

CHALLENGES FACED BY GRADE TWELVE LEARNERS IN READING
COMPREHENSION: A CASE OF A SCHOOL IN KAFUE DISTRICT

by

Mutale Kalabula

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of degree of
Master of Education in Literacy and Learning

The University of Zambia, Lusaka.

2013

COPYRIGHT DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation represents my own work and has not been previously submitted for a degree at this or any other university. All content and ideas drawn directly or indirectly from external sources have been rightly indicated as such.

Place

Date

Signature

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This dissertation of Mutale Kalabula is approved in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of degree of Master of Education in Literacy and Learning by the University of Zambia.

Signed

Date.....

Signed

Date.....

Signed

Date.....

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to ascertain what challenges grade twelve learners faced in reading comprehension. Another aim was to examine the reading strategies that grade twelve learners used to aid them comprehend text. Finally, the study sought to ascertain the strategies that teachers used to teach reading comprehension to grade twelve learners.

The study applied the qualitative method. A case study was employed. The study was carried out at a high school in Kafue District with twenty learners. The learners were given two texts; one narrative and the other expository to provide information about the strategies that they used to comprehend texts. An adaptation of the think aloud protocol was used to determine the challenges faced by learners before, during and after reading narrative or expository texts. After marking the texts, the researcher, a qualified teacher, conducted semi-structured interviews and Focus group discussions with the same learners to provide information on the challenges they faced as well as the strategies they used when reading to ensure comprehension was achieved. The researcher also conducted interviews with teachers to ascertain the strategies that they used to teach reading comprehension to the grade twelve learners. Analysis involved scrutiny of the notes from the think- aloud for challenges faced by learners and transcription and review of interview scripts.

The results of the study were that grade twelve learners faced challenges in reading comprehension. It was found that learners were unable to approach written texts actively in order to interact with the texts; they were not able to set specific goals for reading and had challenges with word meanings resulting in the inability to make connections of new vocabulary to prior knowledge. Finally, it was found that when comprehension broke down, learners were only able to monitor their comprehension using the clarifying strategy which is only one of the monitoring strategies used to repair comprehension breakdown. Findings also indicated that teachers were inconsistent in their use of strategies that helped learners activate their prior knowledge. Teachers also used less effective strategies such as looking up words in Dictionaries, using words in sentences and using the context to find meanings that did not help learners to approach texts actively by connecting new knowledge to prior knowledge.

The principal conclusion was that learners did not use most of the comprehension strategies that good readers employed in comprehending written text; they may not have been taught to do so. Recommendations include a reflection upon the current practices in schools by all stakeholders in order to improve understanding of how to effectively teach comprehension.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my husband, Mubanga; my only son Mapalo and my daughters Bupe and Mutale; and to the memory of my late father, Dr. Darlington Mwamba Kalabula.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been accomplished without the support of many people. First and foremost, it is with immense gratitude that I acknowledge God almighty, in whom I live, move and have my being. Without the ability, strength, and wellbeing of me and my family, this work would have been but a dream. Thank you, almighty God, for having given me the grace to take one day at a time.

I also owe sincere and heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Ecloss Munsaka, for his tireless efforts in reading and re-reading my many revisions from the very beginning of the research process, throughout and to this very end. Sir, you kept me going by way of asking very insightful questions and offering invaluable advice that made this work possible. I can only ask my God, who never fails, to richly bless you.

I truly consider it an honour for having been a partaker of the knowledge and experience of the different lecturers on the course; for opening up new avenues of knowledge in the area of Literacy and Learning. To Dr. Luangala, Mr. Chakanika, Dr. Banda, Mr. Nkossa, Dr. Cheyeka, Dr. Simwiinga, Dr. Mwansa and Dr. Matafwali I say thank you.

Thanks to the University of Zambia for providing the necessary material support.

I cannot find the words to express my gratitude to my beloved husband Mubanga Ng'ona for enduring the long process with me and always offering love and support. Thank you for ever being so understanding.

This work would not have been possible without the love and support of my only beloved son Mapalo. Many thanks to you son for having persevered with me and always patient about my not fulfilling promises I made due to time factor. Your enquiries after my progress with this work always inspired me to go on. The sky, for you, my dear, is not the limit. Be the best you can be.

I would like to thank my dearest daughter Bupe, for inspiring as well as spurring me on by your actions which imitated mine. Each time I was busy writing and enquired of your whereabouts, you would shout from your room that you were writing your 'dissertation'. I pray that you will grow up to be the prolific writer and avid reader you have shown at five!

Deepest gratitude to my youngest daughter Mutale, who missed me the most either while I was at University or while I was present at home yet absent in terms of spending quality time with her. Additionally, I also want to thank you so much, my angel, for providing me with vivid and concrete examples of Emergent Literacy.

Finally, I am indebted to my colleagues for having offered encouragement and support always urging me on when it mattered most. Notable among them are Sr. Estella Kasonde, Edrivione Lupele, Mao Kachinga, Ronald Kaunda, Caroline Chisenga, Langson Chibuye and many more.

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	ii
Certificate of approval.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Dedication.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Table of contents.....	vii
List of Tables.....	xi
CHAPTER 1	1
1.0. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Statement of the problem.....	2
1.3 Purpose of the study	3
1.4. Main research question.....	3
1.5. Objectives of the study	3
1.6. Research questions	3
1.7. Significance of the Study.....	3
1.8. Limitation	4
1.9. Theoretical framework	4
1.9. Definition of terms	5
CHAPTER 2	6
2.0. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	6
2.1 Introduction.....	6

2.2 Acquisition of Literacy in schools	6
2.3 Definitions of literacy.....	7
2.4 Reading comprehension	8
2.5 Schema theory and reading comprehension	9
2.6 Challenges adolescent readers face with text comprehension.....	10
2.7 Comprehension strategies.....	11
2.7.1 Generating questions	13
2.7.2 Answering questions	13
2.7.3 Comprehension monitoring	14
2.7.4 Summarising text.....	14
2.7.5 Text structure	15
CHAPTER 3	18
3.0. METHODOLOGY	18
3.1. Introduction.....	18
3.2. Research design.....	18
3.3. Population	19
3.4. Research sample and sampling procedures	19
3.5. Data collection instruments	19
3.6. Data collection procedures	20
3.7. Data analysis	21
3.8. Ethical considerations.....	21
CHAPTER FOUR.....	22
4.0. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS.....	23
4.1. Introduction.....	23
4.2. Findings from the think-alouds.....	23

4.3.0. Findings from the interviews with learners	27
4.3.1. Learners’ reasons for reading.....	27
4.3.2. Learners’ knowledge about reading comprehension.....	27
4.3.3. Learners ability to approach texts differently.	28
4.3.4. Learners’ ability to ask themselves questions during reading.	28
4.3.5. What learners did when comprehension broke down.	30
4.3.6. What learners did when they achieved comprehension.....	31
4.3.7. Learners’ ability to summarise what they read.	32
4.3.8. Words that helped learners better understand what they read.	33
4.3.9. Learners’ ability to use prior knowledge to aid comprehension.	34
4.4. Findings from the interviews with the teachers	34
4.4.1. Learners’ ability to make sense of text as opposed to word by word reading.....	35
4.4.2. Learners’ ability to understand the goal for reading.	35
4.4.3. Learners’ ability to make use of prior knowledge in reading activities.	36
4.4.4. Learners’ demonstration of attempts to comprehend texts.....	36
4.4.5. Learners’ attitudes towards reading comprehension.	37
4.4.6. Learners’ persistence to read	37
4.4.7. Teachers’ preferred texts in teaching reading comprehension.	38
4.4.8. Strategies teachers used to teach reading comprehension to grade twelve learners.	39
 CHAPTER 5	 42
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	42
5.1. Introduction.....	42
5.2. Challenges faced by learners	42
5.2.1. Learners’ knowledge about reading comprehension.....	43
5.2.2. Learners ability to approach texts differently.	44

5.2.3. What learners did when comprehension broke down	44
5.3. Learners' ability to make sense of text as opposed to word by word reading.....	47
5.3.1. Looking up the words	48
5.3.2. Using words in sentences.....	48
5.3.3. Using the context.....	49
5.4. Learners' ability to make use of prior knowledge in reading activities.	49
5.5. Learners' attitudes towards reading comprehension.....	50
5.6. Learners' persistence to read	51
5.7. Setting goals for reading frequency	51
CHAPTER 6.....	53
6.0. summary, conclusions and recommendations.....	53
6.1. Introduction.....	53
6.2. Summary of findings	53
6.3. Conclusions.....	54
6.4. Recommendations	54
6.5. Suggestions for future study	55
REFERENCES	56
APPENDIX A: Introductory letter.....	62
APPENDIX B: Letter of premission.....	63
APPENDIX C :Consent form.....	64
APPENDIX D: Interview guide for learners	65
APPENDIX E: Interview guide for teachers.....	66
APPENDIX F: Narrative text	67
APPENDIX G: Expository Text.....	71

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Outcomes from the think alouds on the expository text.....	23
Table 2: Learners' scores from the expository text	24
Table 3: Outcomes from the think alouds on the narrative text.....	24
Table 4: Learners' scores from the narrative text.....	25
Table 5: Learners' ability to ask themselves questions during reading.....	27
Table 6: Responses of what learners did when comprehension broke down.....	29
Table 7: Responses of what learners did when comprehension was successful.....	30

CHAPTER 1

1.0. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Zambia is a former British colony and English continues to be used as a medium of instruction from grade two until tertiary education in the school system, (Wigzell, 1983). After much debate on the use of English as a medium of instruction, English was given another mandate to serve as medium of instruction for most subjects throughout the education system, (Ministry of Education, 1977). English Language therefore, occupies a major educational role in Zambia as media of instruction. In the recent past, there has been emphasis on ‘Breaking through to Literacy’ in the first and second grade in the mother tongue or familiar language and English respectively. This began with the introduction of the Primary Reading Programme (PRP) whose main component is the New Breakthrough to Literacy (NBTL). The purpose of this programme is to teach reading skills to Zambian children who enter grade one, (Kelly, 2000). By the time learners are in grade twelve, it is assumed that they would have well made the transition from learning to read to reading to learn. Reading to learn is a skill that brings into play numerous academic concepts and modes of reasoning, primarily through the act of reading. . It remains to seen whether academic achievement with the use of English language for the grade twelve learners is indeed a reality As Lee and Spratley, (2010) assert “most recent Literacy initiatives target younger readers and attempt to instil basic decoding and comprehension skills. Adolescent readers in our schools face more complex and pervasive challenges,” (p.2). Grade twelve learners need a high degree of Literacy but currently this does not seem to be so. We do not know the exact challenges that grade twelve learners face with reading comprehension.

In the years that the researcher has been teaching, there has been district, provincial and national workshops organised by the Language Teachers Association of Zambia (LATAZ). In these meetings attended, different teachers have presented on reading comprehension and how best to teach it to the learners. In many of these meetings there has been a lot of debate as to what the best practices are when it comes to teaching reading comprehension with many agreeing on the way each one was trained from the various colleges and universities they attended. The challenges that most teachers have brought out include insufficient or the lack

of course books for the effective teaching of reading comprehension. They have also cited the large classes of learners they have to teach due to over enrolment. However, even in the schools where course books are sufficient learners still have challenges of text comprehension and we do not know the exact challenges that the learners face in reading comprehension.

One of the challenges that the teachers have brought out has mostly been a focus on how to teach a comprehension lesson to learners step by step. Teaching according to these workshops involves presentation of a passage, followed by the first reading and second reading of a passage. The discussion of vocabulary items then follows. Next, learners answer questions on the passage individually. The teacher then collects the learners' exercise books for marking. Meanwhile, the learners discuss the answers to the same questions in groups. This is followed by class discussion where the teacher draws a grid on the board to document the groups' answers as they give them. The learners try to justify the answers they give as being correct. In such discussions, the teacher prompts the learners by asking questions until they reach an agreement as to the correct answer each time giving evidence from the text.

In schools it has been seen that the teaching of reading comprehension by teachers takes various forms. For most of the time it involves giving out course books to pupils by a teacher and the pupils are asked to read a certain passage and answer the questions that follow. This is done when the teacher is present in the class or while the teacher attends to other things. As for the learners, we do not know the exact challenges they face with reading comprehension.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Comprehension basically, is the ability to take in what is read and grasp it fully. Many grade twelve learners face the challenge of not being able to do this. It is expected that as learners leave high school, they must be able to read, comprehend and apply the knowledge to new learning situations. Not all learners leaving school nowadays attain this goal. They leave school without the fundamental literacy skill of text comprehension. This is demonstrated by reports that have been released after the final examinations have been marked. There has been a general call for teachers to teach comprehension skills, with emphasis laid on vocabulary. Teachers have repeatedly been called upon to guide learners in comprehension skills and to test them in a variety of areas (Examination council of Zambia 2008, 2009,

2010). While Studies based on comprehension have included investigation into the thinking skills of the grade twelve learners, there have not been any, according to my knowledge, on the exact challenges the learners face in reading comprehension from their own perspective. We do not know the exact challenges the grade twelve learners face in reading comprehension.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to find out what challenges grade twelve learners faced in reading comprehension

1.4. Main research question

What challenges do grade twelve learners face in reading comprehension?

1.5. Objectives of the study

The study aimed to:

1. Find out the challenges grade twelve learners face in reading comprehension.
2. Find out the reading strategies grade twelve learners use in aiding comprehension.
3. Find out the strategies teachers use to teach comprehension to grade twelve learners.

1.6. Research questions

The following questions drove the study:

1. What are the challenges being faced by grade twelve learners in reading comprehension?
2. What comprehension strategies do grade twelve learners use in aiding their comprehension of texts?
3. What strategies do teachers use to teach comprehension to grade twelve learners?

1.7. Significance of the Study

This research is important because it may help to identify the challenges being faced by grade twelve learners in reading comprehension. Detailing the challenges faced by grade

twelve learners it was hoped, might trigger a reflection upon the current practices of teaching comprehension in order to improve understanding of how to effectively teach it. Any intervention can only be possible after establishing what challenges learners have.

1.8. Limitation

The study was conducted in one school only. Furthermore, this study focuses on the challenges faced by learners, the strategies they use to comprehend text, and the strategies teachers use to teach reading comprehension. It does not include the components of reading comprehension as that is not the focus of the study.

1.9. Theoretical framework

Learning to read is important as it is fundamental to the development of the human being. However, improving school outcomes should not only focus on early Literacy development but also on Literacy education of older children. Many children are able to read by the end of Basic school, but they face real challenges in the higher grades because reading to learn is very different from the task of learning to read. Gunning (2006) identifies Schema theory as a reading comprehension theory. He defines schema as the organised knowledge that one already has about people, places, things and events. Kitao (2003) posits the schema theory as involving interaction between the reader's own knowledge and the text, which culminate in comprehension.

Two main types of schemas exist for reading as follows: content schema, which represents existing knowledge of objects and events, and textual schema, including knowledge of discourse structure and conventions. Important to reading comprehension are at least six major schema functions. The first function is that, schema provide slots for assimilating additional knowledge; the second is that schema aid in making inferences. Aiding in judging what is important is the third function that schema performs. The fourth is that schemas help to summarise and edit material. Schema activated during reading facilitates an orderly memory search for relevant information. The final function is that schema works in inferential reconstruction (Clark, 1990).

Linguistic and Metalinguistic schema are aids to reading comprehension. Pupils will have better recall if they make use of text structure schema. Schema theory can help to explain failure in comprehension: there may not be enough clues to activate existing schema. The reader may not have the appropriate schema and failure to comprehend may result when the reader makes an interpretation but not the one intended by the author (Clark, 1990).

1.9. Definition of terms

Challenge - in this study challenges are referred to as problems which stand in the way of comprehension of texts.

Reading comprehension strategies- these are techniques or routines that enable students learn to solve problems and complete tasks independently, that is, an individual's approach to a task.

Text structure- refers to the organisational pattern an author uses to structure the ideas in a text

Learner- in this study means one who attends school in grade twelve and gains knowledge or comprehension.

Comprehension monitoring- Monitoring is an advanced technique that involves a great deal of independent thinking. Monitoring occurs when a reader is aware that they do not understand what was just read. The act of monitoring means knowing how to go back and find a way to gain understanding of the topic. Monitoring also means knowing when to use other types of reading comprehension strategies.

CHAPTER 2

2.0. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Many theories and strategies have been proposed as being cornerstones of success in reading comprehension. Although the literature covers a number of these theories and strategies as being important to reading comprehension, for example, the mental models and proposition theory (Gunning, 1996), this review focuses on the Schema theory. It also discusses reading comprehension strategies. Notwithstanding the literature presents reading strategies in various contexts, the literature reviewed in this chapter focuses on their application to literacy in general, and reading comprehension in particular. This chapter attempts to define literacy and reading comprehension tracing how both terms have evolved. Furthermore, the chapter endeavours to discuss the Schema theory and its relationship to reading comprehension. Further discussed are the challenges that adolescent readers face with text comprehension. Five comprehension strategies namely; generating questions, answering questions, comprehension monitoring, summarising text and text structure are also discussed after which the chapter is concluded.

2.2 Acquisition of Literacy in schools

It is now fairly common to emphasise the importance of the acquisition of basic skills through primary grades. At the simplest level, these skills consist of literacy and numeracy and fluency in appropriate languages and English, the basics of scientific literacy and exposure to that which is culturally valued. For these reasons, the curricula at primary school level stress the acquisition of these basic skills to lay the foundations for more systematic acquisition of skills and capabilities at higher levels. Secondary or high school curricula thus being more specialised, focus on analytic and abstract skills above the level of knowledge and recall, and in principle, as well as practice, therefore emphasise links with outcomes that relate to skills that are useful in employment and adult life. It is at secondary or high school level that language skills can be consolidated and higher cognitive skills refined and applied to problems. As is stipulated in Article 1 of the World Declaration on Education for All that

Basic learning needs comprise both learning tools and learning content required by human beings to be able to survive, develop their full capacities, live and work in dignity, participate fully in development, improve the quality of their lives, make informed decisions and continue learning” (p.51).

Since the ability to read, to comprehend, and apply knowledge to new learning situations is essential, Adelman stresses that if individuals cannot read and comprehend well, much knowledge will be beyond them (Adelman, 2006). It is the ideal situation that secondary or high school learners should read in order to learn. This would make reading comprehension or the understanding of what they read important to the learning process as how well learners develop the ability to comprehend what they read has a fundamental effect on their entire lives. We do not know whether grade twelve learners are able to read in order to learn.

2.3 Definitions of literacy

The traditional definition of literacy confines it to decoding and encoding printed symbols. Nowadays, there are newer approaches to reading which involve more than encoding and decoding printed symbols. Malone and Anorve point out literacy as an integral part of development, a tool that helps learners to understand better the political and social forces that impact their lives (Malone & Anorve, 1998). This social and political awareness is not a goal that is reached after learners gain basic reading, writing and numeracy skills.

In academia, the definition of literacy has also developed and changed from an exclusive focus on reading and writing. It has encompassed a more inclusive and expansive perspective. Some of that work has come from researchers involved in exploring literacy among diverse populations and across cultural, political and socioeconomic boundaries. This view is shared by Dublin and Kuhlman (1992) who discuss the changing definition of literacy as going beyond simple reading and writing. They contend that literacy has evolved to mean competence, knowledge and skills and it is common to encounter expressions such as ‘computer literacy’, Civic literacy’ ‘health literacy’ and many other such usages in which literacy symbolises the skill and awareness of the headword in the expression.

There is an emerging new perspective on literacy and the learning processes through which it is acquired. The old view that meaning resided primarily within the text is shifting to the assertion that meaning is created through an interaction of the reader and the text. A transition therefore is visible from a definition of literacy that is text-driven to one where literacy is seen as active transformation of texts, (Hiebert, 1991; Dole, Duffy, Roehler & Pearson 1991). The interaction of reader and text is viewed as being fundamental to literacy. As some authors maintain, the notion of comprehension and the use of written text is central to literacy. A good example is Steelman, Pierce and Koppenhaver's (1994) definition: "To be literate is to be able to gather and to construct meaning using written language" (p. 201). We do not know how well grade twelve learners are able to interact with written text to achieve comprehension.

2.4 Reading comprehension

In the past, reading was considered a relatively static activity. It was seen as the application of a set of isolated skills like identifying words, finding main ideas, identifying cause and effect relationships comparing and contrasting and sequencing. In this view, comprehension was seen as the mastery of these skills. Meaning was imbedded in the text, and the reader's task was to understand what was being transmitted through the words on the page. An important classroom study that was conducted during the 1970s found that teachers mentioned a specific skill that students were to apply, learners were made to practice this skill by completing workbooks and then the students were assessed to find out if they were able to use the skill correctly. The study called this comprehension instruction as a mentioning, practising, assessing procedure (Durkin, 1979).

The notion of reading has evolved from what was before regarded as a receptive process to what is now seen as an interactive process. Reading comprehension is therefore seen as a holistic process of constructing meaning from written text through the interaction of the knowledge the reader brings to the text, that is, word recognition ability, world knowledge, and knowledge of linguistic conventions; the reader's interpretation of the language that the writer used in constructing the text; and the situation in which the text is read (Maria, 1990). In this view, it is evident that meaning is interactive, involving not just the reader but the context in which reading takes place. It appears that there is need to find out whether the grade twelve learners are able to interact with texts by applying word recognition, world knowledge and knowledge of linguistic conventions for the construction of knowledge.

2.5 Schema theory and reading comprehension

Schema theory, now widely accepted as playing a key role in reading comprehension, is based on the assumption that the reader's prior knowledge directly impacts new learning situations (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). While schema theory has existed in various forms since the 1930's, it has recently re-emerged and has been redefined as an important concept in reading comprehension and instruction. Reading theorists view schema theory as a "framework" that organizes knowledge in memory by putting information into the correct "slots," each of which contains related parts. When new information enters memory, it not only must be compatible with one of the slots, but it must actually be entered into the proper slot before comprehension can occur (Nist & Mealey, 1991). If we accept this notion, reading shifts from a text-based activity to an interactive process in which the reader constructs meaning by interacting with the text. As reading specialist, McNeil outlines schemata as the reader's concepts, beliefs, expectations, and processes that are used in making sense of reading. In reading, schemata are used to make sense of text; the printed word evokes the reader's experiences, as well as past and potential relationships (McNeil, 1992).

The three types of schemata on which emphasis needs to be placed are knowledge of the concepts and processes that pertain to certain subject matter such as Science, Mathematics and Social Sciences; general world knowledge which has to do with social relationships, causes and effects and knowledge of rhetorical structures concerned with patterns, rules and structures for organizing text and cues to the reader (Maria, 1990). Having established that schemata help in making sense of reading, it remains unclear whether grade twelve learners are able to use their concepts, beliefs, expectations and processes to make sense of their own reading.

The goal is for learners to develop an awareness of their own reading process and apply effective reading strategies to address the wide range of reading tasks they will encounter (Baker & Brown, 1984; Dole et al., 1991). It remains to be known whether the grade twelve learners have a defined goal for reading where they develop an awareness of their own reading process. We may also not know if they are able to apply reading strategies to address the wide range of reading tasks they encounter.

2.6 Challenges adolescent readers face with text comprehension

Challenges that adolescent readers face with text comprehension are cited. One challenge that a reader may experience is to be active in his or her approach to the text because the process of reading is an interactive one that is ever changing and each new task may alter the learning process (Snow & Biancarosa, 2004). Readers are not only challenged with the changing nature of reading tasks but may also lack some of the strategies that good readers put into use as they read (Pressley, 2000). Some may not be able to relate the content of their reading to prior knowledge or may simply lack sufficient fluency to achieve comprehension. Those that may have fluency may lack the application of comprehension strategies, such as generating questions, summarizing, and monitoring their comprehension (Carlisle & Rice, 2002). With others, strategies may have been learned only with regard to narrative texts, such as stories. This may be true for learners studying literature as a school subject. Some learners learn on their own how to transfer strategies used in one domain, such as Literature, to other domains, such as History and Science. Others do not learn how to transfer these strategies on their own and may never be taught how to apply them to the expository text found in Science, History, Mathematics, and other content areas. Still other learners may have limited background knowledge in these domains (Snow & Biancarosa, 2004). We do not know what challenges grade twelve learners have with the changing nature of reading tasks. We also do not know what strategies the grade twelve learners put into use as they read. Furthermore, we do know whether grade twelve learners are able to relate the content of what they read to prior knowledge or whether they have learnt any reading comprehension strategies with regard to narrative texts.

The structure of high school texts may also present challenges for readers. Expository text is the most prevalent text structure in most High school texts. In contrast with narrative text, learners may have been little exposed to expository text and more important, may not have been taught comprehension strategies using expository text (Santa, 2004). Common categories of expository text include cause/effect, problem/solution, comparison/contrast, chronological order or sequence, concept idea with examples, and proposition with support. Learners encounter expository text across their content-area courses. Expository text is mostly found in newspaper and magazine articles, Science and Social Studies texts and research articles. It is not known whether grade twelve learners have been taught comprehension strategies using expository text.

Expository text categories may exist in various disciplines. For instance, chronological order and cause/effect can be found in History texts. Geography texts could make frequent use of description and comparison/contrast. Text analysis and evaluation of perspectives, arguments, and interpretations use of proposition- support structures is possible in Social studies texts. (Santa, 2004). If students are not familiar with the various types of texts used in high school, they may encounter challenges in comprehending what they read. We are not aware if grade twelve learners are familiar with the text structure that is found in expository texts.

2.7 Comprehension strategies

Learning strategies are said to be techniques or routines that enable students to learn to solve problems and complete tasks independently (Katims, 1997). A strategy therefore, is a learner's approach to a task. Research has established that good readers of all ages engage in conscious, active comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading (Pressley & Wharton-McDonald, 1997). Before reading, for example, good readers may describe their goals for reading and think about what they already know about a topic and the structure of a text. During reading, readers generally activate relevant prior knowledge, make connections among important ideas, construct and test hypotheses, paraphrase key points, and try to resolve any comprehension challenges that may arise. During reading, readers may make notes in the margins or underline portions of a passage. After reading, they may reread or skim the passage, summarize it, or take notes (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). Good readers often continue to reflect on the meaning of a text long after they have read it. Finally, they use strategies flexibly depending on the type of text they are reading and their purpose for reading it (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). What should be known is whether grade twelve learners engage in conscious, active comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading.

Poor readers on the other hand, do not have the ability to select, develop and apply strategies that are able to enhance their comprehension of text. In contrast to readers who read strategically, these readers hardly prepare before reading, as they read without having set specific goals for reading. Such readers rarely give thought to how best they could read a particular type of text (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). In the process of reading, these readers may have challenges decoding and as a result may not be able to read the words of the texts accurately. Furthermore, some read too slowly or lack fluency which may lead to a lack of comprehension of much of what they read. Also, too much attention to word meanings results

in not comprehending texts read (Adams, 1990). Learners who do not use reading strategies tend to have difficulty inferring conceptual meaning, relating to what they have read, monitoring their reading and understanding, and evaluating texts for clarity and consistency (Duffy, Roehler, Sivan, Rackliffe, Book, Meloth, Vavrus, Wesselman, Putnam, & Bassiri, 1987; Underwood, 1997). Failure to employ reading comprehension strategies can facilitate less engagement with the text coupled with a lack of motivation when approaching new reading tasks. Learners require approaching reading tasks strategically to achieve maximum comprehension. We do not know whether grade twelve learners are able to use reading comprehension strategies to facilitate engagement with a text and whether they have the motivation needed when approaching new tasks.

Reading comprehension strategies facilitate comprehension among learners. We do not know whether grade twelve learners in secondary or high school are availed with reading comprehension strategies. The need to avail learners with strategies to help them succeed with reading tasks is well documented in the literature (e.g. Malena & Artwood Coker, 1987; Pressley, 2000). Research has shown that direct instruction in the use of reading strategies is able to improve the reading comprehension skills of students. Research has also shown that learners, who lack in the use of these strategies when given such instruction, often become like skilled readers (e.g. Dowhower, 1999).

Studies have shown that learners who succeed in reading comprehension have a tendency of interacting with texts actively through paraphrasing, summarising, and relating the content to personal experience. Those who don't succeed with reading comprehension on the other hand, have a tendency of underlining or re-reading passively without using specific strategies (e.g. Dowhower, 1999; Duffy et al 1987). We do not know whether grade twelve learners use comprehension strategies to succeed in reading comprehension.

Some comprehension strategies are general and can be used across different kinds of text. However, there are those that can be adapted for use with most types of text like generating questions, answering questions, summarising, text structure and monitoring comprehension. (Jetton & Alexander, 2004). Much of the research on reading comprehension has centred on the question of whether it is possible to improve children's understanding and recall of texts by explicitly teaching them to employ the strategies that good readers use. From their analysis of 203 studies, the National Reading Panel (2000) concluded that there is solid research support for the following strategies:

2.7.1 Generating questions

Good readers ask questions before, during, and after reading (Pressley & Wharton-McDonald, 1997). Generating questions is a way to process text and monitor comprehension. Asking questions during reading helps learners monitor their understanding of what they have read and integrate different parts of the text to understand main ideas and important concepts (Wood, Woloshyn & Willoughby, 1995). What remains to be known is whether grade twelve learners are able to ask questions before, during, and after reading as a way to process text and monitor their comprehension.

Many studies of strategy instruction have centred on teaching children strategies for answering questions or generating questions of their own before, during, or after reading. Questions help students actively engage with a text, check their comprehension, and construct memory representations. From a review of research on strategy instruction that involved question-generation, Rosenshine, Meister and Chapman (1996) sought to attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy. They also purposed to use the research to help themselves and others learn how to fuse the strategy into regular classrooms. From the review, they concluded that students at all skills levels would benefit from being taught these strategies. We are yet to find out if grade twelve learners are taught strategies for answering questions or generating questions of their own before, during, or after reading.

2.7.2 Answering questions

Teacher questioning is known to be an effective way to help learners think about what they have read so that they can fully comprehend the text. Teachers can use *question-answering instruction* to help students improve how they answer questions, which will, in turn, help them better understand what they read. The learner should be able to construct various responses. As Nokes and Dole (2004) suggest, using content-area texts, learners can construct answers from: explicit information in the text where the answer is evident in the text and can often be copied or repeated. Answers can be constructed from implicit information found in several different places in the text where the answer is in the text, but the reader has to pull it together from different parts of the text. Readers can also construct responses from implicit information found in the text and the reader's own prior knowledge and experiences alone; that is, the student does not have to read the text to answer the question, but reading the text informs the answer (Nokes & Dole, 2004). We are not sure whether teachers teaching grade

twelve learners use *question-answering instruction* to help the learners improve how they answer questions, which would, in turn, help them better understand what they read.

2.7.3 Comprehension monitoring

Monitoring is being aware of one's own mental processes when reading (Gunning, 1996). It is an advanced technique involving a great deal of independent thinking. Monitoring occurs when a reader is aware that they do not understand what they just read. The action of monitoring is to know how to go back and find a way to gain understanding of what is being read. Monitoring also involves knowing when to use the other types of reading comprehension strategies. Comprehension monitoring includes a variety of instructional techniques for helping students learn to judge how well they understand a passage and to apply "fix-up" strategies for correcting comprehension problems.

Good readers monitor their comprehension as they read by continuously identifying when they do and when they do not comprehend the information, ideas, and other messages contained in the text. When comprehension breaks down, good readers are able to use comprehension monitoring or other problem solving strategies to help them comprehend. Many readers do not use monitoring strategies or use them inappropriately (Nokes & Dole, 2004). Comprehension monitoring is an internal process that can only be observed if learners verbalise these strategies as they read a text. We may not be capable of telling whether grade twelve learners know how to use comprehension strategies and use them inappropriately.

2.7.4 Summarising text

Experts have identified four components of the summarising strategy: Identifying and/or formulating main ideas, Connecting the main ideas, identifying and deleting redundancies, and restating the main ideas and connections using different words and phrasings (Nokes & Dole, 2004). Summarizing helps learners focus on the important content of a text, determine what is important and what is not important, condense the important content, and restate this content in their own words. Summarizing involves identifying the main idea in a paragraph or composing a concise statement of the main concepts from a longer passage, either orally or in writing. As a strategy employed either during or after reading, summarizing helps readers to focus on main ideas or other key skill concepts that have been taught and to disregard less relevant ones. It may encourage deeper engagement with a text and encourage learners to re-

read as they construct a summary (Kamil, 2004). Summarizing taught as a strategy alone (Armbruster, Anderson, Ostertag, 1987) or as one of several strategies (Palincsar & Brown, 1984) has been shown to improve comprehension and memory for what was read (National Reading Panel, 2000). Summarizing is a complex activity as it involves paraphrasing and reorganizing information in a text notwithstanding, it helps learners comprehend and remember what they read. It does not seem to be clear though, whether grade twelve learners are able to use the summarising strategy to achieve comprehension.

2.7.5 Text structure

As learners build their knowledge of Science, Social studies, Mathematics, and Literature, learning to use knowledge of the structure of the particular text helps them comprehend the more complex texts that they encounter in these disciplines. Selecting strategies that are useful for comprehending text structures involves examining the content, language, and structure of text with which students may have challenges and then identifying specific strategies that will help students use these patterns and structures to aid in comprehension (Graves, 2004). The question of whether grade twelve learners are able to use knowledge of the structure of particular texts to help them comprehend the more complex texts that they encounter in the different disciplines when they read, remains to be answered.

Carrell (1984) investigated the effects of differences in the organisation of English expository prose on reading comprehension of English as a Second Language (ESL) readers of varying linguistic backgrounds. Working with 96 subjects and using four versions of a single passage which contained identical information, a number of conclusions were drawn from this study but mainly, that certain types of expository organisation may be generally more facilitative of recall for ESL readers than other types. The more tightly organised comparison, causation and problem/solution types were found to be more facilitative of recall of specific ideas from a text than the more loosely organised collection of descriptions. In this result, it was found that ESL readers appeared to be similar to native readers, and therefore it can be speculated that if readers of whatever native language background, possess the formal schemata against which to process the more highly structured types of discourse (comparison, problem/solution, causation), these more highly structured types of organisation generally facilitate encoding, retention, and retrieval.

Another finding was the fact that if ESL readers possess the appropriate formal schema against which to process the discourse type of the text, and if they utilise that formal schema to organise their recall protocols, more information is retrieved. However, it was found that only about one-fourth of the ESL students in this study utilised the discourse structure of the original text in their immediate recall protocols, and eight of the twenty-one who did may have failed to successfully identify the rhetorical organisation of the text they read. They may not possess the appropriate formal schema, particularly if they come from a non European background. (Carrell, 1984).

These findings detail the effects of Rhetorical organisation on ESL readers of varying linguistic backgrounds. To my knowledge, no one has investigated the challenges that grade twelve learners face in reading comprehension in Kafue District. Tembo (2011) conducted a study on the thinking skills of grade twelve learners through reading comprehension in selected high schools of central Zambia. The findings of the study revealed that learners did not have the desired cognitive abilities that would be expected of a soon- to- be school leaver. This study was an investigation of the thinking skills of the grade twelve learners through reading comprehension, but does not provide a learners' perspective on the challenges they face in reading comprehension as regards the use of reading comprehension strategies to aid their comprehension of texts.

To sum up, this chapter attempted to show how the ability to read, comprehend and apply knowledge to new learning situations is all important. It has also tried to show how dynamic the definitions of literacy as well as reading comprehension have tended to be over the years. In addition, the schema theory has been shown to play a key role in reading comprehension where the lack of application of prior knowledge by readers might lead to failure in comprehension. Furthermore, the challenges that adolescent readers face have been seen as having to do with whether readers approach texts actively since reading is an interactive process.

It has also been seen that challenges have to do with the changing nature of the reading task and the lack of employment of reading strategies that good readers put in use when they read. Moreover, it has been seen that the structure of high school texts may pose as a challenge to readers where expository text requires readers to employ reading strategies if the readers have been taught to do so. The following chapter describes the tools and methods the study

employed to ascertain whether or not grade twelve readers faced challenges in reading comprehension.

CHAPTER 3

3.0. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The study sought to find out the challenges faced by grade twelve learners in reading comprehension and also to find out what reading strategies they used in aiding their comprehension. Furthermore, it also sought to find out the strategies used by teachers to teach reading comprehension to grade twelve learners. This chapter provides details of the methods of research used and the instruments of data collection utilised. Moreover, it describes the sample size as well as the sampling procedures employed. Procedures for the collection of data and analysis, and finally ethical considerations are also tackled in this chapter.

3.2. Research design

This study utilised the qualitative approach. This was so because the researcher sought to look for answers to questions about the challenges that grade twelve learners faced in reading comprehension with the purpose of describing and understanding the problem from the participants' point of view (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). A research design is a research plan that includes methods of data collection and analysis. The design used was a case study. As Bell (1999) argues, the approach is particularly appropriate for the reason that it gives an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth within a limited time frame. Furthermore, a case study, suitable for learning more about a little known or poorly understood situation, (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005), was the appropriate choice for this study. The study also utilised the think- aloud as a method of enquiry (Newell & Simon, 1972). Think-aloud entails that readers report their thoughts while reading (Cavalcanti, 1987).

The researcher used triangulation. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) define triangulation as “the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour” (p.141).The triangulation techniques used in this study were intended to help explain more fully the richness and complexity of the phenomena under study by studying it from more than one stand point. Specifically, because methodological triangulation utilises the same method on different occasions, or different methods on the same object of study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007), the researcher used interviews for both learners and

teachers and also used focus group discussions and a think aloud, which is a method of inquiry (Ericsson & Simon, 1993; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995), on the learners.

3.3. Population

The target population consisted of all the Grade Twelve (12) learners in Kafue District of Lusaka Province of Zambia. It also consisted of all teachers of English language teaching grade twelve learners in the District.

3.4. Research sample and sampling procedures

The school was purposively sampled as it was co- educational and was representative of both urban and rural populations. Twenty (20) grade twelve boys and girls of varying age groups were included in the study. As Borg (1987) observes, simple random sampling is usually the best approach as all the individuals in the population have an equal and independent chance of being selected that is, an individual's selection does not in any way affect the selection of another. To select the sample, an alphabetical list of the total population was obtained. The researcher then randomly selected alternative names on the list (Bell, 1999).

For the teachers, purposive sampling was used as the researcher handpicked them since they possessed particular characteristics being sought (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007), that is, they were teaching the respondents in the study and so they made up a sample that was satisfactory to the researcher's needs.

3.5. Data collection instruments

To collect data, the researcher used semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to collect data from pupils. Semi structured interviews were also used to collect data from teachers. Two texts; one narrative and the other expository were used for the learners. A think- aloud, which is a method of inquiry into the thoughts of readers during reading (Ericsson & Simon, 1993; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995), was adapted for the purpose and used in the collection of data.

3.6. Data collection procedures

Primarily, two tests, one narrative and the other expository, were administered to the selected sample in one place in two consecutive days. The researcher being a qualified and experienced teacher of English language; having taught the subject for fifteen years, then marked the tests to gauge the challenges that the learners faced in reading comprehension.

The narrative and expository text was used to assess pupils' use of comprehension strategies. Essential to the identification of learners' use of strategies was monitoring their comprehension processes while reading. This was an obvious challenge for the researcher because of not being aware of what each reader was thinking. Therefore, the researcher encouraged students to make their thinking and the strategies they were using visible (Rankin, 1988). The researcher had students document their thoughts as they read on pieces of paper so as to provide insights on their actual use of comprehension strategies for comprehension of the texts. This was an adaptation of the 'think aloud protocol'- though criticised in some circles as a method of inquiry and instruction- its validity has been upheld (e.g. Ericsson & Simon, 1993; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). The notes thus used were collected and later analysed for any evidence of strategy use. This approach was developed by one school in Wisconsin District, in the United States of America. They used it as a comprehensive classroom based process to encourage teachers to examine students' ongoing comprehension needs after discovering that standardised test results alone were not sufficient indicators of student reading comprehension. Based on standardised tests alone, teachers were unable to make educational choices on students' needs. (Fiene & McMahon, 2007).

The researcher utilised Focus group discussions, where boys and girls discussed questions based on the focus group discussion guide authored by the researcher. This was done in two groups of ten participants per group. The focus group discussions were conducted in the school library with permission from the authorities. Discussion among the participants was facilitated by the researcher. Each focus group was at least an hour long and interviews were recorded on tape.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with teachers teaching grade twelve learners, as well as the Head of Department for Languages to ascertain the strategies that they used to teach reading comprehension. The learners were also interviewed to solicit information on the strategies they used to aid them comprehend what they read. Interviews were structured

according to the interview guides written by the researcher which outlined themes to be covered during the interview. The questions in the interview guide were open-ended to encourage the respondents to give elaborate answers (see Appendix E). Interviews were conducted over a period of four weeks and ranged in length from a minimum of twenty-five to a maximum of forty-five minutes, depending on the respondent being interviewed. Bell (1999) cites Semi-structured interviews centred on a topic as allowing the respondent to talk about core issues pertaining to them. Interviews were recorded on tape for subsequent transcription, analysis and interpretation. Transcription was done by the researcher to maintain consistency in the data generated.

3.7. Data analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) define qualitative data analysis as "*working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others*" (pp. 145).

Analysis involved reading and identifying the challenges that emerged from the notes (think alouds) that the learners wrote before, during and after the process of reading the narrative as well as the expository text administered to the respondents at the beginning of the data collection process.

The researcher read and reviewed the interview transcripts and organised the data or facts in a way that was useful according to the questions. The second part of the analysis involved naming and categorising the phenomena through a close scrutiny of the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Categories that could help cluster the data into meaningful groups were identified. Regarding the data, all responses to the nine open-ended questions for the learners were clustered, summarised and analysed. Furthermore, all responses to the eight questions for the teachers were summarised and analysed.

3.8. Ethical considerations

The Researcher sought permission from the manager of the particular school to use the learners and teachers at the school concerned in the study. Having gone to Lusaka Provincial

Headquarters to obtain permission to conduct research in Kafue District, the then outgoing Provincial Education Officer advised the researcher to get the Head teacher of the school the researcher was at to write an introductory letter for the researcher to the Head teacher of the school the researcher intended to conduct research at. This was done (see Appendix B).

Furthermore, the researcher designed a consent form in which respondents were provided with clear, concise information about the study in which they were invited to participate and the freedom they had to accept or decline to participate in the study (see Appendix C). The researcher also sought and was granted permission from the respondents in both cases i.e. the learners and teachers, to record the interviews on tape.

In conclusion, the chapter has outlined the research paradigm used, which is a qualitative one. The study utilised a case study. The population targeted was Kafue District and a random sample of twenty learners and a purposive one of four teachers were used in the study. The instruments for data collection included two texts; a narrative and expository one, interview guides for learners and teachers and a think aloud protocol. The researcher administered the test to the learners and conducted the interviews of both the learners and the teachers. In analysing the data, the researcher read through it, reviewed it and then named and categorised the phenomena. Issues of limitations and research ethics were tackled. The findings of the study are presented in the chapter that follows.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

The study endeavoured to find out the challenges faced by grade twelve learners as well as to find out the reading comprehension strategies they used to aid their comprehension. It also sought to find out the strategies that teachers used in teaching comprehension to the grade twelve learners. This chapter presents the findings in three parts. The first part presents findings from the notes that the learners wrote in 'thinking aloud'. The second part presents findings regarding the learners' responses to the nine open-ended questions that answer the Research questions that are, what are the challenges faced by grade twelve learners and what reading strategies do grade twelve learners use in aiding their comprehension? Finally, the third part presents the findings regarding what strategies teachers use to teach reading comprehension in respect of the eight open-ended questions after which the chapter concludes.

4.2. Findings from the think-alouds

All the respondents read the expository text which was on 'child sexual abuse'. Before reading, none of the 20 respondents wrote anything on the pieces of paper. During reading, two learners were able to identify the important concepts from the text. Two learners thought that the passage was boring while seven had long lists of words whose meaning they did not understand. The other nine did not write anything on the pieces of paper given to them.

Table 1: Outcomes from the think alouds on the expository text.

	Before reading	During reading	After reading
Wrote nothing	20	9	18
Able to identify important concepts	0	2	0
Had long lists of vocabulary items	0	7	0
Thought passage was boring	0	2	0
thought answers to the passage were similar and so were confused	0	0	2

After reading the passage, all the learners responded to the nine questions based on the text, two pupils wrote that the answers to the comprehension passage were similar and they were confused. The others did not write anything concerning the questions. The results obtained by the respondents concerning the expository text are shown in the table that follows.

Table 2: Learners' scores from the expository text.

Frequency	Scores out of 20
1	4
5	5
1	6
2	7
4	9
3	11
3	13
1	15

Regarding the narrative text, all the respondents read it and before reading it none of them wrote anything on the pieces of paper given to them. During reading, two respondents wrote down concepts they did not understand whereas ten wrote down long lists of words they found difficult to understand. Of the respondents, eight did not write anything on the paper that was given to them.

Table 3: Outcomes from the think alouds on the narrative text.

	Before reading	During reading	After reading
Wrote nothing	20	8	0
Wrote down important concepts	0	2	0
Wrote down long lists of vocabulary items	0	10	0
wondered why answers to questions were so similar	0	0	2

After reading the narrative text, all the respondents attempted the nine questions that followed. Of the 20, two wondered on their pieces of paper why the answers to some questions were so similar. Marked scripts revealed scores as shown in the table below:

Table 4: Learners' scores from the narrative text.

Frequency	Scores out of 20
1	2
1	3
1	5
2	6
3	7
3	8
2	9
3	10
1	12
2	13
1	15

4.3.0. Findings from the interviews with learners

The findings concerning the responses to the learners' nine open-ended questions are presented as follows:

4.3.1. Learners' reasons for reading

Of the 20 learners, nine responded that they read to acquire more knowledge. One learner said, *"I read to acquire knowledge about something, to learn new things, for fun and to pass out the time"*.

Another indicated, *"To acquire more knowledge, to know everything"*. Of the nine learners, four also read for fun. Four out of 20 learners read to improve their vocabulary.

One learner stated, *"The reason why I read is to improve my vocabulary and just to know the meanings of English words-to be familiar"*.

Another voiced, *"to know more words, to improve my English and for interest"*.

The other responses were varied including: *"I think reading helps us in many ways, as for the newspapers what's happening, current affairs and all sorts of things"*,

"I read for spelling and proper understanding of words and pronunciation", and

"I read in order to have information and the information the examiners want".

4.3.2. Learners' knowledge about reading comprehension.

The majority of the learners, from their responses, understood reading comprehension as being given a passage to read and thereafter questions to answer. One learner commented, *"...reading comprehension it's all about when you've been given a passage you go through it and then you understand it better so that because we do expect questions at the end of the passage"*.

Another learner had this to say, “I give you a piece of, let me say, story that you read through and give questions that test you whether you’ve understood or not”.

A third learner answered, “Reading comprehension is reading a passage and you are expected to answer some questions at the end of the passage”.

4.3.3. Learners ability to approach texts differently.

Out of the 20 learners, 18 responded that they varied their reading speed when they read expository texts. A learner responded, “I change, when am reading a story, I quite read it fast. Then technical subject like Biology I read it slowly so that I can understand apart from understanding I also memorise”.

Another learner replied:

I think the way I read novels and the way I read subjects like Biology when you are reading a novel it’s like you are reading a story and we do have a lot of interest but when you are reading a subject like Biology, you anticipate questions on the subject or a certain topic. So in terms of speed, Biology I do read it in a way that I understand. I don’t have to be fast because you can miss out points.

Only two responded that they read texts at the same speed regardless of whether it was a narrative or expository text.

4.3.4. Learners’ ability to ask themselves questions during reading.

Only five learners responded that they asked themselves questions during the process of reading. One learner noted,

...like when am reading a story. A story whereby someone was left an orphan both parents died. Then I would sit and say what of this thing happened to me what would I do? How can I manage to cope with this situation? School things

I try by all means to ask myself how a question can come.

Another learner remarked, *“I wouldn’t want to lie. If I find that what I am reading is not interesting I do not ask myself questions, I just peruse through the book. But when it comes to school work I do ask myself questions. You have to articulate matters”*.

Only three learners responded that they asked themselves questions before reading, one learner observed:

like when am reading on ‘blood’, before I do it, before I start reading, I ask myself questions then I answer it before reading and then I read. Reading again I jot down some questions for later when I come back again”.

Eight learners responded that they asked themselves questions only after reading. One learner said, *“I ask myself questions. Like when am reading maybe Chemistry. I read, then to start making questions”*.

Another learner responded, *“No, I cannot ask myself questions unless at the end...you ask yourself questions when you are done”*

Table 5: Learners' ability to ask themselves questions during reading.

Comprehension stage	Frequency
Before reading	3
During reading	5
After reading	8

4.3.5. What learners did when comprehension broke down.

Out the 20 learners, 11 responded that they read through at least twice or three times. Six of the eleven said they stopped after reading through twice or three times without understanding. One learner stated, *“I read through again. Sometimes I get a clue of what am reading about if I don't, I just stop...”*.

Another learner pointed out, *“I feel irritated so I don't have even interest to continue reading it, and I get bored fast.”*

Another learner noted:

As for me if am reading a passage, sometimes you can start reading a passage but the word meanings are strange to you. What makes someone to be bored? with the passage it's because of word meanings. So if I find that the words in a passage many words are strange, I take note of those strange words and go and research”.

Three learners said that they consulted the teacher, people around and the dictionary after reading twice to three times and still without comprehension. One replied, *“If I am reading something, which I don't understand, I read through twice or thrice but if I don't understand*

I just stop...if I am not getting any sense I need someone to help me". The information is outlined in the table below.

Table 6: Responses of what learners did when comprehension broke down.

What learners did when there was comprehension failure	Frequency
Read through twice or three times	11
Stopped after reading 2 or 3 times without understanding	6
Consulted teacher, people around and the Dictionary after reading two or three times without comprehension.	3

4.3.6. What learners did when they achieved comprehension.

There were various responses to this question; five learners responded that they answered questions asked at the end of the passage. One learner addressed the matter in this way, *"Well and good I answer the question and I can know everything but I have to go through again"*.

Four said they developed interest in what they were reading and so kept on reading very fast, one learner admitted to reading the passage again if it was interesting, saying, *"ah! At times I get to read the whole passage and re-read it a lot of times at least I understand something and it gets to be so interesting"*.

Another learner surmised, *"I feel good. It tells me that what I am from reading it's something I can apply. I can tell someone about it...I develop interest if it's something interesting, I read it again"*.

Two said that they were able to tell someone else what they read about, one learner stressed, *"When you are reading something you understand you'll be able to memorise and know it"*

better and be able to share with your friends”. Two were able to ask questions of self to see if recall of material read was easily possible and ‘jot’ down what was read respectively.

The remainder felt happy and made an outward show of comprehending what they read by doing a number of things including shaking of the head, nodding, smiling and even laughing out loud. One proclaimed, *“I feel very happy... I read it very fast... Sometimes I shake my head, smile”*

Table 7: Responses of what learners did when comprehension was successful.

What respondents did when comprehension was successful	Frequency
Responded to questions at the end of the passage	5
Developed interest and read on quickly	4
Read passage again if it was interesting	1
Able to tell someone else what they read	2
Ask questions of self to confirm recall of information	2
Outward show of comprehension i.e. shaking of head, nodding, smiling & laughing out loud	6

4.3.7. Learners’ ability to summarise what they read.

The majority of the learners responded positively and were able to retell what they had read in English most of the time. One learner affirmed:

Maybe Civic Education, maybe you read about social challenges then you go and tell friends about it. You explain to them what is written about the

same topic maybe you are from studying then you go and tell your friends of course you'd have to use English because that's what we use even when we are writing . So you use that language but you can't be getting the words the way they were, you use your own words in your language you even add your own words.

Of these, one learner turned what was read into a lullaby for siblings, the learner bragged, “I’ve got young ones so I tell it to them it turns into a Lullaby”.

4.3.8. Words that helped learners better understand what they read.

The majority of the learners had difficulty with this question. For example one volunteered, “It’s according to the words they have used in a paragraph. You will understand this passage well when they put this word, but I think it just depending on the type of words that they’ve used”.

Another conceded, “Words are there it’s just that we can’t tell because maybe a paragraph will come with words you are familiar with those words, but you find that a passage will come they use maybe words you don’t know, you don’t understand”.

Another explained:

...When you are reading a passage, there are some words that are underlined, if you are familiar with those words, they’ll help you to answer some of the words or they’ll give you a clue to understand what they are talking about. So some main words that are underlined are in some passages.

Only a few learners responded positively about the words that helped them to understand better what they read. Among the few one learner commented:

like in English there words that are automatically like ‘either...or’, neither...nor’, those words you know automatically. You are supposed to put them when you are reading. That’s what makes me know more about reading.

Another learner concluded, *“It helps me maybe there is a sentence which is saying, ‘He managed to pass the exam in spite of being in a road accident’, yes so I will understand to say this person was in a road accident but he managed to pass the test”*.

4.3.9. Learners’ ability to use prior knowledge to aid comprehension.

Majority of the learners’ responses showed a lack of understanding of what was being talked about. For example one suggested:

Yes it does, sometimes you found that you need to write a prose summary but when writing a prose summary you don’t have to get every thing...it’s not all the things that are in the passage that you are going to write, but you are going to fit in with your ideas. You already know, they are helping you”.

Only two learners responded positively, one admitted, *“Some things for example in Geography. Since I know something about the surrounding, it helps me to understand’ and ‘yes it does e.g. HIV/AIDS, what I know about it will help me understand a passage on it better’*.

The other learner affirmed, *“If I like see what a laptop is, then I know how to operate it and then am reading something like a book. It can be easy to understand the book because you know what the thing they are talking about is”*.

4.4. Findings from the interviews with the teachers

As regards responses to the six open-ended interview questions for the teachers, the following were the findings:

4.4.1. Learners' ability to make sense of text as opposed to word by word reading.

The teachers responded that in some cases the learners managed to make sense of what they read. One teacher offered, *"In some cases they read the whole text but you find certain cases where they read word by word and they are not able to understand"*. However, all the teachers attested to most of the learners not being able to make sense of text due to various reasons which included the type of text the learners were given to read.

One teacher conceded, *"Sometimes they manage to make sense of the texts. Anyway it just depends on the kinds of texts that have been given to them. For some, they capture quickly others they have problems"*.

The other difficulty stemmed from the learners having inadequate vocabulary and consequently being unable to understand whatever text they were given and so the inability to assimilate what was being put across in the texts. One teacher admitted:

The problems usually are those that arise as a result of maybe having inadequate vocabulary as a result they are unable to get whatever text that they are given and assimilate what is being put across.

4.4.2. Learners' ability to understand the goal for reading.

The responses of all the teachers were that the learners only read the passages because they had to answer questions following the texts. One teacher responded as follows:

Most of them just read because they want to answer the questions that follow. Not really that they should learn how to read. Because there are situations where you read a particular type of passage, you explain a few difficult words and when again you read the same passage, they're asking about the same words. It shows that they don't really know the goal for reading.

4.4.3. Learners' ability to make use of prior knowledge in reading activities.

Responses to this question were varied. It was found that the learners may apply prior knowledge inappropriately. One teacher replied, *"May be you find someone is answering out of context. Someone is trying to apply his prior knowledge on that subject which is not covered in that passage"*.

Reponses also indicated that a few of the learners did apply prior knowledge but the most were only able to fully understand a passage after it had been discussed. For example one teacher offered, *"I think I can say maybe few of them are able to do that the others, no, not until after the passage has been read and you discuss a few things with them that's when they are able to do that"*.

Another finding was that learners were only able to make use of prior knowledge when the teacher activated it at the beginning of a passage. One teacher confessed, *"Prior knowledge, I have seen it to be a motivation especially before reading a text. Before reading we discuss it and then I tell them to find out more. In that way they are motivated to read"*.

4.4.4. Learners' demonstration of attempts to comprehend texts.

There were various responses to this question. Findings indicate that some learners made some outward show of comprehension of texts. One teacher conceded:

"It's a bit difficult but at times you can tell that an attempt is being made to understand a given passage in cases where you expect them to read and do a given task within an expected period of time but some go over the expected time insisting that they are not yet through...Their facial expressions, some when they are reading they even smile ... again you can tell that someone has difficulties in understanding".

The findings also indicate that some pupils monitored their comprehension as they read. One teacher responded, *"sometimes you see their seriousness by reading and going back again to the same passage', so trying to find out what is required, what is involved in the same passage"*.

It was also found that learners showed they were trying to understand by answering the teacher's questions. One teacher maintained, "...as you are discussing you are able to ask questions and they are able to answer and that way you see that they understand or not".

4.4.5. Learners' attitudes towards reading comprehension.

Findings indicate that some learners were eager to read while others were not and actually showed that they were not eager to read. One teacher reasoned:

The kind of attitude; when it is boring you can see it on their faces, they don't want to continue reading some instead of sitting upright they'll be leaning against the desk-signs of boredom, they're just being forced. But when they're enjoying you can see it by the way they are reading...you can even tell their faces that they're really enjoying it.

It was also found that the attitude depended on the kind of text; sometimes the learners were reluctant to read but the attitude they adopted varied according to the type of text. "Another teacher answered , *"It depends on the kind of text, the kinds of text if it's boring you can even see they'll be reluctant to read. So the attitude anyway varies depending on the text"*.

4.4.6. Learners' persistence to read

It was found that learners' persistence to read depended on the type of text, that is, whether it was interesting or not. It was also found that most of the grade twelve learners read because there were examinations to be written at the end of the term. One teacher surmised:

"It all depends on the passage. If it is interesting they'll go for it, but now that they are in grade twelve they are just reading because they know that at the end of the term they shall write end of term exams".

Findings indicate that Learners' lack of persistence showed when they made noise during silent reading sessions. One teacher argued, *"Some even if you tell them it's silent reading, they continue making noise. They push their desk here and there, 'no madam, the books are not enough,' just like that"*.

4.4.7. Teachers' preferred texts in teaching reading comprehension.

Generally findings indicate that teachers preferred texts that were of interest to the learners.

One teacher reckoned:

we select passages that they themselves have interest in or have experienced ...it should be a passage that talks about what they encounter in their daily lives, on something that you can't share with them for example we have passages that talk about AIDS. If you want your pupils to be enlightened on that subject give them that. Subjects that they have very little knowledge about but which they encounter in life.

Another teacher explained:

I think I can go for familiar stories maybe let's say on sport, HIV AIDS, those information that they really know about. Not passages that have more technical words because at the end of the day, you find that when you are doing vocabulary, you have to go through a lot of words and you find that during that time, you wouldn't do much of the work because it'll take time for them to understand.

Another teacher offered, *"I would prefer love stories because children like them. They enjoy them even those texts that talk about teachers"*.

Only one teacher preferred a variety of texts. This teacher reasoned:

I think I would prefer a variety because as a teacher, if there is no variety even the pupils' vocabulary will be...it will be... what can I say?...there won't be variety because the purpose is for them to learn to read, to build their vocabulary. To have variety you can't just stick to one type of comprehension. You can have a story from what goes on in the laboratory and to maybe the Tiger and the lady...a variety of passages.

4.4.8. Strategies teachers used to teach reading comprehension to grade twelve learners.

The first teacher reported introducing the passage, after which the learners read silently individually. The teacher then let the learners discuss vocabulary in groups having provided Dictionaries for them. The learners thereafter answered the questions following the passage individually. The teacher then conducted class discussion of the responses to the questions and later marked learners' work. The teacher volunteered:

I introduce the passage then individual silent reading. In groups they do vocabulary. After doing vocabulary pupils answer the questions individually then they are requested to hand in their books. This is followed by class discussion then marking of the written work.

For the procedure of discussion of vocabulary items the first teacher explained:

I put the class into two groups e.g., boys / girls, to match vocabulary items, they are provided with dictionaries per group e.g., two. Sometimes, other times, it is just using the textbooks, the two groups compete.

After introducing the passage, the second teacher asked the learners to read the passage silently. Discussion of difficult words from the passage supplied by the learners and led by the teacher then followed. Teacher let the learners construct sentences using the words discussed to gauge understanding. This teacher did this weekly to enable the learners practise as the more times it was done the better they would be able to build up their level of understanding and vocabulary. The teacher responded, *"I introduce the passage, pupils go into silent reading, after silent reading we discuss the passage; difficult words which may not be in the teacher's guide but pupils may come up with them"*

On the procedure of discussion of the passage the second teacher affirmed:

Sometimes the pupils come up with those words and use them in sentences to see if they have understood the meanings. Sometimes combine the reading lesson where they read one after another alternating boy and girl... comprehension is to be done weekly. This is because they need to practise as

it is very subjective. The more they do it the better they will be able to build up their level of understanding and vocabulary.

Providing a passage, the third teacher asked the learners to read it silently. After reading the teacher asked the learners to cite any words they came across that were beyond their comprehension. Together with the learners, the teacher provided meanings. The teacher also brought out words that the teacher thought the learners may not be familiar with. In discussing the meanings of words, reference was made to the passage to see how the words were expressed in the context. The learners were then asked to attempt the questions individually after which, learners worked on the same questions in groups. A class discussion of the group answers then followed led by the teacher and afterwards teacher marked individual learner's work. The teacher answered:

You provide a passage, ask pupils to read silently after which you ask them if they came across any words that were beyond their comprehension. Together with the pupils you provide their meanings... not all pupils may have problems, some may have meanings which I concretise. I may also bring out words I think pupils may not be familiar with. When the pupils do not understand you go back to the passage to see how they are expressed in the context. The pupils can work out the meanings contextually. How long it takes depends on the number of words- even ten minutes. When this is done you ask them to attempt the questions individually. They do the group work of the same questions. You then have a class discussion of the group answers where pupils defend their answers. I then mark the pupils' books.

The fourth teacher sometimes started with giving general views about a particular topic and then the learners read silently. Teacher then asked the learners for difficult words in the passage which were discussed. The teacher disclosed:

Sometimes you start with giving general views about a particular topic. Then you come to the text which you read silently then ask for difficult words in the passage and then discuss the difficult words. You put them into groups where they answer and I draw a grid on the board.

In discussing the passage, the general meaning of a word was identified followed by identifying its contextual meaning. Sometimes the teacher and the learners consulted the Dictionary and some words were given as homework where learners went and researched at home. The teacher revealed:

We identify the words, the general meaning and the contextual meaning (how it has been used in the context). Sometimes we even consult the dictionary. Some words are given as homework where the pupils go and research on their own. This is done on a piece of paper and the answers are shared.

In conclusion ,this chapter has endeavoured to bring out the findings from the ‘think-alouds’ that were given to the respondents when reading the two types of texts that sought to find out the challenges learners faced in reading comprehension, that is the narrative and expository texts respectively. It has also attempted to cluster, summarise and present the findings from the nine open-ended questions for the learners that sought to find out the strategies that the learners used in trying to comprehend text. Finally, findings regarding the strategies the teachers were using to teach comprehension to grade twelve in terms of responses to the eight open-ended questions have been presented in the chapter. Discussions of the findings follow in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the study. The purpose of this study was to find out what challenges grade twelve learners faced in reading comprehension. Working with twenty learners who were randomly selected, and four teachers who were purposively selected, the researcher adapted and utilised the think aloud protocol for the learners to gauge the challenges they faced. Furthermore, interviews were conducted with individuals as well as groups to consolidate what had been found in the think alouds. For the teachers, interviews were conducted to find out the challenges faced by the learners as well as the strategies the teachers used to teach reading comprehension to the learners.

5.2. Challenges faced by learners

Comprehension takes place when a reader interacts with a text. The learners in this study were asked to show what they were thinking as they interacted with the texts they had been presented with. From the findings, it seems clear that the learners did not ask themselves questions about the text before reading as none of the twenty respondents wrote any questions on the pieces of paper. This finding is not in line with Wood, Woloshyn and Willoughby (1995) who found that generating questions was way to process text. Asking questions in this way helps learners monitor their understanding of what they have read. However, views from learners indicated that they asked themselves questions before, during and after reading. This is true for both the expository text and the narrative text (see table 3 and 5).

While the learners indicated that they asked themselves questions before, during and after reading, there is no evidence from the pieces of paper to show that this interaction was going on between these learners and the texts they were given to read. It appears to be a clear picture of what the learners engaged in before reading a text; they did not approach it actively enough in order to interact with it. This finding is not in tandem with what Baker and Brown (1984) and Dole et. al. (1991) observed that the goal of reading comprehension was for

learners to be aware of their own reading process and to apply effective reading strategies. Duffy et. al (1987) also explains that failure to employ reading strategies facilitates less engagement with the text and learners who do not approach reading tasks strategically do not achieve maximum comprehension. From the scores on both the narrative and expository text, there does not seem to have been maximum comprehension if the scores are to go by (see table 2 and 4).

It seems that learners did not ask themselves questions to stimulate and activate their prior knowledge on the topic before, during and after reading the text. This is not in conformity with Pressley and Wharton-McDonald (1997) who explains that readers may think about what they already know about a topic and structure of the text. Although two learners seemed to know about the activation of prior knowledge to aid them to comprehend texts, the majority of the learners did not know about how prior knowledge could help them to comprehend texts. They had no idea as to what the researcher was talking about. Yet according to the teachers, they introduced their comprehension passages to the learners before asking them to read.

It also seems from the findings that learners did not describe their goals for reading as has been established by other research e.g. Pressley & Wharton-McDonald (1997), that good readers of all ages before reading, may describe their goals for reading. This view is validated by a teacher's description of the lack of clear defined goals for reading by the learners.

5.2.1. Learners' knowledge about reading comprehension.

The majority of the learners, from their responses, understood reading comprehension as being given a passage to read and thereafter questions to answer. From what the learner said, the challenge is that the learners see reading comprehension as a kind of test or a chore that has to be performed because of the questions that they are expected to answer at the end of it all. It appears that the learners do not see the reading activity as a chance for them to learn from the reading experience. This finding stresses what Adelman (2006) argues strongly that if individuals cannot read and comprehend well, much knowledge will be beyond them.

5.2.2. Learners ability to approach texts differently.

Out of the 20 learners, 18 responded that they varied their reading speed when they read expository texts. From the views of the learners, it seems clear that most of them read expository text more carefully than they did narrative texts. Findings in terms of the scores of the learners from the expository and narrative texts attested to this (see table 2 and 4). There were more learners who scored more than ten out of twenty for the expository text than the narrative. This finding sharply contradicts Santa (2004) who holds that learners are more exposed to narrative text than expository text. In this view, it could have been expected that learners score better in the narrative texts yet it was the opposite. This could mean that learners paid more attention to expository text than narrative text. It could also mean that they did not see reading narratives as a way for them to learn and this could be the reason for the poor vocabulary of the learners.

The findings also indicate that concentration on expository text just to get answers correct leads to rote learning. Learners simply memorise chunks of knowledge without really learning from it and carrying the knowledge further to improve both their lives and those of others’.

5.2.3. What learners did when comprehension broke down

The views of most of the learners indicate that they engaged in comprehension monitoring activities by going back to read through twice or three times. However, though learners knew when to go back and re-read what they did not understand, they did not know when and how to use the other types of reading comprehension strategies to help them to comprehend texts. This is in line with Nokes and Dole (2004) who contend that when comprehension breaks down, good readers are able to use comprehension monitoring or other problem-solving strategies to help them to comprehend. Moreover, he adds that many readers use them inappropriately.

Good readers apply a variety of strategies throughout the comprehension process to support their construction of meaning such as summarizing; a few of the learners indicated that they were able to summarise what they had read. Though a few learners indicated being able to

summarise material orally after reading, there was no evidence from the findings of the think-alouds that the learners were capable of using the summarising strategy to help them in achieving comprehension. This finding is in line with studies that have shown that success in reading comprehension tends to lean towards the ability to summarise texts or relating them to personal experience as evidence of active interaction with the texts Dowhower (1999) and Duffy et al.(1987). Kamil also states that summarising may encourage a deeper engagement with the text and encourage learners to re-read as they construct a summary. There did not seem to have been a deeper engagement with the texts given since learners did not indicate this action on the think alouds. It seems too that summarising was also done in the learners' own language other than English.

With the other strategies; asking and answering questions, the findings regarding the strategies that teachers used did not show that teachers taught the learners how to generate questions and answer questions as a way of activating prior knowledge when reading. Teachers in the study seemed to concentrate on the strategy of the learners answering either the teachers' oral questions on what the learners had read or the set questions on the reading passages. This finding is not in conformity with Nokes and Dole (2004) who suggest using question-answering instruction to help learners improve how they answer questions which in turn helps them understand what they read, While learners were able to answer the set questions on the two types of texts, the quality of the responses did not indicate that the teachers had taught the strategy to the learners. The quality of the scores is a testimony to this claim (see table 2 and 4). As for generating questions, there was no evidence in the teachers' responses that they were instructing the learners to ask questions of self as a way of processing text and monitoring comprehension. Furthermore, there was no evidence from the think-alouds that the learners generated questions of their own before, during and after reading. Even the two learners who claimed to ask themselves questions before, during and after reading did not show evidence of being able to do so in the think-alouds. Dowhower (1999) found that learners who lacked in the use of these strategies when given instruction often became like skilled readers.

For the use of text structure, the findings from the think alouds did not show that the learners understood the story structure or the literary techniques, for example, plot of the story, the characters, setting and theme. There were no questions that showed that the learners were

interacting with the text by asking themselves questions about the structure of the text. In fact, the scores obtained by the learners from the questions on the narrative text (see table 4) show that the learners had challenges engaging with the text. This is a case where more than half of the learners in the study scored less than ten out of twenty. The findings are indicative of the fact that the learners were not able to fully access their schemas for narrative texts when they began to read the text. It could also be true to say that the learners were not able to make connections with narrative texts that they would have read before and apply the knowledge to the text at hand.

For the expository text, findings show that the majority did not understand the common expository text structures such as sequence, description, comparison and cause and effect. This is evident from the responses that the learners gave when asked to say what kind of words helped them to better understand a text in English language. Only two learners had any idea as to common text structures. Because of a lack of good knowledge of the structure of expository text, the learners were unable to fully engage with the text with the appropriate strategies and schema to help them construct meaning of what they read as evidenced from the scores obtained by the respondents from both the narrative and expository texts.

It is through the application of these strategies at various stages throughout the interaction that meaning is achieved. The major findings from the think alouds indicated that most learners hardly used these comprehension strategies to aid them to comprehend what they read. When comprehension broke down, it is evident from the learners' responses that they monitored their comprehension only by going back to clarify what they read. The learners' responses showed that more than half of the learners monitored their comprehension by reading through the text more than once. This is further complimented by the teachers who confirmed that some learners 'go back' to the passage to read through again. From the think alouds though, there was no evidence of the use of the other comprehension monitoring strategies such as identifying where and what the problem is, restating sentences or whole passages in their own words and looking forward in the text for information that could help resolve the problem.

From the responses of the learners, a cry of help seems to be what the learners are calling for. Learners need to be independent in being able to approach texts strategically. The learners appear not to have been availed these strategies by the teachers. This finding is not in tandem

with the findings of Malena and Artwood Coker (1987) and Pressley (2000) that learners need to be availed strategies to help them succeed with reading tasks.

5.3. Learners' ability to make sense of text as opposed to word by word reading.

The views of the teachers indicate that the learners did not always make sense of what they read. Moreover, all the teachers attested to most of the learners not being able to make sense of text due to various reasons which included the type of text the learners were given to read.

The other difficulty stemmed from the learners having inadequate vocabulary and consequently being unable to understand whatever text they were given and so the inability to assimilate what was being put across in the texts. The data from the think-alouds clearly indicate that the group of learners worked with in this study had long lists of vocabulary from both the narrative as well as the expository text. It could be said that most of the learners spent considerable time on figuring out the meanings of the difficult vocabulary items and were not able to understand the meaning of the passages wholly as a result. This was more so with the narrative passage where more than half of the learners scored less than ten out of the twenty marks and half of the learners had long lists of vocabulary items to grapple with (see table 4).

From the expository text, during reading, seven learners had long lists of words whose meaning they did not understand (see table 2), while ten had long lists of difficult vocabulary items from the narrative text. It appears that the learners that had long lists of vocabulary items could have been grappling with challenges of meanings of words in a bid to achieve comprehension. The teachers also attested to the fact that learners had inadequate vocabulary and consequently were unable to comprehend whatever text they were given and so the inability to assimilate what was being put across in the texts. This finding is in conformity with that of Adams (1990) that too much attention to word meanings results in not comprehending texts.

While the observations of the teachers concerning the learners' are true, the texts preferred by the teachers to teach the learners are a contributing factor to the challenges of vocabulary the learners face. If the responses of the teachers concerning the type of texts preferred are to go by, then the learners are being 'steered' into encountering the vocabulary that meets the

teachers' fancy only without taking into account the needs of the learners to acquire meaningful and working vocabulary that will help the learners in day to day life as well as to continue learning.

The strategies that the teachers are using also contribute to the inadequate vocabulary of the learners. Vocabulary instruction improves reading comprehension (Stahl, 1999). All the teachers in the study were teaching vocabulary to the learners differently and at different stages of comprehension instruction. The teachers used one or all of the following strategies; looking up vocabulary items in the Dictionary, using words in sentences and using the context in which words have been used.

These strategies that the teachers used for vocabulary instruction i.e. looking up words in the Dictionary, using words in sentences and using the context in which the words had been used may be useful but have some implications for the learners when it comes to their ability to comprehend texts:

5.3.1. Looking up the words

The teachers used Dictionaries in their vocabulary instruction. While it is important to teach learners to use Dictionaries, especially for writing purposes, the exercise is most unlikely to culminate in meaningful vocabulary learning. In addition, the act of looking up the words in the Dictionary is time consuming considering that learners are not so well versed in the art of looking up words. Moreover, the eighty minutes allocated to a comprehension lesson in schools may be used up in the exercise and therefore may not be beneficial in aiding comprehension to learners. This is more so if there are long lists of unrelated words to look up as was the case with the learners in this study.

5.3.2. Using words in sentences

One teacher let the learners construct sentences using words that had been discussed. This means that the learners were able to construct sentences with new vocabulary after they had had some understanding of the words. This however, contradicts with what one teacher said that, even after explaining the words learners still asked about the same words when they encountered them again in the same passage. It can be deduced from the teacher's view that

though asking learners to construct sentences after some level of understanding is helpful, it is not so effective. This is so because as the teacher confessed, the strategy has a shortcoming as the learners are not actively involved in making connections between the new vocabulary learnt and what they already knew hence the reason for them to fail to recall the meanings of the words they acquired during a previous reading session. In this case, they even failed to recall the same words that they were taught previously. This could actually be the reason the learners' vocabulary appears to be poor as attested to by the teachers.

5.3.3. Using the context

Some teachers used context as a vocabulary instructional strategy. A study found that learners reading at grade level had about one twentieth chance of learning the meaning of a word from context (Nagy, 1988). While it is true that meaning can be got from the context, it seems clear from the findings in this study that the learners had a difficult time deducing the meanings of words from context in the two passages that were used in the study. It seems a clear sign that learners needed a wider range of strategy instruction where they would have been actively engaged in constructing meaning. It seems that teachers were concentrating too much on teaching how to use context in vocabulary instruction without laying emphasis on teaching the learners how to actively interact with the text using various comprehension strategies to construct meaning.

5.4. Learners' ability to make use of prior knowledge in reading activities.

Findings indicate that the learners may apply prior knowledge inappropriately. Another finding was that learners were only able to make use of prior knowledge when the teacher activated it at the beginning of a passage. Some of the teachers in this study introduced the reading passages to their learners. Introducing a passage is a strategy that helps learners to connect their background knowledge to the new knowledge they encounter in the text. According to the schema theory (Anderson & Pearson, 1984), the reader's prior knowledge directly impacts new learning situations. This finding is in line with the views of Nist and Mealey (1991) that when new information enters memory, it must be compatible with that which is already present for meaning to occur. When a reading passage was well introduced at the beginning of the reading activity, learners' prior knowledge on the subject was

activated to impact the new reading experience. It seems clear from the teachers' views that the way the learners read a passage that had been well introduced differed from the way they read one that had not. From the findings, it seems that learners were able to use prior knowledge, but had not been taught to use it effectively to impact new learning situations. As one teacher put it, the learners were only motivated to read when prior knowledge was activated at the beginning of the reading passage.

Also as evidenced by one teacher, the learners use prior knowledge but use it inappropriately. When learners used prior knowledge in this way, it could mean that they lacked the appropriate schema for interpreting meaning correctly and so they ended up making interpretations of meaning of the text that was not intended by the writer. This finding is in tandem with what Clark observed that readers may not have the appropriate schema and failure to comprehend may result when the reader makes an interpretation but not the one intended by the author (Clark, 1990).

5.5. Learners' attitudes towards reading comprehension.

Findings indicate that some learners were eager to read while others were not and actually showed that they were not eager to read. It was also found that the attitude depended on the kind of text; sometimes the learners were reluctant to read but the attitude they adopted varied according to the type of text. From the findings, it seems clear that the learners lacked the right attitude towards reading comprehension. As rightly observed by the teachers, learners were just being forced to read. There seemed to be no eagerness shown in the learners towards the reading activities. This attitude points to the fact that the reading culture in young people is truly on the dead side.

The teachers also play a part in the attitude of the learners towards reading comprehension. The teachers referred to texts as 'boring', it is a wonder that a teacher can refer to a text as 'boring' because it is with such texts that the teachers should be able to teach the learners how to approach the text and eventually be able to use various comprehension strategies to achieve comprehension without labelling them as 'boring'. It can also be said of the teachers that perhaps they too lacked the skill of being able to use these reading comprehension strategies to achieve comprehension and so labelled texts that they did not appreciate as 'boring'. These findings coincide with the findings of a study of selected secondary schools in Lusaka (Muyangana, 2012) that learners and teachers alike had poor reading culture.

5.6. Learners' persistence to read

Findings indicate that learners' persistence to read depended on the type of text, that is, whether it was interesting or not. Findings also indicate that most of the grade twelve learners read because there were examinations to be written at the end of the term. Findings indicate that Learners' lack of persistence to read showed when they made noise during silent reading sessions.

Furthermore, from the findings it appears that the teachers were not doing much to motivate the learners as firstly they continuously referred to reading texts as 'boring' and secondly as they were discouraged by the class sizes, insufficient textbooks and the learners' waning interest in reading comprehension.

5.7. Setting goals for reading frequency

One strategy that one teacher used was to set a weekly reading goal to motivate the learners to read widely. A broad range of reading experiences improves learners' abilities to comprehend a wider spectrum of texts of different difficulty levels. The experiences, attitudes and perspectives the learners have will mostly determine how they regard the purpose for reading as well as the beneficial value of reading. The findings in this study show that most of the grade twelve learners read because there were examinations to be written at the end of the term. The levels of motivation on the part of learners to read were very low. One teacher reported how learners continued making noise even when they were told that a passage was to be read silently and how others would drag their desks from one point to another and give numerous excuses about the insufficient number of textbooks to use.

Motivating learners to read includes the text types that the teachers choose to avail to them. In this study each teacher had a different notion of what types of texts they would provide to their learners given free rein to do so. From the findings, it seems clear that the biases of the teacher reflect on the kind of reading exposure the learners receive in terms of the texts provided by the teacher for comprehension lessons.

In sum, this chapter attempted to discuss the findings of the study in comparison to previous research. Where other research has noted that the grade twelve learners did not have the

desired cognitive abilities that would be expected of a soon- to- be school leaver, this study has sought to establish the challenges that grade twelve learners face in reading comprehension. These challenges include learners' inability to approach texts actively in order to interact with them, inability to generate questions to activate their schemas on the topic before, during and after reading and inability to set specific goals for reading the texts provided. Furthermore, the learners had challenges of word meanings and were unable to connect new vocabulary to prior knowledge. Evidently, learners in the study did not use a variety of reading comprehension strategies to help them comprehend but for clarifying what they read as a monitoring strategy when comprehension broke down. Moreover, learners were unable to use text structure effectively for both texts to help them to draw on the appropriate strategies and schema to help in meaning construction. Finally, teachers used strategies to teach comprehension that were less effective in that they lacked the active engagement of the learners in connecting new knowledge to prior knowledge and therefore constructing meaning.

CHAPTER 6

6.0. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the

findings of the study. It also presents the conclusions as well as the recommendations. Finally, suggestions for future study are discussed.

6.2. Summary of findings

The purpose of this study was to find out the challenges grade twelve learners faced in reading comprehension. Specifically, the study answered questions on the challenges faced by grade twelve learners; whether grade twelve learners used reading comprehension strategies and what reading comprehension strategies the teachers used in teaching comprehension to these learners.

It was found that grade twelve learners faced challenges in reading comprehension. Learners were unable to approach texts actively in order to interact with the texts. Learners were unable to generate questions to activate their schemas on the topic before, during and after reading yet teachers reported activating their learners' prior knowledge. They were also not able to set specific goals for reading the texts provided. Furthermore, the learners had challenges of word meanings and were unable to connect new vocabulary to prior knowledge. It seems evident that learners in the study did not use a variety of reading comprehension strategies to help them comprehend. What they were able to use is the clarifying strategy which is only one of the monitoring strategies used when comprehension breaks down.

Moreover, learners did not sufficiently use text structure for both texts to help them draw on the appropriate strategies and schema that would help them to construct meaning. Finally, teachers used strategies to teach comprehension that were less effective and in that they lacked the active engagement of the learners in connecting new knowledge to prior knowledge and therefore constructing meaning. Teachers were also inconsistent in their use of strategies that really work such as the activation of prior knowledge before learners read a text.

6.3. Conclusions

The researcher makes conclusions of grade twelve learners in this study that they lacked most of the reading comprehension strategies that good readers used in comprehending text. The reason may be that these strategies had not been taught to them. Teachers of language must have the knowledge and skills of effective reading comprehension instruction to be able to instruct learners in text comprehension skills. Furthermore, it was found that the strategies that the teachers actually used were inadequate in helping the learners to approach reading tasks actively by activating prior knowledge and using strategies appropriately as well as schemas for meaning to occur. Learners in the study were found to lack persistence when it came to reading. The reason could be that teachers chose texts that were a motivation to themselves mostly. However, the learners need to read and keep reading for their vocabularies to be built up as well as for them to learn from what they read. A variety of texts are required if learners are to improve their vocabulary so that when they read comprehension is not obstructed by long lists of vocabulary items not comprehended.

6.4. Recommendations

In view of the findings of the study the following recommendations are made:

1. That a reflection upon the current practices of teaching comprehension is made by all the stake holders in order to improve understanding of how to effectively teach it.
2. It seems to be clear that learners at grade twelve in this study had comprehension needs. It therefore becomes imperative that Teachers of language should make deliberate efforts to find out the reading comprehension needs of their learners in order to address them adequately.
3. Teachers of English language find out what their learners do during reading comprehension lessons by devising methods such as the think aloud protocols to make the thinking of the learners visible. This is so that they can implement strategies that will work for their learners.

4. Teachers should give a variety of texts to learners for comprehension lessons if learners are to improve their vocabulary, so that long lists of vocabulary items not comprehended do not stand in the way of text comprehension
.
5. Heads of Languages Departments should closely monitor whether comprehension instruction is taking place and how their members teach reading comprehension to learners to find out how effective it is.
6. For the teachers to offer instructional strategies that work for comprehension instruction, and Heads of departments to provide the necessary support to teachers, they must themselves be knowledgeable about these techniques
.
7. The researcher therefore recommends serious and vigorous sensitisation of how reading comprehension can be enhanced through the use of these instructional techniques by the appropriate policy making bodies including the Ministry of Education and the institutions responsible for training of teachers.
8. That the Ministry of Education seriously looks at the over enrolment of learners in classes at high school and secondary school level. Such numbers as exist in classes are a big hindrance to effective comprehension instruction.

6.5. Suggestions for future study

The researcher recommends the following to be considered for future study:

1. Find out the strategies teachers in the schools in other parts of the country use to teach reading comprehension to their learners.
2. That quantitative study is conducted to examine the effects of teaching comprehension strategies to selected groups of learners in Zambian secondary or high schools especially those thought to be struggling readers.

3. That comparative study is conducted with whole classes into outcomes of teachers following effective comprehension instructional tendencies and the ones not doing so. This should include what strategies to be taught and to whom?

4. Research be conducted with good readers in secondary or high school focusing on the identification of the strategies they use and the effects of teaching the same to those learners who have challenges comprehending text.

REFERENCES

- Adams, M. J. (1990). *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print*. Cambridge MA: MIT press.
- Adelman, C. (2006). *The Toolbox revisited: paths to Degree completion from High School through college*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.
- Anderson, R.C., & Pearson, P.D. (1984). A Schema-theoretic view of basic processes in reading. In P.D. Pearson, R. Barr, M.L. Kamil, & P. Mosenthal (Eds.), *Handbook of Reading Research* (pp.255-292). New York: Longman.
- Armbruster, B. B., Anderson, T. H., & Ostertag, J. (1987). Does text structure/ Summarization instruction facilitate learning from expository text? *Reading Research Quarterly*, 22, 331-346.
- Baker, L., & Brown, A.L. (1984). Metacognitive skills and reading. In P.D. Pearson, R. Barr, M. Kamil, & P. Mosenthal (Eds.), *Handbook of Reading Research* (pp.353-394). New York: Longman.
- Bell, J. (1999). *Doing your Research Project: A guide for first time researchers in education and Social Science* (3rd Ed.). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1982). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.
- Carlisle, J. F., & Rice, M. S. (2002). *Improving reading comprehension: Research-based principles and practices*. Timonium, MD: York Press.
- Carrell, P.L. (1984). The Effects of Rhetorical Organisation on ESL Readers. *TESOL Quarterly*, 18(3), 441-469.
- Cavalcanti, M. C. (1987). Investigating Foreign Language reading performance through pause protocols. In C. Faerch & G. Kaspers (Eds), *Introspection in Second language research* (pp.230-250). Clevedon: Multilingual matters.
- Clark, S.R, (1990). Schema Theory and Reading Comprehension. Washington D.C.: Eric Clearing House. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 325-802).
- Cohen, L., Manion L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research Methods in Education* (6th Ed.). New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Dole, J.A., Duffy, G. G., Roehler, L.R., & Pearson, P.D. (1991). Moving from the old to the new: Research on reading comprehension instruction. *Review of Educational Research*, 61, 239-264.

- Dowhower, S.L. (1999). Supporting a strategic stance in the classroom: A comprehension framework for helping teachers help students to be strategic. *The Reading Teacher*, 52, 672-688.
- Dubin, F., & Kuhlman, N. A. (1992). The dimensions of cross-cultural literacy. In F. Dubin & N. A. Kuhlman (Eds.), *Cross-cultural literacy: Global perspectives on reading and writing* (pp. v-x). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Regents/Prentice Hall.
- Duffy, G.G., Roehler, L. R., Sivan, E., Rackliffe, G., Book, C., & Meloth, M.S. et al. (1987). Effects of explaining reasoning associated with using reading strategies. *Reading Research Quarterly* 22(3), 347- 368.
- Durkin, D. (1978-79). What classroom observations reveal about reading comprehension instruction. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 41, 481-533.
- Ericsson, K. A., & Simon, H. A. (1993). *Protocol analysis. Verbal reports as data* (Rev.ed). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Examination council of Zambia(2008). *Chief Examiner's report –English language*. Lusaka: Author.
- Examination council of Zambia(2009). *Chief Examiner's report –English language*. Lusaka: Author.
- Examination council of Zambia(2010). *Chief Examiner's report –English language*. Lusaka: Author.
- Fiene, J., & McMahon, S. (2007). Assessing Comprehension: A classroom based process. *The Reading Teacher*, 60(5), 406-417.
- Graves, M., (2004). Theories and constructs that have made a significant difference in adolescent literacy-but have the potential to produce still more positive benefits, In T. Jetton and J. Dole (Eds), *Adolescent literacy research and practice* (pp. 433-452). The Guilford Press: New York.
- Gunning, T. G. (1996). *Creating reading instruction for all children*. (2nd Ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Hiebert, E. H. (1991). Introduction. In E. H. Hiebert (Ed.), *Literacy for a diverse society: Perspectives, practices, and policies* (pp. 1-6). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Jetton, T., & P.A. Alexander, (2004). Domains, teaching, and literacy, In T.L. Jetton and J.A. Dole (Eds.), *Adolescent literacy research and practice* (pp. 15-39). The Guilford Press: New York.
- Kamil, M. L. (2004). Vocabulary and comprehension instruction: Summary and implications of the National Reading Panel findings. In P. McCardle & V.Chhabra (Eds.), *The Voice of evidence in reading research* (pp. 213-234).Baltimore: Brookes.

- Katims, D. S. (1997). Improving the reading comprehension of Middle School Students in inclusive classrooms. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 2, 116-124.
- Kelly, M, J. (2000). *Reading comes first; Baseline reading study, primary reading programme, the Basic school curriculum framework, Ministry of Education*. Lusaka: Curriculum Development Centre.
- Kitao, K. S. (2003). Textual Schemata and English Language learning. *Cross Currents*, 3, 147-155.
- Lee, C.D., & Spratley, A. (2010). *Reading in the disciplines: The challenges of adolescent literacy*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York.
- Leedy, P.D., & Ormrod, J.E. (2005). *Practical Research: Planning and Design* (8th Ed.), New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc. Upper Saddle River.
- Malena, R. F., & Artwood Coker, K. J. (1987). Reading *o*prehension: the missing elements. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 10(3), 25-25, 35.
- Malone, S.S., & Anorve, R.S. (1998). *Fundamentals of Educational Planning*. UNESCO International Institution for Educational Planning: Paris.
- Maria, K. (1990). *Reading Comprehension Instruction, Issues & Strategies*. Parkton, MD: York Press.
- McNeil, J.D. (1992). *Reading comprehension new directions for classroom practice* (3rd. Ed.), Los Angeles: University of California.
- Ministry of Education. (1977). *Educational Reforms: Proposal and recommendations*. Lusaka: Government Printers.
- Muyangana, A.N. (2012). *Strategies employed by teachers in the teaching of reading comprehension in selected schools in Lusaka district*. Unpublished master's dissertation, University of Zambia.
- Nagy, W.E. (1988). Teaching Vocabulary to improve reading comprehension. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- National Reading Panel. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching children to read*. Washington, D. C.: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Clearinghouse.
- Newell, A., & Simon, H. A. (1972). *Human Problem Solving*. Englewood Cliff: NJ Prentice Hall.
- Nist, S.L., & Mealey, D.L. (1991). Teacher-directed comprehension strategies. In R. Flippo & D. Caverly (Eds.), *Teaching reading and study strategies at the college level*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

- Nokes, J.D., & J.A. Dole, (2004). Helping adolescent readers through explicit strategy instruction. In T.L. Jetton and J.A. Dole (Eds.), *Adolescent literacy research and practice* (pp. 162-182). New York: The Guilford Press
- Palincsar, A. S., & Brown, A. L. (1984). Reciprocal teaching of comprehension-fostering and comprehension-monitoring strategies. *Cognition and Instruction*, 2, 117-175.
- Pressley, M. (2000). What should comprehension instruction be made of? In M. Kamil, P. Mosenthal, P. Pearson, R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (vol 3. pp.545-562). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Pressley, M., & Afflerbach, P. (1995). *Verbal protocols of reading: the nature of constructively responsive reading*. Hillside NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum associates.
- Pressley, M., & Wharton-McDonald, R. (1997). Skilled comprehension and its development through instruction. *School Psychology Review*, 26, 448-466.
- Rankin, J.M. (1988). Designing thinking- aloud Studies in ESL reading. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 4,119-132.
- Rosenshine, B., Meister, C., & Chapman, S. (1996). Teaching students to generate questions: A review of the intervention studies. *Review of Educational Research*, 66, 181-221.
- Santa, C.M. (2004). Project CRISS: Reading, writing, and learning in the content subjects, In D.S. Strickland and D.E. Alvermann (Eds.), *Bridging the literacy achievement gap, grades 4-12* (pp. 183-199). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Snow, C., & Biancarosa, G. (2004). *Reading next: A vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy*. New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York.
- Stahl, S.A. (1999). *Vocabulary Development*. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books.
- Steelman, J. D., Pierce, P. L., & Koppenhaver, D. A. (1994). The role of computers in promoting literacy in children with severe speech and physical impairments. In K. G. Butler (Ed.), *Severe communication disorders: Intervention strategies* (pp. 200-212). Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of Qualitative Research*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Thompson , D.(ed). (1992).*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Tembo, B. (2011). *An investigation into the thinking skills of grade 12 pupils in selected high schools of central Zambia*, unpublished master's thesis, University of Zambia.
- Underwood, T., (1997). On knowing what you know: Metacognition and the act of reading. *The Clearing House*, 71(2), 77-80.
- Vellutino, F., Scanlon, D., Sipay, E., Small S., Pratt, A., Chen, R., et al. (1996). Cognitive profiles of difficult to remediate and readily remediated poor readers: Early intervention as a

vehicle for distinguishing between cognitive and experiential deficits as basic causes of specific reading disability. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 88, 601-638.

Wigzell, R. (1983). The role and status of English as a subject in the Zambian English-medium context. In Brumfit C.J., *Language Teaching Projects for the Third World* (Ed.), Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Wood, E., Woloshyn, V.E., & Willoughby, T. (1995). *Cognitive strategy instruction for Middle and High schools*. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books.

World Education forum (Jomtien Declaration), (2000). World Declaration on Education for all. Meeting basic learning needs. Retrieved 20th September 2012 from Web site: [http://www.unesco.org/education.../...](http://www.unesco.org/education.../)

Zambia & United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. (2004). *Zambia National commission for UNESCO, Lusaka* : Author.

APPENDIX A

Letter of Introduction



THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
Department of Language and Social Sciences Education

Telephone: 291074
Telegram: UNZA, LUSAKA
Telex: UNZALU ZA 44370

PO Box 32379
Lusaka, Zambia
Fax: +260-1-292702

05th March, 2012

TO: The Head teacher

U.F.S. The Provincial Education Officer

LUSAKA

U.F.S. The District Education Board Secretary

Kafue District

LUSAKA


RE: FIELD WORK FOR MASTERS STUDENTS: KALABULA MUTALE

The bearer of this letter, Ms. **KALABULA MUTALE** computer number **530506751** is a duly registered student at the University of Zambia, School of Education.

She is taking a Master's Programme in Education – Literacy and Learning. The programme has a fieldwork component which she has to complete. She is seeking your permission to allow her carry out an educational research in a selected High School in Kafue District, Lusaka Province.

We shall greatly appreciate if the necessary assistance is rendered to her.

Yours faithfully,


Luangala J. (Dr.)

COORDINATOR

APPENDIX B

Permission Letter

All communications to be addressed to the
School Manager
Telephone 278722



12

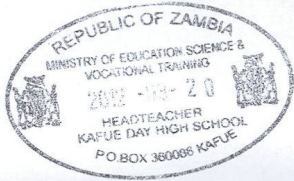
**REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

PARKLANDS HIGH SCHOOL MANAGEMENT BOARD
P.O. BOX 350017
CHILANGA

19th March, 2012

*D/11/11/11
Let the teacher conduct
her research in the
school.*

The Head
Kafue Day High School
KAFUE



Dear Sir

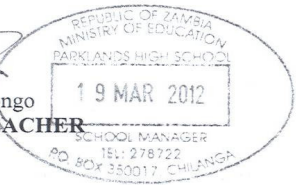
RE: INTRODUCTORY LETTER

I write to introduce Mrs. Mutale P. K. Ng'ona, TS number 089639 a teacher at Parklands High School. She would like to conduct her research at your school.

Kindly assist her.

Yours faithfully

L.N. Matongo
HEADTEACHER



APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

My name is Mutale Kalabula and I am a student in the School of Education; Department Language and Social Science Education at the University of Zambia. I am conducting a study on the challenges faced by grade twelve learners in reading comprehension. To find out these challenges, I require to interview grade twelve learners and the teachers of English language who teach grade twelve. I have been given permission to conduct these interviews. Information that is released to me will be considered strictly confidential and your identity will not be disclosed

If you agree to participate in this study, write your name in the spaces provided below. If for whatever reason you feel that you cannot continue with the interview, you are free to withdraw from the study.

Participant

Name.....Signature.....

Date.....Place.....

Witness/ Researcher

Name.....Signature.....

Date.....Place.....

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PUPILS

QUESTIONS

1. Tell me why you read.
2. What do you know about reading comprehension?
3. Do you vary your reading speed when reading or a text on a technical subject? How?
4. When do you ask yourself questions during reading?
5. Let's say you are reading a passage and then you do not understand what you are reading what do you do?
6. Tell me what you do when you are reading a passage and you understand what you are reading.
7. After reading a passage, are you able to tell another person what you read in your own words?
8. Share with me what kind of words help you to better understand what you read. (e.g. because, since consequently)
9. Are you able to use your knowledge of the world when you read?

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

QUESTIONS

1. Are pupils able to make sense of the text as opposed to word by word reading?
2. Tell me whether pupils are able to understand the goal for reading.
3. Let's discuss how much pupils are able to make use of prior knowledge in their reading activities.
4. How do pupils show that they are trying to understand what they are reading?
5. What kind of attitude do pupils demonstrate towards what they read?
6. How persistent are pupils when it comes to reading?
7. What type of texts do you prefer to use in teaching reading comprehension?
8. What strategies do you use when teaching reading comprehension to the grade twelve learners?

APPENDIX F

COMPREHENSION

INSTRUCTIONS

Write your full name and gender in the spaces provided.

Name _____

Gender _____

Age _____

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions which follow

1. The street had been widened and the mango trees sacrificed. The Njekwa's place, the neighbours, had been shorn of its gardens. Flanked by new smaller houses, it had acquired a shabby look and was too big for its site. No lovely, long-haired young girl in a white summer dress weaving in and out of the green shade. John closed his eyes seeing Emily, remembering why he had gone away for so many years.
2. Then he looked at his own house. The house was freshly painted in white. Flowers and potted plants still crowded the veranda, the sanctuary of his over-literate boyhood, and John knew the front rooms would be bathed in watery dimness. As he knocked he could scarcely breathe. Maria opened the door, an ancient brown woman with a wrinkled face that showed no surprise. Her toothless mouth stretched into a smile and she opened her arms, clasping him down into an olive-scented embrace. John then started to make introductions saying that Maria was their maid, but before he could finish, he stopped.
3. Mrs Phiri, his mother, was descending the stairs, the coloured light from the stained glass window falling so that John couldn't properly see her face. Even so, the missing years burst at him. The hair smoothed under high tortoise-shell comb was totally white. The slow, gracious walk had become laboured. Halting, she stared down, one hand on the banister, the other clutching the black ruffle at her throat.
4. "John" she whispered. "Mum," he said softly and took the steps three at a time. On the landing she clasped him with her full soft arms, holding him away, hugging him again. She thought John had grown to be so much like his father, "Ah" she sighed. The slow quiet voice, the sharpness of lavender in his nostrils brought back his childhood. Tears were threatening to pour out of his eyes, but he controlled himself when he remembered he was now a man.
5. "Mum, how sweet it is to see you." His arm around her shoulders, they moved awkwardly down the narrow steps. At the bottom of the stairway Jane waited, her

hands clenched over her shiny skirt. Mrs Phiri glanced questioningly at her son. John introduced Jane as his wife.

6. “Wife?” Mrs Phiri whispered, her fingers biting into John’s cotton sleeve.
7. “We were married on Saturday”.
8. “Uh, Mrs Phiri, if it isn’t right for you now, I’ll come back in a while.”
9. Mrs Phiri’s fingers remained clamped to John, yet her voice was welcoming, serene. “This is your home”, she said. “And Jane child call me mum. My other daughter calls me mum”.
10. Later they sat around the supper table. John and his mother reminisced about the mango trees and the flowers in the veranda. Jane peeled a piece of fruit with a knife, her round upper arms tensing with effort-she who so easily carried water buckets and chopped loads of firewood. Mr. Phiri cut a generous piece of roasted beef. He distrusted surprises. However, since his first shock at hearing John’s voice, flattened and distorted by the telephone he had been overjoyed. Mr. Phiri was talking to Jane explaining that his cousin who owned a big butchery had supplied them with the same meat they were eating. Jane could only give an impressed murmur, and then went back to peeling her apple. Jane had spoken little today. She had stared with round eyes at the magnificence of the house.
11. She’s not bad at that, Mr. Phiri thought. Big, a good full body and a round cat face. The dress though! Here his well-known eye for quality rebelled. It fitted so tightly in the bodice that the seams were stretched. A small slit showed under her tensed right arm, and a spray of paint did not properly hide a mis-matched button at her throat. Mr. Phiri looked away thinking of Emily. Light colours floated around her small, graceful figure, and her sparkle came not from the jewellery that bud kept giving her but from her eyes and laughter. How could the two brothers choose such different women? Mr. Phiri stifled the question. He was a rigidly decent man. This Jane, too, was his daughter-in-law. He carved a big piece of the roast beef and with a fork pushed it on her plate.

(Adapted from Examinations council of Zambia English language past exam paper, 2000)

In each of the questions 1-9 select the best of the four choices given. Show the letter of your choice by putting a ring around it on the question paper. If you change your mind, cross out the ring very neatly.

1. In paragraph 1, “the mango trees sacrificed,” means they ...
 - A. sacrificed some mangoes to God before widening the street.

- B. Prayed for the mango trees before widening the street.
 - C. Cut down the mango trees before widening the street.
 - D. Cut down the mango trees after praying before widening the streets.
2. "Over-literate boyhood," in paragraph 2 implies that John had ...
 - A. read too many books as a boy.
 - B. read few books as a boy.
 - C. read too many difficult books as a boy.
 - D. never read any books as boy.
 3. We can tell that Maria was happy to see John because she ...
 - A. smiled with her toothless mouth.
 - B. smiled and opened the door for John.
 - C. embraced John and opened the door for him.
 - D. smiled and embraced John.
 4. John realised his mother had grown old because ...
 - A. the missing years burst at him.
 - B. her hair had become totally white and her hand was on the banister.
 - C. her hair had become totally white and her other hand was clutching the ruffle at her throat.
 - D. her hair had become totally white and her walk had become laboured.
 5. Was Mrs. Phiri happy to receive Jane?
 - A. No, she wasn't because she was holding onto her son.
 - B. Yes, she was because she told Jane to call her mum.
 - C. Yes, she was because she told Jane that it was her home and she should call her mum.
 - D. No she wasn't because she shouted "Wife?"
 6. Which statement is true?
 - A. Jane was confident about herself and ready to meet her mother in-law.
 - B. Jane was nervous about meeting her mother in-law.
 - C. Jane was looking forward to meeting her mother in-law.
 - D. Jane seemed indifferent about meeting her mother in-law.
 7. We can infer from the passage that Jane was ...
 - A. lazy and badly dressed.
 - B. strong and badly dressed.
 - C. weak and badly dressed.
 - D. delicate and well dressed.
 8. Why did Mr. Phiri's eye rebel in paragraph 9?
 - A. Because the dress was too light and had a slit.

- B. Because of the dress being too tight.
 - C. Because of the colour, the mismatched button, the slit and the dress being too tight.
 - D. Because of the mismatched button, the slit and the colour though it fitted well.
9. John had left home because he differed with ...
- A. his father.
 - B. his mother.
 - C. his brother.
 - D. Emily.
10. From the underlined words in the passage find one word for each space which is similar in meaning to what is given below.
- A.....marked by utter calm and unruffled.
 - B.....a place of refuge and protection.
 - C.....indulged in remembering
 - D..... twisted out of the natural original condition.

APPENDIX G

COMPREHENSION

INSTRUCTIONS

Write your full name, gender and age in the spaces provided.

Name.....

Gender.....

Age.....

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions which follow

- 1 Sometime back, there was (and rightly so) a major public outcry over the growing incidences of child sexual abuse. Organised by the labour movement, people from different walks of life marched against the scourge. I remember people (men and women) dancing in indignation along with her song ‘*vitendeni*’ meaning “castrate them”. I did not join in for am against corporal punishment. It has not been proven anywhere that it is the solution or deterrent to violent crime. The public outcry is no longer that loud, but one has continued to try and follow what is happening in this matter.
- 2 Clearly, the scourge is not reducing, but subjectively one gets the sense that the police and our courts seem more alive to the matter as we see more and more arrests and some convictions in the courts of law. The sentences being meted out are longer and hence some stiffening of the penalty. This is good.
- 3 This problem may not be peculiar to Zambia but that does not seem to make it right and we must do all we can to stop it. A lot of effort is being put into this, but perhaps it is time to ask if all our efforts are enough.
- 4 In attempting to give some sort of guidance in answering this question, I begun by asking whether we have adequate understanding of what is causing this problem. The received wisdom of this matter is that it is largely about the HIV/AIDS “virgin sex cure myth. But when one hears of very young boys, almost children themselves, raping younger children, one wonders.
- 5 To what extent is the break down in the social fabric of society playing an important role in this sorry matter? I think the breakdown is largely a result of failed Neo-liberal economic policies that have devastated our families and communities and we have begun to prey on each other. It is a very well known phenomenon that when people are “down and out”, when they have no jobs, no hope, they often take out their despair on those closest to them because they are

the easiest targets. It is of course the weakest in our families and communities and in this case, the young children.

- 6 One hears arguments about the role of the media in fuelling this scourge. I have even heard it said that the very act of constantly reporting in the Public Media may itself be contributing to this problem because it gives “ideas” to these no doubt, very sick people who carry out these acts. This is a very difficult argument because the alternative appears to be silence. But, the “culture of silence” has been said to be a major cause of these problems.
- 7 There are no simple answers, which is why we urgently need our universities and research institutions to help us understand better what is going on. This will help us put in place better strategies to prevent the sexual abuse of young children happening in the first place. In addition of course, we need to urgently deal with the deep rooted economic problems of this country.
- 8 As stated earlier, much is being done, but after a child has been abused his or her future is often ruined permanently. The physical wounds may heal, but the psychological ones are more enduring. More often than not, abused children themselves also become abusers. I wonder too, whether there isn’t more that can be done at an activist level. We have at community level, a number of groups organised for support purposes. The Catholic Church for instance has the small Christian Communities, the Neighbourhood Health Committees and so on.
- 9 Would it not be possible to infuse into these, child watch groups? As the name suggests, these would play the role of keeping an eye on the children, watching out for any suspicious behaviour and rooting out unacceptable practices in our communities such as excessive alcohol consumption. This would act as a preventive measure.
- 10 In short people would make sure that those who should be carrying out their functions such as the police, Local Councillors and RDC’s do their work. This is clearly a major problem for which there are no simple answers.

*(Adapted from Examinations council of Zambia, English Language
Past paper of 2008)*

In each of the questions 1-9, select the best of the four choices given. Show the letter of your choice by putting a ring around it on the question paper, as in the example below. If you change your mind, cross out the ring very neatly. Answer question 10 according to instructions.

- 1 Paragraph 1. "There was a major public outcry over the growing incidence of child sexual abuse." What do you understand by this?
 - A. People were crying over the scourge.
 - B. People spoke against the scourge.
 - C. Children cried over the scourge.
 - D. People became aware of the scourge.
2. According to paragraph 1, people danced...
 - A. Happily
 - B. fiercely
 - C. angrily
 - D. sadly
3. According to paragraph 1. Why didn't the author join in the dancing?
 - A. She was only a child.
 - B. she didn't like the song
 - C. she didn't agree with the message in the song.
 - D. she was only an observer
4. According to the author in paragraph 1, the fact that there isn't as much public outcry means that...
 - A. the scourge is reducing.
 - B. the law enforcement agencies are punishing the culprits.
 - C. longer Sentences are being meted out.
 - D. people are not just talking about it.
5. According to the author, why is there sexual abuse?
 - A. It is believed that it will cure HIV/AIDS.
 - B. It is a sign of social moral decay.
 - C. It is a result of the poor economy.
 - D. Broken family ties.
6. After a child has been abused...

- A. physical wounds don't heal.
 - B. the victim's mind is affected forever.
 - C. he or she will have no future.
 - D. a few of them become abusers themselves.
7. One of the ways suggested in paragraphs 8 and 9 of stopping child abuse by...
- A. the Catholic Church stopping the act.
 - B. the formation of the neighbourhood Health committees.
 - C. stopping children taking excessive alcohol.
 - D. the activist groups and awareness campaigners doing their duties.
8. What should be role of universities and research institutions according to the author in paragraph 7?
- A. Finding better solutions.
 - B. Dealing with deep economic problems of the country.
 - C. Researching into ways of stopping the child abuse.
 - D. Helping us understand what is happening.
9. What is the major problem referred to in paragraph 1?
- A. Infusing child watch groups into other organisations.
 - B. Arresting child sexual abuse.
 - C. Improving the economy for all.
 - D. Arresting child sexual abusers.
11. Choose the underlined words in the passage that mean the same or nearly the same as the ones below. Write the words against each word or phrase.
- (i) Discouragement.....
 - (ii) Strange.....
 - (iii) Victimise.....
 - (iv) Proved guilty.....