

**AN EXAMINATION OF THE TEACHING AND ASSESSEMENT OF READING  
COMPREHENSION IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF NDOLA  
DISTRICT OF ZAMBIA**

**By**

**Lubumbe Christabel**

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## Declaration

I Lubumbe Christabel, hereby solely declare that the work contained in this dissertation has been composed and written by me and that this work is as the result of my own individual effort. I further sincerely declare that this research has not been previously published for any academic award at any other higher education institution and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged accordingly by means of complete references.

Signature (candidate)..........Date: 10<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 2024

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## Approval

The Dissertation of Lubumbe Christabel has been approved as fulfilling the requirements for the award of Degree of Master of Education in Literacy, Language and Applied Linguistics by the University of Zambia.

### Examiner 1

Name: Prof. P.C. Mwachuku  
Signature: Mall Date: 10/04/2024

### Examiner 2

Name: Dr. G. Tambulukani  
Signature: GZ Date: 10/04/2024

### Examiner 3

Name: Dr. Chibamba A  
Signature: AC Date: 10/04/2024

### Chairperson, Board of Examiners

Name: Dr. TOMMYE WILSON  
Signature: [Signature] Date: 10/04/2024

### Supervisor

Name: Dr. S. B. Ukanjwira  
Signature: [Signature] Date: 15/04/2024

## Abstract

Effective and appropriate instructional practices in teaching and assessing reading comprehension by secondary school teachers are very fundamental if learners were to build the reading comprehension skills required for them to pass English language and other subjects. The study therefore examined the teachers' instructional practices in the teaching and assessment of reading comprehension. This study generally looked at what instructional practices teachers used to help the learners derive meaning or answers from explicitly stated information, making of both direct and indirect inferences, and interpreting/integrating ideas and information. Lastly, the study also focussed on establishing teachers' instructional practices in ensuring that learners were able to examine and evaluate content, language and textual elements. The other feature that was important to this study was to find out if learners were truly failing reading comprehension assessment or not. Therefore, part of the study assessed the learners in reading comprehension in order to determine if the statistics at national level were the same as at classroom level. Twelve teachers, three heads of departments and 200 learners were sampled from three different government schools of Ndola on the Copperbelt Province of Zambia. These were purposively and simple randomly sampled respectively to participate in the study. The Study employed a Mixed Method approach by way of embedded research design. Data collection was done using lesson observations, semi- structured interviews, questionnaires, document analysis and a reading comprehension test. Thematic analysis was used to analyse qualitative data while Microsoft Excel to find mean averages on learner performance with regard to the four processes of reading comprehension by the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) was used to analyse quantitative data. The findings revealed that, even though teachers taught and assessed the learners in reading comprehension, they did not impart the necessary reading comprehension skills in totality. All the teachers mostly focussed merely on reading, speed, pronunciation of words and vocabulary. They did not give detailed explanations on how the learners were expected to acquire the necessary Comprehension skills. To them, reading comprehension was about reading a text and then answer a few questions thereafter. Furthermore, it was revealed that learners performed well in the questions that did not require them to think beyond the text but on the other hand, the performance was very poor in those questions that required high thinking skills. In view of this, it was recommended that teachers should be oriented to Progress in International Reading Literacy Study so that they can apply in class when teaching and assessing learners in Reading Comprehension. This will help them discover ways of ensuring that the skills of reading comprehension are imparted in learners. Teachers should also ensure that they plan adequately for reading comprehension and formulate questions based on the skills they are teaching in each particular lesson.

**Key words:** Reading comprehension, reading comprehension skills, teaching and assessment practices.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother and father Morine Mwansa-Lubumbe and  
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## **Abbreviations**

DEBS	District Education Board Secretary
DRTA	Directed Reading Thinking Activity
ECZ	Examination Council of Zambia
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EMM	The Embedded Mixed Method
ER	Extensive Reading
ESL	English as Second Language
EFL	English as Foreign Language
HOD	Head of Department
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation and Assessment of Educational Achievement
IR	Intensive Reading
MESVTEE	Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOGE	Ministry of General Education
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
RD	Reading Disability
SBCPD	School Based Continuing Professional Development
TIMSS	Third International Mathematics and Science Study

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Overview

This chapter presents the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, significance of the study, the study framework, limitation and delimitation of the study, operational definitions used in the study and ends with a summary of the chapter.

### 1.2 Background

Knowing how to read is considered to be one of the most important foundational skills that students need to acquire before progressing in academic work. The ability to read has been a valued skill in Zambia since colonial times. Reading is one of the skills taught in English which students are expected to master. These reading skills are necessary to students for acquiring knowledge and new information. According to Brown (2001), reading is the most essential skill in the educational context as it can be the assessment for students' general language ability. Furthermore, reading in English is a survival skill as it helps an individual in social, intellectual, emotional and economic development and is essential for success in society (Mwansa, 2014; Snow, 1998).

In the 2013 Zambian English Secondary School syllabus, reading is categorized in three components: efficient reading, extensive reading, and intensive reading (reading comprehension), (Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education MESTEE, 2013). Hence, reading as can be seen from the Zambian English syllabus is an important part of English language teaching. Furthermore, reading comprehension is one aspect of language skills that must be mastered by the student. To be able to interpret and absorb information from reading material, students should have good understanding ability. Hence, reading comprehension is required in all content subjects because learning in each subject cannot be separated from the act of reading.

Furthermore, Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ) Literature and Languages Performance Review Report (2016, p.7) emphasized that:

*“English Language is one of the core subjects examined at Grades 7, 9 and 12. This is because English Language is the medium of instruction in Zambia; as such, all examinations are administered in English except the examinations in Zambian Languages and French. These are thorough examinations which cover reading and writing skills focusing on the candidate’s understanding and application of the language structure, scope of vocabulary as well as understanding and interpretation of read texts. These language skills that candidates develop over time help them to communicate effectively using Standard English in a variety of situations and these skills are transferable to other subjects.”*

Therefore, students are required to have good understanding capabilities. Additionally, reading is indisputably the most effective tool in language learning and educational achievement and also in non-academic social spheres. Being an integral aspect of literacy, reading fosters personal language acquisition, communication and sharing of skills, norms, and values of learning. Reading therefore, has become a mode of language development and consequently leads to educational advancement. The importance of reading to learning processes cannot be overemphasized. Studies done by Julia (2013) , Christy et al (2016) and Renandya (2007; 2016), have all revealed the critical contribution that reading makes to language learning and learning processes. In his study on the ‘Role of Reading in Language Learning’, (Julia, 2013, p.7) postulates that ‘reading, especially extensive reading supports language learning in terms of speed in understanding the author’s meaning, especially if it is of the learner’s choice and continuously done’

For one’s reading comprehension skills to develop, intensive or reading comprehension skills must be enhanced as they are a part of mental processes and contribute greatly to cognitive development. The competences or outcomes sought for in teaching reading and reading comprehension in the senior secondary syllabus according to MESVTEE (2013, p. 34-35) are to : locate details and answer factual questions, identify and recall in chronological order series of events, identify and

express main ideas of texts, deduce meanings of unfamiliar words and idiomatic expressions, draw inferences from texts by direct or indirect reference, distinguish facts from opinions, distinguish specific facts from generalized facts, identify over-generalized statements, describe the feelings, qualities and motives of characters in stories and understand the connotative meaning of words and phrases. However, the best instructional practice to teach reading has been debated among researchers for decades (Ehri, Nunes, Stahl, & Willows, 2001; Good & Kaminski, 2002; Goodman, 2006; Guzzetti, Alvermann, & Johns, 2002; Monaghan & Barry, 1999). The first law that was passed regarding reading instruction occurred in 1642 in Massachusetts and required any parent or master of education to teach their child to read. The first reading assessment was documented in the early 1910's because of the work from John Broadus Watson and Edward Lee Thorndike (Guzzetti, Alvermann, & Johns, 2002). As time progressed in the United States so did access to public education, educational practices, reading assessments, and federal involvement in reading instruction. Historically, not all children were educated; only Caucasian boys from affluent families were provided an education. Gradually, girls and other ethnic groups were included in public education (Guzzetti, Alvermann, & Johns, 2002).

In fact, there are still many problems in the learning process of reading comprehension. Tasdemir (2010) states that sometimes students are only required to read the text by heart, and then answer questions related to the content of the text. It is a way that does not involve the process of thinking as students are not involved in active reading process. Therefore, the use of suitable strategies could be one of the determinants in teaching and learning to read as well as learning reading comprehension. Needless to say, the method or strategy used should be able to improve students' reading comprehension. The lack of using appropriate methods or learning strategies becomes one of the bottlenecks of achievements of learning goals (Stahl, & Willows, 2001). In the selection of methods for each learning, the teacher must pay attention to the character of the students. Methods or strategies used cannot only be one, but can be varied or used side by side with other methods so that students do not feel tired or bored in the learning process. When students are motivated to learn well, it will facilitate in providing instruction to students such that learning becomes conducive and pleasant. Hence, the goal of learning will be achieved.

Reading instructional practices and reading assessments vary in Zambia. One of the largest debates in history involving the best educational practices began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and still exists today; the debate centered on reading instruction, and involved whole language advocates versus phonics instruction advocates. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Edward Shelton trained teachers to use word methods, sight word memorization (Monaghan & Barry, 1999). Clarence Stone's research in the 1930s emphasized whole word and sentence recognition versus phonics (Chall, 1967). William S. Gray advocated for word to part reading instruction and worked with the Scott Foresman Publishing Company to develop their basal readers in the 1940s (Guzzetti, Alvermann, & Johns, 2002).

In the middle of the 1900s, phonics instruction resurfaced as the best way to teach reading to children. In 1955, Rudolph Flesch published a book titled *Why Johnny Can't Read: And What You Can Do about it* that supported phonics instruction over whole language practices (Flesch, 1966). Jeanne Chall, a researcher, was commissioned by the Carnegie Foundation in the early sixties to study the methods that were being used to teach reading (Chall, 1967). Chall's research contended that children would learn to read if teachers focused their reading instruction on phonics instead of whole language.

Reading assessments on the other hand were created in the early 1900's, but have evolved in the last century. The first reading assessments were a result of the research and work of John Broadus Watson and Edward Lee Thorndike. These two researchers both believed in teaching children the whole word versus teaching children the alphabet and phonics. Watson studied students' eye movements while reading and used his research to support the word method. Thorndike developed achievement scales in various subject areas (Guzzetti, Alvermann, & Johns, 2002).

Many states believe a student needs to have foundational reading skills by grade three before progressing to texts that are more difficult as an older student. Because of this belief, some states require a third-grade student to pass a reading proficiency exam before promotion to the fourth grade. Specifically, Zambia now has the ability to retain students based on a lack of reading proficiency. Grade retention is a widely debated issue in education, and the majority of the research conducted on grade retention does not support this practice as an intervention (Jimerson, Carlson, Rotert, Egeland, &

Sroufe, 1997; Shepard & Smith, 1990). Due to the margin of error that could occur in an assessment, researchers and instructional leaders should use data from more than one assessment to determine if a student should be retained in a specific grade level.

Furthermore, it is known with some students in secondary schools that they still have difficulties in answering questions based on context (Guzzetti, Alvermann, & Johns, 2002). It is also known from the low students' score in answering the questions from the text that students still find it difficult to locate the main ideas in the text. Apart from that, some students are low in vocabulary and it makes them confused in understanding of the text. Many factors cause it to happen that way, one of which is the choice of methods and Muyangana (2012) affirms by stating that , some noticeable features of comprehension observed were poor lesson presentations, unsatisfactory general lesson delivery, poor teaching techniques etc . Therefore, to solve the problems of reading comprehension skills, there is need to revise through learning strategies that can attract students or get students motivated to improve their skills. In here, the researcher suggests the Direct Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy as one of the strategies to improve students' reading comprehension skills.

Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy is one of the strategies in the teaching of reading comprehension. DRTA focuses on students' engagement with the text, because students have to predict and prove when they read. In teaching reading comprehension, students can find the main ideas in the text (Monaghan & Barry, 1999). DRTA attempts to equip readers with the ability to determine the purposes of reading, the ability to extract, comprehend, and assimilate information. Furthermore, it equips the learners with the ability to make predictions, to examine reading materials based on the purposes of reading as well as the ability to pass judgments, and finally the ability to make decisions based upon information gleaned from reading (Odwan, 2012).

Nunam (1991, p.70) adds that “reading is a dynamic process in which the text elements interact with the other factors outside the text in this case most particularly with the readers knowledge of context of the text”. On the other hand, Grabe (1991, p.1) emphasizes that “reading is an active process of comprehension where students need to be taught strategies to read more efficiently. Learners are expected to make inferences about the text, skim ahead to fill in the context etc.” Based on the

aforementioned key features of knowledge skill of reading comprehension, learners are expected to demonstrate the skills listed in the syllabus and these have to be imparted in them by the teacher using the prescribed instructional practices. In this way, a learner may reach a point of interacting with any text whether in a group, pair or alone in the class test or examination. Furthermore, the ability to understand instructions in any subject involves reading comprehension and these reading comprehension skills are developed in the mind by the learners' day-to-day interaction with different reading materials and of course, with the help of teachers.

However, in the case of the Zambian education, learners have not been doing well in reading comprehension and this was the reflection of something wrong. It was not clear what instructional practices the teachers used in the teaching and assessment of reading comprehension. Hence, this study sought to determine how teachers taught and assessed their learners in reading comprehension in order to build the reading skills appropriate for reading comprehension learning.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

A review of Chief Examiners' report dating as far back as 2007, on the Joint School Certificate and General Certificate of Education examinations in English had shown serious weaknesses on the part of learners in reading comprehension. According to the Examination Council of Zambia (2008), some notable concerns were that more than fifty percent of the candidates scored below half the total mark in reading comprehension questions and some of them scored between 0 and 5 marks out of 20. The Examination Council of Zambia (ECZ) Chief Examiner's Report (2017, p.8), states that:

*“In both 2017 and 2016, the general performance of candidates in this section (Reading Comprehension) has been average and slightly below average. In both years, we had candidates who got 20 out of 20 and those who got zero (0) out of 20. Specifically, in 2017, performance was slightly below average as a number of candidates failed to demonstrate a variety of reading skills which included understanding of specific information, responding to literal and inferential questions and basic vocabulary questions which are always based on the given passage.”*

Furthermore, even though the overall results for 2020, 2021 and 2022 English examinations were slightly better than the previous years, the Examination Council of Zambia “ECZ” Performance Review Report noted similar serious concerns in the three years from the low performers in reading comprehension. It states that, candidates were not able to extract specific information as required by the given question and made frequent errors aside exhibiting broken/ muddled English. It additionally says that, in many cases, they completely misunderstood the topic, included disconnected details, had low or no understanding of instructions and rubrics and generally failed to understand the comprehension passage and its questions (The Examination Council of Zambia, School Certificate Examination Performance Review Report 2022).

Candidates, according to the Chief Examiner’s Report, appear to have been weak in almost all areas of reading comprehension as they could not answer vocabulary and inferential questions. It has also been discussed anecdotally that many teachers merely test reading comprehension than teach it and Tasdemir (2010) in his research done in Turkey on the Effects of Reading Comprehension Techniques on Students’ Success, noted that reading comprehension in school has been simply reading and answering questions. Chazangwe (2011) also confirms that the teaching of reading comprehension is one of the skills that are avoided by many teachers. Teachers usually just instruct learners to read the comprehension passages on their own and to answer the exercise that follows in the text book. There was therefore a need to probe into the instructional practices’ teachers used in teaching and assessing reading comprehension in class. The basic question begging answers is how do teachers teach and assess reading comprehension in class.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to examine teachers’ instructional practices in the teaching and assessment of reading comprehension in selected secondary schools of Ndola district of Zambia.

#### **1.5 Research Objectives**

The study sought to address the following research objectives;

- (i) To analyse teachers’ instructional practices in teaching reading comprehension in class.

(ii) To determine teachers' assessment practices in reading comprehension and how these relate to instructional practices.

(iii) To assess learners' performance in reading comprehension according to the PIRLS' (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) Assessment Framework for reading comprehension.

### **1.6 Research Questions**

The study responded to the following research question;

(i) What instructional practices are teachers employing in teaching reading comprehension?

(ii) Which assessment practices do teachers employ in teaching reading comprehension and how do they relate these to instructional practices?

(iii) How is the learners' performance in reading comprehension according to the PIRLS' assessment framework of reading comprehension?

### **1.7 Significance of the study**

The importance of this study is centered on the fact that it focused on teachers' teaching and assessment practices in addressing learners' challenges in answering reading comprehension questions. The study explored how teachers used texts to teach and assess learners in reading comprehension. Hence, the study may contribute to the body of knowledge in English education in many ways. To begin with, the findings may help teachers of English to be equipped with good classroom practices necessary to improve learner performance in Reading Comprehension. In other words, the findings may equip teachers with effective and efficient instructional practices to attend to the learning needs of learners in reading comprehension. Secondly, the study may help administrators and stakeholders in the education sector to design effective teaching methodologies for reading comprehension.

On the other hand, the study may inform curriculum designers regarding effective curriculum implementation guidelines for teachers of English. Most importantly, the findings may help to guide teacher training institutions to train teachers in handling learners in reading comprehension effectively and efficiently. The findings may also contribute to research in English on teachers' classroom instructional practices in teaching and assessing learners in reading comprehension. This may generally help in

the improvement of results in English at national level. The findings of this study will also trigger further research in trying to come up with strategies to nurture internal and external motivation among learners with a view of improving academic performance.

### **1.8 Delimitation of the Study**

This study was restricted to three urban government schools of Ndola district on the Copperbelt Province of Zambia. Furthermore, the study was limited to teachers of Grades eleven (11) and twelve (12), as well as Grade twelve (12) learners as at the time of the research. The area was selected because the researcher acknowledged the fact it had a number of secondary schools. The view was to target schools that had a good number of teachers of English Language in the departments, which would make the research more profuse as there would be diverse views from teachers who handled reading comprehension.

### **1.9 Limitations of the study**

Simon (2011) states that limitations of the study are the potential weaknesses in the study which are out of control of the researcher. Therefore, this part of the report gives a rundown of factors that could have affected the research outcomes in one way or another. First and foremost, this research did not look at prior reading abilities which could be a good foundation for reading comprehension. These reading abilities by the learners would have enriched or broadened the scope of the study. They would have also presented or provided further explanation to certain learning and teaching challenges in reading comprehension. Furthermore, the sample size used in the study also restricted the generalisation of the findings. Lastly, some teachers and learners shunned participation in the research due to personal and/professional reasons. Hence, their refusal to participate may also have limited the scope of the study in one way or another.

### **1.10 Study Framework**

There are three main reading theories which explain the nature of learning to read and their implication to teaching reading skills. This study was guided by the constructive and interactive models of reading. In interactive learning, Harris and Sipay (1984) as quoted in Ngabut (2015) states that, reading comprehension is a dynamic process where readers actively construct meaning by interacting with the text and drawing upon their background knowledge. The background referred to here is explained by

Kintsch (1998) as, all of the world knowledge that a reader brings to the task of reading. This can include all events, facts, knowledge of vocabulary etc. Ngabut indicate that there has been no single model that can be called the most acceptable and so the models can be placed in one of the three categories: bottom-up, top-down, and interactive. Bottom-up models of the reading process view reading as basically a translating, decoding, or encoding process. To elaborate more on the aforementioned, Ngabut, (2015) states that, the reader starts with letters or larger units, and as he attends to them, he begins to anticipate the words they spell. When the words are identified, they are decoded to inner speech from which the reader derives meaning in the same way as listening. In this process reading comprehension is believed to be an automatic outcome of accurate word recognition.

In contrast to reading as translation models, that is, the bottom-up ones, top-down models theorists believed that skilled readers go directly from print to meaning without first reading to speech (Harris & Sipay, 1984). These models are predisposed by psycholinguists, and they are typically suitable for accomplished readers. However, theorists on interactive models such as Rumelhart (1980) believe that, at least for skilled or advanced readers, top-down and bottom-up processing in reading seem to occur simultaneously. Rumelhart believes that comprehension is dependent on both graphic information and the information in the reader's mind. Comprehension, therefore, may be obstructed when a critical skill or a piece of knowledge is missing. Which entails that all knowledge from top-down or bottom-up processes are crucial in reading comprehension.

Therefore, Rumelhart's view suggests that, in interactive reading, the skilled reader compensates by decoding a word, relying on context, or both word and context. In conjunction with these theories, reading is defined as the meaningful interpretation of printed or written symbols, while comprehending is a result of the interaction between the perception of graphic symbols that represent language and the reader's language skill, and his knowledge of the world. In this process, the reader tries to create meanings that are intended by the writer (Harris & Sipay, 1984:8). Reading in this case is not one skill but a large number of interrelated skills that develop gradually over a period of years. So, it is a complex process in which the recognition and comprehension of written symbols are influenced by reader's perceptual skills, decoding skills, experiences, language backgrounds, mind sets, and reasoning abilities.

On the same constructive and interactive theories of reading, assessment of learners in this study was guided by the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). This Reading Framework was developed to assess and incorporate the latest approaches to measuring the reading achievement of young students in their fourth year of schooling. PIRLS is based on the extensive concept of what the ability to read entail. This includes, a concept that embraces the ability to reflect on written texts and to use these texts as tools for attaining individual and societal goals, also known as “reading to do” (Mullis et al, 2016). This interpretation is progressively pertinent as great emphasis continues to be centered on students’ ability to use the information they acquire from reading. Emphasis is shifting from demonstrating fluency and basic comprehension to demonstrating the ability to apply what is read to new situations or projects (Coulombe, Trembly, & Marchand, 2004). These new situations apply to new information and/or new texts.

The PIRLS framework for assessing reading achievement was initially developed for the first assessment in 2001, using International Association for Evaluation and Educational Achievement ( IEA)’s 1991 Reading Literacy Study ( Elley, 1992; 1994; Wolf, 1995). This framework was established as the basis for the PIRLS definition of reading literacy and for establishing the aspects of reading comprehension to be assessed. Since then, the PIRLS assessment framework has been updated for each subsequent assessment cycle (Campbell, Kelly, Mullis, Martin, & Sainsbury, 2001; Mullis, Kennedy, Martin, & Sainsbury, 2006; Mullis, Martin, Kennedy, Trong, & Sainsbury, 2009).

The PIRLS definition of reading literacy is grounded in IEA’s 1991 study, in which reading literacy was defined as “the ability to understand and use those written language forms required by society and/or valued by the individual.” With successive assessments, this definition has been elaborated so that it retains its applicability to readers of all ages and a broad range of written language forms, yet makes explicit reference to aspects of the reading experience of young students as they become proficient readers. The PIRLS framework highlights the widespread importance of reading in school and everyday life, and acknowledges the increasing variety of texts in today’s technological world.

This view of reading therefore also reflects numerous theories of reading literacy as a constructive and interactive process (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Chall, 1983; Kintsch, 1998; 2012; 2013; Ruddell & Unrau, 2004; Rumelhart, 1985). Meaning is constructed through the interaction between reader and text in the context of a particular reading experience (Britt, Goldman, & Rouet, 2012; Snow, 2002). Readers are regarded as actively constructing meaning as well as knowing effective reading strategies and how to reflect on reading (Afflerbach & Cho, 2009; Langer, 2011).

Before, during, and after reading, readers use a repertoire of linguistic skills, cognitive and metacognitive strategies, as well as background knowledge to construct meaning ( Kintsch, 2012; 2013). In addition, the context of the reading situation can support the construction of meaning by promoting engagement and motivation to read (Taboada, Tonks, Wigfield, & Guthrie, 2009).

In order to acquire knowledge of the world and themselves, readers can learn from a host of text types. Any given text type can take many forms and combinations of forms. These include traditional written forms, such as books, magazines, documents, and newspapers, as well as digital forms such as email, text messaging, and Internet websites where text often is integrated with various multimedia formats ( Rosell & Pahl, 2010; Reuda, 2013).

Discussing what they have read with different groups of individuals allows young students to construct text meaning in a variety of contexts (Almasi & Garas-York, 2009; Murphy, Wilkinson, Soter, Hennessey, & Alexander, 2009). Social interactions about reading in one or more communities of readers can be instrumental in helping young students gain an understanding and appreciation of texts (Galda & Beach, 2001; Kucer, 2005). Socially constructed environments in the classroom or school library can give young students formal and informal opportunities to broaden their perspectives about texts and to see reading as a shared experience with their classmates and teachers (Alvermann & Moje, 2013; Guthrie, 1996). This can be extended to communities outside of school as young students talk with their families and friends about ideas and information acquired from reading.

Based on reading purposes and comprehension processes, the PIRLS framework provides the foundation for the PIRLS assessment of students' reading achievement in their fourth year of schooling, as well as for PIRLS Literacy. The PIRLS framework

focuses on the two overarching purposes for reading that account for most of the reading done by young students both in and out of school: for literary experience, and to acquire and use information. In addition, the PIRLS assessment integrates four broad-based comprehension processes within each of the two purposes for reading: focus on and retrieve explicitly stated information, make straightforward inferences, interpret and integrate ideas and information, and evaluate and critique content and textual elements. For more information on PIRLS refer to the links here attached.

[PDF] PIRLS 2006 Assessment Framework and Specifications: Progress in International Reading Literacy Study. | Semantic Scholar ,also <https://pirls2021.org/frameworks/home/reading-assessment-framework/overview/index.html> and 2001 pirls assessment framework - Search (bing.com).

The above elucidations on interactive and constructive study theories relate to my study because, for a learner to make meaning out of any given text or passage, there must be an interaction between that learner and the given text. By using information such as background knowledge, learners are expected to have a good understanding of what reading comprehension teaching and assessment is and make meaning at all times. Hence, it was imperative for the learners to understand how to construct meaning from any given text either during individual work or group work. Learners were also expected to exhibit knowledge of the reading comprehension skills as championed by the 2013 Senior Secondary School English Zambian Syllabus and also the four broad based processes of reading comprehension as espoused by PIRLS. PIRLS assessment framework has outlined the reading comprehension skills expected by the learners to have and this study followed those skills or rather principles to the latter in assessing Grade twelve learners. It is for this reason that the constructivist and interactive theories stated in this section including the PIRLS itself are very instrumental to this study.

### **1.11 Operational Definitions**

#### ***Assessment-***

In this study assessment was used in line with the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) framework as a way of evaluating how well learners understood what they read using the four processes of reading comprehension.

***Reading Comprehension*** – The learner’s ability to demonstrate understanding of questions that need plainly stated information in the text. Be able to make inferences, interpretation and integration of ideas/ information and also be able to examine and evaluate content, language and textual elements in any given text or passage.

***Teaching*** – This refers to a teacher’s facilitation of learners’ comprehension of a written text according to the four processes of comprehension proposed by the PIRLS framework.

### **1.12. Summary**

This chapter has presented the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, significance of the study, theoretical framework, limitation and delimitation of the study. The next chapter present the review of literature.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.1. Overview**

This chapter presents the review of related literature that informed the study. Creswell (2009) posits that this section of the study is important as it links the study to other studies or research that have been done in the past in the same field. It is worth mentioning that this section also endeavours to highlight and analyse the knowledge gap. To be precise and concise, the present section attempts to review related literature which has a direct bearing on the problem or study under discussion and it has thus, been segmented into the following aspects: Concept of reading comprehension, conceptual review, review of studies; Instructional Practices in Teaching Reading Comprehension, Assessment Tasks/Strategies Teachers use in Reading Comprehension Lessons and the Assessment of Learners' Performance in Reading Comprehension.

#### **2.2 Concept of Reading Comprehension**

Reading Comprehension has been defined differently by different scholars across the world. It is therefore, imperative to consider a wide range of views to avoid making a myopic stance on matters of research. Reading Comprehension, according to Pour-Mohammadi and Abidin (2011, p.238) is defined as “an interactive mental process between a reader’s linguistic knowledge, knowledge of the world, and knowledge about a given topic.” Here, Pour-Mohammadi and Abidin consider Reading Comprehension as one aspect that involves mental interaction between what a reader knows about a particular language in terms of meaning or vocabulary and structure, what he or she knows about the world and what the topic at hand is all about whose positive impact is understanding. Liou (2021) posits that Reading Comprehension is an important skill for navigating the textual world around us. She further explains that Reading Comprehension is a dynamic process that involves making predictions, summarizing the main idea, questioning one's predictions, and clarifying unclear concepts. Kirby (2007, p.1) submits that “Reading comprehension is the process by which we understand the texts we read.” Kirby’s definition is oversimplified as it does not bring out specific cognitive skills that lead to comprehension or understanding.

Unlike Kirby, Liou (2021) mentions such necessary skills as making predictions, summarizing the main idea, questioning one's predictions and clarifying ideas.

Furthermore, Snow (2002, p.11) defines Reading Comprehension as “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language.” In view of this definition, we can deduce that reading involves three interrelated elements namely the reader, the text, and the activity or the reading process which should all be situated into a broader sociocultural context. Therefore, to comprehend a text, Snow (2002, p.11) substantiates his definition by stating that “a reader must be well equipped with a host of abilities such as attention, memory, inferencing and motivation.” Motivation depends on the reading goals and interest of a reader. Snow, Pour-Mohammadi, Albidin and Liou (2021) have attempted to submit mouthwatering definitions that have brought out many key aspects like the mental interaction among the key interrelated elements namely the reader, the text, the reading activity, motivation, memory, inferencing, the sociocultural context or the reader's knowledge of the world and the reader's linguistic knowledge. All the ideas stated therefore help in understanding that, a reader must be presented with suitable texts, coupled with good teaching techniques and activities that will foster the reading comprehension skills or abilities. This ultimately suggests that there must be careful selection of texts and methods and/or techniques that align with expected learning outcomes in reading comprehension.

## **2. 3. Conceptual Review**

### **2.3.1 Strategies to Increase Student Reading Comprehension**

Cunningham and Tierney (1980) give details of strategies used in the teaching of comprehension. Reading comprehension according to Cunningham and Tierney (1980) needs the teacher to use the following strategies: Pre-reading activities, Guiding Reader/Text Interactions during Reading to Learn, Teacher Interventions Following Reading to Learn and General Comments on Increasing Learning from Text/Prose. These strategies are further explained below.

### **2.3.2. Pre-reading Activities**

Pre-reading activities include using the learners' background knowledge on the topic and building on it. The learner's background knowledge refers to the knowledge that the learner possesses about the topic of the text to be read as he/she is not an empty vessel. Then the teacher may ask oral questions to find out what the learners know about the topic. The learners' prior knowledge can also be used to activate learners' attention and interest or motivation in the lesson can also be facilitated by way of pre-teaching of vocabulary. Another pre-reading activity that can be used as a teaching strategy for reading comprehension is activating background knowledge and attention-focusing. This is supported by Anthony (1989, p.6) who quotes Johnston (1983)'s argument that "the relationship between vocabulary and comprehension is due to the fact that knowledge of vocabulary is actually a measure of background knowledge and should not be thought of as a separate influential factor in reading comprehension."

Hunter (1982) calls the above instructional procedure as the *Get Student attention and review* where learners are. This can be done by giving hand-outs, review questions written on the classroom screen or board, a video clip on screen, a discussion prompt that engages students in a brief sharing time of background knowledge. The ideas according to Hunter are endless and teachers are encouraged to be creative. The point is to get them to talk about the topic of the text to be read and to find out if they know something about it or to supply some background information.

### **2.3.3. Guiding Reader/Text Interactions during Reading**

The second strategy used in teaching reading comprehension according to Cunningham and Tierney (1980) is guiding reader/text interactions during reading to learn. First, the teacher plays the role of a facilitator to guide the learners in the process of interacting with the text by instructing individual learners to read the text paragraph by paragraph loudly while the rest of the class follow through silently. The teacher can ask the learners oral questions on each paragraph read. Alternatively, the teacher may write these questions based on each paragraph on the board in advance so that individual learners can have these questions in their minds as they read the text. This helps the learners to acquire the skill of self-questioning. Questioning is a reading strategy that is taught to students to help them engage with the text. It helps them to clarify what they are reading and to understand the text better. Sometimes the whole class may be directed to read the text silently and the teacher can ask oral questions

paragraph by paragraph as another way of teaching them self-questioning. These techniques ensure effective interaction between the learner and the text under the guidance from the teacher. The responses to self-questioning on the part of the learner provoke critical thinking and enables learning to take place during reading. Sometimes, the answers to the questions can be answered within the text but at other times the learners have to think beyond the text through making inferences. Examples of self-questioning or the teacher's oral questions that can be answered from within the text during reading might be:

- What happened in the text so far?
- What are the most important things you have learnt so far?

On the other hand, inference questions might be:

- What do you think will happen next?
- What does this text remind you of?

#### **2.3.4. Teacher Interventions Following Reading to Learn**

Thirdly, a teacher can use intervention to enhance learning in a learner during a reading comprehension lesson. Intervention can be done by using post-reading questions, getting feedback from the learners, and group and whole-class discussions of the text. Post-reading questions refer to questions that the teacher may pose to the learners with the aim of getting feedback from them after they have read the text during a reading comprehension lesson. This can be achieved by using post-reading comprehension strategies. The aim of such strategies is to give learners a way to summarize, reflect and question what they have read. Matthew Lynch (2021) proposes the following examples of Post-reading comprehension strategies:

##### **2.3.4.1 Exit Slips**

Exit slip post-reading tactic is used to help learners reflect on what they have just read. Sort out ideas and what they feel about the material learned. It requires learners to use critical thinking. The teacher can write the following questions on the slips or cards and distribute them to groups or to each learner:

- a. Write down one thing you have learned today.
- b. Discuss one thing you that have learned today that can be useful in the real world.

- c. State one thing or things that surprised you in the text today.
- d. Rate your understanding of today's topic on the scale of 1 to 5.

#### **2.3.4.2 Frame Routine**

Matthew Lynch (2021) further proposes Frame Routine which is a class tactic that uses a graphic organizer to assist learners in organizing topics, main ideas and vital details of what they have just read. Elizabeth Kroll (2021) in the article titled *Graphic Organizer: Definition, Types and Examples* defines a Graphic Organizer as a visual tool that helps students learn and organize topics. It, thus, helps learners summarize what they have learned. This strategy is used in the following way:

- a. Choose the topic. The topic is the title of what you have read.
- b. Identify the main idea. Write down the important details of the topic.
- c. Talk about the details and write the details in the appropriate sections.
- d. Learners write a brief summary of the conclusion that they have created.
- e. Finally, study the information on the frame to ensure that it is clear and well organized. Then the teacher evaluates it and plans follow-up activities to extend learner learning.

#### **2.3.4.3 Question the Author**

Matthew Lynch (2021) lastly proposes Questioning the Author which is a tactic that requires learners to pose questions that critique the author's writing. It engages all the learners in the content and helps to cement their comprehension. This strategy is employed in the following way:

- a. The teacher should choose an interesting passage that would make for a good discussion.
- b. Mark specific spots that you want to pause so learners can gain comprehension.
- c. Make specific questions for each spot in the text to ask learners, for example; What is the author trying to communicate? Why did the author use this phrase?
- d. Provide a brief passage to learners with a few questions.
- e. Challenge the learners to read and answer the questions that the teacher has modelled.

### **2.3.5. General Comments on Increasing Learning from Text/Prose**

A number of studies, according to Cunningham and Tierney (1980, p.40), “have examined the influence upon student learning of a variety of orienting strategies, guided reading procedures and post-reading activities.” Teachers may read the passage and make comments on it as a strategy to help learners learn from it. Making comments on the passage by the teacher means that teacher gives an overview on what the text or passage is all about. This strategy, therefore, increases the learners understanding of texts in reading comprehension as it lessens the complexity of the text especially for slow learners. Additionally, it arouses the readers’ interest in attempting to read the text or passage.

The ECZ Literature and Languages Performance Review Report (2016, p.9) quoting Tinker and McCullough (1975) adds that “The comprehension of a paragraph requires comprehension of its sentences as well as an understanding of the relationships between the sentences which are essential for grasping the larger meaning of the passage.” Tinkler and McCullough imply that there is a relationship between grammatical sophistication and reading comprehension because as learners learn to use more complex sentences in their oral and written language, their ability to make sense of what they read increases. Therefore, teachers must ensure that grammatical concepts are taught in an orderly manner so that learners can transfer the same knowledge and skills and apply them in the reading comprehension lesson.

Furthermore, Kelly (2020) remarks that a good strategy to teach reading comprehension is to generate questions. Learners should be taught by the teacher on how to generate questions as they read or interact with the text. The nature of questions could be based on what the learners have already read by asking themselves whether what they have read makes sense. Sometimes questions can be about what is yet to be read and to do this, they can make predictions based on the knowledge they possess. These could be either questions about what has happened or what they think might happen in the future. Doing so can help the learners to focus on the main ideas and increase the students’ engagement with the material.

On reading aloud, Kelly further notes that, reading aloud and monitoring the fluency, pronunciation and confidence during the reading activity can work well in the reading

comprehension lessons. She notes that reading aloud in a secondary classroom shows some evidence that it benefits middle and high school even if some scholars think it's an elementary practice.

Furthermore, attention to text structure cannot be over emphasized. This practice can help the learners to use the elements in a story's structure (setting, Character, plot, etc.) as a means of helping them recall story content. Kelly also adds that students should take note and make notes on texts. With this practice they can write down questions, create a vocabulary list of all the highlighted words in the chapter along with any unfamiliar terms that need to define. This part is very important as can be seen from ECZ Literature and languages Performance Review Report (2016) which indicates that average and low performers exhibited narrow scope of vocabulary, misunderstanding of questions and contexts among other challenges.

In view of the above, it is also important to mention that another crucial aspect as propounded by Kelly is the use of context clues. This is important as students need to look at context clues, that is a word or a phrase directly before or after a word they may not know to work out the meaning of that unfamiliar word or expression.

Summarization of the text can also not be left out when dealing with texts. Learners should be encouraged to stop their reading periodically and summarize what they have just read. In creating a summary, learners have to integrate the most important ideas and generalize from the text information. They need to separate the important ideas from the unimportant or irrelevant elements. It is thus a way of showing that they understand what they have read.

### **2.3.6. Criterion for Assessing Learners in Reading Comprehension**

According to Black and Wiliam (1998) assessment is seen as the practice of detecting and defining the student's knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills. It is a classroom activity used to stimulate learning by collecting data and offering constructive feedback.

Palomba and Banta (1994, p.4) on the other hand define assessment as the systematic collection, review and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving learning and development.

The ECZ Literature and Languages Performance Review Report (2016,) indicates that there are two major reasons for aligning examinations with learning objectives. First, alignment increases the probability that learners will be provided with the opportunities to learn and practice the knowledge and skills that will be required on the various designed examinations. When examinations and objectives are aligned, ‘good grades’ are more likely to translate into ‘good learning’. When assessment is not aligned with the curriculum and instruction, it can undermine learner performance.

The ECZ Performance Review Report further points out that the teaching syllabus for English at Grade 12 outlines four major skills that need to be taught to a learner namely Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking. However, at Grade 12 only two areas are assessed: these are Reading and Writing. The Report further highlights objectives which are embedded in the Grade Twelve 2015 Assessment Scheme which are knowledge of vocabulary, comprehension of passages etc. The International Association for evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) give a further guide of what is expected in assessment of reading comprehension as discussed below.

### **2.3.7. International Association for Evaluation Achievements’ PIRLS Reading Processes**

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is an international comparative study directed by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The aim of PIRLS is to assess and compare the reading performance of pupils in their fourth year of formal schooling across participating countries. The PIRLS is a concept that started as a reaction to the findings of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) of 1995 by IEA, which reported very poor language skills in the participating learners as they struggled to formulate their answers in English.

According to Mullins and Martin (2015), the International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) uses four reading processes to assess reading comprehension. These are:

- Focusing on and retrieving explicitly stated information
- making straight-forward inferences
- interpreting and integrating ideas and information
- Examining and evaluating content, language and textual elements.

Mullis and Martin (2016), note the degree of complexity and sophistication of assessment questions in PIRLS's framework differ from one process to another. They postulated that it would possibly seem that locating and extracting explicitly stated information would be less difficult than, for example, making interpretations across an entire text and integrating external ideas and information. Consequently, the nature of the text can determine the level of difficulty of the question asked across the IEA's four types of reading comprehension processes. However, learning develops from simple to complex as it is expected of learners to move from simple retrieval of explicitly stated details and straight-forward inferences to the higher level of thinking of analyzing and evaluating the content, linguistic and textual elements in the text.

Building on the IEA's reading processes as reported by Mullis and Martin (2015), children can understand a text at various levels including the literal, inferential, application and evaluation. . To clarify this, Weih (2008) elucidates that at literal level, they understand the who, what, where, when-type of information in the texts. At the inferential level, they understand the intended message the author is trying to convey through text. Furthermore, at the application level, Weih notes that children understand that they can take the information the author conveyed and apply it to what they know about the topic they are reading about or to what they have learned about the topic. Finally, when it comes to the evaluation level, learners are expected to understand that they can take information gained from the text and use it to think in new ways (form new opinions), create something new, or investigate a "what if" type of scenario.

Generally, as Piaget (1926) in *The Language and Thought of the Child* puts it, whether children are listening to the teacher or reading the text on their own, the processes of reaching the four levels of reading comprehension indicated below can occur through thought engagement:

- The act of reading text or listening to the text being read aloud can create sensory activity in children's brains that can cause them to experience mental images and emotions as they think about the meanings of what is being conveyed through the text
- Children make mental connections which includes emotional connections between the text and their own individual background experiences and information, which is called prior knowledge.

- In processing text, then each child relates to the text through his or her individual perspective or lens, based on his or her culture i.e. family and community and exposure to every form of other text videos and films (Rosenblatt, 1969, 1978, 1982)

New information is learned through this process and attached to the old information, and so the process continues throughout their lives Piaget (1926).

#### **2.4 Review of Studies on Teachers' Instructional Practices in Teaching Reading Comprehension**

Reading comprehension requires effective instructional practices or teaching strategies to achieve its intended objectives. Effective instructional practices help in making learners engaged and participating actively in the teaching and learning process. A lot of studies concerning effective instructional practices in reading comprehension have been conducted.

Among them, a review study by Kim et al (2012) was conducted in Texas, America. The aim of the study was to examine the effectiveness of critical factors in instruction for improving the reading comprehension of middle school students with learning disabilities. The study was conducted by involving a total of 465 students with learning disabilities from different studies by different scholars. In the case of data collection, sampling assignments, standard tests, researcher-developed measures and standards and matched-paired assignments were used in collecting data from the participants. The findings indicated that interventions incorporating strategy instruction, specifically, main ideas and summarization, yielded high effects on comprehension (Kim et al, 2012:1). The following were found to be effective instructional practices for teaching reading comprehension as they contribute to learner's understanding of a text:

- Teaching students to identify main ideas and summarizing passages.
- Teaching students to see underlying structure of the text.
- Using supplemental materials and interactive delivery methods such as videos.
- Peer-assisted learning and questioning.
- Incorporating vocabulary and self-monitoring.

In view of the above, Mary (2023) in *Text Deconstruction in High School - The Basics and beyond* explains that deconstruction aims at disturbing in order to discover. In this case, learners learn to read beyond a text's straight-forward content and uncover the new meanings. First, learners must grasp the main ideas, arguments, claims made in a text. Second, they should be able to identify the basic structure of a text and how it supports the main ideas. They can go on analyzing the claims and the main ideas by looking at the evidence that supports them. The learners can even investigate the author's purpose of writing a text.

This study by Kim et al (2012) was important to my study because it helped me to explore teachers' instructional practices used during reading comprehension teaching and learning. However, this study by Kim et al examined the already established instructional practices teachers were using in the teaching of reading comprehension and also focused specifically on learners with learning disabilities which could not be applied to learners without teaching and learning disabilities. Additionally, the study was just reviewing other studies on instructional practices that were already established. My study however aimed at examining the instructional practices from the Zambian context in the schools where the study was conducted. In my study, the instructional practices used were not clearly known. Hence, the gaps.

Another study was conducted by Tuturahiza (2008) that aimed at examining the instructional practices that English as Second Language (ESL) teachers in secondary schools use to facilitate student's background knowledge, pose questions about the text as their strategy in teaching reading. To add on, Mkandawire et al. (2022) suggests modelling as part of instructional practices and defines modelling of a text as "showing the learners what to do, demonstrating and practicing the steps, as preparation for dependent/joint and independent work." In this case, the teacher helps learners build up their understanding about the purpose of the text at hand including its general language features to enable them gain enough background knowledge. Furthermore, Maala and Mkandawire (2022) notes that this stage helps to investigate the structural pattern and language features, comparing the model with other examples of the same text type.

Tutyrahiza's findings revealed that activating student's background knowledge was an effective strategy for teaching and learning reading regardless of the level of the student. Tutyrahiza's findings are in tandem with Hayes and Tierney (cited in Carrell,1988), when they stated that presenting background knowledge that is related to the topic to be learned helped students to learn from text in spite of how the background information was presented and how specific or general it was. They postulated that such a strategy was suitable for all levels of students because it helped them in understanding the meaning of text. The above indicates that teachers' instructional practices are essential for students' performance in reading.

Tutyrahiza's study was very important to my study because it helped me to look at how teachers build the context by creating activities which helped students to comprehend the content of the text or how they used background knowledge to engage the learners in understanding the content to be learnt.

However, this study leaves a gap because firstly, it was done in Malaysia which cannot be generalised to a Zambian context. Secondly, the study was aimed at examining the instructional practices that facilitate teaching and learning reading (ESL). My study however, was an examination of the teaching and assessment of reading comprehension in secondary schools.

Yusuf (2015) also conducted a study in Senior Secondary Schools in Kaduna, Nigeria to determine the impact of interactive activities on students' performance in reading comprehension. Senior secondary students from two government schools far apart from each were used as participants in the study. These schools had 40 students per class. Students from one school were used as an experimental group and the other was used as a control group. The study also used pre-test and post-test quasi experimental design. The findings suggested that interactive activities are helpful in understanding and comprehending written texts. They also help teachers to see how students' individual thought processes are working with the information received from the text. Consequently, "promoting conversation through turning on the meaning using light bulbs, multiple activities and experiences using various channels of communications such as teacher-student, student-teacher, student-students' could increase students' use of language as well as improve reading fluency" (Yusuf, 2015, p.6; Iversen & Mkandawire, 2020).

Yusuf's study was an important piece of research to my study because it helped me to focus on how teachers ensured that learners were collectively able to make meaning from the text. It helped my study to focus on how teachers helped learners to work in groups and applied critical thinking skills in working in groups.

However, the study conducted by Yusuf already had an instructional strategy (Interactive Activities) as an independent variable in conducting the study. The study was aimed at assessing Interactive Activities' impact on the learners' performance in reading comprehension in Kaduna. On the contrary, my study was aimed at examining the instructional practices which first needed to be established (not predetermined) as it was not known whether they were used or not.

Furthermore, in Zambia, a study was conducted by Chuunga in 2013 in Monze District. Chuunga's study was aimed at investigating how teachers practice the teaching of reading and writing towards supporting learners with reading difficulties at the lower primary level. The study included three schools and six teachers from the same schools who had classes of 55 to 78 learners. The study found out that various or different strategies were used by teachers as instructional practices in teaching reading such as direct group-based teaching, small groups, question and answer techniques, one-on-one teaching, paired and group reading, chorus reading, and giving feedback.

Chunga's study was also of great importance to my study as it was looking at reading which is a prerequisite to reading comprehension. It was also essential to my study because, the findings revealed that, different strategies were used by teachers as instructional practices in teaching reading. It was worth investigating the interventions that teachers use to help learners acquire reading comprehension skills. Chuunga's study however, left a gap for my study for two reasons. The first one is that the study was focusing on the strategies or instructional practices for teaching a step to reading comprehension which is 'reading' and not 'reading comprehension' in entirety. Secondly, the participants were primary school graders and not secondary school learners, which were the focus for my study. It was therefore worth investigating on the interventions that teachers put in place to help learners acquire reading comprehension skills. Baier (2005, p.8) as quoted in Sultan-Nafa (2022) states that "reading is fundamentally important for success. It opens doors to individual freedom and shuts doors to opportunity. Learning to read is a means to an end. The best

prevention of reading difficulties, therefore, is early intervention strategies at pre-school or kindergarten.”

Another study conducted in Zambia was done by Muyangana (2012) on Strategies Employed by Teachers in the Teaching of Reading Comprehension in Lusaka district. Muyangana’s study used qualitative methodology in both collection and analysis of data. His findings revealed that most learners had challenges with reading comprehension and that reading comprehension was not taught in the manner it was supposed to. He further revealed that, most comprehension lessons were characterized by testing instead of teaching. The morale of most teachers was low and that was portrayed by the manner in which they started and ended their lessons. Some noticeable features of comprehension observed were poor lesson presentations, unsatisfactory general lesson delivery, poor teaching techniques, teachers’ non-reading culture and pupils lack of confidence in some teachers. Others were insufficient reading materials in some schools and the preferences of outdated books.

Muyangana’s study was very important to my study as it had looked at the teaching strategies employed by teachers in teaching of reading comprehension in secondary schools which was also a focus of my study. My study looked at instructional practices used in teaching reading comprehension in secondary school and so there was that similarity. However, Muyangana did not look at assessment strategies used by teachers in reading comprehension hence the gap.

## **2.5 Review of Studies on Teachers’ Assessment Practices in teaching Reading Comprehension Lessons**

Reading comprehension assesses learners in various aspects of cognitive development such as understanding, inferential skills, making judgment, interpretation, analytical skills, etc. The emphasis on Cognitive development owes to the fact that reading is a mental process as argued in the article titled *Bloom’s Taxonomy in Designing Reading Comprehension Questions* (2019, p.41) that “traditional education tends to focus on the Cognitive Domain because the skills in this domain revolve around knowledge, comprehension and critical thinking of a particular topic.” Therefore, the type of assessment tasks or questions determine what skill the learner is required to demonstrate in attending to the given task or problem. Different scholars from all over the world have conducted studies related to reading comprehension assessments tasks

and/or strategies and the skills reading comprehension engages. Snyder et al (2005, p.10) presents the following as the five key features of knowledge skills that reading comprehension assessment seeks to achieve:

- Extracting meaning from the wording and grammar of the text.
- Building a basic understanding of the text base explicitly contained in the selection.
- Going beyond what is explicitly stated in the text, drawing inferences to build a mental representation or idea of what the text is about.
- Dealing with genre-specific text structures (e.g., narrative vs. rhetorical text organization) and apprehend the different channels of communication used by the writer (e.g., narrator, participant, or audience)
- Following culturally appropriate ground rules for respective text types.

To engage students, the assessment practices need to attend to the cognitive skills of learners and there are five forms of questions that can be used in assessing learners in reading comprehension according to Day and Park (2005, p.6) and these are, “*Yes/NO questions, Alternative questions, True/False questions, Wh-questions and Multiple choice questions.*”

These forms of questions guide the engagement of learners’ cognitive skills (literal understanding of text, inferential skills, passage summary skills, prediction and evaluation skills depending on the type and objective of the text. For example, questions that begin with *where, what, when, who, how, and why* are called *wh-questions*. They are effective in engaging learners in literal understanding of the text, reorganizing information in the text, and making evaluations, personal responses and predictions. They can also be used as follow-ups to other questions forms, such as *yes/no* and *alternative* in assessing reading comprehension (Day and Park, 2005).

Habib (2016) states that, in order to assess reading comprehension, teachers should use several methods and no single technique can truly measure students’ reading skills. He notes that, a reading comprehension test may incorporate activities such as gap filling, short questions, multiple choice questions, true or false questions, and yes-no questions. Habib adds that there are numerous methods and forms of reading comprehension tasks that can be used in assessing students’ comprehension and

stimulating their understanding of a text. These techniques may take formal or informal forms and so in line with Day and Park (2005). Sally and Katie (2008) outline the following as some of the tasks:

#### *Yes-No Questions*

Sally and Katie (2008) advises that these forms of questions should be answered with either yes or no and teachers are recommended to follow up these by other types of questions to make sure that students have understood the text as Yes /NO questions can be answered correctly by chance.

#### *True or False questions*

This is another type of a reading test that is familiar to most learners. It contains of a text accompanied by a series of statements. This type of reading comprehension questions provides learners with a set of sentences or statements that need the learners to choose and indicate if the given statements are true or false according to the text. Learners are required to read the text and discover the true and the false statements without giving answers in a complex written response.

#### *Matching*

For this particular task, learners need to choose from a list of stimuli. These prompts may be statements, headings, or question completion. For instance, learners can be asked to match a description to the appropriate paragraph, or to match words and phrases to their meanings.

#### *WH questions*

Wh questions are questions that begin with Wh such as: “where”, “why”, “who”, “when”, and “how”. These questions are useful in providing learners with literal understanding of a text and help them recognize information in the text and make evaluations and personal predictions.

#### *Open -Ended Questions*

These questions are used in standardized assessments. These forms of questions are very important in assessing the component skills of comprehension such as the ability of learners to make inferences from the text. Learners are asked different questions for the reason of testing their memory and their comprehension of the text.

### *Multiple-Choice Questions*

Multiple choice tasks are composed of a text which can be of any type accompanied by multiple choice items. These choices may be in the form of statements, a question with answers, or incomplete statements with a choice of phrases or words. Generally, there are three or four options and only one of them is the right one. It is very cardinal to have statements equivalent to specific paragraphs or sections of the text, but there may be statements that assess comprehension of the whole text. Developing a good multiple-choice question need a careful consideration. Sally and Katie (2008) observe that a question with four choices works best for learners with low proficiency in the target language, and one of the four choices should sound the right and the desired answer. Literal comprehension can be checked more effectively by the use of multiple-Choice questions and can be further used for prediction and evaluation.

### *Gapped Texts*

This kind of reading comprehension test includes texts or diagrams from which single words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs are deleted. The filling the gaps tasks can also be used in testing grammar and vocabulary. Learners sometimes have to decide what should fill in the gap. Others times, they are given a series of alternatives for choice. Where words, sentences, or paragraphs are removed.

### *Proofreading*

Sally and Katie (2008) indicate that, this kind of tasks includes deliberate errors or mistakes of different types in the text provided. Despite the fact the proofreading activities make part of grammar and vocabulary tests, they can also be used in reading comprehension assessments. In fact, the texts can be of any type and, in most cases, is formed of numbered lines. Some lines may involve an extra, or a misspelt word, or an error of punctuation, while the other lines are correct. At this level, learners need to read the text, mark the correct lines, remove the extra words, and correct the spelling and punctuation errors.

Marin (2008) conducted a study aimed at exploring the assessment practices that teachers in reading comprehension program were using in Colombia. 15 teachers of English and the head of the Foreign Language Reading Program were used as participants. The study also used document analysis of foreign language program

regulations, a semi-structured interview for the head of the program and a structured interview with the 15 teachers from the reading comprehension program.

Findings from the study showed that each teacher used his/her own criteria and a variety of instruments in assessing reading comprehension. These included quizzes, multiple-choice questions, tests and class participation, reading reports and presentations of which most of them were inclining to quantitative strategies where teachers find it easy to quantify the students' responses in terms of them being wrong or right. Furthermore, teachers had diverse practices in assessing reading comprehension and mostly used quantitative instruments to evaluate qualitatively. Their students lacked familiarity with qualitative assessment practices; teachers also lacked familiarity with alternative assessment and were concerned about the verification of achievement of learning objectives (Marin, 2008).

Marin's (2008) study was cardinal to my study because it revealed that teachers used different instruments and own criteria in assessing learners in reading comprehension which also gave me morale to find out which of those various instruments were being used by the teachers in the Zambian setup. Hence, the need for my research.

Marin's study however focused on Summative Assessment. Therefore, a study in Zambia was needed to examine the tasks or practices teachers use in assessing reading comprehension during the teaching process, which is formative assessment and not summative assessment, which was the Centre of Marin's study.

Another study in South Africa by Mkhwanzi et al, (2014) on Teachers use of formative assessment in the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 learners. The study was conducted to describe, explore and obtain evidence-based data on the facilitation of formative assessment in the teaching of reading comprehension in Grade three (3). Nkhwazi and the group found out that teachers lacked the knowledge of teaching reading comprehension and formative assessment. Consequently, they failed to plan to use formative assessment in their lessons to enhance the teaching of reading comprehension.

Mkhwanzi's study helped my study in the sense that it was focusing on formative assessment which was also one area I focused on. My study was partly centered on finding out how teachers assessed learners formatively. Nonetheless, Mkhwanzi et al's

study left a gap for my study to be conducted for two reasons: Firstly, it was focused mainly on the use of formative assessment by the teachers in teaching reading comprehension and secondly, it was targeting reading comprehension assessment at Primary school level, specifically Grade three (3) learners. My study however was aimed at examining the assessment practices teachers use in teaching reading comprehension at Senior Secondary school level.

## **2.6 Review of Studies on Learners' Performance in Reading Comprehension**

A lot of studies have been conducted by scholars to assess the performance of learners at various levels i.e. age, grade and in different languages in reading comprehension. For example, a study was conducted by Giang (2017) on Reading Comprehension Performance of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Students in Vietnam. The study was aimed at determining the cause of reading skill acquisition that affects the study habit of 221 EFL freshmen at 7 Universities in Thai Nguyen. The findings of the study revealed that students' level of competence in reading comprehension is merely the state of being literal in dimension which means understanding of information and facts directly stated in the text such as keywords. The findings revealed that EFL freshmen were only easy to understand what they read at low level type of understanding. Reading comprehension with cognitive evaluation was an obstacle for them to go over.

Giang (2017) observed that Reading comprehension involves critical thinking and scientific reasoning. Therefore, it is advisable that the programs should be designed to encourage these two factors with a variety of genres of reading comprehension. Besides, it is better to expose students with selected materials that meet the demand of students in the area of English language communication. More diversified activities and strategies should be taken into account to draw the interest of EFL freshmen. Giang's (2017) study gave a basis for my study as he revealed that EFL freshmen were only easy to understand what they read at low level type of questions. My study also identified a problem through the ECZ chief examiners report where learners supposedly struggled to answer questions that needed them to think or understand a text beyond word level. Hence it was important that I establish if the students from my study experienced the same difficulties as the students in Giang's study.

Despite being so important to my study, Giang's study left a gap because his study was aimed at finding out the causes of the difficulty of reading skill acquisition that

affected the study habits of the 221 EFL freshmen. My study however was aimed at examining teacher's instructional and assessment practices in reading comprehension of Grade 12 secondary school learners and not on the acquisition of mere reading.

Another study of utmost relevance to my study was an action research study which was an experimental intervention done by Rahaman in (2014) in Dhaka, Bangladesh on Reading comprehension through group work activities in an EFL classroom. In his study, he endeavored to analyse the use of classroom group work activity in relation with reading comprehension with the possibility of applying group work in classroom.

Rahaman adopted a mixed method research in which a pre-test and post tests were administered to Grade Eights (8s) EFL learners. The results indicated an average standard mark scheme on the Pre-test results, which was given to learners prior to group activities. The post test was in the same framework as the pre-test. The results were prepared based on different questions which had been tried to maintain same quality as the pre-test. After conducting group work activities, the students were very excited to perform. The post-test's results showed remarkable improvement among students and they could answer the reading task better than before when they didn't get group tasks and discussion. The results showed that after group work was applied in classroom, the students were very keen to participate. The results indicated that comprehension reading skill is based on understanding and generating ideas. Hence, the text should be internalized and comprehensible and group work has a good impact to develop this ability. The data showed in this research advocates that noticeable better results could be achieved through group work than traditional drills. The learners feel more comfort and enthusiastic by doing such activities. It is also found that group work can be applied in an EFL context.

Rahaman's study was very important to my study because it was looking at one of the classroom activities in reading comprehension which was group work and my study also thrived to find out the instructional practices used in reading comprehension teaching in class, group work inclusive. The findings also revealed that group work activities had an effect on the results.

However, Rahama's study was experimental and it looked at one practice which was group work while mine looked at different classroom activities in teaching and assessing reading comprehension. Hence the gap.

Furthermore, a study to ascertain the effect of phonological and morphological awareness on reading comprehension in Hebrew speaking adolescents who had reading disabilities (RD) was conducted by Schiff et al. (2011). The study found out that phonological and morphological awareness of RD readers are critical for both word-reading and reading comprehension abilities and that difficulty at word-reading level hinders processing mechanisms that eventually entails impaired reading and reading comprehension skills (Schiff et al; 2011, p.59).

Schiff et al's study leaves a gap in the sense that it was focusing on factors influencing reading comprehension on readers who were third and seventh graders and with reading disabilities (RD). Secondly, it was testing reading comprehension in participants who were Monolingual Hebrew speakers; and not English language which was the focus for my study. My study was also looking at teachers' instructional practices in teaching and assessing reading comprehension.

Another study conducted by Kwiatskowska-White (2012) in Ontario, Canada found out that later reading comprehension difficulties in children are evident early in their schooling. Secondly, reading comprehension difficulties was found to occur at multiple levels, specifically in word-level vocabulary knowledge and in text base and situation model construction and that reading comprehension occurring at multiple levels assists in the conceptualization of the multidimensionality of reading comprehension (Kwiatkowska-White, 2012, p.166-167).

This study however, was longitudinal and it was assessing the performance of reading comprehension in learners progressively from primary level to high school level. My study however was aimed at assessing performance of learners in reading comprehension just from the reading comprehension test that was administered based on the PIRLS Assessment Framework

Furthermore, Lekota (2014) assessed learners' performance in reading comprehension in South Africa where two groups were selected as samples comprising an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group had the advantage of

being exposed to a topic over a month, on the day of the test the two groups were combined, and the results from the test were analyzed. The outcomes showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group proving that prior knowledge increases chances of comprehension.

Lekota's study was also very instrumental to my study, because the aspect of exposing the learners "experimental group" to material prior to testing them helped me focus on the type of content the teachers administered to the learners and how relatable was this content to the learners.

Lekota's study however leaves a gap also for my study in the sense that the participants in Lekota's study were primary school graders (Grade 6) which makes the findings not applicable to secondary school learners. In addition, it was a comparative study of advantaged group (learners who were exposed to the reading comprehension material before assessment) and the disadvantaged group (learners who read the reading comprehension assessment text at the time of assessment). This made my study worth undertaking as the findings from Lekota's study cannot be generalized and be applied to learners who we're not going to be compared in scores based on prior exposure to the assessment text.

Another study that can't go without mentioning is the study which was done by Chazangwe (2011) on the performance of Grade twelve pupils in reading comprehension. The study was conducted in Southern Province of Zambia in Kalomo district. He looked at teachers' perception in teaching reading comprehension in Secondary schools and part of the research also looked at how teachers prepared for the reading comprehension lessons. His findings revealed that reading comprehension is one of the skills mostly avoided being taught by many teachers and that the teachers had a bad perception on reading comprehension. These teachers also did not expect good performance from their own learners. This study further revealed that the learners' performance was quite poor and Chazangwe concluded that teachers did not do their part in reading comprehension lesson preparation and the learners also did not play their part. In his conclusion, he stated that teachers did not often prepare when going to class.

This study was of utmost importance to my study because it looked at reading comprehension of Grade twelve learners and their performance which was part of what I also looked at in my study.

However, his study did not look at the practices that teachers use in class. Hence leaving a gap for my study to undertake the instructional practices used in teaching and assessing reading comprehension skills to the learners

## **2.7 Summary**

This chapter has presented a review of literature related to the study according to the objectives. It has presented studies from a western, African and Zambian context. Under each cited study, the knowledge gap has been presented. The next chapter presents the methodology for the study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Overview**

This chapter presents the methodology that was employed in the study. Kazdin (1992) defines research methodology as the principles, procedures and practices that govern the research. This chapter presents the research paradigm, research design, the target population, study sample, sampling procedure, data collection instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis and the ethical considerations for this study. It ends with a summary of issues discussed in the chapter.

#### **3.1. Research Paradigm**

Research paradigms according to Tracy (2013) are preferred ways of understanding reality, building knowledge, and gathering information about the world. This study employed pragmatism research paradigm since the researcher drew from both qualitative and quantitative approaches to collect and analyse data. Pragmatists look to many approaches to collect and analyse data and investigators use both qualitative and quantitative data because they work to provide the best understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2003). Therefore, this research paradigm was appropriate in this study because the researcher explored teachers' instructional practices in teaching reading comprehension in class, and teachers' assessment practices in reading comprehension and how they related to instructional practices using qualitative research approach. Moreover, the researcher also assessed learners' performance in reading comprehension according to PIRLS' assessment framework for reading comprehension using quantitative research approach.

#### **3.2 Mixed Methods Approach**

This study employed a mixed methods approach. A mixed methods study is one in which the researcher incorporates both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis in a single study. This type of study enables the policy researcher to understand complex phenomena qualitatively as well as explain the phenomena through numbers, charts, and basic statistical analysis. Creswell (2007).

Creswell (2014, p.32) further defined a mixed method as “an approach to inquiry involving collecting both qualitative and quantitative data, integrating the two forms of data, and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks.” The core assumption of this form of inquiry is that the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) also note that, the fundamentals of Mixed Method Research have multiple allegiances and these allegiances determine and embrace what the world is like and how to look at the world, views of reality, ways of understanding, knowing about and researching that reality and values / value systems, e.g., value-free, or value-laden research. These are brought together in different ways in different paradigms.

Mixed methods Research was used in this study firstly because; Objectives 1 and 2 focussed on qualitative data which was collected through lesson observations, interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis.

Dooley (1984) noted that when research is based on qualitative methodology, it makes use of non-quantitative observations which are made in the field and analysed in non-statistical way. The major part of this study was based on such a type of research. Seale (2004) added that qualitative approach involves intensive studying of a single setting or number of people. It involves the researcher interacting, observing and interpreting meaning from the cases being studied.

It also involves the researcher describing kinds of characteristics of people and events without comparing them in terms of measurements and amounts or numbers. This approach was appropriate for this study because I was partly interested in studying teachers’ classroom practices by interacting with them through lesson observations and interviews in their natural classrooms. This approach upholds the view that reality and viewpoints are not fixed variables in life. Denzin and Lincoln (2013, p. 3) add that “qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.”

Secondly, research objective 3 was centred on quantitative data which was collected by testing the learners' ability to exhibit knowledge of reading comprehension skills.

About 200 Grade twelve learners from the three schools were tested on the four broad based reading comprehension processes by Progress in International Reading Literacy Study "PIRLS" which are reading comprehension skills in all the four areas stipulated by PIRLS such as retrieving explicitly stated information, making straight-forward inferences, interpreting and integrating ideas and examining and evaluating language and textual elements. The data collected was analysed carefully on the four expected reading comprehension skills in learners.

The researcher calculated the average number of learners who were able to score correct answers on each PIRLS skill and the results of the tests were described and summarized in a meaningful way on each school and all schools put together as shown in table 1. The presence of the test scores from the reading comprehension test and the presentation of data in numeric forms serve as evidence of the quantitative form of research design.

The connection between qualitative and quantitative data in this study can be in such a way that the results of the reading comprehension tests showed the ability or inability by learners to understand reading comprehension questions beyond words and sentences. While the qualitative inquiry gave deep understanding of the causes of these abilities or inabilities through lesson observations, interviews, document analysis and questionnaires with the teachers. The ways of handling reading comprehension lessons provided an insight as to why the learners answered or failed to provide correct answers to certain reading comprehension questions.

### **3.3 Research Design**

To begin with, Creswell (2009, p.4) defines a research design as "plans and procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis". Additionally, Bryman and Bell (2019, p. 27) observed that "a research design is a framework for the collection and analysis of the data that is used to answer the research questions. It must satisfy certain criteria and the form it takes depends on the research questions being asked." In this study, the researcher used the embedded mixed method design.

### **3.3.1 The Embedded Mixed Method (EMM)**

An embedded mixed method (EMM) research design was adopted in this study. In this type of research design, the researcher combines the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data within a traditional quantitative research design or qualitative research design (Creswell and Clark, 2010). The collection and analysis of the data set may occur before, during, and/or after the implementation of the data collection and analysis procedures traditionally associated with the larger design (Mkandawire, 2022). In an embedded mixed method, the researcher collects and analyzes both quantitative and qualitative data to examine a case. Creswell (2006, p. 67) also defines the embedded Design as, “a mixed methods design in which one data set provides a supportive, secondary role in a study based primarily on the other data type”. Furthermore, Edmonds and Kennedy (2017) stated that, the embedded approach is similarly useful when the researcher logistically cannot place equal priority on both types of data or simply has little experience with one of the forms of data.

Embedded research design can be exemplified as “QUAN = Quantitative data which have priority over qualitative data. Quan = Quantitative data which are subordinate to qualitative data. QUAL = Qualitative data, which have priority over quantitative data. Qual = Qualitative data which are subordinate to quantitative data.” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p. 39 as cited in Mkandawire, 2022)

In this study, the researcher used , the embedded design in a “QUAL[quan]” or ‘(quan) QUAL’ manner where the qualitative data set were priorities over quantitative, or the quantitative inquiry is embedded in qualitative to provide alternative explanations to the results obtained in quantitative data.

### **3.4 Study Site**

The study was conducted in Ndola city particularly at three government secondary schools. According to Msabila and Nalaila (2013), there are many motivating factors that could influence the researchers’ choice of the study site, such as the nature and incidence of the problem, research time, and data accessibility, clients’ interest and instruction, resource availability, performance in particular field, goals and objectives of the study. I, therefore, chose Ndola city as my study site because the city is equipped with a District Resource Centre, Provincial Resource Centre and Ndola Public Library, and they are in close proximity and well-furnished with secondary sources or reference

books. In addition, the availability of government secondary schools with well stocked libraries and functional computer libraries made the study researchable. The clients or learners and teachers showed immense interest in participating in the investigation into how Reading Comprehension was being taught and assessed because it directly concerned them.

Furthermore, I selected Ndola as the study area for my study because the performance in English on the Copperbelt province from as far back as 2012 to 2018 had been below 40 % and Ndola being one of the largest districts in the province contributed massively to the statistics. This reason is well backed up by the Examinations Council of Zambia “ECZ” 2016 general performance analysis which indicated that Copperbelt Province average scores in English for 2012, 2014 and 2016 were 37.03, 34.49 and 36.94 respectively (ECZ , 2016, p.57). This information on the poor performance in English in Ndola, therefore, is representative of the entire province.

### **3.5 Study Population**

By definition, the study population according to Festinger, DeMatteo and Marczyk (2005, p.33) is “all individuals of interest to the researcher”. This study’s individuals of interest were all teachers of Grades eleven and twelve at the time of the research and all Grade Twelve learners from three government schools. Teachers were chosen because they are the key people in ensuring that learners get the right skills in preparation for reading comprehension exams and or any form of assessment.

### **3.6 Sampling Techniques**

The study used expert purposive sampling technique to select both Heads of Departments and teachers of English to participate in the study. Simple random sampling technique was used to sample pupils to participate in the study. The sample size for pupils was decided using the views by Collis and Hussey (2003). Collis and Hussey (2003) assert that the question of appropriate number of subjects to include in a sample is complex and it is a question of deciding how accurate the researcher wants the result to be and how confident is the answer. For the purpose of this research, the total sample size is confined to 200 learners, 12 teachers and 3 Heads of Department selected from three government schools in the Ndola district. All the teachers involved in teaching Grade twelve and Grade eleven learners as well as all the three Heads of

Department were sampled except for the ones who did not show willingness to participate for various personal and/or professional reasons.

### **3.7 Study Sample**

Festinger, DeMatteo and Marczyk, (2005) indicate that researchers typically study a subset of the population and that subset is called a sample. Researchers may not be able to study the entire population of interest. It is important that the sample be representative of the population from which it was selected. In this study, the sample size employed comprised of Grades eleven and twelve Secondary teachers of English, four from each school, and three heads of department in the three departments of Literature and Languages from schools A, B and C. These were thought would be helpful informants on the subject matter because the study was their area of specialization and expertise. The study sample size also comprised of 200 Grade twelve pupils: 67 from school A, 67 from school B and 66 from school C. This study sample made a total of 215 participants. This was a reasonable sample size for a mixed method study because it helped to provide data needed to fulfill the requirements of efficiency, representativeness, reliability and flexibility.

### **3.8 Data Collection methods and instruments**

Research instruments are guides, checklists and tools a researcher uses to gather data (Mkandawire, 2019). This study employed five data collection tools. These were: lesson observations protocol, document analysis sheet, questionnaires, interview guide and a test. The observation protocol was the first tool to be used to gather the teachers' approaches and instructional practices in teaching and assessing reading comprehension. Lesson observations involved the researcher directly observing the teachers. The study also analyzed lesson plans and schemes of work. This was so to find out how teachers prepared for their reading comprehension lessons.

A structured interview guide was used in collecting data from the Heads of Department for Literature and Languages because it enabled the researcher/interviewer to ask the respondents and at the same time fill the responses in interview schedule in a face-to-face situation. A questionnaire was used to collect data from the teachers. This was done in order to allow the respondents to answer questions in a well thought-through manner. A questionnaire was also appropriate for teachers in this study as the respondents answered at their convenient time as it puts less pressure on the

respondents for immediate response. They can answer it at their own leisure, whereas interviews or observation demands specific fixation of time and situation.

The reading comprehension test was applied by assessing sampled learners in reading comprehension based on skills outlined in PIRLS framework processes. To be precise, the construction of the questions was based on four skills outlined by the PIRLS framework processes of reading comprehension, and these are:

- Focusing on and retrieving explicitly stated information
- making straight-forward inferences
- interpreting and integrating ideas and information
- Examining and evaluating content, language and textual elements.

These skills are also in tandem with English Language syllabus and were recorded for analysis per question and the reading comprehension skill level.

### **3.8.1 Lesson observations**

In this study, I used the lesson observation protocols to collect data as the teachers were teaching reading comprehension to their Grade Twelve learners. The areas that were considered in the instrument were teacher's instructional practices and assessment practices. The main reason for considering these two areas was to see which instructional practices teachers were using to teach, assess their learners and how they engaged the learners in providing answers that were in line with the reading comprehension skills. McMillan and Schumacher (1993) states that lesson observation is a tool which provides information about the actual behavior. Creswell (2014) also adds that direct observation is useful because some behavior involves habitual routines of which people are hardly aware.

In this study, I video recorded the lessons in order to have an opportunity to view them in future and analyse them at ease. Merriam (1998) highlights the advantage of using a video camera to record field observations by saying, video allows the researcher not only to capture the physical environment but also to revisit the images later and recall the experiences during analysis.

### **3.8.2 Questionnaires**

Questionnaires were administered to the teachers after they were observed in class at least more than twice or thrice each. The rationale behind this was to ensure that during lessons, teachers were able to practice teaching in a natural setting and to avoid them having an idea of what the researcher was looking for. By giving those questionnaires after lesson observations, it meant that their lessons were not faked and it also accorded them chance to respond to questions in their own time in a well thought out manner. The questionnaires were used to collect data about types of instructional practices teachers use, assessment practices, challenges affecting the teaching of reading comprehension and the specific reading comprehension skills learners were expected to demonstrate.

### **3.8.3 Semi- Structured Interviews**

Interviews were conducted with the Heads of Department after teachers were observed in reading comprehension lessons. The type of data that was being collected from the interviews with the Heads of Department was their thoughts and views pertaining to the teachers' classroom practices in teaching and assessing reading comprehension lessons. Furthermore, their understanding on Kvale (1996) states that researchers across sphere contended that interviews are the best to collect data because it helps the researcher to establish feelings opinions, attitudes, views and are useful in gathering in-depth data.

### **3.8.4 Test**

The other instrument that was used was a test. The test was constructed based on the four reading processes in Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). All the questions or tasks were formulated using the four PIRLS reading processes as shown below:

- Focusing on and retrieving explicitly stated information.
- Making straight-forward inferences.
- Interpreting and integrating ideas and information.
- Examining and evaluating content, language and textual elements.

200 learners were tested in reading comprehension. The nature of the data to be collected was the information about the performance of learners in reading

comprehension at classroom level. The purpose for doing so was to ascertain whether the performance at classroom level in Ndola district was better or was the same as reflected in the Examination Council of Zambia Performance Review Reports. The performance of learners in reading comprehension at national level had been of great concern and this had seen the ECZ Chief Examiners Reports indicate the devastating marks year in, year out (ECZ 2012, ECZ 2013, ECZ 2015, ECZ 2017 , ECZ 2018, 2019 ,ECZ 2020 , ECZ, 2021 and ECZ 2022 ).

### **3.8. 5 Document Analysis**

In this study, I also used document analysis method by looking at the lesson plans and schemes of work for all the schools that participated in the study in order to find out if these documents depicted or reflected how the teachers intended to engage grade twelve learners when teaching and assessing reading comprehension. I analyzed lesson plans to see whether teachers taught reading comprehension and the methods they used to do so. I was also interested in the nature of the assessments they used to assess learners' performance in the lesson.

### **3.9. Validity and Reliability of Instruments**

There was wide consultation from experts during formation of research instruments. All the instruments were developed by the researcher and validated by the supervisor and experts from the Department of Languages and Social Sciences of the University of Zambia. In addition, questions in the test to be administered to learners were formulated based on the recommended reading comprehension skills. The questions in the tests were modified using PIRLS framework to cater for the four reading comprehension skills which expects learners to be able to respond correctly to questions that focus on retrieval of explicitly stated information and those that make straight-forward inferences. Other questions had to do with interpreting and integrating ideas and information while others were about examining and evaluating content, language and textual elements. The amount of time in which the test was written was also consistent for all the learners.

### **3.10. Data Collection Procedure.**

Data was collected in the second term of the 2020 academic year and the period covered was from the first to the ninth week which was between May to August. I took

three weeks at each school in order to collect data from the teachers and the Heads of Departments as well as testing the learners.

Qualitative data was collected first through lesson observations as well as document analysis. Later, the Heads of Department were interviewed. The teachers also responded to open ended questions on the questionnaire which were only administered to them after lesson observations. Quantitative data was collected last by giving the learners a reading comprehension test. This assessment had questions covering the four skills outlined by the PIRLS concept namely focus on and retrieve explicitly stated information, making straightforward inferences, interpret and integrate ideas and information, and evaluate and critique content and textual elements. And they were recorded for analysis per question and the reading comprehension skill level. The themes that emerged from the lesson observations, interviews, questionnaires and document analysis were put under research questions depending on the suitability.

The following codes were used in this study for identification of the participants: For school A, The Head of Department was labeled as HOD A, for School B as HOD B and for School C as HOD C.

For the twelve teachers, they were labeled as Teacher A<sub>1</sub>, A<sub>2</sub>, A<sub>3</sub>, A<sub>4</sub>, B<sub>1</sub>, B<sub>2</sub>, B<sub>3</sub>, B<sub>4</sub>, C<sub>1</sub>, C<sub>2</sub>, C<sub>3</sub> and C<sub>4</sub> for schools A, B and C respectively. For the learners, they were labeled collectively as School Learners A, B and C for schools A, B and C respectively.

### **3.11. Data Analysis**

Data from participants was fully checked for accuracy and completeness after collection. Respondents were appropriately coded and entered on a data sheet. Primary statistical or quantitative data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel software. To ensure the accuracy and completeness of the data collected from the respondents, the following steps were considered according to Jon Gitlin (2021):

Respondents who only answer a portion of your questions.

Respondents who don't meet your target criteria.

Respondents who speed through your survey.

Respondents who "straight-line".

Respondents who provide unrealistic answers.

Respondents who give inconsistent responses.

Respondents who offer nonsensical feedback in your open-ended questions

Respondents who answer just a fraction of the required questions can render overall results bias, so they were filtered out by the complete response rule. Based on the audience specifications, respondents who did not match them were filtered out. Once speedy respondents were identified, they were removed because they were not reading questions carefully and answering them thoughtfully. In the case of Straight-lining, this is when a respondent chooses the same answer choice over and over again. This technique revealed that they were answering each question with little to no thought, so they were removed. As for those who gave unrealistic responses, their responses were removed. Finally, all nonsensical feedback was removed, and the end result of this Survey Monkey technique, was the collection of accurate and complete data which was meant for data analysis.

The analysis of data started almost the same time as the collection of data started. Data was organized based on research objectives. Dawson (2002) stated that, for qualitative data, the researcher might analyse as the research progresses, continually refining and reorganizing in light of the emerging results. Hence, for data collected through lesson observations, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and document analysis. Data was analysed vertically according to each instrument and horizontally across all research instruments in line with the research questions and themes were generated considering horizontal analysis (Cresswell, 2014). For research objectives one and two, data collected was analysed thematically (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993).

Data that was collected during lesson observations, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires was transcribed, edited, coded, categorized and tabulated according to the research questions. The data that was answering questions one and two on what instructional practices were teachers employing in teaching reading comprehension and what assessment practices did the teachers employ in reading comprehension and how do they relate these to instructional practices, were manually coded as 1 and 2 respectively.

For data collected using document analysis, video lessons and recordings from semi structured interviews, the data was interpreted using the strategies to increase student reading comprehension by Cunningham and Tierney. (1980). This was done by looking at how teachers executed their lessons in order to help learners acquire the reading comprehension skills; what strategies did they use to impart the skill? Triangulation of data was done by comparing what the teachers did when teaching in class, what they said during interviews and what I observed when analysing their documents. Data collected was coded according to research questions as already mentioned and then characterised according to similar ideas patterning to research questions. Themes were then generated based on ideas characterised.

For research question three which looked at the learners' performance in reading comprehension according to the PIRLS' assessment framework of reading comprehension, data was analysed using Microsoft Excel. After the learners wrote a test, I had to categorise the results according to the level of reading comprehension skill. The reading comprehension skills were analysed by looking at the number of learners that were able to respond correctly to each reading comprehension process as espoused by PIRLS. The first and third process had three questions each, while the second and fourth had two each as shown in Table 2. Furthermore, the average percentages in terms of learners who scored correctly in each process was calculated for each school and the general overview on all results was stated.

### **3.12. Ethical Considerations**

The data collection procedure started by acquiring an ethical clearance letter from the University of Zambia. The letter was used to seek permission from the relevant authorities and respondents in schools. The whole research process was fully explained to all the participants and the respondents were assured of confidentiality. Consent was also sought from the respondents before conducting any interview or administering a questionnaire or a test. Additionally, all the photos and videos taken were done with the permission from the participants. In cases where photos were used in the document for illustration purposes, participants were informed and had the option to either allow the researcher to use them or not. Furthermore, those photos used in the documents had the faces disguised to avoid face recognition. Participants were also told to be free to withdraw from participating in the study if they didn't wish to continue. No names

of schools and participants were mentioned in the report. Instead, pseudonyms were used.

### **3.13. Summary**

This chapter has presented the methodology in terms of techniques and procedures for the study. The chapter has exhaustively delved into matters of research methodology by exploring the research paradigm, research design, the target population, study sample, sampling procedure, data collection instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis and the ethical considerations for this study. The subsequent chapter deals with research findings.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### 4.1. Overview

The previous chapter has given a description of the methodology that was used in this study to come up with results that are presented in this chapter. The findings of the study are organised in line with the research questions outlined below:

1. What instructional practices are teachers employing in teaching reading comprehension?
2. Which assessment practices do teachers employ in reading comprehension and how do they relate these to instructional practices?
3. How is the learners' performance in reading comprehension according to the PIRLS' assessment framework of reading comprehension?

In total, 215 participants took part in the research. Out of 215, 12 were teachers representing 5.58 % of the population, 3 were Heads of Department (HODs) representing 1% of the population and the majority were pupils with a frequency of 200 representing 93%.

#### 4.2 Research question 1: what Instructional Practices are teachers employing in teaching Reading Comprehension?

Research question one focussed on observing and establishing what teachers do when teaching reading comprehensions. Therefore, to answer research question one, I observed teachers and collected data using lesson observations, interviews, questionnaires and document analysis. It was discovered that teachers used various instructional practices and these were brain storming / prior knowledge, reading, class discussions, group discussions, teacher exposition and also scheming/lesson planning.

The findings for objective number one revealed that, teachers used prior knowledge, reading, group/ open class discussions, teacher exposition, scheming and lesson planning as the instructional practices for teaching reading comprehension lessons. These are discussed in the sections below.

#### 4.2.1 Finding out Prior Knowledge

Through questionnaires, the results showed that eight out of twelve teachers indicated that they used what they called “finding out pupils’ prior knowledge about the topic” as an instructional practice. Thus, Teachers A<sub>1</sub>, A<sub>2</sub>, A<sub>3</sub>, B<sub>2</sub>, B<sub>3</sub>, C<sub>2</sub>, C<sub>3</sub>, C<sub>4</sub>, and all Heads of Departments (A, B and C) stated that finding out prior knowledge was one of the most effective ways they used to find out any pre-requisite knowledge learners had about a topic before starting the reading comprehension lessons. According to them, this practice opened the learners’ minds about the lesson prior to the learning. Furthermore, through lesson observations, it was revealed that teachers took time to ask learners questions about the lesson at hand and probed for answers from them. For instance, in order for teacher B<sub>1</sub> to evoke the learners’ prior knowledge on the topic, the teacher had the following interaction with his class during the introduction stage of the lesson.

**Teacher:** *What are human rights?*

**Learner B<sub>1</sub>:** *The basic freedoms humans should be assured of.*

**Teacher:** *Good. What human rights do you know?*

**Learner B<sub>2</sub>:** *right to life, right to thought and expression.*

**Teacher:** *Good, so you know human rights. Any other examples?*

**Learner B<sub>3</sub>:** *freedom of expression as in freedom to talk. For example, when something is wrong or not done in the right manner by the people in power in the country then you openly talk about it without being incarcerated or told to shut up for speaking.*

**Teacher:** *Very good class, now we are going to discuss human rights in details....*

Furthermore, teacher A<sub>1</sub> also probed for the learners’ prior knowledge in the following manner:

**Teacher,** *what is an environment?*

**Learner A<sub>1</sub>:** *It is the surrounding in which we live in*

**Learner A<sub>2</sub>:** *it is the natural world of the ecosystem.*

**Teacher:** *You are all correct. Next question, what does it mean to conserve?*

**Learner A<sub>3</sub>:** *to save something for using later.*

**Teacher:** *Good. What then is environmental conservation?*

**Learner A 4:** *It is the protection of the natural environment.*

**Teacher:** *Good, today we are going to read a passage on Environmental Conservation and then will answer the questions there after.*

After the teachers asked their learners the above questions respectively, the learners were given text books to read on the two respective topics silently then answer comprehension questions thereafter.

Furthermore, Teachers, A<sub>3</sub>, B<sub>3</sub> and C<sub>4</sub> respectively stated:

*I use pre-requisite knowledge of the learners in order to help me effectively teach reading comprehension lessons. For example, if the passage or text is about Drug Abuse, I brainstorm by asking them what they know about drugs in general and abuse... **Teacher A<sub>3</sub>***

*Before I give them to read text passages, I enquire what they know about the reading comprehension topic at hand. Without even mentioning that we are discussing this and that topic, I just ask random question just to know if they are familiar with the passage at hand.*

**Teacher B<sub>2</sub>**

*Firstly, I brainstorm to find out prior knowledge, then I make them read later... **Teacher C<sub>4</sub>***

*The crucial thing to do before reading comprehension lesson is to find out any prerequisite information learners have concerning the topic*

**Teacher B<sub>3</sub>.**

Furthermore, all the three HODs during interviews stated that finding out prior knowledge was an important instructional practice teachers used in class. The following are extracts from the interviews conducted with the Heads of Departments. The extracts depict part of the answers given by the HODs after they were asked to mention the instructional practices that were considered efficient for teaching reading comprehension to learners.

**HOD A:** *“One of the most effective practices is by beginning the lesson from what learners already know through brainstorming.”*

**HOD B:** *“Another important instructional practice is done by way of finding out the learners’ prior knowledge. Teachers need to brainstorm the passage to be read”.*

**HOD C:** *As a way to stimulate the learners’ interest, teachers need to brainstorm the passage and find out any information the learners have before teaching them reading comprehension lessons”*

#### **4.2.2 Reading**

Teachers used different reading practices, for example; individual silent reading and reading aloud of paragraphs as assigned by the teacher. These two styles of reading were used interchangeably. Although the two reading strategies were the mostly employed during the lessons, chorusing was also conducted on few occasions. Through specific lesson observations and interviews, the results revealed that all the teachers used reading as an instructional practice to teach reading comprehension. Most teachers assigned individual learners to read the text paragraph by paragraph. However, one teacher subjected learners to chorus reading or everybody reading aloud at once.

Furthermore, whilst the learners read the texts aloud as assigned, the teachers also corrected their pronunciations where they mispronounced words or failed to pronounce. On the other hand, chorus reading had some slower readers/learners trying to play catch up with the fluent readers. In addition, during interviews, the following teachers and all the three Heads of Departments from the three schools mentioned that reading was an important practice during reading comprehension teaching.

*I think the major instructional practice in reading comprehension is reading ... (Teacher B<sub>3</sub>).*

*Before we talk of comprehension, we must critically ensure a child knows how to read ... So reading is an important instructional practice. (Teacher B<sub>4</sub>).*

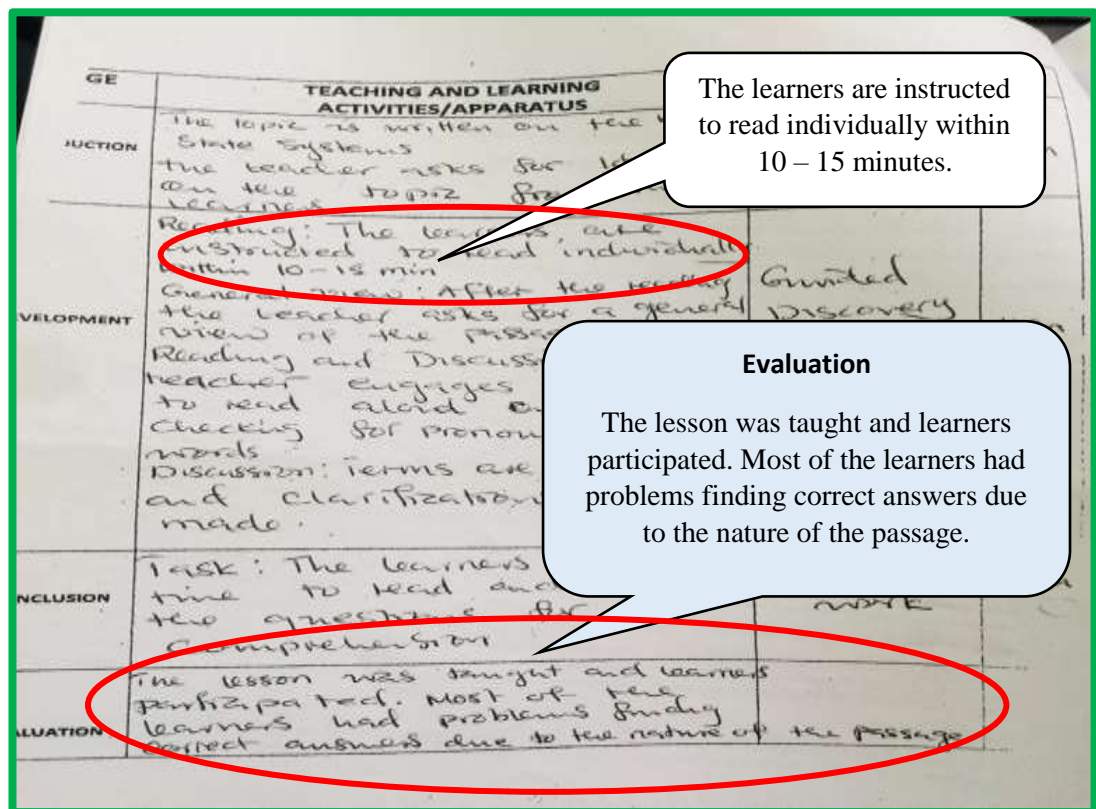
*Pre-reading, reading and discussion are some of the instructional practices in teaching... (Teacher C<sub>3</sub>).*

**HOD C from school C, added that;**

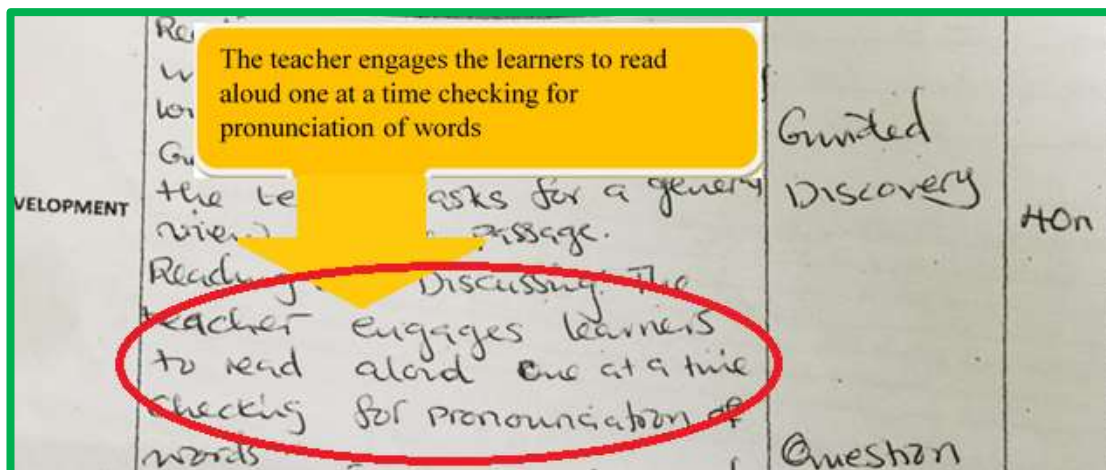
*“Reading is an important practice during reading comprehension lessons even though there are not enough text books to help teachers to effectively use this practice in class.”*

Furthermore, after analysis of documents, it was revealed that all the teachers used reading as an instructional practice. The following figures show Teachers A<sub>2</sub> and Teacher B<sub>1</sub>'s lesson plans showing evidence that reading was one of the most widely used instructional practice.

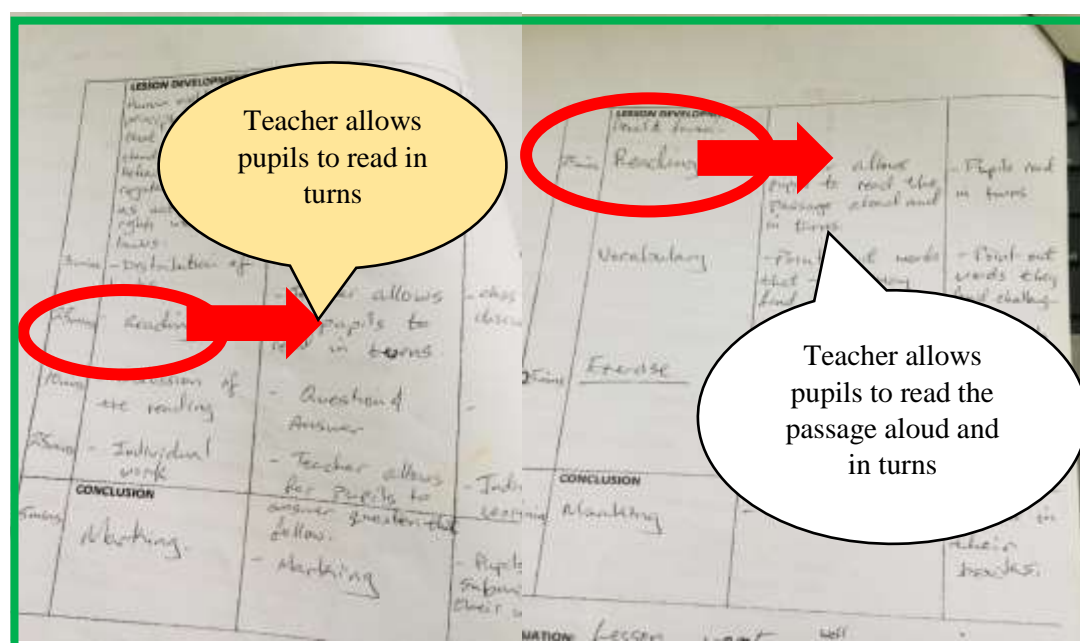
Figures 1, 2 and 3 below for teachers A<sub>2</sub>, A<sub>1</sub> and B<sub>1</sub>, respectively highlights sections of the lesson plans where reading was planned for.



**Figure 1:** Lesson plan for teacher A<sub>2</sub> depicting reading as was going to be used during the reading comprehension and also the evaluation of the lesson..



**Figure 2:** Lesson plan for teacher A<sub>1</sub> showing how the learners were engaged in reading aloud and pronunciations of words



**Figure 3:** Lesson plans for teacher B<sub>1</sub> as he had planned to use reading in both lessons observed at different times

Furthermore, the following are some of the excerpts from the development stages of the lesson plans from teachers (A<sub>1</sub>, A<sub>2</sub>, B<sub>1</sub> and C<sub>2</sub>) comprehension lesson plans indicating how they had planned on going about reading.

*“Pupils to start reading paragraphs as guided by the teacher who also explains difficult words plus ensuring the learners pronounce words correctly” (Teacher A<sub>1</sub>).*

*“The learners are introduced to read individually within 10-15 minutes” (Teacher A<sub>2</sub>).*

*“Allow learners to read out aloud and in turns then define difficult words after” (Teacher B<sub>1</sub>).*

*“Teacher reads out the passage” (Teacher C<sub>1</sub>).*

*Lesson outcomes: 1. Read the passage comprehensively (Teacher B<sub>2</sub>).*

#### **4.2.3 Class Discussions/ Group discussions**

During lesson observations, the findings revealed that, learners discussed different topics such as Human Rights, Environmental Conservation etc. It was revealed that nearly all the teachers involved learners in open class discussions of the questions and answers. Additionally, the Heads of Departments stated that both group and class discussions were effective ways of teaching reading comprehension. The following are some of the HODs’ and teachers’ responses that indicated that class discussion was known as one of the instructional practices used by teachers in class.

*“Both Group and class discussions are very important during reading comprehension. Learners need to engage in interactive activities in order for them to have a broad understanding of a given text” (HOD C).*

*“One very cardinal mode of teaching reading comprehension is by ensuring that learners are allowed to discuss the text or passage with their peers in groups or as a whole class. That way, it gets very easy for them to individually tackle the reading comprehension questions thereafter...” (HOD B).*

*Group discussions as well as open class discussions are two of my favourite Instructional practices in reading comprehension teaching because I see the enthusiasm that my pupils exhibit in those groups and discussions..... (Teacher A<sub>3</sub>).*

*To name a few practices, I think finding out prior knowledge, making the pupils summarise passages especially in groups and individual work/ exercises. (Teacher B<sub>4</sub>).*

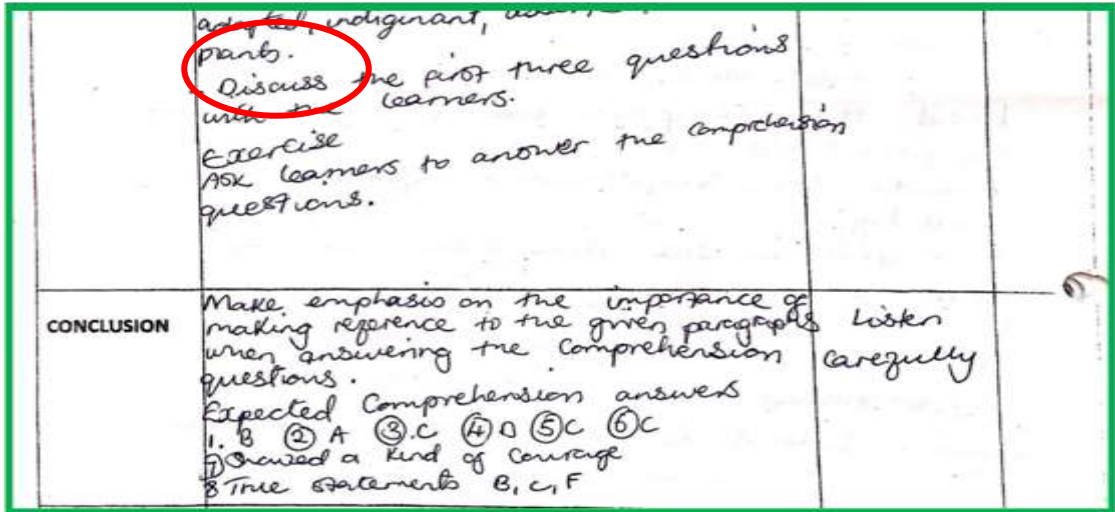
*Teacher exposition, group work, open class discussion are the methods I use to teach reading comprehension. (Teacher C<sub>4</sub>).*

Generally put, learners discussed passages or texts in open class discussions before during and after reading the text. Learners were asked questions by the teachers openly and that ignited discussions among them as a class which may eventually help them have a broader understanding of any passage/ given text. Teachers asked questions and learners raised hands and continued to either offer answers concerning vocabulary, or anything they needed clarity on especially difficult words. Furthermore, after document analysis, it was discovered that, many of the teachers actually planned for discussion. The lesson plan excerpts in figures 5,6 and 7 below highlight the sections where class discussion was going to be used in teaching reading comprehension.

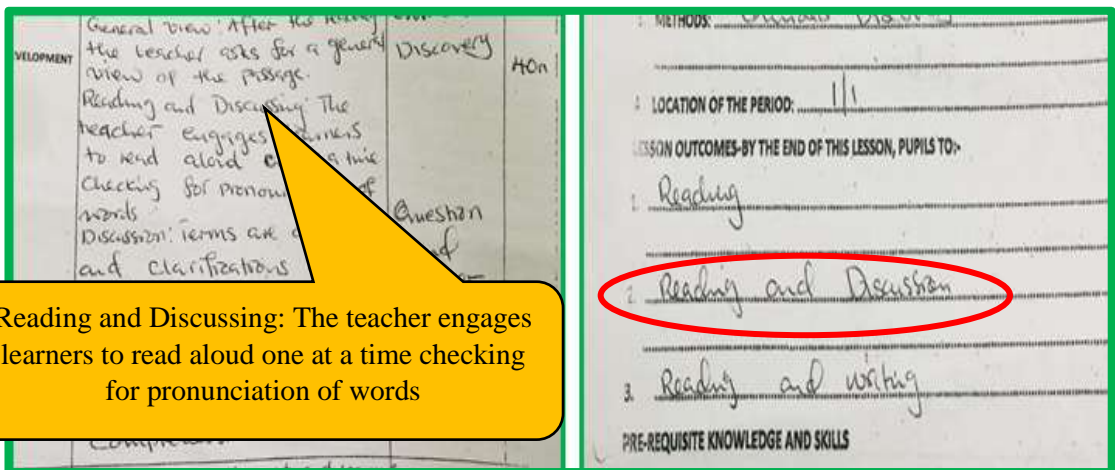
During reading comprehension lessons observations, it was noted that teachers did not practice group work but mainly practiced open class discussions during which a notable number of learners were very quiet or rather passive. Their justification was that they were adhering to COVID 19 guidelines at the time. However, there was still a contradiction to this claim because some of these teachers due to lack of material/ teaching and learning resources in school, were seen making the learners to sit in pairs when they wanted them to look up some difficult words in the dictionary. This is evidenced in the two pictures below in figure 4.



**Figure 4:** *School C learners looking up words from the dictionaries*



**Figure 5:** Lesson plan for teacher A<sub>1</sub> showing how she planned for discussion.



Reading and Discussing: The teacher engages learners to read aloud one at a time checking for pronunciation of words

**Figure 6:** Lesson plan for teacher A<sub>2</sub> showing reading and discussion as planned

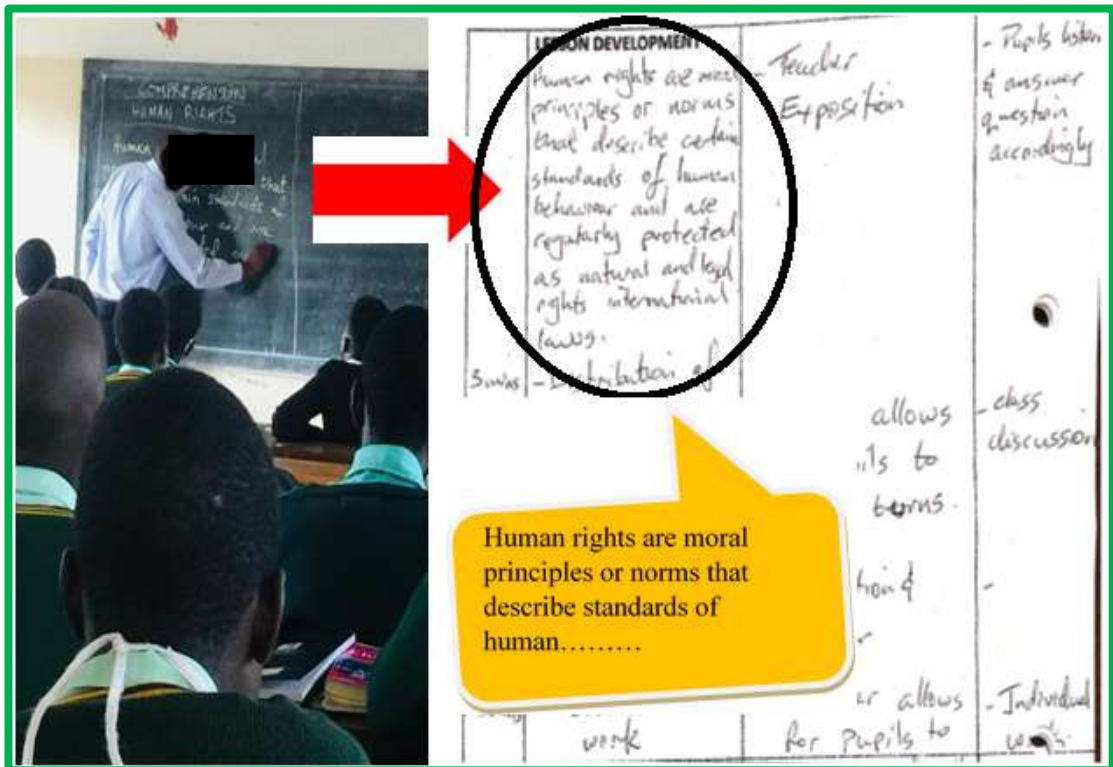
The figure below (Figure 6) also shows teacher C<sub>2</sub> discussing unfamiliar words with the learners as she wrote the answers on the board.



**Figure 7:** Teacher C<sub>2</sub> discussing unfamiliar words with learners during open class discussion.

#### 4.2.4 Teacher Exposition

Through lesson observations, analysis of the teachers' lesson plans and interviews, the results revealed that teachers used Teacher Exposition as a technique to teach reading comprehension. Learners had the privilege to listen to the teacher's explanations on the lesson at hand. It was evidenced that teachers gave detailed explanations based on the topics they taught in each lesson. For example, in the picture below, teacher B<sub>1</sub> was teaching and giving full explanations to learners on human rights. He explained what human rights were, types of human rights in Zambia and penalties for violating human rights. The circled portions of the lesson plans below by teacher B<sub>1</sub> show a section indicating that teacher exposition was planned for.



**Figure 8:** Teacher B<sub>1</sub> and his lesson plan on the right side giving detailed explanation on human rights

REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA  
MINISTRY OF GENERAL  
EDUCATION  
15 JUL 2020  
SCHOOL  
GRADE

LITERATURE AND LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT  
LESSON PLAN

TEACHER'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ SUBJECT: ENGLISH  
CLASS: 12 TL DURATION: 20 minutes DATE: 15/07/2020  
PERIOD: 1 9 2  
NUMBER OF PUPILS: 45 BOYS: 30 GIRLS: 15  
TOPIC: COMPREHENSION  
SUBTOPIC: ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION  
REFERENCE: EXCEL & ADVANCE IN ENGLISH LEARNER'S BOOK Grade 12 Zambia - K 5  
TEACHING AND LEARNING AIDS: Text, chalk board, chalk  
LEARNING OUTCOMES: DURING AND AFTER THE LESSON, LSBAT;  
1. Read efficiently at a good  
2. Understand the passage in order  
3. the questions that follow  
RATIONALE: This exercise helps pupils  
better understand the content of the  
text.

TIME	CONTENT	TEACHER ACTIVITY	PUPIL ACTIVITY
5 mins	INTRODUCTION Environmental Conservation The preservation of the environment to include	Teacher Exposition	Pupils listen

**Figure 9:** TeacherB<sub>1</sub> lesson plan showing exposition as planned for.

Furthermore, through questionnaires, almost all the teachers stated that they used teacher exposition as an instructional practice in reading comprehension and the HODs during interviews strongly brought out teacher exposition as a way to teach reading comprehension.

The following show some of the HODs responses regarding teacher exposition.

*“I wouldn't say my teachers really do understand teacher exposition and that they use it effectively when it comes to reading comprehension but they are definitely supposed to thoroughly explain to the learners how to provide meaningful or appropriate answers to reading comprehension questions” (HOD A).*

*“If reading comprehension lessons were to be meaningful, a teacher must always explain the content of the lesson by ensuring that learners are taught how to answer reading comprehension questions...” (HOD B).*

*“Teachers need to use their knowledge by ensuring that learners get the knowledge of reading comprehension...” (HOD C).*

Teachers also had the following to say:

*..... furthermore, I make sure that I explain to the learners what is required of them in reading comprehension, I give sample questions and explain... (Teacher A4).*

*...Not sure if this one qualifies to be an instructional practice but I also consider, teacher exposition. Why I say so, is because mostly us teachers just give pupils passages to read and then answer questions afterwards, but if we are going to impart a skill, then we must expose our pupils to knowledge that will help that impartation. (Teacher B3)  
In many instances apart from just making my pupils to read, I also explain the skills to them in details .... (Teacher C3)*

#### **4.2.5 Scheming and Lesson Planning**

Through questionnaires seven teachers mentioned that preparation before going to class was a very important practice. Teacher C<sub>2</sub> and A<sub>1</sub>, had the following to say concerning lesson preparation.

*Before going to class, I always ensure that I prepare adequately. So in other words, I consider lesson preparation as an important practice when it comes to the teaching of reading comprehension. Without prior adequate preparation, it's difficult to teach the learners.  
(Teacher C<sub>2</sub>).*

*In the Literature and Languages Department,  
Our HOD puts an emphasis on preparation before the teaching and learning occur. In view of this, I would consider lesson scheming and lesson planning as an important practice for reading comprehension teaching. (Teacher A<sub>1</sub>).*

Furthermore, through lesson observations and document analysis, it was revealed that all the teachers prepared for the reading comprehension lessons. They planned for the reading comprehension lessons before going to class. Their lesson plans were date stamped which meant that their HODs or supervisors had approved of them.

Additionally, during interviews for Heads of Departments, it was revealed that preparing for lessons was an important practice for reading comprehension lessons.

When asked what instructional practices were considered efficient for teaching reading comprehension, HODs had the following to say.

*“It would be useless to discuss lesson delivery if one did not plan for it. Hence, it is important that teachers get into the habit of efficiently planning for reading comprehension lessons beginning with scheming...” (HOD A)*

*“I always encourage my teachers to read more and prepare adequately before going to class. This to me as the supervisor is much more important than anything else. When teachers prepare adequately, lesson delivery is easy... (HOD B).*

*“Besides all the practices that go on in class, it is important that teachers prepare for reading comprehension lessons...” (HOD C).*

Furthermore, **teachers, B<sub>2</sub>, B<sub>3</sub> C<sub>2</sub> and C<sub>4</sub>** all included lesson planning and scheming on their answers as instructional practices for teaching reading comprehension.

**Teacher B<sub>3</sub>**, went on to say;

*“The days I don’t prepare lesson plans when going to teach reading comprehension lessons, are the days I just dish out text books and tell them to read any passage and then answer follow up questions ...So without proper planning and scheming, I am always a disaster in class.”*

Furthermore, after document analysis particularly, the schemes of work, it was noted that reading comprehension lessons were truly planned for. Both schools A and C planned for reading comprehension lessons weekly, while school B planned fortnightly. However, there was a gap on the type of scheming. For instance, there was no proper planning to show that school A planned for the teaching of reading comprehension for that particular term. School A, took the Schemes of work meant for another province and cancelled the name of that particular province and changed with a pen to Copperbelt Province. School A went on to date stamp the scheme meant for another province using their school date stamp. This problem has been illustrated or rather evidenced in figure 10 below.

COPPERBELT CENTRAL PROVINCE LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT GRADE TWELVE (12) COMMON SCHEMES OF WORK				
WEEKS	TOPIC/CONTENT	LEARNING OUTCOMES	METHODS	RESOURCES
1	REVISIONS i. Structure ii. summary iii. composition iv. exposition	Make correction to the end of term one exam test	Question work Teachers' exposition Individual	
9	STRUCTURE (Affirmation) SUMMARY (leaving school)  COMPREHENSION (leaving school)	Build new words using affines.  Demonstrate understanding the differences between main and subsidiary ideas in texts.  Acquire reading techniques and values necessary for use both outside and inside school	Question and answer, individual work Teachers' exposition, individual work Group work Individual work Discussion	Relevant material Pg. 92 ENG 12  Pg. 89 ENG 12

COPPERBELT  
CENTRAL PROVINCE

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MINISTRY OF GENERAL EDUCATION  
18 JUL 2020

**Figure 10:** Scheme of work for school A

#### 4.2.6 Other practices

Some of the instructional practices were stated when teachers were asked if they had attended any Continuing Professional Development (CPD) meeting where they learnt about instructional and assessment practices used in teaching and assessing reading comprehension. Four teachers who were teachers **A<sub>1</sub>**, **A<sub>2</sub>**, **C<sub>1</sub>** and **C<sub>2</sub>** all categorically stated that, they were taught instructional and assessment practices in reading comprehension and they had the following to say:

##### **Teacher A<sub>1</sub> from School A**

*“Three levels involved in comprehension learning were taught. These included: literal meaning-understanding what the text simply says, inferential meaning-determining what the text means and evaluative meaning-what the text is telling us about the world outside the story. Furthermore, both class and group discussions play an important role in teaching the learners reading comprehension”.*

##### **Teacher A<sub>2</sub>**

1. Brain storming,
2. Allowing learners to read individually
3. Opening the learner to have a point of view and discuss
4. Appropriate and adequate lesson planning is key.

**Teacher C<sub>1</sub>,**

*“Reading comprehension tests a lot of skills, therefore, as a teacher you need to be more specific on what you are testing. (skill)”*

**Teacher C<sub>2</sub>**

*“Reading, teacher exposition, comprehension and word meaning through contextual clues”*

In addition, when asked what their own experiences had taught them about what instructional practices were effective for teaching reading comprehension. They had the following to say.

**Teacher B<sub>1</sub>**

*Good reading habits and reading for understanding,*

**Teacher C<sub>2</sub>**

*Following the learners closely and help them with difficult words,*

**Teacher B<sub>1</sub>**

*Asking questions related to the passage and engaging testing and vocabulary skills and finding the meaning of words.*

**4.3 Research Question 2: Which assessment practices do teachers employ in reading comprehension and how do they relate these to instructional practices?**

Research question two was centred on finding out what assessment practices teachers employed when teaching reading comprehension and how they do relate to instructional practices. For research question two, the findings revealed that teachers used oral question and answer sessions, multiple choice questions, yes/ no questions open-ended questions and individual / group work as instructional modes of assessments.

For this to be achieved, I observed teachers in reading comprehension lessons in Grade twelve classes. I also analysed documents such as lesson plans to see how teachers planned for the assessment of learners. For some results, I interviewed Heads of Departments and also derived some from the teachers’ perceived assessment practices through the question-and-answer sessions.

The overall findings from the participants on assessment practices used in reading comprehension indicated that teachers did not as per say understand fully the assessment of reading comprehension. However, the findings revealed the following as assessment practices in reading comprehension: oral question and answer sessions, giving learners multiple choice questions, Yes/no question technique, open ended questions, group work and individual work (exercises).

#### **4.3.1 Oral question and answer sessions**

This practice was mostly noted during lesson observation sessions. Teachers asked learners oral questions where they were expected to provide answers right there and then. For example, **teacher A<sub>2</sub>** during one of her reading comprehension lessons on “Culture and Tradition” was recorded asking learners’ oral questions as follows,

*“What is culture?”*

*“How can you preserve culture?”*

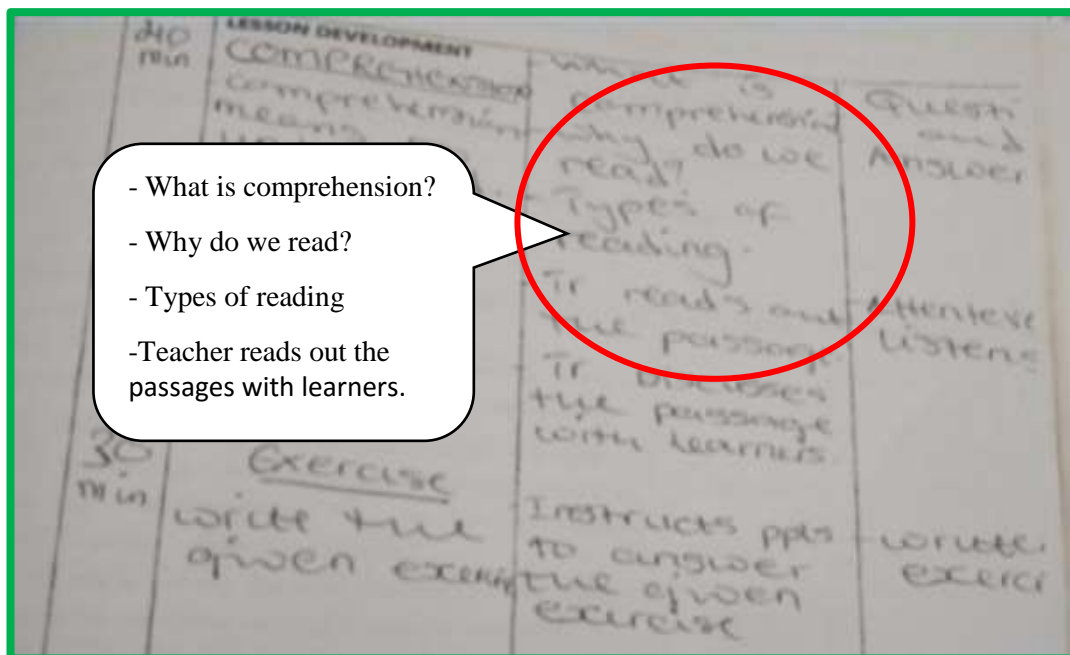
*“What is the meaning of the word superstition etc.....”*

Also, **teacher C<sub>2</sub>** during her reading comprehension lesson on “*Crime and Punishment*” kept probing for answers from the learners through oral practice. The teacher asked the learners to define the words; *comprehend, reading, crime, punishment* and she also asked them to name the types of reading...”

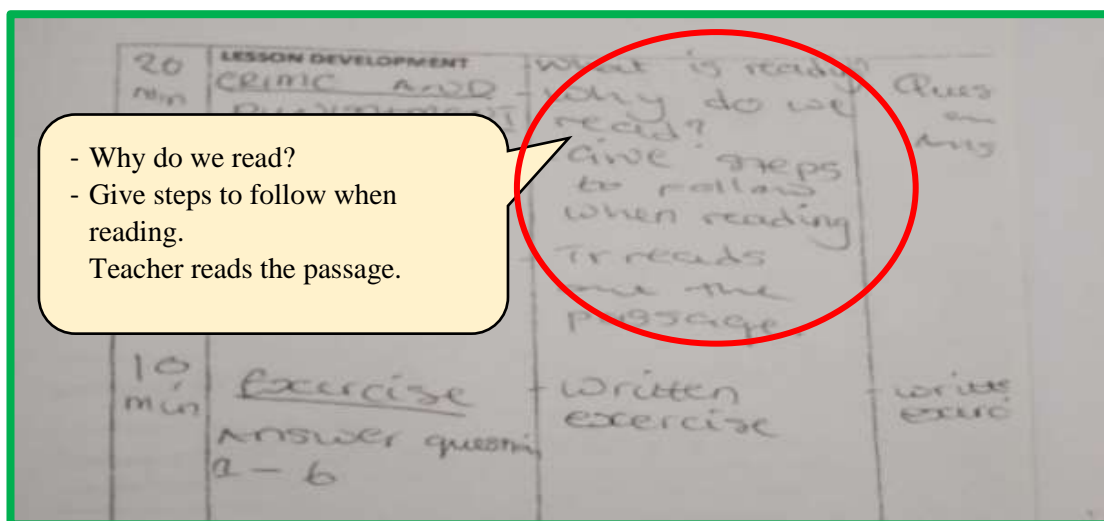
Furthermore, during lesson observations, Teacher C<sub>1</sub> was orally testing the learners understanding of reading by asking questions that were centered on reading. For instance, during the introduction of the lesson, teacher C<sub>1</sub> stated that she wanted to know how much the learners understood about reading comprehension and so she orally asked the following questions;

1. *What is reading?*
2. *Name the types of reading.*
3. *Why do we read?*
4. *Give steps to follow when reading.*

This pattern of oral testing was done in all her three lessons when she was observed in class and all the lesson plans had the same types of questions as evidenced in the following lesson excerpts of her lesson plans.



**Figure 11:** Lesson plan for teacher C<sub>1</sub> showing the questions she was asking during reading comprehension lesson



**Figure 12:** Lesson plan for teacher C<sub>1</sub> showing how she was conducting reading comprehension lesson

The above lesson excerpts from Teacher C<sub>1</sub> indicate the lesson's oral question and answer sessions and then straight went into the reading of the text followed by individual exercise.

Furthermore, Two Heads of Department for schools A and B respectively stated the following

**HOD A:**

*“It is an important assessment practice to ask learners oral questions based on the lesson at hand, as this would help them acquire reading comprehension skills depending on the type of oral questions”.*

**HOD B:**

*“Another way for a teacher to assess the learners is by ensuring that they ask them oral questions after reading. This will help the teacher to determine whether they have understood what they read or not and also helps the teacher to know if there are any points of vocabulary to be discussed.*

#### **4.3.2 Multiple choice questions**

After lesson observations and document analysis, it was revealed that all the exercises that were given to the learners during reading comprehension lessons had a number of multiple choices as compared to other types of questions. All the teachers administered questions that needed learners to choose the best possible or correct answer. In all the instances, learners were asked to write down only the letter of their best choice of answer.

#### **4.3.3 Yes or no questions.**

All teachers observed and the three Heads of Department stated that they used Yes/no question formats. **Teacher B<sub>2</sub>** categorically mentioned;

*“I use Yes/No question technique to assess learners, especially if the answers are coming direct from the passage or text and do not require the learners to think outside the text when looking for answers.”*

**Teacher B<sub>3</sub>** also said, ... *I also use Yes and No questioning technique especially when it comes to objective type of questions. Those questions that don't require my learners to produce different types of answers but one.*

#### **4.3.4 Open-ended questions**

The responses from the respondents' questionnaires indicated that open-ended questions were a common way to assess the learners understanding when it came to reading comprehension. All the teachers were seen using a reasonable number of open-ended questions during reading comprehension lessons.

#### **4.3.5 Individual work and group work (Exercises).**

During lesson observations, it was evident that teachers gave individual work to the learners. Learners were subjected to reading individually at some point during the lesson and then respond to questions thereafter.

Additionally, a good number of the teachers said that they used group work to assess the learners in reading comprehension.

The HODs were also recorded stating that group work was another very important practice for assessing reading comprehension. The following are the cut-outs from the interviews conducted with HODs

##### ***HOD A***

*“Another crucial way to assess the learners in reading comprehension is through group work. When work is given in groups, learners participate and through those interactions, my belief is that they tend to understand the text better and provide more correct answers than when they do the work at individual level.”*

##### ***HOD C***

*“Group work is a very important practice for reading comprehension lessons and exercises because it gives the learners chance to learn from their peers.”*

Furthermore, the following teachers added:

*In the previous question on instructional practice used to teach comprehension, I said, I use group work to teach but again, I also use it to assess the learners. For the sake of vocabulary, it gets easy for them to find answers when in groups compared to when they work as individuals... (Teacher A<sub>3</sub>)*

*“...I also use group work to assess learners. I sometimes give them reading comprehension exercise in groups and mark them as a group...” (Teacher B<sub>1</sub>).*

*Because of lack of enough teaching and learning materials in school, I make them write comprehension exercises in groups although as at now, the COVID 19 pandemic has restricted this practice (Teacher B<sub>4</sub>)*

*.... Well, again, I feel most of these practices work both ways, (teaching/assessment) So even though I rarely do this, but I also assess my learners in groups. (Teacher C<sub>4</sub>).*

#### **4.4 How is the Learners’ Performance in Reading Comprehension According to the PIRLS’ Assessment Framework**

For research question three, the findings or test results were placed according to the processes of reading comprehension. Using the four broad based reading comprehension processes, questions 1, 3 and 5 of the reading comprehension exercise were aimed at testing the learners’ knowledge in line with focusing on retrieving explicitly stated information from the passage or text. Questions 2 and 4 were based on making straight forward inferences while question 6, 7 and 9 were aimed at finding out if the learners were able to interpret and integrate ideas and information. Questions 8 and 9 on the other hand were purely centered on finding out if the learners were able to either examine and evaluate content or examine language and textual features. Data was collected by giving a test to the learners and all the questions were based on the four broad based reading comprehension processes for PIRLS. The results are presented in descriptive statistics as scores for learners and individual schools were calculated on each process of reading comprehension. The table on the next page gives the number of learners who scored a particular question based on the specific PIRLS’s process.

**Table 1:** *Distribution of pupils' performance in reading comprehension assessment*

PROCESSES OF READING COMPREHENSION	QUESTION NUMBERS ATTEMPTED ON EACH PROCESS	NUMBER OF PUPILS WHO SCORED FROM SCHOOL A	NUMBER OF PUPILS WHO SCORED FROM SCHOOL B	NUMBER OF PUPILS WHO SCORED FROM SCHOOL C	TOTAL NUMBER OF PUPILS WHO SCORED PER QUESTION FROM ALL SCHOOLS
Focusing on retrieving explicitly stated information	1	58 out of 67	53 out of 67	56 out of 66	167 out of 200
	3	50 out of 67	54 out of 67	56 out of 66	154 out of 200
	5	39 out of 67	39 out of 67	37 out of 66	115 out of 200
Making straightforward inferences	2	34 out of 67	38 out of 67	37 out of 66	109 out of 200
	4	32 out of 67	33 out of 67	31 out of 66	96 out of 200
Interpreting and integrating ideas and information	6	13 out of 67	28 out of 67	24 out of 66	65 out of 200
	7	21 out of 67	20 out of 67	21 out of 66	62 out of 200
	9	09 out of 67	05 out of 67	05 out of 66	19 out of 200
Examining and evaluating content, language and textual features	8	09 out of 67	14 out of 67	13 out of 66	36 out of 200
	10	17 out of 67	13 out of 67	14 out of 66	44 out of 200

The average percentages in terms of performance per particular PIRLS process for each school are calculated below:

**School A**

**Average Percentage for the 1<sup>st</sup> PIRLS process:**

$$58 + 50 + 39 = 147/3 = 49 \text{ divided by } 67 \text{ multiplied by } 100 = 73.1\%$$

**School B**

**Average Percentage for the 1<sup>st</sup> PIRLS process:**

$$53 + 54 + 39 = 146/3 = 48.6 \text{ divided by } 67 \text{ multiplied by } 100 = 72.6\%$$

### **School C**

#### **Average Percentage for the 1<sup>st</sup> PIRLS process:**

$$56 + 56 + 37 = 149/3 = 49.66 \text{ divided by } 66 \text{ multiplied by } 100 = 75.25\%$$

On comparative basis, all the three schools namely A, B and C performed above average as demonstrated by the calculated average percentages for each school in each category or PIRLS process. For example, School A had 73.1% based on the average of 49 of learners, school B had 72.6% based on the average of 48.6 of the learners and school C had 75.25% based on the average of 49.66 of learners.

### **School A**

#### **Average Percentage for the 2<sup>nd</sup> PIRLS process:**

$$34 + 32 = 66/2 = 33 \text{ divided by } 67 \text{ multiplied by } 100 = 49.25\%$$

### **School B**

#### **Average Percentage for the 2<sup>nd</sup> PIRLS process:**

$$38 + 33 = 71/2 = 32.5 \text{ divided by } 67 \text{ multiplied by } 100 = 52.98\%$$

### **School C**

#### **Average Percentage for the 2<sup>nd</sup> PIRLS process:**

$$37 + 31 = 68/2 = 34 \text{ divided by } 66 \text{ multiplied by } 100 = 51.5\%$$

On comparative basis, all the three schools namely A, B and C performed slightly above average as demonstrated by the calculated average percentages for each school in each category or 2<sup>nd</sup> PIRLS process. For example, School A had 49.25% based on the average of 33 of learners who scored correctly, school B had 52.98% based on the average of 32.5 of the learners who scored correctly and school C had 51.5% based on the average of 34 of learners who scored correctly.

### **School A**

#### **Average Percentage for the 3<sup>rd</sup> PIRLS process:**

$$13 + 21 + 9 = 43/3 = 14.3 \text{ divided by } 67 \text{ multiplied by } 100 = 21.3\%$$

### **School B**

#### **Average Percentage for the 3<sup>rd</sup> PIRLS process:**

$$28 + 20 + 5 = 53/3 = 17.66 \text{ divided by } 67 \text{ multiplied by } 100 = 26.36\%$$

### **School C**

#### **Average Percentage for the 3<sup>rd</sup> PIRLS process:**

$$24 + 21 + 5 = 50/3 = 16.66 \text{ divided by } 66 \text{ multiplied by } 100 = 25.25\%.$$

On comparative basis, all the three schools namely A, B and C performed below average as demonstrated by the calculated average percentages for each school in each category or 3<sup>rd</sup> PIRLS process. For example, School A had 21.3 % based on the average of 14.3 of learners who scored correctly, school B had 26.36% based on the average of 17.66 of the learners who scored correctly and school C had 25.25% based on the average of 16.66 of learners who scored correctly.

### **School A**

#### **Average Percentage for the 4<sup>th</sup> PIRLS process:**

$$9 + 17 = 26/2 = 13 \text{ divided by } 67 \text{ multiplied by } 100 = 19.4\%$$

### **School B**

#### **Average Percentage for the 4<sup>th</sup> PIRLS process:**

$$14 + 13 = 27/2 = 13.5 \text{ divided by } 67 \text{ multiplied by } 100 = 20.1\%$$

### **School C**

#### **Average Percentage for the 4<sup>th</sup> PIRLS process:**

$$13 + 14 = 27/2 = 13.5 \text{ divided by } 66 \text{ multiplied by } 100 = 20.4\%$$

On comparative basis, all the three schools namely A, B and C performed below average as demonstrated by the calculated average percentages for each school in each category or 4<sup>th</sup> PIRLS process. For example, School A had 19.4 % based on the average of 13 of learners who scored correctly, school B had 20.1% based on the average of 13.5 of the learners who scored correctly and school C had 20.4 % based on the average of 13.5 of learners who scored correctly.

Table 1 shows the performance of pupils in reading comprehension in line with the PIRLS' framework assessment guideline for reading comprehension. The assessment

was done in three schools named as School A, School B and School C for the purpose of this study and designed following the four broad-based comprehension processes which included: focus on and retrieve explicitly stated information, making straightforward inferences, interpret and integrate ideas and information, and evaluate and critique content and textual elements as shown above. The number of pupils who attempted the test questions from School A, School B and School C were 67, 67 and 66 respectively, giving a total of 200 pupils.

Regarding the test questions 1, 3 and 5 that focussed on retrieving explicitly stated information, the findings from the table and calculations revealed that learners' performance was above average from all the three schools out of 200 (Refer to the table 3, calculations and subsequent explanations or analysis. Out of the 200 pupils tested, the total numbers of pupils who scored from all the three (3) schools regarding questions 2, 4 and 6 on making straight forward inferences were slightly above average. Regarding test questions 6, 7 and 9 based on interpreting and integrating ideas and information, the total numbers of pupils who scored out of 200 from the three schools were below average. Lastly, on test questions regarding examining and evaluating content, language and textual features, the findings from the table revealed that the total numbers of pupils who scored out of 200 from the three schools were pathetically below average. Generally, the performance of the learners in all schools was almost the same.

#### **4.5 Summary**

The chapter has presented findings with regard to the research questions and the findings have revealed that teachers use prior knowledge, reading, class discussions and group discussions and teacher exposition, scheming and lesson planning as instructional practices in teaching reading comprehension. With regard to instructional practices used in assessment of reading comprehension, teachers employed oral questions and answer sessions, multiple choice questions, yes/no questions, open ended questions, individual work and group work. Finally, the chapter has presented the performance of learners with reference to PIRLS framework and the results indicated that learners performed very well in the first process, average in the second and below average in the third and fourth processes.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 5.0 Overview

This chapter discusses the findings of the research. The discussions are organised in 5 subsections. Section 5.1 discusses the teachers' instructional practices in teaching reading comprehension. Section 5.2 provides discussions on the teachers' assessment practices in reading comprehension. 5.3 discusses the learners' performance based on the four reading comprehension processes as proposed in PIRLS. 5.4 summarises the chapter.

#### 5.1 Teachers' instructional practices in teaching reading comprehension in class

From the findings, it was observed that teachers were unable to give or explain clearly what appropriate practices of teaching and assessing reading comprehension were being used. To be concise, the instructional practices noted during observations were merely teaching of reading, pronunciation and meanings of words or vocabulary which showed that teachers did not entirely adhere to what is proposed in PIRLS. Appropriate teaching implies that teachers observe and implement correct procedures or instructional practices namely teaching students to identify main ideas and summarizing passages, teaching students to see underlying structure of the text, using supplemental materials and interactive delivery methods such as videos, peer-assisted learning and questioning and incorporating vocabulary and self-monitoring.

The findings under this theme also indicated that whereas teachers did seemingly teach reading comprehension, they were not fully aware of appropriate ways of teaching. For instance, when asked on the instructional practices that are effective for assessing reading comprehension, some teachers indicated the same answers for the two different questions. For example, teacher A<sub>1</sub> from school A was asked the same aforementioned questions on teaching and assessment of reading comprehension. This teacher was unable to differentiate teaching of reading comprehension from assessment.

### 5.1.1 Finding out Prior Knowledge

A good number of participants as seen in the findings like **Teachers** A<sub>3</sub>, C<sub>4</sub>, B<sub>2</sub>, C<sub>4</sub>, B<sub>3</sub> and **all the HODs** clearly indicated prior knowledge as a way of teaching reading comprehension. Through questionnaires and interviews, the results showed that eight teachers out of twelve indicated that they used “finding out pupils’ prior knowledge about the topic” as an instructional practice. ‘Finding out pupils’ prior knowledge’ refers to all of the experiences readers have had throughout their lives which includes information they have learnt elsewhere (Jason Rosenblatt, 2006; Chella et al., 2023). This is an effective instructional practice and in this case as observed during lessons, it was correctly used by Teachers A<sub>1</sub> from school A and Teacher B<sub>1</sub> from school B. In view of this observation, Gómez et al (2009, p.58) states that, “comprehension is carried by engaging the students to think of an issue and based on it, start thinking of other concepts relating to it, so that the students can have a wider idea of what they want to talk or write about.”

To prove that Finding out Prior Knowledge was properly used, here is an example, Teacher A<sub>1</sub> was teaching reading comprehension on State systems. Her mode of introducing the lesson was to ask learners about state systems, types of state systems, the kind of state systems found in Zambia. Based on the learners’ responses, the teacher discussed the types of state systems in the Russian Society in the introduction and main body of the lesson. This validates Harris and Sipay (1984) as they indicate that in constructive and interactive models of reading, reading comprehension is a dynamic process where readers actively construct meaning by interacting with the text and drawing upon their background knowledge.

In another lesson, teacher A<sub>1</sub> also had to find out Prior Knowledge by asking the learners questions on “The Environment” which was the topic for the reading comprehension lesson that day. The questions comprised vocabulary-oriented type of questions related to the topic at hand as stated in the findings which relates to activating student’s background knowledge. Both teachers A<sub>1</sub> and B<sub>1</sub> did engage the learners so that they could relate to concepts and eventually made the task easier. This therefore is in tention with Anthony (1989, p.6) who quotes Johnston (1983)’s argument that “the relationship between vocabulary and comprehension is due to the fact that

knowledge of vocabulary is actually a measure of background knowledge and should not be thought of as a separate influential factor in reading comprehension.”

Teachers A<sub>1</sub> and B<sub>1</sub>'s style of finding out the learners' prior knowledge further agrees with Tutyrahiza (2009)'s findings which revealed that activating student's background knowledge through brainstorming and other strategies were effective for teaching and learning reading regardless of the level of the student. Tutyrahiza noted that teachers frequently used activating student's background knowledge, pose questions about the text as their strategy in teaching reading. Hence, it can be seen that in both cases, the teachers correctly implemented the practice.

Teachers asked learners to define certain words before the reading comprehension lesson, this meant that they were evoking the learners' background knowledge and vocabulary. Defining difficult words from the passage does relate to evoking the learners' background knowledge concerning the main theme or what the passage is all about, especially if the vocabulary is related to the topic, for instance, defining the word 'discrimination' from a passage about *Human Rights*. In addition, in this example, learners relied on what they knew about human rights before reading the actual passage. Baumann & Kameenui, (1991), Paul & O'Rourke, (1988), Stanovich, (1986) explain that, the relationship between reading and vocabulary knowledge is strong and unequivocal and although the precise causal nature of the relationship is not completely understood, it does seem to be largely reciprocal. Hunter (1982) calls this instructional procedure as the *Get Student attention and review*. The ideas according to Hunter are endless and teachers are encouraged to be creative. The point is to get them to talk about the topic of the text to be read and to find out if they know something about it or to supply some background information.

### **5.1.2 Reading for Speed and Pronunciation**

It was observed that teachers used reading aloud as an instructional practice during reading comprehension lessons only to find out if the learners were able to read with the correct pronunciations and good speed. This was good but the main purpose is about teaching Reading Comprehension and the argument is that the planning and teaching ran contrary to the expected instructional practices in teaching reading comprehension in all the four areas stipulated by PIRLS.

Good practice according to Cunningham and Tierney (1980) entails that, teachers are supposed to observe “highlighted Pre-reading activities, Guiding Reader/Text Interactions during Reading to Learn, Teacher Interventions, Following Reading to learn and General Comments on Increasing Learning from Text/Prose as the effective instructional teaching strategies that a teacher needs to use when teaching comprehension. Furthermore, from figures 2 and 3, it can be deduced that learners were exposed to merely having a general view of the text, pronunciation and reading aloud without the analysis of the text. This way of teaching made it difficult for the learners to understand passages and/or texts and provide correct needed answers and Teacher A<sub>2</sub>'s lesson excerpt in Figure 1 validates this problem as she evaluated her lesson. It can be deduced that learners could not provide correct answers because there was no proper impartation of the reading comprehension skills by the teacher.

This approach runs contrary to PIRLS's instructional practices on reading comprehension in all the four broad based PIRLS areas of reading comprehension.

The findings also were contrary to ECZ Performance Review Report Quoting Tinker and McCullough (1975) which expects the comprehension of the paragraph to be about comprehending not just sentences. In addition, it is also about the understanding of the relationship between the sentences which are essential for grasping the larger meaning of the passage and may only be achieved by basing planning and lesson delivery on four areas stipulated by PIRLS such as retrieving explicitly stated information, making straight-forward inferences, interpreting and integrating ideas and examining and evaluating language and textual elements.

The findings also revealed that, teachers were more inclined to making sure that learners just read in turns whether they understood the text or not. There were no follow up activities to ensure learners understood the texts.

### **5.1.3 No Practice of Group discussions**

It was revealed that all the teachers involved learners in open class discussions and most of the learners were quiet during these sessions. Even though teachers had mostly included group and class discussions in their lesson plans as instructional practices and the three HODs had also strongly indicated that group work as well as class discussions were an important practice during the teaching of reading comprehension, they did not practice group work in reality. During lesson observations, it was noted that teachers

did not administer group work but mainly practiced open class discussions in which a notable number of learners were not participating. Their justification was that they were adhering to COVID 19 guidelines at the time. However, there was still a contradiction to this claim because some of teachers due to lack of enough teaching/learning resources in school were seen making the learners to sit in pairs to share and/or exchange the few copies of the dictionaries when they needed them to look up words in the dictionary (refer to figure 4 ) . They also made the learners in some cases to share the limited text books and answer the reading comprehension questions.

This failure by the teachers to allow students to work in groups during reading comprehension lessons goes seriously contrary to Yusuf (2015) who viewed interactive activities as important in reading comprehension for the learners. Yusuf emphasizes that interactive activities are helpful in comprehending written texts. Interactive activities are helpful in understanding written texts and assist teachers to determine how learners' individual mental processes operate with the information obtained from the passage. As a result, "promoting conversation through turning on the meaning using light bulbs, multiple activities and experiences using various channels of communication such as teacher-student, student-teacher, student-students could increase students' use of language as well as improving reading fluency" (Yusuf, 2015, p.6). Furthermore, Mkandawire et al. (2023, p.15) observed that group work (peer tutoring) as an instructional strategy aid learners to learn from one another in their understanding of concepts and teaching points.

#### **5.1.4 Teacher Exposition**

The findings revealed that teachers did not provide detailed explanations on how to derive answers or meaning from a given passage while paying attention to the reading comprehension skills. In short, teachers were supposed to help learners work out what is mentioned in the four reading processes. For example, to work out inferences, interpret and integrate information etc. The teachers mostly and mainly focused on teaching and explaining to the learners about the topic at hand such as Human Rights as if it were Civic Education. In other words, the skills of reading comprehension were mostly not accommodated at any point during teachers' lesson presentations.

**HOD A** also hinted what made the researcher deduce that there was a possibility that teachers neither understood nor knew how to impart the knowledge they had on reading comprehension to learners. Figures 8 and 9 further gives a picture that teacher B<sub>1</sub> indicated teacher exposition was one of the practices he was using in his reading comprehension lessons. His teacher exposition practice as revealed during lesson observation was focused on explaining in details the actual content of the day's lesson. For example, his lesson on Human rights was centered on what human rights were, naming of some human rights in Zambia etc. The same teacher B<sub>1</sub> on a different day had a reading comprehension lesson on Environmental Conservation and his pattern of teaching was the same. He asked the learners what conservation was, ways of conserving the environment and so on. The whole lesson was based on Environmental Conservation as a topic and nothing to do with the passage in terms of identification of the main idea, summarization of the passage etc.

Findings from the lesson observations showed that only one teacher out of all the teachers who were observed made an attempt in one of her three lessons observed to explain how to identify main ideas and summarizing passages. Most teachers seemed not to be aware of the skills expected to be taught in reading comprehension. In other words, reading comprehension teaching was merely testing the learners without teaching. This has confirmed Muyangana (2012) who found out that most comprehension lessons were characterized by testing instead of teaching, there was poor lesson presentation by the teachers and that reading comprehension was not taught in the manner it was supposed to.

Furthermore, what was expected was in line with Kim et al, (2012), was that all the teachers were supposed to ensure that “teaching students to identify main ideas and summarizing passages, teaching students to see underlying structure of the text, using supplemental materials and interactive delivery methods such as videos, peer-assisted learning and questioning, incorporating vocabulary and self-monitoring as effective instructional practices for teaching reading comprehension” was done.

#### **5.1.5 No efficient Scheming or Lesson Planning**

With reference to the findings, it was evident that lesson planning was an important practice when teaching reading comprehension as all the teachers went to class with lesson plans. The schemes of work were also reflected as an important strategy to the

teaching of reading comprehension. This is because lesson plans were derived from what teachers had planned for the particular term in a year. Seven (7) teachers and all the three (3) HODs, strongly mentioned that adequate and appropriate scheming and or lesson planning was very important prior to teaching reading comprehension. Through lesson observations, it was noted that teachers planned for the reading comprehension lessons.

However, after document analysis, it was discovered that most of the teachers did not effectively plan for the reading comprehension lessons. Teachers mostly planned for mere reading and discussions concerning vocabulary in open class discussion format. Refer to the lesson plan excerpts; figures 1, 2, 11 and 12, in the findings for further reference. Contrary to this practice, teachers were expected to plan, deliver the lessons on reading comprehension and assess the learners according to PIRL's instructional practices on reading comprehension rather than planning for mere reading and discussions concerning vocabulary.

Additionally, as already mentioned, the findings revealed that scheming was very relevant to the teaching of reading comprehension. However, there was a problem on the type of scheming in some schools. This has been evidenced in figure 10 where there was no evidence to show that a named school had schemed for English or reading comprehension that particular term. School A took the Schemes of work meant for another province and cancelled the name of that particular province and changed with a pen to Copperbelt Province.

Furthermore, through lesson observations and document analysis, the findings revealed that teachers had lesson plans but those lesson plans focused merely on reading and not reading comprehension as a whole. Their lesson objectives were also in tandem with their lesson content but not totally relevant to the needs of reading comprehension. Refer to figure 6 on lesson objectives and also figures 11 and 12 showing how teachers planned for mere reading lessons as opposed to reading comprehension as a whole.

The fact that teachers did not effectively plan, teach and assess reading comprehension in line with reading comprehension in all the four areas stipulated by PIRLS, has confirmed Chazangwe (2011) who found out that teachers did not do their part in

reading comprehension lesson preparation and the learners also did not play their part. This therefore ignores Weih (2018) who considers planning and delivery of lessons as important instructions through topic and thematic units whenever feasible. Mkhwanzi et al. (2014) also confirmed that, teachers lacked the knowledge of teaching reading comprehension and formative assessment. Consequently, they failed to plan to use formative assessment in their lessons to enhance the teaching of reading comprehension.

## **5.2 Assessment practices in reading comprehension and how these relate to instructional practices**

Teachers were expected to assess or test the learners in reading comprehension in all the four areas stipulated by PIRLS such as retrieving explicitly stated information, making straight-forward inferences, interpreting and integrating ideas and examining and evaluating language and textual elements. However, from the findings, teachers did not understand that assessment is done during reading comprehension lessons. For instance, the findings revealed the following as assessment practices in reading comprehension; oral question and answer sessions, giving learners multiple choice questions, Yes/no question technique, open ended questions, group work and individual work (exercises).

Habib (2016) notes that the use of several methods and no single technique can measure students reading skills. Generally, it was established that teachers assessed learners using various forms of questions. However, the research also revealed that teachers used common textbooks and did not set questions based on expected reading comprehension skills. Teachers did not take time to set the questions based on the particular skills or based on what they taught the learners. As a result, they failed to even supplement questions where necessary. All in all, after lesson observations, it was revealed that, the teachers' understanding and practice of assessment was not clearly understood by the teachers observed. For example, the teachers' oral testing was centered on questions that mostly had to do with vocabulary and once they did this, the learners were straight away given exercises to do individually. The problem with this was that, the meanings of those words were not used in context but literal form. This made it difficult for the learners to derive answers beyond literal stage.

### **5.2.1. Oral Question and Answer Testing**

Undeniably, teachers and HODs stated how important oral questions were for assessment in reading comprehension, Teachers A<sub>2</sub>, B<sub>1</sub>, B<sub>2</sub>, C<sub>2</sub> and nearly every teacher orally asked question after reading the passage. The questions were all literal, based on the subject at hand. If it were Culture or Crime, then all the oral questions were merely about culture or Crime respectively as if the lesson was about cultural lessons or Civic Education and not reading comprehension. The same trend of handling the oral testing of reading comprehension went on for most of the teachers. Teacher C<sub>1</sub> as evidenced in the study findings in figures 11 and 12 was orally testing the learners understanding of reading by asking questions that were centered on reading as follows:

Teacher C<sub>1</sub> was seen in all the three lessons observed that she was only asking and testing the learners orally on mere reading and not reading comprehension. All her three lessons observed and the lesson plans analyzed had seen this teacher orally test the learners in mere reading and not reading comprehension as can be evidenced from figures 11 and 12 of the lesson plans excerpts.

These descriptions of teachers A<sub>2</sub> and C<sub>1</sub>'s testing methods have confirmed Mkhwanzi et al. (2014) who found in their study that teachers lacked the knowledge of teaching reading comprehension and formative assessment. Consequently, they failed to plan to use formative assessment in their lessons to enhance the teaching of reading comprehension.

### **5.2.2 Multiple Choice Questions**

It was confirmed that teachers used largely multiple-choice questions as an instructional practice in assessing learners in reading comprehension. The findings through lesson observations revealed that, teachers gave learners questions that comprised of multiple-choice questions. However, in all the cases, the teachers did not entirely test the learners based on the lessons taught. The questioning techniques were mostly not based on the four broad based reading comprehension skills. Instead, learners were generally subjected to pick the best possible answers from the list.

The findings in this case revealed that teachers were assessing the learners based on just whether the answers were wrong or not. The main interest was to see how much learners were able to get correct answers from the multiple-choice questions. In other

words, the focus of these teachers when giving these questions to learners was on quantitative evaluation. Most learners were not able to justify or explain their choice of answers even when their answers were correct.

The above observation agrees with Marin (2008) study when he stated that teachers had diverse practices in assessing reading comprehension and mostly used quantitative assessment to evaluate qualitatively. The students according to Marin's findings lacked familiarity with qualitative assessment practices. This mode of assessment can only work well for learners with low proficiency who depend on guess work and Sally and Katie (2008) agrees that a question with four choices works best for learners with low proficiency in the target language, and one of the four choices should sound the right and the desired answer. Literal comprehension can be checked more effectively by the use of multiple-choice questions and can be further used for prediction and evaluation.

### **5.2.3 Yes and no question**

As much as teachers and heads of department insisted that they used Yes and No questions to assess the learners in reading comprehension, there was no evidence of questions of such nature from all the six teachers observed. Even after document analysis, there were no indications that teachers planned or used such a format or practice to assess the learners. This is not therefore in harmony with Sally and Katie (2008) who recommended the use of follow up activities by first using the Yes and No questions as it helped the teacher to know if learners understood the text or not.

The findings further disagree with Day and Park (2005;6) who hypothesized "*Yes/NO questions, Alternative questions, True/False questions, Wh-questions and Multiple-choice questions*" as the five forms of questions that can be used in assessing learners in reading comprehension. It was evidenced that some questioning techniques or practices were completely ignored in assessing reading comprehension to the learners. There was clearly no evidence of teachers using yes/no question and true or false even if they were commonly mentioned as assessment practices.

#### **5.2.4 Individual work**

Mostly learners were given individual work in form of exercises. Here the learners had to read the given passages in silence then answered the questions that followed. In as much as the learners were given an opportunity to work on their own, they were not necessarily imparted with the skill of reading comprehension prior to the exercise. As a result, many of them failed to attend to the given questions correctly as confirmed by the evaluation of the lesson plan for teacher A<sub>2</sub> in Figure 1 . This form of assessment therefore does not agree with Snyder's et al, (2005) key features of knowledge skills that reading comprehension assessment seeks to achieve. This also confirms Tasdemir (2010) assertion who states in his research done in Turkey on the Effects of Reading Comprehension Techniques on Students' Success, that reading comprehension in school has been simply reading and answering questions.

#### **5.2.5 Group Work**

Though this practice was stated as one of the instructional practices commonly used by the teachers and HODS, there was no evidence of assessment of reading comprehension given or done in groups. There was only pair work given in few instances where learners had to share dictionaries and look up for meanings of some difficult words in the passages as evidenced in figure 4. This could cause the learners not to perform well in the given tasks as Rahaman (2014) confirms in his experimental study that, learners performed well after they did the group work activities in class than in the pre-test when they did not do group work activities. Rahaman adds that, Group work is one of the major activities for generating ideas of any written piece of text and that group work facilitates EFL learners to read in social perspective which makes their learning more diverse. He further recommends that teachers must be trained in doing such activities, because it is necessary to implement group work.

#### **5.2.6 Open-Ended questions**

A reasonable number of open-ended questions were seen from the given exercises. Except there was no prior imparting of the reading comprehension skill to help the learners answer such questions. This therefore did not agree with Sally and Katie (2008) who clearly asserts that these forms of questions are very important in assessing the component skills of comprehension such as the ability of learners to

make inferences from the text. Learners are asked different questions for the reason of testing their memory and their comprehension of the text. However, in the case of this study, learners did not quite receive an opportunity to have the ability to tackle enough of such questions.

### **5.3 Learners' performance in reading comprehension according to the PIRLS' Assessment Framework for reading comprehension**

For research question three, the findings revealed that, the performance of the learners' regarding the Progresses in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) four processes of reading comprehension was above average in the first two processes and below average on the last two processes. It was also generally established that, the performance of the learners was below average and this was attributed to a number of issues as observed, stated or exhibited by the parties involved in the research: HODs, teachers, learners and the researcher.

The objective of the above theme was to assess learners' performance in reading comprehension according to the PIRLS' (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) Assessment Framework for reading comprehension. From the information gathered, it was clear that learners' performance in reading according to PIRLS' assessment framework was generally between; slightly above and below average. Specifically, and based on table 2, all the three schools performed well on some questions especially on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> PIRLS processes with the average percentages for school A, B and C of 73.1%, 72.6%, 75.25% and 49.25%, 52.98% and 51.5% respectively. Regarding the last two processes labeled as 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> PIRLS processes, the performance was below average for School A, B and C according to table 2 and the calculations were; 21.3%, 26.36% and 25.25%, 19.4%, 20.1% and 20.4% respectively. To a larger extent, it confirms the Examination Council of Zambia (ECZ) Chief Examiner's Report (2017, p.8), which stated that

*“In both 2017 and 2016, the general performance of candidates in this section (Reading Comprehension) has been average and slightly below average. In both years, we had candidates who got 20 out of 20 and those who got zero (0) out of 20. Specifically, in 2017, performance was slightly below average as a number of candidates failed to demonstrate a variety of reading skills which included understanding*

*of specific information, responding to literal and inferential questions and basic vocabulary questions which are always based on the given passage.”*

Nevertheless, the findings indicated that learners from all the (3) three schools performed far above average on the first PIRLS process, that is; focusing on retrieving explicitly stated information.

While the aforementioned discussion concerning the general performance of learners does not agree with the Examination Council of Zambia (ECZ) Chief Examiner’s Report (2017), the discrepancy could be attributed to what (Mullis and Martin: 2016) postulated that the degree of complexity and sophistication of assessment questions in PIRLS’s framework differ from one process to another. They hypothesized that locating and extracting explicitly stated information is less difficult than making interpretations across an entire text and integrating those with external ideas and experiences. This therefore explains why learners performed above average on ‘extracting explicitly stated information’ than the other three processes. Mullis and Martin’s hypothesis also explains the differences in performance on each process as shown in table 1. Giang (2017) affirms what Mullins and Martin say when she stated in her study that EFL freshmen were only easy to understand what they read at low level type of understanding. Reading comprehension with cognitive evaluation was an obstacle for them to go over.

The general interpretation from this theme is that the performance of learners in reading comprehension is poor. The correlation between learners’ performance and teachers’ instructional practices in teaching comprehension shows that majority of the teachers are not aware of the skills of reading comprehension as stipulated in the MESVTEE (2013) Senior Secondary syllabus which are; locate details and answer factual questions, identify and recall in chronological order series of events, identify and express main ideas of texts, deduce meanings of unfamiliar words and idiomatic expressions, draw inferences from texts by direct or indirect reference, distinguish facts from opinions, distinguish specific facts from generalized facts, identify over-generalized statements, describe the feelings, qualities and motives of characters in stories and understand the connotative meaning of words and phrases. These skills also correlate with the four PIRLS’ reading assessment framework processes on reading

comprehension. Hence, teachers are unable to effectively implement the necessary skills due to a number of challenges that confront them and learners.

Furthermore, whereas the performance on the PIRLS reading comprehension processes have been attributed to the degree of complexity and sophistication, learners' poor performance on making straight-forward inferences, interpreting and integrating ideas and information, examining and evaluating content, language and textual elements could also be linked to teachers' ineffective instructional practices in the teaching and assessment of reading comprehension.

#### **5.4 Summary**

The findings and discussions revealed that, teachers taught and assessed the learners in reading comprehension. However, they did not impart the necessary reading comprehension skills as expected. A good number of the teachers if not most, focussed merely on reading, speed, pronunciation of words and vocabulary. They did not give detailed explanations on how the learners were expected to acquire the necessary reading comprehension skills. They also did not understand how to properly assess their learners during or after teaching. To them, reading comprehension was about reading a text and then answer a few questions thereafter. Furthermore, it was revealed that learners performed well in the questions that did not require them to think beyond the text but on the other hand, the performance was very poor in those questions that required high thinking skills.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 Overview**

This chapter concludes the study and highlights the major contributions the study has made to research. Thereafter, the recommendations are made in order to improve the instructional practices in teaching and assessing reading comprehension in secondary schools. This is because the failure by the learners to interpret texts during reading comprehension lessons or assessments contributes greatly to poor performance in English language as constantly reported by Examination Council of Zambia 2014 to 2022. The Chapter ends by suggesting further research in teaching comprehension in English.

#### **6.2. Conclusion**

The main purpose of this study was to examine teachers' instructional practices when teaching and assessing reading comprehension as well as to assess learners' reading comprehension performance using Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) Assessment Framework for reading comprehension.

In line with the study objective number one namely the instructional practices teachers were employing in teaching reading comprehension, teachers mentioned that they used prior knowledge, teacher exposition, reading, group/open class discussions, scheming and most importantly lesson planning to foster learner acquisition of necessary skills in reading comprehension. In line with the findings and discussions, it was revealed, that teachers used prior knowledge to foster skill acquisition. They probed for the background knowledge of the learners as stated. Teachers also engaged learners into reading. However, for the most part, the reading generally focussed on the speed at which learners read, the pronunciation of words and audibility when asked to read aloud. Hence, the lessons seemed to be more about reading in general and not reading comprehension.

Additionally, there was no engagement of learners in group work except open class discussions in which a notable number of learners were quiet. Lesson planning was on the other hand done by all the teachers though as alluded to earlier, the content of the lessons was more of mere reading lessons as opposed to reading comprehension. Furthermore, the schools seemingly had schemes for reading comprehension but one

school could not even take time to plan on their own. They used a common scheme meant for a different province in the country. Teacher exposition on the other hand was not done in accordance with reading comprehension skills. Almost all the teachers observed did not fully understand how to use teacher exposition during reading comprehension lessons. Generally, it was discovered that, there was no satisfactory impartation of the reading comprehension skills neither was there evident meaningful engagement of the learners during the teaching and learning process.

The second objective was examining the assessment practices teachers employed in reading comprehension and how they related these to instructional practices. Teachers were expected to link teaching and assessment by basing both aspects of teaching on four areas of reading comprehension according to PIRLS. The findings revealed that they employed oral question and answer sessions, giving learners multiple choice questions, yes/ no questions, open ended questions, group and individual work (exercises) which proved ineffective as they delinked teaching and assessment. They stated or listed the assessment practices. The only problem was that effective implementation of these practices was not exhibited by them. Teachers did not fully understand how to effectively prepare the learners for reading comprehension assessment. Some of them could not even understand the difference between teaching and assessment instructional practices. Generally, teachers simply tested the learners as opposed to teaching them first. It was also established that, learners were not mostly able to interpret texts or answer questions effectively when it came to questions that required them to cognitively evaluate content.

Last but not least, objective number three was centered on learners' performance in reading comprehension according to the PIRLS' assessment framework of reading comprehension. It was revealed that, the learners' performance from all the three schools was above average when tested on questions that focussed on retrieving explicitly stated information. In brief, it was generally revealed that the learners performed above average on the first process, average on the second process and below average on the last two processes. The performance from the three schools was also almost the same. In a nutshell, it was concluded that although teachers perceived a variety of instructional practices to teach reading comprehension and a good number of techniques to assess learners in reading comprehension, they did not adequately

prepare learners for assessment based on the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study. This in turn, made the learners to fail to attend to reading comprehension questions adequately. Therefore, the study established that teachers did not do enough to impart the learners with the necessary reading comprehension skills.

### **6.3. Implications of my study for the Zambian schools**

1. Teachers must make it a mandate to know and understand the effective ways of teaching and assessing reading comprehension.
2. Different strategies must be appropriately used in reading comprehension lessons to secondary school learners.
3. Different kinds of interaction should be encouraged to promote fostering of all the necessary skills needed to be learnt in reading comprehension.
4. Teachers must ensure that they devise reading comprehension lessons and questions with regard to the four processes of reading comprehension and also by making sure that the learners have prerequisite knowledge to help them understand the lessons.
5. The four processes of reading comprehension by PIRLS should be addressed as separate entities in the initial stages of reading comprehension lessons until learners are able to attend to reading comprehension questions holistically.

### **6.4. Contribution to the field**

Worldwide, this study may contribute to the body of knowledge regarding research in English Language based on the effective teacher's instructional practices in teaching reading comprehension namely teaching students to identify main ideas and summarizing passages, teaching students to see underlying structure of the text, using supplemental materials and interactive delivery methods such as videos, peer-assisted learning and questioning and incorporating vocabulary and self-monitoring. Knowledge on assessing learners' performance in reading comprehension according to the PIRLS is also a contribution to the body of study. Therefore, this study has endeavoured to emphasise the link between effective teaching and assessment for effective imparting of reading comprehension skills. Progress in International Reading Literacy Study helped me to emphasise on appropriate analysis of data on what instructional practices teachers used to engage learners to acquire reading comprehension skills necessary for assessment. These concepts were applied in some

studies but did not specifically focus on teachers' instructional practices in teaching and assessing reading comprehension in class. In view of the findings of this study, I recommend the following:

## **6.5 Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made in light of policy, practice and further research.

### **6.5.1 Policy**

1. There is need for Ministry of Education through Curriculum Development to emphasise on strategies that foster text interpretation in reading comprehension.
2. There is also need for the Ministry of Education to ensure that teaching and assessment of reading comprehension is based on the standardized format by referring to the skills stipulated in the English Secondary School syllabus.
3. Also the use of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) assessment framework by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) can be of great importance.

### **6.5.2 Practice**

1. Both in-service and pre-service teachers need to undergo staff development or capacity building through such programmes as Professional Continuing Development Programmes, so that they can handle reading comprehension teaching in a way that is aimed at fostering reading comprehension skills in learners.
2. Teachers should ensure that they engage the learners at all levels of learning reading comprehension. In simpler terms, learners must be allowed to take a leading role in their own learning and acquisition of reading comprehension skills.
3. Heads of Department should closely check lesson plans and the schemes of work for the teachers in order to ensure that there is effective preparation of the teaching and assessment of reading comprehension.

4. Standard monitors both internal and external should intensify monitoring of teachers of English in order to device deliberate effective practices of handling reading comprehension in class.

### **6.5.3 Further Research**

1. There is need to explore learners' views on interactive activities and classroom participation in reading comprehension
2. There is also a need to examine how teachers employ critical thinking in reading comprehension lessons.
3. There is need to examine the relationship between teacher's classroom practices and learner performance in reading comprehension.
4. A further research could be done also on learners' perspective on the teaching and assessment of reading comprehension in school.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Clearance letter for data collection from the University of Zambia Ethical Committee



## THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES

Great East Road Campus | P.O. Box 32379 | Lusaka 10101 | Tel: (+260) 290 258/291 777  
Fax: (+260) 211 290 258/253 952 | Email: director.drgs@unza.zm | Website: www.unza.zm

### APPROVAL OF STUDY

21<sup>st</sup> December, 2020.

**REF NO. HSSREC-2020-MAR-034**

Christabel Lubumbe  
LUSAKA

Dear Ms. Lubumbe,

**RE: "AN EXAMINATION OF THE TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT OF READING COMPREHENSION IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF NDOLA DISTRICT"**

Reference is made to your protocol dated 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2020. HSSREC resolved to approve this study and your participation as Principal Investigator for a period of one year.

REVIEW TYPE	ORDINARY REVIEW	APPROVAL NO.
		HSSREC-2020-MAR-034
Approval and Expiry Date	Approval Date: 20 <sup>th</sup> December, 2020	Expiry Date: 21 <sup>st</sup> December, 2021
Protocol Version and Date Information Sheet.	Version - Nil. • English.	21 <sup>st</sup> December, 2021 To be provided
Consent Forms and Dates		
Consent form ID and Date	Version - Nil	To be provided
Recruitment Materials	Nil	Nil
Other Study Documents	Questionnaire.	
Number of Participants		
Approved for Study		

Specific conditions will apply to this approval. As Principal Investigator it is your responsibility to ensure that the contents of this letter are adhered to. If these are not adhered to, the approval may be suspended. Should the study be suspended, study sponsors and other regulatory authorities will be informed.

**Appendix B: Permission letter for data collection- District Education Board Secretary**

**(DEBS, Ndola District)**

All correspondence should be addressed to the  
District Education Board Secretary

Telephone: +260 212 812277 / 822047



In reply please quote:

No. ....

**REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA**  
**MINISTRY OF GENERAL EDUCATION**  
DISTRICT EDUCATION BOARD SECRETARY  
P.O Box 71970  
NDOLA.

6<sup>th</sup> May 2020

The Headteachers  
**NDOLA DISTRICT**

**RE: FIELD WORK FOR MASTERS/PHD STUDENTS**

I write to introduce to you Ms. Christabel Lubumbe Computer Number 2018248383 a registered student at the University of Zambia, School of Education.

She is currently pursuing a Master's Programme in Education and would like to carry out her field work.

Kindly assist her.

*Chilufya*  
*0850*  
pp **Crispin Chilufya** *000*  
District Education Board Secretary  
**NDOLA DISTRICT**  
*/rkc*



## Appendix C: Letter of Permission for Head Teachers

Date:.....

The Head teacher,  
.....Secondary school,  
P.O. Box.....  
Ndola.

Dear Sir/ Madam,

### **Re: Request for Permission to conduct research in your school**

I am a student at the University of Zambia (UNZA) pursuing a Master of Education in Applied Linguistics. As a requirement for my studies, I am expected to carry out some research and compile a report thereof. I intend to conduct a study entitled “*An Examination of the teaching and assessment of reading Comprehension*” This will involve observing the way teachers of English teach and assess reading comprehension on a day to day practice. I will further conduct interviews with them as well as with the Head of Department. Additionally, some learners will be sampled to undertake a reading comprehension test. I therefore, request permission to conduct my study in your school. Be assured that the identities of the school, teachers and learners will be highly protected in order to comply with Ethical requirements laid down by The University of Zambia.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Yours Faithfully

LUBUMBE CHRISTABEL

For any enquires, you may contact me on 0966-882804 or Email:  
[christabelubumbe@yahoo.com](mailto:christabelubumbe@yahoo.com)

## Appendix D: Questionnaire for Teachers

### Introduction

My name is **LUBUMBE CHRISTABEL**, am a postgraduate student at the University of Zambia pursuing a Master's Degree in Literacy, Language and Applied Linguistics. I am conducting a research on the topic, "**An Examination of the Teaching and Assessment of Reading Comprehension in Selected Secondary Schools of Ndola District**".

Dear Participant,

You have been purposively sampled to take part in this research. Hence, you are kindly requested to participate in this research by responding to the questions below. This study is purely for academic purposes and not meant to cause you any mental or physical harm. I therefore, encourage you to be free when providing your responses.

### INSTRUCTIONS

Please do not give your name. The data/information you give in this questionnaire will be treated with utmost confidentiality. It will only be used for academic purposes. Therefore, be as truthful and factual as possible.

1. How old were you on your last birthday? .....
2. Sex
  1. Male [ ]
  2. Female [ ]
3. Number of years of service (teaching experience).....
4. What is your teacher-pupil ratio in your classes?
  1. Less than 20 pupils per class [ ]
  2. 20-30 pupils per class [ ]
  3. 30-40 pupils per class [ ]
  4. 40-50 pupils per class [ ]
  5. 50-60 pupils per class [ ]
  6. Above 60 pupils per class [ ]
5. Have you ever attended a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) on reading comprehension?
  1. Yes [ ]
  2. No [ ]
6. (a) If your response to Q6 is Yes, how many times?  
.....
7. (b) and what instructional practices were taught or presented as effective for teaching and assessing reading comprehension?  
Teaching:.....

Assessing:.....

8. From your own experience, what instructional practices do you use or are effective for teaching and assessing reading comprehension

(a)Teaching:.....

(b)Assessing:.....

9. Do you have any challenges that negatively affect your effectiveness and efficiency in reading comprehension lesson planning and delivery?

1. Yes [ ] 2. No [ ]

10. (a) If your response to Q9 is Yes, what are those challenges?.....

10. (b) If your response to Q9 is Yes, what intervention measures do you think should be put in place to lessen or reduce the challenges mentioned in Q10 (a)?

11. During your reading comprehension lessons, what questioning techniques do you employ in assessing reading comprehension in learners?

12. When assessing your learners in reading comprehension, what kind of specific skills do you expect them to demonstrate?.....

13. Do you think learners' performance in reading comprehension has an effect on the learners' performance in other subjects or on their general academic performance?

1. Yes [ ] 2. No [ ]

14. If your response to Q10 is yes, give a reason.....

**Thank you for your responses**

## **Appendix E: Interview Guide for Heads of Departments (H.O.Ds)**

**Dear Participant,**

I am a postgraduate student at the University of Zambia (UNZA) pursuing a Master of Education in Literacy, Language and Applied Linguistics. I am conducting a research on the topic. “**An Examination of the Teaching and Assessment of Reading Comprehension in Selected Secondary Schools of Ndola District**”. You are kindly requested to feel free as I interview you. All the questions shall be taken as strictly classified. This study is purely for academic purposes and not meant to cause you any mental or physical harm. I therefore encourage you to be free as I interview you.

**SCHOOL CODE..... H.O.D’S CODE.....**

**TIME..... DATE:.....**

1. Do you think reading comprehension is effectively taught in your school? Explain/Give a comment.
2. From your experience and observations, what are the most effective instructional practices that your teachers use that are effective for reading comprehension? Give brief explanations.
3. What are the most effective assessment tasks or practices in reading comprehension?
4. Does the experience of a teacher in teaching have an impact or influence on the instructional practices they employ in reading comprehension?
5. What are your teachers’ attitudes towards teaching reading comprehension?
6. In general, what challenges do you think the teachers may have that could cause them to fail to teach reading comprehension effectively?
7. From your observations, do your teachers have enough knowledge on reading comprehension skills and how they can be imparted in learners. Give brief explanation.
8. From your observation, do your teachers’ lesson plans for reading comprehension clearly indicate the assessment tasks that match with the objectives? Give/make a comment.
9. Is the frequency of reading comprehension in your schemes adequate enough to help learners gain more knowledge on reading comprehension skills?
10. How is the performance of your pupils in reading comprehension?
11. Do you think the performance of your learners in reading comprehension has an impact on their academic performance in general?

**Thank you very much for your co-operation.**

## Appendix F: Observation Sheet guide for teachers

**Dear Participant,**

I am a postgraduate student at the University of Zambia (UNZA) pursuing a Master of Education in Literacy, Language and Applied Linguistics. I am conducting a research on the topic, “**An Examination of the Teaching and Assessment of Reading Comprehension in Selected Secondary Schools of Ndola District**”. You are kindly requested to feel free as I observe your lesson. All observations recorded will be taken as strictly classified. This study is purely for academic purposes and not meant to cause you any mental or physical harm. I therefore, encourage you to be free when teaching as I observe the lesson.

**SCHOOL CODE..... TEACHER’S CODE.....**

**GRADE..... TIME..... DATE.....**

**NUMBER OF LEARNERS:..... BOYS.....GIRLS...**

N/NO	CRITERION FOR TEACHING AND ASSESSING READING COMPREHENSION	SUB-CATEGORIES	ACTION/EVIDENCE	COMMENT
1	Engage learners or encourage them to participate actively and or help figure out the context or content before the teaching and learning process.	-Discussion -Surveys -use of pictures, audio visual excursions etc. -generally engage in pre reading activities		
2	Guiding Reader/Text Interactions during Reading to Learn, Teacher Interventions Following Reading to Learn and General Comments on Increasing Learning from Text/Prose	-analyze the text: generic structures, linguistic features etc. -Generally investigate structural patterns		

		-oral-aural pronunciation, decoding, and spellings		
z3	Probe learners' explanations and answers with regard to the stated reading comprehension skills	-teacher questioning, discussing and editing whole class construction- Information gap activities -self assessment and peer assessment activities		
4	Provide detailed explanations on how to provide answers from a given passage while paying attention to the Reading Comprehension skills?	-teacher exposition		
6	Structure the reading comprehension questions using the reading comprehension-based skills	-ask questions that border on information that is explicitly mentioned, make inferences, examining and evaluating content, language and textual elements or integrating / interpreting ideas.		
7	Use texts that are appropriate in content with regard to learners' day to day experiences or knowledge?	-texts should be familiar to the learners		

**GENERAL OBSERVATION.....**

## Appendix G: Document Analysis Sheet

**Dear Participants,**

I am a postgraduate student at the University of Zambia (UNZA) pursuing a Master of Education in Literacy, Language and Applied Linguistics. I am conducting a research on the topic “**An Examination of the Teaching and Assessment of Reading Comprehension in Selected Secondary Schools of Ndola District**”. You are kindly requested to participate in this research by providing me with your lesson plans and schemes of work. All observations recorded will be taken as strictly classified. This study is purely for academic purposes and not meant to cause you any mental or physical harm. I therefore, encourage you to be free as I conduct document analysis.

**School code: .....Teacher’s code: Grade:.....**

S/NO	CRITERION FOR TEACHING AND ASSESSING READING COMPREHENSION	SUB-CATEGORIES	ACTION/ EVIDENCE	COMMENT
1.	Document reflecting the connection between the stated outcomes and the content	-lesson outcomes should be clearly stated and must match the content of the lesson plan		
2.	Is the document reflecting giving learner’s chance to interact with different kinds of materials	-the material or texts used must allow learners to interact with various pieces of information that they can relate with.		
3.	Learners explore reading comprehension in its broadness	-allow learners to answer questions that		

		border or tally with the reading comprehension skills		
4.	Planning on document reflecting probing learners' explanations of what they are required to do in order to get the correct answers to the reading comprehension questions.	-the document must state clearly the process of achieving the learning outcomes.		

**Time:**..... **Date:**.....

**Document type:**.....

**GENERAL OBSERVATION**

.....

## **Appendix H: Reading Comprehension Assessment Passage, Questions and Answers**

**Read the following passage and then answer the questions that follow.**

### **AN UNBELIEVABLE NIGHT**

1. Anina was ten years old, so even half asleep she could find her way from her room to the bathroom. The door to her room was usually open a crack, and the nightlight in the hallway made it light enough to get to the bathroom past the telephone stand.
2. One night, as she passed the telephone stand on her way to the bathroom, Anina heard something that sounded like a quiet hissing. But, because she was half asleep, she didn't really pay any attention to it. Anyway, it came from pretty far away. Not until she was on her way back to her room did she see where it came from. Under the telephone stand there was a large pile of old newspapers and magazines, and this pile now began to move. That was where the noise was coming from. All of a sudden, the pile started to fall over – right, left, forwards, backwards – then there were newspapers and magazines all over the floor. Anina could not believe her eyes as she watched a grunting and snorting crocodile come out from under the telephone stand.
3. Anina was frozen to the spot. Her eyes wide as saucers, she watched the crocodile crawl completely out of the newspapers and slowly look around the apartment. It seemed to have just come out of the water because its whole body was dripping wet. Wherever the crocodile stepped, the carpet under it became drenched.
4. The crocodile moved its head back and forth letting out a loud hissing sound. Anina swallowed hard, looking at the crocodile's snout with its terribly long row of teeth. It swung its tail slowly back and forth. Anina had read about that in "Animal Magazine"– how the crocodile whips the water with its tail to chase away or attack its enemies.
5. Her gaze fell on the last issue of "Animal Magazine," which had fallen from the pile and was lying at her feet. She got another shock. The cover of the magazine used to have a picture of a big crocodile on a river bank. The river bank was now empty!

6. Anina bent down and picked up the magazine. At that moment the crocodile whipped his tail so hard that he cracked the big vase of sunflowers on the floor and the sunflowers scattered everywhere. With a quick jump Anina was in her bedroom. She slammed the door shut, grabbed her bed and pushed it up against the door. She had built a barricade that would keep her safe from the crocodile. Relieved, she let her breath out.
7. But then she hesitated. What if the beast was simply hungry? Maybe to make the crocodile go away you had to give it something to eat?
8. Anina looked again at the animal magazine. If the crocodile could crawl out of a picture then perhaps other animal could too. Anina hastily flipped through the magazine and stopped at a swarm of flamingos in a jungle swamp. Just right, she thought. They look like a birthday cake for crocodiles.
9. Suddenly there was a loud crack and the tip of the crocodile's tail pushed through the splintered door.
10. Quickly, Anina held the picture of the flamingos up to the hole in the door and called as loud as she could, "Get out of the swamp! Shoo! Shoo!" Then she threw the magazine through the hole into the hallway, clapped her hands and yelled and screamed.
11. She could hardly believe what happened next. The entire hallway was suddenly filled with screeching flamingos wildly flapping their wings and running around all over the place on their long, skinny legs. Anina saw one bird with a sunflower in its beak and another grabbing her mother's hat from its hook. She also saw a flamingo disappear into the crocodile's mouth. With two quick bites he swallowed the flamingo and quickly followed it with another, the one with the sunflower in its beak.
12. After two portions of flamingo the crocodile seemed to have had enough and lay down contentedly in the middle of the hallway. When he had closed his eyes and no longer moved, Anina quietly opened her door and slipped through it into the hallway. She placed the empty magazine cover in front of the crocodile's nose. "Please," she whispered, "please go back home." She crept back into the bedroom and looked through the hole in the door. She saw the crocodile back on the cover of the magazine.
13. She now went cautiously into the living room where the flamingos were crowded around the sofa and standing on the television. Anina opened the

magazine to the page with the empty picture. “Thank you,” she said, “thank you very much. You may now go back to your swamp.”

14. In the morning, it was very difficult for her to explain the giant wet spot on the floor and the broken door to her parents. They weren't convinced about the crocodile even though her mother's hat was nowhere to be found.

*Adapted from Eine Wilde Nacht in Der GroßeZwerg und AndereGeschichten by Franz Hohler.*

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. What was the first sign that something unusual was happening?
  - A. A pile of newspapers began to move.
  - B. Anina saw the magazine cover.
  - C. The door to her room was broken.
  - D. Anina heard a hissing sound.**
2. Where did the crocodile come from?
  - A. the bathroom
  - B. a magazine cover**
  - C. under the bed
  - D. a nearby river
3. Which words tell you that Anina was frightened?
  - A. “frozen to the spot”**
  - B. “could not believe her eyes”
  - C. “let her breath out”
  - D. “sounded like a quiet hissing”
4. Why did Anina think the crocodile was going to attack?
  - A. It showed its long row of teeth.
  - B. It let out a loud hissing sound.
  - C. It started grunting and snorting.
  - D. It swung its tail back and forth.**
5. Put the following sentences in the order in which they happened in the story.  
The first one has been done for you.  
-Anina sees the crocodile.  
-The crocodile ate two flamingos.

- Anina tried to explain to her parents why the door is broken.
- Anina started to walk to the bathroom
- Anina ran to the bedroom and slammed the door

**Appropriate Ordering of Sentences**

- I. Anina started to walk to the bathroom.
  - II. Anina sees the crocodile.
  - III. Anina ran to the bedroom and slammed the door.
  - IV. The crocodile ate two flamingos.
  - V. Anina tried to explain to her parents why the door is broken.
6. Why did Anina call the flamingos?

The response demonstrates an understanding that the flamingos were food to the crocodile.

**Example:**

To feed the crocodile.

Or, the response demonstrates a general understanding that Anina used the flamingos to help her keep safe from the crocodile.

**Example:**

So they would protect her from the crocodile.

7. How did the magazine help Anina? Write two ways.

**2 – Complete Comprehension**

The response identifies two ways that Anina used the magazine to help her situation, either by teaching her about the animals from the magazine, helping her to get the animals out of her house, or feeding the crocodile. See the list below for appropriate ways that the magazine helped Anina.

**1 – Partial Comprehension**

The response identifies only one way the magazine helped her as listed below.

The second way identified may be inaccurate or too vague.

**Acceptable ideas for how the magazine helped Anina:**

- It told her that when crocodiles swing their tails/whip the water it means that they are going to attack.
- It showed her where the crocodile had come from.
- It provided the flamingos. /It gave her something to feed to the crocodile.

- It helped her to get rid of the crocodile/flamingos (by sending them back on to the pages).
8. At the end of the story, how did Anina feel toward the flamingos?
- A. guilty
  - B. cautious
  - C. grateful**
  - D. annoyed
9. Name one thing Anina had difficulty explaining to her parents.

**1. Acceptable Response**

The response identifies one of the things in the house that Anina might have had trouble explaining.

**Examples:**

- the wet spot on the floor
  - the broken door
  - her mother's (missing) hat,
  - the broken vase
  - or scattered sunflowers.
10. You learn what Anina was like, from the things she did. Describe what she was like and give two examples of what she did that show this.

**3 – Extensive Comprehension**

The response provides at least one valid, appropriate description of what Anina was like (e.g., clever, fast thinker, innovative, creative, resourceful, brave, cautious, fearful, frightened, scared, appreciative, grateful, nice, good) with two things that she said or did in the story that support the description and illustrate her character.

**Example:**

She was brave to come out of her room and then put the magazine right under the crocodile's nose.

## **2 – Satisfactory Comprehension**

The response provides at least one valid, appropriate description and only one supporting thing that she did.

### **Example:**

She was clever because she made a plan to get rid of the crocodile.

## **1 – Partial Comprehension**

The response provides an appropriate description with a reason that is vague or general.

### **Example:**

Anina was clever. She used the magazine.

Or, the response provides at least one appropriate description without a reason.

### **Example:**

Anina was a fast thinker.

Or, the response provides at least one appropriate reason without a description.

### **Example:**

She let the flamingos out of the magazine and she got the crocodile to go back to its home in the magazine.

- Her mother's hat was missing the next morning.
- The door was cracked.
- The carpet had a wet spot.
- The vase was broken.
- The sunflowers were scattered on the floor.