not understand what he is reading, it is on the next level, by the end of the year he is still having a problem with understanding the reading comprehension. Any text that is given, for Grade 3 level they must be able to, does that then, what happens when he goes to the next grade. They go to the next grade, with no real understanding. If we can allow them to master the reading comprehension and the idea of what is needed in that and then I think it will make the child more, how can I say prepared for further development? I think the reading comprehension is really the learner is already struggling to grasp the idea of what we are trying to focus on. Because sometimes you give them a text for example, you give them a text. Even if it is for their level or they would read the text with the teacher, they will read it alone by themselves if they*

are able to. Then if we ask the question, they would not think to look for the answer in the text. They would write any answer that comes to their head even if it is not from the text now that we find that happens a lot. We should teach them methods. I always tell them, listen, where do we find our answers? What is going on here? What do we understand, because they do not understand that that is linked to the text? It becomes frustrating overtime for the teacher, but we need to implement strategies so the children become more aware or feel better in that way.

More detail was shared and given in Questions 5-9 and topics that I consider important in the interview. Q6 learners' reading skills are not on their grade level, Q8 support should come from parents, and the projector is not functional. Q9 starts teaching reading from the bottom from a grade 1-2 level. The participant said that she experienced problems with the department and reading with comprehension is a problem. Foundation has to be laid before learners come to grade 3, however when learners see a long text they shut down.

Extract: Q7

Interviewer: Carry onto the next question. Do you receive any support concerning the teaching of reading comprehension in Grade 3? Will you provide more details?

Participant: *Wow, what it depends on which support we are looking at, we have a learning support teacher so we would report to her if maybe we are having difficulty in spelling or having difficulty in reading comprehension? Then she would take the group of learners that had those issues and then she would actually come and fetch them out of the class. She takes them to her class that is equipped with all reading comprehension, phonics, mathematics. Then she will actually do an intervention with them, to prepare them better. We do get assistance when they come out, the department head will always come with resources or in meetings. We always discuss better strategies, best practices amongst the teachers, which is very good because we give each other ideas of if something does not work, maybe the schoolwork. The Department would give us resources, they would come in and support us, but they would come and observe a lesson that might seem.*

Extract: Q8

Interviewer: What are your pressing teaching reading comprehension support needs? Could you please elaborate on that?

Participant: *Why it is not working, what is not working that the learners are not grasping the idea and mastering this technique and skill. I think because the children are so technologically sound now, I think that if we are more technically savvy, then maybe we can get through to the learner better. What our school is busy doing now. Our ICT department from the department that has allocated us like projectors, whiteboards, and laptops that we can download programmes. I think for me, personally, that support will impact a lot on my teaching and my class. When that is set up, I think there will be more; hands-on approach with the learners. At the moment, I sit with a little laptop and it's very unfair for me to expect a child to see the, listen to the story, see the pictures, because that can also hinder the process. In the end, some of them do not hear, some of them do not see and there are 36 in the class. How is that viable, you know it does not make sense? If we can be totally sorted out with technical things like the board and the projectors that will be very much appreciated but we are heading that way, slowly but surely.*

Extract: Q9

Interviewer: Miss for the last question is there any additional information that you would like to provide me concerning teaching reading comprehension.

Participant: *The thing that I would like to say is that yes, we do have a problem with reading comprehension and I think that the department also noticed that. That is why, we are encouraged to promote reading especially and reading with understanding.*

The other thing is that it is difficult because the children have issues with reading, because of the level they are not on that Grade 3 level yet. Remember what I said to you.

Interviewer: Yes

Participant: *When they get to Grade 3 they are supposed to be reading with understanding and more than half can't do that. More than half still struggle with phonics, we need to teach them the phonics we need to teach them the sentence construction in order for them to read. If they cannot do that, they cannot master those skills. They are not going to read with comprehension on their own. They will not be able to read the story independently. The learners who have been in Grade 2 too much times are a different topic. If I give them an assessment piece what's, the first thing they say? Ma'am can you read the question for me. If I give you a reading comprehension over five questions, I must now read every single question to you. Then, I am stuck with the learners on a lower level and the higher-level learners are finished with the questions already. I need to make sure that there is an additional activity for you and I am still stuck with the lower. It is very time consuming, very time consuming in the end. What is sad is that sometimes it does not work and that learners are still set back.*

With reference to Q3 the participant experienced difficulties and did not elaborate on the question although she answered the question I detected certain uncertainty and feared that she would go off track, P2 mentioned answering questions and engaging with the text by acting it out. I found Q6, Q7, Q8 and Q9 of the participants' responses to be most helpful. With regard to Q.6 the importance of RC instruction, including the inability to read with understanding and moving from grade to grade. Even when learners are given a text on their level, they do not know how to answer RC questions; due to lack of strategies, this becomes wearisome.

Q7 learners have trouble in spelling and reading comprehension. Assistance takes the form of a learning support teacher; department heads organise resources and meetings along with the department support. Q8 pressing teaching RC support needs include the need for technology resources to provide a more interactive approach. The lack of resources negatively impacts the teaching and learning process, but the ICT department is working towards establishing it at school. In response to Q9 P2 admitted that RC is a challenge and the department is aware of it. As teachers are urged to teach reading and RC the challenge presents itself as learners are not reading at their expected grade level.

4.6.5. P3: Interview environment

At School A, I interviewed P3 on June 21, 2022, at 1:14 pm in the school library. The interview lasted approximately 20 minutes and 20.8 seconds. The Head of Department (HOD) is appointed to teach Grade 2. The school library served as the venue for the interview. The library is large, spacious, peaceful, and safe, providing a sense of well-being. It is also supportive of social interaction and attractively decorated.

4.6.6. Interview responses

The interview schedule does answer the research questions as it is simple and direct and to the point. However, at times the participants need additional information and probing because they do not fully grasp the question, reasons range from interview anxiety, misunderstanding and limited knowledge. P3 answered Q1 briefly, Q4 the participant was able to redirect herself, as the interview schedule served as a monitoring tool that guides the participant's thoughts. For Q7, I simply paraphrased the question but for Question 8, the participant explicitly stated that he did not fully understand the question. With additional information, she was able to answer the question.

Extract: Q1

Interviewer: Good day miss thank you for participating, today we are going to cover nine questions. We will start with question one. What is your understanding of reading comprehensions?

Participant: *Basically, reading comprehension is retrieving information from a text.*

Extract: Q4

Interviewer: Yes, let us carry on. What informs your choice of reading comprehension strategies? Could you please elaborate?

Participant: *Like I said in the previous one. Interesting and funny texts they can relate to and sometimes you give the texts of a lesson on how to behave, we used it as a story about animals.*

Interviewer: Okay

Participant: *They could relate and could talk about it and very important is reading to understand what is in the passage. I am answering the wrong one.*

Interviewer: Okay

Interviewer: What informs your choice of reading comprehension strategies?

Participant: *The choice of reading strategies, and it is the level of the child.*

Interviewer: The level

Participant: *The child's reading level is the only way, and seeing. You can prepare yourself for a certain strategy, and then you can start to see, maybe of the lowest level of the child. The level of the children is very important. It is the level of the children.*

Having the interview schedule in front of the participant assisted in processing information verbally and in writing and tracking her own responses, this is exactly what the participant did and has proven a good method of avoiding and limiting going off-course. This helps participants immensely as they are able to Q5 and Q6 the participant answered briefly.

Extract: Q5

Interviewer: Onto the next one, which reading comprehension assessments do you employ in your class? Could you please explain?

Participant: *Assessment tools*

Interviewer: For instance, if you give a reading comprehension lesson, how are you going to assess that lesson?

Participant: *Asking questions, giving the child the opportunity to explain what he understands about the text. Number one first, then the child will be able to give back, can relate to what they understand and if they are able to, and answer the questions of the text.*

Interviewer: Are there any strategies you use to assess your lesson?

Participant: *I am teaching Grade 2, Grade 1 is Grade 3 level.*

Interviewer: ((Laugh))

Interviewer: Besides the questions, what strategies do you use to evaluate learners' understanding? The reading comprehension, if they understood the reading comprehension.

Participant: *Identifying the sight words before we do certain reading comprehensions we do identifying the sight words.*

Extract: Q6

Interviewer: In your opinion, is reading comprehension important in Grade 3? Could you please explain?

Participant: *Yes, definitely. The instructions should be very, very clear so that the children can understand what you want from this. What we normally do in Grade 2 already, we teach them the different instructions that you can, that you must ask in certain of these stories. So first the instructions so that the young ones that get to Grade 3 they know. That identifies the instructions some sort of what, what is the instructions and then we will break instruction down into smaller parts for them to understand.*

Interviewer: In your opinion, do you think that reading comprehension instructions is important?

Participant: *Hmm*

Interviewer: So why do you think it is important? If instructions are important, why is it important?

Participant: *In order for the child to understand, the child must be able to find information that is needed to answer the questions and to understand the questions.*

Q7, Q8, and Q9 were answered in depth. I found Q6, Q7, Q8 and Q9 of the participants' responses to be most helpful.

Extract: Q7

- Interviewer: Onto the next question, do you receive any support concerning the teaching of reading comprehension in Grade 3 class? Please explain in detail.
- Participant: *Support from, our support*
- Interviewer: Support at classroom and school level, what support do you get?
- Participant: *We normally get just one or two because we have only almost the reading comprehension and writing part because reading comprehension informs your writing. So, going to have a problem with that, so that is one of the things that when we have workshops, they would touch on reading comprehension.*
- Interviewer: Okay
- Participant: *And what we also do is we as a in the Foundation Phase group we sit and share best strategies with each other, to help each other especially with the reading and comprehension and writing fast. Every term we do an analysis of the work and the assessments. It comes down to reading comprehension difficulty in reading comprehension, barriers being struggling with writing and sentence construction.*
- Interviewer: So, the classroom level you say or how you decide?
- Participant: *Classroom level what we did now this year, we saw some books, reading comprehension revision. The Clever Comprehension is where we start with simple comprehensions, short comprehensions, stories then we usually follow the level of the story. The level of the stories, we got some books like that but we have had the Tarot books that we have tried. Three years ago, we had the movie stories that you find in the Huisgenoot. We then made up a pretended bulletin, took that and used that which is familiar and wrote that colourful and all that and we use that to enhance our comprehension.*

Extract: Q8

- Interviewer: The next question is. What are your pressing teaching reading comprehension support needs?
- Participant: ((confused))
- Interviewer: What are your pressing teaching reading comprehension support needs? What is needed to teach effectively?
- Participant: *Help manage and support the children with sight words, and with reading. Obviously, we find out that wait the parents struggled with reading so they sometimes when we send work home. Then you find out that the parents cannot understand that their reading ability is not on level as it should be. For them to be able to help their children and so support is needed we need more resources and we actually need to sit and work out resources for the reading comprehension is the big problem that we have. The reading because the children struggle with reading, they struggle to read comprehension are obviously difficult for them. They do not have the vocabulary so it all informs each other. If they do not have the vocabulary then they cannot read properly and obviously, they find reading comprehension difficult that is why we have the word walls in the classrooms to help the children to identify words. Familiar words also that are familiar to them because every time we come to do certain, a new word and we put on it on the word wall and we have like small diaries, word diaries and we made one now. I think the Grade 3, also has the word diaries. So, like their own whenever they have a new word they write it in this, their own new word bible you could say. A dictionary, to have a normal dictionary but to make their own, then obviously it is much easier for them once you teach new words and even in a comprehension there should be new high frequency words. Then they write the words down in your dictionary so that has been very helpful if the children have their own dictionary where they have their own word wall and the dictionary and so they increase their vocabulary and sight word knowledge and sight word ability.*
- Interviewer: So, we covered basically, you said about the sight words and the vocabulary. Besides those resources, what other resources, whether it be material resources, are there in human resources that you need?
- Participant: *Any human resources*
- Interviewer: Human resources that you normally need to assist you teach reading comprehensions.
- Participant: *Like*

Interviewer: We are speaking about how you can be supported at a school and or at a district level.
Participant: *I would say at a district level they do assist us in giving workshops.*
Interviewer: *And at a school level, what is your support?*
Participant: *The library obviously, we use the library a lot and we even said that our plan is to establish our own library for the children. And they use the library but to establish our own library for the day and even write stories and put it on the back here, yes so, we creative writing format this is one of our future plans.*

Extract: Q9

Interviewer: Thank you can we go to question nine, is there any additional information you would like to provide me concerning the teaching of reading comprehensions.
Participant: *Teachers must have a lot of patience.*
Interviewer: Maybe something that I have not covered yet.
Participant: *You should have a lot of patience. One of the things is as I said in English you have to start where the child is. When we get assessments from the department and from different places and it is not on the level of the children. Our children have different levels. What we have done in the past we are ready to make up our stories so we take something that they are familiar with and then make up our own stories. From there onwards build the reading text and then we go over to taking questions of the reading text but working from the familiar to the unfamiliar but most of all. Working on the child's level it can be fixed. Take a Grade 3 book, a Grade 3 reading piece is supposed to be and you can find children will not be able to understand whatever the piece because we find it is not on their level. We have to protect them grammatically so that the child is reading to them. We share information first, in the past we did the Oxford reading programme, so in our reading list, we have about nine to ten different readers. That means 10 different groups of children reading on different levels because I mean each one, the child, as I always tell the teachers. The children cannot read on their own they cannot to go back to their level, Grade 2 level or Grade 1 level problems. We were not teaching children last year because of COVID. We had like a small comprehension booklet that we taught. Although it was Grade 2 it was almost like a Grade 1 level starting with simple questions, simple one answer questions, and then we would build up to a more difficult question. Obviously, what we also did, you start the answering the questions to get the first word, and then they answer the rest of the questions, so you teach them. We have it in the DBE books, where they start the question answering of the questions and eventually they will be able to answer the questions on their own.*

During the interview, several important topics were raised in relation to the participants' responses. The participant stressed the significance of clear instruction and informing learners about the expectations of the lesson. She also mentioned the importance of employing different instructional approaches to cater to learners' diverse needs. The participant highlighted the importance of both reading comprehension and writing skills. They acknowledged that writing posed a challenge for learners, indicating a need for further support and instruction in this area. Q8 brought attention to the issue of parents' reading abilities and their inability to effectively assist their children with reading. The participant noted that this lack of parental support, coupled with limited vocabulary, could impact learners' reading development. In Q9, P3 emphasised the need for teacher patience, particularly in light of the disparity between learners'

current reading levels and the expected grade-level reading. Learners have diverse reading abilities, which become evident when department assessments are administered.

4.7. School B: Interview

4.7.1. P4: Interview environment

At School B, I interviewed P4 on September 14, 2022, at 8:44 am in the classroom, the duration of the interview was approximately 8 minutes and 9 seconds. It was the first interview conducted at School B, and the interview took place in the classroom. Prior to the interview, there were some disturbances related to the feeding scheme staff distributing food to learners. This may have caused some distractions or interruptions prior to the start of the interview. While conducting an interview, there were instances of learners roaming around and talking in the classroom. However, it was noted that the noise level was at an acceptable level and did not significantly hinder the interview process. Despite these minor disturbances, the interview was successfully conducted.

4.7.2. Interview response

Upon entering the classroom, I made a conscious effort to maintain a positive body language, including maintaining eye contact and greeting the participant with a smile. This was done in order to create an approachable and friendly atmosphere. The participant responded positively, reciprocating with a cheerful facial expression, maintaining eye contact, and speaking with a clear tone of voice. These nonverbal signals indicated a positive attitude and energy from the participant.

The participant was welcoming and inquired about the interview location. I provided two options, and the participant decided that the classroom would be the preferred location for the interview. To ensure smooth running, the teacher assistant supervised the classroom during the interview session. Although the participant displayed eagerness, there was also a slight nervousness evident in the fast pace and time taken to conclude the interview. However, throughout the interview, the participant demonstrated positive body language and an even tone of voice, which helped create a comfortable environment.

The participant displayed a clear understanding of the questions and confidently answered all of them effortlessly. From my perspective, I found questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, and 9 to be the most valuable and interesting in eliciting insightful responses from the participant.

Extract: Q2

Interviewer: And which strategy do you use to teach reading to your Grade 3 learners?

Participant: *The strategies that we use is they first need to read the story verbatim to understand the story. We also focus a lot on the main characters, setting, plot, problems, and solutions in the story, the type of story. We rely a lot on scaffolding the learners with the questioning higher-order, lower-order questioning also activating prior knowledge before we even start before we even start our reading.*

Extract: Q3

Interviewer: From the strategies that you just have mentioned in question 2 which one do you find the most effective, could you please elaborate on that?

Participant: *I would say activating their prior knowledge because when doing that then the child is able to relate to the story much more. If we doing something on worms we first ask them what they know about worms, where do they see worms, have they touched the worm before you know getting them engaged with the story, before they even start reading the story?*

Extract: Q4

Interviewer: What informs your choice of reading comprehension strategy?

Participant: *I told you we use our reading cycle. We take one reading piece and we first break it up into vocab and then we do a picture walk through and then we doing a reading and also, we do a cloze activity. It's all to engage to get them engage in the story before we do the actual comprehension.*

Extract: Q5

Interviewer: Which reading comprehension assessment tools do you use or employ in your class, could you please explain?

Participant: *We use worksheets with our reading; everything is linked to our reading. Our language structure, our writing pieces, they all link to the comprehension.*

Interviewer: Yes

Participant: *We use at the end of the 2-week cycle we do the challenge and that is used. Everything is included there is phonetics, there is phonics there is you know writing, there is listening and speaking everything is included in there so we use that as their informal mark.*

Extract: Q8

Interviewer: What is your support needed right now? Could you please elaborate on that?

Participant: *Because this group of learners struggled, they did not get the basics. They did not get a full Grade 1 and they had broken up Grade 2 so they are not their reading is not on grade level as yet. There is about 30% of my class that is, but the rest are really struggling to read so if you cannot, so if you cannot decode then you are not reading with fluency you will not get the habit of comprehension.*

Interviewer: What do you think is needed to support that?

Participant: *We need support from the parents.*

- Interviewer: Parental support
- Participant: *Parental support is very important. It is something what we lack here.*
- Interviewer: What do you think they should go about assisting you?
- Participant: *We have the Basal Reader every day in their book but we also have sight words. It's about a hundred sight words that's in their homework flip file. The parents should then have been telling them from term one every day you should go through one column, there are about six columns. But like I said there'll be 30% of my class that will know all those words so it's not being practised regularly.*

Extract: Q9

- Interviewer: The last question, Miss. Is there any additional information is there any additional information you would like to add regarding the teaching of reading comprehension?
- Participant: *The learners should be exposed to reading in different settings, they need to go to the library and need to have the love for reading. I know that this is a different type of learner where they get everything from YouTube or social media but they should still engage in written text which I don't think that they are doing that much. Also, behaviour plays a very big role in their learning because a lot of them learners we battle with their behaviour and then once you trying to teach them the skill, settling them down before the time it becomes a roar it's a nightmare so behaviour is a huge problem we facing in the foundation phase which affects their learning.*
- Interviewer: True and how has COVID affected the reading comprehension, with your reading.
- Participant: *Like I said they are behind in their beginning sounds. I'm talking about my bottom learners. They know their beginning sounds but they are unable to blend the words together like C-ube, Cube. They are unable to break up the word. They did not get the right foundation in Grade 1 because about 2 or 3 months they were out of school.*

Based on the participants' responses to the interview questions, several important topics were discussed. In relation to Q2, the participant mentioned the importance of reading word for word, understanding story structures, and using questioning strategies during reading instruction. In response to Q3, the participant highlighted the effectiveness of the APK strategy in aiding reading comprehension. Q4 elicited information about the participant's choice of reading comprehension (RC) strategies based on the reading cycle. Q5 RC assessment tools comprise worksheets. In response to Q8, P4 stated most of the learners are not on Grade level and lacking decoding skills, experience insufficient parent support. Q9 provided an opportunity to share learners needing more reading exposure, disruptive behaviour in the classroom, and difficulties in managing behaviour. The participant also highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on learning and the need for learners to catch up on basic reading developmental skills.

4.7.3. P5: Interview environment

At School B, I interviewed P5 on the 14 September 2022 at 9:23 am in the staffroom and it took approximately 11:20 minutes. This is the third interview conducted at School B. I chose to interview her last, hoping to give her more time to complete her tasks. The staffroom at School B is a spacious and non-threatening environment, equipped with whiteboards, desks,

and chairs suitable for staff meetings, a sink, kettle, microwave, fridge, and a deep freezer. This location is freely available and open to all staff members.

4.7.4. Interview response

I provided the participant the opportunity to review the interview guide both before and during the interview. This approach has been highly beneficial in helping participants' process information effectively and track their own thinking and responses. By providing a written copy of the interview guide during the interview itself, this further supports the participant in organising their thoughts and referring to the specific questions as needed. This helped and alleviate any anxiety or potential misunderstandings that may arise during the interview, enabling the participant to provide more accurate and comprehensive answers. I found questions 2, 3, 6, 8, and 9 to be particularly interesting and helpful.

Extract: Q2

Interviewer: And which strategies do you use to teach reading to Grade 3 learners?

Participant: *Read, reading, re-reading, the teacher reads, the children read, we read together, underline words that they do not understand and we explain it. When they read the story repeatedly then they begin to understand exactly what the story is about.*

Extract: Q3

Interviewer: From the strategies that you just named in question 2 which one have you found to be the most effective. Could you please explain in detail?

Participant: *Oh yes, I forgot for question number two I forgot to include the pictures.*

Interviewer: Yes, right.

Participant: *As we go through the story, each paragraph, or every, or each event we let them draw a picture. Then they are able to- for those of them who do not have the ability to read full sentences or read the whole story they can at least follow the picture story and they can kind of read with us by looking at the picture.*

Extract: Q6

Interviewer: Reading comprehension instruction, teaching reading is that important?

Participant: *Teaching reading comprehension is important because a child, who does not comprehend the story, then how are they going to answer the questions. If the child does not know what they are reading therefore our instruction we write them or call them aside we teach all the different strategies.*

Interviewer: Yes

Participant: *That can help the child not only for the story that is in front of them but also for future they learn from us the strategies that we teach them. They will take that into the higher grades then they are able to read a text and answer the questions effectively.*

Extract: Q8

Interviewer: What is your pressing teaching reading comprehension support right now for you to teach effectively? Could you please explain?

Participant: *As a teacher or the learners' point of view?*

Interviewer: Teacher

Participant: *The children on Grade 3 level of reading; before we can scaffold reading comprehension, we have to go all the way back to the foundation of helping them to read. Even three letter words because some of these children do not even know letter u that is our actual what we need the most support.*

Interviewer: How do you think it can be supported?

Participant: *I believe that they should make it compulsory for all children to at least have a grade R to be compulsorily. I think that if they bringing into a school setting and then by the time they get to Grade 3 they already mastered all the foundation, all of them like the basic needs for them to be able to be sufficiently in reading by the time they get to Grade 3.*

Interviewer: Yes

Participant: *When we have children that come*

Interviewer: Hmm

Participant: *They come to Grade R or Grade 1 and they are of the right age to go to Grade 1, but they have never held a book in their hand. They have never read, they have never even learnt how to write, hold a pencil. That are all things that they are going to tackle if the children have at least some schooling by the time they come into Grade 3 in Grade 1.*

Extract: Q9

Interviewer: Miss, is there any additional information that you would like to sorry? Is there any additional information you would like to provide me regarding the teaching of reading comprehension that we have not covered yet? Issues that you are dealing with or support that is lacking or reading strategies that can be assisted.

Participant: *From the outside, I think we covered everything because we do get support from the department; we do get support from our curriculum advisors. It is like our school, even though our schools are in the same quintile as the children within the school. I do not want them to paint everybody with the same brush because our children are different to the children that are maybe in the same quintile as us parse. You know they come from families that are more fluent where the parents are supportive. Here, we get 5% of our parents are hardworking, not hardworking like I mean like they work late nights and leave the house early.*

Interviewer: Yes

Participant: *They do not have the time and the money to invest in their children's education; it is no fault of theirs.*

Interviewer: Parental support is lacking.

Participant: *Parental support, definitely*

Interviewer: Is there anything else Miss?

Participant: *I think parental support will help us a lot because I found out that many of the parents who sit with their children also assist them with their homework. These are the children that can read well because they are exposed to good English and good examples of the text and for many of our learners, English is not their home language.*

Interviewer: Yes

Participant: *The only time they ever hear English is when they are in the classroom. If they can read better then they will be able to read and comprehend better.*

I found Q2, Q3, Q6, Q8, and Q9 to be significant and valuable. Topics that I deem useful and beneficial during interviews are as follows:

Q2, reading strategies comprise reading collectively, reading with the teacher, re-reading, and drawing attention to words as a class. Q3, P5 found that using picture stories and drawing pictures the most effective for reading difficulties. Q6, the importance of reading comprehension and understanding what they have read impacts their ability to comprehend other texts and the strategies they need as they progress through the schooling system. Regarding Q8, P5 mentioned that learners who are unable to read on the grade level require instruction on basic words. The need to help these learners reach their grade level in reading is emphasised. For Q9, P5 believes that parental support would assist in providing reading exposure and helping with homework.

4.7.5. P6: Interview environment

At School B, I interviewed P6 on September 14, 2022, at 9:04 am. The interview lasted approximately 11 minutes and 34 seconds. This was the second interview I conducted at School B. We conducted the interview in the staffroom. Before the interview, I engaged in small talk while walking to the interview location. This helped in building trust and finding common interests. However, during the interview, I realised that no interview location is completely secure, reliable, and predictable, as there were unforeseen disturbances.

4.7.6. Interview response

During the interview, the participant took a moment to pause and reflect before answering Question 4, indicating deep thought. From the participant's responses, I found Questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 to be particularly useful in gaining valuable insights.

Extract: Q2

Interviewer: Let us carry onto question two. Which strategies do you use to teach reading comprehension?

Participant: *Strategies so I do reading aloud.*

Interviewer: Okay

Participant: *Basically, the teacher reading the text obviously with the inflection and everything so that you can show learners the mood or how the text is flowing, what emotions the character has in the text as well and then. We do re-reading and we do choral reading so that is them reading with me and then reading with each other. Then also questions based on the text whether it's like how do you think the character felt, what was the setting, what was the moral of the story taking information out of there.*

Extract: Q3

Interviewer: Miss from the strategies that you have just mentioned in question two which one have you found to be the most effective; could you please explain in detail?

Participant: *I forgot to mention the one we also do beginning, middle and end.*

Interviewer: Yes

Participant: *Beginning middle and end of the story, we use pictures as well.*

Interviewer: Yes

Participant: *Especially for those who cannot read properly yet then they read the pictures. Then, from the pictures, we formulate what happened in the story at the beginning, middle and end. From the strategies, I would say that one.*

Interviewer: Okay

Participant: *The one with the pictures showing the beginning, middle, and end of the story. Then, of course, letting them write what the story text, so that I can see what they understood about what the story is about.*

Extract: Q4

Interviewer: Carry onto the next question. What informs your choice of reading comprehension strategies? Could you please elaborate on that? What informs your choice of reading comprehension strategies?

Participant: *Basically, the CAPS document we take it from there, we obviously base our lessons according to that, we form our lesson plans. Then we are also busy with the department with a program that they are running because Grade 3 is systemic. We do a 2 weekly shared reading comprehension text with the learner where we show them different skills and then basically the aim is to make them independent readers and then also to acquire skills for comprehension.*

Extract: Q5

Interviewer: Which read comprehension assessment tools do you employ in your class please explain.

Participant: *Assessment tools, the challenges like I have explained and then our formal assessment tasks have the English comprehension. During writing and reading, during writing and reading, we teach comprehension. When they read for us and say they come to a word, like in one of the stories, shed, then I ask them. What is a shed?*

Extract: Q6

Interviewer: Miss, can we carry on? In your opinion, is reading comprehension instruction important in Grade 3? Please explain.

Participant: *Yes, no definitely because reading comprehension is not only for English reading comprehension moves into mathematics when they do their sums. Reading comprehension when they see the word double they need to know what it means so that they know I need to use this strategy of doubling here. In their life skills, as well when they learn about the differences like space or pollution. When they reading a text they also need to understand what is being read,*

reading is very important. It also stems from it come from birth already, comprehending what is being said to you.

Extract: Q8

Interviewer: What are your pressing teaching reading comprehension support needs right now? Could you please elaborate in detail?

Participant: *Basically, because children come to Grade 3 and they on Grade 1 level reading or even Grade R. It is very challenging, as we have to start teaching from the beginning. Usually, learners do not even get it by the end of the year at the Grade 3 level, and then we do not have a lot of parental support. The social economic background of the children they come from poor communities and most of their parents are on drugs uninterested in their school work or they living with their grandparents that don't have education so that is also a challenge.*

Interviewer: So how do you think that you can be assisted?

Participant: *How can we be assisted?*

Interviewer: Yes, to eradicate those issues

Participant: *To change schools.*

Participant: *I do not know we were talking about amongst each other and we were saying it just gets harder every year. Maybe you just need a change of schools where the children you know have parents that support them so even though the school runs like programs.*

Interviewer: Yes

Participant: *Where they want to support the parents, the parents do not come to the programs you know, they are uninterested so maybe they have like help your child to read. If you are interested, come on Saturday there will be so few parents or you know what I mean it is difficult. It is not that we can change the mind-sets of the parents so for us we cannot rely on the parents. It has to be in our classroom but we also know that in the classroom only is not enough.*

Interviewer: Yes

Participant: *You try your best to get them at least to a certain level because if you look at my children, I sit with them at night. My Grade 1 daughter can read on like Grade 3 level children you know that.*

Participant: *For me it is like with the support you also get at home you need to come to school you are going to be taught. However, when you come home you also need to practise and you need to be exposed to it. So that you can become better at doing a certain skill, you know what I mean. I do not know if that was a proper answer.*

Q2, reading strategies include reading aloud, taking reading tests, identifying and expressing the mood and emotions portrayed in the text, re-reading through choral reading, and engaging in questions based on the text, such as understanding how the characters felt and extracting information from the text. Q3, the most effective strategy identified is analysing the beginning, middle, and the end of the story. Q4, the CAPS document, which outlines the curriculum, informs the choice of reading comprehension strategies. Q5, the problems in reading comprehension also involve formal assessment tasks and questioning strategies, although the specific assessment tool was not mentioned by P6. Q6, the importance of RCI extends beyond language and applies across subjects and topics. It is emphasised that this instruction should begin in infancy. Q8, P6 highlighted pressing teaching support needs in reading comprehension, addressing learners below reading level and the absence of parental support.

4.8. School C: Interview

4.8.1. P7: Interview environment

At School C, I interviewed P7 on September 29, 2022, at 9:34 am. The interview lasted approximately 10 minutes and 32 seconds. This was the first interview conducted at School C. We conducted the interview in the classroom, which provided a spacious and print-rich environment, making it a suitable location for the interview.

4.8.2. Interview response

The interview schedule was found to effectively address the research questions. It was designed to be undemanding, non-judgmental, and open-ended. The participant was able to answer the questions. I gave the interview schedule to the participant, which proved helpful in minimising misunderstandings and facilitating a smooth flow of information.

During the interview, the participant answered all questions except for Q2, where she signalled deep thought and appeared to have difficulty grasping the concept of reading instructional strategies. Additionally, the participant experienced a brief moment of “brain freeze,” as evidenced by her struggle to find words for Q2 and Q3. This could be attributed to anxiety or difficulty in fully comprehending the questions.

Extract Q2

- Interviewer: Which strategy do you use to teach reading to your learners?
Interviewer: What types of instructional strategies do you use?
Participant: ((Thinking))
Interviewer: For instance, Miss you use for reading and the rereading strategies what else do you use?
Participant: *Picture, visual aids, and the reading passage that is it.*
Interviewer: When you teach reading comprehension, what strategies do you implement?
Participant: *Hmm*
Interviewer: To teach a lesson, what strategies do you use?
Participant: *I would let them I will first do the introduction with something that correlates with the passage just to give them an idea then they are not lost.*
Interviewer: Is there anything else, are there other strategies that you use?
Participant: *Like I will use songs, poems, and rhymes as well and language I will bring I will incorporate language as well and games as well.*

Extract: Q3

- Interviewer: Miss from the strategies that you have mentioned in question two which one have you found to be the most effective. Please explain in detail.
- Participant: *I would say all of them all of the above like with the first I did I used the phone and I used the poem and the second I used the song on the phone and now I did the poem.*

During Q2, I noticed the participant's pause, and in response, I rephrased the question to allow her more time to think. However, despite additional probing and explanations, the participant still did not fully understand the question. This was evident from her answers and the manner in which she responded to Q2 and Q3, indicating a difficulty in identifying instructional strategies and a lack of clarity regarding the question. Q3, which was intended as a follow-up question to Q2, further highlighted the participant's struggle in this area. On a positive note, I found the participant's responses to Q4, Q6, Q7, and Q8 to be valuable and informative, providing valuable insights and information.

Extract: Q4

- Interviewer: Can we carry on? What informs your choice of reading comprehension strategies, could you please elaborate?
- Participant: *The children's level there uh because I found that due to COVID there are gaps in their learning so I had to bridge that gap with the strategies that I have implemented.*
- Interviewer: Do tell me more Miss.
- Participant: *I will start with the easy with not so difficult comprehension and then eventually I will increase the level of difficulty.*

Extract: Q6

- Interviewer: In your opinion, is reading instructions important in Grade 3, could you please explain?
- Participant: *Definitely, it is important because if the child cannot read, the child cannot answer any questions and where I normally liaise with the Grade 2 teachers with the children over coming over to Grade 3 where did she stop.*
- Interviewer: Yes
- Participant: *In order for me to start with the children, the learner.*
- Interviewer: How do you do that Miss, when your learners come over?
- Participant: *I normally go to the Grade teacher to give me a breakdown.*
- Interviewer: Okay
- Participant: *Of what they have done in Grade 2 in order for me to continue in Grade 3. We need to work hand in hand with the Grade 2 and the Grade 1 teachers that are actually a chain reaction.*

Extract: Q7

- Interviewer: Do you receive support concerning the teaching of reading comprehension in Grade 3 class? Please explain in detail.

Interviewer: *No, definitely not, I do not know, definitely I do not. They just expect me to know because of my years of experience.*

Extract: Q8

Interviewer: What are your pressing teaching reading comprehension support needs? Please elaborate.

Participant: *The children not being able to read with understanding*

Interviewer: And

Participant: *That is actually a no go for me. Children have been scraping though they've repeated Grade 1 then they are being sent over to Grade 2 and Grade 3 without them even being able to read. That is actually a problem because the child is sitting here in Grade 3 and they not able to comprehend what is being done.*

Interviewer: How do you think you can improve this?

Participant: *With intervention strategies, having extra classes also and assisting those children who cannot.*

Topics discussed in Q4 relate to child-level themes, the selection of reading comprehension strategies, and the impact of COVID-19. Q6, the relationship between reading comprehension and the capacity to provide answers to questions is what makes it important. Q7, the lack of support from schools is evident based on teachers' experience. Q8, learners are struggling to comprehend the meaning behind what they read.

4.8.3. P8: Interview environment

At School C, I interviewed P8 on September 29, 2022, at 10:50 am. The interview lasted approximately 11 minutes and 43 seconds. This was the second interview conducted that day. The participant had just completed her third lesson observation yesterday. The classroom at School C is spacious, neat, and clean, with good lighting, providing a non-threatening environment. To minimise any disturbances, the participant closed the classroom door during the interview.

4.8.4. Interview response

The participant demonstrated a clear understanding of the questions and provided satisfactory answers. Q3, Q4, Q5, Q7, Q8, and Q9 were helpful in eliciting valuable insights. It is worth noting that during Q4, the participant was able to redirect herself, using the interview schedule as a monitoring tool to guide her thoughts. Based on my deductions, the participant understood the questions and answered them satisfactorily.

Extract: Q3

Interviewer: From the strategies that you just named in question two, which one have you found to be the most effective, could you please explain in detail?

Participant: *To be honest there are many different strategies to use even theories as well. I can't say which one is the most effective because all of them are valuable. For example, the learners that I have now are more creative and they more visual. A strategy for them will be to draw what you think will happen and then write one or two sentences. Or I'll show a picture, and then they need to decide what they think is happening in the story rather than the recital? When we make connections, we will have little we will maybe cut out things and then write their answers on those little papers and it will show how to connect. The choice of strategy depends on the learners' preferred learning styles, an alternative to asking them to write down the full sentence. Some have the visual form, it depends I cannot actually say which is the best.*

Extract: Q4

Interviewer: What informs your choice of reading comprehension strategy, please elaborate?

Participant: *Like I said the learner, however, because we have to use the CAPS document and other textbooks. My textbooks I would check for example we done Mzee the tortoise. Then what I had to relate it to was happening in their daily lives. What informs your choice of reading strategies and again as I said it depends if they are a visual learner or not. I like to mix Piaget stuff with Freud as well, as I said some of my kids are a bit older than the others. So, their strategy will be a little bit different from what I give group 1. Maybe group 2 will write down the answers and maybe group 3 will set out the beginning, middle and end. What informs the choice is what I get from the textbook then my strategy depends on that and how they would understand it. If I see very difficult words you will obviously start with a strategy with vocabulary first, find the difficult words then use dictionaries and things like that. It depends on the text if it is an easy text they can go for it; difficult text they do not complete it.*

Extract: Q5

Interviewer: Which reading comprehension assessments tools do you employ in your class, could you please explain?

Participant: *Again, depending on what reading, whether it is an exam or just a normal class comprehension. I used to have a... I think you call it a scrapbook. I think we call it a lab book where we have like for English. For example, we have their targets, and as we go around, we tick off. We make this stronger; so they are able to link the words they were able to describe. We had a little book every week we would tick off verbally, visually, how we succeed. Then at the end of the week, we have our little tests, and we use our worksheets that are also the perfect way to get all the assessments, even flash cards. At the end of every lesson, hand in the flash cards and tell them to match something so that they make that target of that lesson.*

Interviewer: Okay

Participant: *But in South Africa it is more of written unfortunately they do not (pause) agree with ticking off. I visually see that they understand everything like that. South Africa wants paperwork evidence all the time and unfortunately not all the children can spell, can write but they verbally can give you the answers but here by us we don't allow that as a pass so that's the thing that for me.*

Extract: Q6

Interviewer: Miss in your opinion is reading comprehension instruction important in Grade 3 could you please explain in detail?

Participant: *Yes, it is important from Grade 1 to Grade 3 because, at the end of the day, comprehension helps learners analyse certain things in different situations in their lives. Comprehension tells you about morals about values. And tells you it shows them when you get a paper how to break it down, how to skim it and how to understand that they need to expect it instead of reading every little detail. It is extremely important from the foundation phase all the way to their life in general.*

Extract: Q7

- Interviewer: Do you receive any support concerning the teaching of reading comprehension in Grade 3; could you please explain in detail?
- Participant: *I just started at the school. The support they give is enough. They do support me telling me the lesson plans and give me the textbooks and things that you need to use. We are very open on how you teach in your class. Each teacher has their own way obviously, because students are different so the support is there.*
- Interviewer: Could you explain more in detail Miss, tell me more?
- Participant: Of Support
- Interviewer: Yes
- Participant: *They would check if my lesson plans and tell me what to use and make sure I stay in line with the CAPS.*

Extract: Q8

- Interviewer: What are your pressing teaching reading comprehension support needs, please elaborate.
- Participant: *Pressing teaching support means?*
- Interviewer: What is needed for you to teach effectively, what is lacking right now?
- Participant: *Probably, if less in the class I think if there are less students we'll be able to break it down a little bit further and also the timeline that they give us. I think that is also a little bit too short because remember with 1 comprehension we can do grammar and there's nouns you can do the all types of things find a synonym, antonyms then you break it down further into find the difficult words when you're done finding the difficult words let's read it. Done reading the beginning, middle and end, you create your own story, finding the connection because there are so many things you could do with one story.*
- Interviewer: Yes
- Participant: *But because of the timeline given, we cannot unpack it into the depth actually required. I think that is my main thing.*

Extract: Q9

- Interviewer: Let us go to the last question: is there any additional information you would like to provide me concerning the teaching of reading comprehension that we have not covered yet?
- Participant: *Well, if or if South Africa could meet school teachers with paper I think it could be broken down further for example a simple thing like having a projector where you for instance you reading the story they can watch the story as well would have worked amazingly. Simple resources where they have to where they do not need to buy paper where the school provides paper where they can draw, create their own puppet characters, act out the story, and create dramas. I think in South Africa we minimise the kids in class and, given the resources needed for comprehension would fly, our kids are actually really amazing. They have different scenarios that they can bring into the comprehension. But your understanding of the text is completely different than their understanding because of the experience situation that they have. If the school is more resourced and helped to teach the prime things for us, then that would have been much better.*

In Q3, P8 expressed the opinion that there is no specific strategy she favours, as the choice of strategy varies according to the learners' developmental stage and learning styles. Q4, when selecting reading comprehension strategies, P8 considers factors such as learners, the CAPS document, and the textbook as sources of information. Q5, P8 mentioned previously using the

ticking off system, which involves assessing learners using worksheets, flashcards, and visually gauging their understanding of the lesson. P8 also raised the issue of learners with diverse learning abilities, including those who struggle with writing but can express themselves verbally. Q7, P8 acknowledged receiving support, which includes being informed about lesson plans and textbooks, and ensuring alignment with the CAPS document. Q8, P8 expressed concern about time constraints limiting the depth of teaching and understanding. Q9, limited resources and class size were mentioned as two aspects of concern, with the understanding that the learners themselves are not the problem.

4.8.5. P9: Interview environment

At School C, I conducted an interview with P9 on September 29, 2022, at 13:04 pm. The interview lasted approximately 7 minutes and 19 seconds. This was the third interview I conducted at School C. The interview took place in the classroom, it is spacious and comfortable, providing a literacy-rich environment. It offered a quiet and non-threatening atmosphere. Despite the participant's effort to minimise outside disturbances by closing the door, we experienced some interruptions caused by passers-by.

4.8.6. Interview response

The participant successfully answered the questions during the brief interview. Notably, during Q5, the participant confidently requested further clarification. The interviewer tried to rephrase the last question in order to gather more information from the participant. Despite the interview being rushed, the participant willingly participated in the process. However, it is important to note that the participant's avoidance strategies and firm tone of voice, communicate a certain amount of anxiety. For Q5, although attempts were made to obtain additional information, the participant appeared reluctant to provide further details.

Extract: Q5

- Interviewer: Which reading comprehension assessment tools do you employ when you teach in your class, could you please explain?
- Participant: *Like assessment tools, like what now?*
- Interviewer: When you teach a reading comprehension lesson.
- Participant: *Yes*
- Interviewer: How do you gauge with them or assess that they have understood the lesson, what are your assessment strategies?

Participant: *We also question, I question them about the comprehension.*
Interviewer: *And what else Miss?*
Participant: *Basically, it is the comprehension phase and as I said, difficult words get explained. Do they understand the difficult words we need to break up words or do they understand the story? Break the story, tell the story back to me in as few sentences as possible just to gauge with, do they understand what they have read.*

The responses to Q2, Q3, Q4, Q6, Q7, and Q8 elicited valuable insights and information.

Extract: Q2

Interviewer: Which strategies do you use to teach in Grade 3?
Participant: *Well, we will use word attack skills, phonics are they reading with understanding do they understand. We also have challenges with the language. I think their vocabulary is not so huge. Sometimes there are difficult words in the passage and they struggle to understand. Then we have to explain the meaning of certain words. I try to read bits of the comprehension at the time. Then besides the comprehension questions I will ask my own questions on each piece of the comprehension I broke it up. I tried their questions that they have in the question paper or on their or in their books. I am writing my own little questions to see if they read the comprehension.*

Extract: Q3

Interviewer: From the strategies that you have mentioned in question two which one have you found to be the most effective, could you please explain?
Participant: *When we take out some stuff from the comprehension and I ask them to answer then they remember. If it is a long piece and they need to find answers then they tend to struggle a bit. Although I explain to them if they ask comprehension questions, question one won't be found in paragraph seven question one will be in paragraph one, the answer to question 1 question two will obviously follow then. Question two will probably be in the next paragraph in the next few sentences, so question two's answer will not be found in the last sentence or paragraph. The comprehension questions normally follow in order as the story happens.*

Extract: Q4

Interviewer: What informs your choice in reading comprehension strategies?
Participant: *Something that the learners will find interesting stories that will grab their attention. I normally try to find a topic for boys and a topic for girls that they will find interesting and that will make it interesting for them to read.*

Extract: Q6

Interviewer: In your opinion is reading comprehension instruction important in Grade 3 could you please explain in detail?
Participant: *Yes, it is important because comprehensions they do up until Grade 12, they will be answering comprehensions.*
Interviewer: Could you tell me a bit more?

Participant: *As I have said, they will be doing comprehension like almost in varsity as I say if they do major in English or Languages like that. They need to from here already know how to answer comprehension. The department Blue Books, the comprehensions in the Blue Books are way too short. We get, their comprehension is normally a quarter page sometimes half a page and when I teach after the assessment comprehension it is a two- or three-page comprehension.*

Interviewer: Okay

Participant: *The comprehension in there should really be made longer.*

Extract: Q7

Interviewer: Miss, do you receive any support concerning the teaching of reading comprehension in Grade 3? Could you please explain in detail?

Participant: *Yes, the department assists us. They will have workshops on comprehension skills, had one recently and it was very informative and we do come back to class and we try to bring that to your classroom. Try the new methods that they suggested because they do realise that comprehension is a problem in our school.*

Interviewer: What other support do you get besides the department?

Participant: *We support each other in the grades and in the phase, we will talk about what do you have, what do I have that is different and what to do differently, yes.*

Extract: Q8

Interviewer: What are your pressing teaching reading comprehension support needs? Could you please elaborate in detail?

Participant: *Teachers need to come to the party and parents should get more involved. Parents need to teach the learners, parents need to ask the learners questions at home, anything be it in a newspaper be it in the library book be it wherever parents also need to get involved to help the kids understand more I encourage that all the time. I'll tell the parents please, the library book, read a page, ask questions. Do they understand what they have read? Do they comprehend what they have read, are they able to answer you?*

Interviewer: Other than parent support, what do you feel is lacking right now in your classroom?

Participant: *Also, language, some of our learners have a problem there, what they know, their knowledge they read too little they definitely read too little.*

Interviewer: How can you be assisted?

Participant: *No, like we encourage them to join the library, join a little library. I even message my parents not so long ago there are reading apps that they can download if they have phones. There are reading apps that they can download to assist their learners to assist their kids at least.*

Q2, the topics discussed include phonics, reading with understanding, language development, encountering difficult words in passages, difficulties in understanding and explaining word meanings, and the ability to read and formulate comprehension questions. Q3, learners expressed feeling overwhelmed by lengthy texts, which affects their ability to answer questions effectively. Q4, the participant's choice of reading comprehension strategies is influenced by finding interesting texts that are relatable to the learners. Q6, the importance of reading comprehension is emphasised due to its continuous relevance and application throughout a learner's schooling career and beyond. P9 also highlighted the shortcomings of the Blue Books

and how they relate to challenges in assessments. Q9, the involvement of parents is emphasised as a valuable means of assisting their children in developing literacy skills through reading. These points reflect the key insights by P9 during the interview.

4.9. Summary of Interviews

From the interview responses, the most commonly mentioned reading strategies were questioning strategy, activating prior knowledge (APK), summarising/picture story, visualisation, story structure, and predictions. Participants favoured the questioning strategy and activating prior knowledge as their most preferred reading comprehension strategies. However, it was noted that some participants had difficulty distinguishing between reading cognitive strategies and teaching approaches. Most participants, except for P7 and P8, mentioned receiving support from district officials. P2 specifically mentioned the importance of monitoring systems and revising strategy implementation.

Additionally, all participants, except for P4, mentioned sharing their best practices with others. Regarding support needs, the participants identified various factors contributing to support deficiencies. These challenges include reading difficulties, limited exposure to reading materials, text length, language issues, limited vocabulary, phonics/decoding difficulties, and difficulties with sentence construction. Concerns about grade level issues, reading comprehension challenges, scarce technology and resources, teaching patience, the Department of Basic Education limitations, curriculum-imposed time constraints, classroom size, limited school support, and behavioural problems were among the problems raised by the participants at the classroom level.

Problems with reading comprehension, grade-level difficulties, and a lack of resources seemed to be the main problems. Concerns about socioeconomic status were also raised, along with issues with parental support, lack of consolidation, and limited parental support. Based on the interview responses, it is evident that reading is problematic, and learners are currently struggling with basic decoding skills across all three schools.

4.10. Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present data gathered through the document analysis, classroom observations, and interviews. A thematic narrative approach was used to elucidate the reading comprehension instructional strategies of Grade 3 teachers in the selected schools.



Chapter 5:

DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter explains the qualitative analysis of the data, the steps taken in the analysis. The first two sections provide successively an overview of the analysis methods of the study, i.e. thematic analysis as the main method, and interpretivist approach as the subsidiary method to understand the data. The themes identified from data analysis are successively presented from section 5.3 to section 5.7. Section 5.8 addresses data triangulation. Finally, section 5.9 provides a summary of the study findings.

5.1. Thematic Analysis

The themes and categories that emerged from the data collected through analysis of documents, non-participant observations, and interviews. The CAPS document (DBE, 2011) served as a reference point in the data analysis, and presented themes developed from the instruments used. The research questions focused on: “What are teachers’ instructional strategies for teaching reading comprehension in Grade 3?”

This study employed a qualitative approach and a case study design, with a sample size of nine participants selected from three primary schools in the Western Cape. The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis, which involved classifying theme areas contributing to the interpretation and understanding (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Thematic analysis is considered a method that transfers experiences, meanings, and reality people attribute to things within society (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

An interpretive paradigm was espoused in this study to understand how participants incorporate reading instructional strategies in their classrooms. The constructivist theories and thematic analysis align with the qualitative case study research design. The qualitative methodology is suitable showing how participants “construct their worlds and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016: 6). In the previous chapters 1, 2, and 3, while “every child in South Africa must learn to read for meaning by the end of Grade 3” (Spaull *et al.*, 2016: 4), a significant number of learners are still unable to read with understanding (Howie, 2017).

5.2. Data Interpretation

I analysed the written data through a six-phase process of coding, categorising, developing themes, and creating a thematic map and report. Thematic analysis procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2013) were used to analyse the qualitative data, following six phases as described by Braun and Clarke (2006: 2). Thematic analysis aims to identify, analyse, organise, describe, and report themes found within a data set, with the purpose of classifying theme areas that contribute to the interpretation and understanding (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

To familiarise myself with the data, I transcribed the audio files using the Express Scribe transcription tool. The transcription process involved creating both true verbatim files and clean transcription files, including tracking forms that detail the transcription process. I initially placed my codes in the word document before adding comments, as this process was less time-consuming. I double-checked each code by reviewing each participant's code list, moving back and forth between transcripts and checking the initial codes. To assist with this, I used the doctools extract data add-in for Microsoft Word, which proved to be very useful in organising and extracting comments from the document.

Next, I tallied up the frequency of the initial codes and recorded them in a word document. I then reviewed the initial codes and categorised them, followed by grouping them into codes, categories, and themes. Reading the process description, reviewing my own notes, and consulting research helped provide direction during this stage. The decision-making process involved working through the themes and organising them. Reviewing the themes included refining theme tables and creating a thematic map. Producing and forming themes and thematic maps have the advantage of visually representing the connections between ideas and key themes and subthemes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

I began writing the report, using the research questions as a guide. This process involved addressing the first research question by working through the related codes, followed by the second research question and its corresponding codes, and then addressing codes related to the third question. The report writing process allowed for a detailed examination of codes and quotes. The combined quotes document contained colour-coded notes extracted from field notes. Once I verified the codes for each participant, I proceeded to write the report.

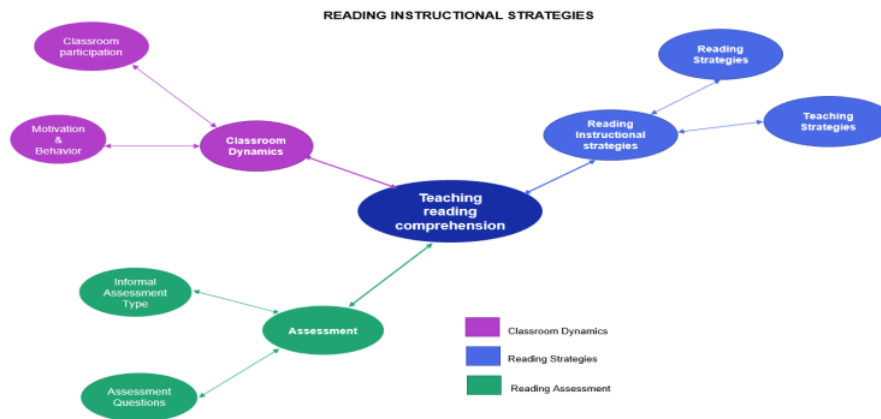


Figure 9: Themes from the classroom observations

Themes emerged from classroom observations:

- Reading instructional strategies
- Reading assessment
- Classroom dynamics

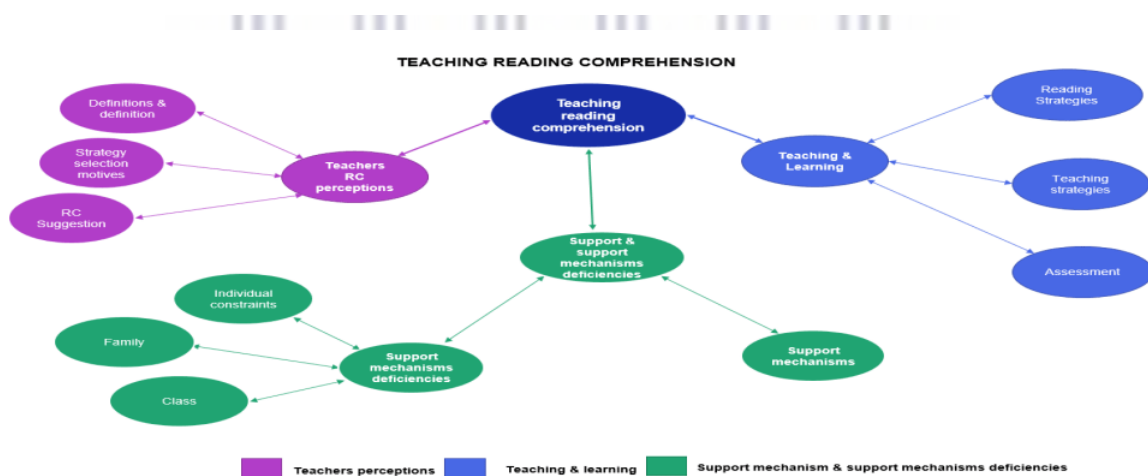


Figure 10: Themes from the semi-structured interviews

Themes emerged from tsemi-structured interviews:

- Teaching and learning
- Teachers' perceptions
- Support mechanisms and support mechanism deficiencies

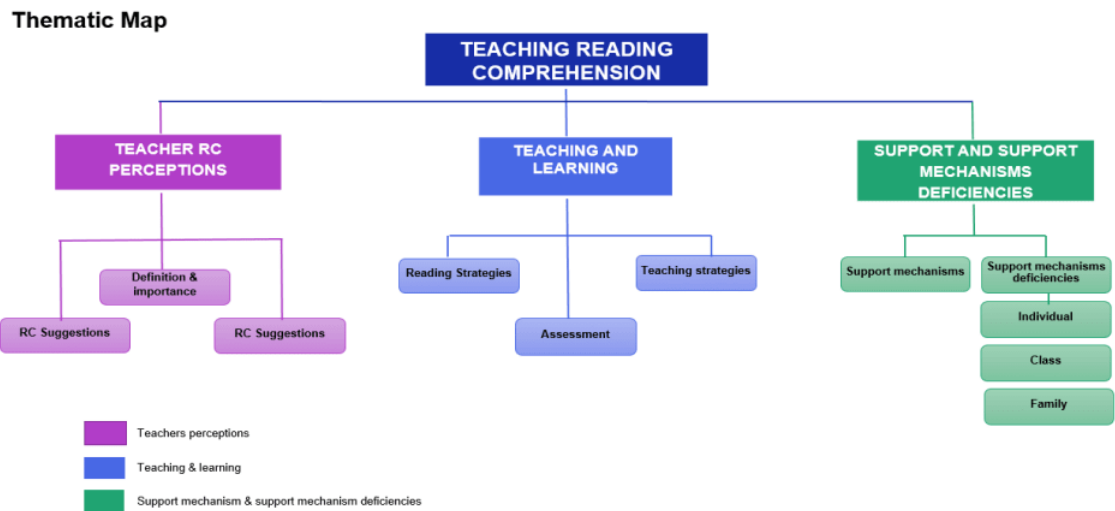


Figure 11: Thematic map of the semi-structured interviews

Thematic map of the CAPS document (DBE, 2011) themes

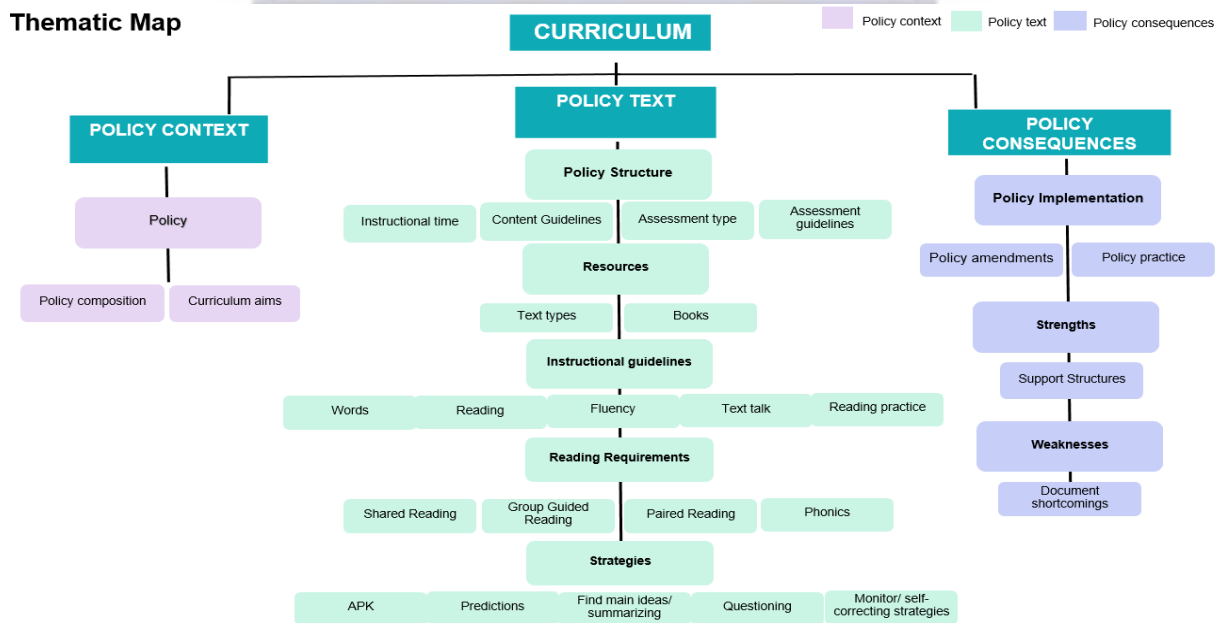


Figure 12: Thematic map of the CAPS document

5.2.4. Document analysis process

The key policy document utilised in this study is the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (DBE, 2011). Although I have also reviewed and revised the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (Department of Education, 2008), Foundation for Learning and

Literacy in the Foundation Phase (FFLC) (Department of Education, 2008), Teaching Reading in Early Grades (Department of Education, 2008), and the National Reading Strategy (Department of Education, 2008). For this research, the focus was on the National Curriculum Statement Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement Language the Foundation Phase Grades R-3 (DBE, 2011). This document informed the teaching practices for Grade 3 reading comprehension and served as a criterion for analysing teachers' instructional practices. It proved valuable in this study as it provided a framework and tool for corroborating evidence obtained from multiple case studies through triangulation. The document offered qualitative data and background information on what to teach and how to teach. In the analysis of policies, I employed the conceptual framework for policy analysis suggested by Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, and Henry (1997), incorporating the three aspects of context, text, and consequences (Cardno, 2018). The tool used five essential features that have been highlighted in numerous policy analysis works (Alexander, 2013; Bell & Stephenson, 2006; Busher, 2006). These features encompassed questions regarding document production and location, authorship and spectators, policy context, policy text, and policy consequences (Cardno, 2018: 631).

5.2.5. Assessments

I observed eighteen (18) Grade 3 reading comprehension lessons in six Grade 3 classrooms. After observing three lessons and obtaining three assessment tools from each participant, I selected only one from each group. I sifted through the classroom observations through the process of selection and deselection; the decision-making was influenced by the quality of the recording and lesson and through the process of screening and identifying. I typed out assessment questions, analysed it by and placed it into relevant question levels by placing it into matrix table questions arranged in a tabular format. After inserting these questions in the Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (2001) used Pohl (2000) and Anderson *et al.* (2001) questions to guide my decision making of analysis. I completed this task by inserting the questions in the respective question level to evaluate the level of questions and determining the frequency or prevalence of each question type. I was able to assess the cognitive levels of questions used in reading comprehension informal assessments

5.2.6. Presenting themes

This section presents the research findings, concentrating on three key themes presented by the research questions. It presents data relating to Q.1 to answer the research question, “Which instructional strategies do teachers use when teaching reading comprehension to Grade 3 learners?” I tabulated research-based strategies and strategies embedded in CAPS and the reading strategies in this study, followed by presenting themes in classroom observations and interviews.

5.3. Theme 1: Reading Instructional Strategies

5.3.1. Subtheme 1: Reading strategies

I used Jim Cummins’ (2011) five phases of questioning in intensive reading and adapted Klapwijk (2011: 91) research-based strategy table. This approach facilitated the comparison of research-based strategies, the CAPS document, and the reading strategies employed in this study. It offered a framework for dissecting and assessing the various approaches taken in reading comprehension instruction.

Researcher	Recommended strategies	Mainstream strategies	Contained within in this study	Contained within in CAPS
Palincsar and Brown (1984)	Predicting, clarifying, questioning, summarising	Activating prior knowledge Predicting Identify story structure	Activating prior knowledge (APK) Predicting Identify Story structure	APK Questioning Find main ideas/summarise
Anderson (1991)	Monitoring, Questioning, Predicting, Inferences, Use of background knowledge	Mental imagery inferences Monitoring Questioning Summarisation (identify main ideas)	Visualisation Inferences Monitoring Questioning Summarisation	Monitor/self-correcting strategies
Snow (2002a)	Identifying main ideas, Questioning, paraphrasing, Identify gist of text, Identify main ideas, identify structure		Incorporated: Clarifying Compare and contrast	
Pressely (1997)	Activating prior knowledge, identify main ideas, mental imagery, analyse stories into story grammar,			

	question generation, summarisation			
Block and Duffy (2008)	Predicting, monitoring, questioning, imagery, lookback/ reread, inferencing, find main ideas/ summarise, evaluate and synthesise			

Table 21: Research-based strategies and strategies used

Based on the data presentation in **Table 21** and **Figure 13** the CAPS document encourages the questioning strategy, APK, find main ideas/summarise, monitor/self-correcting strategies. As indicated in **Table 21** and **Table 22** participants' classroom reading strategies include questioning, clarifying, APK, story structure, monitoring, visualisation, predictions, compare and contrast, summarise, inferences. **Table 25** represents selected reading strategies from the interviews, this includes the questioning strategy, APK, summarising/picture story, visualisation, story structure and predictions.

The pie chart in **Figure 13** below is an illustration of the percentage of the CAPS reading strategies.

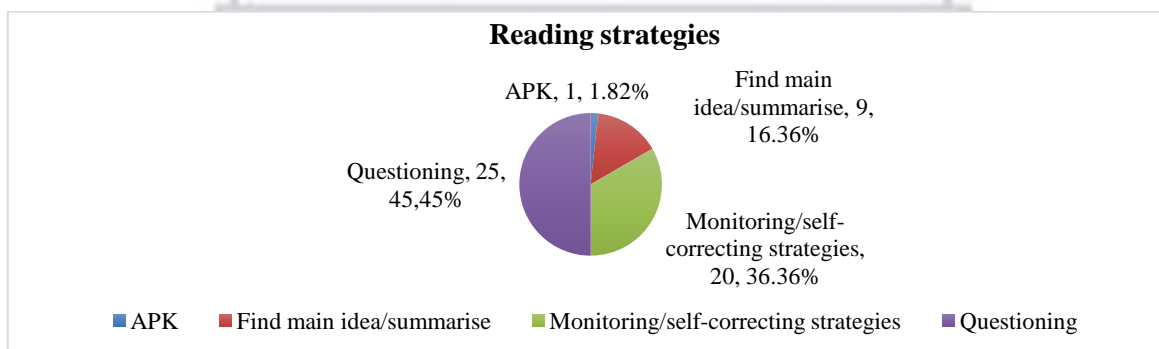


Figure 13: CAPS reading strategies

Table 22 below records frequency and percentage of classroom reading strategies.

No	Strategy	P1	P2	P4	P5	P7	P8	Freq.	%
1.	Questioning	42	49	46	60	46	46	289	75.65%
2.	Clarifying	5	2	2	18	4	7	38	9.94%
3.	APK	8	4	1	7	4	1	25	6.54%
4.	Story structure	0	0	4	0	0	11	15	3.92%

5.	Monitoring	0	2	0	0	2	0	4	1.04%
6.	Visualisation	0	2	1	0	1	0	4	1.04%
7.	Predictions	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0.52%
8.	Compare and contrast	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.52%
9.	Summarise	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0.52%
10.	Inferences	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0.26%

Table 22: *Frequency and percentage of classroom reading strategies*

As seen in **Table 22**, all six teachers the questioning, activating prior knowledge (APK), and clarifying are the most common. Of which the questioning strategy is the most favoured strategy with the highest frequency of 289 and a 75.65% followed by clarifying is third strategy with a frequency of 38 with a 9.94%. APK attained a frequency of 25 with a 6.54% and story structure with a frequency of 15 and a 3.92%. Monitoring strategy and Visualisation attained with a frequency of 4 and a percentage of 1.04%. Predictions, compare and contrast, and summarise attained a frequency of 2 with a 0.52% and inferences strategy attained at frequency of 1 with a 0.26%. Summarise, predictions, compare and contrast, including inferences were the least frequently used reading strategies.

Figure 14 below presents specifically the percentage of the classroom reading strategies.

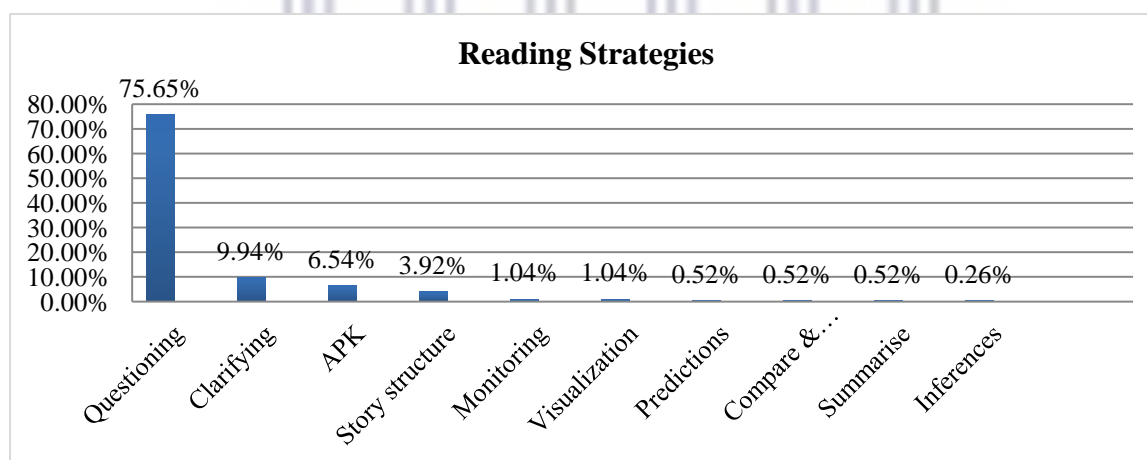


Figure 14: *Percentage of classroom reading strategies*

The questioning strategy has featured most prominently across all six classrooms. Participants generally control the teaching and learning process, the level of questioning, and the input received from learners, which makes it an instructional adaptive tool. All six participants are familiar with APK, questioning, summarise, and story structure and visualisation strategies. Participants unknowingly implemented monitoring and clarifying, inferences and compare and contrast strategies. P4 and P8 taught, model and explain story structures strategies, while

including P8 prediction strategy. P1, P2, P5, and P7 implement model strategies they did not explain certain strategies.

The CAPS document (DBE, 2011) recommends the questioning strategy. Although CAPS encourages teachers to teach children to monitor themselves both in word recognition and comprehension (DBE, 2011: 18), participants did not teach meta-cognitive skills.

5.3.2. Five stage questioning in reading comprehension

According to the information, the CAPS document promotes the questioning strategy and therefore decided to use Cummins (2001)'s five stages of questioning in intensive reading. The five stages of questioning provides a pragmatic approach and holistic view of the levels of questioning implied in the curriculum and reading strategies observed during lessons. With the goal to identify reading instructional patterns and making data more understandable to determine what is happening.

Table 23 below displays the five-stage questioning in classroom reading comprehension.

Five-stage questioning in intensive reading			
Questioning stages	Explanation	Implied in the curriculum	Reading strategies observed
Experiential phase	Activate prior knowledge and build knowledge.	Yes	Yes
Literal phase	The focus is on information in the text; typical questions might be (when, where, how, who and why)	Yes	Yes
Personal phase	Connect the information in the text to their emotions and past experiences.	Yes	Yes
Critical phase	Critical analysis of issues or problems arising from text; involves drawing inferences and exploring generalisations.	Yes	Yes
Creative stage	Translating results of the previous phases into concrete action.	No	Yes

Table 23: Five-stage questioning in classroom reading comprehension

The CAPS document encourages the teacher “to engage children in a range of levels of thinking and questioning,”... “Help to develop both lower and higher order comprehension skills, levels literal, reorganisation, inferential, evaluation and appreciation questions’ (DBE, 2011: 16-18).

But do not include the creative stage or providing learners with extension task that will transform learning into action or practice except that, “children read the text themselves and engage in oral, practical and written activities based on the text” (DBE, 2011:12) this usually takes the form of answering comprehension questions, although it is implied in the different levels of questioning.

Table 24 below presents the five-stage questioning observed during lessons.

Five-stage questioning in intensive reading							
Questioning stages	Explanation	P1	P2	P4	P5	P7	P8
Experiential phase	Activate prior knowledge and build knowledge.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Literal phase	Focus is on information contained in the text; typical questions might be (when, where, how, who and why)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Personal phase	Learners relate textual information to their own experiences and feelings.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Critical phase	Critical analysis of issues or problems arising from text; involves drawing inferences and exploring generalisations.	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Creative stage	Translating the results of the previous phases into concrete action	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 24: *Five stage questioning observed during lesson*

P1, P2, P4, P5, P7 and P8 included the experiential phase by APK. P1, P2, P4, P5, P7 and P8 included the literal phase through questioning strategy while P4 and P8 included the story structure questions. P1, P2, P4, P5, P7 and P8 included a Personal phase through the use of questioning strategy as encouraged in the CAPS document, with the children giving a personal

response to the text (DBE, 2011: 12). P1, P2, P4, P5, P7 and P8 included critical phases; this was achieved through questioning strategy while P5 used the inference.

5.3.2.1. *Experiential phase*

Scholars have established that prior knowledge is an important forecaster of text comprehension, and learners who have background knowledge about a certain topic are more likely to understand a text (Amadiou *et al.*, 2009; Dempsey & McNamara, 2009; Ozuru *et al.*, 2009; Molinary & Tapiero, 2007). Research has shown that with the triggering of prior knowledge, learners' reading comprehension may improve (Li, Tong, Irby & Lara-Alecio, 2021).

With reference to Table 1.1 all six participants (P1, P2, P4, P5, P7, and P8) used the APK strategy. P1, P2, P4, P5, P7 and P8 included the experiential phase by APK. P1 achieved the highest frequency of 8 while P4 and P8 attained the lowest frequency of 1.

5.3.2.2. *Literal phase*

Engaging with the text through asking questions is emphasised and discussion whereby understanding is developed on a superficial level. Questioning strategy produces deeper comprehension processes (Soter *et al.*, 2008; Wells, 2007) that “lead readers deeper into a piece” of text (Zimmermann & Hutchins, 2003: 3). Frequently, learners are prepared to do this independently and occasionally they require teachers to provide cues: “Can you tell me...? (e.g. who, what, when, why, or how)” (Bodang & Mmegwa, 2020: 191).

According to the National Reading Panel, important questions can develop learners' reading comprehension (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). P5 achieved the highest frequency of 60 while P1 attained the lowest frequency of 42. P8 achieved a frequency of 11 and P4 attained a frequency of 4 for story structure.

5.3.2.3. *Personal phase*

Once teachers have gathered literal information or surface level information it is essential to connect with the text by giving and sharing your own personal understandings and feelings (Cummins, 2001:67). Ask the following questions, “Has anything like this ever happened to

you or to someone you know? How did what you read make you feel? Did you like it? Did it make you happy? Frighten you? What about your family” (Cummins, 2001: 67)? Ada (1988a: 104) points out that the process helps develop children’s self-esteem by showing that their experiences and feelings are valued by the teacher and classmates.

It also helps children understand that “true learning occurs only when the information received is analysed in the light of one’s own experiences and emotions.” Teachers should nurture reading comprehension abilities and present rich experiential learning environments wherein the learner actively participates in their own learning. Implementing authentic learning experiences accompanied with a learner-centred learning environment the teacher is able to function as a facilitator offering multiple roles to build interest and motivation.

Participants engaged in this phase as this is suggested in the CAPS document (DBE, 2011:12), “[t]he first session focuses on the enjoyment and first ‘look’ at the text, with the children giving a personal response to the text.” P1, P4, P5, P7 and P8 included personal response questions except for P2. P1 used a compare and contrast strategy during the reading lesson.

5.3.2.4. Critical phase

Teachers are encouraged to participate and employ abstract procedures of critically analysing concerns or problems in the text; this involves making inferences and delves into making generalisations. Suitable questions consist of: ‘Is it valid? Always? When? Does it why? Under what conditions? Are there any alternatives to this situation?’ (Cummins, 2001: 67-68) CAPS document encourages active and critical methods of learning, instead of rote and uncritical education of given facts (DBE, 2011). All participants engaged in critical thinking questions while P5 implemented inferences. In this phase, all of the participants except P5 engaged in critical comprehension.

The critical comprehension level leads to the making of balanced judgments about the author’s style and some other aspects of the text. It has to do with evaluating or making judgments in four major areas: central issues, support for those issues, language style, and logic used to arrive at conclusions (Antoni, 2010: 41).

5.3.2.5. Creative phase

Transforming the results of preceding phases into real action, ‘How can the problem or issues be resolved? What role can we play in helping resolve the problem?’ (Cummins, 2001: 68). The classroom discussion is concerned with determining what changes individuals can make to progress their lives or solve the problem. This phase promotes meaning as we alter aspects of our social realities we achieve a better understanding of those realities (Cummins, 2001).

None of the participants included the creative phase except for P7. P2, P4, P5, P7 and P8 included an extension task; the focus of these tasks is not orientated towards discovering what changes individuals can make to improve their lives or to resolve the problem presented (Cummins, 2001: 68).

Participants delivered extension tasks in an attempt to develop meaning and to gain a deeper understanding of the text except for P1.

Table 25 presents the frequency and percentages of reading strategies as obtained from interviews.

Reading Strategies	Frequency	Percentage	Participant
Questioning strategy	17	47.22%	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9
APK	7	19.44%	P3, P4, P5, P7, P8
Summarising/ picture story	5	13.88%	P4, P8
Visualisation	4	11.11%	P5, P8
Story structure	2	5.55%	P4, P8
Predictions	1	2.77%	P8

Table 25: Reading strategies of interviews

Questioning strategy

P1: *Of the high ordered questions, why do you say that, what do you think will happen? It is just to open up the child, so that the child thinks more, broaden the child's mind as to, why do you think so? Could it have been that? Not just accepting the child's opinion, but go in depth let the child think and not do it at Grade 3 level.*

P2: *Then I would ask them questions about the text and then obviously most of the time it is a written activity, and then they have the questions and they would write in the answers.*

P3: *Highlighting certain words and phrases that you know that will be part of the answers. Its more questions highlighting certain words and phrases and obviously also highlighting unfamiliar new words. Asking questions, giving the child the opportunity to explain what he understands about the text. Number one first, then the child will be able to give back, can relate to what they understand and if they are able to, and answer the questions of the text. In order for the child to understand and in order for the child to be able to retrieve the information that is needed to answer the questions and to understand the questions. Read more than once the texts, they about to answer the questions about it. Its more questions highlighting certain words and phrases and obviously also highlighting unfamiliar new words.*

P4: *We rely a lot on scaffolding the learners with the questioning higher-order, lower-order questioning.*

P5: *I read the questions with them and we do it orally interacting orally.*

P6: *Then also questions based on the text whether it's like how do you think the character felt, what was the setting, what was the moral of the story taking information out of there. Then they give me obviously an answer and sometimes they can even look from the picture in their reader and give me an answer.*

P8: *Find for me the moral of the story tells me your opinion of the story and we give questions now we actually give more index questions for example, who created that Jeans? Then they need to say the person's name, it is identifying the title and we have the last question in Term 2 that is open based because now we want them to decide what they feel, giving their opinion to it yes or no answer and why. Term 3, we unpack it further so now you cannot just give one-word answers you cannot just say John you need to say John created the jeans so now. In Term two, the comprehension is more form of actually creative writing as well. They have more sentence structures the questions are more in depth where we have in a straight describe so we use the Bloom's taxonomy on how we form the questioning. Then the last group you have the A our A question, MA question and the AK question. The HQ most of the time because for 3rd term is just one question. Majority will be MA and then we start always off with the low form questions just to keeps the kids more excited and into it. Term 4 we will take more a creative approach so now we want them to write their own stories based on that opinion. We want them to connect how they relate to that story and how it relates to society so now we will take that story in a situation that they live in today.*

P9: *Then besides the comprehension questions, I will ask my own questions on each piece of the comprehension I broke it up. I tried their questions that they have in the question paper or on their or in their books. I am writing my own little questions to see if they read the comprehension. When we take out some stuff from the comprehension and I ask them to answer then they remember. Although I explain to them if they ask comprehension questions, question one won't be found in paragraph seven question one will be in paragraph one, the answer to question 1 question two will obviously follow then.*

APK

P3: *They could relate and they could talk about it and very important is reading to understand what is in the passage.*

P4: *Also activating prior knowledge before we even start before we even start our reading, I would say activating their prior knowledge because when doing that then the child is able to relate to the story much more. If we doing something on worms we first ask them what they know about worms, where do they see worms, have they touched the worm before you know getting them engaged with the story before they even start reading the story?*

P5: *If I see that the children are not familiar with the theme of the story, with the plot then I will break it down and bring it to their level, show them pictures, let them watch videos. We cannot get feedback or you do not get anything out of them if they do not know what the story is all about.*

P7: *I would let them. I will first do the introduction with something that correlates with the passage just to give them an idea then they not lost.*

P8: *When we make connections, we will have little we will maybe cut out things and then write their answers on those little papers and it will show how to connect.*

Visualisation

P5: *Then they are able for those of them who do not have the ability to read full sentences or read the whole story. They can at least follow the picture story and they can kind of read with us by looking at the picture. I think for my picture story. That works for them especially for the learners who are not on Grade 3 level. Yes, if they are unable to read at least they can follow in their minds and follow the plot of the story.*

P8: *A strategy for them will be to draw for me what you think will happen and then write for me one or two sentences.*

Summarising/picture story

P5: *Then they are able for those of them who do not have the ability to read full sentences or read the whole story. They can at least follow the picture story and they can kind of read with us by looking at the picture. I think for my picture story. That works for them especially for the learners who are not on Grade 3 level. Yes, if they are unable to read at least they can follow in their minds and follow the plot of the story. I forgot to mention the one we also do beginning, middle and end.*

P6: *Beginning middle and end of the story, we use pictures as well. Especially for those who cannot read properly yet then they read the pictures. Then from the pictures, we formulate what happened in the story, in the beginning, middle and end, from the strategies I would say that one. The one with the pictures showing the beginning, middle and end of the story and then of course letting them write what the story the text so that I can see what they understood what the story is about.*

P8: *We build a little bit higher where you would say the middle end, the beginning, middle and end.*

Story structure

P4: *We also focus a lot on the main characters, setting, plot, problems, and solutions in the story, the type of story.*

P8: *Then Grade 3 we look more in detail, what is the plot of the story and the big parts that happened in the story, what is the solution in the story, so each Grade we build up.*

Predictions

P8: *Or I will show a picture and then they need to decide on what they think is going to happen, what is going to happen in the story instead of just the recital.*

Strategy confusion

P7: *I would say all of them all of the above like with the first I did I used the phone and I used the poem and the second I used the song on the phone and now I did the poem.*

Figure 15 below shows the percentage of reading strategies as obtained from interviews.

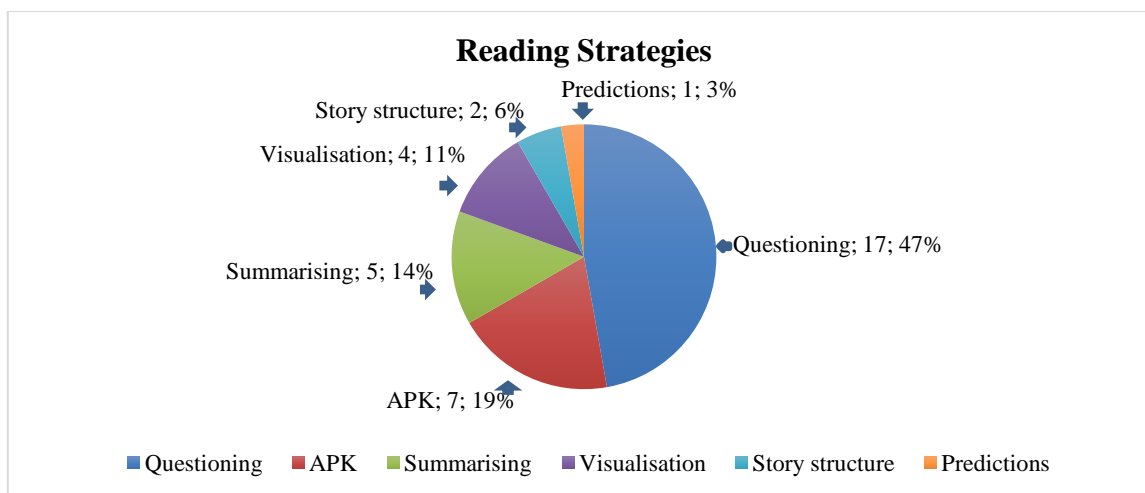


Figure 15: Reading strategies from interviews

From the data collected P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8 and P9 except for P7 mentioned the questioning strategy and attained a frequency of 17 with a 47.22%. Activating prior knowledge was mentioned by P3, P4, P5, P7 and P8 and attained the second highest frequency of 7 with a percentage of 19.44%. Summarising/picture story was mentioned by both P4, and P8 with a frequency of 5 with 13.88%. Visualisation was mentioned by P5 and P8 with a frequency of 4 with a percentage of 11.11%. P4 and P8 mentioned story structure with a frequency of 2 with a 5.55% while P8 mentioned predictions 1 with a 2.77%.

Table 26 shows the frequency of reading strategies as obtained from interviews.

	Questioning	APK	Summarising Picture story	Visualisation	Story structure	Predictions
P1	✓					
P2	✓					
P3	✓	✓	✓			
P4	✓	✓			✓	
P5	✓	✓		✓		
P6	✓					
P7		✓				
P8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
P9	✓					

Table 26: Frequency of reading strategies

P1 mentioned questioning strategy and APK, while P2 named only the questioning strategy. P3 mentioned the questioning, APK, and P4 named questioning strategy, APK, story structure,

and summarising/picture story strategy. P5 mentioned questioning, APK, and visualisation while P6 the questioning. P7 mentioned APK only, while P8 mentioned questioning, APK, story structure, summarising/Picture story, predictions, and visualisation while P9 mentioned the questioning strategy only. Of the nine participants P2, P7 and P9 have identified only 1 strategy. P8 mentioned 6 strategies, P3, P4 and P5 mentioned 4, P3 mentioned 3 strategies, P2, P7 and P9 mentioned one strategy. Although P5 and P8 stated that they use a variety of strategies, they are unable to make that distinction. The inability to identify RC strategies demonstrates a lack of knowledge, whereas P7 has shown a limited and incorrect interpretation of RC strategy. Majority of participants favoured questioning strategies that focused largely on oral language comprehension supplemented with limited RC strategies. The questioning strategy functioned as a tool to navigate thinking processes.

P7: I would say all of them all of the above like with the first 1 I did I used the phone and I used the poem and the second I used the song on the phone and now I did the poem.

The CAPS document encourages the questioning strategy understandably; majority of the participants identified and favoured it. In response to the question: Q.2 and Q.3 participants were not able to differentiate between reading and teaching strategies. For that reason, they were unable to make a distinction between RC strategies and teaching strategies. Generally, they interpret RC strategies and teaching strategies as the same and perceive it as synonymous.

5.3.3. Subtheme 2: Teaching strategies

The reading instructional strategies employed by participants are tabulated in a diagram and compared to the reading instruction suggestions outlined in the curriculum. This analysis aims to evaluate the alignment between the strategies used by participants and the recommended practices in the curriculum.

Table 27 below shows the reading instruction suggestions in the curriculum and used by participants.

Reading instruction suggestions in the curriculum	Reading instruction observed during lessons	Additional reading instructional strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the topic • Text features • Text structures: grammar and punctuation • Word recognition • Vocabulary • Divide text • Scanning • Reread • Cloze procedure • Teacher reads aloud • Read aloud • Text talk • teacher-modelled process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the topic/set purpose • Text feature • Text structures • Word recognition • Vocabulary • Divide text • Scanning • Look-back/read • Cloze procedure • Teacher reads aloud • Read aloud • Text talk- group work • teacher-modelled process:-Guide instruction: task direction, guide instruction, clear instruction and • teacher interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repetition: Repeat words, repeat questions, restate answers, and repeat instruction. • Lesson closure

Table 27: Reading instruction suggestions in the curriculum and used by participants

Figure 16 below displays a pie chart of CAPS teaching strategies.

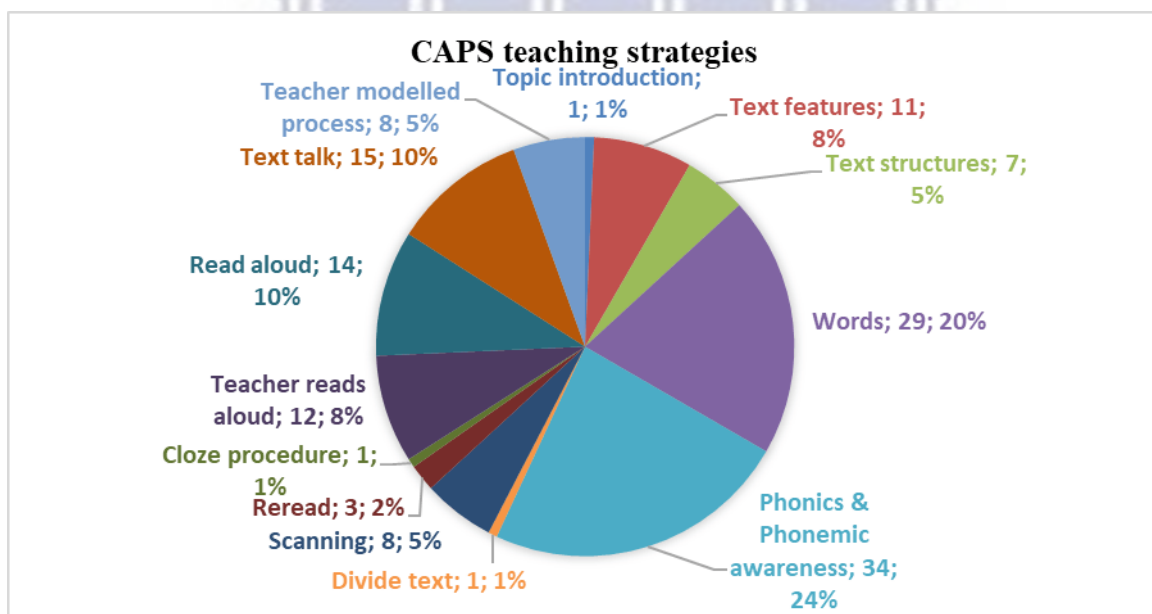


Figure 16: CAPS Teaching Strategies

Table 28 below records the frequency and percentage of the CAPS teaching strategies.

Teaching strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Introduce the topic	1	0.69%
Text features	11	7.63%
Text structures: grammar and punctuation	7	4.86%
Words	29	20.13%
Phonics and phonemic awareness	34	23.61%

Divide text	1	0.69%
Scanning	8	5.55%
Reread	3	2.08%
Cloze procedure	1	0.69%
Teacher reads aloud	12	8.33%
Read aloud	14	9.72%
Text talk	15	10.41%
Teacher-modelled process	8	5.55%

Table 28: CAPS teaching strategies

Based on the data presentation in **Table 27**, **Table 28** and **Figure 16** CAPS teaching strategies encourages introduce the topic, text features, text structures: grammar and punctuation, words, phonics and phonemic awareness, divide text, scanning, reread, cloze procedure, teacher reads aloud, read aloud, text talk and teacher-modelled process. As indicated in **Table 29**, **Table 30** and **Figure 17** display classroom-teaching strategies lesson introduction, set purpose, text feature, text structure, divide text, scanning, cloze reading, fill in the missing word, vocabulary, syllables/repeat syllables, spelling, look-back/reread, read aloud, teacher reads, repetition, guide instruction, group work and lesson closure. **Figure 18**, **Table 31** and **Table 32** represents selected teaching strategies from interviews, this includes vocabulary, word recognition, read text, look-back/reread, language structure, shared reading strategies, scanning, role-play and cloze reading. Participants comply with the letter with the document; though shortcomings are identified in equipping the children to develop reading skills to function independently. Participants' classroom teaching strategies conform to the CAPS stipulations. Of which words, reading approaches (read aloud, cloze reading, read text and guided instruction /scaffold text appear to be the most common codes across instruments and have attained the highest frequencies.

Table 29 below the reading phases and the teaching strategies for the classroom reading.

P1	P2	P4	P5	P7	P8
Before reading	Before reading	Before reading	Before reading	Before reading	Before reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson introduction • Set purpose • APK • Text feature • Questioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson introduction • APK • Set purpose • Questioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set purpose • Read aloud • Vocabulary • APK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher reads • Predictions • Questioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson introduction • APK • Questioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning • APK • Predictions • Teacher reads
During reading	During reading	During reading	During reading	During reading	During reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divide text • Cloze reading • Fill in the missing word • Vocabulary • Read aloud • Questioning • Guide instruction • Repetition • Compare and contrast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word recognition • Read aloud • Teacher reads • Visualisation • Questioning • Monitoring • Clarifying • Guide instruction • Repetition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look-back/ Reread • Questioning • Scanning • Story structure • Repetition • Guide instruction • Look-back/ reread 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set purpose • Text feature • Divide text • Scanning • cloze reading • Fill in the missing word • APK • Vocabulary • Syllables/ syllables repeat • Read aloud • Inferences • Guide instruction • Look-back/ reread 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divide text • Vocabulary • Syllables/ syllables repeat • Read aloud • Teacher reads • Clarifying • Visualisation • Repetition • Guide instruction • Look-back/ reread 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cloze reading • Fill in the missing word • Read aloud • Story structure • Repetition • Clarifying • Summarise • Guide instruction • Look-back/ reread
Post-reading	Post-reading	Post-reading	Post-reading	Post-reading	Post-reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look-back/ reread • Questioning • Spelling • Lesson closure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning • Look-back/ reread • Repetition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning • Clarifying • Spelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning • Clarifying • Repetition • Summarise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning • Monitoring • Lesson closure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning • Group work

Table 29: Reading phases and teaching strategies for the classroom reading

5.3.3.1. Teachers' classroom reading and teaching strategies

Teachers' reading comprehension strategies are divided into three reading stages pre-reading stage, while reading stage and post-reading stage (Hood *et al.*, 2005; Gibbon, 2002; Brown, 2001; Wallace, 1992; and Barnet 1988). Reading instructional lessons focuses on language structure and meaning.

5.3.3.2. Pre-reading stage

P1 and P5 referred to text features by discussing aimed to familiarise learners with the major contextual features of a text or text structure. Research clearly shows that how many readers understand about the text's topic before they read it is a major factor in how much they understand while and after they read it (Cervetti & Wright, 2020). All participants engaged in activating prior knowledge of which P4 focused on lexical knowledge P1 and P5 focused on structural knowledge while participants connected through scenario knowledge around varied situations. The use of predictions is suggested by (Anderson, 1999; Pelinscar & Brown 1984; Doolittle, 2006). P5 and P8 made predictions by combining readers' prior knowledge and text clues through explicit instruction that consists of anticipating information and what will happen onward in the text.

5.3.3.3. During-reading stage

In this stage, the focus is on assisting learners to comprehend the text. The common one is reading aloud activity which is recommended to use by Gibbons, (2002); Hancock and Leaver (2006); Nuttal, (1996:2). P1, P2, P4, P5, P7, and P8 the learners read aloud while P2, P5 and P7 the teacher reads aloud. There are two kinds of reading aloud; reading aloud to learners is can used as an opportunity to bring learners into a popular culture and an opportunity to challenging text and reading aloud by learners is individual learners to each other can develop class cohesion and encourage learners about the text Handcock and Leaver (2006:40). The NCLRC (2007) suggests rereading to check comprehension as a during-reading strategy.

Frequency and percentage of Grade 3 instructional reading strategies indicate that all participants engaged in look-back/ reread strategies. P1, P2, P5 and P7 introduce vocabulary in the while- reading stage. P1, P5 and P8 implemented the cloze procedure that can be used to teach reading because it goes beyond the sampling, reconstructing and matching demands of

normal reading (Rye, 1982:7). P1, P2, P5, and P7 introduced the meaning and pronunciation of these words. In addition, P1, P5 and P7 divided text while P4 and P5 used the scanning strategy. In P4 and P8 classrooms of which they explicitly taught story structure strategies while P5 and P8 implemented explicit predictions, whereas all participants taught look-back/ and reread strategies. Participants implemented the questioning, monitoring, clarifying, inferences, compare and contrast and visualisation strategies but did not explain it. As for summarising P5 summarised the text but did explain what she was doing while P8 referred to summarise strategy but did not implement the strategy.

The participants used Bloom's taxonomies to guide teachers' instruction. With the exception of P4 and P8 the scaffolding of the text consists of working through the comprehension questions and assessing the accuracy of answers, the scaffolding process is depicted as dominating and restraining. The findings of this study confirm previous studies as the majority of the participants with the exception of P4, P5 and P8 taught reading strategies explicitly while all of the participants taught look-back/ reread strategy.

5.3.3.4. *Post-reading stage*

Teachers generally engage in activities to assess the learners' comprehension in specific tasks as proposed by an online publication; the National Capital Language Resource Center (2007); Gibbons (2002: 91). Palincsar and Brown (1984), Doolittle (2006), Anderson (1999), and USA National Reading Panel (2000) recommend predicting, questioning, clarifying, summarising, monitoring comprehension, and promote the implementation of comprehension strategies during classroom activities in instructing reading comprehension. P1 engaged in the questioning strategy, spelling, and lesson closure, while P2 focused on questioning and repetition. P4 focuses on questioning, clarifying and spelling while P5 questioning, clarifying, repetition and summarising. P7 focused on questioning, monitoring, and lesson closure, while P8 focused on questioning and group work. All participants focused on answering questions while P8 implemented group activity that created opportunities for learners to interact and ask questions more freely.

Table 30 below presents the frequency of classroom teaching strategies.

Teaching strategies	P1	P2	P4	P5	P7	P8
Lesson introduction	1	1	0	0	1	0
Set purpose	1	1	1	1	0	0
Text feature	5	0	0	1	0	0
Text structure	0	0	4	0	0	0
Divide text	3	0	0	1	1	0
Scanning	0	0	1	1	0	0
Cloze reading	14	0	0	1	0	31
Fill in the missing word	12	0	0	1	0	33
Vocabulary	4	3	3	8	1	0
Syllables/repeat syllables	0	0	0	12	2	0
Spelling	3	0	1	0	0	0
Look-back/reread	2	3	2	1	4	3
Read aloud	11	1	17	4	23	7
Teacher reads	0	1	0	7	2	3
Repetition	8	2	4	14	13	6
Guide instruction	11	13	20	19	28	19
Group work	0	0	0	0	0	1
Lesson closure	1	0	0	0	1	0

Table 30: *Frequency of classroom teaching strategies*

P1 implemented lesson introduction, set purpose, text feature, text structure, divide text, cloze reading, fill in the missing word, vocabulary, spelling, look-back/reread, read aloud, repetition, guide instruction and lesson closure. P2 implemented lesson introduction, set purpose, vocabulary, look-back/reread, read aloud, teacher reads, and repetition and guide instruction. P4 set purpose, scanning, vocabulary, and spelling, look-back/reread, read aloud, repetition, and guide instruction. P5 implemented set purpose, text feature, divide text, scanning, and cloze reading, fill in the missing word, vocabulary, syllables/repeat syllables, look-back/reread, read aloud, teacher reads, repetition, and guide instruction. P7 implemented lesson introduction, divide text, vocabulary, and syllables/repeat syllables, look-back/reread, read aloud, teacher reads, repetition, guide instruction, and lesson closure. P8 implemented cloze reading; fill in the missing word, look-back/reread, read aloud, teacher reads, repetition, guide instruction, and group work.

Although participants offered instructional support, participants do not explicitly teach and demonstrate what and how to implement or apply reading strategies, in the absence of metacognitive strategies. Training learners how, when and what strategies to implement needs proper nurturing and explicit instruction. Group work creates less teacher control input and more voluntary learner control output, wherein learners take ownership of their own learning.

Figure 17 below is a display of classroom teaching strategies and their respective frequencies per participant.

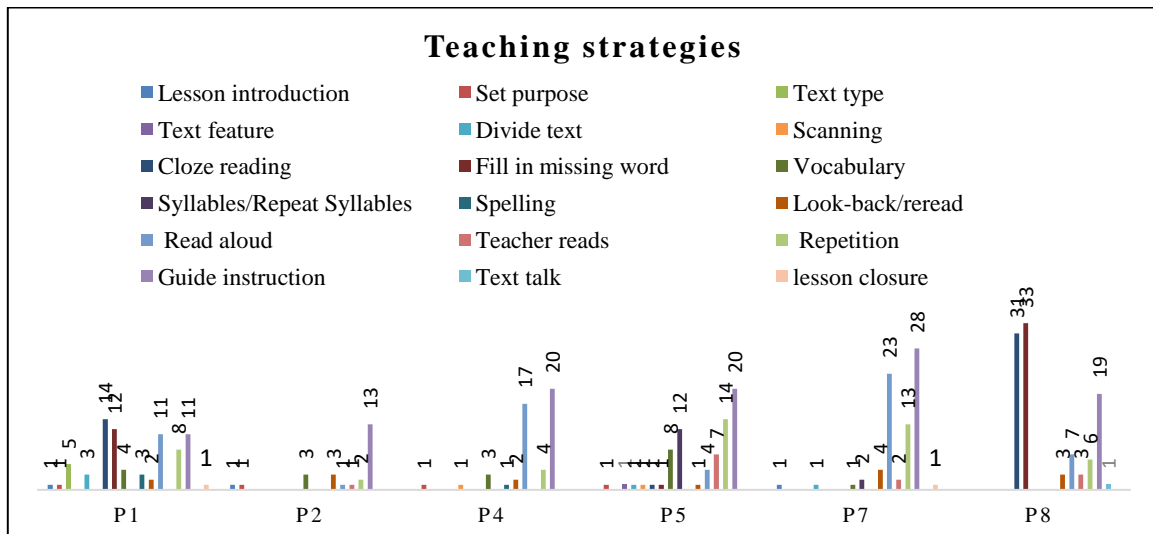


Figure 17: Classroom teaching strategies

In summary, participants’ lessons consist of reading phases, reading lessons are scaffold through guided instruction, with a focus on vocabulary and text reading. All six participants used read aloud strategies and three participants engaged in cloze reading strategies. Participants generally conduct lessons as whole class instruction, except for P2 and P8. Despite the use of questioning strategy, participants minimise text talk engagement due to excessive use of the whole class questioning strategy. Participants used strategies but did not explain how to use strategies and the reason for using specific strategies.

Participants' scaffolding process resembled modelling the text, activating prior knowledge, minimal dialogue through questioning strategy, building vocabulary, and actively participating through reading and developing fluency, with no cooperative learning strategies except for P8. Opportunities for engagement are limited to a few learners through selective answering as not all learners answer questions that render them inactive. With the exception of P8 the provision of group work offered learners a chance to discuss the text through learner-to-learner interaction in a relaxed setting to gain an improved understanding of the text, “work effectively as individuals and with others as members of a team” (DBE, 2011: 5). P2 taught small instructional ability-groups that facilitated individual engagement, as ‘text talk is central to this approach’ (DBE, 2011: 12).

Figure 18 below is a display of teaching strategies and their respective percentages per participants as obtained from interviews.

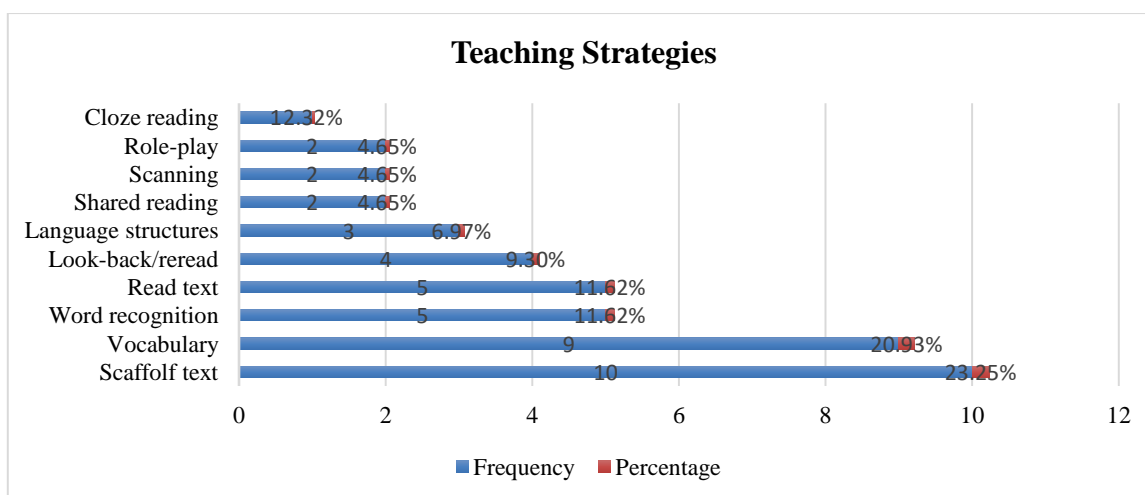


Figure 18: Teaching strategies from interviews

Scaffold text

P1: If that scaffolding has been done correctly and the foundation has been laid then once they come into Grade 3 they must be able to work with various texts.

P3: To make a detailed scaffolding of the text so then the children will be able to understand, the most effective one, is the strategy of breaking down this whole text per paragraph, explain to the child all the details in the paragraph. Digging the info, the details of the words, what is the meaning of the words? Once they can relate to the text you are busy scaffolding through the text and giving the unfamiliar words and giving the meaning of the words so then they understand. Then we will break instruction down to into smaller parts for them to understand. Obviously, what we also did, you start the answering of the questions to get the first word, and then they answer the rest of the questions, so you teach them. What we have done in the past we take ready to make up our stories so we take something that they are familiar with and then make up our own stories.

P5: As we go through the story, each paragraph, or every, or each event we let them draw a picture.

P7: They must be able to definitely even if it is a short paragraph they must be able to read in order and they must be able to comprehend they must retell the story you must go through it, paragraph, paragraph 1 paragraph, in order for you to see if they understand.

P9: Break the story, tell the story back to me in as few sentences as possible just to gauge with them, do they understand what they have read.

Vocabulary

P2: I would select that word I feel is difficult for their level or maybe words that I know that they not familiar with so about five or six unfamiliar words and then from there read the text let them ask me questions about the text.

P3: Grade 3 reading, the comprehension is the reading and understanding of the words in the text, then big words obviously, unknown words to as I explain the words to them. They increase their vocabulary, sight word knowledge and sight word ability. Because once you have and they understand the meaning of certain words

they will understand what is in this paragraph, what is asking of me in the paragraph? They do not have the vocabulary so it all informs each other, if they do not have the vocabulary then they cannot read properly and obviously they find reading comprehensions difficult.

P6: *When they read for us and say they come to a word like in one of the stories shed then I ask them what do you think a shed is?*

Basically, a difficult word then we tell them what do you think a synonym for that word is and then we can maybe find a word that they know so that they can associate the two and they can be like that means.

P8: *If I see very difficult words you will obviously start with a strategy with vocabulary first find the difficult words then use dictionaries and things like that.*

P9: *I think their vocabulary is not so huge. Sometimes there are difficult words in the passage and they struggle to understand. Then we have to explain the meaning of certain words.*

Word recognition

P1: *I also like to teach them, how to, what is the word spot, or what is the word. I also like to teach them, how to, what is the word spot, or what is the word. We show them like start a sentence with a capital letter and end with a full stop, all that little things. Now the spelling mistakes, teach the basics so that they can get into it. Once they get into the shared reading and they grasp the concept then they will be able to do it on their own, but it actually takes a lot of practice.*

P3: *Highlighting certain words, phrases that you know that will be part of the answers.*

Identifying the sight words before we do certain reading comprehensions, we do identifying the sight words.

P9: *Well, we will use word attack skills, phonics, are they reading with understanding, do they understand.*

Read text

P1: *I use shared reading strategies in my class and from that, we do actually also do comprehension skills. When I do shared reading, we look at the tone, the tone of the learner, the speed, how to pronounce the word correctly.*

P2: *Where, I read the text to them and they answer questions, but, I found that it is better too.*

P4: *The strategies that we use are they first need to read the story verbatim to understand the story.*

P5: *When they read the story repeatedly then they begin to understand exactly what the story is about.*

P6: *Basically, the teacher reading the text obviously with the inflection and everything so that you can show learners the mood or how the text is flowing, what emotions the character has in the text as well and then.*

P7: *Picture, visual aids and the reading passage that is it*

Look-back/reread

P1: *Like in my one lesson yesterday, when I asked the question I told them to refer back to their reading piece. Because they sometimes forget that rule in comprehension that it is okay to refer back, to look at you reading piece.*

P3: *Read more than once the texts they about, to answer the questions.*

P5: *Read, reading, re-reading, the teacher reads, the children read, we read together, underline words that they do not understand and we explain it.*

P6: *We do re-reading and we do choral reading so that is them reading with me and then reading with each other.*

Language structure

P6: *We put in language structure, we put in phonics, we put in we teach children a whole lot of skills. So that they can comprehend what is being read. For example, with the language structure, for instance synonyms so maybe they're reading a text that is difficult and we come to the word let me just think.*

P7: *Like I will use songs, poems, and rhymes as well and language I will incorporate language as well and games as well.*

Shared reading strategies

P1: *I use shared reading strategies in my class and from that, we do actually also do comprehension skills. With my group ones, group one and two. The needs of ones they vary, I like to teach shared reading, shared writing and also when it comes to comprehension shared answering the comprehension. When I do shared reading, we look at the tone, the tone of the learner, the speed, how to pronounce the word correctly.*

Scanning

P1: *they need to scan their reading piece and know exactly where I will find this word, that word, or whichever I am asking for. Teaching reading skills also comprehension skills are also very important because, if the child is able to scan his or her work then he will know exactly where to find that answer and also be able to answer the questions.*

Role-play

P2: *For them to be more interactive with the reading text, so it is either see the actual text and they maybe even act out the story. I would say mainly to those two for example if I am now thinking this to make it easier for the child's understanding. The assessments that I will do is, if the child is able to act out the comprehension, so in a practical way and then that will lead me to my understanding.*

Cloze reading

P4: *We do cloze activities. It is all to engage to get them in the story before we do the actual comprehension.*

Diverse strategies

P1: *So maybe, five strong learners out of that, so which means we need to build on code 2, 3, 4, 5 learners that we I am focusing on to push them, to improve their work.*

P5: *If the child does not know what they are reading therefore our instruction we write them or call them aside we teaching all the different strategies.*

P8: *I like to mix Piaget stuff with Freud as well. I said some of my kids are a bit older than the others. So, their strategy will be a little bit different from what I give group 1. Maybe group 2 will write down the answers and maybe group 3 will set out the beginning, middle and end. To be honest there is many different strategies to use even theories as well. I can't say which one is the most effective because all of them are valuable. For example the learners that I have now is more creative and they more visual.*

Table 31 below contains a list of teaching strategies as obtained from interviews.

Teaching strategies	Frequency	Percentage	Participants
Scaffold text	10	23.25%	P3, P4, P5
Vocabulary	9	20.93%	P2, P3, P6, P8, P9
Word recognition	5	11.62%	P1, P3, P9
Read text	5	11.62%	P2, P4, P5, P6, P7
Look-back/reread	4	9.30%	P1, P3, P5, P6
Language structure	3	6.97%	P6, P7
Shared reading strategies	2	4.65%	P1
Scanning	2	4.65%	P1
Role-play	2	4.65%	P2
Cloze reading	1	2.32%	P4

Table 31: *Teaching strategies from interviews*

P3, P4, and P5 mentioned scaffolding text with a frequency of 10 with a 23.25%. P2, P3, P6, P8 and P9 mentioned the vocabulary with a frequency of 9 and a 20.93%, while P1, P3 and P9 word recognition strategies with a frequency of 5 and 11.62%. P2, P4, P5, P6 and P7 mentioned the read text strategy with a frequency of 5 and 11.62%. P6 and P7 mentioned language structures with a frequency of 3 and with a 6.97%. P1 mentioned both shared reading strategies and scanning with a frequency of 2 and with a 4.65%. P2 mentioned role-play with a frequency of 2 and with a 4.65% while P4 mentioned cloze reading strategy with a frequency of 1 and with a 2.32%. Participants were unable to make the distinction between RC strategy and teaching strategies therefore mentioned these teaching strategies instead.

Table 32 below presents the distribution of the teaching strategies according to the participants.

	Scaffold Text	Read Text	Look-Back/Read	Vocabulary	Word Recognition	Shared reading strategies	Scanning	Role Play	Language Structures	Close Reading
P1			✓		✓	✓	✓			
P2				✓				✓		
P3	✓		✓	✓	✓					
P4	✓	✓								✓
P5	✓	✓	✓							
P6		✓	✓	✓					✓	
P7		✓							✓	
P8				✓						
P9				✓	✓					

Table 32: *Distribution of teaching strategies*

From the teaching strategies, P1 mentioned look-back/ reread, word recognition, shared reading, and scanning strategies. P2 mentioned vocabulary, word recognition, and role-play. P3 mentioned Scaffold text, look-back/ reread, vocabulary, and word recognition. P4 mentioned scaffold text, read text, and cloze reading. P5 mentioned scaffold text, look-back/reread, and read text while P6 mentioned read text, look-back/ reread, vocabulary, and language structures. P7 mentioned reading text, vocabulary and language structures. P8 mentioned vocabulary while P9 mentioned vocabulary, word recognition strategies. From the teaching strategies mentioned above the focus involves scaffold text, decoding and reading the text. What's more both P5 and P8 said they use diverse strategies.

5.4. Theme 2: Assessment

5.4.1. Assessment: Observation Results

Figure 20, Figure 21 and Table 33 illustrate informal assessment questioning type, questioning levels frequency, and percentages observed during class observations. The data indicate that participants generally pose lower-level questions, primarily remembering-level questions, accounting for 45 out of 55 questions.

The interview data presented in **Figure 20** and **Figure 22** reveal that both worksheets and answer questions (questioning) have the highest frequency, with a notable preference for using worksheets. Additionally, **Figure 19** below provides excerpt 1 of CAPS (DBE, 2011: 120-121), indicating that participants assessment tools align with policy. The CAPS Assessment type covers formal and informal assessment activities with a frequency of 17. Assessment guidelines achieved a frequency of 10, presenting reading options for oral, practical and written tasks as referenced in **Figure 19** below (DBE, 2011: 120-121).

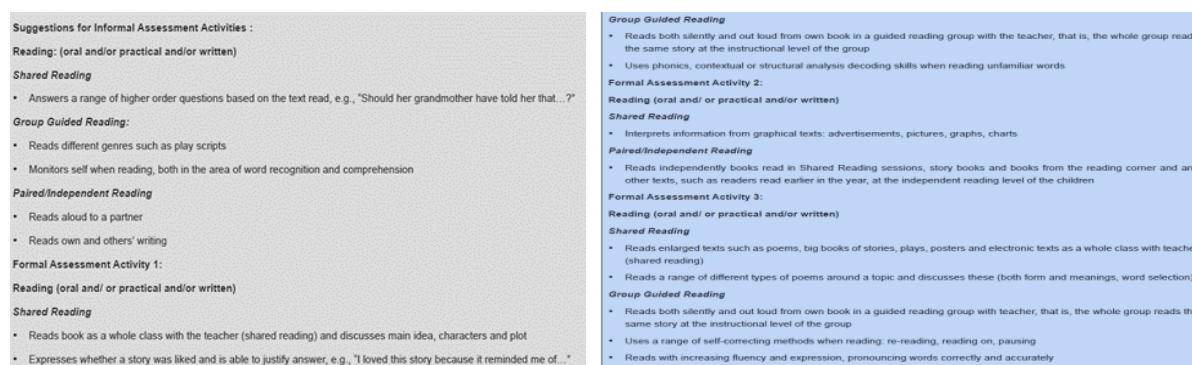


Figure 19: Extract 1 of CAPS HL

I noticed that the CAPS document, including the National Protocol for Assessment Grade R-12 (DBE, 2011), lacks a standardized rubric for assessing Grade 3 reading comprehension.

Additionally, the CAPS document (DBE, 2011) encourages the teaching and assessment of reading instruction through different levels of thinking processes and questioning. This motivated me to utilise the six levels of Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (2001). These questioning levels were adapted from Delton (1986), Pohl (2000) and Anderson *et al.* (2001) (Tangsakul *et al.*, 2017: 38).

The purpose of incorporating Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (2001) is to discern teachers’ preferences in informal assessments to evaluate the level of thinking processes and questioning employed to assess learners’ understanding and engagement with the text. Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (2001), comprises of six questioning levels; remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating (Anderson *et al.*, 2001:2-4). This framework assisted in determining the levels of reading comprehension questions used by teachers.

Figure 20 below presents the assessment questioning type for each participant.

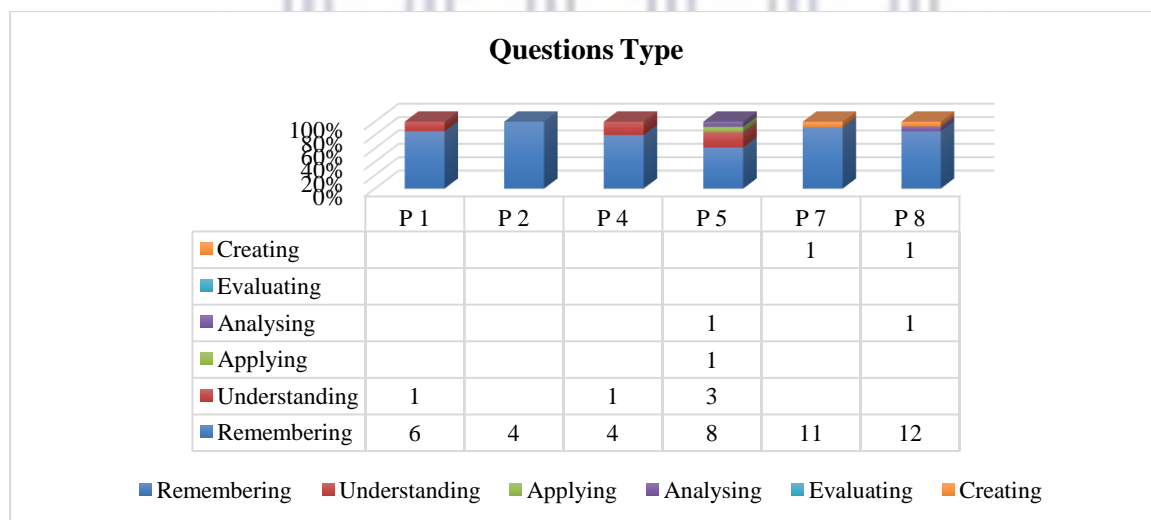


Figure 20: Assessment questioning type

Table 33 below is an adaptation from Tangsakul *et al.* (2017) of the assessment levels of questioning six.

Participant	No. of Questions	Level of questions					
		Remembering	Understanding	Applying	Analysing	Evaluating	Creating
1	7	6	1				
2	4	4					

4	5	4	1				
5	13	8	3	1	1		
7	12	11					1
8	14	12			1		1
6	55	45	5	1	2	0	2

Table 33: Assessment levels of questioning six

Table 33 illustrates reading comprehension questions of Grade 3 informal assessments. The six informal assessments comprise of fifty-five 55 questions. The study found four levels of questions; these included 45 remembering questions (81.81%), 5 understanding questions (0.09%), one applying question with a 1.81%, 2 analysing questions (3.63%) and 2 creating questions (3.63%). From the frequency rates of Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (2001) question levels it is clear that remembering questions to have the highest frequency while the analysing questions were the lowest frequency, while applying and evaluating questions were excluded. Even though CAPS encourage the teachers “to develop both, lower and higher order comprehension skills” (DBE, 2011: 16) that require children to bring together information from different parts of a text (i.e. synthesise), to infer (i.e. read between the lines), to evaluate what happens (i.e. give an opinion) and/or to appreciate a text (e.g. say whether one liked or disliked it and why) (DBE, 2011: 132).

Figure 21 below the frequencies and percentages of the assessment questioning levels.

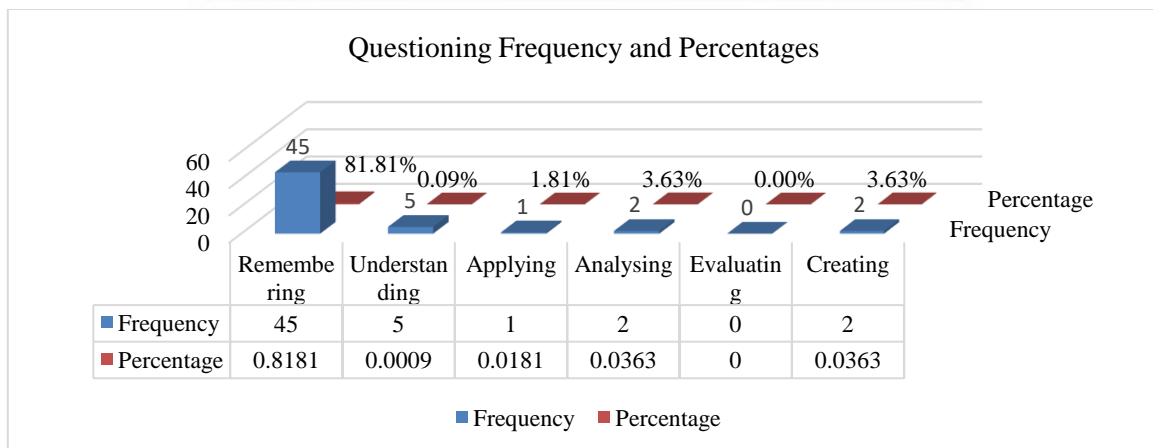


Figure 21: Questioning frequency and percentages

Figure 21 above shows that of the percentages of the six levels of reading comprehension questions in six of the Grade 3 classrooms. The results are similar with Khorsand (2009), Veeravagu *et al.* (2010), Lan and Chern (2010) and Abdelrahman (2014) regarding the levels

of questions grounded on Bloom’s taxonomy 1956 and Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy 2001 (Tangsakul *et al.*, 2017).

5.4.2. Assessment: Narratives from interviews

In response to the question: ‘which reading comprehension assessments do you employ in your class?’ A range of responses was elicited this ranged from answer questions, worksheet, rubric, oral assessment, observation assessment, tests, flash cards, and retelling story.

Table 34 below presents the assessment questioning type from interviews.

Assessment	Frequency	Percentage	Participant
Answer questions	5	21.73%	P2, P3, P6
Worksheet	5	21.73%	P1, P4, P5, P7, P8
Rubric	3	13.04%	P1, P2
Oral assessment	3	13.04%	P1, P7, P9
Observation assessment	2	8.69%	P1, P2
Tests	2	8.69%	P5, P8
Flash cards	2	8.69%	P8
Retelling story	1	4.34%	P9

Table 34: Assessment of questioning type from interviews

Figure 22 displays the frequencies and percentages of the assessment questioning type from the interviews.

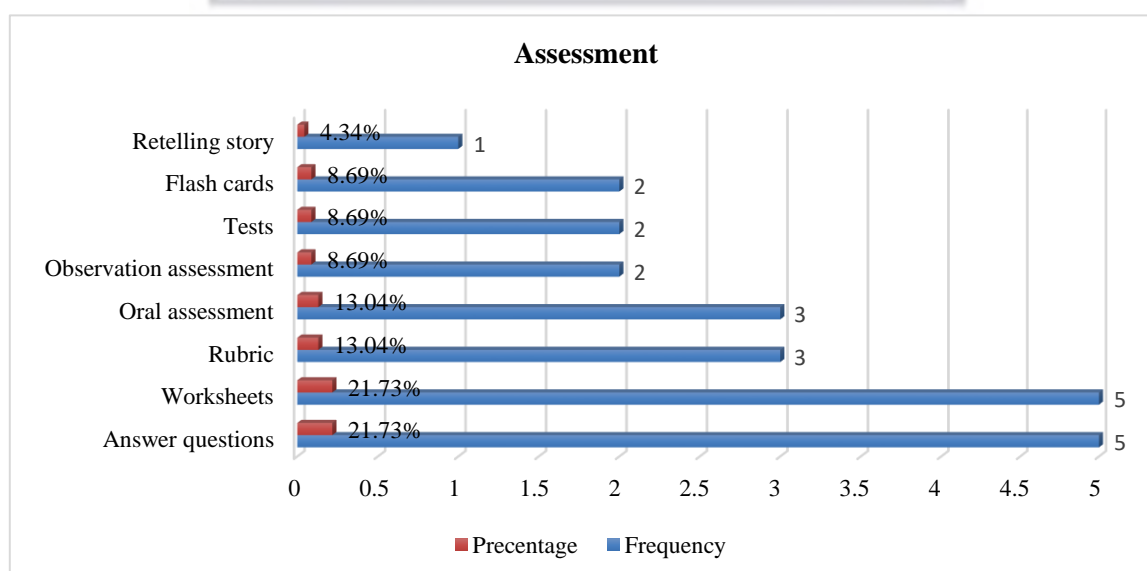


Figure 22: Assessment questioning frequency and percentage

With reference to assessments P2, P3 and P6 mentioned the answer questions with a frequency of 5 and 21.73%. P4, P5, P6 and P8 mentioned worksheets with a frequency of 5 and with

21.73%. P1 and P2 mentioned rubrics with a frequency of 3 and 13.04%. P1, P7 and P9 mentioned oral assessment with a frequency of 3 with 13.04%. P1 and P2 mentioned observation assessment with a frequency of 2 with 8.69%. P5 and P8 mentioned Tests with a frequency of 2 with 8.69%. P8 mentioned flashcards with a frequency of 2 with 8.69%. P1 mentioned retelling the story with a frequency of 1 with 4.34%. Asking questions and worksheets attained the highest and the similar frequency. The preferred method of assessment is the worksheets followed by answering questions (questioning).

Excerpts on assessments

Answer questions

P2: *...and then answer the questions then they have a better understanding of what the comprehension is about. ...and then we use the questions. If the learners are able to answer the questions then obviously, we need to go and relook. Is the comprehension maybe too difficult for the child, is it on the child's level and so forth.*

P3: *Asking questions, giving the child the opportunity to explain what he understands about the text.*

P6: *Then they give me, obviously, an answer and sometimes they can even look from the picture in their reader give me an answer.*

Worksheet

P1: *Normally, with the comprehension there are questions and we also, in my case I like my children to answer to start with a capital letter and end with a full stop and answer in full, it is very important.*

P4: *We use worksheets with our reading. Everything is linked to our reading. Our language structure, our writing pieces, they all link to the comprehension.*

P5: *Yes, a written form in the form of a worksheet.*

P7: *And then I will go to the written activity.*

P8: *we use our worksheets that are also the perfect way to get all the assessments.*

Rubric

P1: *We also, do that via a rubric*

P2: *When we do reading comprehension, we use a rubric for the learners understanding. In the rubric and the questioning, we will use those two strategies. I would say mainly to those two for example if I am now thinking this to make it easier for the child's understanding.*

Oral assessment

P1: *Look the Grade R, Grade 1 they do not need to do reading and comprehension tests, in a virtual type of centre, but that they can do it in an oral way, where the concept still stays.*

P7: *First oral we will first start with the oral.*

P9: *We also question, I question them about the comprehension.*

Observation assessment

P1: *But then the assessments that I will give with that are an observation assessment form so my observation of the child understanding through then acting out the comprehension will then serve as an assessment.*

P2: *But then the assessments that I will give with that are an observation assessment form so my observation of the child understanding through then acting out the comprehension will then serve as an assessment.*

Tests

P5: *We also discuss the possible answers and then we do it, and eventually we do it in the test form.*

P8: *Then at the end of the week, we have our little tests.*

Flashcards

P8: *...even flash cards. At the end of every lesson, to hand in the flashcards and tell them to match something so that they make that target of that lesson.*

Retelling story

P9: *Break the story, tell the story back to me in as few sentences as possible just to gauge with them do they understand what they have read.*

5.4.3. Subtheme 2: Classroom questioning

Classroom questioning is ranked according to participants' frequency of occurrence. The item response presents yes or no responses.

Table 35 below presents the classroom per participant and from both teachers' and learners' perspectives.

Teachers questioning	P1	P2	P4	P5	P7	P8	Freq.	%
Questioning	42	49	46	60	46	46	289	31.89
Teacher response	2	0	0	2	0	2	6	0.66
Frequency	44	49	46	62	46	48	295	32.56
Percentage	4.85	5.40	5.07	6.84	5.07	5.29	65.12	
Learners questioning	P1	P2	P4	P5	P7	P8	Freq.	%
Yes/No response	8	14	14	8	5	3	52	5.73
Asking questions	2	0	0	2	0	3	7	0.77
Question answering	24	45	35	40	51	54	249	27.48
Question/Answer	0	0	0	0	0	8	8	0.88
Frequency	34	59	49	50	56	68	906	

Table 35: Classroom questioning

The questioning strategy attained the frequency of 289 with 31.89% this followed by Question answering which attained a frequency of 249 with 27.48%. Yes /No responses attained a frequency of 52 with 5.73%. Asking questions attained a frequency of 7 with 0.77% with a 1.15% while Teacher responses attained a frequency of 6 with 0.98%. The questioning attained the highest frequency this demonstrates that most of communication triggered by questions and answering questions. P1 attained a teacher communication frequency of 44 with 4.85% and the lowest learner communication frequency of 34 with 3.75%. P2 attained a teacher communication frequency of 49 with 5.40% and a learner communication frequency of 59 with 6.51%. P4 attained a teacher communication frequency of 46 with 5.07% and a learner communication frequency of 49 with 5.40%. P5 attained a teacher communication frequency of 62 with 6.84% and a learner communication frequency of 50 with 5.51%. P7 attained a teacher communication frequency of 46 with 5.07% and a learner communication frequency of 56 with 6.18%. P8 attained a teacher communication frequency of 48 with 5.29% and a learner communication frequency of 68 with 7.50%.

Figure 23 below presents classroom questioning ranked according to participants frequency of occurrence.

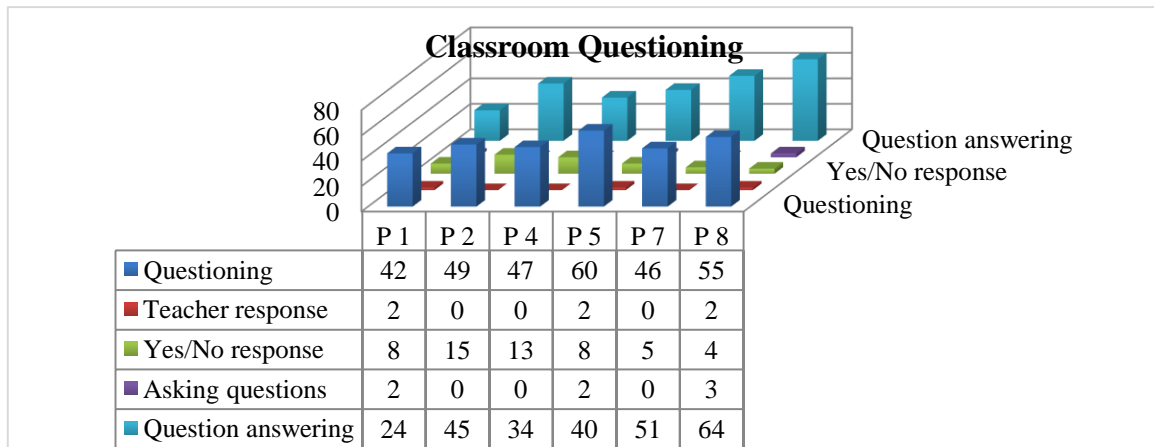


Figure 23: Classroom questioning according to participants frequency of occurrence

P8 has not only attained the highest learner communication frequency and it exceeds teacher communication frequency. P2 attained the second highest learner communication frequency. P5 attained the third highest learner communication frequency followed by P5. P4 attained the fifth highest learner communication frequency followed by P7 while P1 attained the lowest learner communication frequency. P8 group work activity that has created opportunities for active learning and communication, this classroom has attained the lowest level of responses and highest level of asking questions and answering questions.

All six teachers create opportunities for communication and active learning using the questioning strategy as an instrument of engagement, however the group work provides highest communication frequencies compared to the whole class approach that is apparent in P8 classroom. All six participants used the questioning strategy as an instructional tool to engage learners that is consistent with policy.

Figure 24 below presents the percentages of Grade 3 classroom questioning.

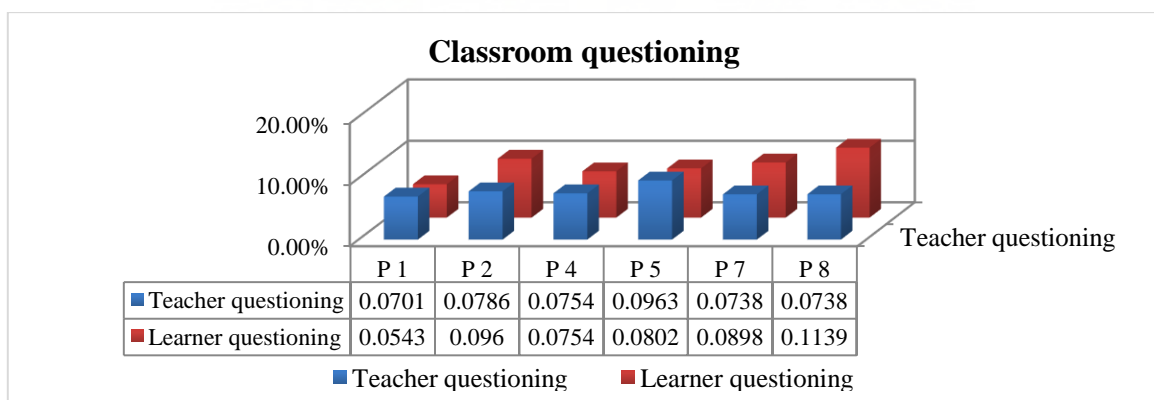


Figure 24: Percentages of Grade 3 classroom questioning

Figure 25 below presents the percentages of Grade 3 classroom questioning.

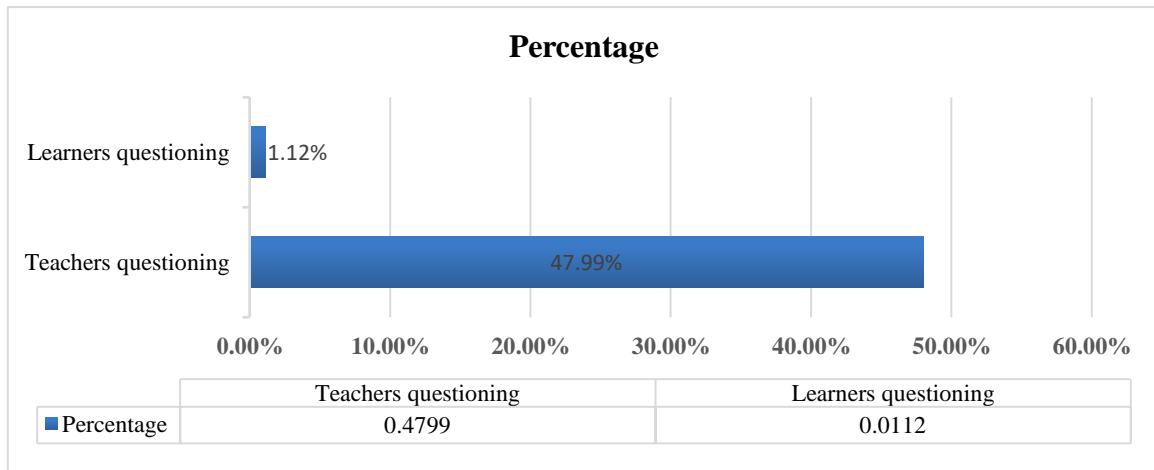


Figure 25: Percentages of Grade 3 classroom questioning

As can be seen from the table (above), the teacher's questioning is reported significantly more than learners questioning. As **Figure 25** shows, there is a significant difference ($t = 47.99\%$, $l = 1.12\%$) between the two groups. It is apparent from this table that there are very few opportunities for learners to communicate.

5.4.4. Subtheme 3: Motivation and Behaviour

Table 36 below presents the motivation and behaviour in the classroom per participant.

Motivation and Behaviour		P1	P2	P4	P5	P7	P8	Freq.	%
1.	Verbal praise	0	3	0	4	4	21	32	82.05
2.	Time-on-task	0	0	3	0	0	4	7	17.94
3.	Percentage	0	7.69	7.69	10.25	10.25	64.10		
4.	Manage Behaviour	5	4	2	3	1	0	15	100
	Percentage	33.3	26.6	13.3	20	6.6	0		

Table 36: Motivation and behaviour

Figure 26 below presents motivation and behaviour frequencies per participant.

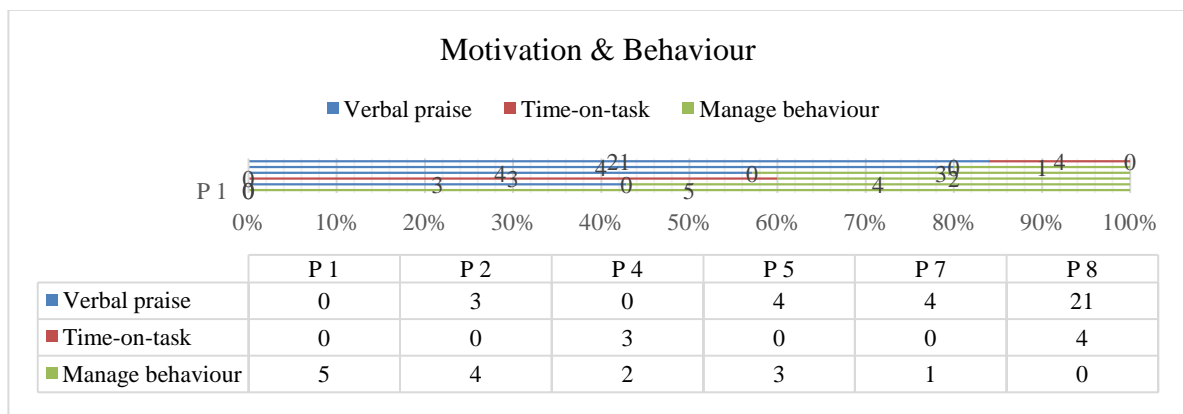


Figure 26: Motivation and Behaviour Frequencies

P1 has illustrated no verbal praise, time-on-task incidence attributes with a manage behaviour frequency of 5 with 33.3%. P2 has presented a verbal praise frequency of 3 and a manage behaviour frequency of 4 with 26.6%. P4 has exhibited a verbal praise frequency of 3 and a manage behaviour frequency 2 with 13.3%. P5 has exhibited a verbal praise frequency of 4 and a manage behaviour frequency 3 with 20%. P7 has exhibited a verbal praise frequency of 4 and a manage behaviour frequency 1 with 6.6%. P8 has exhibited a verbal praise frequency of 21, time-on-task frequency of 4 and a manage behaviour frequency 0 with 0%. The results indicate that the element of verbal praise along with time-on-task promotes behaviour management and interest. P8 classroom illustrates the benefits of verbal praise and time-on-task management while the lack thereof has the capacity to heighten issues relating to manage behaviour as indicated in P1 classroom. Verbal praise plays an important role in classroom management behaviour; this is apparent in P5, P7, and P8 but works more effectively in the presence of time-on-task.

Q.2 to answer research question 2, “What are the Grade 3 teachers’ perceptions of teaching reading comprehension?” This study responded to the question by presenting data relating to definition and importance, strategy selection motives, and reading comprehension suggestions.

5.4.4.1. *Extract*

Figure 27 below presents an excerpt 2 of the CAPS RC (DBE, 2011: 16) that illustrates the absence of a clear definition RC in the CAPS document. While the four reading components do have defined and explained terms, the comprehension component lacks such clarity.

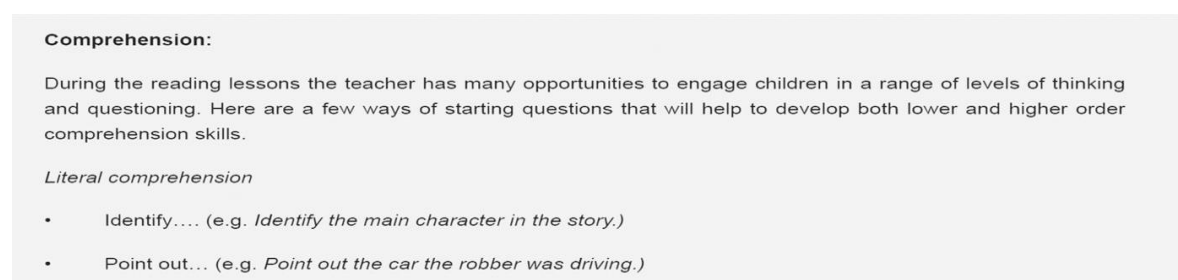


Figure 27: *Extract 2 of CAPS HL*

The CAPS document frequently emphasizes the development of meaning making skills, particularly in the context of phonics. However, explicit mention of making meaning solely in relation to comprehension occurs only twice, both instances in the fourth term.

The excerpts in **Figure 28** (DBE, 2011: 125) and **Figure 29** (DBE, 2011: 127) below respectively showcase and highlight the application of comprehension skills in the process of constructing meaning.

5.4.4.2. Extract

Figure 28 below is excerpt 3 from the CAPS HL Grades R-3 Foundation Phase, emphasising the role of comprehension skills to construct meaning.

Group Guided Reading:

The teacher works with two groups each day, spending 15 minutes with each group. Each group works with the teacher twice a week.

- Reads both silently and out loud from own book in a guided reading group with the teacher; whole group reads the same story at the instructional level of the group
- Reads with increasing fluency, speed and expression
- Uses phonics, contextual and structural analysis decoding skills and comprehension skills to make meaning

Figure 28: *Extract 3 of CAPS HL*

5.4.4.3. Extract

Figure 29 below is excerpt 4 from the CAPS HL Grades R-3 Foundation Phase, which emphasising the role of comprehension skills to construct meaning.

Group Guided Reading

- Reads both silently and out loud from own book in a guided reading group with the teacher, that is, the whole group reads the same story at the instructional level of the group
- Reads with increasing fluency, speed and expression
- Uses phonics, contextual and structural analysis decoding skills and comprehension skills to make meaning
- Monitors self when reading, both word recognition and comprehension
- Uses self-correcting strategies when reading: re-reading, pausing, practising a word before saying it aloud

Figure 29: *Extract 4 of CAPS HL*

5.5. Theme 3: Perceptions of Reading Comprehension

5.5.1. Subtheme 1: Definition and Importance

When the participants were asked, “What is your understanding of reading comprehension?” the majority commented that to read with understanding and to answer questions. However, of

the nine participants who responded to this question, P3 understanding of RC is limited to focus information recall.

Excerpts on reading comprehension definition

P1: My understanding and reading comprehension is that you need to read with insight and you with my learners here at school because they are struggling to read. I teach them how to do comprehension by reading and by then I can then in depth, what the questions or what the story is all about.

P2: My understanding of reading comprehension is that the learner is supposed to read with comprehension. They are supposed to understand what they are reading. If you give them a text and they read it I would be expecting that if I ask a question they should be able to answer the questions that comes from the reading comprehension, that's my understanding.

P3: Basically, reading is retrieving of information from a text.

P4: My understanding of reading comprehension is reading with understanding. Reading and be able and being able to summarise what they've read and to answer questions both verbally and written.

P5: The ability of the child to understand the story, the text, and every aspect whether language, whether it is the plot of the story, words that they do not understand and able to understand what they are reading.

P6: Reading comprehension means when you read a text with understanding what you have read.

P7: The child must be able to read in order to understand the passage and they must read with understanding but sometimes children read but they do not understand what they reading.

P8: For me each grade it depends in which grade reading comprehension consists of is how they understand the reading. What they understand of the text like, who is the characters, the title and the moral of the story then that covers what they start in Grade 1 in Grade 2.

P9: Reading to your children the reading piece and then you need to understand and then answer questions.

5.5.1.1. Importance of reading comprehension

In response to the question, "In your opinion is reading comprehension instruction important in grade 3?" The overall response to this question was very positive as participants unanimously agreed upon the importance of RC. P1, P2, P3, P4 and P8 pointed out the importance of RC instruction in Foundation Phase as it is essential and contributes to learning in Grade 3 and beyond. P5 and P7 emphasised the importance of answering questions when teaching RC; while P6 and P9 stated that RC importance goes beyond schooling system as it

assists us to acquire and understand knowledge and make sense of every aspect of life and P1 and P4 indicated the lack thereof result in learners struggling.

5.5.1.2. Excerpts on the importance of reading comprehension instruction

The importance of reading comprehension instruction is shown in the excerpts below.

P1: To me it is very important and I know even in my school career, people also struggle in reading and comprehension.

P2: You find a learner that is in Grade 3, that learner is supposed to be able to read with understanding and that is where comprehension understanding comes in.

P3: Yes, definitely the instructions should be very clear so that the children can understand what you want from this. What we normally do in Grade 2 already, we teach them the different instructions that you can, that you must ask in certain of these stories.

P4: Yes, it is important this skill is needed before they leave the Foundation Phase. If they lack the skill they will struggle throughout their schooling with reading and understanding. What is being read, summarising, and being able to take notes as they go higher in their school year.

P5: Teaching reading comprehension is very important because if a child does not understand the story then how are they going to answer the questions. That can help the child for not only for the story that is in front of them but also for future they learn from us the strategies that we teach them. They will take that into the higher grades then they are able to read a text and answer the questions effectively.

P6: No definitely, because reading comprehension is not only for English reading comprehension, it moves into mathematics when they do their sums. Reading comprehension when they see the word, double they need to know what it means so that they know I need to use this strategy of doubling here in their life skills as well when they learn about the different like space or pollution.

P7: Definitely, it is important because if the child cannot read, the child cannot answer any questions.

P8: Yes, it is important from Grade 1 through to Grade 3. It is important in every Grade because at the end of the day comprehension helps them, analyse certain things in different situations in their life. Comprehension tells you about morals about values and tells you, it shows them when you get a paper how to break it down, how to skim it and how to understand that they need to expect it instead of reading every little detail. It is extremely important from foundation phase all the way to their life in general.

P9: Yes, it is important because the comprehension they do up until Grade 12, they will be answering comprehensions. As I have said, they will be doing comprehension like almost in varsity as I say if they do major in English or Languages so like that.

5.5.2. Subtheme 2: Strategy selection motives

Excerpts on strategy selection motives

Child ability level

P1: *Normally, at the beginning of the year when we get the learners, they do a baseline test and through the baseline test, you can see where the barriers are.*

P2: *That depends on, I think on the learning and on the understanding of the child, of the level of the child. If it is a strong group, I need not elaborate as much as I would, like the acting out maybe and the going back to the difficult words. I will not need as much activities as I do with the stronger learners, as with the weaker group. The choice depends on the level of the child that I am dealing with in the group.*

P3: *The choice of reading strategies, but definitely it is the level of the child. The level of the child's ability, this is the only way, and seeing. You can prepare yourself for a certain strategy, then you can start to see maybe of the last level of the child. The level of the children is very important. It is the level of the children.*

P5: *I think the levels of the learners are on.*

P7: *The children's level*

P8: *What informs the choice is what I get from the textbook then my strategy depends on that and how they would understand it.*

Text selection

P3: *It is very important for them to read something that is familiar to them or they find interesting. Once we have a text you must try to find a text of interest to the children. A problem that they can relate to is very important. Once they can relate to like I said in the previous one. Interesting and funny texts they can relate to and sometimes you give the texts of a lesson on how to behave, we used it as a story about animals. Three years ago, we had the movie stories that you find in the Huisgenoot. We then made up a pretended bulletin, took that and used that which is familiar and wrote that colourful and all that and we use that to enhance our comprehension.*

P7: *I will start with the easy with not so difficult comprehension and then eventually I will increase the level of difficulty.*

P9: *Something that the learners will find interesting stories that will grab their attention, I normally try to find a topic for boys and a topic for girls that they will find interesting and that will make it interesting for them to read.*

CAPS document

P6: *The CAPS document we take it from there we obviously base our lessons according to that we form our lesson plans.*

P8: *Like I said the learner, however, because we have to use the CAPS document and other textbooks. My textbooks I would check for example we done Mzee the tortoise. Then what I had to relate it to was happening in their daily lives.*

RC Planning

P4: I told you we use our reading cycle.

P6: shared reading comprehension text with the learner where we show them different skills and then the aim is to make them independent readers and then also to acquire skills for comprehension.

Learning style

P8: What informs your choice of reading strategies and again as I said it depends if they are a visual learner or not.

Figure 30 below presents a list of strategy selection motives as well as their respective frequencies.

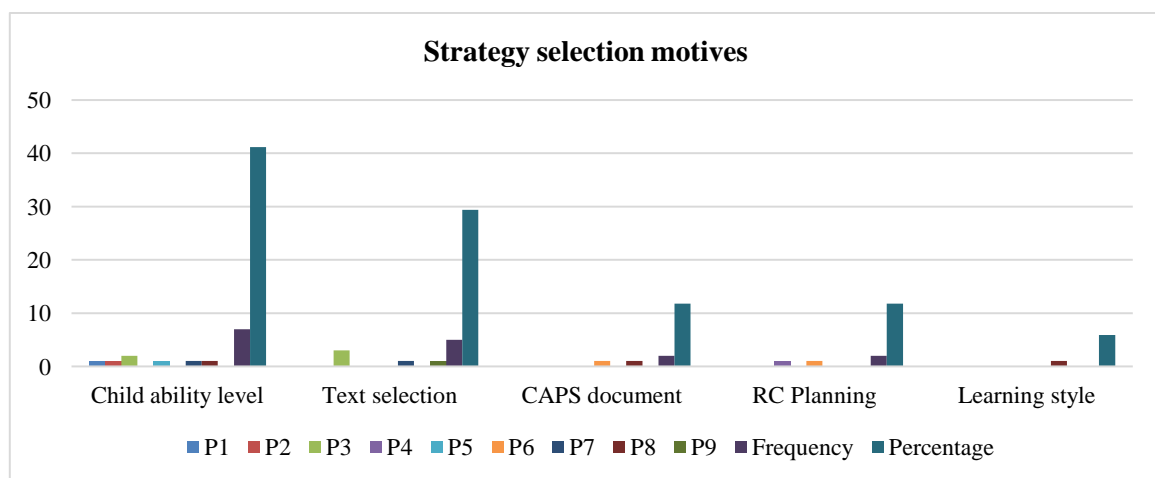


Figure 30: Strategy selection motives and frequencies

Figure 30 P1, P2, P3, P5, P7, and P9 based their strategy choice based on the child's ability level with a frequency of 7 with 41.17%. P3, P7 and P9 based their choice of selection on text selection with a frequency of 5 with 29.41%, while P6 and P8 based their strategy choice on CAPS document with 2 with 11.76%. P4 and P6 mentioned RC planning and P8 added the learning style of children with a frequency of 1 with 5.88%. P1, P2, P4, P5, P9 strategy selection motives are motivated by 1 of the 5 elements, while P3, P7 mentioned 2 elements and P8 mentioned 3 different elements. From the above it is clear that participants vary in what motivates their choice of strategy but child ability level is identified as the most common factor.

Figure 31 below presents a list of strategy selection motives as well as their respective percentages.

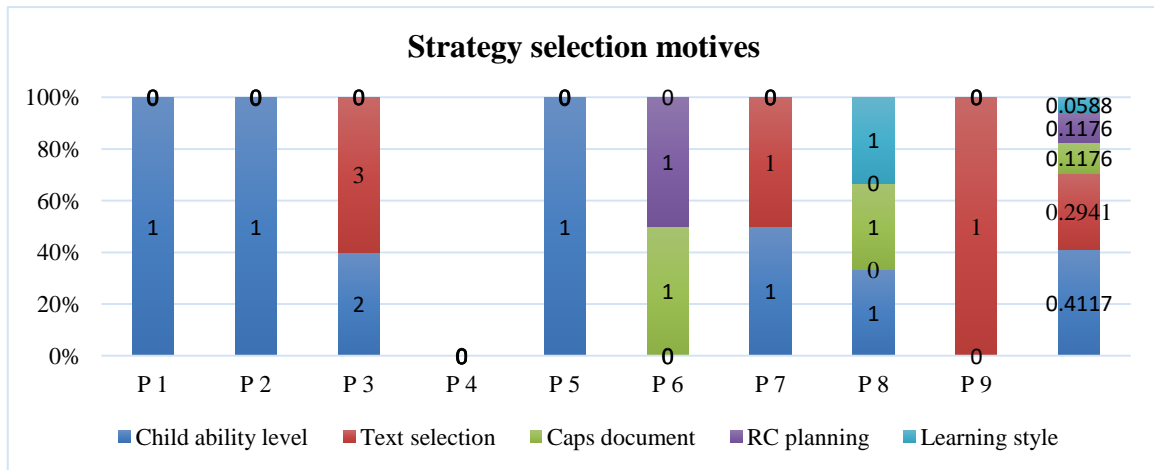


Figure 31: Strategy selection motives and percentages

5.5.3. Subtheme 3: Reading Comprehension suggestions

Figure 31 shows responses who responded to interviews. Out of the nine participants, P1 and P6 have stated the importance of teaching RC early. P1 suggested that RC must start Grade R while P6 suggested that comprehending starts from as early as childbirth. This suggests that participants feel that children are capable and ready for RC lessons at an early age. P1, P4 and P5 have stated the importance of laying firm RC foundational skills prior to getting to Grade 3. This notion corresponds with P1, P6 point of view. There is consensus among four participants as P1 and P6 propose learners need to be sufficiently prepared with RC at an early age, even before reaching Grade 3.

Excerpts on reading comprehension early start

P1: For me, it starts from the bottom reading comprehension starts from the bottom from Grade R, Grade 1, and Grade 2. It is very important, it doesn't just start in Grade 3 it starts far from Grade R because then you can actually see that the child has the reading piece, you open the child's mind, broadening his/her child's vocabulary and general knowledge. Now and then, I will read to them a word or two but for me assessments you are on your own. I need to know what your understanding of whatever work is, is put in front of you.

P6: I said it also stems from it comes from birth already, comprehending what is being said to you.

Excerpts on reading comprehension basics

P1: If that scaffolding has been done correctly and the foundation has been laid then once they come into Grade 3 they must be able to work with various texts.

P4: Because this group of learners struggled, they did not get the basics. They did not get the right foundation in Grade 1 because about 2 or 3 months they were out of school.

P5: *I believe that they should make it compulsory for all children to at least have a Grade R to be compulsorily. I think that if they bringing into a school setting and then by the time they get to Grade 3 they already mastered all the foundation, all of the basic needs for them to be able to be sufficiently in reading by the time they get to Grade 3. They come to Grade R or Grade 1 and they are of the right age to go to Grade 1, but they have never held a book in their hand. They have never read, they have never even learnt how to write, hold a pencil. That are all things that they are going to tackled if the children have at least some schooling by the time they come into Grade 3 in Grade 1.*

Q3 to what extent do teachers receive support about teaching reading comprehension? This section presents support mechanisms and support mechanisms deficiencies at the level of the individual, class and family.

5.6. Theme 4: Support Mechanisms

The CAPS document (DBE, 2011) promotes and endorses inclusivity in schools and to identify and deal with barriers effectively. These support structures comprise of “school community, including teachers, District-Based Support Teams, Institutional-Level Support Teams, parents, and Special Schools as Resource Centres.” (DBE, 2011: 5). The policy strengths are categorised as support structures that have attained a frequency of 8, while policy weakness is categorised as document shortcomings that have also attained a frequency of 8. The document provides resources as a point of reference and support structures, this lessens the burden and provides a holistic approach to teaching and learning. Teaching and learning is not limited to the classroom but includes a supporting infrastructure.

5.6.1. Support mechanism and support mechanism deficiencies

In response to the question, “Do you receive any of the support concerning the teaching of reading comprehension in a Grade 3 class?” The majority commented that they do receive support. Although district support attained the highest frequency, the majority of those interviewed mentioned that they receive support sharing best practices.

Table 37 below presents support mechanisms as obtained from interviews.

Support mechanisms	Frequency	Percentage	Participants
District support	12	40%	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P9
Best practices	11	36,66%	P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9
School support	3	10%	P3, P6
Learning support teacher	2	6,66%	P2
Teacher assistants	1	3,33%	P4
DBE resource	1	3,33%	P1

Table 37: *Support mechanisms from interviews*

Excerpts on support mechanisms

District support

- P1: *A few weeks ago, Grade 3's went to a maths workshop and a reading comprehension workshop. She gave us some pamphlets, reading pieces, and questions and a couple of questions: what is higher ordered questions, what is lowered ordered questions, different types of questioning that we can use in class. Yes, we are getting support from our department.*
- P2: *We do get assistance, they come out, the department head will always come with resources or in meetings. The Department would give us resources, they would come in and support us, but they would come and observe a lesson that might seem. That depends also, look, the department does not necessarily send us stuff when we go to workshops; they supply us with workshop literacy, strategies, but it is all on paper.*
- P3: *So, we going to have a problem with that as that is one of the things that when we have workshops, they would touch on reading comprehension. I would say at a district level they do assist us in giving workshops.*
- P4: *We also have our curriculum advisor that is, that advisors us a lot concerning the reading comprehension because the focus for systemic reading is reading comprehension. We get a lot of support from our curriculum advisor, we go on many workshops, we do get support from the department; we do get support from our curriculum advisors.*
- P5: *We do get support from the department; we do get support from our curriculum advisors.*
- P6: *we do get support from the department; we do get support from our curriculum advisors. Yes, we have cluster meetings in which Grade 3 teachers from different schools in Hadelberg come together. From our subject advisor when we run into difficulty we can contact her.*
- P9: *Then also between the four of us as Grade 3 teachers, we share what works in our classroom, then obviously exchange ideas, and obviously based on our lesson plans that we work from. Yes, the department assists us. They will have workshops on comprehension skills, had one recently and it was very informative and we do come back to class and we try to bring that to your classroom.*

P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6 and P9 acknowledge the support received by the department but P2 suggests that the type of support rendered needs to be reviewed/ re-evaluated.

Proposed District support

- P2: *What we need more is for them to come and look at my class because you are telling, you giving me the strategy but if you implement the strategy in my class and then I can observe. Is that not a better solution, then I can learn as a teacher from you because you are giving me the support. But it doesn't happen often, it doesn't happen often, very seldom. It does happen but I have never experienced it before. In all my 21 years of teaching I have never had a subject advisor come in and demonstrate for me. When they take support from the department, I do not know what to say because I have ever experienced it. That depends also, look, the department does not necessarily send us stuff when we go to workshops; they supply us with workshop literacy, strategies, but it is all on paper. I can tell you one thing if you give the teacher something on paper now, that teacher is not going to read it. Unfortunately, but, we do not have time. However, if you going to show me what to do, then I will make an effort, because you are showed me.*

What is interesting in this data is that informing teachers what to do, observational visits, and constructive feedback is not enough. P2 raised two issues concerning district support. The first is the issue of observation evaluations and feedback and the second is the distribution of notes instead of demonstrating strategy implementation. P2 found this cumbersome, as they frequently have to deal with endless paperwork. To establish the most suitable training solution to support the teaching and learning process and to ensure strategy implementation, P2 considers the modelling or execution and monitoring of strategies along with adapting and revising strategy implementation.

Best practices

P1: *Yes, we are actually in contact with each other, planning, and discussing strategies even with my colleagues.*

P2: *We always discuss better strategies, best practices amongst the teachers, which is very good because we give each other ideas of if something does not work maybe the schoolwork.*

P3: *And what we also do is we as a in the Foundation Phase group we sit and share best strategies with each other, to help each other especially with the reading and comprehension and writing fast.*

P5: *What I up to Grade 3 do with the other Grade 3 is we always plan together. We put together and we compare what are the pros and the cons of teaching in that way. What should we do better, what should we not focus on so much we of Grade 3's we very much teamwork is very important. You can walk into any of our classrooms and we will be teaching the same things at the same time most of the time. We are able to share our best practices.*

P7: *I normally liaise with the Grade 2 teachers with the children over coming over to Grade 3 where did she stop. In order for me to start with the children, the learner. Of what they have done in Grade 2 in order for me to continue in Grade 3. We need to work hand in hand with the Grade 2 and the Grade 1 teachers that are actually a chain reaction.*

P8: *I just started by the school. The support they give is enough. They do support me telling me the lesson plans and give me the textbooks and things that you need to use. We are very open on how you teach in your class. Each teacher has their own way obviously, because students are different so the support is there. They would check if my lesson plans and tell me what to use and make sure I stay in line with the CAPS.*

P9: *We support each other in the grades and in the phase, we will talk about what do you have, what do I have that is different and what to do differently.*

School support

P3: *The library obviously, we use the library a lot the library and we even said that our plan is to establish our own library for the children. And they use to the library but to establish our own library for the day and even write stories and put it on the back here, yes so, we creative writing format this is one of our future plans.*

Classroom level what we did now this year, we saw some books, reading comprehension revision. The Clever Comprehension is where we start with simple comprehensions, short comprehensions, stories then we usually follow the level of the story. The level of the stories, we got some book like that but we have had the Tarot books that we have tried.

P6: If you are interested, come on Saturday there will be so few parents or you know what I mean it is difficult. It is not that we can change the mind-sets of the parents so for us we cannot rely on the parents.

School support

School support encompasses the school library, teaching reading resources and parental advice-giving guidelines. Parents' poor attendance to school-initiated programs contributes to educational barriers, P3 finds their lack of support unreliable.

Teacher assistants

P4: Yes, we do, we have our teacher's assistants that help us a lot. She would take the, you know the struggling readers and we do sight words every day she would take them individually and do sight words with them.

Learning support teacher

P2: Wow, what it depends on which support we are looking at, we have a learning support teacher so we would report to her if maybe we having difficulty in spelling we having difficulty in reading comprehension She takes them to her class that is equipped with all reading comprehension, phonics, mathematics. Then she will actually do an intervention with them, to prepare them better.

DBE resource

P3: We have it in the DBE books, where they start the question answering of the questions and eventually they will be able to answer the questions on their own. ...assessment comprehension it is a two- or three-page comprehension. The comprehension in there should really be made longer.

The **Figure 32** below illustrates District support was mentioned by P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, and P9 with a frequency of 12 with 40%. Best practices were mentioned by P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, and P9 with a frequency of 11 with 36.6%. School support was mentioned by P2, P3, P4 and P6 with a frequency 6 and with 20%. DBE resource was mentioned by P4 with a frequency of 1 and 3.3%. From the data collected district support and district support had reached the highest scores followed by school support, while DBE resources attained the lowest scores. Although P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P9 have considered district support as support mechanisms, P2 have objected to the type of support rendered by district support officials.

Figure 32 below is an illustration of support mechanisms frequencies and percentages.

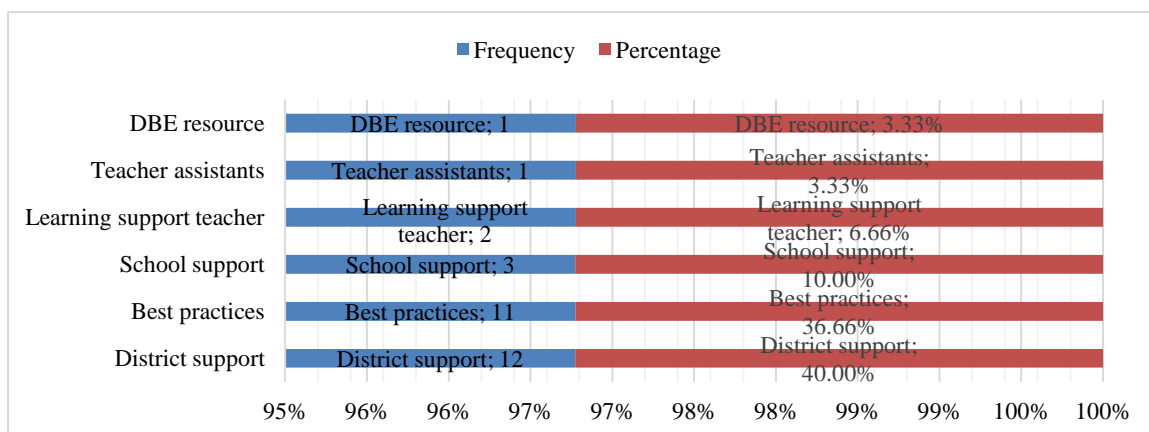


Figure 32: Support mechanisms

5.6.2. Subtheme 1: Deficiencies of individual support mechanism

From this data, we can see reading inabilities, limited reading exposure, text length, language issues, limited vocabulary, phonics/decoding difficulties, phonics/ sentence construction difficulties, and writing difficulties. What is interesting in this data is that reading inabilities have contributed by limited reading exposure and language issues. This contributes to text length difficulties and limited vocabulary along with phonics/decoding difficulties, phonics/sentence construction difficulties and writing difficulties.

5.6.2.1. Experts on deficiencies of individual support mechanism

Limited reading exposure

P4: *The learners need to be exposed to reading in different settings, they need to go to the library and need to have the love for reading. I know that this is a different type of learner where they get everything from YouTube or social media but they should still engage in written text which I don't think that they are doing that much.*

P5: *They have never read, they have never even learnt how to write, hold a pencil. That are all things that they are going to tackle if the children have at least some schooling by the time they come into the Grade 3 in Grade 1.*

P9: *They read too little, they definitely read too little.*

Reading inabilities

P1: *Insight and you with my learners here at school because they are struggling to read.*

P2: *Because sometimes you give them a text for example, even if it is for their level or they would read the text with the teacher. They will read it alone by themselves if they are able to. Then if we ask the question, they would not think to look for the answer in the text.*

P3: *The reading because the children struggle with reading, they struggle to read the reading comprehension, are obviously difficult for them. Help manage and support the children with sight words, and with reading.*

P7: *That is actually a no go for me. Children are been scraping though they've repeated Grade 1 then they are being sent over to Grade 2 and Grade 3 without them even being able to read. I feel this is my opinion, children must be able to read when they come to Grade 3. They must be able to definitely even if it is a short paragraph they must be able to read in order and they must be able to comprehend they must retell the story you must go through it paragraph, paragraph 1 paragraph, in order for you to see if they understand.*

Language issues

P5: *The only time they ever hear English is when they in the classroom.*

P9: *We also have challenges with the language. Also, language, some of our learners they have a problem there what they know, their knowledge.*

Limited vocabulary

P3: *They do not have the vocabulary so it all informs each other, if they do not have the vocabulary then they cannot read properly and obviously they find reading comprehensions difficult.*

P6: *Oh, very important, vocabulary is so important and that is what we struggle with because our children come with minimal vocabulary.*

Phonics/Decoding difficulties

P4: *If you cannot decode then you are not reading with fluency you will not get the habit comprehension, they are behind in their beginning sounds. I'm talking about my bottom learners. They know their beginning sounds but they are unable to blend the words together like C-ube, Cube. They are unable to break up the word.*

P5: *The children on Grade 3 level of reading; before we can scaffold reading comprehension, we have to go all the way back to the foundation of helping them to read. Even three letter words because some of these children do not even know letter u that is our actual what we need the most support.*

Text length

P1: *You must actually prepare them because of the systemic overwhelming pages and the children freak out.*

P1: *With various texts, like once of my children see or feel strange with lot of writing then they shut down.*

P9: *If it is a long piece and they need to find answers then they tend to struggle a bit. If it is a long piece and they need to find answers then they tend to struggle a bit. I think we have covered everything; I have spoken about language and parent involvement. I have spoken about how involved the department was.*

Although there is a clear specification of text length in the Intermediate Phase but lacking in Grade 3, there are several written suggestions of text types and books in the policy but no mention of text length; this can be problematic as there is no consistency. This contributes to learners' being insufficiently prepared for systemic tests.

5.6.2.2. Phonics/sentence construction difficulties

P2: *More than half-still struggle with phonics, we need to teach them the phonics we need to teach them the sentence construction in order for them to read.*

P3: *It comes down to reading comprehension difficulty in reading comprehension, barriers being struggling with writing and sentence construction.*

Figure 33 below displays a pie chart of individual factors and their respective percentages.

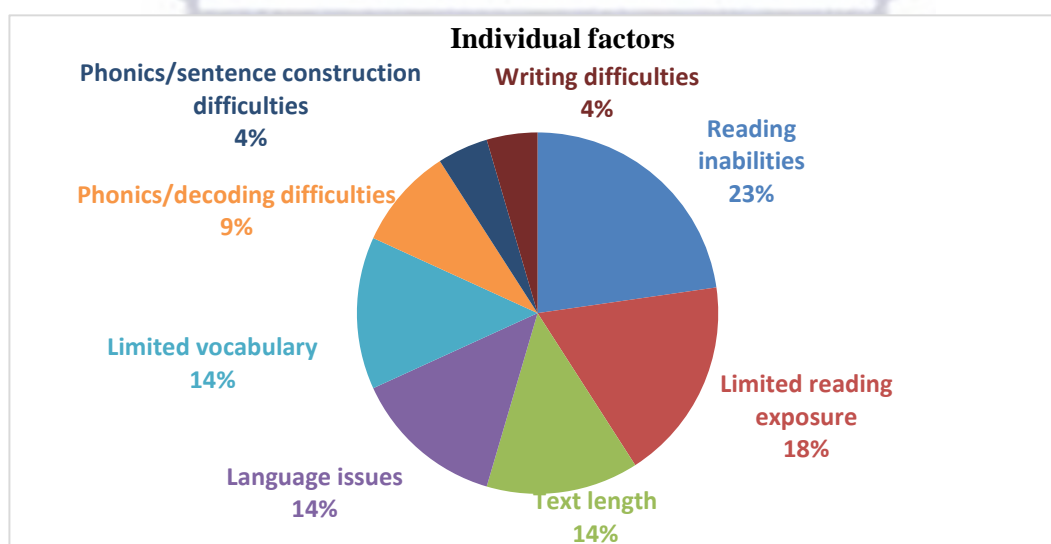


Figure 33: Individual factors

5.6.3. Deficiencies of individual support mechanism

Table 38 below makes a list of individual factors with their respective frequencies and percentages according to each participant.

Individual factors	Frequency	Percentage	Participants
Reading inabilities	5	22.72%	P1, P2, P3, P7
Limited reading exposure	4	18.18%	P4, P5, P9
Text length	3	13.63%	P1, P9
Language issues	3	13.63%	P5, P9
Limited vocabulary	3	13.63%	P3, P5
Phonics/Decoding difficulties	2	9.09%	P4, P5
Phonics/sentence construction difficulties	2	9.09%	P2, P3

Table 38: Individual factors

Table 38 P1, P2, P3, P7 mentioned reading inabilities with a frequency of 5 with 22.72%. P4, P5, P9 mentioned limited reading exposure frequency of 4 with 18.18%, while P1 and P9 mentioned text length with a frequency 3 with 13.63%. P5 and P9 with language issues with a frequency of 3 with 13.63% and P3 and P5 mentioned limited vocabulary with a frequency 3 with 13.63%. P4 and P5 mentioned phonics/decoding difficulties with a frequency of 2 with 9.09%. P2 mentioned Phonics/sentence construction difficulties with a frequency of 2 and with 9.09%. P3 mentioned sentence construction difficulties with a frequency of 2 and with 9.09%. P1 learners with reading inabilities experienced text-length difficulties, while P2 learners' inabilities experienced phonics/sentence construction difficulties.

P3 learners' limited vocabulary learners' language issues, phonics, or decoding difficulties, and text length difficulties and phonics/sentence construction difficulties. P4 learners with limited reading exposure experienced phonics/decoding difficulties while P5 learners with limited exposure experienced language issues and phonics/decoding difficulties. P7 only referred to learners' reading inabilities. P9 learners with limited reading exposure experienced phonics/sentence construction difficulties. Reading inabilities attained the highest frequency and participant ratio.

5.6.4. Subtheme 2: Deficiencies of class support mechanism

Policy provides teachers with guidelines for time allocation. In response to the question Q.8 and Q.9 a range of responses was elicited of which grade level issues and reading comprehension challenges attained the highest scores, followed by limited resources and limited technology resources. Based on the challenges the participants expressed the need for teaching patience and despite the availability P1 perceived the DBE Blue books as a resource while P9 felt differently. CAPS time constraints, limited school support, classroom size, behaviour problems contribute to a challenging teaching learning environment. Below are presented excerpts on deficiencies of class support mechanism.

RC challenges

- P1: *To me it is very important and I know even in my school career, people also struggle in reading and comprehension.
With various texts, like one of my children sees or feels strange with a lot of writing then they shut down.*
- P2: *If that child does not understand what he is reading, it on the next level, by the end of the year he is still having a problem with understanding the reading comprehension. Any text that is given for Grade 3 level they must be able to, what happens when he goes to the next grade. They go to the next grade, with no real understanding. If we can allow them to master the reading comprehension and the idea of what is needed in that and then I think it will make the child more, how can I say prepared for further development?
Because sometimes you give them a text for example, even if it is for their level or they would read the text with the teacher. They will read it alone by themselves if they are able to. Then if we ask the question, they would not think to look for the answer in the text.
I always tell them, listen, where do we find our answers? What is going on here? What do we understand, because they do not understand that that is linked to the text?
Why it is not working, what is not working that the learners are not grasping the idea and mastering this technique and skill.
We do have a problem with reading comprehension and I think that the department also noticed that. That is why, we are encouraged to promote reading especially and reading with understanding.
When they get to Grade 3 they are supposed to be reading with understanding and more than half can't do that.*
- P3: *Help manage and support the children with sight words, and with reading.*
- P4: *If they lack the skill they will struggle throughout their schooling with reading and understanding. What is being read, summarising, and being able to take notes as they go higher in their school year.*
- P5: *If they can read better then they will be able to read and comprehend better.*
- P6: *Obviously there are some learners that are able to read a text and they read well but they do not have comprehension of what they have read.*
- P7: *The children not being able to read with understanding. Then you need to teach them the skill and it takes some time because up to now some of them are still struggling. It is only the no I will not say the bright learners but the children that read well they can read with understanding and that is really a pressing concern for me. I feel this is my opinion, children must be able to read when they come to Grade 3.
Still, you find some children still lacking they feel they cannot read with comprehension. COVID actually caused gaps in their learning not through their own fault but through the pandemic.*
- P8: *It depends on the text if it is an easy text they can go for it difficult text they do not complete it. South Africa wants paper work evidence all the time and unfortunately not all the children can't spell, can't write but they verbally can give you the answers but here by us we don't allow that as a pass so that's the thing that for me.*
- P9: *If it is a long piece and they need to find answers then they tend to struggle a bit. I think we have covered everything; I have spoken about language and parent involvement. I have spoken about how the involved the department was.*

Grade level issues

- P1: *We need to do basic things so for these two terms we have been doing basics, because there's a big gap in their learning. Which contents area or, so you put that up and once you see that also in our cases we had a lot of learners that has repeated already in Foundation Phase as well as failures. So maybe five strong learners out of that, so which means we need to build on code 2, 3, 4, 5 learners that we I am focusing on to push them, to improve their work. Like I said, for now, because due to COVID gap we had in our children lives.
With the past COVID years now, there is a very big gap, in our learners. It is not like where they get to Grade 3 and I can run with them doing high frequency questions or teach spelling words.*

P2: You find a learner that is in Grade 3, that learner is supposed to be able to read with understanding and that is where comprehension understanding comes in....it is difficult because the children have issues with reading, because of the level they are not on that Grade 3 level yet. Remember what I said to you.

If they cannot do that, they cannot master those skills. They are not going to be able to do a reading comprehension on their own. They will not be able to read the story without my assistance. It is very time consuming in the end. What is sad is that sometimes it does not work and that learners are still set back. It becomes frustrating overtime for the teacher, but we need to implement strategies so the children become more aware or feel better in that way. If I give them an assessment piece what's, the first thing they say. Ma'am can you read the question for me. If I give you a reading comprehension over five questions, I must now read every single question to you. Then, I am stuck with the learners on a lower level and the higher-level learners are finished with the questions already. I need to make sure that there is an additional activity for you and I am still stuck with the lower.

P3: Our children have different levels. Take a Grade 3 book, a Grade 3 reading piece is supposed to be and you can find children will not be able to understand whatever the piece because we find it is not on their level. We have to protect them grammatically so that the child is reading to them. *We share information first. In the past we did the Oxford reading programme, so in our reading list, we have about nine to ten different readers. That means 10 different groups of children reading on different levels*

P4: *They did not get a full Grade 1 and they had broken up Grade 2 so they are not their reading is not on grade level as yet. There is about 30% of my class that is but the rest are really struggling to read.*

P6: *Then also between the four of us as Grade 3 teachers, we share what works in our classroom, then obviously exchange ideas, and obviously based on our lesson plans that we work from.*

P7: *That is actually a problem because the child is sitting here in Grade 3 and they not able to comprehend what is being done. Definitely, a child must be able to read and they must read with understanding if that skill wasn't taught in Grade 2 then you going to have to struggle as the as the teacher. I found that due to COVID there are gaps in their learning so I had to bridge that gap with the strategies that I have implemented. COVID actually caused gaps in their learning not through their own fault but through the pandemic. No, not with COVID you can see the gaps. With COVID definitely there are major gaps because you need to do the work over and over with them.*

Teaching patience

P2: *It becomes frustrating overtime for the teacher, but we need to implement strategies so the children become more aware or feel better in that way.*

P3: *Teachers must have a lot of patience. You should have a lot of patience. One of the things is as I said, in the English, you have to start where the child is. When we get assessments from the department and from different places and it is not on the level of the children.*

Classroom size

P8: *Probably, if less in class I think if there with less students we'll be able to break it down a little bit further and also the timeline that they give us. I think in South Africa minimise the kids in class.*

Behaviour problem

P4: *Also, behaviour plays a very big role in their learning. A lot of them learners, we battle with their behaviour. Then once you trying to teach them the skill, settling them down before the time it becomes a roar, it is a nightmare so behaviour is a huge problem we facing in the foundation phase which affects their learning.*

CAPS time constraints

P8: *I think if there with less students we'll be able to break it down a little bit further and also the timeline that they give us. I think that is also a little bit too short because remember with one comprehension we can do grammar and there's nouns you can do the all types of things find synonyms, antonyms then you break it down further into find the difficult words when you're done finding the difficult words lets read it.*

P8: *But because of the timeline given, we cannot unpack it, into the depth actually required. I think that is my main thing.*

Limited school support

P7: *No, definitely not, I do not know, definitely I do not. They just expect me to know because of my years of experience. ...found school support lacking due to her teaching experience. From the above-mentioned comments, school support is confined to teacher assistants, learning support teacher, and school library.*

DBE limitations

P9: *The Department Blue Books, the comprehensions in the Blue Books are too short. Their comprehension is normally a quarter page, sometimes half a page and when I teach after the assessment comprehension it is a two- or three-page comprehension. The comprehension in there should really be made longer.*

P1 considered the DBE resource as a helpful resource to support the teaching and learning process however, P9 has mentioned impracticable. P9 found the DBE differences of text length as a problem as it does not conform to assessment requirements of Grade 3 level. This impacts the learner's perception of what to expect when doing assessments and unfair assessment to the child as they are usually exposed and trained to complete text comprehension tasks that are shorter and it does not fit the assessment grade level requirements and causes pressures.

Limited resources

P2: *But most of the materials, look the school does ask us. We do have a request form, if we need anything for the learner whether it is posters, visual aids, properties, apparatus, we can request, whether we going to get it are another story. What I do personally, I make my own resources, so the even though the big sheet we are supposed to have in our, in our rooms, we do not have those. We were supposed to have a big white sheet and take a pen khoki and then with the difficult words for reading comprehension. We suppose to rewrite or display the book, the story, in our class, for that time that the story is being read. You see we do not have opportunities to do stuff like that, that is where it comes down to, when you look at support and resources.*

P3: *So, support is needed we need more resources and we actually need to sit and work out resources for the reading comprehension is the big problem that we have.*

P8: *Simple resources where they have to where they do not need to buy paper, where the school provides paper, where they can draw, create their own puppet characters, act out the story, and create dramas. Your understanding of the text is completely different than their understanding because of the experience situation that they have, if the school is more resourced, helped to teach the prime things for us, then that would have been much better.*

Limited technology resources

P1: *I feel we can actually make it even more interesting for them to read, to have a love and passion for reading, where as you get lovely stuff on the internet. I got the whiteboard in the class, you know it is not working; it is not the projector is not working and sometimes I just wish before my reading period. I just wish that I can like play a video or song or play it or I have to do it from my phone, various software to engage with them even more so that the passion of reading can come out even more so.*

P2: *What our school is busy doing now. Our ICT department from the department that has allocated us like projectors, whiteboards, and laptops that we can download programmes. I think for me, personally that support need will impact a lot on my teaching and my class. When that is set up, I think there will be more; hands on approach with the learners are able to see. I sit with a little laptop and it is very unfair for me to expect a child to see the, listen to the story, see the pictures, because that can also hinder the process. In the end, some of them do not hear, some of them do not see and there are 36 in the class. How is that viable, you know it does not make sense? If we can be totally sorted out with technical things like the board and the projectors that will be very much appreciated but we are heading that way, slowly but surely.*

Technology suggestions

P2: *I think because the children are so technologically sound now, I think that if we are more technically savvy, then maybe we can get through to the learner better.*

Figure 34 below is a pie chart of class factors and their respective frequencies.

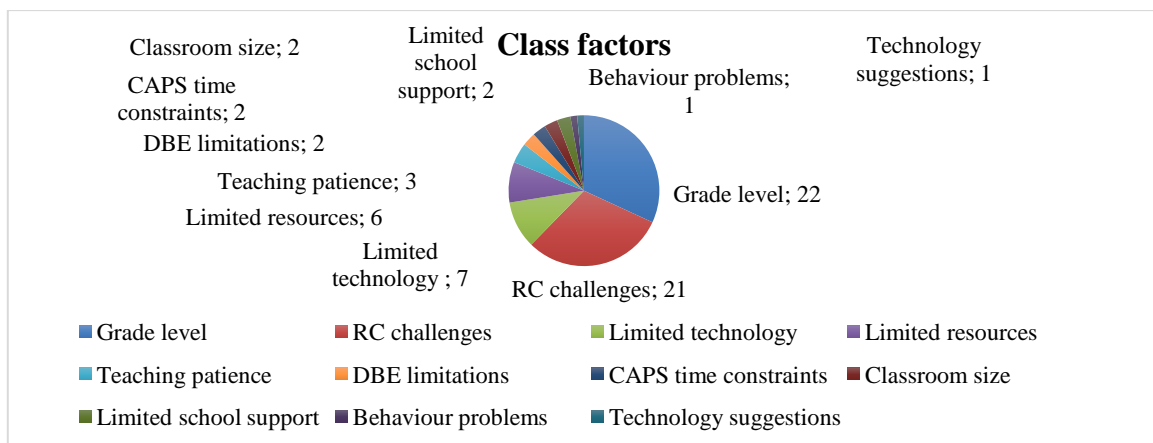


Figure 34: Class factors and frequencies

Table 39 below shows the list of class factors together with their respective frequencies and percentages for each participant.

Class factors	Frequency	Percentage	Participants
Grade level issues	22	32.35	P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7
RC challenges	21	30.88	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9
Limited technology resources	7	10.29	P1, P2, P8
Limited resources	6	8.82	P2, P3, P8
Teaching patience	3	4.41	P2, P3
DBE limitations	2	2.94	P9
CAPS time constraints	2	2.94	P8
Classroom size	2	2.94	P8
Limited school support	2	2.94	P7
Behaviour problems	1	1.47	P4

Table 39: *Class factors: frequencies and percentages*

In **Table 39** P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, and P7 mentioned Grade level issues with a frequency of 22 and with 32.35%. P1-P9 mentioned RC challenges with a frequency of 21 and with 30.88%. P2, P3, and P8 mentioned limited resources with frequency of 6 with 8.82%. P1, P2, and P8 mentioned limited technology resources with a frequency of 7 with 10.29%. P2 and P3 mentioned teaching patience with a frequency of 3 with 4.41%. P9 mentioned DBE limitations with a frequency of 2 with 2.94%. P8 mentioned both CAPS time constraints and classroom size with frequency of 2 with 2.94% for each respectively. P7 mentioned limited school support with a frequency of 2 with 2.94%. P4 mentioned behaviour problems with a frequency of 1 with 1.47%, while P2 mentioned technology suggestions with five participants mentioned that they do experience RC challenges that is apparent at all three schools.

Six of the participants mentioned Grade level issues and the effects of Covid-19 gaps. The loss of learning and the teaching instructional time during Covid-19 has further disadvantaged learners and deepened disparities in opportunities as learner's skills development is characterised below Grade 3 level standards. P2 and P3 mentioned the repetition and recap strategies and when confronted with assessments with learners with diverse reading levels. P2 mentioned it is a balancing act having to accommodate learners of different levels as learners' learners work and complete work at different paces that require additional materials or tasks to accommodate or apply different instructional needs. P3 emphasised teaching patience regarding diverse reading levels. P2 mentioned that limited resources restrict her from meeting teaching expectations when teaching RC. P3 finds resource limitations as a huge problem while P8 feels that resources would create more opportunities and teaching options and foster creativity. P1, P2 and P8 feel that technology would create teaching options and positively contribute to better information processing and more hands-on teaching. P1 thinks it would create reading interest. P2 and P8 feel that it positively affects teachers' teaching and learning

process. Limited technology resources negatively affect the teaching process whereas its presence creates opportunities for experiential learning or hands-on-approach. P2 suggests that basic technology equipment in the classroom would appeal to learners' interest and prove more advantageous and useful.

5.6.5. Subtheme 3: Deficiencies of family support mechanism

Table 40 illustrated lack of parental support, no consolidation, parental support issues and socioeconomic status that contribute to educational challenges. This entails no parent involvement, no homework, parental support assists with reading development, due language exposure, and English is not their Home Language. Lack of support increases teacher difficulty, as only a few learners' do practice skills at home and consolidation of work. Lack of support increases teacher difficulty, parents need to teach the learners and practice comprehension. Parental support issues include parent's readability levels hinder the ability to provide reading support to their children, parents do not come to the programs, they neglect to use proposed reading applications. No consolidation happening at home, skills need to be practised at home to improve and develop them.

Table 40 below shows the list of family factors together with their respective frequencies and percentages for each participant.

Family factors	Frequency	Percentage	Participants
Limited Parental support	11	52.38%	P1, P4, P5, P6, P9
No consolidation	5	23.80%	P1, P4, P6
Parental support issues	3	14.28%	P3, P6, P9
Socioeconomic status	2	9.52%	P5, P6

Table 40: Family factors: frequencies and percentages

P1, P4, P5, P6 and P9 mentioned lack of parental support and attained the highest frequency of 10 with 52.6%. P1, P4 and P6 mentioned no consolidation with a frequency of 5 with 23.80%. P3, P6 and P9 mentioned Parental support issues with a frequency of 3 with 14.28%. P5 and P6 mentioned socioeconomic status with a frequency of 2 with 9.52%. P1 and P4 talked about lack of parental support and no consolidation, while P3 talked about parental support issues. P5 spoke about the lack of parental support and socioeconomic status. P6 talked about the lack of parental support, parental support issues, and no consolidation. P9 talked about parental support, parental support issues, and no consolidation. Below are excerpts on deficiencies of family support mechanisms.

Lack of parental support

- P1: *there is no parent involvement, no homework being done. There is not much support, but I feel that the support must come from the parents; the support really must come from the parents.*
- P4: *We need support from the parents. Parental support that is very important. It is something, what we lack here.*
- P5: *Parental support, definitely, I think the parental support will help us a lot because I found out many of the parents whom do sit with their children help them with their homework. Those are the children that can read well because they are being exposed to good English, good examples the text and many of our learners are also English is there not their Home Language.*
- P6: *Yet, and then we do not have a lot of parental support. I do not know we were talking about amongst each other and we were saying it just gets harder every year. Maybe you just need a change of schools where the children you know, have parents that support them so even though the school runs like programs.*
- P9: *Teachers need to come to the party, parents should get more involved. Parents need to teach the learners, parents need to ask the learners questions at home. Anything be it in a newspaper be it in the library book be it wherever parents also need to get involved to help the kids understand more I encourage that all the time. I'll tell the parents please, the library book read a page ask questions. Do they understand what they have read, do they comprehend what they have read, are they able to answer you.*

Parental support issues

- P3: *Obviously, we find out that wait the parents struggled with reading so they sometimes when we send work home. Then you find out that the parents cannot their reading ability is not on level as it should be. For them to be able to help their children*
- P6: *Where they want to support the parents, the parents do not come to the programs you know they are uninterested so maybe they have like help your child to read.*
- P9: *No, like we encourage them to join the library, join a little library. I even message my parents not so long ago there is reading apps that they can download if they have phones. There are reading apps that they can download to assist their learners to assist their kids at least.*

No consolidation

- P1: *there is no parent involvement, no homework being done. ...no studying at home going over, consolidating there is nothing going on like that at home.*
- P4: *We have the Basal Reader every day in their book but we also have sight words. It's about a hundred sight words that's in their homework flip file. The parents should then have been telling them from term one every day you should go through one column, there is about six columns. But like I said there'll be 30% of my class that will know all those words so it's not being practised regularly.*
- P6: *However, when you come home you also need to practise and you need to be exposed to it. So that you can become better at doing a certain skill, you know what I mean. I do not know if that was a proper answer.*

Socioeconomic status

P5: *It is like our school, even though our schools are in the same quintile as the children within the school. I do not want them to paint everybody with the same brush because our children are different to the children that are maybe in the same quintile as us parse. You know they come from families that are more affluent where the parents are supportive. Here, we get 5% of our parents are hardworking, not hardworking; I mean they work late nights, leave the house early.*

P6: *The social economic background of the children they come from poor communities and most of their parents are on drugs uninterested in their school work or them living with their grandparents that don't have education so that is also a challenge.*

Figure 35 below recapitulates on family factors and their respective frequencies and percentages.

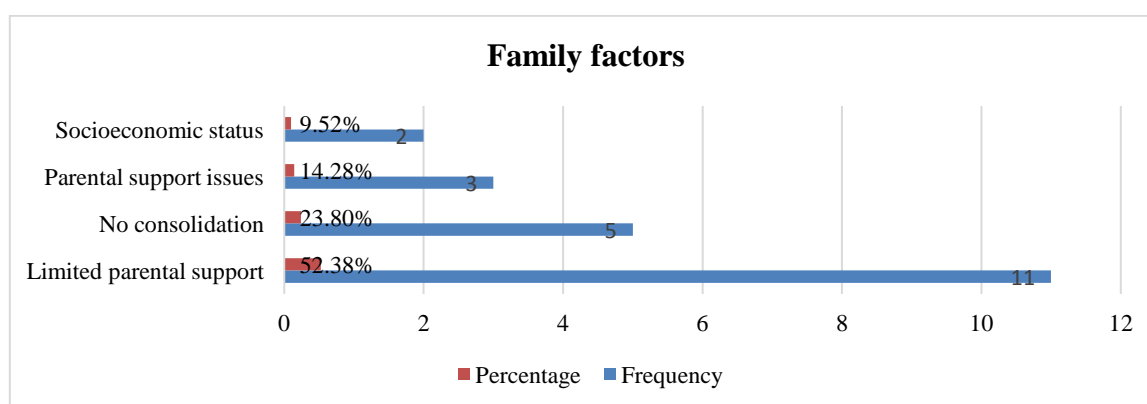


Figure 35: *Family factors: frequencies and percentages*

5.7. Themes and Sub-Themes

The research questions inform the development of themes. The themes and sub-themes discussed below developed from the data organised above. The key themes are:

- (i) Teaching and learning
- (ii) Conceptions/ Perceptions of Reading Comprehension
- (iii) Reading comprehension support mechanism and challenges

5.7.1. Reading instructional strategies

Participants' classroom teaching strategies practices conform to the CAPS (DBE, 2011) stipulations; however, fall short in equipping children to develop reading skills to function independently. Of which words, reading approaches (read aloud, cloze reading, read text and guided instruction /scaffold text) appear to be the most common codes across instruments and have attained the highest frequencies. In the classroom observations, participants favoured

scaffolding skills that support RC development although they did not explain reading strategies and how to use it. It was clear that most teachers do not know how to model comprehension strategies. This is consistent with findings by Mudzielwana *et al.* (2013), Pilanieta and Medina (2009), and Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016).

Furthermore, policy encourages teachers to teach children to monitor themselves when reading, both in the area of word recognition and comprehension (DBE, 2011: 18). Beck and Condy (2017) consider it to be more advantageous to the child's development teaching metacognition skills about exactly how and the reason why you apply strategies and guided practices. Despite the significance of meta-cognitive skills, participants did not teach it. From the interview responses, it is evident that all six participants are familiar with APK, questioning, summarise, and story structure and visualisation strategies. Although during classroom observations, participants unknowingly implemented monitoring and clarifying, inferences and compare and contrast strategies. Although the two strategies identified across high and low frequency classrooms was questioning and activating prior knowledge, this is consistent with strategies established to be effective or worth teaching in prior studies (Cho & Afflerbach, 2017; Duke *et al.*, 2011; Brevik, 2014 and 2017; Brevik, & Hellekjær, 2018; Grabe, 2009; NICHD, 2000). In this regard, the importance of guided instruction is underscored as "Vygotsky's theory promotes the belief, "what is learned must be taught" (Wilhelm, 2001: 8) which places emphasis on social level of learning and the process of scaffolding (Ford & Opitz, 2008).

CAPS (DBE, 2011) stipulates Bloom's taxonomy as a guide to develop both low and high ordered questions and primarily emphasises and encourages the questioning strategy. Understandably, this has featured as the most prominent reading strategy across all six classrooms, which is consistent with the policy. Although the questioning strategy functioned as an instrument of engagement, communication, active learning was restrictive. Participants minimise text talk engagement due to excessive use of the whole class questioning strategy that focuses on listening skills. Despite the educational significance of learners questioning, learners ask astonishingly less questions, and even fewer in a real search of knowledge (Almeida, 2011). In **Figure 25** there is significant difference ($t = 47.99\%$, $l = 1.12\%$) between the two groups and teachers questioning is reported significantly more than learners questioning, indicative of fewer opportunities for learner communication and to practise language. Low level of learner participation demonstrates the inclination of teachers

maintaining strict control over classroom dialogue, with most lessons guided by the teacher (Spaull & Hoadley, 2017).

Figure 24 shows that P8 attained a teacher communication frequency of 48 with 5.29% and a learner communication frequency of 68 with 7.50%. P8 group work activity has created opportunities for active learning and communication. Group work provides the highest communication frequencies compared to the whole-class approach. This created an opportunity for learners to take an active role to interact with their peers and take ownership of their own learning. This supports cognitive constructivism that deems information as proactively created while social constructivism deems learners' capacity to advance is not reliant exclusively on learners' cognitive skills, but coupled with social relations that teachers encourage (Vygotsky, 1978a & 1978b). By doing so, social interaction and language learners were able to engage actively with the text opposed to passive approach.

5.7.2. Assessment

Assessment is a vital component of effective teaching since teaching measures correspond learners' "knowledge, skills, and interests" (Nel, 2012: 11). Similarly, the constructivist assessment focuses upon external observable behaviour. What learners can actually show and do, by observing such external behaviour, we can infer how effective the internal behaviour is (Donald *et al.*, 2014). This is in line with CAPS informal evaluation activities that includes (oral and/or practical and/or written) (DBE, 2011: 107).

However, there is not enough guidance, assistance, and information for teachers on "how" to perform assessment to advance learning (Kanjee, 2008). As the CAPS document including the National Protocol for Assessment Grade R-12 (DBE, 2011) does not have a standard rubric to assess Grade 3 reading comprehension. A clear standard assessment criterion is lacking to grasp performance levels that are inadequately described. Even though policy encourages the teachers "to develop both, lower and higher order comprehension skills" (DBE, 2011: 16), the assessment tools are indicative of high scores of remembering questions. This is apparent in **Figure 20**, **Figure 21** and **Table 33** illustrates informal assessment questioning type, questioning levels frequency and percentages from class observations. From the interview responses and classroom observations, the preferred method of assessment is the worksheets followed by answering questions (questioning).

Participants used questioning strategy, worksheets, and flash cards to assess learners' progress. Data indicate that participants generally ask lower level questions or remembering level questions. As of the 55 questions, 45 questions were targeted at the lowest level. Regardless, of what specialists say about the nature of reading, several teachers assess comprehension by simply recollecting the information learners read (Allington, 2001).

5.7.3. Motivation

Motivation is termed as extrinsic or intrinsic. In this study, extrinsic motivation consisting of verbal praise plays an important role in classroom management behaviour; this is apparent in three of the classrooms but works more effectively with in the presence of time-on-task.

However, extrinsically motivated learners favour partaking in learning activities that is not demanding since they strive for reward or search for social approval, and do not favour challenging problems as they like easy ones better, and rely on teachers for responses (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990; Meece *et al.*, 1988; Ryan & Deci, 2000). This emphasises the importance of intrinsic motivation and the significance of employing a learner-centred approach to promote mental stimulation and cognitive thinking skills.

5.7.4. Understanding of reading comprehension

The policy does not define RC nor did it explicitly outline research-based RC strategies except for questioning strategy and meta-cognitive strategies. In the absence of a definition or explanation, teachers are left with the dictionary definition of reading comprehension. This gives a wide interpretation of RC which is not codified; this means there is no uniformity and everyone is left to their own interpretation. One of nine participants communicated a limited understanding of RC focusing on information recall.

From the interview responses, the participants did not know and had no knowledge of RC strategies. For that reason, they were unable to make a distinction between RC strategies and teaching strategies. Generally, they interpret RC strategies and teaching strategies as the same and perceive it as synonymous. Although four of the six participants implemented model reading strategies they did not explain certain strategies. They did not explicitly teach strategies except for two of the participants. Combrinck *et al.* (2014) expressed that applying reading

strategies only may be insufficient for the reader as teachers teach ineffectively what is unknown to them (Van der Berg *et al.*, 2016).

The inability to understand and implement comprehension strategies in Grade 3, learners will lag behind their classmates and experience problems to draw near (Flynt & Cooter, 2005; Geary, 2006; Prado & Plourde, 2011).

5.7.5. Importance of reading comprehension

Turning to the importance of reading comprehension, interview responses show that out of the nine participants, P1 and P6 have stated the importance of teaching RC early. P1 suggested that RC must start Grade R while P6 suggested that comprehending starts from as early as childbirth. This suggests that children are capable and prepared for RC instruction from an early age. Three participants stressed the importance of laying firm RC foundational skills prior to getting to Grade 3, this notion corresponds with P1, P6 point of view of sufficiently preparing learners prior to reaching Grade 3.

The results of several other studies also highlight the importance of language comprehension skills in early reading development (Bishop & Adams, 1990; Cain & Oakhill, 2007; Cain *et al.*, 2004; Catts *et al.*, 1999; Paris & Paris, 2003). Based on the findings on early development of comprehension and inference-making skills, one might deduce that it is possible to develop skills relevant to text-comprehension skills even before children can read (Van den Broek *et al.*, 2013: 4).

5.7.5.1. Support mechanism and support mechanism deficiencies

The CAPS document refers to relevant support structures within the school community. From the data, district support and district support had reached the highest scores followed by school support, while DBE resources attained the lowest scores. P7 stated that she does not receive school support. Although seven of the nine participants have considered district support as support mechanisms, P2 have objected to the type of support rendered by district support officials.

The participants raised two issues concerning district support. The first is the issue of observation evaluations and feedback and the second is the distribution of notes instead of demonstrating strategy implementation. P2 found this cumbersome, as they frequently have to

deal with endless paperwork. To establish the most suitable training solution to support the teaching and learning process and to ensure strategy implementation, P2 considered the modelling or execution and monitoring of strategies along with adapting and revising strategy implementation. Both theory and practical demonstration of research-based strategies is needed.

What is more, P1 considered the DBE resource as a helpful resource while P9 considered it as impracticable. Due consideration is given to participants conflicting reports and must be taken from the participants' standpoint, teaching learning experience, and the learners reading abilities.

Participants' support needs or reading comprehension challenges are divided into three levels; the individual, class and family level.

- (i) Individual factors
- (ii) Class factors and
- (iii) Family factors

5.7.5.2. Individual Factors

As shown in **Table 38** the individual factors consist of reading inabilities, limited reading exposure, text length, language issues, limited vocabulary, phonics /decoding difficulties, and phonics/sentence construction difficulties.

All of these factors are all interrelated and building blocks of reading that cause reading to malfunction. Although policy does make provisions for phonics revision activities in Grade 1-2, reading inabilities attained the highest frequency and percentage of 22.72% this is exacerbated by limited reading exposure. Research has shown that inadequate acquisition of reading skills in Grades 1-3 forms one of the chief causes of weak academic results and poor cognitive abilities in the upper grades (Spaull *et al.*, 2016). Most of the Grade 1-2 learners have not grasped the fundamentals of decoding skills in their Home Language (Spaull & Pretorius, 2019; Van der Berg *et al.*, 2016).

Another important finding was that text length, language issues, and limited vocabulary attained the third highest percentage of 13.63%. Both P1 and P9 mentioned negative effects of a text length on learners during assessments. IP policy provides clear guidelines and specifications of text length; however, this is not the case of the FP. Although there are several

written suggestions of text types and books in the FP, the lack of text length specifications contributes to inconsistency and insufficient assessment preparation. This is consistent with Marais and Wessels (2020) who suggested that curriculum implementation shows that the lack of clarity in curriculum guidelines has proven unproductive to enhance learning capacity.

5.7.5.3. Class factors

Class factors include grade level issues, RC challenges, limited technology resources, limited resources, teaching patience, DBE limitations; policy time constraints, classroom size, limited school support, and behaviour problems. **Table 39** indicates that grade level issues and RC challenges are the key classroom challenges followed by limited technology and resources. Grade level issues and RC challenges attained the highest frequencies. Six of the participants mentioned Grade level issues and the effects of COVID-19 gaps. The loss of learning and the teaching instructional time during COVID-19 has further disadvantaged learners and deepened disparities as learner's skills development is characterised below Grade 3 level standards. Data reveal that participants' at all three schools experience RC challenges.

The result conforms to previous studies, as a significant number of learners are unable to read with understanding (Howie, 2017). The procurement of school resources and technology can be challenging particularly in budget constraint environments. Circumstances worsen with the lack of resources; this means that they are frequently required to depend on out-dated approaches (Mudzielwana, 2012; Nkosi, 2011), as in the case of school A and school C.

P1 and P2 mentioned the need for technology. P2 also mentioned the school lacks basic reading resources, P3 said the need for resources as RC is a problem and P8 stated the provision of basic reading resources would make a difference as it provides opportunities for teachers to be more creative and to do more. From the interview responses, the shortage of reading resources has a major consequence on the learners' reading (Pretorius & Machet, 2004).

What is more, CAPS time constraints, limited school support, classroom size, behaviour problems contribute to a challenging teaching learning environment. The results from this study are similar to those of Lucas (2011) and Rany (2013) who argue that learners' low reading competencies result in the inaccessibility of reading materials, and influence inappropriate curriculum execution to improve learners' reading abilities. This is also connected to teaching sites that are congested and disorderly for the success of appropriate teaching pedagogy.

5.7.5.4. Family factors

Parental involvement is vital in children's learning (Desforges, 2003) as teaching children exactly how to read begins at home while children are growing (Wade & Moore 2000). In fact, parental involvement has proven to make a positive contribution to the child's educational success (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Jeynes, 2003, 2005; Pomerantz *et al.*, 2005). Additionally, the CAPS document (DBE, 2011) considers parents as support structures and their involvement in learners practising reading at home. However, based on the participants' responses it is clear that parental support is lacking.

Table 40 illustrates the lack of parental support, no consolidation, parental support issues, and socioeconomic status that contribute to educational challenges. This entails no parent involvement, no homework, parental support assists with reading development, due language exposure, and English is not their Home Language. Lack of support increases teacher difficulty, as only a few learners' do practice skills at home and consolidation of work. From P5 and P6 interviews, responses it is clear that the low socioeconomic backgrounds do pose a challenge for learners' reading abilities. In fact, studies demonstrate that low socio-economic settings negatively affect children's reading ability (Bloch, 2006).

5.8. Data Triangulation

The study analysed data from three different instruments that was triangulated by addressing the following research aims. Data retrieved from data analysis, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews were pieced together. To illustrate, **Theme 1** reading instructional strategies consist of two themes reading strategies and teaching strategies featured in all three instruments and presented in **Table 21** Research-based strategies and strategies used and **Table 23** Five stage questioning in classroom reading comprehension. As for subtheme **Table 27** Reading instruction suggestions in the curriculum and used by participants, **Table 29** Reading phases illustrates classroom reading and teaching strategies and **Figure 25** Stacked bar teaching strategies from interviews and **Table 31** Teaching strategies from interviews. As **Theme 2**, Assessment **Figure 20**, **Figure 21**, and **Table 33** illustrate informal assessment questioning type, questioning levels frequency and percentages from class observations.

Data indicate that participants generally ask lower level questions or remembering level questions. Of the 55 questions, 45 questions are remembering level questions. From the data presented from the interviews in **Table 34** and **Figure 22** both worksheets and answer

questions (questioning) have attained the highest frequency while majority favoured using the worksheets.

Table: 41 below presents the triangulated data.

What are teachers' instructional strategies for teaching reading comprehension in Grade 3?	
Research questions	Data sources
1. Examine teachers' instructional strategies for teaching reading comprehension	Document analysis Classroom observations Semi-structured interviews Q.2, Q.3, Q.5
2. Analyse the Grade 3 teachers' perceptions of teaching reading comprehension.	Document analysis Semi-structured interviews Q.1, Q.4, Q.6
3. Explore to what extent teachers receive support about teaching reading comprehension.	Document analysis Semi-structured interviews Q.7, Q.8

Table 41: *Triangulated data*

5.9. Summary of Data Presentation and Findings

In this chapter, I presented data in themes. Participants had limited knowledge of reading instructional strategies. For that reason, they were unable to make a distinction between RC strategies and teaching strategies. Generally, they interpret RC strategies and teaching strategies as the same and perceive it as synonymous.

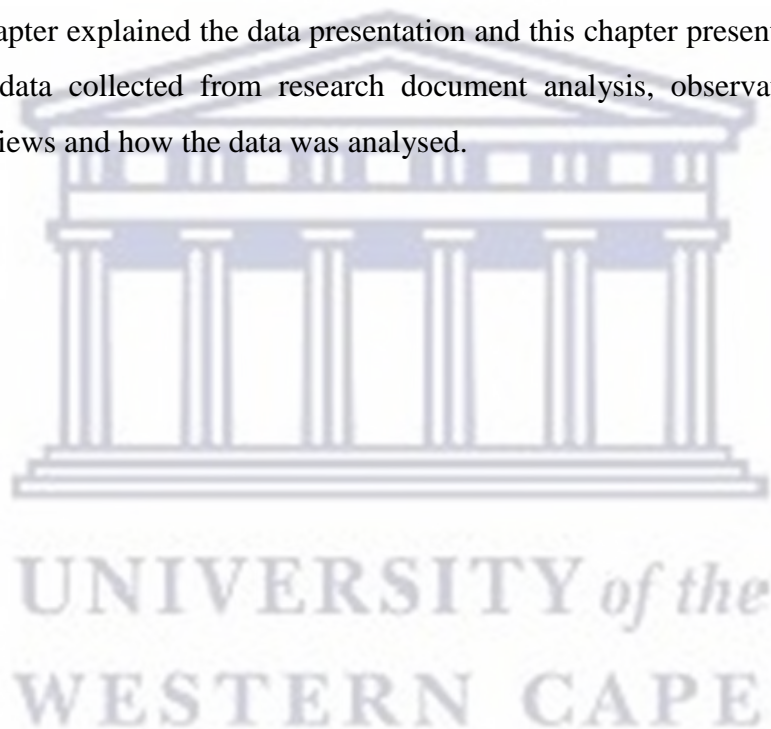
For assessments **Figure 20**, **Figure 21** and **Table 33** illustrate informal assessment questioning type, questioning levels frequency and percentages from class observations. Data indicate that participants generally ask lower level questions or remembering level questions. Participants preferred both answering questions and worksheets equally, while retelling the story is the least favoured.

Concerning classroom questioning, motivation and behaviour, all six teachers create opportunities for communication and active learning using the questioning strategy. However, group work provides the highest communication frequencies compared to the whole class approach. Verbal praise plays an important role in classroom management behaviour; this is apparent in three classrooms but works more effectively within the presence of time-on-task. In response to teachers' perceptions of reading comprehension, one participant's understanding

of RC is limited to focus information recall. Participants' strategy selection motives vary in what motivates their choice of strategy but child ability level is identified as the most common factor. Majority of the participants commented that they do receive support and this is through sharing their best practices. The type of support rendered by district support officials is questionable to certain participants and there were mixed reactions and judgements of the DBE resource as a support mechanism. Subthemes of support mechanisms include a range of challenges ranging from individual, class, and family support deficiencies.

5.10. Chapter Summary

The previous chapter explained the data presentation and this chapter presented data analysis. It presents the data collected from research document analysis, observations, and semi-structured interviews and how the data was analysed.



Chapter 6:

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this chapter, I provide a discussion of key findings that originated from the analysed data. These findings were compared and discussed in relation to the findings of previous works. Each finding is presented and discussed in a specific section of its own in this chapter.

These research findings support the subsidiary research questions indicated in Chapter 1. The research concentrates on teachers' instructional strategies for teaching reading comprehension in Grade 3. Hence, findings in section 6.1, section 6.2 and section 6.3 address the first research question, i.e. which instructional strategies do teachers use when teaching reading comprehension to Grade 3 learners?

Findings in section 6.4 and section 6.5 address the second research question, i.e. what are Grade 3 teachers' perceptions of teaching reading comprehension? Findings in section 6.6, section 6.7, section 6.8 and section 6.9 address the third research question, i.e. to what extent do teachers receive support about teaching reading comprehension?

These research questions inform the development of themes. The themes and sub-themes discussed below developed from the data organised above. These key themes are the following:

- (i) Teaching and learning
- (ii) Perceptions of reading comprehension
- (iii) Reading comprehension support mechanism and challenges

6.1. Pedagogical Knowledge

The issue of pedagogical knowledge in relation to reading strategy and teaching strategy is complex. Previous research has found that most participants are familiar with the strategies outlined in the policy, including reading aloud, paired reading, shared reading, listening comprehension, thinking and reasoning, vocabulary development, phonics, creative writing, and grammar (Venketsamy & Sibanda, 2021: 261). This aligns with the participants' classroom teaching practices as discussed in **Table 27** in Chapter 5. However, the controversy surrounding different reading approaches contributes to a lack of transparency in effectively delivering reading instruction, as teachers cannot teach what they do not understand (Spull & Hoadley, 2017).

Although teachers are aware of the reading instructional strategies outlined in the policy, it does not necessarily mean they know how to effectively teach them. Consistent with the

findings of Venketsamy and Sibanda (2021), teachers may be unacquainted with the various strategies, leading to ineffective teaching practices (Van der Berg *et al.*, 2016). This contributes to a general confusion between reading strategies and teaching strategies, as the policy does not make a clear distinction between the two. The more familiar teachers become with policy requirements, the more they equate RS with TS through the mere exposure effect (Bornstein & Craver-Lemley, 2017), resulting in the belief that RS and TS are the same.

Participants generally interpret RS and TS as synonymous terms. However, RS is a cognitive process that involves the internal processing of knowledge to facilitate learning, while TS refers to teaching methods or techniques. RS cannot be generalised in the same way as TS. It is important to distinguish between the two in terms of strategy implementation and procedure. The disinformation provided by the policy has led to a consistency in teachers' familiarity with RS and their misconceptions. This has contributed to conflicting beliefs, ideas, and knowledge among teachers regarding reading strategies and the reasons behind their teaching practices. Ambiguous policy guidelines present barriers to effective policy implementation.

Another important consideration is the excessive use of questioning strategies. According to Mohr *et al.* (2023), asking too many questions can overwhelm learners and reduce the quality of their thinking (Mohr, 1998). Instead of relying solely on questioning, teachers should provide more modelling and explanation. It has been observed that teachers predominantly use literal questions rather than inferential questions when they are not anticipated (Hansen, 1981). Mohr *et al.* (2023) argue that trying to understand the connections readers make after reading can be futile. This approach limits and regulates participation, emphasising the importance of correct answers rather than the application of problem-solving skills. The use of questioning strategies resembles a TS rather than a RS, as it functions as a tool for generating answers rather than a strategy or process that needs to be developed through practice. This is supported by participants' responses to Q.1 in the interviews. It indicates a knowledge transmission approach, resembling Freire's banking concept of education, in which the teacher assumes an authoritarian position and adopts a teacher-centred approach (Donald *et al.*, 2014). The policy, which is heavily focused on content, promotes the development of knowledge, skills, and values, as well as critical thinking skills. However, in practice, meaning-making and the development of thinking skills are not prioritised in the classroom.

Classroom practices are often underdeveloped, even though the curriculum aims to emphasise process learning over product learning (Hanely *et al.*, 1970). The process of acquiring skills

and applying them to the text is disregarded. In line with this, Clement (1979: 1) stated that “we should be teaching students how to think. Instead, we are teaching them what to think.” Hence, learners are programmed to passively receive information. While content knowledge is important, the process of how learners acquire that content is equally significant (Snyder & Snyder, 2008). To foster independent functioning and ensure continuous reading comprehension progress, it is crucial to prioritize skill development. Teaching learners how to develop questioning skills using Bloom’s taxonomy can be more beneficial, as learner-generated questioning can lead to a more meaningful learning experience (Bowker, 2010; Wilson & Smetana, 2011). This transformation shifts the role of learning and teaching by moving from teacher-mediated rote questioning to the development of learner-active critical thinking skills, empowering learners to take an active role in their learning.

Referring to Brevik (2019)’s definition in Chapter 1 of reading strategy or skills as problem-solving tools, it is important to reconsider how questioning strategies are used in the classroom. Excessive questioning, by design, is often used for content assessment rather than assessing learning and the practical application of skills. By design, it is used for content assessment and not learning assessment, which assesses the practical application and acquisition of skills. In such situations, the teacher remains in control while the learners become passive recipients, resulting in an undemocratic approach that hinders independent thinking and creates a deficit or gap in skills.

This raises the question: How can we shift from the transmission of content to a more synergized process that combines knowledge and skills? Although teachers have a comprehensive understanding of what is needed for learners to excel, they often adopt a narrow perspective of the schooling system, focusing on teaching what is required rather than what is truly needed. This points to knowledge gaps among teachers. The negative consequence of these knowledge gaps is that learners are sometimes taught how to use and apply skills without a deeper understanding of the underlying concepts.

6.2. Assessment

According to Carr and Harris (2001: 35), “Assessment is an integral part of instruction... effective classroom assessment is relevant to immediate learning.” In the South African Foundation Phase, teachers can benefit from reading assessments as they have the potential to

inform reading instructional planning and contribute to the construction and application of meaningful reading instruction (McCurry-Harrington, 2019). Policy encourages teachers to develop both lower and higher-order comprehension skills (DBE, 2011: 16). This aligns with the views of constructivist theorists, who emphasise assessments that are based on learners' potential understanding and their ability to progress in comprehension and higher cognitive tasks (Donald *et al.*, 2014).

During RC lessons, classroom assessments primarily focus on content knowledge rather than skill development. Although participants assess learners' potential understanding by asking a range of questions during reading lessons, learner-generated questions may facilitate deeper learning (Wilson & Smetana, 2011). However, the assessment tools used do not align with constructivist theories or policy, as they mainly consist of low-level questions.

Most participants opt to use prearranged assessments due to time constraints imposed by policy. This is consistent with the findings of Mihai and van Staden (2019), who observed that teachers' lesson plans delivered prearranged assessments wherein minimal effort or proof of mastery of skill was anticipated from learners. It is interesting to note that, with the exception of one participant, the other six participants choose to formulate their own assessment questions, which mainly consist of low-level questions. One interpretation of these findings is that teachers do not employ quality assessment measures, as they primarily ask lower-order thinking questions to gauge learners' understanding of the topic.

One can argue that participants' assessments do not promote the development of deeper meaning or critical thinking in learners. The results strongly suggest that teachers have inadequate knowledge and expertise in assessments and lack appropriate guidance on how to use assessments to meet the learning needs of all learners (Kanjee & Croft, 2012; Pryor & Lubisi, 2002; RSA DoE, 2000; Republic of South Africa, 2009; Vandeyar & Killen, 2007). Kanjee (2008) agrees that most often teachers' assessment tools consist mainly of prearranged assessments because there is not enough guidance, assistance, and information for teachers on how to perform assessment to advance learning.

The most compelling explanation for these findings is that policy does not provide a standard rubric for assessments or a clear definition or explanation. While assessment guidelines include questioning techniques and types of questions to guide teachers, they still leave room for error due to limited information. In the absence of a standard assessment tool, ambiguity arises, and it is not surprising that teachers struggle to design suitable assessments. The expectations and

procedural guidelines leave it up to individual agency rather than collective effort, as there is no intermediary agent to develop suitable assessments. It suggests that reading for meaning is not the primary focus at this stage. This has consequences and contributes to inconsistencies and discrepancies in the document and beyond. Teachers' misconceptions and instructional preferences appear to be influenced by repetitive exposure to policy information and a lack of adequate training.

6.3. Motivation

Considering South Africa's diverse reading abilities, overcrowded and multilingual classrooms, motivation is essential for cultivating learning and promoting development. Participants in this study utilised both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation during the teaching and learning process. This has proven helpful as a mechanism to engage learners and maintain their interest and enthusiasm. While participants used verbal praise as positive reinforcement to extrinsically motivate learners, it is imperative to also foster intrinsic motivation.

However, lessons should not be limited to the teacher dispensing information (Donald *et al.*, 2014) or adopting a teacher-centred approach. A fundamental function of teachers is to support learner-centred learning by involving learners in decision-making processes (McCarthy, 2015), which promotes approaches that shift the focus of teaching from teacher to learner (Du Plessis, 2020). Activities such as discussions, collaborative work, and feedback from learner to teacher are essential in facilitating learners' maximum potential (Patang & Machmoed, 2020). These activities promote language and social interaction, which are important for constructing knowledge and align with constructivist principles.

In this study, group work was found to be the least frequent form of communication compared to whole-class instruction. However, group work offers valuable opportunities for learners to solidify information through language interaction and discussions. Out of the six participants, only one actively engaged in group work activities, which allowed for peer-level mediation (according to Vygotsky's theory) and facilitated the stimulation of cognitive conflict among learners who had similar understandings (as proposed by Piaget). This active participation and collaborative knowledge-building process (Donald *et al.*, 2014) are fostered through group work. Nevertheless, teachers often tend to rely on a collective whole-class pedagogy that operates at the pace of the weakest learner (Hoadley, 2018).

Based on these findings, it is evident that whole-class instruction does not create the best opportunities for social engagement, participation, cognitive stimulation, exploration, and curiosity. The context in which learning occurs plays a crucial role, as emphasised by Piaget (1970), who explained that learners' curiosity significantly propels learning, and learners learn best through practice rather than instruction (Mooney, 2013). This underscores the importance of active participation and facilitation. The advantages of social interaction and cooperative learning activities, which develop a sense of competency and intrinsically motivate learners, contrast with a teacher-centred approach. However, a significant amount of reading instruction conducted in primary schools in low socioeconomic settings adopts a whole-class and teacher-centred approach, with limited opportunities for learners to read and think independently (Donaldson, 2011; Taylor *et al.*, 2000). Based on the findings and previous research, it is clear that poverty impacts literacy development.

6.4. Misconceptions of Reading Comprehension

The findings of this study reveal a clear relationship between teaching practices and teachers' perceptions (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). The way teachers view and relate to reading instruction has a significant impact on the way they teach in the classroom (Kuzbyska, 2011). Teachers' perception and interpretation of reading instruction have a significant impact on their classroom practices (Kuzborska, 2011). In the absence of a clear definition of reading comprehension and clear distinctions, confusion arises. Most participants in the study had a satisfactory understanding of reading comprehension, with the exception of one participant. It is interesting to note that a Grade 3 Head of Department (HOD) shared a limited understanding of RC despite her many years of experience and leadership position. Additionally, most participants were unable to identify specific RS. This suggests that inadequate pre-service and in-service training and poor pedagogical knowledge of reading comprehension contribute to teachers' misconceptions.

Teachers' perceptions play a significant role in the way they deliver reading instruction. Furthermore, the challenges inherent in the policy's design and implementation of reading instruction also contribute to teachers' knowledge gaps and their lack of understanding on how to effectively teach it. This highlights the gap between theory, policy and practice. According to Stoffelsma, "the South African Grades 1 to 3..." "Curriculum" "provided to teachers" through CAPS is limited" in terms of support for teachers" (Stoffelsma, 2019: 9).

These deficits in policy contribute to the perpetuation of poor literacy rates. Consequently, current pre-service teacher training programmes in South Africa do not train teachers to teach reading in foundation and intermediate phase (Kotze *et al.*, 2019; Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). The combination of teachers' inefficient pedagogies and the inherent challenges of policy has led to teachers' flawed thinking and misconceptions.

6.5. Importance of Reading Comprehension in Early Years

The importance of reading comprehension in the early years of schooling cannot be overstated. Inadequate reading comprehension instruction in early education leads to persistent reading difficulties and has long-term consequences. The absence of appropriate reading strategies and foundational reading skills hinders learners' ability to read with understanding (Lucas, 2011; Rany, 2013). Therefore, teachers believe that by teaching reading comprehension skills in the early grades, they can address the challenges associated with reading comprehension and meet the literacy demands of Grade 3.

Evidence suggests that more effective reading instructional strategies are needed during this stage, as reading skills are often inefficiently implemented (Shea & Ceprano, 2017). Theoretically, in the early stages of reading, children's cognitive attention is to decode until fluency develops (Wright, 2019). To achieve the necessary level of fluency, some teachers underestimate the importance of teaching comprehension (Mohr *et al.*, 2023). While fluency is important, comprehension should remain the primary focus throughout the learning-to-read stage and beyond. Comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading, even though it does not necessarily stem from fluency. Therefore, the continuum of learning RC should be continuous (Mohr *et al.*, 2023). One of the ways to do this is to emphasise comprehension immediately, even before learners are proficient readers (Oakhill & Caine, 2012; Van den Broek *et al.*, 2011).

Several variables, such as contextual factors, individual differences, instructional strategies, impact the teaching of reading and assessment. It is widely acknowledged that while children learn to read in different ways and at different rates, most can read within the first three years of school. That being said, there is no specific grade level at which reading should be taught, nor is there an exact formula for evaluating reading skills (Spaull & Hoadley, 2017).

Early reading comprehension strategies have been shown to have an impact on reading development, as shown by Solis *et al.* (2012), Edmonds (2009), Kamil (2008), Gajria *et al.*

(2007), Biancarosa and Snow (2006). These findings emphasise the advantages of early implementation of reading strategies. Duke *et al.* (2021) propose that the connection between word reading and comprehension is distinguished by synergy rather than competition, suggesting teaching the two in conjunction.

The misconception of delaying RS may stem from the transitional arrangement of learning to read and reading to learn. As teachers may be conditioned to think that cognitive developmental stages are static rather than acknowledging the variability in children's cognitive growth potential. Vygotsky emphasises the importance of teachers actively engaging with learners' potential within their ZPD and guiding them through mediation to promote cognitive growth and comprehension. This approach underscores the significance of scaffolding and provides support to them to attain higher levels of education and development (Donald *et al.*, 2014). This has implications for educational policy as it should recognize and support children's individual cognitive developmental stages and provide appropriate instructional strategies to facilitate optimal performance (Donald *et al.*, 2014; Stigler *et al.*, 1990). As learners have the potential to grow and develop cognitively at varying speeds, and their learning environment plays a critical role in facilitating optimal performance.

6.6. Inadequate Support Mechanism

The study findings indicate that although there has been some improvement in district-level support compared to previous research, the current level of support is still inadequate. While district support was mentioned as the highest source of support, teachers highlighted the need for proper training and support from subject advisors. Previous studies have also found shortcomings in district-level supervising and support structures in primary schools (Spaull *et al.*, 2016). Teachers in this study reported resorting to learning from teaching staff, reading, and the internet, which they found beneficial. However, they emphasised “proper training by the subject advisors will do us a lot of good” (Venketsamy & Sibanda, 2021: 262).

The current findings align with Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016), who argue that current pre-service teacher training programmes do not adequately train teacher trainees with the necessary knowledge and skills to teach and assess reading comprehension. In this study, complaints about the type of support provided by district officials. Suggestions for more practical modelling, monitoring, and adaptation of strategies. Teachers expressed the need for both

theoretical knowledge and hands-on demonstrations of research-based strategies, rather than simply observing lessons. Similar to previous research, subject advisors and district officials focused on observation and often fell short in providing organised support (De Clercq & Shalem, 2014; Mavuso, 2013; Van der Berg *et al.*, 2011).

The findings support the notion that training provided to teachers is often insufficient in addressing the realities of the classroom (Tebid, 2019). It is important to consider the different learning environments and design strategies that are adaptable to teachers' individual needs and implementation requirements. In a heterogeneous educational setting, it is not feasible to rely solely on one-dimensional strategies for literacy instruction (Lawrence, 2011). This highlights the need for policy makers to engage teachers and solicit their input, as they are on the frontline and have valuable knowledge and insights about what is needed in their specific classroom situations (Kallaway, 2007). By involving teachers in the decision-making process, policies can better translate into effective support and improved outcomes.

6.7. Individual Factors

In this section, the key issues of reading inabilities and limited reading exposure are discussed. It is believed that learners' limited reading exposure contributes to their reading difficulties, language issues, limited vocabulary, and decoding difficulties. Previous research has shown that children's reading difficulties are often associated with factors such as decreased cognitive stimulation, limited parental involvement, a lack of books in the home, insufficient shared-book reading opportunities with parents, and lower academic performance expectations in low socioeconomic circumstances (Bhattacharya, 2010; Eamon, 2002; Hecht, 2001).

The findings of this study align with studies that many Grade 1-2 learners have not mastered the fundamentals of decoding skills in their Home Language (Spaull & Pretorius, 2019; Van der Berg *et al.*, 2016), and teachers also lack decoding skills (Motilal & Fleisch, 2020). Additionally, Hart and Risley's (1995) study found a "30-million word" gap in children from impoverished homes, highlighting the significant disparities in language exposure and vocabulary development.

The limited access to books and lack of opportunities to read with others at home contribute to these reading inabilities. For many children, school becomes the primary place to learn how to read and may even be the sole source of access to reading materials (Spaull & Hoadley, 2017),

as observed in the context of this study. Learners who come from low socioeconomic settings experience limited reading exposure. In the absence of this crucial factor, it is not surprising that learners face challenges in reading, including reading inabilities, language issues, limited vocabulary, and decoding difficulties.

6.8. Class Factors

This section focuses on factors that influence comprehension. The study reveals that RC challenges, resource shortages, and time constraints are significant issues. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant number of learners already struggled with reading comprehension (Howie, 2017). However, the pandemic has exacerbated these challenges. Participants mentioned grade-level issues and the impact of COVID-19 learning gaps as significant factors affecting reading comprehension. The loss of instructional time during the pandemic has disadvantaged learners and widened disparities in educational opportunities.

Research reveals that more than three-quarters of nine-ten-year-old learners in South African primary schools do not meet the expected reading standards (Tofaris & Wills, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic has obliterated a decade of reading advancement, returning South Africa to 2011 as the numbers for reading with understanding has escalated from 78% (in 2016) to 82% (in 2021) (Masweneng, 2023). In addition, Dr Gabrielle Wills's findings revealed a 50-120% learning shortfalls for learners in the foundation phase in Mpumalanga, North West, Eastern Cape and Western Cape (Matiwane, 2023).

The prevalence of comprehension problems is attributed to a combination of factors such as poverty and the setbacks caused by COVID-19. The inconsistent implementation of RC strategies and a lack of a conducive learning environment contribute to these challenges. In the absence of these essential elements, such as during sporadic school closures due to COVID-19, it is not surprising that children experience RC challenges in schools. Supporting this perspective, Shea and Ceprano (2017) state that reading skills and strategies need to be explicitly taught, modelled and continually practised with adequate supervision to facilitate reading with understanding. However, government negotiations and preparations to secure education have been complacent. Nic Spaull reported that despite the 2019 state of the nation address, even though reading was placed as a topmost 5 high-priority, “no progress, no plan, and no budget” for reading has been put in place (Masweneng, 2023: 1).

The participants in the study expressed varied opinions regarding the effectiveness of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) workbooks. These workbooks were intended to provide teachers with pedagogical and content resources to address their challenges (McKay, 2019). However, it was found that the DBE workbooks do not align with Grade 3 reading requirements and are therefore not suitable. The mixed opinions are attributed to various reading levels and school contexts.

In Govender and Hugo (2018) study some participants found the workbooks to be too complex and unsuitable for the learner's real levels of development; thus, perceived as too confusing (Govender & Hugo, 2018). Majority of participants agreed with Fourie *et al.* (2018) that the graded readers were not designed to target an appropriate reading level. However, in this study one participant viewed the DBE Workbooks as a tool to support teaching and learning; however, another participant found it to be impracticable. Furthermore, the text length of the DBE texts did not meet the requirements of Grade 3 assessment.

Furthermore, issues regarding text length are not exclusive to the DBE Rainbow workbooks but also apply to the CAPS document (DBE, 2011). This has an impact on learners' perception of assessment expectations, resulting in inadequate preparation and an unfair, unrealistic expectation of assessment requirements. It is not surprising, therefore, that teachers perceive the DBE workbooks as a suitable resource. These findings align with Smith and Jones (2008), who suggested that "South African curriculum for grades 1-3... "Given to teachers through CAPS is limited" (Stoffelsma, 2019: 9). The deficiencies in the CAPS document (DBE, 2011) have contributed to the persistent problem of low literacy rates. Insufficient resources and lack of technical support are significant factors that affect teachers' effectiveness and performance and supported by Gentry and Ouellette (2019) statement that the majority have limited access to teaching materials. To achieve success in reading instruction, they propose that two critical factors are necessary: effective instructional strategies and adequate resources. This underscores the importance of combining effective instructional strategies with sufficient resources to promote successful reading instruction.

Time constraints imposed by policy instructional guidelines were also a concern raised by participants. The focus on content coverage and the pressure to adhere to specific timelines often lead to a teacher-centred approach that prioritises content over the needs of learners. This can be disadvantageous, particularly in overcrowded classrooms. This is in agreement with the findings of Govender and Hugo (2018), who stated that participants recognized the policy as

highly pressured and counterproductive. However, for teachers to teach properly, they need to consider phonic revision in a broader context. Nevertheless, due to the limitation of instructional time, this may not always be possible. Previous studies have identified various anxieties related to Reading RCI, including “time constraints, difficulty in comprehending concepts, and the need for proper teacher education” (Govender & Hugo, 2018; Klapwijk, 2015: 92).

Several studies confirm poor performance in South African schools (Buhlungu *et al.*, 2007; Wium & Louw, 2011). This situation can be better understood in terms of learners’ low reading capabilities, which contribute to the lack of reading resources and unsuitable curriculum implementation for developing learners’ reading abilities. Furthermore, overcrowded and rowdy teaching settings hinder the achievement of appropriate teaching pedagogy (Lucas, 2011; Rany, 2013).

Overall, class factors such as limited resources, time constraints, and curriculum implementation issues significantly impact reading comprehension in schools. Addressing these factors is crucial to improve reading instruction and promote better literacy outcomes.

6.9. Family Factors

Family factors play a crucial role in children’s reading levels and academic achievement. Schools rely on parents to get involved and create a conducive home environment; since it directly affects school achievement (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Sylva *et al.*, 2003). Teaching and learning must not be restricted to the classroom but supported by an infrastructure and network of support systems. In addition, parents must be aware of their influence on their children’s reading abilities (Mudzielwana, 2014). In fact, when parents participate in reading tasks, it appears to have a favourable influence on reading achievement, language comprehension, and expressive language skills (Gest *et al.*, 2004; Supplee *et al.*, 2004).

However, there is a lack of support as conditions can make parenting a stressful responsibility (Stephen & Franks, 1999). Therefore, parents from disadvantaged backgrounds may not always be able to provide supportive educational environments that are conducive to learning. This is evident when parents have low levels of education, unemployment, and limited quality time and communication for parenting. These factors contribute to a lack of educational support and parents’ absence from school programs. Although, families aim to secure the progress of their

children emotionally, intellectually and further upper-level needs by allowing them to grow to their ability (Seedat *et al.*, 2001). The understanding, by sending their children to school and thinking that education is a means of advancing their children's social and economic situations (Donald *et al.*, 2014) this is not possible in the absence of parental support, consolidation, and motivation.

Poverty contributes to various factors that impact the type and quality of support, the level of parent involvement, limited vocabulary, restricted reading exposure, language issues, as well as poor educational conditions like overcrowded classrooms, behaviour problems, and limited resources and technology. These factors collectively create barriers to learning, widen learning gaps, and exacerbate the situation.

There is a clear correlation between the success of RC and poverty, which results in unsatisfactory academic performance, influenced by individual, class, and family factors discussed in this study the impact of academic performance, in the context of reading comprehension.

6.10. Chapter Summary

Chapter 6 focused on research findings related to reading comprehension in the Foundation Phase. This was compared and discussed in relation to previous work. I explained the analysed data collected from the participants.

In the next chapter, the study gives a summary of the findings and draws conclusions based on the findings.

Chapter 7:

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter has three main sections:

- (i) a summary of major findings,
- (ii) a conclusion, and
- (iii) Recommendations based on the findings presented in Chapter 6.

These sections aim to provide an overview of the study's key findings and offer a backdrop for future research.

The primary objective of this study was to investigate teachers' strategies for teaching reading comprehension in Grade 3. The research question was formulated as follows: What are teachers' instructional strategies for teaching reading in Grade 3? The study used a qualitative multiple-case study design within an interpretive paradigm. Drawing from Piaget's cognitive and Vygotsky's social constructivism, it delved into how reading is influenced by the implementation of diverse strategies.

The research instruments utilised in this study included document analysis, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews, which were analysed using thematic analysis.

A purposive sampling was used to select a sample. The findings revealed that most participants were unable to identify research-based reading strategies and did not teach reading strategies and a teacher-centred approach. While the findings aligned with the goals of Grade three reading comprehension and policy aims, they did not translate into significant advancements in literacy.

7.1. Summary of Findings

This study uncovered several key findings related to reading comprehension (RC) instruction. Here is a summary of findings:

- (i) **Conformity of strategies:** Teachers generally aligned their classroom teaching strategies with policy guidelines. However, most teachers did not explicitly teach RC strategies, relying instead on whole-class approaches that were teacher-centred.

- (ii) **Influence of Group Work:** The findings indicated that group work positively influenced learner engagement and motivation in RC. Collaborative activities and group discussions were found to facilitate extrinsic motivations among learners.
- (iii) **Limited Emphasis on RC Strategies:** A significant number of participants did not actively teach or demonstrate RC strategies, indicating a potential gap in teacher preparation or awareness of effective RC instruction. Teachers also struggled to identify specific RC strategies.
- (iv) **Assessment Tools:** The assessment tools primarily consisted of low-level questions, focusing on surface-level understanding rather than higher-order thinking skills associated with RC.
- (v) **Early Emphasis on RC:** Teachers recognized the importance of addressing RC skills early on and encouraged the teaching of RC prior to Grade 3, indicating a challenge across the three schools studied.
- (vi) **Deficits in Policy and Support:** Deficiencies were identified in the policy document. Additionally, there was inadequate district support and insufficient training for teachers, emphasising the need for enhanced guidance and resources.
- (vii) **Challenges Related to Individual, Class, and Family Factors:** Various challenges, including deficits in decoding skills among learners, were observed at the individual, classroom, and family levels.
- (viii) **Lack of Connection between Theory and Practice:** A disconnection between educational theories, policies guiding RC instruction, and their implementation in the classroom.
- (ix) **Insufficient Technical and Parental Support:** Teachers lacked technical support, which hindered their ability to implement RC instruction effectively. Additionally, insufficient parental support underscored the importance of involving parents and caregivers in supporting learners' RC development.

This section discusses how teachers interpret instructional strategies based on the information provided in Sections 6.2 to 6.10. I will evaluate whether this study has answered the research question and state whether the aims have been achieved, while also acknowledging areas that require further research. In the following section, I will address the aims of the study by examining each sub-question.

7.2. Summary of Research Question

The purpose is to explain the outcomes of the research question. It is important to note that considering x as “the most significant element” of y does not imply that x represents the entire phenomenon. In the context of this study, while the teachers play a crucial role as the most significant element in the eyes of the teacher-learner relationship, they do not encompass the entirety of the phenomenon. From a constructivist perspective, the teacher-learner relationship acts as a key mediator but not the sole determining factor in grasping learner’s ability to learn. It is important to know the extent to which learners actively participate in their own knowledge, because anyone can serve as a competent mediator within the policy network support structures and in the different levels of the educational process.

The learning environment, encompassing both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, is given due consideration. However, it is observed that intrinsic motivation yields greater cognitive benefits, while extrinsic motivation facilitates participation and behaviour management. In the instructional process, assessments play a crucial role in determining and guiding teachers in planning, identifying the ZPD, and assessing learners’ understanding of lessons through the implementation of questioning strategies.

Nevertheless, the inability to differentiate between teaching strategies and reading strategies raises concerns about what has been taught and what has been learned. Although participants shared information and content through a knowledge-sharing process known as the protégé effect, the deficit in reading comprehension strategies is a significant drawback. Teachers often fail to demonstrate how to apply these strategies, leaving learners expected to do so. This situation is further exacerbated by a lack of parental support and compounded by the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

7.3. Attainment of the Research Aims

A number of key findings have emerged towards achieving the aims of this study.

Aim 1: To explore teachers’ instructional strategies for teaching reading comprehension:

- (i) Pedagogical knowledge is an essential factor in teachers’ instructional strategies.
- (ii) It is evident that teachers tend to rely on a limited range of reading strategies, with questioning and APK (Activating Prior Knowledge) strategies being favoured by all participants.

- (iii) Many participants did not actively teach specific reading strategies.
- (iv) Participants often interpret and refer to reading comprehension (RC) strategies and teaching strategies interchangeably.
- (v) With the exception of one participant, the prevalent use of prearranged assessment tools consisting mainly of low-level questions was observed.
- (vi) Both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation offer benefits, such as social engagement, increased participation, cognitive stimulation, exploration opportunities, and curiosity. There is a notable relationship between academic achievement and motivation.

Aim 2: To analyse the Grade 3 teachers' views of teaching reading comprehension:

- (i) The absence of a clear and understandable definition of RC and lack of distinction between reading strategies and teaching strategies contribute to confusion.
- (ii) Teachers have misconceptions about reading comprehension and demonstrate a limited understanding of RC. These findings suggest inadequate pre-service and in-service training, leading to poor pedagogical knowledge of reading comprehension.
- (iii) Participants emphasise the importance of reading in the early years. They believe that introducing RC strategies in the early grades will help alleviate reading comprehension challenges and prepare learners for the literacy demands of Grade 3.

Aim 3: To explore to what extent teachers receive support for teaching reading comprehension:

- (i) There is an inadequate support mechanism in place, although DBST have shown some improvement compared to previous findings. However, the support provided to teachers remains insufficient. The DBST primarily focuses on evaluation, with limited consideration for the diverse contexts of schools.
- (ii) The study revealed that learners are unable to read at their grade level and face difficulties in decoding skills.
- (iii) Reading comprehension challenges are prevalent across all three schools.
- (iv) Policy constraints, particularly time constraints, prioritise fast-paced lessons with minimal attention given to consolidation or opportunities for lesson revision.
- (v) Some participants have limited access to technical support, including educational resources and technical equipment, which hinders the teaching and learning

process and learner achievement. Technical support is a crucial factor that impacts teachers' effectiveness and performance.

- (vi) Parental support is lacking, as socioeconomic situations do not always translate into positive learner support or conducive learning environments.

Based on the findings of this study on teachers' reading instructional strategies in three primary schools in the Western Cape, the the study's aims have been achieved, addressing a literature gap within the South African context. Multiple factors impact reading comprehension proficiency, and individual, class, and family factors are interconnected and better understood within a systemic framework that significantly influences learning outcomes. Additionally, there are factors that contribute to the creation conducive learning environments and enhancing learning effectiveness.

As teachers occupy frontline positions, it is imperative that they receive adequate pre-service and in-service training, along with a collaborative network of support, parental involvement, technical support, curriculum reconsiderations, government commitment, and the creation of motivational learning environments. Understanding the interrelated nature of these factors is crucial in reducing declining literacy rates and moving away from regressive teaching methods towards more progressive approaches. It is essential for all of us to play our part in liberating children from the perils of illiteracy by reinforcing change through a multi-tiered network of support systems in schools. The relationship between different systemic levels and poverty underscores the significance of a multi-tiered support network. Developing a network of support mechanisms is key to the success of reading comprehension by easing the pressure on families. For this reason, policies should prioritize providing families the time, resources necessary to foster supportive care and enhance their children's reading comprehension (Richter *et al.*, 2017).

7.4. Recommendations

In the current section, I provide recommendations for policymakers and teacher education institutions, teachers, and future researchers based on the findings of my empirical research.

7.4.1. Recommendations for policymakers

The findings suggest that knowledge acquisition does not guarantee understanding, and a lack of critical information leads to confusion and misinformation, which impacts the teaching and learning process. This study found that teachers' pedagogical understanding is affected by a comprehensive policy yet ambiguous policy guidelines for research-based reading strategies. This hinders teachers' ability to comprehend, identify, and effectively teach reading strategies. To address these challenges, it is crucial for policies to ensure consistency and uniformity in teaching and learning practices.

Insufficient policy coverage and ambiguity exacerbate this issue by failing to provide adequate knowledge, support, and training required to comprehend, identify, and teach reading strategies. The DBE should include a clear definition and explanation of RC, reading strategies, and assessment tools in the policy. This can be achieved by providing well-defined guidelines and structures that contribute to the successful implementation and understanding of the content eliminating any misconceptions. To address these challenges, the following recommendations are proposed:

- (i) Data obtained from participants' responses and instructions further support the assumption that there is a significant disparity between knowledge and understanding. The policy should prioritise research-based strategies and differentiate between RS and TS to mitigate teachers' misconceptions.
- (ii) Policymakers should provide guidelines on how to implement a range of reading comprehension strategies RCS and encourage the use of problem-solving strategies and critical thinking skills. Relying solely on a questioning strategy may stimulate thinking and participation, but it may hinder the development of skills and promote a teacher-centred approach.
- (iii) The policy should include a standardised assessment prototype for RC. This guideline can serve as a reference point for developing assessments with confidence.
- (iv) Policymakers should specify the desired text length and align it with the RC texts used in reading materials and DBE workbooks. This will ensure consistency and uniformity in expectations and help teachers prepare for assessment demands.
- (v) Policymakers should allocate more time for reading comprehension activities, as opportunities for consolidation and revision are limited. Participants raised

concerns about time constraints, which pose challenges for teachers dealing with learners of varying reading levels and difficulties.

- (vi) It is imperative to provide proper professional pre-service and in-service training to enhance teachers' knowledge and skills. While findings indicate some increase in district support, participants still consider it inadequate. Both theoretical and practical demonstrations of research-based strategies and assessments are needed.
- (vii) Provide technical support to schools, as the lack of resources limits teaching and learning potential. Successful reading instruction requires effective instructional strategies and resources. Addressing poverty through education is essential, as participants noted that learners from impoverished backgrounds lack access to basic educational resources.
- (viii) One significant finding is the negative correlation between poverty and reading success (Cunningham, 2006). Policymakers should implement multi-tiered systems of support at schools targeting learners, classes, and families to alleviate the impact of poverty and mitigate negative experiences.

By implementing these recommendations, policymakers can promote uniformity in teaching and learning practices, provide clear guidelines, enhance teachers' pedagogical understanding, and address the challenges associated with reading comprehension strategies.

7.4.2. Recommendations for teachers

Recommendations for teachers are based on the theoretical viewpoints of Piaget and Vygotsky. Piaget emphasises active engagement, uneven cognitive development, and the quality of thought, which significantly impact education (Donald *et al.*, 2014). Social constructivism, influenced by Vygotsky, considers the socio-cultural context and promotes teacher-learner cooperation as a crucial element of the learning process (Agarkar, 2019).

My recommendations are as follows:

- (i) The ability to learn and apply strategies: Teachers should focus on developing the acquisition and application of learners' skills and independence to promote future learning and critical thinking skills. It is recommended to teach a diverse set of reading comprehension strategies to help learners understand texts (Schmidt *et al.*,

2021). Recognising the ineffectiveness of a one-size-fits-all approach, particularly for learners struggling with comprehension. Teachers are encouraged to adopt a more tailored approach to explicitly teach, model, and explain reading strategies while emphasising the integration of critical reading skills. By doing so, learners are empowered to construct meaning independently.

- (ii) Create a supportive classroom environment: It is important for teachers to create a supportive classroom environment that incorporates both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation through social learning activities. The integration of cooperative and collaborative learning activities can facilitate active participation, engagement, and cognitive development. The connection between academic achievement and motivation highlights the significance of this approach in enhancing learning effectiveness.
- (iii) Teach reading comprehension strategies in the early years: Building on Piaget's concept of uneven cognitive development (Donald *et al.*, 2014), it is recommended to introduce reading strategies in the early years of schooling. Research suggests that teaching these strategies during early cognitive development stages, with the support of the social context, can be beneficial.
- (iv) Collaborate with institutional-level and district-based support teams: Teachers should establish positive relationships and collaborate closely with support teams at both the institutional and district levels. Top-down policies that disregard teachers' expertise and information may not yield the desired results (Kallaway, 2007). By building relationships with these support teams, teachers can access valuable support and resources to enhance their teaching practices.
- (v) Strengthen community and parental involvement: Parental involvement has been shown to increase academic achievement. It is essential to strengthen community participation by fostering healthy relationships and open communication between parents and teachers regarding their children's education. Everyone, including parents, caregivers, peers, and teachers, can play a role in the educational process (Donald *et al.*, 2014). Providing language exposure, improving reading comprehension, and offering opportunities for consolidation, revision, and extensive reading are important aspects to consider.

These recommendations aim to enhance teaching practices, promote learner independence, and create a supportive educational environment through collaboration and involvement from various stakeholders.

7.4.3. Recommendations for research

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are suggested for future research:

- (i) A study with a larger sample size: This qualitative case study has a sample size of nine participants.' It is recommended that future researchers conduct a similar study with a larger sample size and enable the generalisation of the findings to a wider population.
- (ii) Investigate learners' and parents' perceptions of the educational system: In spite of participants' best efforts to involve parents, they report feeling unsupported. Despite participants' best efforts to involve parents, they report feeling unsupported. Future researchers should explore learners' and parents' perspectives on the educational system and identify ways to better support them in the teaching and learning process, as this can help with intervention programs that address the specific needs and barriers identified.
- (iii) Examine strategies to improve reading comprehension in low-socioeconomic classrooms: Future research should focus on investigating methods to enhance reading comprehension skills in South African Foundation Phase classrooms with low socioeconomic status. This study highlighted that poverty contributes to various challenges, including limited parental involvement, reading difficulties, restricted vocabulary, limited reading exposure, language barriers, overcrowded classrooms, and behaviour problems, lack of resources and technology, and inadequate school support. Exploring individual, class, and family factors in relation to reading comprehension success and poverty can shed light on the factors affecting academic performance and inform interventions to address these issues effectively.

By addressing these research areas, future studies can provide a better understanding of the education process, offer insights into parental involvement,

and develop targeted strategies to improve reading comprehension outcomes in low-socioeconomic contexts.

7.5. Limitations of the Study

While this study has several strengths, it is important to acknowledge its limitations:

- (i) **Small sample size:** The findings of this study are based on a small sample size of nine participants, which may limit the generalizability of the results to a larger population. Future research with a larger and more diverse sample could provide broader insights.
- (ii) **Self-reported data:** This study relies on self-reported data, which may be subject to potential biases or inaccuracies. The participants' responses could be influenced by their perceptions, recall bias, or social desirability. Employing multiple data collection methods that enhances the validity of the findings.
- (iii) **Brief data collection time restrictions:** The data collection period was constrained to six months, including a pilot study and multiple case studies. Factors such as COVID-19 disruptions and time constraints limited time at schools. Extending the data collection period could provide a comprehensive understanding of the study.
- (iv) **Timeframe of interviews:** The interview sessions were restricted due to participants' concerns about the audio recorder and their administrative duties. This limitation may have impacted the depth and richness of the data obtained. Allowing for longer, more in-depth interviews could yield more nuanced insights.

Despite these limitations, this study offers valuable insights into the strategies used by Grade 3 teachers. It sheds light on the interplay between different system levels and the influence of poverty, emphasising the significance of a multi-tiered support network. The findings highlight the importance of developing support for reading comprehension.

This research hopes to catalyse further investigation in this area. Future studies could address the limitations by expanding the sample size, employing mixed methods, extending the data collection timeframe, and conducting more extensive interviews. By building upon these findings, researchers and policymakers can continue to enhance reading instruction and support teachers and learners.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

This form serves as an official document and forms part of the research proposal exploring teachers' instructional strategies of teaching reading comprehension in grade three: A case study of three primary schools in the Western Cape.

.....

1. What is your understanding of reading comprehension?
2. Which strategies do you use to teach reading comprehension to your Grade 3 learners?
3. From the strategies you have named in 2 above, which one have you found to be the most effective? Please explain in detail.
4. What informs your choice of reading comprehension strategies? Please elaborate.
5. Which reading comprehension assessment tools do you employ in your class? Please explain.
6. In your opinion, is reading comprehension instruction important in Grade 3? Please explain in detail.
7. Do you receive any support concerning the teaching of reading comprehension in your Grade 3 class? Please explain in detail.
8. What are your pressing teaching reading comprehension support needs? Please elaborate in detail.
9. Is there any additional information you would like to provide me with regards to the teaching of reading comprehension?

Thank you for your cooperation

Post-reading activities:

Additional information:



Appendix C: Permission Letters and Consent Forms

Permission Letter to the Principal to Pilot Interview Questions

Department of Language
Education Faculty of Education
University of the Western Cape
Bellville
8000

Dear Principal

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I, Mareldia Arend, currently enrolled in the Magister Educationis (MEd) Degree in the Department of Language Education at the University of the Western Cape. I am in the process of writing my Master's thesis entitled, 'Teachers' instructional strategies of teaching reading comprehension in grade 3: A case study of three primary schools in the Western Cape.'

I request permission to conduct pilot testing of the interview schedule to establish the reliability of my questions in the interview schedule. The study requires Grade 3 teachers' participation in the form of semi-structured interviews. Be reassured this study will not interfere with the optimal functioning of classes.

Participation in the study is voluntary, and teachers may withdraw at any time. I will keep the identity of teachers as well as your school anonymous. The collected data will be kept confidential. Participants will have access to the transcripts, and the recorder will be destroyed. Participants will be given feedback on the study. The information provided will only be used for the study.

Attached is a copy of my interview schedule. Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information.

Yours sincerely,
M. Arend (Mrs)
Email: 2617677@myuwc.ac.za
Tel: 079 907 1652 (mobile)

Supervisor: Dr Hugues Steve N. Koumba-Binza
Email: nkbinza@uwc.ac.za
Tel: 021 959 2860

HSSREC contact details:
Research Development
Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za
Tel: 021 959 4111

SIGNATURE OF THE RESEARCHER: _____ DATE: _____

Grade 3 teachers' permission letter and consent form to pilot interview questions

**Department of Language
Education Faculty of Education
University of the Western Cape
Bellville
8000**

Dear Mr/Mrs _____

I am Mareldia Arend, a student in the Language Department at the University of the Western Cape. I am conducting research concerning teachers' instructional strategies of teaching reading comprehension in grade 3: A case study of three primary schools in the Western Cape.'

This study focuses on grade 3 due to limited research in this area while the purpose of the study is to explore teachers' instructional performances and views about teaching reading comprehension which seems to be a critical factor that contributes to learners' outcomes. The findings of the study will provide a detailed understanding of reading comprehension in Grade 3, which will give insights and deepen our knowledge in this area.

The semi-structured interview consists of nine questions which will take approximately 40- 60 minutes which is a pilot interview study. All information obtained from interviews will solely be used for this study. It will be treated with the utmost discretion and confidentiality and no one will get access to it. Be reassured that your name or any form of your identity will remain anonymous. Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from this study at any time of the research process. No financial benefit will be derived since this is an educational study.

Thank you for your cooperation. Please feel free to contact me to clarify any aspect of this study.

Yours sincerely,
M. Arend (Mrs)
Email: 2617677@myuwc.ac.za
Tel: 079 907 1652 (mobile)

Supervisor: Dr Hugues Steve N. Koumba-Binza
Email: nkbinza@uwc.ac.za
Tel: 021 959 2860 HSSREC contact details:

Research Development
Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za
Tel: 021 959 4111

Reply slip

Please fill in the consent form below.

I, _____ do understand the nature of the study. I am at liberty to withdraw from this study whenever I deem it necessary. I also confirm the purpose of the study was fully explained to me. This study does not entail any financial benefits while my participation will remain confidential. I give my full consent [_____] tick or do not give my consent [_____] tick.

Signature of research participant: _____ Date: _____
This includes consent to be recorded (Informed consent).

Participants signature: _____ Date: _____
I consider the participant to be offering informed consent to participate in this study.

SIGNATURE OF THE RESEARCHER: _____ DATE: _____



Permission letter to the Principal

Department of Language
Education Faculty of Education
University of the Western Cape
Bellville
8000

Dear Principal

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I, Mareldia Arend, currently enrolled in the Magister Educationis (MEd) Degree in the Department of Language Education at the University of the Western Cape. I am in the process of writing my Master's thesis entitled, 'Exploring teachers' instructional strategies of teaching reading comprehension in grade 3: A case study of three primary schools in the Western Cape.'

I request permission to conduct pilot testing of the interview schedule to establish the reliability of my questions in the interview schedule. The study requires Grade 3 teachers' participation in the form of semi-structured interviews. Be reassured this study will not interfere with the optimal functioning of classes.

Participation in the study is voluntary, and teachers may withdraw at any time. I will keep the identity of teachers as well as your school anonymous. The collected data will be kept confidential. Participants will have access to the transcripts, and the recorder will be destroyed. Participants will be given feedback on the study. The information provided will only be used for the study.

Attached is a copy of my interview schedule. Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information.

Yours sincerely,
M. Arend (Mrs)

Email: 2617677@myuwc.ac.za
Tel: 079 907 1652 (mobile)

Supervisor: Dr Hugues Steve N. Koumba-Binza

Email: nkbinza@uwc.ac.za
Tel: 021 959 2860

HSSREC contact details:

Research Development
Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za
Tel: 021 959 4111

SIGNATURE OF THE PRINCIPAL: _____ DATE: _____

SIGNATURE OF THE RESEARCHER: _____ DATE: _____

Part 2: Information sheet to Principal

**Department of Language Education
Faculty of Education
University of the Western Cape
Bellville
8000**

Dear Sir/ Madam

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THREE PRIMARY SCHOOLS

In an attempt to fulfil the requirements of the Magister Educationis (MEd) Degree in the Department of Language Education at the University of the Western Cape, request to conduct my research.

This research study is aimed at exploring teachers' instructional strategies of teaching reading comprehension in grade 3: A case study of three primary schools in the Western Cape. The study will be conducted in three public primary schools in the Western Cape.

Overview and Background

National and international literacy assessments have established that learners are unable to read with meaning at the end of Grade 3. The process of learning to read is very brief yet it has a devastating impact on learners' achievement abilities as they journey through the school system.

This study focuses on Grade 3 due to limited research in this area; therefore, this study strives to understand how teachers perceive, what constitutes reading comprehension and how it should be taught especially in Grade 3. To give insight into teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge and how this is implemented by teachers in the teaching of reading comprehension as the process and how to achieve meaning is a long-standing issue.

Research aims

Explore teachers' instructional strategies of teaching reading comprehension in grade 3: A case study of three primary schools in the Western Cape.

The study addressed the following aims:

1. Examine teachers' instructional strategies for teaching reading comprehension.
2. Analyse the Grade 3 teachers' perceptions of teaching reading comprehension.
3. Explore to what extent teachers receive support about teaching reading comprehension.

Research questions

What are teachers' instructional strategies for teaching reading comprehension in Grade 3?

1. Which instructional strategies do teachers use when teaching reading comprehension to Grade 3 learners?
2. What are the Grade 3 teachers' perceptions of teaching reading comprehension?
3. To what extent do teachers receive support about teaching reading comprehension?

Methodology, Research site and Participants

This is a qualitative multiple case study that is aimed at exploring how teachers practice and understand reading comprehension and the extent to which they are supported to teach reading effectively. The data collection instruments include document analysis, semi-structured

interviews, and lesson observations. This study will be conducted in three public primary schools in the Western Cape, the sample size consists of three Grade three classrooms, comprising six Grade three teachers and three Head of Departments. Based on internal and external circumstances this multiple case study cannot be greater than nine participants.

Participation in the research is voluntary. Participants are allowed to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. The collected information will be used for research purposes only. All participants will receive consent forms to indicate their willingness to participate in the study. The research process will not hinder the teaching and learning process. I will adhere to research ethical standards and the information about the school, teachers and learners will be kept confidential. The names of all the participants will be kept anonymous. The school will get a hard copy of the research findings before submission. The interviews and observation will be recorded, and field notes will be taken.

I appreciate your willingness to accommodate this request. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor if you have any questions or concerns, kindly refer to the details provided below.

Yours sincerely,

M. Arend (Mrs)

Email: 2617677@myuwc.ac.za

Tel: 079 907 1652 (mobile)

Supervisor: Dr Hugues Steve N. Koumba-Binza

Email: nkbinza@uwc.ac.za

Tel: 021 959 2860

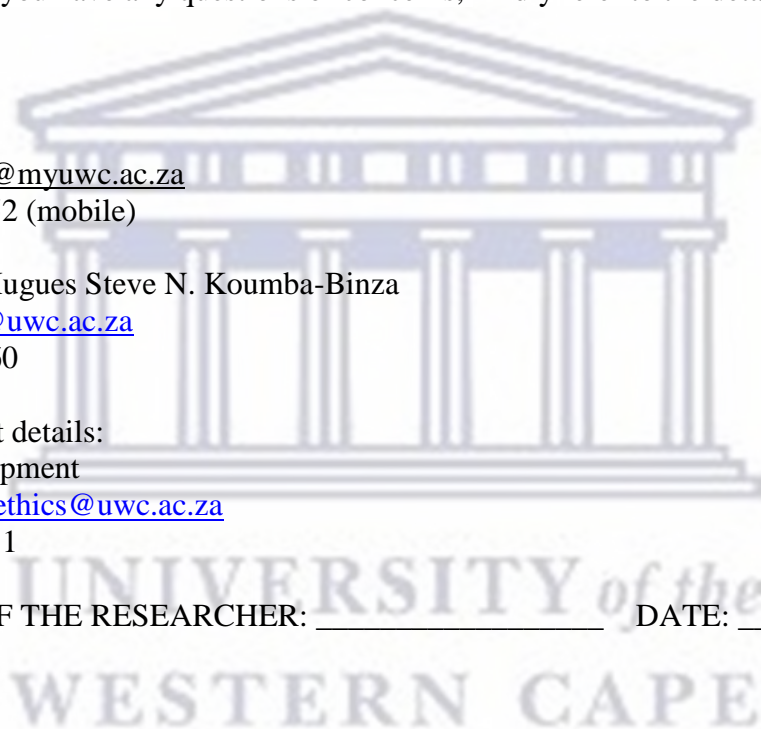
HSSREC contact details:

Research Development

Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

Tel: 021 959 4111

SIGNATURE OF THE RESEARCHER: _____ DATE: _____



Grade 3 teachers' permission letter and consent form

**Department of Language
Education Faculty of Education
University of the Western Cape
Bellville
8000**

Dear Mr/Mrs _____

I am Mareldia Arend, a student in the Language Department at the University of the Western Cape. I am conducting research concerning teachers' instructional strategies of teaching reading comprehension in grade 3: A case study of three primary schools in the Western Cape.'

This study focuses on grade 3 due to limited research in this area while the purpose of the study is to explore teachers' instructional performances and views about teaching reading comprehension which seems to be a critical factor that contributes to learners' outcomes. The findings of the study will provide a detailed understanding of reading comprehension in Grade 3, which will give insights and deepen our knowledge in this area.

The semi-structured interview consists of nine questions which will take approximately 40 minutes which is a pilot interview study. All information obtained from interviews will solely be used for this study. It will be treated with the utmost discretion and confidentiality and no one will get access to it. Be reassured that your name or any form of your identity will remain anonymous. Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from this study at any time of the research process. No financial benefit will be derived since this is an educational study.

Thank you for your cooperation. Please feel free to contact me to clarify any aspect of this study.

Yours sincerely,

M. Arend (Mrs)

Email: 2617677@myuwc.ac.za

Tel: 079 907 1652 (mobile)

Supervisor: Dr Hugues Steve N. Koumba-Binza

Email: nkbinza@uwc.ac.za

Tel: 021 959 2860

HSSREC contact details:

Research Development

Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

Tel: 021 959 4111

Reply slip

Please fill in the consent form below.

I, _____do understand the nature of the study. I am at liberty to withdraw from this study whenever I deem it necessary. I also confirm the purpose of the study was fully explained to me. This study does not entail any financial benefits while my participation will remain confidential. I give my full consent [_____] tick or do not give my consent [_____] tick.

Signature of research participant: _____ Date: _____
This includes consent to be recorded (Informed consent).

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____
I consider the participant to be offering informed consent to participate in this study.

SIGNATURE OF THE RESEARCHER: _____ DATE: _____



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Parent /guardian permission letter and consent form

**Department of Language
Education Faculty of Education
University of the Western Cape
Bellville
8000**

Dear Parent/Guardian

I, Mareldia Arend a student of the University of Western Cape, as part of the requirement of the Master's programme, I will be researching: exploring teachers' instructional strategies of teaching reading comprehension in grade 3: A case study of three primary schools in the Western Cape.

Therefore, I seek your permission for your child to participate in my research study. The observation process will not interfere with the daily functioning of the classroom. However, it will provide opportunities to determine how reading comprehension lessons are conducted and get first-hand experience of how learners learn in the classroom.

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your child from this study at any time. Your child's real name will not be used at any point while all information collected from this study will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. No monetary or reward will be provided since it is an educational study.

Thank you for your cooperation. Should you need further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

M. Arend (Mrs.)

Email: 2617677@myuwc.ac.za

Tel: 079 907 1652 (mobile)

Supervisor: Dr Hugues Steve N. Koumba-Binza

Email: nkbinza@uwc.ac.za

Tel: 021 959 2860

HSSREC contact details:

Research Development

Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

Tel: 021 959 4111

Reply slip

Please fill in the consent form below.

I, _____ parent/guardian of _____ (name of learner) give permission for my child to participate in the research project. I am aware of the aims of this study and that my child will play a valuable role in an observational research schedule in the classroom.

Signature of parent/guardian: _____ Date: _____

SIGNATURE OF THE RESEARCHER: _____ DATE: _____



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Appendix D: Western Cape Education Department Permission Letter

**The Research Director
Western Cape Education Department
Cape Town
8000**

Dear Sir/ Madam

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THREE PRIMARY SCHOOLS

In an attempt to fulfil the requirements of the Magister Educationis (MEd) Degree in the Department of Language Education at the University of the Western Cape, request to conduct my research.

This research study is aimed at exploring teachers' instructional strategies of teaching reading comprehension in grade 3: A case study of three primary schools in the Western Cape. The study will be conducted in three public primary schools in the Western Cape.

Participation in the research is voluntary. Participants are allowed to withdraw from the research at any time they choose to do so. The collected information will be used for research purposes only. All participants will get consent forms to indicate their willingness to participate in the study. The names of all the participants will be kept anonymous. The research process will not hinder the teaching and learning process. I will adhere to ethical standards and respect learners, teachers and the school as a whole. The information about the school, teachers and learners will be kept confidential. You will get a hard copy of the research findings before submission together with the school. The interview will be recorded, and field notes will be taken.

I appreciate your willingness to accommodate this request. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor if you have any questions or concerns, kindly refer to the details provided below.

Yours sincerely,
M. Arend (Mrs.)
Email: 2617677@myuwc.ac.za
Tel: 079 907 1652 (mobile)

Supervisor: Dr Hugues Steve N. Koumba-Binza
Email: nkbinza@uwc.ac.za
Tel: 021 959 2860

HSSREC contact details:
Research Development
Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za
Tel: 021 959 4111

SIGNATURE OF THE RESEARCHER: _____ DATE: _____



13 April 2022

Mrs M Arend
Language Education
Faculty of Education

HSSREC Reference Number:

HS21/6/22

Project Title:

Teachers's instructional strategies of teaching comprehension in grade 3: A case study of three primary schools in the Western Cape.

Approval Period:

13 April 2022-13 April 2025

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology, and amendments to the ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

Please remember to submit a progress report by 30 November each year for the duration of the project.

For permission to conduct research using student and/or staff data or to distribute research surveys/ questionnaires please apply via:

<https://sites.google.com/uwc.ac.za/permissionresearch/home>

The permission letter must then be submitted to HSSREC for record keeping purposes.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse events and/or termination of the study.

*Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape*

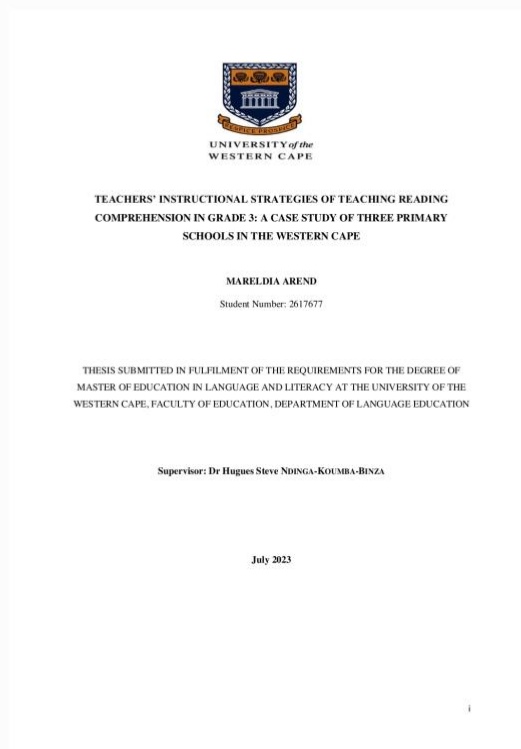


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