

**TEACHERS' PREPAREDNESS TO TEACH READING COMPREHENSION
IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AMONG GRADE FOUR LEARNERS IN
SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN CHONGWE DISTRICT, ZAMBIA**

BY

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Declaration

I, Handili Jimaima do hereby declare that this dissertation represents my own work and all the other work of other persons has been acknowledged, and that this work has not been submitted before at this University or indeed at any other University for the degree of Master of Education in Literacy, Language and Applied Linguistics.

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ABSTRACT

This study explored teacher's preparedness to teach reading comprehension in English language to Grade four learners in selected primary schools of Chongwe district, Zambia. The research objectives were; to assess teachers' knowledge of reading comprehension, ascertain primary school teachers of Chongwe district's preparedness to teach reading comprehension and to establish the challenges primary school teachers of Chongwe district face when teaching reading comprehension. The study was situated within the constructivist paradigm and a descriptive research design was used. The research used qualitative methods of data collection. The study engaged a sample size of 21 participants, comprising 20 teachers and 1 senior education standard officer who were purposively selected from four primary schools. The data collected through focus group discussions and lesson observation was coded and the emerging themes were analysed. The findings showed that the teachers generally had knowledge of reading comprehension but did not teach in ways it ought to be taught. There was no correlation between what was confidently stated in the focus group discussion and what was observed in the classroom situation. Findings further revealed that teachers were generally ill-prepared to teach reading comprehension as evident from the lessons observed. Most of the teachers were not aware of the strategies in the teaching of reading comprehension and did not even apply them during their teaching. It was also revealed that teachers faced challenges when teaching reading comprehension. Some of the challenges highlighted included absenteeism, lack of parental involvement, lack of teaching and learning material and late coming. The study among other recommendations recommends regular monitoring of teachers by standards to help them teach according to standards. The study also recommends holding of continuous professional development programmes by teachers to remind themselves of new trends in teaching.

Key Words: *Reading, Reading Comprehension, Reading strategies, Preparedness, Background knowledge*

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife, Lungowe Imasiku Jimaima and my entire family.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This part of the thesis presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, specific objectives, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation and limitations and operational definitions.

1.1 Background

Reading is a deep-seated skill for children. It is also a foundational skill, upon which acquisition of other critical skills and knowledge depends. Nevertheless, it is one that the majority of children in low-income countries are not acquiring as improvements in student learning lag significantly behind improvements in access to schooling (World Bank: Independent Evaluation Group, 2006). Reading undergirds the entire learning experience for a child; it needs to be the foundation of any education enterprise. Early grade reading is an exemplar for improving the overall quality of education. It is crucial to the academic success of pupils and to the growth of a nation (Oberholzer, 2005; Oyetunji, 2011).

If pupils' reading competencies are poor, then their writing competencies and their comprehension levels would also be poor... one of the complex factors resulting in pupils' poor reading, learning and achievement are the teachers because most of them are not trained to teach basic reading (Botha et al., 2008).

Sturdy reading comprehension skills are essential not only to academic and professional success, but also to a productive social and civic life. These skills build the aptitude to learn independently, to absorb information on a variety of topics, to enjoy reading, and to experience literature more deeply. It is believed that students who read with understanding at an early age gain access to a broader range of texts, knowledge, and educational opportunities, making early reading comprehension instruction particularly critical.

The purpose of reading instruction is to give young readers the tools they need to understand progressively more difficult material in all subjects from elementary through later years of school. A story map, for example, is one such useful tool in

reading comprehension only if it helps learners to follow the storyline more fully and accurately. With this principle as a backdrop, teachers should prepare their reading lessons in a way that encourages learners to use the tools to improve comprehension skilfully and independently as they read.

Reading requires a rich and complex array of abilities that enable comprehension, not all of which are specifically reading comprehension skills. For instance, successful decoding undergirds successful reading comprehension, and it undoubtedly ought to be taught. The question, however, still remains as to whether Primary School teachers in Chongwe district are indeed equipped with this important skill and do impart it to their learners.

1.2 The Models of Reading

Reading is one of the key components in the early childhood education. It involves quite a lot before the child can get to reading with understanding. So, in teaching reading, teachers do apply various models. There are basically three kinds of influential reading models. These include, top-down model, bottom-up model and interactive model. These models have been discussed in the subsequent section.

1.2.1 The Top-down Model

The top-down model is the kind of teaching strategy in which the learner's background knowledge is activated. It is this knowledge which in turn enhances the learner's language learning and making possible reading comprehension. In this model, *content schemata* are activated; prior knowledge plays a significant role in the learner's comprehension. Apart from prior knowledge being at the centre, the top-down model is essentially a whole-language teaching approach where readers focus on the context and manage to create meaning in the text they are reading. The implication in the top-down model is that readers must rely on previous knowledge for them to predict the gist of the text, either by looking at pictures or indeed the title of the text (Brown, 2001).

1.2.2 The Bottom-up Model

As opposed to the top-down model in which readers rely on their previous knowledge for them to understand a text, the bottom-up model looks upon reading as a skill in which students learn to read in a step-by-step way. This model is said to be a decoding

process of constructing meaning at the *bottom*, e.g., letters or words to the larger units at *the top*, e.g. phrases, clauses and intersentential linkages (Carrell & Eistenhold, 1983). Brown (2007) defined bottom-up model as using mental data-processing device to linguistic signal in order in addition, Eunjeo (2009) argues that the bottom-up model is defined focussing on individual words, pausing for grammatical difficulties and repeated readings.

Put simply, this approach makes use of building-block approach starting with the foundation of phonics and phonemic awareness. The model recognises the fact that learners must first learn the basics in order to fully understand the more complex components such as comprehension and inferences. Because of its sequential approach, the bottom-up model is widely used. This model recognises reading as a development process that can best be learned in a way that begins with a foundation and builds with complexity. In other words, the model relies on direct and explicit instruction of five key components (phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency and reading comprehension) of reading throughout early childhood education. These components must be fully mastered if a learner has to become fully literate.

1.2.2.1 The Five Components of Reading

Phonics – this is the method of instruction that teaches students the systematic relationship between the letters and letter combinations (graphemes) in written language and individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken language and how to use these relationships to read and spell words. Adams (1990) contends that phonics is a system of teaching reading that builds on the alphabetic principle, a system of which a central component of teaching is the correspondence between letters or groups of letters and their pronunciations. Phonics instruction can help students how to convert the printed word into spoken form (National Reading Panel, 2000). There are two approaches to phonics instruction – Systematic, explicit phonics instruction and Incidental, implicit phonics instruction. In systematic, explicit phonics instruction, the sounds/spelling correspondences are taught directly and systematically while in the incidental, implicit phonics instruction, sounds/spelling correspondences are inferred from reading whole words and introduced as learners encounter them in text. The hallmark of systematic phonics programmes is that they outline a planned, sequential set of elements and they teach these elements explicitly and systematically (National Reading panel, 2000).

Importantly, in phonics, under word recognition, both regular and irregular types of words are involved. Regular words that can be decoded are referred to as *sound-out* words while irregular words that must be learned by memory are called *spell-out* words. Another important emphasis of phonics and word recognition is learning high-frequency words which can be regular or irregular. In addition to high-frequency words, there are multisyllabic words that are also taught through systematic and explicit instruction. Through learning to decode unknown words accurately and automatically, students become fluent readers. A simple sequence of phonics elements for teaching sound-out words is followed from the easiest sound or spelling patterns to the most difficult. The sequence involves the following: consonants and short vowel sounds, consonant digraphs and blends, long vowels, long vowel digraphs, other vowel patterns, syllable patterns and affixes.

Phonological awareness – is the ability to detect, identify and manipulate phonemes in spoken words (Brady, 2020). Phonological awareness is an umbrella term that includes four developmental levels which are: word awareness, syllable awareness, onset-rime awareness and phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is the understanding that spoken language can be broken into individual phonemes – the smallest units of spoken language. Phonemic awareness focuses on the individual sounds in spoken language. Learners, in this component must be aware of such larger parts of spoken language as words, syllables and blends as well as smaller units of spoken language, the phonemes. Phonemic awareness performance is important because it is a strong predictor of long term reading and spelling success (Put reading First, 1998). Blachman (2000) argues that learners with strong phonological awareness are likely to become good readers while those with weak phonological skills are likely to become poor readers. It is estimated that more than 90 percent of learners with significant reading problems have a core deficit in their ability to process phonological information (Blachman, 1995). Phonemic awareness is one of the few factors that teachers are able to influence significantly through instruction (Lane & Pullen, 2004). Instruction therefore should be systematic. Learners learn to isolate, identify and categorise phonemes first after which they are taught a more complex activity to blend phonemes to make words before learning to segment words into phonemes which is typically more difficult. Blending phonemes into words and segmenting words into phonemes contribute directly to learning to read and spell well. The skills of blending phonemes into words and segmenting words into phonemes contribute to learning to

read and spell than any of the other activities under phonological awareness umbrella (National reading, 2000; Snider, 1995).

Vocabulary –vocabulary is the knowledge of words and word meanings. Stahl (2005) argues that vocabulary knowledge is knowledge; the knowledge of a word not only implies a definition, but also implies how that word fits into the world. Children acquire vocabulary indirectly, first by listening when others speak or read to them and by using words to talk to others. This indirect acquisition of vocabulary by learners at home and at school through indirect exposure is called incidental vocabulary learning. When children begin to read and write, they acquire more words through understanding what they are reading and then incorporate those words into their speaking and writing. Research has shown that vocabulary supports reading development and increases comprehension. Students with low vocabulary scores tend to have low comprehension and students with satisfactory or high vocabulary scores tend to have satisfactory high comprehension scores.

Fluency – this is the ability to read with proper speed and expression without errors. Educators have recognised that fluency is one of the critical building blocks and an important aspect of reading. This is so because fluency development is directly related to reading comprehension. Reading fluency and reading comprehension are highly correlated. Learners become fluent by reading. Some learners become fluent readers without explicit instruction. For other learners, on the other hand, fluency does not develop in the course of normal classroom instruction. Simply encouraging learners to read independently is not the most effective way to improve reading achievement (National Reading Panel, 2000). The National Reading Panel (2000) proposes that there are three strategies that improve fluency, comprehension and reading achievement. These include: teacher modelling, repeated reading and progress monitoring.

Comprehension – this is viewed as the “the essence of reading” (Durkin, 1993). It involves interacting with text, using intentional thinking to construct meaning. Comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading. In order to read with comprehension, developing readers must be able to read with some proficiency and then receive explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies (Tierney, 1982). Important to note that the process of comprehending a text begin before learners can read, when someone reads a picture book to them. They listen to the words, see the pictures in the book, and may start to associate the words on the page with the words they are hearing and the ideas they represent. In order to learn comprehension strategies, students need

modelling, practice, and feedback. The key comprehension strategies are as described in the subsequent part of the dissertation.

Using Prior Knowledge/Previewing

When students preview the text, they tap into what they already know that will help them to understand the text they are about to read. This provides a framework for any new information they read.

Predicting

When students make predictions about the text they are yet to read, it sets up expectations based on their prior knowledge about similar topics. As they read, they may mentally revise their prediction as they gain more information.

Identifying the Main Idea and Summarization

To be able to identify the main idea and summarizing requires that readers establish what is important and then put it in their own words. Implicit in this process is trying to understand the author's purpose in writing the text.

Questioning

Asking and answering questions about the text being read is another strategy that helps students focus on the meaning of text. Teachers can help by modelling both the process of asking good questions and strategies to arrive at answers in the text.

Making Inferences

In order to make inferences about something that is not explicitly stated in the text, students must learn to draw on prior knowledge and recognize clues in the text itself.

Visualizing

Research has shown that readers who visualize while reading are likely to have a better recall of what they read than those who do not (Pressley, 1977). Readers can take advantage of illustrations that are in the text or construct their own mental images or drawings when reading a text without illustrations.

1.2.3 The Interactive Model

The interactive model is the combination of both the bottom-up and the top-down models. This model was arrived at by theorists so that it could deal with what neither

the bottom-up nor the top-down could account for. Rumelhart (1980) argues that the interactive model is a comprehensive model that could explain the process of reading comprehension and was also suitable for teaching reading comprehension. Put simply, this model presumes that any act of comprehension is the combined effect of the top-down and the bottom-up models. It is believed that efficient reading is generated from the interaction between top-down and bottom-up reading strategies.

Comprehension must be understood as an active process of constructing meaning from text and involves accessing previous knowledge, understanding vocabulary and concepts, making inferences, and linking key ideas. Comprehension cannot be learned through one instruction, but requires a series of strategies that influence understanding of text (Vaughn and Thomson, 2004). With this in mind, it requires that teachers are skilful in their instruction and respond flexibly and opportunistically to students' needs for instructive feedback as they read. To be able to do this, teachers must themselves have a firm grasp not only of the strategies that they are teaching the children but also of instructional strategies that they can employ to achieve their goal (National Reading Panel, 2000). This study therefore, was set out to explore teachers' preparedness to teach reading comprehension in English language in selected primary schools in Chongwe district, Zambia.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Research has shown that there is poor performance in reading comprehension among early grade learners in most schools in Zambia. The 1999 Zambia's National Assessment Project indicates that pupil performance in English was low at all cognitive levels. According to this report, the level that posed the greatest difficulty in English was the higher level of comprehension. The Executive Summary brief-of 2018 Baseline EGRA Results shows inability of Grade 2 to read fluently and comprehend grade level text. Similarly, findings in the report on reading in English in primary schools in Zambia confirm that most Grade 3 and 4 pupils had difficulties with passages which are aimed at their level.

The findings in the 2016 National Assessment Survey (NAS) Report at Primary School Level show that learners had challenges in English Language as they failed to reach the

Minimum Level of Performance (MLP) in most Content Areas such as Grammar, Comprehension, Vocabulary, Punctuation and Sequencing.

If this is not attended to, the situation may turn out worse. Of course, various factors could be responsible for this situation. Could the problem be with the learners, or the teachers, or indeed other problems not seen yet? To successfully teach reading comprehension, various steps ought to be undertaken. It was owing to this that this study was set out to explore teacher's preparedness to teach reading comprehension in English language in primary schools of Chongwe district.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to explore teachers' preparedness to teach reading comprehension in English language in selected primary schools of Chongwe district.

1.5 Objectives

- i. To assess teachers' knowledge of Reading Comprehension
- ii. To ascertain Primary School teachers of Chongwe district's preparedness to teach reading comprehension
- iii. To establish the challenges Primary School teachers of Chongwe district face when teaching reading comprehension.

1.6 Research Questions

- i. What is the teachers' knowledge of Reading Comprehension
- ii. How prepared are Primary School teachers of Chongwe district to teach reading comprehension?
- iii. What challenges do Primary School teachers of Chongwe urban experience when teaching the reading comprehension strategies?

1.7 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study may prove significant in contributing to the teachers' preparedness in pedagogies in the teaching of literacy, particularly the teaching of reading comprehension. It is also hoped that the study may provide knowledge to the Primary School teachers of the reading comprehension strategies and help resolve the practical problems of implementing the reading comprehension strategies among

Primary School teachers. Furthermore, it is hoped that the study may also contribute to the body of knowledge and to teacher preparation in teacher training institutions.

1.8 Delimitation

The study was conducted in Chongwe district in some selected primary schools and restricted to Grade four.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

There are several reading theories that relate to reading comprehension. However, this research was guided by the Schema Theory, which is about knowledge and how this knowledge is represented. It provides details on how learner's background knowledge interacts with the reading task and illustrates how a student's knowledge and previous experience with the world is crucial to decoding a text.

The expression "schema" is derived from Greek and first appeared in ancient Greek philosophy and psychology works. It was first put forward by Immanuel Kant in 1804 and its original meaning refers to "the product of the transcendental imagination" (Chen, 2002). The schema has now received widely spread attention from scholars and has been used in teaching.

Kant defined schema as an intermediary or bridge between knowledge and direct life experience. The view of modern schema theory is: schema is a kind of cognitive structure for understanding information materials; it plays a very active role in coordinating the process of cognition. According to this theory, when people face new things, they must combine their original experience with new things. When humans read language material, they can connect people's schemas with the content of the materials and then we can understand the theme of the text. Schema theory is used for all kinds of schema knowledge to analyse and understand language materials.

The Schema Theory was first mentioned by Frederic Charles Bartlett, a well-known psychologist and the first to observe this human phenomenon. He defined "schema" as "an active organization of past reactions or experiences (Bartlett, 1932). According to Widdowson (1993), schema is the knowledge structure of known things or information that is stored in the mind. Many other scholars have of course, written about the Schema theory. Schema theory is based on the notion that past experiences lead to the creation

of mental frameworks that help a reader make sense of new experiences. Being able to use background knowledge plays an important role in one's attempt to comprehend a text. Anderson (1994) points out in his research that recall of information in a text is affected by the reader's schemata.

The concept of the schema and related concepts arises from the development of research in cognitive science where the significance of background knowledge in language comprehension is found to exist. The new cognitive and top-down processing approaches revolutionised the conception of the way students learn to read (Goodman 1967; Smith 1994). Rumelhart (1980:34) proposes that:

A schema theory is basically a theory about knowledge. It is the theory about how knowledge is represented and about how that representation facilitates the use of knowledge in particular ways. According to the schema theories, all knowledge is packaged into units. These units are the schema. Embedded in these packages of knowledge is, in addition to the knowledge itself, information about how this knowledge is to be used. A schema, then, is a data structure for representing the generic concepts stored in memory.

Writing on the schema theory, Naunan (1999) argues that the schema theory is based on the notion that past experiences lead to the creation of mental frameworks that help us make sense of new experiences.

Rumelhart (1980) considers comprehension as the process of selecting the schema to shed light on input information and variable constraints. He argues that reading comprehension begins by inputting some amount of information and then searching for the schemata illustrating the information. Comprehension occurs when such schemata are found or some schemata are specified or slots are filled. Just as diverse concepts function at different levels, schemata in human's mind also have different levels, and the process of comprehension is bound to mirror the levels, that is, the input information has to be processed at different levels successively from lower level schema specification to higher level one.

Supporting Rumelhart, McCormick & Pressley (199) state schemata as generalised knowledge about objects, situation, and events. According to McCormick & Pressley, when a schema is activated, it can dramatically affect comprehension, inferences,

attention allocation and memory of what is read. Linked to reading, on the basis of the schema theory, a text simply provides directions for readers as to how they should retrieve or create meaning from their own previously acquired knowledge. Brown (2001) contends that the distinctive feature of schema theory regarding reading is that a text does not carry meaning by itself. The reader brings knowledge, emotion and culture – that is schemata, to the printed world. Carrell & Eisterhold (1983) and Anderson (1999) strongly believe that the reader's comprehension depends on the ability to connect the information that the reader gets from the text with his or her pre-existing background. A comprehension text is an interactive process between the reader's background knowledge and the text when viewed from the schema theory. In this view, reading is not just extracting meaning from the text but a process of connecting information in the text with the knowledge the reader brings to the act of reading. Reading, therefore, is a dialogue between the reader and the text (Grabe, 1988). It is understood to be an active cognitive process in which the reader's background knowledge plays a significant role in the construction of meaning (Tierney & Pearson 1994). Reading is not a passive mechanical activity but purposeful and rational, that relies on prior knowledge and expectations of the reader.

When schema theory is applied to reading, in order to teach reading effectively, teacher's role to activate and build schemata is important. Pre-reading activities play a significant role in schema theory reading models (Chen and Graves 1995; Demiriz 1998; Grabe and Stoller, 2002). McLaughlin (2012) argues that learning takes place when new information is integrated with the already known subject matter. It is believed that children develop schemas way back before they enter school. These schemas are developed are units of knowledge which eventually become theories; theories which not only affect the manner in which information comprehension is interpreted but also constantly change as new information is received. Based on these explanations about the schema, it means that when people understand new things, they should connect new things with known concepts and previous experience. Schema is a kind of memory structure and readers can rearrange reading materials according to their existing schema in the brain so that they can understand better.

1.9.1 The Three Different Stages of Reading

In the reading process, there are reading strategies that are applied in three different phases of reading. Effective readers use these strategies in the three different reading phases to develop and acquire a quick and automatic understanding of the text – the pre-reading (before reading), during and post-reading (after reading) phases. Cakici (2016) identifies these reading strategies as deliberate actions that require cognitive effort which is used with the intent of building and maintaining text meaning. By implicature, the strategies come about through the conscious attempts geared towards generating automaticity, comprehension and overall reading skills.

1.9.1.1 Before Reading

This is the first phase in the reading. In this stage, the basis for the construction of meaning is launched for the subsequent actual construction of meaning. Included at this stage are pre-reading activities, which engage readers in more purposeful reading (Chastain, 1988; Ur, 1996). Purposeful reading is achieved through a multiple of strategies, such as discussion of passage title, headings, subheadings, pictures, illustrations, identification of text structure, knowledge about the world in general previewing and so on (Abraham, 2002).

In short, background knowledge is activated here, which learners may even connect to their personal lives. This knowledge is necessary to establish links for comprehension. This stage is also known as a planification stage because it also aims at setting up questions and possible links useful to prime readers' prior schemata that links the new knowledge when it arises during reading. Unfortunately, analyses of several basal teachers' manuals show instances of problems in the pre-reading component. Some manuals, for example, suggest that teachers focus on tangential elements that are irrelevant to the upcoming section. Sometimes, even under the best conditions, the teacher's manual may suggest concepts inappropriate for a specific group of children (Beck, 1986). However, according to Dewitz, Jones & Leahy (2009), teachers can improve on what the publishing companies' core reading programmes do not provide. Teachers can focus their discussion on the theme or message rather than the topic.

Background knowledge is an essential component of reading comprehension. The more the learner knows about the topic, the easier it is for them to read and understand the

text. Not only that, but it is also easier for them to retain what they will have read. It follows therefore that learners with good background knowledge are able to choose between multiple meanings of words and make inferences that rely on background knowledge.

According to RAND Reading Study Group (2002), effective reading comprehension considers student factors in instruction. Activating background knowledge and fostering interest and motivation for reading a given text is critical, whether the student is a native English speaker or an English learner. Teachers are therefore encouraged to support learners' comprehension of texts by activating prior knowledge and promoting text connections. According to Neuman, Kaefer & Pinkham (2014), there are several ways that could be used to build learner background knowledge. They further state that activation of background knowledge is not simply accumulation of facts; but rather children need to develop knowledge networks which consist of clusters of concepts that are coherent, generative and supportive to future learning in a particular domain. Suggested strategies include teaching of words in categories, using contrast and comparison, use of analogies and many others. During this phase of reading, the teacher motivates learners through activities that may increase their interest. Activities may include book talks, dramatic readings, or displays of art related to the text which would make the text relevant to the learners in some way. The teacher thus activates learners' background knowledge that is important to the content of the text by discussing what the learners will read and why what they already know about the text and about the text organisation. Put simply, learners, with the help of the teacher in this phase may: establish the purpose for reading, identify and discuss difficult words, phrases, and concepts in the text. Not only that, learners may also preview the text by surveying the title, illustrations and unusual text structures to make predictions about its content. Learners may also think, talk and write about the topic of the text.

One very common pre-reading strategy or activity done is *brainstorming* (Wallace, 1992). In this activity, the teacher may supply the class with some key concept for students to call out words or indeed phrases that they associate with the keyword that has been provided by the teacher. The brainstorming activity has a number of advantages. To begin with, it requires that the teacher adequately prepares; secondly, it allows learners to bring their background knowledge on a particular topic and it is one activity that involves the whole class.

1.9.1.2 During Reading

In this stage, monitoring strategies that are used to maintain the previous established bases to build meaning are deployed. Here, meaning and comprehension are constantly reviewed through questions and comparing and contrasting previous schemas with new expectations about the text. New predictions which increase attention for comprehension arise. Put simply, the learner in this stage integrates new and old knowledge, the background knowledge activated in the pre-reading stage. In this phase, the teacher takes the role of a guide and should therefore encourage learners to use comprehension strategies as they read and monitor their understanding. The teacher, for example, asks learners questions to keep track of the reading and to focus their attention on main ideas and important parts of the text. The questions the teacher asks help the learners to predict and confirm these predictions, develop visual images as they read, relate situations and characters in the text and monitor their reading.

Pang et al. (2003) suggests strategies that can be used in the during reading phase as making connections between and among important ideas in the text, integration of new ideas with existing background knowledge, sequencing events and ideas in the text, monitoring understanding through paraphrasing or restating events in the text and identifying characters and settings. Beyond this, there are lexical strategies that learners must be taught to deploy should they experience comprehension issues at word level. These strategies include such as deduction of meaning from context, identifying word class, analysing morphological formation and using reference words that are used for making text continuity and fluid meaning comprehension.

1.9.1.3 After Reading

The after reading or post reading phase is the final stage in reading strategy instruction which is regarded as the meaning evaluation and consolidation stage. At this stage, meaning is clarified to establish text essentials to derive conclusions and evaluate the existing links between the content and background knowledge so experienced in the *during reading* phase. What is common within these three phases is the invariable use of comprehension questioning to maintain attention and identify connections between the text and its different parts and indeed between the text and the reader.

Toprak (2009) argues that every idea is concluded in the post reading stage. Teachers in this stage can then make some discussion from the reading and also summarise important ideas and supporting details. In this stage, learners recall and retell important parts of the text in their own words. They could also respond to the reading in a number of ways. These ways could include writing, role-playing, debate, summarising, describe and stating cause and effect. It means that the teacher must help the learners through questions to use their acquired knowledge in similar readings and help them integrate with the foreign culture in the text. In other words, teachers help learners to relate the information to themselves and other written materials by not regarding events as isolated happenings, but rather as results of previous occurrences. Networking of the new knowledge helps learners to enhance their memory. Certain activities and procedures like retelling could be undertaken to improve the learners' comprehension of narrative texts. Retelling, which is various types, involves having learners orally reconstruct the story that they read. Retelling requires learners to activate their knowledge of how stories work and apply it to the new reading. As part of retelling, learners engage in ordering and summarising information and making inferences. Story retelling is a higher thinking activity that allows learners to analyse, synthesize, evaluate and interpret the text they have read at complex levels (Tankersley, 2005). The teacher can use retelling as a way to assess how well learners understand the story, and then use this information to help learners develop a deeper understanding of what they have read. Jennings et al. (2014) asserted that retelling is a strategy used to determine how well a reader understands a particular story's content and context.

To achieve this, the teacher must use explicit instruction, explaining why retelling is useful, modelling the procedure, providing learners with opportunities to practice and providing feedback. In the simple type of retelling, the learner may identify and retell the beginning of the story, the middle and the end in order. The learner may also describe the setting in which the story takes place, or may indeed indentify the problem and the resolution of the identified problem. In a more complete retelling, the leaner may identify and retell events and facts in a sequence. The learner may also make inferences to fill in missing information or identify and retell causes of actions or events and their effects.

1.9.1.4 Reading Strategies

The reading strategies are divided into three groups according to the three phases of reading comprehension: pre-reading, while (during) reading and post-reading strategies (Bukut, 2017). Pre-reading strategies include preparing a reading plan, eliciting the topic from the first sentences of the paragraph, making predictions from main titles, subtitles and visual information, activating prior knowledge, deciding where to focus and determining reading speed.

While-reading strategies involve making connections between paragraphs, taking notes on significant points, re-reading when attention is lost, underlining significant points, using the dictionary when meaning cannot be elicited from the context, making use of textual clues, reanalysing when conflicting information is encountered and establishing connections with between prior knowledge and new ones.

Finally, Bukut (2017) the post-reading strategies include summarising the text, checking whether the reading goals are achieved or not, checking previous predictions, evaluating the main ideas of the text critically, taking notes for future reference, answering questions and expressing the main ideas of the text.

Supporting Bukut (2017), Zimmerman & Hutchins (2003) quoted in Gibson (2009) hold that research has identified specific thinking strategies used by proficient readers, and that these are key strategies to reading comprehension. Zimmerman and Hutchins' strategies include making connections, asking questions, making inferences, determining importance, synthesising information visualising while reading (2003). Taylor et al. (2003) quoted in Gibson hold that effective reading instruction encompasses teachers who challenge their students with high-level thinking and the application of reading strategies to their reading and writing. Effective teachers use coaching and modelling to help students learn as well as to help them assume responsibility for their own learning. Teachers who use higher order thinking skills promote greater reading growth among their students.

1.9.2 The Three Divisions of the Schema

The schema is divided into three types: linguistic schema, content schema and the formal schema. Each of these types has significance as it relates to reading comprehension.

1.9.2.1 Linguistic Schema

Linguistic schema refers to readers' prior linguistic knowledge and it includes the knowledge about phonetics, grammar and vocabulary (Wang, 1990). Linguistic schema acts as the backdrop for English reading comprehension. The argument is that, if students have small vocabulary, or in other words are not familiar with English structure, and have not mastered enough grammatical knowledge, they will without doubt encounter obstacles in reading and consequently make effective understanding of the text. Without linguistic schema, therefore, it would difficult for readers to connect the information in the text with previous information. Not only that, it would also be difficult to combine content and formal schema with linguistics schema. Linguistic schema is therefore the premise of English reading comprehension and also the basis of the application of the content and formal schema.

Xue (2019) contends that, if learners are to later understand and process a text, teachers should cultivate in them basic knowledge of the target language, enrich their schema and build for them a concrete foundation. Being the basis of reading comprehension, the linguistic schema demands that teachers pay attention to the expansion of their learners' vocabulary, which is the most basic language material. This is so because the broader the vocabulary the learners have, the easier it would be for them to understand the reading materials. Once the learners' vocabulary base has been established, teachers should then cultivate in their learners the ability to master sentence patterns cultivate in the learners' grammatical knowledge. It is this grammatical knowledge that will in turn help learners to analyse sentence patters and word meanings if they are to comprehend the reading comprehension text and later on answer questions.

1.9.2.2 Content Schema

Carrell (1988) argues that content schema is the background knowledge an essay or the topic it relates to. Content schema contains two aspects. One of these aspects is the

context or what is referred to as social environment related to reading materials, the other one is the background knowledge that readers already have. It must be noted, however, that in a narrow sense, the content schema refers to the cultural background knowledge of the language. Understanding the meaning of language therefore, is largely dependent on the understanding of cultural traditions and customs. As argued by some experts, the cultural background knowledge is the external world of knowledge that the reader ought to have to understand a specific discourse.

When applied to reading comprehension, the content schema contends that knowing the meaning of each word and each sentence does not amount to understanding the gist of a text since language and culture depend on each other and have a way of influencing each other. If peradventure the topic being read is alien to the readers and readers lack relevant background knowledge of the text, they are likely to face difficulties in reading comprehension. Teachers, therefore, should endeavour to guide their learners to pay more attention to the domestic and foreign affairs and to read articles in the target. Not only that, but teachers can also provide their learners with opportunities to discuss topics about recent happenings in the world to cultivate their interest in reading. Students, through reading foreign classical literature cannot only understand the world history and culture, but would also increase the cultural deposits (Xue, 2019).

1.9.2.3 Formal Schema

Sharp (2002) suggests that formal schemata are part of the macrostructure of a text and contain the logical organization of the text which the writer has used to represent the intended meaning. Put simply, formal schema refers to the discourse form, the frame and rhetorical structure of the text. For example, newspaper articles, folk tales, poetry and other genre, all have their own structure. Overtly the structure of a text contributes to the understanding of the text. Peregoy and Boyle (2000) also stated that text structure knowledge enhanced comprehension by helping readers to anticipate and predict the direction of a plot or argument, thereby facilitating attention to the larger meaning of the text. Xue (2019) adds that teachers can introduce articles of all different kinds of genres in order for students to have a clear understanding of the article.

1.9.3 Schema and Inference

Inference in language understanding not only connects different components in reading, but also conforms reading contents to the reader's prior knowledge. There are two main relationships between schema and inference – schema selects inference and inference speeds comprehension. The selection of schema in reading is a process of inference. This means that by inference of a small amount of prior knowledge, the schema will be activated. The reader's experience is what influences which schemata are to be chosen. It follows therefore that when reading begins, every reader finds some prompts from what is being read to infer suitable schema.

Now, depending on whether the reader can easily recognise the author's point of view or not, they can immediately judge the value of the author or not. The point is that the whole process of reading is full of comparison between the old and new information and full of top-down inference (Xie, 2005). Consequently, the reading speed is dependent on the reader's ability to infer smoothly based on their prior knowledge.

1.9.4 Schema and reading comprehension

The schema theory's significance to reading comprehension rests in how the reader makes use of their schemata. Literature suggests that investigators on the schemata agree that some mechanism activates only those schemata most relevant to the reader's task (University, 2009). This approach to reading comprehension demands that a teacher should be the one to construct those schemata most relevant to the reader's task. Thus, in reading comprehension, proper schemata are activated to activate the search for information in memory and rebuild representation of memory (Anderson and Pearson, 1978).

The main functions of schemata in reading comprehension are in editing and planning for retrieval. Involved in editing are such activities as to select, abbreviate, abstract, arrange, organise and polish reading materials. While schema selection, abbreviation and abstracting are the first stage editing, schema arrangement, organisation and polishing are the second stage editing. In the first stage of editing, what is accommodated is information related to schema and filtering the irrelevant. However, it must be noted that the accommodated contents are not the duplicate of the original but the abstraction of its basic meanings (Bartlett, 1932).

1.10 Limitation

The study was conducted in one district. Therefore, findings may not be generalised. Limitations of any particular study concern themselves with potential weaknesses that may arise as a result of the researcher's control and are often associated with the research design selected, funding constraints or other factors (Theofanidis and Fountouki, 2019). A restriction is therefore an imposed restriction essentially stemming from the researcher's control.

1.11 Operational definitions

Reading: an activity in which readers respond to and make sense of a text being read connected to their prior knowledge

Reading Comprehension: an intentional, active, interactive process that occurs before, during and after a person reads a particular piece of writing.

Reading Strategies: "the mental operations involved when readers approach a text effectively to make sense of what they read... Good readers apply more strategies more frequently ...and more effectively than poor readers." (Pani 2004) also broad term used to describe the planned and explicit actions that help readers translate print to meaning.

Pedagogical knowledge: the specialised knowledge of teachers for creating effective teaching and learning environments for all students.

Challenges: Something that needs a lot of skill, energy and determination to deal with or achieve.

Instructional Strategies: instructional materials and procedures that enable learners to achieve the learning outcomes.

Preparedness: action that involve a combination of planning, resources, training, exercising and organising to build, sustain and improve operational capabilities.

Pre-reading Activities: activities done as a prerequisite to reading meant to prepare learners' minds for the reading activity. They include such activities as picture discussion.

Background knowledge: all of the world knowledge that the reader brings to the task of reading.

1.12 Summary

This chapter has presented the background of the study. It has looked at statement of the problem, purpose of the study, specific objectives, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation and limitations and operational definitions. The next chapter presents literature review.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Overview

The previous chapter dealt with the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, specific objectives, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation and limitations and operational definitions. This chapter reviews literature by other scholars in relation to the current study. Literature is discussed in accordance with the objectives of the study.

2.1 The Concept of Reading

Urquhart and Weirt in William Grabe (2009) stated that Reading is the process of receiving interpreting information in language from via the medium of print. According to Johnson (2008), Reading is practice of using text to create meaning. Reading is of various types, which include: intensive, extensive, reading aloud, and silent reading. Reading is a purposeful activity and plays an important role in civic life.

2.2 Teachers' knowledge of Reading Comprehension

Understanding reading comprehension processes is fundamental for teachers to effectively conduct teaching and assessment of reading in schools. Alenizi conducted a study in 2019 that assessed the pre-university teachers' perception about reading comprehension in English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. The study mainly aimed at exploring issues related to teaching reading, both from teachers as well as learners' perspectives in order to adopt the best teaching strategies to achieve desired outcomes. A descriptive approach was used. Responses of the study showed that teachers' poor awareness of teaching strategies cause poor learners. Responses also reveal that teachers do not take into account learners' difficulties that cause learners' helplessness in getting desired outcomes.

Another study on teachers' knowledge on the teaching of reading comprehension was conducted by Ndileleleni in 2014, in South Africa. Ndileleleni' study is predominantly qualitative which used a case study from three schools. The study focused on the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. The

purpose and focus of the study sought to examine what teachers understood as reading comprehension and its importance, and which strategies teachers use to teach reading comprehension. Since the study focused on reading comprehension, the research sought to determine the extent to which teachers understood reading comprehension as a concept. They were therefore asked to indicate how they understood reading comprehension. There was a general feeling among the participants that reading comprehension entailed reading with understanding.

Ndileleni (2014) argues that during the teachers' individual interviews and focus group interviews, the participants expressed a common understanding of the concept reading comprehension, but findings as seen in the classroom the participants did not clearly apply their knowledge of reading comprehension and its importance in the lives of the learners. Reading comprehension was not taught in their classrooms in line with what they claimed during interviews and focus group interviews as their practice. In short, the declared understanding of reading comprehension during the interview was not evident in their teaching.

Yet another study on teachers' knowledge of teaching reading comprehension was done in 2018 by Mohammed and Amponsah on predominant factors that contribute to low reading abilities of pupils at Elsie Lund Basic School in Tamale Metropolis, Ghana. A qualitative case study design was used. Findings show that the predominant factors that contribute to low reading abilities of pupils are several including teacher inadequate knowledge on teaching phonemic awareness skills. The study found that language teachers in the school prepare inadequately when teaching lessons in class and also inadequate knowledge on how to teach phonemic awareness. Mohammed and Amponsah's study was carried out among teachers teaching in Basic school as opposed to the current study that was carried out among teachers teaching literacy among Grade four teachers.

2.3 Preparedness of teachers in teaching Reading Comprehension

Teacher preparedness in teaching reading comprehension is crucial if they are to achieve the aim of reading comprehension. Research shows between what is known about teaching and how teachers are prepared to teach. Durance (2017) reports that in 2010, for example, researchers with the institute of Educational Sciences surveyed more

than 2,200 pre-service about how much their preparation programmes focused on the essential components of reading instruction. Only 25% of the students said their programmes strong focus on reading instruction in their course work. The National Council on Teacher Quality shows additional evidence that pre-service training for reading instruction is not adequate in many teacher preparation programmes. Findings in a qualitative study conducted in 2019 in Australia on Initial Teacher Education shows inadequate preparation of teachers to handle struggling literacy learners in secondary schooling. Muyangana did a study in 2012 on strategies employed by teachers in teaching reading comprehension in Lusaka district. Using a qualitative method, Muyangana's study reveals that reading comprehension was not taught the way it is supposed to. It was instead tested in most cases and in times it was taught, it was characterised by poor lesson presentations. Other findings show that there were inadequate reading materials and poor teaching techniques. Muyangana's study like the others so reviewed does not or did not investigate teacher preparedness in the teaching of literacy.

Reading forms the basis for all the subjects, and it is expected that all children succeed in it. This expectation has not become a realisation for many children as majority of them are unable to read with comprehension (UNESCO, 2011). The success of language in every child is largely influenced by his or her reading practiced. It is therefore the responsibility of the teacher to develop reading habits in his or her learners to help them enhance target language efficiency (Neyman, 2002). Teacher preparation in the use of evidence-based instruction strategies for reading – including learning strategies, classroom organization and behaviour management, is very crucial for teaching reading and writing (Holdheide & Reschly, 2008). Teacher skilled in scientifically based instruction and class organization and behaviour management have competencies to establish classrooms conducive to learning and improved results in reading (Holdheide & Reschly, 2008).

Alenizi did a study in Saudi Arabia in 2019. The study aimed at exploring issues related to teaching reading. A descriptive approach was used on a sample of instructors from various non-native English-speaking nationalists and Saudi learners. The study sought to answer several questions, but for the sake of the present study, the question related was on *how much teachers were aware of teaching reading strategies to be followed in their pedagogies*. In their responses, the participants, both male and female teachers

stated that they found teaching reading was exciting and was important factor in language learning. Though they responded in favour of reading as an important skill, they were found to be not well prepared and or lacked the desired skills for teaching reading comprehension. This was clear from the class observations which were of two fold – the one in which they were informed they would be observed and the other in which they were not informed. In both instances they were found less aware of the skills for teaching reading comprehension. Their unpreparedness was further evident in their lack of awareness of the components or strategies related to teaching reading comprehension when asked to state. Alenizi's study was carried out in Saudi Arabia while the current study was carried out in Chongwe district, Zambia.

Another study on teacher preparedness was conducted by Meeks & Kemp (2017) who studied on *how well prepared were Australian Pre-service Teachers to Teach Early Reading Skills*. A survey was done regarding pre-service teachers' perceptions of preparedness and ability to teach early reading and spelling skills, as well as their knowledge of components of early reading, such as phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge and early spelling patterns. Although the pre-service teachers generally rated themselves as prepared to teach early reading, most of them demonstrated minimal to very poor knowledge of the components of early reading, indicating a substantial discrepancy between the general confidence of pre-service teachers to teach, and their limited content knowledge of beginning reading skills. While Meek and Kemp's study concentrated on pre-service teachers, the current study on the hand was done on teachers already in service.

Further, Accardo (2015) did a study on teacher preparedness, particularly on effective practices and teacher self-efficacy in teaching reading comprehension to learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The study proposed to investigate teacher preparedness to use effective practices to teach reading comprehension to learners with autism and teacher job-related factors of experience, administrator support, learner verbal language and instructional setting, as predictors of (1) teacher perceived self-efficacy in teaching comprehension to learners with autism, and (2) teacher perceived outcome expectancy regarding their professional ability to improve the comprehension of learners with autism. The findings, like in other studies done earlier, the majority of teachers did not strongly agree that they were prepared to use the identified effective practices to teach reading comprehension to students with autism (Accardo, 2015). Accardo's 2015 study

dealt with teachers who were to teach reading comprehension to learners with autism, teachers were still not adequately prepared. This study aimed to ascertain primary teachers of Chongwe district's preparedness to teach reading comprehension to Grade four learners, learners without autism spectrum disorder.

Accardo and Finnegan did another study in the states in 2017 whose primary goal was to glean insight from teachers into their perceptions and experiences surrounding teaching reading comprehension to learners with autism through an exploration of teacher preparedness to use the effective instructional practices emerging from the extant of research. Survey methodology was used to gather both descriptive and quantitative data to support understanding of preparedness to use effective use of effective practices to teach reading comprehension by classroom teachers. 112 participants took part in the study from 23 states from both public and private institutions with different years of teaching experience. In the survey, teacher participants reported preparedness to use many effective practices. However, there was a discrepancy between teachers reported effective practices and preparedness to use those practices to teach reading comprehension to learners with autism. Accardo and Finnegan's study suggests that while teachers may feel confident in their ability to use effective practices in the classroom, they are either not actually using them in the classroom, or they do not, as a collective group perceive the investigated instructional practices for learners with autism.

2.4 Challenges of Implementing Reading Comprehension Strategies

Literature has shown that teachers face various challenges in implementing reading strategies in their teaching of reading. A qualitative study by Gopie done in (2017) shows those educators faced challenges in teaching reading skills. The study was aimed at exploring the phenomenon of the challenges educators experienced in teaching reading in foundation phase in Clare Estate Durban. The study further showed that the challenges educators experience in teaching reading skills to learners was language barrier, large class size and lack of parental involvement. O'Connor & Geiger (2009) argue that, in spite of about 76% of teachers trying to collaborate with parents of learners, focusing groups showed that few of them responded. One of the major challenges according to Bandura (1997) is lack of self-efficacy, which refers to

individuals' judgements and perceptions about whether they are able to do well and accomplish a task. Agreeing with Bandura, (Shunk & Pajares, 2000) adds that self-efficacy refers to individuals' judgement or self-evaluation about their ability to do well on reading activities such as reading a book, or reading a passage. Versely (2000) argues that reading self-efficacy has been found to correlate positively with different measures of reading comprehension, breadth of reading and amount of reading outside of school.

Accardo (2015) did another study on self-efficacy. The whole study was on effective practices and teacher self-efficacy in teaching reading comprehension to learners with autism spectrum disorder. The purpose of the study was to address the scarcity of research that connects the learning needs of students with autism spectrum disorder, existing effective practices, teacher training and teacher perceptions of their own ability, through a focus on teacher perceived self-efficacy, teacher outcome expectancy, and teacher preparedness to use effective practices emerging from the extant of research. A qualitative survey methodology and hierarchical regression analysis were used in this study to investigate teacher preparedness to use effective practices, along with the job-related factors of experience, administrator support, learner verbal language and instructional setting, as predictors of first, teacher perceived self-efficacy and secondly, teacher perceived outcome expectancy in teaching reading comprehension to learners with autism spectrum disorder. Findings of this study revealed a discrepancy between teacher reported effective practices to teach comprehension to learners with autism spectrum disorder and the practices identified as effective from the research, indicating a potential research to practice gap. The study showed that teachers had a challenge of self-efficacy in teaching reading comprehension to learners with autism spectrum disorder. However, the current study was aimed identifying the challenges faced by teachers when teaching reading comprehension to ordinary learners (learners without autism spectrum disorder).

Yusuf (2015) carried out a study in Nigeria on multiple challenges in teaching reading comprehension in large multilingual classrooms at the basic education level. The study highlights some of the problems teachers face in teaching reading comprehension in large multilingual classrooms. The purpose of the study was to assess how reading comprehension is taught in large multilingual classes at Basic Education level and to identify the problems and challenges faced by teachers in teaching reading

comprehension in large multilingual classrooms. Observations were done in classes whose population ranged from 70 and above. Findings show that most teaching just read passages aloud to learners and sometimes ask learners to read silently on their own and then answer questions that follow.

Furthermore, teachers observed in their various classrooms did not group learners according to their reading abilities. Most teachers revealed that they faced difficulties to group learners according to their reading abilities because teachers themselves were not adequately informed on certain criteria to be used in grouping students according to their reading abilities. The other challenge teacher said they faced was language problem. Teachers revealed that they could not teach reading comprehension in English as they taught in Nigerian languages.

In the same study, Yusuf further dealt with one other major problem associated with reading inefficiency. Findings showed that reading inefficiency was associated with home background. Some learners came from homes whose parents were illiterate while others from homes whose parents were literate. Findings showed that children from homes of literate parents had access to reading facilities and were encouraged by their parents to read hence their improved reading skills. On the other hand, learners from homes whose parents were illiterate had little or no access to reading facilities because parents did not have means to help in this regard. Their reading skills were poor hence presenting challenges to teachers when teaching reading comprehension. This study used class observations only while the current study used both observations and focus group discussions.

Yuli and Susanto (2013) carried out a study in Semarang of Indonesia on the analysis of teaching reading comprehension in eighth grade. The study aimed at establishing the problems faced by teachers and students in reading comprehension. A qualitative research design was used to conduct the study. Observation sheets and interviews were used. Findings show that teachers did not make efforts in order to implement the appropriate steps in the method when teaching because they probably were not aware of the appropriate steps to be applied in the pedagogy. Findings further showed that because of using conventional methods such as lecture methods, learners could sleep in the process and dislike English. The study concentrated on Grade eight teachers and was aimed at analysing the problems faced by teachers and students in reading

comprehension. This study concerned itself with teacher preparedness in the teaching of reading comprehension and concentrated on Grade four teachers.

Gladiora et al (2020) did a study on teachers' strategies in teaching reading at junior high schools in Sirimau of Indonesia. The purpose of the study was to explain the understanding of teachers about the method of teaching comprehension, the techniques that are used, the challenges encountered by the teacher and the approaches that have been found to solve these problems. A mixed-method research methodology was used to conduct the study. The findings of the study showed that there were commonly used strategies by teachers in teaching reading comprehension ranging from vocabulary teaching, teaching aloud, skimming, scanning and summarising. The findings of the study further showed problems or challenges faced by junior high teachers in teaching reading comprehension. These challenges were of two fold. Some of them came from the learners while others were from the teachers. The findings showed that there was lack of vocabulary and low level of interest to study English among students. For the challenges that came from the teachers, teachers themselves stated that some teachers used strategies that were not in accordance with the students' level. These strategies demotivated learners and affected their concentration. The other challenge was on unsuitable material used and topics not suited to the level of students. This study used a mixed-method approach and was done among junior high school teachers while the current study concentrated on Grade four teachers and used only qualitative approach.

Lack of support by Department of Education is another challenge that teachers face in implementing reading strategies. Evidence shows that teachers need a greater availability of support teams (Department of Education, 2001) for learners who need them. The study conducted by Mulkeen and Chen (2008) in Tanzania revealed that the huge challenge of teachers faced in the teaching reading in rural schools is the issue of support.

Kepe (2017); Maswanganye (2010), argue that the main challenge with the teaching of reading in South African schools is the lack of teaching skills and approaches that can make learners read. Lenyai (2011), comments that the key to achieving the goal for English literacy lies in teachers' expertise in teaching reading. One of the international studies conducted on the teaching of reading exposed reading crisis in USA as well.

Teaching reading requires considerable knowledge and skill acquired over several years through focused study and supervised practice (Moaths, 1999).

Literature also shows lack of time as another challenge making teachers fail to implement reading comprehension strategies (Schwartz, 2008). In China, the unavailability of resources which include teaching material poses challenges. In Nigeria, Oyetunde and Unoh (1986) list impediments, which include lack of materials and poor preparation of teachers to positive reading and attitude.

Maala and Mkandawire did a study in 2022 in which they investigated factors contributing to low performance in English reading comprehension in selected secondary school in Lusaka district. The study employed a descriptive research design under qualitative mode of inquiry. Findings of the study revealed that low performance in reading comprehension was due to a multiple of factors such which included limited vocabulary by learners, lack of learning and teaching materials, inappropriate teaching methods by the teachers and lack of knowledge by some teachers on the procedures for teaching reading comprehension. This study however, concentrated on teachers in secondary schools in Lusaka and was aimed at investigating factors contributing to low performance in English reading comprehension. The current study explored teachers' preparedness to teach reading comprehension in English language among Grade four learners in Chongwe.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has reviewed related literature according to the objectives of the study. The chapter has revealed literature on teachers' of teaching reading comprehension, teacher's preparedness to teach reading comprehension and the challenges that teachers face when teaching reading comprehension. The subsequent chapter deals with the methodology of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

The previous chapter has dealt with review of related literature to this study. This chapter presents the methodology and the research design of the study. Discussed in the chapter are the research design, target population, study sample and sampling techniques, data collection instruments, data collection procedure, methods of data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Paradigm

Different kinds of paradigms are in research. Selection of a paradigm much depends on the topic, or indeed the interest of the researcher (Patton, 1990). This research was situated within the constructivist paradigm. Constructivism is a philosophical paradigm that emphasizes how an individual actively constructs their own notions of reality through their cognition resulting in the existence of multiple realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt, 1997). Belief in this paradigm emphasizes that participants construct, describe and narrate their own lived experiences. Supporting the argument, Creswell (2009) holds that constructivist researchers focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants. The researcher also believes that knowledge is co-constructed between researcher and participant (Tashakkori et al., 2021). Constructivism is often associated with qualitative research (Tashakkori et al., 2021). The researcher adopted constructivism as a research paradigm because the research design is purely qualitative. Creswell, (2003) contends that “qualitative research is fundamentally of the data, this means the researcher makes an interpretation on the data. This includes developing a description of individual or setting, analyzing data for themes or categories, and finally making an interpretation or drawing conclusion about its meaning personally and theoretically.

3.2 Research Design

Research design is defined as the clearly defined structures within which the study is implemented (Burns & Grove, 2001). Is the procedure for collecting, analysing, interpreting and reporting data in research (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Grey (2014) argues that a research design sets the procedure on the required data, the methods to be applied to collect and analyse this data and how all of this would respond to the research question. Creswell (2009) contends that a research design is a plan and the procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis. There are three possible forms of research designs as argued by Robson (2002); exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. For this particular study, the researcher used descriptive design in this research because this research focused on a certain phenomenon in the school environments. Descriptive research design is one which involves direct exploration, analysis and description of the phenomena (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). In descriptive studies, phenomenon of interest, in real life situation is documented (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The phenomenon in this case was the teaching of reading comprehension. The researcher used a number of qualitative data collection approaches (e.g., in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and observation) to provide greater understanding of the phenomenon under study.

3.3 Target Population

The target population included all Primary School teachers teaching literacy and language in Grade four in Chongwe district.

3.4 Study Sample and Sampling Techniques

According to Creswell (2014), a sample in qualitative research design refers to a small group of people purposively selected to help understand the problem and research questions. This particular study used homogeneous purposive sampling technique in selecting the participants. A homogeneous purposive sample is one that is selected for having a shared characteristic or set of characteristics. Thus the researcher targeted the total sample of twenty-one (21) participants comprising one, (1) senior education standard officer and twenty (20) teachers of literacy and language, teaching literacy from Grade one to Grade four drawn from four (4) schools, five (5) from each school. Purposive sampling according to Cohen et al., (2011) is a feature of qualitative research

design where the researcher intentionally selects participants and research sites. Brink (1996) proposes that purposive sampling requires selecting participants who are knowledgeable about the issue in question because of their absolute involvement in and experience of the situation. Supporting the argument, Litchman (2010) suggests that purposive sampling endeavours to select cases which provide rich information in line with the purpose of the study.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

To achieve the stated objectives, the researcher used lesson observations and focus group guides to collect data.

3.5.2 Lesson Observation Guide

The lesson observation is a tool designed to capture teacher's instruction during a classroom observation visit. According to Crossman (2019), and Simpson and Tuson (2005), observation takes note of behaviours, actions, situations, artefacts, and habits of people. Cohen et al. (2011) noted that it allows the researcher the opportunity to collect 'live' information from naturally occurring social contexts. The method of observation was chosen as one of the data collection methods because it allowed the researcher to observe teachers teaching in classrooms.

3.5.3 Focus Group Discussions Guide

Focus groups are described as group discussions that are used to identify and explore perceptions and thoughts of a specified group of individuals with regard to a specific topic and area of interest. The environment in which this discussion takes place is formalised so as to be permissive and non-threatening. The data collected in this process is a result of the communication and interaction between the participants. The researcher, apart from taking notes, he also did a recording of what the participants said in the discussion.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection is an outline of steps taken to generate data from respondents (Saldana and Omasta, 2018). Data collection procedures draw a line for the researcher to see where data collection activity begins from and where it ends. The researcher first sought

letter of approval from the Ethical Clearance Committee- University of Zambia and permission from the Assistant Dean School of Education. Later, permission was sought from the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) of Chongwe District to undertake research in the selected schools in the district. Data was then collected from the four selected schools. The researcher first sought permission from respective head teachers and made appointments in advance for subsequent face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions and lesson observations. During lesson observations, interviews and focus group discussions the researcher recorded and took notes.

3.7 Methods of Data Analysis

Maree (2007) argues that data analysis is a summary of what the researcher hears and sees in terms of words, phrases, themes or patterns that emerge from the data. The methods of data analysis vary according to the method of data collection. In focus group discussion and in-depth interviews, verbatim transcripts of the discussion are analysed and explored using various analytical methods. In this particular study, data collected were thematically analysed from the emerging themes arising from the respondents' recordings, interviews and focus group discussions. Data were first coded by reading and rereading and placing together those with common coding.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Issues of ethical confidentiality and privacy of personal rights of participants particularly those who were interviewed and those whose lessons were observed was protected. Consent was sought and the objective of the study explained verbally and participants were assured that the information would be kept confidential. The researcher ensured that he met all ethical principles set by the University Ethical Committee.

3.9 Summary

This chapter has dealt with the methodology adopted by the study. The study was informed by the social constructivism research paradigm. The chapter has discussed the research paradigm, research design, population, sample population and sampling procedure, data collection instruments, data collection procedure, methods of data

analysis and ethical considerations. The next chapter presents the findings or raw data without discussing them.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Overview

The previous chapter has described the methodology adopted by the study in data collection. This chapter focuses on the presentation of the research findings. The data presented here were collected qualitatively from the four selected primary schools in Chongwe district. The instruments used by the researcher included focus group discussion guides, interview guides and lesson observation checklists. The findings are presented based on the research questions of the study. The following were the questions:

- i. What is the teachers' knowledge of Reading Comprehension?
- ii. How prepared are Primary School teachers of Chongwe district to teach Reading Comprehension?
- iii. What challenges do Primary School teachers of Chongwe district experience when teaching Reading Comprehension?

The responses to these research questions from the teachers are presented in the subsequent sections. The research questions are presented as the main themes and under each one of them, sub themes arise from some questions falling under each main question. They too are presented.

4.1 What is the teachers' knowledge of Reading Comprehension?

This section presents the findings of the study on the first research question. The first research question aimed at establishing teachers' knowledge of Reading Comprehension. The data were collected from focus group discussions and consolidated by lesson observations. Further, one senior education standard officer (SESO) for languages was also interviewed. The data have been presented thematically in table one.

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
<p>Theme 1</p> <p>Reading and understanding of text or story</p>	<p>Sub-theme 1.1 Lesson where you give learners a story, they read ask for difficult words then ask questions from the story.</p> <p>Sub-theme 1.2 Understanding the story</p> <p>Sub-theme 1.3 Where you give pupils a story afterwards you give them questions to answer.</p> <p>Sub-theme 1.4 Reading to understand and also for fluency.</p>

Table 1 showing theme and sub-themes under objective one – teachers’ knowledge of reading comprehension

4.1.1 Reading and understanding of text

The following thus were the responses from participants presented in verbatim and paraphrase. So, when teachers were asked on their knowledge on Reading Comprehension, the following responses were provided.

“Lesson where you give learners a story, they read ask from difficult words then ask questions from the story.” (Teacher A from School W).

“It involves reading and understanding – learners have to understand what they are reading.” (Teacher B from School W).

“It deals with reading to understand a text and questions are asked later on.” (Teacher A from School X).

“Reading comprehension deals with reading and understanding the passage. (Teacher B from School Y).

“You give a passage and learners read in order to understand and answer questions.” (Teacher D from School Z).

4.2 How prepared are Primary School teachers of Chongwe district to teach Reading Comprehension?

This was the second question of the study. The question was aimed to ascertain how prepared the teachers were to teach Reading Comprehension. Teacher preparedness was to be established at two levels. Firstly, the question was about preparedness of the teacher in respect with competence in the teaching of reading comprehension. That is, whether teachers had the knowledge from training on how reading comprehension is to be taught. That is, whether or not they remember being taught teaching reading comprehension strategies while in college, or university; whether teachers were aware of the strategies to be used in the teaching of reading comprehension and text selection. Secondly, preparedness of the teacher also involved actual teaching, from selection of text, whether teachers had a way of linking the reading comprehension texts to learners' background knowledge, whether teachers conducted pre-reading activities, application of strategies and following the procedures in teaching reading comprehension; before, during and after reading phases. When asked how adequately prepared the teachers were to handle reading comprehension, the following were the themes and sub-themes drawn from their responses. Table 2 shows the themes and sub-themes on teacher preparedness in respect to competence and actual teaching.

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Theme 1 Through selection of the passage	Sub-theme 1.1 Reading through prior to teaching and identifying difficult words Sub-theme 1.3 prepare questions and answers from the passage for learners' activity
Theme 2 Awareness of strategies in teaching reading comprehension	Sub-theme 2.1 Unaware of the strategies Sub-theme 2.3 Skimming, Scanning and discussion
Theme 3 Procedure of teaching reading comprehension	Sub-theme 3.1 teaching the five competences; phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency and reading comprehension Sub-theme 3.2 Using the syllabic chat

	Sub-theme 3.3 reading the passage and answering questions
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Table 2 showing Themes and Sub-themes under objective 2 – teacher preparedness to teach reading comprehension

4.2.1 Selection of the passage

From the verbal accounts of the participants, preparedness to teach reading comprehension begun by selection of a passage.

4.2.1.1 Reading through the passage

The participants argued that after they had selected the passage, they would then read through before the actual time to teach. Their verbatim were as reflected.

“The teacher chooses an interesting story - looks at the story, picks out words he thinks are difficult to learners, ask learners to read them then read the story.” (Teacher A from School W)

“By getting a good story and go through before teaching - yes, by identifying difficult words, discussing meaning of these words, learners read the story. This would make it easy for learners to understand what they read. We also discuss the pictures and ask learners what they think about the story from the pictures.”(Teacher D from School W)

4.2.1.3 Preparing questions and answers

They further said that, after reading the passage, they identify difficult words and find meanings to them then finally prepare questions and answers from the passage for learners’ activity.

“I prepare myself by reading through the story and identify difficult words. I also prepare questions to ask my pupils.”(Teacher D from School X).

“I find a story and I read the passage before class. The stories we read sometimes are strange to our learners.” (Teacher B from School Y).

“I prepare by reading the passage before teaching. Then prepare questions for the learners.” (Teacher D from School Y).

“I adequately prepare. First it’s to select a passage and read before teaching and also finding answers to the questions.” (Teacher B from School Z).

“We always prepare the passage and look for difficult words before giving the pupils to read.” (Teacher C from School Z).

4.2.2 Awareness of strategies in teaching reading comprehension

Further questions on teacher preparedness were on whether the teachers were aware of the strategies in the teaching of comprehension, whether or not they remember being taught these strategies in college or university and whether they used these strategies in the teaching of reading comprehension. The following is an account of the verbatim from the participants on awareness of reading comprehension strategies.

“I am not aware of the strategies – I don’t even know if I use them. I can’t remember learning them at school.” (Teacher A from School W).

“I am not aware. Learning them at school; I can’t remember.” (Teacher D from School W).

“Yes, for example, scanning and skimming, prediction and inferencing. Learners are asked some questions even before the text is read to see if they are familiar with text.” (Teacher A from School X).

“Yes, scanning and skimming.” (Teacher B from School X).

“Yes, discussion.” (Teacher D from School X).

“Maybe I have forgotten them.”(Teacher A of School Y).

“I am not aware. I don’t remember learning them. Maybe I have forgotten.”(Teacher B of School Z).

4.2.3 Procedure of teaching reading comprehension

On whether teachers followed the procedure of teaching reading comprehension; the following were the responses that gave rise to the sub-themes as reflected in the following verbatim from the participants.

4.2.3.1 Teaching the five competences

On the teaching of the five competences, very few seemed to be aware even of the five competences. The following were their verbal accounts:

“We are adequately prepared – each literacy lesson has a component of comprehension. Every literacy lesson has five competences; phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension – every day you prepare for all these competences in one lesson.”(Teacher C from School X).

“I first teach sounds then vocabulary and explain the meaning of some words to learners then give them the story to read.”(Teacher D from School Z).

4.2.3.2 Using the syllabic chat

“We use the syllabic chat for learners to read phonics – I read the story before I go to class to see if there are difficult words in the passage.”(Teacher B from School X).

4.2.3.3 Reading the Passage and answering questions

“I read through the passage and break down the passage and look for adequate materials to use.” (Teacher A from School Y).

“I just know that it’s to find a passage, read as a teacher before teaching to check for new words. New words are written on the board and explained to pupils before they the passage. Sometimes questions are there after the passage, but sometimes you make the questions yourself.” (Teacher D of School Y).

The three phases in the teaching of teaching reading comprehension were generally followed -the pre-reading, during and after reading. Practically, there was evidence of picture discussion in the pre-reading phase and that was all. There was no activation of background knowledge or predicting. During reading, no strategies were applied. It was just reading aloud in all the three lessons observed. Teacher read first and asked learners to read aloud, one after another while others followed. After reading, teachers asked some oral questions and finally teacher gave a written exercise to the learners.

4.3 What challenges do Primary School teachers of Chongwe district experience when teaching Reading Comprehension?

This section presents the findings of the study on the third question which aimed at establishing challenges primary school teachers of Chongwe district experienced when teaching reading comprehension. To this question, respondents provided the following responses. These responses have been presented as collected from the schools data were collected from.

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Theme 1 Lack of parental involvement	Sub-theme 1.1 Parents do not help learners to read Sub-theme 1.2 Some parents can’t read Sub-theme 1.3 Home environment Sub-theme 1.4 We do not work hand-in-hand with parents. Sub-theme 1.5 Occupation of parents
Theme 2 Absenteeism	Sub-theme 2.1 distance between home Sub-theme 2.2 Learners perform poorly in reading comprehension

	Sub-theme 2.3 Lack of parental involvement
Theme 3 Lack of adequate teaching and learning material	Sub-theme 3.1 Sharing of books Sub-theme 3.2 Passages written on the board Sub-theme 3.3 Time consuming
Theme 4 Overcrowded classroom	Sub-theme 4.1 Overenrollment Sub-theme 4.2 Free education policy Sub-theme 4.3 shortage of reading material Sub-theme 4.4 sharing of books when reading Sub-theme 4.5 Difficult to achieve fluency Sub-theme 4.5 challenge to attend to individual learners
Theme 5 Late coming	Sub-theme 4.1 Distance between school and home Sub-theme 4.2 Perpetual missing of literacy lessons
Theme 6 Failure to breakthrough	Sub-theme 6.1 Challenge to attain literacy skills Sub-theme 6.2 Limited vocabulary Sub-theme 6.3 language barrier Sub-theme 6.4 Use of decodable stories

Table 3 showing themes and sub-themes on challenges teachers face when teaching reading comprehension

4.3.1 Lack of parental involvement

From the verbal accounts of the participants, they faced challenges in teaching reading comprehension because parents were not of help. Their arguments were as follows:

“We do not work hand-in-hand with parents because parents do not help learners to read.”(Teacher A from School W).

“The environments where learners are coming from – some parents do not know how to read – literacy problems in homes.” (Teacher C from School Z).

“Parents do not help in homework because they can’t read. Another challenge is absenteeism.” (Teacher A of School X).

“Parents do not help in homework because they can’t read.” (Teacher A from School X).

“Most parents are too busy. Some of them are business men. Others sell at the market, so they don’t have time to check their children’s books because they come tired from work.” (Teacher B of Y).

4.3.2 Absenteeism

The other challenge according to the participants was absenteeism. Participants held that absenteeism entailed learners missing on certain reading skills. Teachers also said that absenteeism was attributed to lack of parental involvement. The following are some of their arguments:

“Absenteeism is one challenge and in some cases classes are combined, making the class overcrowded.” (Teacher C from School W).

“... Another challenge is absenteeism.” (Teacher A from School X).

“Because of absenteeism, learners fail to achieve literacy skills ad fail to read because they miss out when they are absent.” (Teacher A from School Y).

4.3.3 Lack of adequate teaching and learning material

Lack of adequate teaching and learning material is yet another challenge that teachers faced when teaching reading comprehension. Inadequate reading resources meant that learners had to share books when reading. It also meant that it was difficult to teach reading comprehension. Participants also argued that they were forced to write stories on the board which led to loss of time in the process.

“The other challenge is not having adequate teaching and learning materials, such as books and flip charts. Difficult to teach comprehension the way it is supposed to be taught.”
(Teacher D from School W).

*“There is not enough reading materials – teacher is the only one with the story and reads to the learners. In most cases reading comprehension text is written on the board. Time is lost in the process of writing.”***(Teacher A from School Z).**

*“It takes time to finish writing the text on the board and we get tired. This affects other subjects to be taught – we need books to solve this problem.”***(Teacher B from School Z).**

*“There are few books against huge numbers of learners – teachers can’t teach one-to-one-teacher-pupil ratio. Mostly the passage is written on the board or on a chat.”***(Teacher D from School Z).**

Lack of adequate reading material or indeed lack of exposure of children to books has been seen to contribute significantly to low literacy levels among learners. The findings also suggest that failure to understand reading comprehension texts by learners can be attributed to their lack of exposure to literacy materials. The findings of this study are similar with those of Lucas (2011) and Rany (2013) who also note that pupils may have low reading ability due to school heads not availing the necessary course books for practice reading, lack of appropriate curriculum to help improve pupils reading abilities and classroom environments that are crowded and noisy for an appropriate teaching pedagogy to be fulfilled.

4.3.4 Overcrowded classrooms

Teachers also argued that overcrowded classrooms was another challenge that they faced when teaching reading comprehension. This is as evidenced in their verbal accounts.

“Over enrollment and books are not enough, fewer desks in the classroom, inadequate time due to fewer classroom

spaces - learners come in sessions but these sessions are short. It is difficult to follow the time table – reading comprehension is not taught every day. Mostly we just ask learners to read and we ask questions due to time.” (Teacher B from School Y).

“Classes are now full because of the free education by the new dawn government. Some pupils who had stopped school have come back. The numbers of learners we have do not match with the few books we have in our school. It is difficult to teach comprehension.” (Teacher C of School X).

“These days, I find it difficult to attend to individual learners because of time. It is not easy. They are too many.” (Teacher D of School X).

4.3.5 Late coming

Late coming was another challenge that teachers said they faced when teaching reading comprehension. Participants argued that the long distance between home and school made learners late at school and consequently missed literacy lessons, which in most cases were the first ones on the timetable each day. Participants further argued that learners got to school tired and lost concentration in the process which became another challenge to teachers. Lack of concentration was also caused by poverty. Most learners came to school without having eaten.

“Late coming – some learners miss already taught stuff. Absenteeism – parents send learners to sell at the market - some learners don’t like writing. Poverty – learners don’t concentrate. Distance – learners get tired, so they don’t concentrate. Some learners, due to distance come with their older siblings in the morning, but wait until 15 hours to go to class – they lose concentration. Some learners start school late – they become shy and have low self-esteem. Others, because of age get exposed to vices and lose concentration.” (Teacher C from School Y).

4.3.6 Failure to breakthrough

Some learners fail to breakthrough to English language having had all their lessons in the local familiar language. To learn to read in English is a challenge to some learners. Participants contended that some learners read English words as if they were reading a local language. According to participants this impacted negatively on their understanding of vocabulary, and consequently the comprehension text.

“Most learners are not breaking through – they can’t read fluently, so in teaching comprehension in most cases, we use decodable stories.” (Teacher B from School X).

“Teaching reading comprehension in English is difficult because learners read English words as if they were reading local language – this affects their comprehension. Learners face problems in transitioning from local language to English.” (Teacher C from School X).

“When it comes to teaching comprehension in English language, learners pronounce English words as if they are Cinyanja words.” (Teacher D from School X).

“Teaching learners who cannot read.” (Teacher A from School Y).

4.4 Lesson observations

To consolidate the data collected from focus group discussions, three lessons, one from School X, one from School Y and the other from School Z were observed using a lesson observation checklist.

Teacher A of School X was observed and the following were the observations on the lesson in Reading Comprehension.

Before reading the passage; - Pre-reading activities:

In the pre-reading phase, the teacher did picture discussion, phonics/phonemic awareness and taught vocabulary and provided learner friendly meaning.

During reading

In this phase, the teacher read the first paragraph of the story aloud while learners followed along. She then pointed randomly at different learners to also read aloud. The teacher did not use appropriate methodology such as; monitoring comprehension, asking learners to predict, visualise, or inferencing.

After reading

After reading the teacher asked oral questions to the learners which led to passage discussion. Learners wrote about what they read. Passage selection did not take into account the learners' cultural background.

Teacher D was observed from school Z and the lesson went as follows:

Before reading the passage; - Pre-reading activities:

The teacher chose a passage suitable and relevant to the learners and did picture discussion. However, she did not teach vocabulary or any phonics or phonemic awareness.

During reading:

During reading, the teacher did none of the activities done during the reading process.

After reading:

The teacher summarised the passage through oral questions and asked learner to write an exercise about what they had read.

Teacher D of School Y was observed and the lesson went as follows:

Before reading the passage; - Pre-reading activities:

First of all, the passage chosen was not familiar to the learners. In the pre-reading phase, the teacher did picture discussion with learners and taught vocabulary. She however did not do any phonics or phonemic awareness activities.

During reading:

The teacher asked learners to read aloud one after the other and did none of the activities which are supposed to be done during the reading process.

After reading:

The teacher did some passage discussion and gave learners a written exercise about what they read. The teacher discussed the task given to learners after marking

4.5 Interview with Senior Education Standard Officer - Languages

To further establish teachers' knowledge, preparedness as well as the challenges they experienced in the teaching of reading comprehension, the senior education standard officer in languages was interviewed. The interview was carried out to establish from the senior education standard officer whether during the monitoring exercise teacher exhibited understanding of reading comprehension, whether or not they were prepared to teach reading comprehension and also to establish challenges teachers experience when teaching reading comprehension. The following were the responses from the senior education standard officer.

When asked how often the standard officer monitored the teachers, his response was that they were not regularly monitored because of lack of resources.

“Not frequently because of lack of resources; funding has become a problem these days. We also don't have transport.”
(Senior education standard officer).

On whether teachers exhibited some knowledge of reading comprehension, the senior education standard officer said they did.

“Yes, they do.”(Senior education standard officer).

When asked on the availability of literacy materials in schools, the senior education standard officer said some materials were there in schools but were not enough because of low funding in schools.

“Some materials are there in schools, but they are not enough. Low funding in schools.”(Senior education standard officer).

The standard officer was asked whether when he went for monitoring teachers exhibited knowledge of reading comprehension strategies and used them in teaching reading comprehension. His response was that they did.

“They do.” (Senior education standard officer).

“Yes, they do.”(Senior education standard officer).

The senior education standard officer was also asked whether it was possible for him to name some of these strategies used by the teachers. His response was that there were a number of them.

“There are a number of them.” (Senior education standard officer).

The other question the senior education standard officer was asked was whether from his observation, teachers were adequately prepared to teach reading comprehension. He said teachers’ methodologies were poor, they needed retraining. He later said their initial training was adequate, but their attitude was negative. He said some teachers only entered the teaching service for the sake of a job. He further said some of them were poorly qualified at Grade 12, but enrolled in colleges and became teachers.

“Teaching methodologies are poor, so teachers need to be retrained. The initial training is adequate, but teacher’s attitude negative. Some teachers enter teaching for the sake of a job. Some of them are poorly qualified at Grade 12, but they are enrolled in colleges and they become teachers. In some cases, trainee teachers are half baked because numbers in colleges are so big that individual students are not attended to. Teachers are adequately trained in literacy.”(Senior education standard officer).

The senior standard officer was also asked as to whether teachers followed the three phase activities (before, during and after) in the teaching of reading comprehension. In his response, the senior education standard officer said teachers did not carry out such activities.

Before, during and reading? - they do not carry out these activities. (Senior education standard officer).

The senior education standard officer was asked about the challenges teachers experienced when teaching reading comprehension. He said teachers lacked materials, their methodologies were poor, numbers of learners exceeded the capacities of teachers and parents were not involved in their children's education. The following is the senior education standard officer's verbatim.

“Teachers experience lack of teaching and learning materials – classes are not print rich. Teachers’ preparations to teach reading comprehension are poor because of lack of resources. Teaching methodologies are poor among teachers. The numbers of learners exceed the capacity of teachers – no attending to individual learners. Teachers also say that parents are not involved in their children’s education – some of them come back without doing their homework.”(Senior education standard officer).

4.6 Summary

This chapter has presented the findings thematically and in accordance with the research questions of the study. Presented are the findings collected through focus group discussions and lesson observations. The next chapter discusses the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.0 Overview

The previous chapter has presented the findings as collected through classroom observations and interviews, without any discussion. This chapter has discussed and analysed the findings. The findings have been discussed according to the arising themes from the responses.

5.1 Teachers' knowledge of reading comprehension

Teachers' understanding of reading comprehension is crucial if they are to effectively teach it to the learners and consequently carry out assessments in reading. The teachers were asked to state what they understood by reading comprehension as a concept in focus group discussion.

Data gathered during focus group discussion revealed that participating teachers said they had knowledge of the concept of reading comprehension. What was generally felt among the teachers was that reading comprehension implied reading with understanding. Most of them said it involved reading a text and answering questions afterwards. Focusing on the teachers' responses on their knowledge of reading comprehension, one would conclude that teachers were really teaching the learners based on the understanding as reflected in their responses.

Conversely, the findings from the classroom observations made on the three teachers from schools X, Y and Z revealed that even though the participating teachers said they understood what reading comprehension was, there was no correlation between what they said and what they practically did in the classroom setting. Observations in the classroom showed that reading comprehension was unsystematically taught with little or no attention paid to most of the strategies used in teaching reading comprehension.

For example, teacher A from school X, as shown in the findings only managed a few of the strategies of teaching reading comprehension. There was no use of graphic and semantic organisers, no exposing learners to recognition of story structure, generating questions and summarising. She did not, for example clearly segment the lesson in the three (3) usual parts of "*before reading, during reading and after reading*" and conduct

various activities in each of these distinct parts. Of course, she conducted picture discussion, some phonics and phonemic awareness and taught vocabulary. She then read one paragraph aloud and randomly at different learners to read aloud also. Evidence from the observations shows that appropriate methodology was not followed by the teacher, thus, *monitoring comprehension, asking learners to predict, visualise or inferencing* did not happen at all. From what was observed in the classroom, it is possible to deduce that the teacher did not have knowledge of the strategies used in reading comprehension, hence not applying them. These findings are supported by Lindner (2008) and Njie (2013) who both believe that lack of exposure to reading strategies in class and use of poor teaching methodologies by language teachers lead to poor reading skills. Studies by Maala and Mkandawire (2022) also support the findings of this study on lack of knowledge by some teachers on procedures for teaching reading comprehension as well as their inappropriate methods, thus teaching poorly.

Teacher D, observed from school Z also demonstrated that she did not really understand what reading comprehension was in spite of having said she did during the focus group discussions. In the lesson observed, while the passage selected was suited with learners' cultural background, the teacher did not conduct any pre-reading activities such as picture discussion, did not do phonics, phonemic awareness, or the teaching of vocabulary. She did none of the activities done during the reading process, but asked learners oral questions after reading the passage and they wrote about what they had read the text. She generally did not apply the reading comprehension strategies during her teaching.

From the classroom observations, teacher D of school Y chose an interesting passage, one which was familiar to the learners' cultural context, did picture discussion, taught vocabulary, but did not do any phonics or phonemic awareness. In short, the teacher did not carry out the five competencies found in a literacy lesson such as phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and reading comprehension. These findings suggest lack of knowledge by the teachers of these components. These findings are in line with Mohammed and Amponsah (2018) who argue that language teachers prepare inadequately when teaching lessons in class and also inadequate knowledge on how to teach phonemic awareness skills in class.

No activities were done during reading. Teacher simply asked learners to read aloud, one after the other. This kind of reading did not give room for the learners to predict, infer, visualise, monitoring comprehension because the teacher did not even prompt them to do so. The teacher, however, did passage discussion through questions, asked learners to answer questions in a written task and at end teacher with learners discussed the task given to learners simply for correction purposes.

As earlier alluded to, during the focus group discussion, the participants showed a common understanding of reading comprehension, but they did not evidently apply their understanding of reading comprehension as well as its significance in the lives of the learners. This study is in line with Ndileleni who did a study on Teachers' understanding in South Africa on the teaching of Reading Comprehension. Put simply, teachers' understanding of reading comprehension declared in the interview was not evident in their teaching. Reading comprehension as observed in practice was not taught in line with the teachers confidently stated during the focus interviews. It was difficult for example, to see whether learners were able to evaluate the text read, or to critically explain their opinion about the text. Not only did the learners fail to relate the text to anything experienced before or indeed to their lives. From the researcher's observation, because of failure by learners to relate the texts they read to their lives, they were answering questions more on a literal level, or indeed plainly.

Failure by learners to relate texts read to their real life situation evidently arose from teachers' inability to activate learners' background knowledge in spite of its significance in the creation of meaning from the text. Of the teachers observed, none evidently activated learner's background knowledge before texts were read. Keene & Zimmermann (1997) argue that background knowledge is an important factor for creating meaning and teachers should help learners activate prior knowledge before reading so that information connected with concepts or topics in the text is more easily accessible during reading.

5.2 Teachers Preparedness to teach Reading Comprehension

Teacher preparedness to teach Reading Comprehension was the second objective of the study. It must be pointed out that effective reading instruction is indispensable for all learners. Research has shown that there is a direct relationship between teachers' knowledge and skills about effective literacy instruction and student outcomes

(Darling-Hammond, 2000, McCombes-Tolis & Feinn, 2008; Piasta, Conner, Fishman & Morrison, 2009). Research has also suggested that teachers influence learners' academic growth more than any other single factor (Reutzel et al., 2011; Rowan, Correnti, & Miller, 2002).

The findings on teachers' preparedness show that teachers were generally ill-prepared to handle Reading Comprehension lessons. Preparedness here was to be established at two levels. The first level looked at preparedness in respect with competence in teaching Reading Comprehension, that is, whether teachers had knowledge from training on how to Reading Comprehension is to be taught. In other words, whether teachers remember being taught teaching Reading Comprehension strategies while in college, or university; whether teachers were aware of the strategies to be used in teaching Reading Comprehension and text selection. The second level of teachers' preparedness involved actual teaching; that is, from selection of text and linking it to learners' background knowledge, conducting of pre-reading activities, application of Reading Comprehension strategies and following procedures in the teaching of Reading Comprehension. And, as earlier stated, findings show that teachers were generally ill-prepared. From their responses during the focus group interview, teachers generally seemed to suggest that they were adequately prepared. Most of them demonstrated that they read the text beforehand, identified difficult words and prepared questions.

Findings show that many teachers overestimated the level of their knowledge in teaching Reading Comprehension. In other words, they considered themselves as more knowledgeable, but the practical aspect during lesson observations for those teachers observed did not reflect so. If teachers could rate themselves this high, it only suggests that these teachers who lack knowledge are not likely to recognise it hence very unlikely to look for and attain competencies on the subject matter. These findings are in line with Berkeley et al in the study done on teachers' knowledge of Reading Instruction. From the Lessons observed in the three schools, evidence showed that teachers were actually not adequately prepared right from college or university to teach Reading Comprehension.

Preparedness to teach Reading Comprehension by teachers also involves the selection of the text to be read by learners in the teaching of Reading Comprehension. Text choice is one of the most fundamental issues in the teaching of Reading Comprehension. It is

a process that benefits from professional discussion and requires time and thought. It is a contextual decision that teachers make on a daily basis. Selecting texts for learner learning necessitates teachers to consider the learner as a learner across all the modes. It entails the examination of the learner's competencies and needs. The understanding of learners' competencies and knowledge of what learners need to learn next informs text selection. Questions to ask are; on what grounds are decisions made to arrive at what text is to be selected for teaching Reading Comprehension. Are these texts chosen based on what teachers think is valuable; do these texts speak to the learners; do they challenge them to grow as readers? Teachers should choose texts with high quality, with richness and depth of ideas and information. Texts must be of strong literary value and accurate; well written, and engaging. When selecting a text, teachers need to look for characteristics such as rich content, strong organisation, and variation and richness in word choice and sentence structure (Shanahan, Callison, Carriere, Duke, Pearson, Schatschneider, & Torgesen, 2010). Two out of the three teachers in the lessons observed selected passages not familiar to the learners and which did not relate to them. Lack of preparedness by the teachers led to poor selection of texts. All that teachers thought about or did was simply reading the passage and have learners answering questions without paying attention to effects of texts on the learners and how learners would react to the text so selected.

From the responses of the participants, it did not matter what kind of a text was selected. And, in spite of these seeming confident responses, like on their understanding of Reading Comprehension, what was in the actual lessons for those observed, was something different from what was claimed in the interview. The so claimed preparedness did not practically happen so. Only one of the three observed teachers selected a text suitable and relevant to the learners. The other two did not select their texts with their learners needs in mind. In other words, the texts selected were unfamiliar to the learners. Results of the research showed that learners had more difficulties to answer questions in the two lessons where the texts were not familiar to them than they had in the lesson where the text selected was familiar. In the familiar text, it was easy for the teachers to activate background knowledge, which affects learners' reading comprehension. These findings are similar with those as found by Nguyen (2007) who argues that background knowledge is one of the aspects that affect reading comprehension. Evidence from the studies conducted showed that learners who

had prior knowledge could comprehend the text with ease as opposed to those who encountered unfamiliar texts. These findings are also supported by Picher & Anderson (1977) who propose that when good readers begin reading, their schemas are activated. Pitcher & Anderson (1977) further argue that readers' comprehension and response to the text are influenced by the initial schema text.

This argument is also supported by Narvaez (2002) who states that a reader's cognitive cause that leads to evaluate text in different ways - or example, to make moral judgements. Comprehension is affected by a reader's culture, based on the degree to which it matches with writer's culture or the culture espoused in the text.

The teacher must be careful therefore in text selection. The text selected must not be too difficult for the learners. It must have a fairly simple structure, one which will allow the readers to apply the reading strategies in order to understand it. It must be one that will fully engage the learners from beginning to the end (Duke, 2010).

The other part on teacher preparedness was on whether or not teachers were aware of the strategies in teaching reading comprehension, whether or not they remembered being taught these strategies while at college or university, or indeed if they applied these strategies in their teaching. Teaching learners to be good comprehenders involves providing them with explicit instruction in comprehension strategies. The National Reading Panel on Reading Comprehension concluded that learners in elementary, middle school, and high school benefit from direct instruction of reading comprehension. Teachers of all levels therefore, must teach Reading Comprehension strategies. However, when asked if teachers were aware of the reading comprehension strategies, whether they remember being taught at college or university, or indeed whether they applied these strategies in their teaching, the responses were that the teachers were not aware. Since reading is an active process of constructing meaning from the text and involves accessing previous knowledge, understanding vocabulary and concepts, making inferences and linking key ideas, teachers must themselves have a firm grasp not only of the strategies that they can employ to achieve their goal but must be skilful in their instruction and respond appropriately to the needs of the students (National Reading Panel, 2000). The teachers observed, however, did not have these skills as much.

The findings from focus group interviews and the classroom observations indicated that most teachers were not aware of the strategies in the teaching of reading comprehension. As seen from the verbatim of participants, only teacher A from School X mentioned few of the strategies, prediction and inferencing, of course, including scanning and skimming. The rest of them indicated that they were not even aware of these strategies. From the responses given, conclusions can be made that the teachers in the focus groups interviews either did not learn these strategies at college or university, or totally forgot about them. If they did not learn about them, then colleges and universities they attended did not align their training with what was in practice in schools.

From the three lessons observed, it was evident that teachers were generally not aware of the reading comprehension strategies. In their teaching, there was no application of the reading comprehension strategies generally. In all the three lessons observed, the teachers did picture discussion as the only pre-reading activity. Two teachers, teacher D from school Y and teacher D from school Z only asked what learners could see in the pictures without linking the text to what learners may have experienced to try and activate learners' background knowledge or connect the text to learners' personal lives. The two teachers did not help learners make predictions. While teacher D from school Y taught vocabulary, teacher D from school Z did not. Both teachers did not apply any strategy during reading like restating, thinking aloud, monitoring comprehension, inferencing and asking questions. Teacher A of school X on the other hand tried did phonics, phonemic awareness and taught vocabulary, but like the other two did not also use the appropriate reading comprehension strategies.

Now reading comprehension is a complex process which requires readers' knowledge of vocabulary, the interaction of text and the use of comprehension strategies by readers. Learners, to engage in an effective reading process must effectively use comprehension strategies. They need to have skills on how to elicit meaning of words from the context, use prior knowledge and check its accuracy, think about characters and events in fictional texts and summarise them as well as reconstruct the meaning. Teachers should have therefore taught these strategies in their three appropriate phases to the learners so that they could use these in their reading process. Bulut (2017) argues that these strategies help improving reading comprehension skills and improve learners' comprehension level. As Bulut (2017), Taylor et al. (2003) quoted in Gibson also hold

that effective teaching involves coaching and modelling to facilitate students learn as well as to help them assume responsibility for their own learning. Therefore, teachers who use higher order thinking skills promote greater reading growth among their students. So, the absence of these strategies in the teachers observed just confirmed poor performance in the comprehension activity by the learners.

The three phases in the teaching of teaching reading comprehension were generally followed -the pre-reading, during and after reading. Practically, there was evidence of picture discussion in the pre-reading phase and that was all. There was no activation of background knowledge or predicting. During reading, no strategies were applied. It was just reading aloud in all the three lessons observed. Teacher read first and asked learners to read aloud, one after another while others followed. After reading, teachers asked some oral questions and finally teacher gave a written exercise to the learners.

Lack of awareness of the reading comprehension strategies and later on use them in teaching is a cause of failure to read by learners and consequently failure to understand comprehension texts. The findings of this study are in agreement with those of Lindner (2008), who contends that most pupils have low reading abilities as a result of: primary school teachers' difficulties in moving beginning readers toward immediate reading skills, pupils' lack of exposure to reading strategies and the prevailing attitude among teachers towards reading strategies.

5.3 Challenges Primary School teachers of Chongwe district face when teaching Reading Comprehension

Gopie (2017) in a qualitative study argues that educators faced such challenges as language barrier, large class size and lack of parental involvement in teaching reading skills.

Parents are their children's very first teachers. From birth, parents help to provide the support and stimuli that children need to begin to make sense of the world around them. Parents play a significant role in building the exclusive human endowment of language. They do this by talking and interacting with their children and by identifying various objects in the child's environment with names. It means therefore that parents take a crucial stand in their children's development and education. This is so because it is the

role of parents to take care of their overall physical and intellectual development till such a time when they are independent and mature enough to face societal challenges. Indeed, engaging families in the education of their children at home and at school is increasingly looked upon as an important means to support better learning outcomes for children (Berthelsen & Walker, 2008). While parents are aware of the work on the development of children, they need pedagogical information on the right to education of their children.

Parental involvement has been described by researchers as a variety of activities that allow parents to participate in the education process of their children (Tarraga, Garcia and Reyes, 2017). UK Essay (2018) citing (Al-Awabdeh, 2011) described parental involvement as the activities occurring between a parent and a child or between a parent at school that may contribute to the child's educational outcomes and development. Parental involvement has a significant effect on children's achievement and adjustment (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003, Jeyes, 2016). In addition to higher academic achievement and greater cognitive competence, parental involvement leads to greater problem-solving skills development, greater school enjoyment, better school attendance, fewer behavioural problems at school and greater social emotional development. In their responses, participants said parents did not help their children in homework because they could not read.

Lack of involvement by parents in their children's education would be attributed to parents' low literacy levels or indeed their illiteracy. The illiteracy of parents may further be compounded by homes that may have no literacy materials to which learners would be exposed. If peradventure some literacy materials were found in these homes, it is unlikely for parents to encourage their children to read when they themselves cannot read. The challenge of lack involvement by parents also confirms the poor performance by learners in reading comprehension, for example, their inability to relate the texts to their lives and only answering questions literally without engaging into critical judgement as was observed in the lessons in the three schools. The findings suggest that learners only practice reading while they are at school. The findings of this study are supported by Maringehosi (2022) who did a study on the challenges faced by teachers in the teaching of reading comprehension. One of the challenges unearthed in Maringehosi's study is lack of parental support.

Children's intellectual development in their early age much depends the environment (home) in which they are brought up. Owing to this, parents, depending on their backgrounds and educational experiences do have different ideas, perceptions and attitudes of what their involvement means in their children's reading achievement (Hammer, et al., 2007). Put simply, parents' background may or may not support their children's education. The negative attitude or indeed the non-supportive position of parents can be attributed, as stated by participants to illiteracy on the part of parents. Of course, this does not only suggest that parents did not help their children with home because they were illiterate. There are other factors leading to the non-supportive nature of parents. Such other factors include being busy in making a living for their children. Because of their low educational levels, most parents in the area are either peasant farmers (having a vegetable garden) or own a small scale business which keeps them away from children for a while. Others are single mothers whose livelihood is in the markets. With this situation, parents think that there are better things to do than help their children with the home work.

The findings of this study are supported by Mante, Awereh & Kumea (2015) who argue that family structure affects parental involvement in their children's education.

From the findings in this study, and indeed from other studies, the high level of parental involvement in the learners' education could enhance children's reading performance.

A number of studies have demonstrated that active parent participation in children education is associated with children's academic performance (Christian, Morrison, & Bryant, 1998; Epstein, 2016; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Burow, 1995; Singh et al., 1995; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). Parental involvement in children's education seems also to be related to positive outcomes in children's reading development. Several studies have revealed that early parent intervention boosts children's reading development (Carroll, 2013; Fan & Chen, 2001; Gest, Freeman, Domitrovich, & Welsh, 2004; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002; Simonds, 2012).

Findings of the study also revealed lack of adequate teaching and learning materials, particularly text books as one of the challenges being faced by teachers in teaching reading comprehension. Some participants stated that the teacher could be the only one with the reading comprehension text. In such instances, the reading comprehension text could be read by teacher, or be written on the board or chat which was time consuming.

The verbatim from participants in chapter four reveal that lack of adequate teaching and learning materials was yet one of the challenges faced by teachers in the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade four learners. Lack of adequate teaching and learning material was also seen during lesson observations when learners shared books during reading comprehension lesson. The findings on lack of adequate teaching and learning materials in this study are similar with those of Maringehosi (2022) who did a study on challenges faced by teachers in teaching reading skills in comprehension. These results also agree with studies done by Maala & Mkandawire, 2022.

Absenteeism was yet another challenge faced by teachers when teaching reading comprehension. Absenteeism can be attributed to lack of parental involvement in learners' school activities. It is possible to conclude that because parents are not involved in school activities or indeed do not seem to be bothered, learners do not take their education seriously and can abscond lessons at any given time. As a consequence of absenteeism, learners either fail to breakthrough in literacy posing a challenge on teachers for their inability to read as their regular counterparts. Failure to breakthrough to literacy would be attributed to the learners' in class attendance. Studies have shown that class attendance has a profound impact upon mastery of the target language. A 2018 Lexia report noted that only 17% of students who were chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade went on to read at grade level in third grade. Some of the learners in classes observed struggled to read material of their grade level owing to absenteeism.

The findings on absenteeism are supported by a study conducted on absenteeism and language learning by Fay, Aguirre & Gash (2013), which showed that every time, students who were present performed better on test questions and demonstrated their knowledge and their language mastery better than those who were absent. The findings in study further stated that even a very few absences were detrimental to mastery of what was being learned. So teachers were right when they said absenteeism was a challenge in the teaching of reading comprehension because most learners struggled to read. These findings are supported by Kindra (2022) who holds that chronic absenteeism is on the rise and students are struggling to meet grade level reading standards. The findings are also in agreement with Conner et al. (2009) quoted in Kindra (2022) who argues that children in the primary grades are struggling to achieve academic success in foundational reading skills.

Overcrowded classrooms was yet another challenge that teachers faced in the teaching of reading comprehension. Overcrowded classrooms, according to the participants were further escalated because of the free education by the New Dawn Government. After taking over power in 2021, the New Dawn Government, to fulfil one of their campaign promises, reintroduced free education from pre-school to Grade 12. The reintroduction of free education saw the return to school of many children who had dropped out school because of failure to pay school fees, making most classes swell to their limits. The increase in the numbers of learners however did not correlate with infrastructure and teaching and learning materials which remained the same.

The reflected verbatim in the previous chapter confirm the overcrowding phenomenon in the classrooms. This situation indeed presents a challenge to teachers in the teaching reading comprehension. The challenge of overcrowded classes is not only prevalent in Chongwe but it is an international problem. The findings of this study are similar with those of Osai, Amponsah, Ampadu, & Commey-Mintah, (2021) who argue that overcrowding in classrooms is an international issue that hinders an efficient teaching and learning process. Similarly, Hachen & Mayor (2019) agree that overcrowding is one of the pressing issues facing education even in the United States today. The problem of overcrowded classrooms most African countries is no different at all. There have been reports in some countries such as Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa to have admitted congestions that exceed the UN acceptable ratio (Motshekga, 2012; Mutisya, 2020; Onwu & Stoffels, 2005). The findings of the are also in line with Yusuf (2016) who did a study on how reading comprehension is taught in large classes and the challenges teachers face in such circumstances.

Overcrowded classrooms entailed learners had to share books when reading since there is yet another already existing challenge on inadequate teaching and learning materials. In short, overcrowding led to the shortage of teaching and learning material. The sharing of books during reading is also gave rise to more problems to the teaching of reading comprehension. Fluency, for example, is difficult to achieve by learners sharing a text in reading comprehension because they do not read with the same speed when asked to read silently. Some learners would read faster than others. A text that is not read properly, with accuracy or fluency is difficult to understand. It therefore would be concluded that learners did not perform as expected in the lessons observed because

they did not understand the text due to sharing books during reading. Overcrowding also meant that teachers could not effectively teach reading comprehension.

One other challenge faced by teachers was late coming to school by the learners due to the distance between their homes and school. Participants stated that when learners arrived late to school, they found that reading comprehension has already been taught because in most cases it appeared in the first period of the day. Some learners perpetually arrived late to school thus always missed this part. Perpetual missing has therefore led to inability to achieve literacy competences for their level. This thus suggests that teachers have to keep repeating what may have already been taught if late comers are to benefit. Because the only time they get exposed to reading material is during reading comprehension lesson, their reading skills drop drastically – they cannot read therefore and this affects their performance in other subjects. Further arguments by participants were that because tiredness due to distance covered, some learners often lost concentration in class. While tiredness partly caused lack of concentration, poverty was yet another contributing factor to loss of concentration in class. Most children came to school without having eaten anything.

Failure to breakthrough by some learners was yet another challenge faced teachers in the teaching of reading comprehension. Owing to the policy of teaching using the familiar language, some learners have difficulties or fail to breakthrough to reading in the English language. This presents a challenge to achieve literacy skills in English and consequently achieving comprehension in English language. From the teacher participants, some learners read English language vocabulary as if they were reading a local language. Learners in other words had limited vocabulary thus lack of understanding most words they read. If learners did not understand most words they read, it entailed that they did not understand the text.

With the failure by most learners to read and understand most vocabulary in the reading comprehension text, it then becomes a challenge to the teacher because they have to read and spend time to explain the meaning of these words to the learners. This then would mean spending more time on reading comprehension at the expense of other subject areas. The findings in this study are supported by those by Maala & Mkandawire (2022) noted that teachers were made to spend more time explaining the meaning of words.

5.4 Interview with Senior Education Standard Officer - Languages

To further establish teachers' knowledge, preparedness as well as the challenges they experienced in the teaching of reading comprehension, the senior education standard officer in languages was interviewed. The interview was carried out to establish from the senior education standard officer whether during the monitoring exercise teacher exhibited understanding of reading comprehension, whether or not they were prepared to teach reading comprehension and also to establish challenges teachers experience when teaching reading comprehension. The following were the responses from the senior education standard officer.

When asked how often the standard officer monitored the teachers, his response was that they were not regularly monitored because of lack of resources.

On whether teachers exhibited some knowledge of reading comprehension, the senior education standard officer said they did. This response resonates with the responses given by teachers on their knowledge of reading comprehension. However, as argued earlier, there was no correlation between what was said and actual practice in the classroom.

When asked on the availability of literacy materials in schools, the senior education standard officer said some materials were there in schools but were not enough because of low funding in schools. The senior education standard officer's response confirmed the lack of adequate teaching and learning materials talked about by the teachers in the focus group discussions and as observed in the classrooms.

The standard officer was asked whether when he went for monitoring teachers exhibited knowledge of reading comprehension strategies and used them in teaching reading comprehension. His response was that they did. That teachers are not regularly monitored suggests their unpreparedness and to some extent failure to engage in serious pedagogy up skilling and be able to use explicit instructions in teaching. Teachers need to be monitored in order to make them appreciate the duty to do what is right in the classroom with the learners.

The senior education standard officer was also asked whether it was possible for him to name some of these strategies used by the teachers. His response was that there were a number of them. The response that there are a number of them by the senior education standard officer suggested that he may not be aware of the strategies himself and could therefore not recognise or identify them with teachers or may not be able to educate teachers on them.

The other question the senior education standard officer was asked was whether from his observation, teachers were adequately prepared to teach reading comprehension. He said teachers' methodologies were poor, they needed retraining. He later said their initial training was adequate, but their attitude was negative. He said some teachers only entered the teaching service for the sake of a job. He further said some of them were poorly qualified at Grade 12, but enrolled in colleges and became teachers.

The response from the standard officer just confirmed what was observed in the classrooms on how the teaching of reading comprehension was mismanaged by the teachers. There was a clear confirmation of teacher unpreparedness.

The senior standard officer was also asked as to whether teachers followed the three phase activities (before, during and after) in the teaching of reading comprehension. In his response, the senior education standard officer said most teachers did not carry out such activities.

Again, the senior education standard officer's response correlated with classroom observations that showed that teachers were unable to apply strategies according to the three phases in the teaching of reading comprehension.

The senior education standard officer was asked about the challenges teachers experienced when teaching reading comprehension. He said teachers lacked materials, their methodologies were poor, numbers of learners exceeded the capacities of teachers and parents were not involved in their children's education. The following is the senior education standard officer's verbatim.

The challenges highlighted in verbal account of the senior education standard officer are similar to what the teachers themselves said and what was seen in the classrooms during class observations.

5.4 Summary

This chapter has discussed the key findings of the study. The findings have been discussed thematically according to the objectives of the study. The findings revealed that teachers generally stated that they had knowledge of reading comprehension was and that they adequately prepared to teach. However, when observed in the classroom, there was no correlation between what was said and what practically happened in the classroom. Discussed also in the chapter were the challenges faced by teachers in teaching reading comprehension. The next chapter presents conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Overview

The previous chapter thematically presented key findings of the study. The findings were discussed according to the objectives of the study which were: to assess teachers' knowledge of reading comprehension, to ascertain primary school teacher of Chongwe district's preparedness to teach reading comprehension and to establish the challenges primary school teachers of Chongwe district face when teaching reading comprehension. This chapter presents conclusion and recommendations based on the findings of the study.

6.1 Conclusion

The study was guided by three objectives one which were to assess teachers' knowledge of reading comprehension, to ascertain teachers' preparedness to teach reading comprehension and to establish challenges primary teachers faced when teaching reading comprehension. The subsequent part of this dissertation provides conclusions made on each objective.

6.1.1 Assessing teachers' knowledge of Reading comprehension

Data gathered from focus group discussion revealed that teacher participants had knowledge of the concept of reading comprehension. What was generally felt among the participants was reading comprehension implied reading with understanding. Most of them stated that it involved reading a text and answering questions based on read text. Focusing on the participants' responses, it can be concluded that teachers were really teaching learners based on the understanding demonstrated in the responses. Conversely, the findings from the classroom observations revealed that even though the participants said they had knowledge of reading comprehension, there was no generally no correlation between what they said and what they practically did in the classroom setting. Reading comprehension was unsystematically taught with little or no attention paid to the comprehension strategies such as failure to activate background knowledge of learners. The three phases of reading comprehension with their specific strategies could not be actualised in the actual teaching.

6.1.2 Primary school teachers of Chongwe district's preparedness to teach reading comprehension

Findings on teacher preparedness show that teachers were generally ill-prepared to teach reading comprehension. From the classroom observations, findings show that many of the participants overestimated the level of preparedness, but they in actual sense were inadequately prepared. Two of the teachers observed ill-selected the reading comprehension texts. Only one cared about the learners. In the process of teaching, they did not apply the strategies used in teaching reading comprehension except for one who also did not use all apart from one. All teachers simply did picture discussion which did not activate learners' background knowledge. No strategy such monitoring comprehension, inferencing, predictions were used during the reading phase. Teachers themselves said it as shown from the verbatim that they could not remember learning about the strategies in college. Only one of them mentioned only inferencing, scanning and skimming. Furthermore, no one among those observed was able to use higher order thinking skills to promote greater reading growth among learners. The conclusion drawn from the findings was that the teachers were generally inadequately prepared.

6.1.3 Challenges faced by primary school teachers of Chongwe district when teaching reading comprehension

The study established that teachers faced challenges when teaching reading comprehension. Findings show that challenges faced included lack of parent involvement, absenteeism, late coming, failure to breakthrough by some learners, inadequate teaching and learning material and overcrowded classrooms. These challenges made the teaching of comprehension done in ways not expected.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings presented in this study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. It is recommended that the university and college curriculum be aligned with the syllabus in primary schools.
- ii. It is recommended that pre-service teachers be equipped with skills to teach literacy while in college and university.

- iii. It is recommended that teachers conduct continuous professional development programmes to remind themselves of best practices in pedagogies.
- iv. It is also recommended that teachers be regularly monitored to ensure that they teach with explicit instruction.

6.3 Suggestion for future research

This was aimed to explore teachers' preparedness to teach reading comprehension in English language among Grade four learners in selected primary schools of Chongwe district, Zambia. For future research, the study recommends an evaluation of teacher preparation in the teaching of literacy in colleges and universities. This study may help stake holders to bridge the gap in aligning training with primary school curriculum.

6.4 Summary

This chapter has presented the conclusion of the study and has dealt with conclusions made on each objective of the study. The chapter has also made recommendations and suggestions for future research.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION

DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH AND POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

FOCUS GROUP GUIDE FOR TEACHERS OF LITERACY AND LANGUAGE

I am a postgraduate student at the University of Zambia pursuing a Master of Education in language, Literacy and Applied Linguistics. The following interview schedule is aimed at establishing the preparedness of Primary School teachers of Chongwe district in the teaching of reading comprehension among Grade Four learners. You are therefore requested to be as open and as truthful as you could be throughout the discussion of this very important subject. Note that the information you provide will be used for purely academic purposes. Thank you in anticipation to your affirmative support. The interview will be recorded.

1. What do you understand by reading comprehension as a concept?
2. During your training at college, did you learn about how reading comprehension is taught?
3. Do you have adequate teaching and learning materials for teaching reading comprehension?
4. How adequately are you prepared to handle comprehension lessons?
5. Are you aware of teaching reading strategies to be followed in your pedagogical process?
6. During your training at college, what methods or strategies of teaching reading comprehension do you remember being taught?
7. Do you apply these strategies in the teaching of reading comprehension to your learners?
8. Which of these strategies do you apply in your teaching of reading comprehension?
9. What challenges do you as teachers experience in the teaching of reading comprehension?
10. Could language of instruction be one of the challenges in the teaching of reading comprehension?
11. Are you familiar with the language of instruction?

APPENDIX B: LESSON OBSERVATION GUIDE

School: Grade:

Topic:

Day: Date: Time:

Number of Pupils: Sex of Teacher:

COMPETENCES	
1	General Organisation
a.	Lesson planning – Bio-data section
b.	Pre-reading activities
c.	Relevance of the passage to the learners
d.	Suitability of the passage content to the learners
	Purpose for reading
	Activation of background knowledge
	Brain storming
2	Lesson Presentation
a.	Lesson introduction –links to previous lesson
b.	Teacher’s ability to captivate learners
c.	Application of appropriate methodology
d.	Introduction of the reading passage
3.	Use of reading comprehension strategies during reading
a.	Monitoring Comprehension
b.	Predicting, pause and check predictions
c.	Visualising
d.	Engaging learners throughout the lesson
4.	After reading
a.	Summarise the passage through question
b.	Retelling story by learners
c.	Ask questions – what learners knew before reading and knowledge after
d.	Engage learners in discussions
e.	Writing about what has been read

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SENIOR STANDARD OFFICER - LANGUAGES

The following interview schedule is aimed at establishing your perception about the teaching of reading comprehension among Grade four learners in your province. You are requested to be as honest and as open as you could possibly be. The information you provide will be purely for academic purposes.

Senior Standard Officer - Languages:

1. When you monitor your teachers, do they exhibit understanding of reading comprehension?
2. During their lesson presentation, do they apply the reading comprehension strategies?
3. What would be your comment on your teachers' knowledge of the reading comprehension strategies?
4. Do teachers apply these strategies in the teaching of reading comprehension?
5. From your observations of your teachers, would you say they are adequately prepared to teach reading comprehension?
6. Do the teachers follow the three phases in teaching reading comprehension?
7. Would you say that language of instruction could be one of the challenges in teaching reading comprehension?
8. How adequate and appropriate are the teaching and learning materials for teaching reading comprehension?
9. What other challenges do teachers face in teaching reading comprehension?