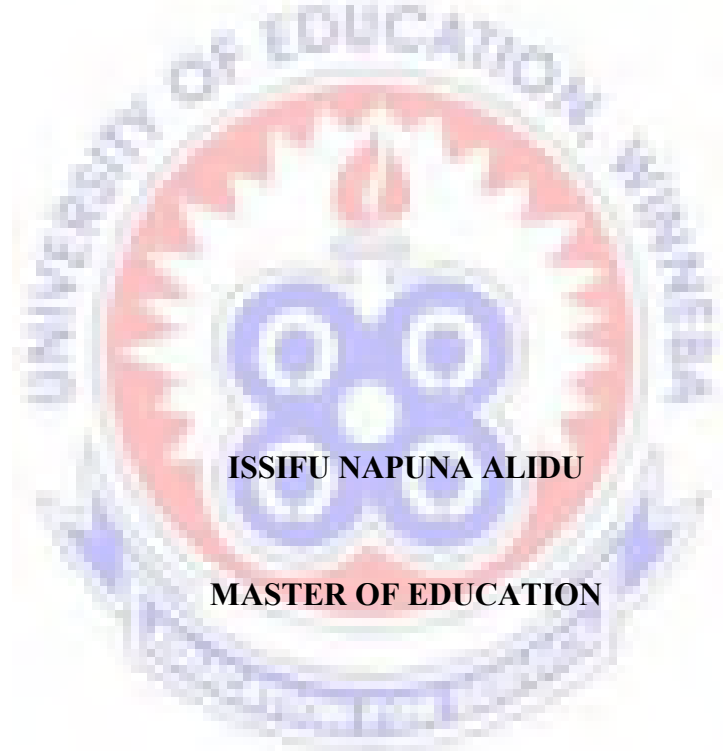**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS OF STUDENTS: A

CASE STUDY OF SHS 2 STUDENTS IN KANTON SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

ISSIFU NAPUNA ALIDU

MASTER OF EDUCATION

2019

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

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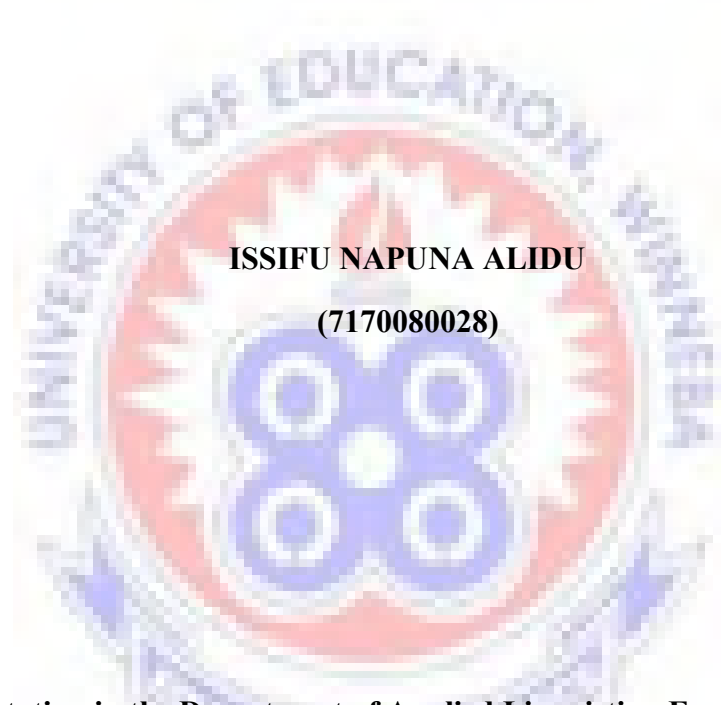
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(7170080028)

A dissertation in the Department of Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Foreign Language Education and Communication, submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the award of the degree of
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in the University of Education, Winneba

SEPTEMBER, 2019

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Issifu Napuna Alidu, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

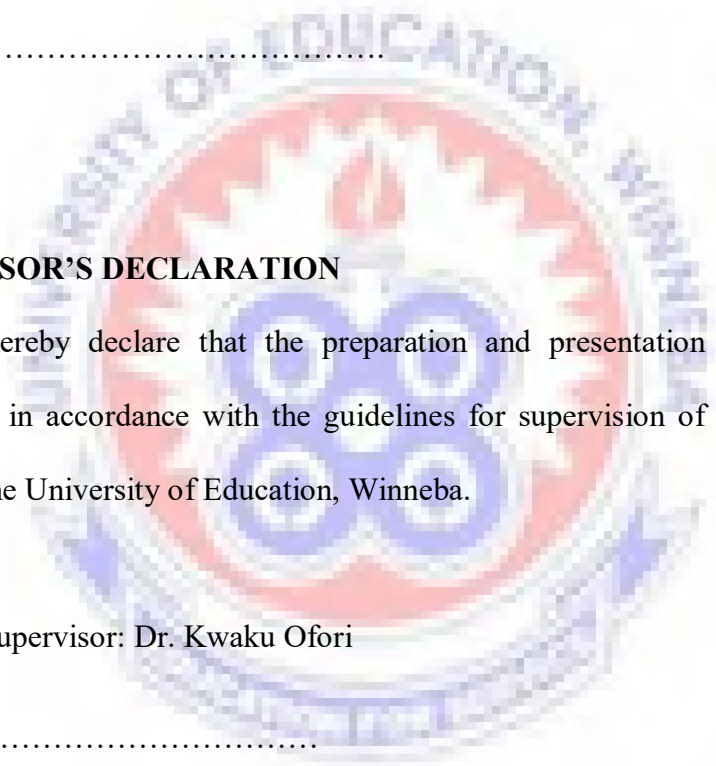Signature:…………………………….

Date:…………………………………..

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of dissertation as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Name of Supervisor: Dr. Kwaku Ofori

Signature :……………………….

Date:………………………………

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of my late father, Alidu Waah Yumo, as well as my wife and my mother, Amina Kanluoru Iddi and Marie Tanjia Hatongama respectively, and to my three lovely boys (ie Mckin, Wadood, and Rasmi) as well as the entire Alidu Waah Yumo's family.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GES   Ghana Education Service

IQ   Intelligent Quotient

NFER   National Foundation for Education Research

NGOs   Non-Governmental Organisations

USA   United States of American

SHS   Senior High School
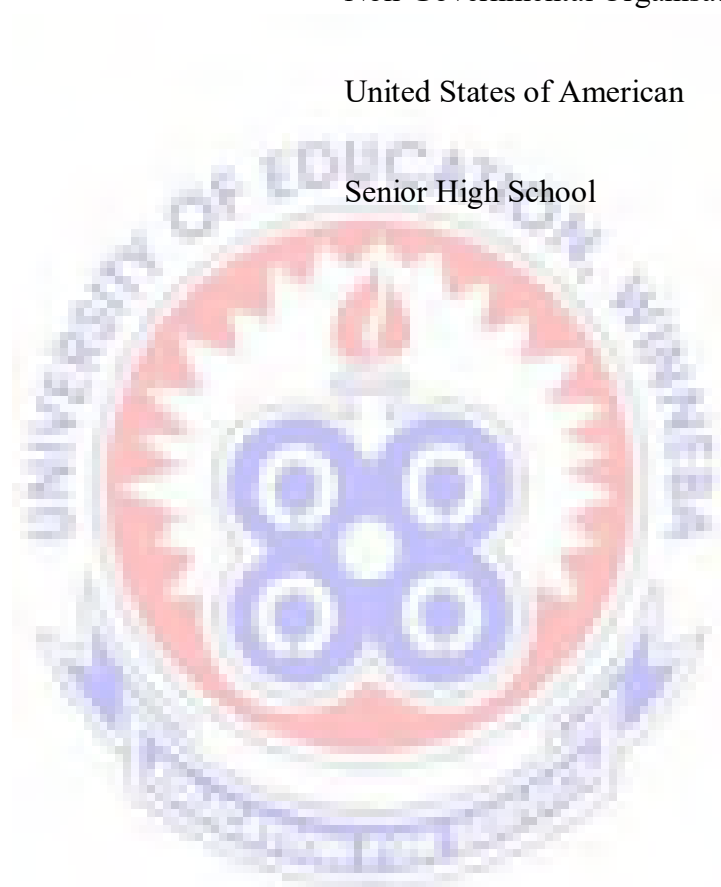
ABSTRACT

Reading comprehension is an important part of every human activity. Despite its significance in the academic world and the world of work, many people are challenged with varied degrees of difficulties when it comes to reading comprehension. This study therefore sought to improve reading comprehension skills of students in the Senior High School, particularly Kanton Senior High School. The study used both qualitative and quantitative data gathered from fifty-eight (58) participants made of students, teachers and parents using probability and non-probability sampling techniques. The study helped unearth the contribution of some relevant stakeholders and strategies in improving reading comprehension skills and some of the variables responsible for reading comprehension challenges. The work has among others made recommended that teachers should provide ample time for reading and comprehension lessons. Also, the government and other relevant stakeholders in the teaching and learning industry should help in providing refresher courses for English language teachers in Ghana.

Some Key words: *reading, comprehension, skills, causes, methods, strategies, and stakeholders.*

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the background of the study, the problem statement, research questions (main and specific), research objectives (main and specific), the significance of the study, limitations, delimitations, and organisation of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

It is quite obvious that language is the most important tool of communication in any human society or organized unit. It is therefore the defining feature of culture and unmistakable mark of personality. Akpanglo-Nartey (2003) sees language as a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used for human communication. This therefore highlights the importance of language, more specifically, the English Language in the every human enterprise.

Eskey (2005) asserted that students want to read texts in order to obtain information and to use it according to their needs. Similarly, Levine Ferenz&Reves (2000) considered reading comprehension as one of the most important skills for students at university level to enhance reading academic text ability. Reading comprehension skills are therefore pivotal in facilitating academic performance.

At independence, many countries look to reform education to accelerate economic and social development. Ghana was no exception, and the newly independent government saw in education the keys to social and economic development.

Ghana has accumulated a wealth of knowledge and experience from over 60 years of educational development. On average, it has introduced one form of reform in every five years, but it is how the country utilises knowledge and experiences from these reforms that will determine the extent to which education and economic development will interact to achieve Ghana's developmental agenda.

Interestingly, English language is the Lingua Franca of Ghana. That is to say, it is the official language of government business, trade and commerce, information transfer and exchange, entertainment and broadcast regardless the interplay of its local languages. This therefore suggests that reading comprehension skills are paramount if one is to function effectively in a society that placed the English language at the hem of its local languages in official communication.

Historically, reading comprehension has long been considered a process where readers interact with the texts to construct meaning. Barnett (1989) stated that this process can be illustrated by three different reading models, namely bottom-up model, top-down model and interactive model.

Reading is one of the basic skills every person agrees as critical for survival in the modern world and in the world of work. It covers a whole array of activities in the school, from being able to re-organize letters of the alphabets through reading of words and sentences and finally to be able to read anything about printed materials (Sessan 1997).

One of such challenges that confront many students particularly at the basic and senior high school levels has to do with reading comprehension skills. In general terms, reading comprehension can be defined as the ability to understand information in a text and interpret it appropriately. Grabe and Stoller (2002) define reading comprehension according to a set of necessary processes. The last but not the least important process is that of reading comprehension as a linguistic process. This however suggests that, reading and comprehension is not an easy task and students who find it difficult to read, finds it difficult in life.

In attempting to respond to this challenge, linguist, policy makers and researchers must address a formidable question. What are the causes of poor reading

and comprehension skills development among students? What strategies or methods should be adopted to improve students' reading comprehension skills and finally, what are the militating factors against reading comprehension skills acquisition among senior high school students?

Unfortunately, students think that reading comprehension is all about pronouncing words correctly yet the same student finds it difficult to understand what is been read. Let alone provide appropriate reading comprehension responses to what has been read.

It is against this background that the researcher sought to find answers to and also to suggest appropriate strategies to improve reading comprehension skills of students in the Senior High Schools, particularly Kanton Senior High School in the Upper West Region of Ghana.

1.2 Problem Statement

Educational progress and development remain the greatest goal of every student and have been largely determined by the ability of the student to read and comprehend written text. Different studies such as Taverner (1990), Aebersold& Field (1997), and Urquhart & Weir (1998) describe reading comprehension as the most difficult area which has not been comprehended and elaborated in terms of meaning of the text. However, reading comprehension as in the words of (Urquhart & Weir, 1998, p. 17) means "the whole parcel of cognitive activities that readers initiate in order to comprehend the correct meaning of the text". Similarly, Taverner (1990, p. 4) defined reading comprehension for "a means of extending experience" based on the reading material which they read and perceive the actual meaning according to the text.

Snow, (2002) asserted that reading comprehension refers to the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and

involvement with written language. In a situation where this assertion may not be true for all students then great efforts will be required in fostering the achievement of academic laurels of students and also in meeting the country's (Ghana's) drive for a literate society.

The capacity to read and comprehend written text by senior high school students in Kanton Senior High School has remain a challenge even in the era of information communication and technology proliferation in Ghana.

Though other academic interventions such teaching of grammar, composition and expository writing skills and the genres of literature, all in the effort to improve upon the student's understanding of text and appreciation of the English language, however, it has been observed that students continue to exhibit poor performance in reading comprehension at almost all levels of education in Ghana and in particular Kanton Senior High School. The inability for a student to effectively read and understand text read may lead to lack of opportunities for personal fulfilment and job success.

It is quite clear that many learners who experience difficulties in reading and read comprehension will experience difficulties in other subject areas and to an extent in life. The researcher has therefore identified the inability of students to read and comprehension written text in Kanton Senior High School as the greatest challenge in their lifelong learning and academic performance.

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to establish the causes of poor reading comprehension skills among the students of Kanton Senior High School and to suggest appropriate strategies to improve upon them.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The research hopes to achieve the following Specific Objectives:

1. To establish, the causes of poor reading comprehension skills among the students of Kanton Senior High School.

2. To evaluate, the militating factors against reading comprehension skills among Students of Kanton Senior High School.

3. To assess, the reading comprehension skills/strategies appropriate for improving reading comprehension of students in the study area.

1.4 Research Questions

1.4.1 Main Research Question

The main research question of this study is; what are the causes of poor reading comprehension skills among the students of Kanton Senior High School and the appropriate strategies to improve upon them?

1.4.2 Specific Research Question

1. What are the basic causes of poor reading comprehension skills among the students of Kanton Senior High School?

2. What are the militating factors against reading comprehension skills acquisition among Students of Kanton Senior High School?

3. What are the reading comprehension skills/strategies appropriate for improving upon reading comprehension of students in the study area?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research justification would be buttressed by the theoretical and practical significance of the study. This research seeks to bring into perspective and examination of the various concepts and theories, other related literature pertaining to Reading Comprehension Skills among students of Kanton Senior High School in the Sissala East Municipal of the Upper West Region of Ghana.

However, the significance of this study extends beyond the researcher who has first-hand information on the reading comprehension skills among senior high school students to its impact on other stakeholders In the educational sector; such as, the government, parents, teachers, civil society organisations, development partners, policy makers and analyst, as well as the media in various discourse related to reading comprehension skills among students.

The government through the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service could identify and adopt some of the reading comprehension strategies in this work as a reference point for educational policy development and also for curriculum review and development.

Teacher as implementer of educational policies will equally find this research significant in teaching reading comprehension and also in identifying some of the causes of poor reading comprehension skills among students in the course of teaching for an improved lesson delivery.

The civil society, NGOs, development partners, the mass media among others will also find this research work important in discussing and educating others on the causes and appropriate strategies for teaching reading comprehension in schools.

Practically, findings may be extended to other parts of the country and other academic fields of study where and when necessary.

1.6 Limitation(s) of the Study

Like any other project or academic undertaking, this research work comes with some challenges which range from financial to time constraint.

Financially, this research work will require financial commitments considering the intended material and field data to be collected not forgetting the distance from study area (Tumu in the Upper West Region to Winneba in the Central Region) for supervision in order to produce quality work.

Another limitation will be the approved travel permissions from my superiors at the workplace. Regardless the enormous academic benefits that this academic exercise will have for the school, it is also obvious that some amount of contact hours with the students will be lost in the process.

1.7 Delimitations

This research has focused on improving reading comprehension skills of students in Kanton Senior High School and not in the other schools in the district.

It was possible that the problem might have existed in other year groups in the school but the researcher focused on the second year students only. The study was restricted to only reading comprehension as an aspect of English language at the expense of other aspects such as grammar, listening and speaking.

1.8 Organisation of the Study

The study was organized into the following five chapters. Chapter 1 outlined the introduction, the statement of the research problem, objectives, research questions,

significance of the study, limitations, and delimitations of the study and the organization of the study. Chapter 2 reviewed the related literature and the framework for hypothesis, while Chapter 3 focused on the research methodology paying particular attention to the research design, population of the study, sampling techniques and methods, as well as data collection instruments. However, Chapter 4 looked at data presentation, analysis, and discussion of results. Finally, Chapter 5 took care of the major findings, possible recommendations, and conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the relevant literature on how to improve reading comprehension skills of students. The literature review is aimed at providing a comprehensive examination of scholarly works which are of importance to the research topic and the realization of research objectives by taking into account the available documents - published works, used as relevant information in the development of this research work. Literature review forms an integral part of the success of any academic research. The main purpose of literature review is for referencing and for critical review.

For purposes of this research, the literature review is put into four (4) main categories to examine the concept of reading and reading comprehension, factors to consider in teaching reading comprehension, the strategies employed in teaching reading comprehension, possible causes of reading comprehension challenges among students, and any other item deemed relevant to the research work..

2.1.0 The Concept of Reading

Reading has been variedly defined. However, according to Strang et al.(1971) reading is more than seeing words clearly, more than pronouncing printed words correctly and also more than recognizing the meaning of isolated words. Reading requires the reader to think, feel, imagine something and make effective reading. It also determines what the reader reads, why the reader reads and how he reads. The inference is that, reading goes beyond the mere identification, recognition, perception, interpretation of written symbols in the form of words.

It is therefore worth stating that reading is a process, a mode of thinking, a kind of real experience, an aspect of communication and a subject tool which help other make relevant meaning from text.

Harmer, (2007:pp.99-100) identifies two different kinds of reading which are extensive and intensive reading. He explains that extensive reading refers to reading which students do often away from classroom which possibly involves reading for pleasure whereas intensive reading refers to the detailed focus on the construction of reading text which takes place usually within the classrooms. It is therefore important to note that, regardless the methods and approaches, the teacher should cultivate in the students the interest to read varied books and texts in order to build their vocabulary banks which will position them well to understand other written text in and out of the classroom.

2.1.1 The Causes of Reading Challenges

Ahuja and Ahuja (1999:pp.81-82) attributes the poor performance of children in reading to the following: prescribed textbook not up to the mark, the teaching of reading coming to a pause in grade four and five, inadequate time for studies and too heavy curriculum demands. For these, the problem of poor reading skills of the learner abound in many schools especially in the deprived districts and communities in Ghana especially in the researcher's study area.

According Asamoah et al., (2003:p.75) "a bad start will certainly make your children poor readers". It is obvious that starting every endeavour at an early stage well gives the starter an urge over later beginners. In that, early beginners in time cultivate relevant experiences for continuity. Therefore teachers who exposed their students to early reading comprehension skills are most likely to have the students perform well in reading and comprehension text.

However, for Tamakloe,(1992), certain important attributes of reading must be considered as given principles. In his assertion, values and attributes which are useful in building affective aspects of learners have not been catered for and which therefore should be taken care of being guided by the level of maturation, ability, and general disposition of the learner.

2.1.2 Overview of Reading Comprehension

Comprehension is the essence of reading and the active process of constructing meaning from text (Durkin, 1993). Reading comprehension is a complex interaction among automatic and strategic cognitive processes that enables the reader to create a mental representation of the text (van den Broek&Espin, 2012). Comprehension depends not only on characteristics of the reader, such as prior knowledge and working memory, but also on language processes, such as basic reading skills, decoding, vocabulary, sensitivity to text structure, inferencing, and motivation. Comprehension also requires effective use of strategic processes, such as metacognition and comprehension monitoring. As readers mature in their comprehension skills, they are able to progress efficiently from the stage of learning to read to the ultimate goal of reading to learn (Yovanoff et al., 2005). The researcher had observed that many of the students from the Junior High School to the Senior High School are relatively younger and immature as compared to the predecessors in the 80s. This immaturity in the students may affect their reading comprehension skills and acquisition as observed in the study area.

2.1.3 The Role of Cognitive Skills in Reading Comprehension

Fluency is a prerequisite skill to comprehension. It is the automatic recognition of words that frees up the cognitive capacity required for comprehending the meaning of the words (Pressley, 2002). Considered a bridge between decoding and comprehension (Pikulski& Chard, 2005), reading fluency took center stage after the results from the National Reading Panel (2000) were published. Although early studies recognized decoding as the skill that predicted differences in comprehension skills between children (Stanovich, 1986), a landmark study of struggling readers revealed that only those who practiced reading the words until they automatically recognized them were able to accurately answer comprehension questions about the text (Tan & Nicholson, 1997). A study of at-risk second graders also revealed that accuracy and rate of oral reading uniquely predicted comprehension ability. Students in the study are therefore confronted with the ability to master these automatic word recognition skills in relation to reading comprehension.

(Berninger et al., 2006). However, fluency appears to be a larger influence in developing reading comprehension skills for younger readers compared to older ones. As text becomes more challenging with each grade level, fluency becomes less predictive of reading comprehension and, instead, gives way to vocabulary (Yovanoff et al, 2005). In a multivariate study of Florida students' reading comprehension scores, Schatschneider et al., (2005) discovered that oral reading fluency did explain the differences in comprehension among third grade students while vocabulary emerged as a major factor among older students. In the section that follows, research on the role of vocabulary in comprehension development is discussed.

2.1.4 Vocabulary and Semantic Processing

In order to extract meaning from text, a strong sense of semantics is required. That is, children have to understand what words mean before they can construct understanding of text passages. The first empirical study of the correlation between word knowledge and reading comprehension was published over 70 years ago (Davis, 1942), and has been replicated in decades of research consistently identifying knowledge of vocabulary as a primary predictor of reading comprehension development (Thorndike, 1973; Beck et al, 1982; Carroll, 1993; Torgeson et al., 1997; de Jong & van der Leij, 2002; Braze, Tabor et al., 2007). This research findings which identified vocabulary as a primary predictor of reading comprehension development is evident in the Kanton Senior High School in which students who lacks good vocabulary due to insufficient word banks are confronted with reading and comprehension challenges.

Similarly, vocabulary skills, such as oral definitions and word retrieval, were the best predictors of reading comprehension development. A study of at-risk second graders revealed that verbal IQ was a statistically significant predictor of reading comprehension in both the beginning and end of school year assessments (Berninger et al., 2006). It is quite obvious that a good vocabulary development will result in fluency in oral and written conversation of students in the study area. This goes to buttress the point that a learner's vocabulary development may give rise to an increase in verbal IQ and reading comprehension skills development.

Further, vocabulary knowledge is a consistent predictor of reading comprehension from fourth through eighth grades as well (Bos& Anders, 1990; Yovanoff et al., 2005). It is worthy of note that, students with relevant vocabulary

knowledge are mostly likely to be effectively reader with less word recognition errors which is challenge among students in the study area.

Finally, research suggests that students with poor comprehension exhibit a lack of semantic awareness characterized by an inability to attach meaning to words (Sencibaugh, 2007). In a comprehensive review of research, the National Reading Panel, California USA (2000) concluded that vocabulary instruction facilitates the development of reading comprehension, especially when students are repeatedly exposed to vocabulary words. Further, the Panel recommended explicit instruction in vocabulary through a variety of active learning methods and contexts. Indeed, the preponderance of research indicates that vocabulary is a key contributor to reading comprehension development.

2.1.3 Visualization

Another key component of reading comprehension is the active construction of a mental image of the text. These mental images are fluid and change as the reader continually assimilates new text (Woolley, 2010). Visualization is an application of the dual-coding theory of reading (Sadoski & Paivio, 2001), the concept that readers process both visual representations of verbal information and of objects to create meaning. Also referred to as mental imagery, research suggests that this skill contributes to comprehension (Pressley, 2002; National Reading Panel-USA, 2000) and enhances memory of the text (Romeo, 2002).

Instruction in visualization is supported by research as well. In a large-scale study of Pueblo County Schools, grade third through fifth graders trained in mental imagery while reading made greater reading comprehension gains than their matched control group (Sadoski & Wilson, 2006). In addition, Center et al., (1999) and Brown et al. (1996) found statistically significant correlations between visualization training

and reading comprehension scores of students when used as part of a multiple-strategy instruction intervention.

2.1.5 Working Memory

Working memory has also been identified as an integral part of reading comprehension. Working memory is defined as an executive function responsible for keeping and updating information in the mind (Rothlisberger et al., 2013). Further, working memory is responsible for managing the process of extracting information from text and integrating it with prior knowledge to create meaning (Garcia-Madruga et al., 2013). Sequences of text-based information are held in working memory and integrated with new incoming text and with prior knowledge held in long-term memory.

Research has established a correlation between working memory and comprehension (Cain et al., 2004). In two studies, Seigneuric (2005) and his colleagues found working memory to be a direct predictor of reading comprehension scores among third and fourth graders, although not significant for first and second graders. Further, a similar result emerged from a study of 8 to 16 year olds, identifying working memory as a statistically-significant predictor of reading comprehension (Christopher et al., 2012). The findings from these three studies suggest that as text complexity increases with grade level, a greater amount of working memory is needed for assimilating longer sentences with new vocabulary into rapidly changing mental images. However, recent research indicates that composite executive function scores are statistically significant predictors of reading comprehension scores in pre-kindergarten through third grade as well (Rothlisberger et al., 2013). Indeed, working memory seems to play a critical role in reading comprehension across age groups.

2.1.6 Reasoning and Inference

Inferential reasoning is the ability to use information in the text to determine additional information that is only implied by the text. In a review of studies on inference skills for reading, researchers at the National Foundation for Educational Research-USA (2008) discovered that the ability to draw inferences is directly related to reading comprehension ability. In unrelated studies, Cain and Oakhill (1999, 2007) reported that students' inferencing skills contribute to future comprehension skills; and Bowyer-Crane and Snowling (2005) discovered that students with poor comprehension also lack inferencing ability.

The process of inferential reasoning requires both short-term and long-term memory, acting on retrieval of background knowledge combined with the text to arrive at the implicit information from the text (NFER, 2008). In a study of the factors that contribute to reading comprehension among Florida students, Schatschneider et al., (2005) discovered that in addition to verbal knowledge, reasoning ability was the dominant factor among 10th grade students' reading comprehension scores. The growing body of research continues to acknowledge the role of reasoning and inferencing abilities in reading comprehension.

2.1.7 The Role of Cognitive Strategies and Metacognition in Reading Comprehension

Although cognitive skills are indeed prerequisites for reading comprehension, cognitive strategies are also required. Cognitive strategies differ from cognitive skills because they are active, rather than passive, processes. Metacognition is commonly referred to as thinking about thinking. In reading, metacognition refers to control of cognitive strategies that help the reader process new information from text. Based on a comprehensive review of research, the National Reading Panel (2000) in the USA identified several strategies that contribute to successful reading comprehension: prediction, activating prior knowledge, questioning, visualizing, monitoring and

clarifying, and drawing inferences. Further, the Panel identified 38 studies that indicated that the coordination of multiple cognitive strategies while reading improves reading comprehension and text memory.

A study conducted with 45 third graders found statistically significant differences in cognitive strategy used between high achieving and low achieving students; further, metacognitive use of strategies was positively correlated with reading comprehension scores (Dermitzaki et al., 2008). Pressley (2002) also asserts a correlation between students' metacognition and reading comprehension scores; and that students' ability to monitor their comprehension at age eight significantly predicted their reading comprehension skill at age 11. This is perhaps what lacks in the study area because students even at the Senior High School are still challenged in their reading comprehension lessons.

Research continues to identify metacognition and cognitive strategies as key contributors to reading comprehension development. Conversely, a primary deficit in poor comprehenders is the inability to employ metacognitive strategies during reading. Dermitzaki et al (2008) identified a lack of planning, comprehension monitoring, analyzing, and prioritizing important text as key deficits among third graders with low reading comprehension achievement. While many poor comprehenders lack metacognitive strategies, others are simply unable to select or use strategies effectively (Horner &Shwery, 2002). Therefore, reading comprehension requires knowledge of cognitive strategies as well as effective use and control over them.

2.1.8 The Role of Background Knowledge in Reading Comprehension

The ability to activate prior knowledge is a cognitive strategy needed for effective reading comprehension. More specifically, background knowledge is necessary for generating inferences (Cain et al., 2001; Pressley, 2000). Background knowledge is a compilation of prior learning, as well as prior mental images of text that are stored in long-term memory. Cromley and Azevedo (2007) discovered that background knowledge is a significant contributor to comprehension, as is vocabulary. Students who lack prior knowledge about the content they are reading will struggle to make sense of it. Background knowledge is developed through exposure to a variety of books, particularly trade books (Headley &Dunston, 2000), as well as through general life experiences (Gill, 2008). It therefore clear that student with poor background knowledge due to little exposure to relevant books and teaching skills on reading comprehension will find difficulties in their reading comprehension lessons at different level of their education as observed in the study area.

2.1.9 Characteristics of Effective Interventions for Reading Comprehension.

Explicit Strategy Instruction. Meta-analyses of research indicates that reading comprehension interventions are effective only when they are accurate, consistent, and intensive (Sencibaugh, 2007), as well as explicit and recursive (Mastropieri et al. 2003). It is therefore important for teachers to emphasize accuracy and consistency in teaching reading comprehension since that will help promote fluency in reading with little or no word recognition difficulties as observed in the study area.

Recent research also supports this assertion that explicit instruction in comprehension strategies to third and fourth graders enhanced their comprehension for both narrative and expository text. As in a study conducted by Dube et al. (2013) who reported a statistically significant improvements in reading comprehension following

explicit strategy instruction to third and fourth grade students with learning difficulties. Indeed, the evidence for explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies continues to mount.

2.1.10 Text and Word Structure Instruction

Text structure refers to how ideas or facts are related on the printed page, such as in a sequence, a comparison, a question and answer, or a cause and effect. Consistent with this recommendation, current research suggests that training in strategies based on text structure produces significant reading comprehension outcomes for students (Sencibaugh, 2007). In text and word structure instruction strategies are therefore viewed as relevant in drawing the relationship between ideas and facts which is very significant in promoting reading and comprehension skills.

The research indicates that even students in primary grades achieve reading comprehension improvement from explicit instruction in text structure (Hall et al., 2005).

In addition, instructions in analysis of word structures, including root words, prefixes, and suffixes, is supported by several preliminary research studies conducted by Baumann and Edwards (Baumann et al., 2002; Baumann et al., 2003). In a follow-up study, Baumann, Ware, and Edwards (2007) discovered that direct instruction in word structures to 20 fifth graders produced a 36% increase in word volume and a 42% increase in the use of low-frequency words in students' writing samples. In addition, vocabulary is improved by learning common prefixes (Graves, 2006).

It is clear that instruction in both text and word structure is supported by the reading comprehension research findings and that word formation strategies such prefixation, suffixation, compounding, etc are relevant in building one's vocabulary.

2.1.11 Individualized Instruction

Along with explicit and intensive instruction, research indicates greater gains in reading comprehension when students are instructed one-on-one. Highlighting the importance of one-on-one reading instruction, Cain and Oakhill (2006) suggest that group measurements obscure individual weaknesses and prevent tailored interventions for individual student needs. Torgesen et al. (2001) studied two intensive one-on-one interventions for reading disabilities and discovered that both programs produced significant improvements across reading skills.

2.1.12 Comprehension errors and Students' Academic Performance

Reading difficulties are the principal causes of failure in school Mercer and Mercer (2011), between 10 per cent and 15 per cent of school-going learners have reading difficulties. Teachers therefore cannot wait but to be in a position to identify a learner's problem including those related to reading from an impartial point of view in order to help such a student cope academically in school. Lerner (2006) also notes that teachers should identify children with reading problems early and provide them with appropriate early interventions rather than practicing the policy of wait - and - fail method (Lerner, 2006). The teacher therefore has a responsible to ensure that his/her students are given early and appropriate interventions in reading comprehension skills which is perhaps lacking in Kanton Senior High School.

The researcher therefore sees the ability to read fluently as vital both in school and for life. Reading will help the students of the study in information gathering and learning of concepts. Through reading, the learner is exposed to new vocabulary, new sentence structures and different registers. A good foundation of reading should therefore be laid in earlier stages of the school life. This is because reading is a very important component of language learning. It will also help in the study of all other subjects as posited by (Lerner, 2006).

A study done by Runo (2010) on identification of reading disabilities and teacher oriented challenges in teaching reading to standard five in Kenya concludes that the learners who scored poorly in the wordlist and reading passage were equally poor performers academically in primary schools. This was in line with her conceptual framework which indicated that both internal and external factors cause reading difficulties, hence poor academic performance.

She concludes that there is need to train the primary school teachers on the methods of identifying reading difficulties in learners to avoid learners' continued failure in school subjects.

This finds reasonable context in developing countries (Ghana) and rural settings where many teachers are either inadequate in classroom or they lack the capacity to effectively teach reading comprehension to the understanding of their students.

2.2.0. Category Two: Factors to Consider in Teaching Reading Comprehension

2.2.1 Importance of Reading

Reading is a very important aspect of teaching and learning process. The following are some of the importance of reading:

i. The ability to read and extract meaning from the printed text is a skill essential for everybody to be able to live comfortably in a world dominated by printing materials.

ii. The child with limited interest in reading is a danger to himself and to the society. A child who cannot read has risk of security, loss of self-esteem and inability to pursue his future interest to the fullest satisfaction

iii. The research seeks to state that, reading broadens one's horizons. We are able to know what happened in the past, what is happening today and what is likely

to happen in future through reading. It is therefore an essential tool for a child to survive.

2.2.2 Factors to Consider when Teaching Reading

Before the aims for teaching reading can be accomplished the language teacher must observe certain factors which can help to achieve those aims.

Tsadidey (2002) enumerates some factors to consider in teaching reading. They include the following:

i. The linguistic ability of learners

ii. The nature of the reading materials such as passage

iii. The level of motivation the reader gets and also expects to get.

iv. Physical factors like seating arrangements, nature of desk or tables being used, etc.

The researcher concludes that, language teachers who would like to develop good reading comprehension skills should consider seriously these factors so as to achieve their aims.

2.3.0 Category three: The Strategies/Methods Employed in Teaching Reading and Reading Comprehension.

2.3.1 The Use of Syllabic Method of Teaching Reading

Asamoah, Hammond and Ayivi-Touch (2003) describe the syllabic method as the type in which a long word spoken is broken into syllables to help the learners to read with ease. When children are able to recognize letters, the teacher concentrates on helping them read the letters and put together to use in syllables. The words the teacher selects should begin with a consonant or end with a vowel. For example "a", "la", "ma", etc. Many teachers disapprove of this kind of exercise because most words identified

are meaningless. Others however, have the view that, the syllabic method is effective. For example if a learner fails to read the word 'comprehension', it could be broken into three syllabus – 'com', 'pre', 'hen; and 'sion' so that it becomes easier to read.

maker => ma – ker

teachable => tae-cha-ble

concentration   => con-cen-tra-tion

nationalistic =>na-tio-na-lis-tic

An advantage for using the syllabic method is that it equips learners with word attack skills. The researcher can therefore relate the inability of the students in the study to recognise and pronounce words in reading comprehension text to the students of relevant knowledge in the syllabic methods. The syllabic methods can help students to break perceive unfamiliar words into syllables for easier pronunciation during reading comprehension lessons.

2.3.2 The use of Phonic Method in Teaching Reading

Asamoah, Hammond and Ayivi-Touch (2003) describe the phonic method as follows: in this method the child reads a new word by saying the sound associated with each letter aloud. He/she puts the sounds realized together and says the word. Written English has letters which stand as speech sounds. Translating these symbols into sounds is known as phonics. One of the reading skills is of relating visual symbols to the sounds they represent. In brief phonic method is a method of teaching reading using the sounds of the letters of the alphabet.

The procedure for using the phonic method is as follows:

1. Associating upper case letters with lower case letters

	A	B	C	D	E
	a	b	c	d	e

2. The next step is associating sounds of letters with letter symbols. The teacher at this stage teaches learners the sounds the letters of the alphabet make.

It is often proposed that consonants that are common be taught first. These are

c, d, f, l, m, n, p, s, t

e.g. c is /k/ as in Cart and Cap

d is /d/ as in dare, dent

f is /f/ as in fare, etc.

Next, vowels are taught. These are; a, i, e, o, u

/ a / as in Cap and Cat

/ i / as in Sip and Did, etc.

3. The third step is blending sounds to form words.

(i) m + a => ma

   m + a + m + a => mama

(ii) p + a => pa

   p + a + p + a => papa, etc.

2.4.0 Category Four: Causes of Reading Comprehension Challenges/disabilities

The causes of reading challenges/disabilities are many and varied. Some of these causes are as follows:

    a.   Social factors.

    b.   Poor methods of teaching reading.

    c.   Unavailability of reading materials.

    d.   Lack or inadequate teaching and learning materials.

According to Runo (2010), teachers faced such challenges as teaching sounds, inadequate materials, and inadequate time to teach reading and mother tongue interference. Lerner (2006) contests that problems of low self -esteem and poor social relationships are carried forward into adolescence where they can develop into learned helplessness, a significant drop in their confidence to learn and succeed, low motivation to achieve, attention problems and maladaptive behaviour which can affect secondary school student's performance negatively.

2.4.1 Social Factors

A number of social factors contribute to the problem of reading among learners at the basic level.

Fraiser (1970) classified these factors under

    (i)   Cultural variables

    (ii)   Material variables

    (iii)   Emotional variables.

With regard to cultural factors, it is generally held that, children of literate parents have high academic achievements since it is believed that such parents provide facilities for reading and also serve as good role models. This believe may be shared by

the researcher since major of the parents in the study area engaged in socio-cultural practices such peasant farming, animal rearing, bee keeping, among others.

Hahn (1983) states that positive attitude towards reading and success in reading can be influenced by many factors including individual homes, backgrounds and stimulating linguistic and cultural environment which provide opportunities for sharing linguistic and cultural experience as well as communication skills.

In the case of material variables, children from poor homes with large family size and limited living space lack facilities whereas the middle class or upper class families have access to material resources including books. Such children are often deprived of opportunities for linguistic development. This, the researcher view in the affirmative since most the children in the study are from relatively poor families and deprive communities in the northern part of Ghana.

In connection with emotional factors, it is generally known that children from a family where there are constant confusions, fighting and other form of vices are usually denied the necessary psychological, safety, love and a sense of belongingness. Such children are emotionally disturbed both at home and at school. This kind of situation will adversely affect the child's ability to learn in general and reading for comprehension in particular.

In the face of computer and mobile phone proliferation, many children are therefore engaged in playing games and other entertainment related activities for amusement at the expense of studies.

2.4.2 Poor Methods of Teaching Reading

Reading is a very vital element in the education of a child when effective measures are not employed from the unset, the whole course is affected. It begins at the early stages of the child where pre-reading activities are started. Since these pre-reading

activities such as oral language development, auditory discrimination, visual discrimination, etc are the foundation for reading, when they are not taught properly at the early stages of the child, it affects the reading capabilities of the child. Also when teachers of our schools fail to employ the approved methods for teaching reading such as the syllabic, phonic, electric and other methods of teaching reading, it makes it difficult to develop proper reading skills.

It is therefore obvious that classroom effectiveness of teachers heavily depends on their knowledge of the subject matter and their pedagogical skills. Unfortunately, most teachers are not oriented towards helping poor readers in their classes. In their training, they are usually not adequately prepared to teach all children according to their needs. Therefore, even in cases where reading materials are adequate, as in the study area where students share or pair reading materials during reading comprehension lessons, reading skills of poor readers are not improved.

2.4.3 Unavailability of Reading Materials

Reading has its own materials which makes learning effective and also enjoyable. These include textbooks, storybooks, magazines and other relevant literature. When learners are not equipped with these materials, they cannot enjoy reading to the fullest and this affects learners' ability to read effectively.

2.4.4 Inadequate Teaching and Reading Materials

According to Amofa (1998), teaching and learning materials include materials and devices that teachers and students use to enhance teaching and learning. It improves the quality of teaching and enriches the learning process.

Amofa argued that teachers have to employ the use of the various senses in the quality of teaching and learning materials. When new materials are learnt through many

simultaneous linkages, it is retained well than where it is through one means. Again as a direct consequence of differential in learner characteristics, the various media enable the learners to make optimum use of the sense which are most congenial to themselves such as sight, touch, smell, taste and hearing. This is to retain visual memories better than the other persons.

However, Amofa (1998) states the following advantages of using teaching and learning materials.

(i)   They facilitate the understanding of difficult and abstract concepts.

(ii)   They make teaching very meaningful.

(iii)   They attract the attention of learners making them attentive.

(iv)   They appeal to as many senses as possible, thereby making learners involved in lessons.

(v)   Learners hardly forget lessons taught with useful teaching and learning materials.

2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, reading and comprehension is a complex activity and involves many skills. The ability to read and comprehend what is read is an essential tool for progress in schools in particular and essential for living as a whole. The student will therefore have to work harder in order to master this and of course with the support of the teacher in providing the much needed professional competencies in that regard. Individual differences and other impeding factors to the student's ability to effectively read and comprehend text should not be ignored. For instance, extensive reading enables learners to develop into independent and confident readers (Day &Bamford, 2011). This gives students the intrinsic motivation to continue to reading other text of

varied complexity. However, Intensive reading, also known "narrow reading" may involve students reading selections by the same author or several texts about the same topic. Given this, content and grammatical structures repeat themselves and learners get varied opportunities to understand the meanings of the text. In this work, the researcher had a discussion on the importance of reading and reading comprehension skills. It was revealed that it will be quite disappointing for anyone to deny or be denied the skills of reading and comprehension. Finally, some of the factors affecting the teaching of reading comprehension and the approaches/strategies for teaching effective reading comprehension skills were touched on.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher shall look at the research design appropriate for the study, explore the study area in terms of certain relevant characteristics to the study, the target population and the appropriate sampling and sample size and then sample techniques suitable for the study.

The data collection instrument, the data collection procedures as well as the data analysis methods shall be implored.

3.1 Research Design

The research is descriptive in nature which is based on empirical evidence in the form of primary data. The aim of using this method was to have an in-depth knowledge and analysis on improving reading comprehension skills of students as a tool for improving academic performance in Kanton Senior High School in the Sissala East District.

This research design made use of both the qualitative and quantitative data as proposed by Patel and Tebelius (1987). The descriptive survey design also uses the *"Wh-questions" such as what?, who?, when? or how?* This isto help the researcher find adequate and relevant responses to the researcher's questions and objectives in relation to how to improve reading and comprehension skills of students in the study area.

Reading comprehension tests were conducted to help assess the reading comprehension skills of the students. The test helped identify the reading competence of the students and the causes of the students' reading disabilities and comprehension challenges.

Interview was also used to gather qualitative date from respondents. Here, the researcher personally conducted the interview. Some of the respondents were interviewed face-to-face while others were reached through the mobile phone.

Finally, structured questionnaire was administered using both open-ended and close-ended questions to collect first-hand information from respondents. The survey method was used in order to collect in-depth data from the sample which helped answer the research questions and objectives.

3.2.0 Study Area

3.2.1 Brief Historical Background of Kanton Senior High School:

Kanton Senior High School was established as one of the Kwame Nkrumah Trust Schools in the 1960s.

In 1962, it started as a Teacher Training College to train professional teachers to fill the teacher-student gap in the northern sector.

In 1972, it was transformed into a second cycle educational institution (secondary school) and it has since undergone many changes due to policy changes in the sector by successive governments in Ghana.

The school has a current student population of over thousand eight hundred (ie +1,800 students) comprising boys and girls.

On inter-school academic, sporting, and cultural competitions, Kanton Senior School has always pride itself to be a leader in the Upper West Region of Ghana.

3.2.2 The Sissala East District:

The Sissala East District is located in the North-Eastern part of the Upper West region of Ghana. It falls between Longitudes. 1.300 W and Latitude. 10.000 N and 11.000 N. The District has a total land size of 4,744 square kilometres representing 26percent of the total landmass of the region. It shares boundaries to the North with

Burkina Faso, to the East with Kassena- Nankana and Builsa Districts, to the South East with West Mamprusi District, to the South West with Wa East and Nadowli Districts and to the West by Sissala West District.

It has total a population of 56,528 (Males=27,503. Females=29,025) people. According to Ghana Statistical Service, (2010) Population and Housing Census. The District has five main ethnic groups comprising the Sissala's (88 percent), Kassenas (5percent), Dagabas (3 percent), Moshies (2 percent), and 2 percent comprising other ethnic groups. On the other hand, the religious composition in the District includes Moslems-80 percent, Catholics-10 percent, Traditionalist-5percent, and others accounting for about 5 percent.

The Sissala East District has between 35 percent and 40 percent of its population constituting the active labour force. A greater proportion of this population is engaged in agriculture production and its related activities. The industrial activities in the District include; sheabutter processing; groundnut oil extraction; weaving and dress making; pottery and basket weaving; blacksmithing; pito brewing; carpentry and masonry; bicycle repairs and vehicle repairs. The commerce and distributive trading sector takes 10percent of the work force whilst the remaining 5 percent are engaged in sectors such as finance, social services, construction, restaurants/hotels and transport operation.

Figure: 1.0:   Map Locating Sissala East District
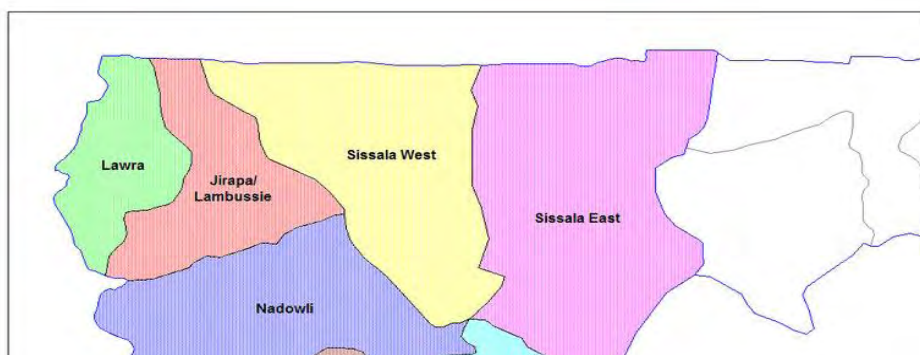
3.3 Types of Data Collected

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected on students of Kanton Senior High School, some parents and the English Subject Teachers of the school. First hand information was gathered using questionnaires as well as the conduct of interviews to solicit qualitative data from respondents in the study area.

3.4 Sources of Data

Both relevant Primary and Secondary sources of data were extensively used. Data from respondents, and textbooks, desktop information, related works were collected to enhance the effective execution of this study. Primary data were gathered from field administered test, questionnaire and interviews while secondary data were also obtained from the school's archives, textbooks, and internet sources.

3.5 Data Collection Method

The research employed data collection tools such as; observations, test, questionnaires and unstructured interview guide, to gather relevant first hand field data as well as secondary data from the school's archives, electronic and non-electronic sources.

3.6 Target Population

The population of the study area were the students of Kanton Senior High School especially the General Arts 2A, Science 2A, Vocational 2A and Business 2A classes of the school which has the characteristics of the research interest. The study considered a population of 519 for the second year students of the school but particular emphasis was placed on four (4) second year classes (namely; General Arts 2A, Science 2A, Vocational 2A and Business 2A) purposively selected for the study and all the eleven (11) teachers from the Languages Department of the school due to their active attendance rate and the availability of relevant data for the study.

Table 1. Population of Respondents/Participants

S/N	Class/staff	Students/teachers
1	General Arts 2A	37
2	Science 2A	30
3	Vocational 2A	38
4	Business 2A	27
5	Teachers of English in the school	11
	TOTAL	**143**

Source: Kanton Senior High School (2019)

3.7 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The probability and non-probability sampling techniques such as simple random and purposive sampling techniques respectively were used to draw a sample size of one hundred and forty-three (143) for the study. This enabled the researcher avoid biases and to collect adequate yet relevant information to draw inferences and recommendations.

The study targeted 143 respondents out of the population of 519 drawn from the entire second year classes of the school. The data was obtained from the registry of Kanton Senior High School.

The sampled size was determined by the mathematical formula: $n = \frac{N}{1+N(\alpha)2}$ propounded by Taro Yamane, (1967:886) to determine the sample of 57 (at 90 percent confidence level).

Where:

 n=sample size,

N= population size and

α = the level of precision or margin of error.

By inputting/substituting the variables into the formula,

$$n = \frac{143}{1 + 143(0.1)2}$$

 n= 58.8477366; Therefore n = 59

Due to the heterogeneous nature of the population, stratified random sampling technique was used to select respondents in each form/class for the study.

The De Vaus, (2012) formula was used for the study.

Which is given as: r=(c×s) ÷ p

Where; r = desired respondents from a category.

c= category of the population.

s= desired sample.

p= population of total beneficiaries under consideration.

As a result, the respondents for the study were selected using convenience sampling techniques. The number of the respondents from each class/category were determined as follows:

General Arts 2A $= (37×59) ÷ 143 = 15$

Science 2A $= (30×59) ÷ 143 = 12$

Vocational 2A $= (38×59) ÷143 = 15$

Business 2A $= (27×59) ÷143 = 11$

Teachers of English $= (11×59) ÷143 = 5$

Table 2. Stratified Random Sampling

S/N	Class/staff	Population	Sample Size
1	General Arts 2A	37	15
2	Science 2A	30	12
3	Vocational 2A	38	15
4	Business 2A	27	11
5	Teachers of English in the school	11	5
	TOTAL	**143**	**58**

Source: Researcher's Field Data, (2019)

3.8 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis were used to organise and discuss the research findings and to draw conclusions from the study.

In essence, descriptive statistical tools such as frequency tables, percentages, bar graphs and pie charts were used with the aid of the IBM Statistical Package for Service Solutions version20.0 (SPSS).

3.9 Data Collection Instruments

The study made use of the following data collection instruments.

a) Test

b) Interviews

c) Questionnaire

On **test,** the researcher conducted reading comprehension tests as part of intervention strategies to help identify the causes of students' poor reading skills. The researcher conducted both pre-intervention and post-intervention tests using different passages *(see appendix 'A & B' respectively for details)*. The students' weak performance in the pre-intervention test as in appendix "A" necessitated the conduct of the post-intervention test *(see appendix 'B')*. In the pre-intervention test conducted on 7th May, 2019 more than 50 percent of the subjects of interest could not recognised words such as *dispatch, withdrew, striking, recounted, genocide, colleagues* among others in the passage *(see appendix 'A')*. And on the 25th of June, 2019 a post-intervention reading comprehension test was conducted on the same subjects. The subjects during the post-intervention test demonstrated improvement in their reading skills *(see table 2 in chapter 4 for details)*.

However, a structured **interview** guide was also used as a data collection instrument to gather some relevant information from some parents/guardians of the students on how to improve upon the reading comprehension skills of their wards. Interview questions range from parents' visitation to schools, household chores of the students during holidays, the utilisation of the community library by their wards during holidays, socio-cultural factors in the society in which students engage in during holidays, among others and how these factors affect students' reading comprehension

skills. Some of the parents were readily available for a one-on-one interview while others were contacted on the mobile phone by the researcher.

Finally, a **questionnaire** was administered to collect relevant information from the English language teachers in the study area in order to improve upon reading comprehension skills of the subjects under consideration. Both open-ended and close-ended questions were employed. The questions were structured based on the research questions and objectives. Respondents were advised to be brief, concise and precise in their response to open-ended questions and to indicate with a tick (√) for close-ended questions. The researcher was able to retrieve all administered questionnaires.

3.10. Ethical Issues/Concerns

The researcher was mindful of ethical issues in relation to this research work.

The issue of **confidentiality and anonymity** were critically observed. In that, the researcher had protected the identity of the participants in the study because all responses of the participants cannot be traced to them. The researcher was able to promise anonymity and confidentiality through the management of private information of participants in order to protect the subject's identity. Levine (1976) advocates that confidentiality means that individuals are free to give and withhold as much information as they wish to the person they choose. The researcher had therefore maintained confidentiality of participants that goes beyond ordinary loyalty.

Levine (1976) asserted that **privacy** is the freedom an individual has to determine the time, extent, and general circumstances under which private information will be shared with or withheld from others. In that regard, the researcher had allowed participants (students, teachers, and parents/guardians) to freely determine the time, extent, and general circumstances under which they were ready to respond to the

reading comprehension test, interview either on phone or face-to-face, as well as the teachers' response to the questionnaire.

The issue of **informed consent** had been explored too in this research work. The participants were duly informed of the purpose of the study and the reason for which their responses were needed and that the participants had not provided information unwillingly or without their due consent/knowledge. The headmaster of Kanton Senior High School was briefed and his consent sought too in the conduct of this research.

3.10 Conclusion

A number of intervention activities were put in place to help improve upon students' reading comprehension skills. In other words, to help students pronounce words, read short sentences and also to read passage as a whole correctly and understand text read, the researcher adopted the syllabic and phonic methods as well as reading aloud, silent reading, mixed ability groupings and one-on-one after-class reading with students to address the challenge. With the syllabic method, the researcher used flash cards as teaching and learning materials and with the phonic wheel and phonic slide as teaching and learning materials.

The results from the pre and post-interventions tests on the students' reading and comprehension challenges motivated the researcher to interview some of the parents of the subjects under study. Some of the parents were readily available for a one-on-one interview while others were contacted on the mobile phone by the researcher.

The interview questions ranged from households chores during school vacations to parents' visitation to schools and students utilization of community library.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to improve reading comprehension skills among second year students in Kanton Senior High School. In this chapter, the data collected are examined by critically exploring the academic and other implications of the outcomes. The findings are analysed taking into consideration the research questions and objectives which provided the foundation for the researcher to do an in-depth study based on the research techniques employed to gather relevant information using observations, test and questionnaires. Relevant aspects analysed here include the bio-data of respondents, the causes of poor reading and comprehension skills among the students, as well as the relevant techniques, methods and strategies of improving upon students reading and comprehension skills.

4.1 Analysis of the Pre-intervention Test

The researcher found it essential to conduct a pre-intervention on reading comprehension to ascertain the reading and comprehension competencies of the subjects under study. This was due to what the researcher had observed during students' reading and comprehension lessons. The researcher had observed that the students though in the second year in the senior high school could not read written text fluently and those who could even read do so with word recognition difficulties and finger pointing at words with frequent breaks. The researcher also observed that many of the students in the classes of interest in this study (ie Science 2A, General Arts 2A, Vocational 2A, and Business 2A) share similar characteristics in relation to reading and comprehension difficulties. The researcher after observing the challenges that the

students were confronted in terms of reading and comprehension, therefore engaged the population of interest by conducting a pre-intervention test aimed at allaying his doubts.*(see appendix 'A' for test pre-intervention items)*

See Table 3 for pre-intervention results of student in terms of their reading abilities and competencies.

Table 3. Pre-Intervention Score Sheet

Item (Variables)	Frequency	Percentage %
Excellent readers	0	0.0
Above average readers	5	8.62
Average readers	23	39.66
Below average readers	30	51.72
Total	**58**	**100.00**

Lerner (2006) also advocated that teachers should identify children with reading problems early and provide them with appropriate early interventions rather than practicing the policy of wait - and - fail method (Lerner, 2006). The researcher therefore found reason in providing appropriate interventions after observing the students' reading and comprehension challenges instead of practicing the policy of wait-and fail method as advocated by (Lerner, 2006). Hence, the results in table 1 above.

The results as displayed in table 1 above clearly provided the foundation for much thorough and subsequent intervention.

The researcher observed that out of a total of fifty-eight (58) participants, thirty (30) of the students representing 51.72% were below average readers, these were students could not pronounce words and phrases in the pre-intervention test passage

correctly. Words such as *dispatch, withdrew, striking, recounted, genocide, colleagues* etc correctly in the pre-intervention test passage *(see Appendix 'A' for details)*. They could not read simple text too fluently. Meanwhile, twenty-three (23) of the students who participated in the pre-intervention representing 39.66% were average readers. The researcher therefore found it as a matter of significance when it came clear from the pre-intervention test that only five (5) of the participants were above average readers. This represented 8.62 in percentage terms. However, none of the participant could be regarded excellent readers per the pre-intervention reading comprehension test conducted by the researcher.

Situating this within literature, the researcher found (Reagan, 2010) argument relevant in that a critical analysis of writing shows that there cannot be any effective and successful writing endeavour without effective and successful reading. This argument makes it clear that the students' inability to writing well during the pre-intervention test is connected to their inability to read and understand what is been read.

4.2 Analysis of the Post-intervention Test

The researcher therefore found it necessary to conduct a post-intervention reading and comprehension test to verify the subjects of interest status in terms of their reading proficiency and comprehension skills. *(see Appendix 'B' for post-intervention passage)*

See Table 4 below for detailed results from the post-intervention reading and comprehension test conducted by the researcher. *(see Appendix 'B' for test items)*

Table 4. Post-Intervention Score Sheet

Item (Variables)	Frequency	Percentage %

Excellent readers	3	5.17
Above average readers	14	24.14
Average readers	29	50.00
Below average readers	12	20.69
Total	**58**	**100.00**

The researcher conducted a post-intervention reading comprehension test following the outcome of the researcher's pre-intervention results as displayed in Table 1. After series of interventions activities, methods and strategies (ie reading aloud, silent reading, mixed ability reading groupings, one-on-one after class reading with the teacher, the use of syllabic and phonic methods) were implored. The researcher then conducted a post-intervention test using the same subjects as in the pre-intervention test. *(refer to Appendix 'B' for post-intervention test items)*.

The results of the post-intervention test show a significant improvement among the participants of interest. From thirty (30) students to twelve (12) were captured as below average readers representing 20.69% from 51.72% not good readers score. Meaning there was a significant shift from below average readers towards excellent readers mark.

However, studies on the interconnectedness of reading to writing and by extension good academic performance among students is paramount in that Reagan (2010) concluded that, "because reading and writing employ similar cognitive processes and rely upon a common text knowledge, experienced readers are usually proficient writers, while inexperienced readers are almost always basic writers" (pp. 177). This therefore meant that as the students gradually glide from below average

reader towards excellent readers, it will result in a significant increase in their reading and comprehension skills hence better academic performance.

4.3 Analysis of the Interview Conducted for Selected Parents/Guardians

Following the interview conducted by the researcher on some selected parents/guardians of the students, the responses are collected and analysed as follow.

A parent had this to say when asked "Do your ward during school vacation utilise the community library?"

"Not at all ooh! He is always with friends playing and watching computer games and programmes. When asked to go to the library, he often says that holidays are for relaxation. In fact, sometimes he goes out of the house in the morning and comes in the evening. Today's children are nothing but trouble"

From the response above, the researcher therefore found that some of the learners (students) engage themselves more in computer related entertainment (games) at the expense of their studies. The researcher also realised that parental control or the lack of it has an effect on the child's readiness to study while at home. Moreover, socio-cultural factors in the immediate environment such as funerals, farming activities, inter-club sporting activities, etc of the student may have a significant effect on the student's available time for reading during vacation. The researcher can therefore relate with Hahn (1983) assertion that positive attitude towards reading and success in reading can be influenced by many factors including individual homes, backgrounds and stimulating linguistic and cultural environment which provide opportunities for sharing linguistic and cultural experience as well as communication skills.

However, responding to the questions "What does your child do during school vacations? And Do your child go the community library to read or study during school holidays?." A parent had this to say:

"My ward is very disciplined and hardworking. She goes to the community library to read and truly so because the Librarian tells me so. However, she finds it very difficult to read. And when even she does, she still finds it difficult to recognize certain words let alone understand simple phrases in the text. What should I do, teacher?"

The researcher therefore found the response from the parent to be in sharp contrast from that of the first parent. This was clear from the attitudes and behaviours of the two students from different social and cultural backgrounds and upbringings resulting from cosmopolitan and district characteristics of the first and second student respectively.

However, the researcher has observed that, it is not all who goes to the library to reading could actually read and understand the text read as revealed by the second parent in the interview extract "…*She goes to the community library to read and truly so because the Librarian tells me so. However, she finds it very difficult to read. And when even she does, she still finds it difficult to recognize certain words let alone understand simple phrases in the text"*

However, a third parent had this to say when asked whether she pays some visits to the ward during school sessions and the kind of household chores the ward does during holidays. This was what she said:

"I visit my ward in school at least twice every semester (term) and he is always happy to see me and the items I have for him. As for household

chores, Yes! Like many of his friends, he does some household chores during holidays and he is often happy doing them. I don't think that has any significant negative effect on his academic performance. He is just a smart kid."

The interview conducted on some of the parents revealed that, what a student does during school vacations can have a significant negative effect on his/her academic performance as well as their reading comprehension abilities. Similarly, the actions and inactions of parents towards their wards could also have a positive or negative effect on the ward's attitude towards reading and comprehension and by extension academic performance.

The researcher therefore found Pressley (2002) study relevant in asserting a correlation between students' metacognition and reading comprehension scores. Research continues to identify metacognition and cognitive strategies as key contributors to reading comprehension development. Conversely, a primary deficit in poor comprehenders is the inability to employ metacognitive strategies during reading. Dermitzaki et al (2008) identified a lack of planning, comprehension monitoring, analysing, and prioritizing important text as key deficits among third graders with low reading comprehension achievement.

4.4.0 Analysis of the Questionnaire administered to Teachers

From the pre and post-intervention test results and the interviews with some selected parents of the students, the researcher therefore found it necessary to deploy questionnaire to get the side of the teachers in order to help improve upon the reading comprehension challenges of the students as well as meet the objectives of the study.

The results of the questionnaire were computered using IBM SPSS Version20.0 and displayed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency tables, and charts as shown below.

4.4.1 Demographic Data of Respondents

This section of the study analysed the demographic data (as in age distribution, sex, educational level, length of time teaching in a particular school and the average class enrolment). The bio-data of respondents was from questions1-5 in the questionnaire.

4.4.2 Age and Education Level of Respondents

It was necessary for the researcher to determine the age distribution and educational status of the respondents since that data had enabled the researcher ascertain the most likely age group of respondents teaching at the Senior High School and how the respondents' educational levels have influenced the success or otherwise of the students' understanding and performance in reading and comprehension text. See bi-variable table below for details.
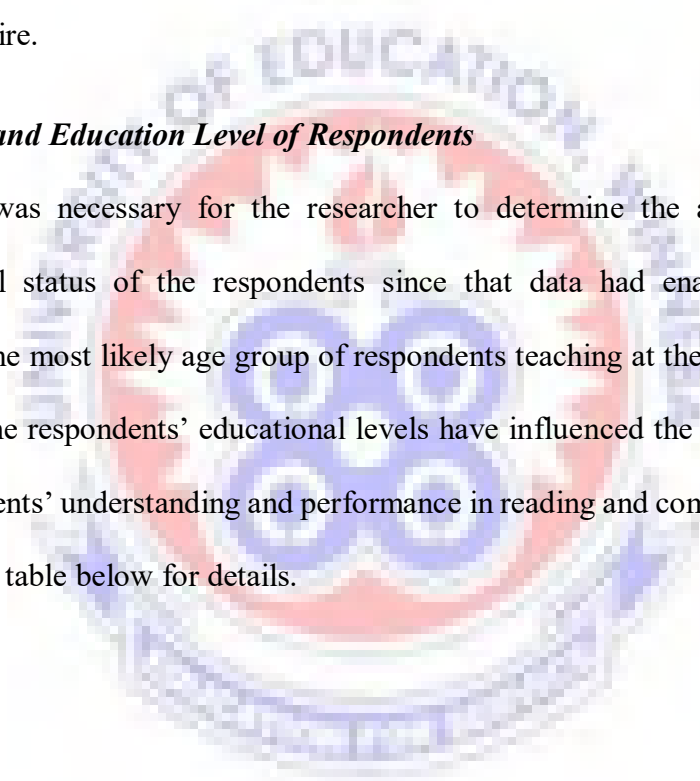
Table 5. Age and Education of Respondents

Variables Age	Age of Respondents		Variables Education	Educational Level of Respondent	
	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
20-24years	0	0.0	Cert "A"	0	0.0
25-34years	2	40.0	Diploma in Education	0	0.0
35-49years	3	60.0	Degree	4	80.0
50-59years	0	0.0	Masters	1	20.0
60years and above	0	0.0	-	-	-
Total	5	100.0	Total	5	100.0

Source: Researcher's Field Data, (2019).

As shown in Table 3, 2 out of 5 respondents were aged between 20-34years while 3 out of 5 respondents were 35-49years. This indicates that most of the teachers at the study area were within the youth bracket. 80 percent of the respondents numbering 4 out of 5 had their first degrees from various tertiary institutions across the country. This shows that a significant percentage of the respondents had some relevant education and experience in their subject areas.

The researcher therefore found reasonable meaning in that, most of the respondents had relevant background knowledge which was developed through exposure to a variety of books, particularly trade books (Headley &Dunston, 2000), as well as through general life experiences (Gill, 2008). Those demographic factors such age and education have a significant effect on reading and comprehension since a teacher's background knowledge and life experience can be fairly linked with teacher's education level and age respectively as suggested by (Headley &Dunston, 2000).

4.4.3 *Teacher duration and student's reading comprehension errors/challenges*

The researcher found it necessary to investigate whether or not there is a link between how long a teacher has been teaching in a particular school and the rate of commonly found reading comprehension errors and challenges that the students encounter.

This, the researcher believed would be relevant in determining which teacher is assigned to various year levels in the Senior High School especially in preparation towards the students' final examinations and whether or not class size has an effect on teacher's delivery and students' performance in reading comprehension text.

Table 6. Teacher Duration and Students' Reading Comprehension Errors/Challenges

Variables Duration	Teacher's length of service in a particular school		Variables Errors/ challenges	Commonly found reading comprehension errors/challenges	
	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
1-5years	3	60.0	Word recognition errors	2	40.0
6-10years	1	20.0	Problems relating to reading habits	1	20.0
11-15years	1	20.0	inappropriate word grouping	1	20.0
-	-	-	ignored or misinterpreted punctuations	1	20.0
Total	**5**	**100.0**	**Total**	**5**	**100.0**

It can be observed from Table 4 that, 3 out of 5 respondents representing 60 percent of the participants had taught in the school between 1-5years while the remaining 2 out of 5 had taught in the same school for more than 5years. By implication,

many of the English language teachers in the school had relatively not stayed long enough to understand and appreciate the school's culture and academic performance trends in relation to reading and comprehension challenges of the students.

However, a significant number of the students had word recognition challenges while errors relating to reading habits, inappropriate word grouping, ignored or misinterpretation and punctuation errors accounted for 20 percent each. This meant that the students were more prone to word recognitions errors during reading comprehension lessons which makes it quite difficult for them to understand text read.

This can be explained in the context working memory which is responsible for managing the process of extracting information from text and integrating it with prior knowledge to create meaning (Garcia-Madruga et al., 2013). This helps explain why 40 percent of the students were challenged with word recognition errors during reading comprehension lessons in Kanton Senior High School.

4.5   The Causes of Poor Reading Comprehension Skills Among Senior High School Students

Using the questionnaire to investigate the causes of poor reading comprehension skills on students' text in the Senior High School and in particular Kanton Senior High School, 40 percent of the respondents cited word recognition errors, 40 percent of the respondents also indicated a lack of in-service training on effective ways of teaching reading and comprehension in the school. Meanwhile, 60 percent strongly agreed that reading and comprehension challenges are the cause of poor academic performance among students in the Kanton Senior High School.

It can be inferred from Mercer and Mercer (2011) work that reading difficulties are the principal causes of failure in school. This goes to buttress the fact that teachers

must be in a position to help their students improve upon reading and comprehension skills in schools order to improve upon academic performance.

Other causes of reading and comprehension challenges identified by the respondents included poor learner's previous academic background in which 60 percent of the respondents strongly agreed contributed to poor reading comprehension skills of the students. However, 20 percent strongly disagreed that the quality of the teaching staff has an effect on the reading comprehension abilities of students while 40 percent agreed that the quality of the teaching staff has a significant influence on students' reading and comprehension abilities and academic performance.

Taking from a study done by Runo (2016) on identification of reading disabilities and teacher oriented challenges in teaching reading to standard five in Kenya concluded that the learners who scored poorly in the wordlist and reading passage were equally poor performers academically in primary schools. This indicated that both internal and external factors cause reading difficulties, hence poor academic performance in Kanton Senior High School. This calls for the adoption of effective reading and comprehension strategies and techniques by the teachers to improve the reading and comprehension skills of student in the study area.

However, the researcher further posed some relevant questions to establish the effects of poor academic performance on students' social/emotional adjustment in relating to their reading and comprehension skills.

Figure 2. Poor Reading Ability and Self-esteem
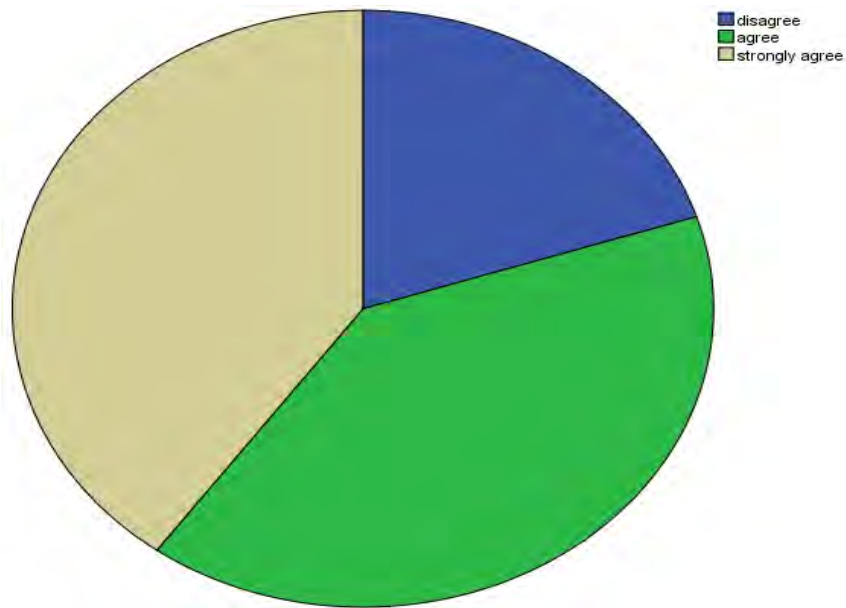
Figure 3. Reading Comprehension and Student Behaviour
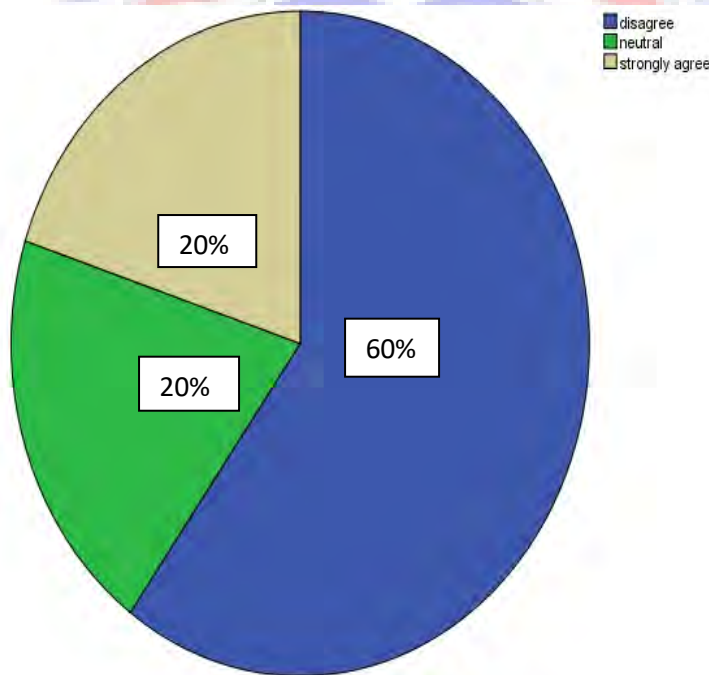
From Figure 2, 40 percent of the respondents agreed that poor reading ability leads to lowered self-esteem. While 80 percent strongly agreed that reading comprehension challenges prevents students from reaching desired career goals. Contrarily, Figure 3 shows that 60 percent strongly disagreed that reading

comprehension failure can lead to misconduct, anxiety, and lack of motivation among students. Besides, 40 percent of the respondents agreed that a student's continuous academic failure can be attributed to a lack of relevant reading comprehension skills.

The respondents also indicated that students' social and emotions adjustments in the academic environment is fairly linked to the student's reading and comprehension skills which creates a fertile grounds for good academic performance in various academic disciplines. The study has confirmed Hahn (1983) assertion that positive attitude towards reading and success in reading can be influenced by many factors including individual homes, backgrounds and stimulating linguistic and cultural environment which provide opportunities for sharing linguistic and cultural experience as well as communication skills.

4.6 Reading and comprehension Methods and Strategies

The researcher went ahead to assess the teacher's knowledge on the appropriate methods, techniques, and strategies needed to improve students' reading and comprehension skills in the Kanton Senior High School using questionnaire.

Responding to the question *"Are teachers comfortable in handling students and their reading and comprehension challenges in class?"* 80 percent responded NO, it can be deduced from the response that majority of the teachers find it difficult in helping their students resolve their reading and comprehension challenges in class since the teachers themselves find it uncomfortable teaching.

This assertion by the researcher has been confirmed by Runo (2010) that teachers faced such challenges as teaching sounds, inadequate materials, and inadequate time to teach reading and mother tongue interference. Unfortunately, most teachers are not oriented towards helping poor readers in their classes. Even in cases

where reading materials are adequate, reading skills of poor readers are not improved to enable them improve reading comprehension challenges of the students in Kanton Senior High School.

In responding to the researcher's question on teachers' knowledge on reading and comprehension methods, strategies and techniques? 80 percent of the respondents stated the scanning and skimming technique which is also clearly stated in the English Syllabus 2010 for Senior High Schools in Ghana. By this, respondents have indicated that they had very little or no knowledge of other reading and comprehension techniques and strategies such as the SQ3R (ie S=Survey, Q=Question, R=Read, R=Recall, and R=Review).

Also, extensive and intensive reading strategies, that is reading comprehension skills are developed over time as learners are engaged in the reading process. More reading leads to better comprehension and that teachers giving more time for reading in the classroom with the students is pivotal to comprehension (Fielding and Pearson, 1994). Explicit strategy instruction strategies in which teachers make conscious efforts to teach children to read for comprehension among others should be harness by the teacher to improve reading and comprehension skills of their students.

When the researcher asked the question *"What strategies are used by school administrators/headmasters/teachers to improve reading comprehension skills in second cycle schools?"* 60 percent strongly agreed that the supply of adequate curriculum materials and equipment would result in improved reading comprehension skills, 60 percent saw the availability of library resources to improved reading comprehension skills among skills while 80 percent of the respondents agreed that information technology resources would result in improved reading comprehension skills of students in second cycle schools, others include the provision of guidance and

counselling services in schools, having quality staff who can differentiate instructions and to have staff who can offer study and academic skills. This agrees with Van den Broek&Espin (2012) that reading comprehension is a complex interaction among automatic and strategic cognitive processes that enables the reader to create a mental representation of the text. Comprehension depends not only on characteristics of the reader, such as prior knowledge and working memory, but also on language processes, such as basic reading skills, decoding, vocabulary, sensitivity to text structure, inferencing, and motivation (Van den Broek&Espin, 2012).

This goes to affirm the researcher's assertion that multi-variant approaches, methods, strategies, techniques, and resources should be used to improve upon students' reading comprehension skills.

Figure 4. Time Allotted for Reading Comprehension on Teachers Scheme of Work
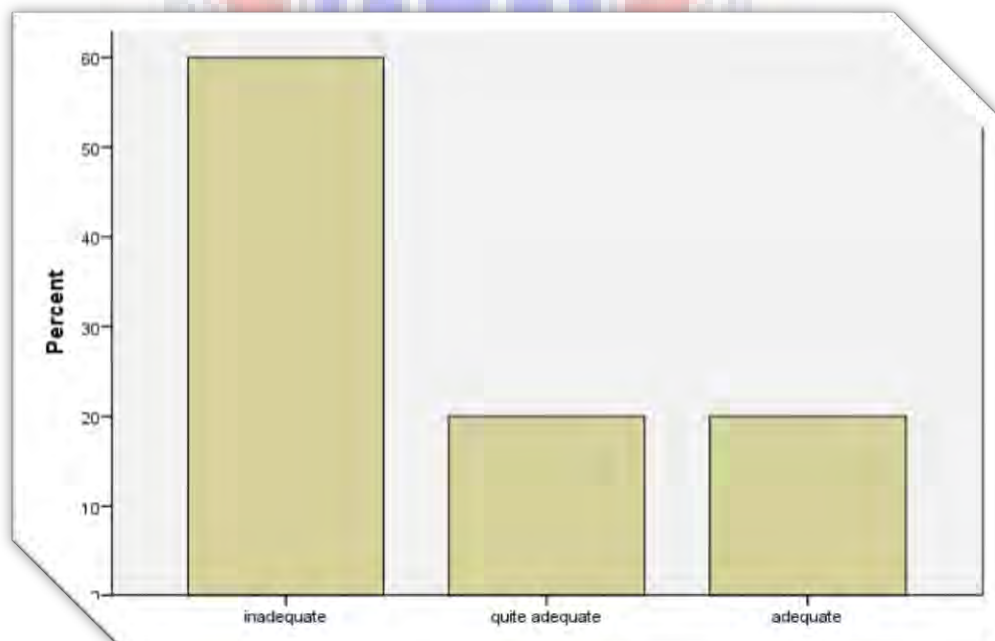
As shown in Figure 4, 60 percent of the respondents said students were interested in reading comprehension lessons, however, a corresponding 60 percent said

the time allotted for teaching reading comprehension on teachers' scheme of work was inadequate. This means that time allotted for teaching reading comprehension should be adjusted. This can be situated in literature as confirmed by Day &Bamford, (2011) that extensive reading enables learners to develop into independent and confident readers. The teacher should therefore be motivated to give more time for reading in the classroom with the students. It can therefore be acknowledged that students can only do extensive and detailed reading of a text in the classroom when adequate time is provided for it.

4.7 Conclusion

The study sought to improve reading comprehension skills of students in the Senior High School. Reading comprehension has continued to pose a great challenge to students at various levels of the Ghanaian education landscape, particularly at the study area.

The causes of which are varied requiring different methodologies and teaching strategies. Some of the causes from study emanates from poor or a lack of appropriate teaching methods and strategies by teachers in reading comprehension, the ill-perception of some students regarding reading comprehension as well as some parents' lack of control of their wards during holidays. Also, the role of computer related games and entertainments indulged in by some students to government untimely provision of relevant teaching and learning materials on the subject matter among others contributes to the inabilities of student to do well during reading comprehension lesson.

However, the use of some relevant teaching and learning methods and strategies such as the syllabic and phonetic methods, mixed-ability groupings, reading loud, the

SQ3R strategies among others could be of significant boost to improving reading comprehension skills of students in the study.

Improving reading comprehension skills of students is a collective effort which requires a multifaceted methods and strategies with all relevant stakeholders playing their roles effectively.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5. 0 Introduction

This chapter constitutes three main components. The first component shows the major findings of the study. The second focuses on the conclusions of the study and the last component pays attention to the recommendations advanced by the researcher taking into consideration the research objectives and the possible area(s) for further studies.

5.1 Major Findings

From the study, it was discovered that reading and comprehension challenges have significant effect on the academic performance of students. Variables responsible for improving reading comprehension skills of students are closely related to those needed to improve the academic performance of any student in Kanton Senior High School and by extension any student in the academic field.

However, the causes of poor reading and comprehension skills among students in the Senior High School are quite diverse which require greater tact and technical linguistic competencies which are rooted in effective teaching and learning skills, techniques, strategies, methodologies, and approaches in order to help improve reading and comprehension abilities in students. Poor pedagogical skills of teachers in reading and comprehension skills will result in poor reading and comprehension skills development in students.

Also, it was revealed that, word recognition errors among students have a significant negative effect on their reading and comprehension skills in written text. It implies that students' inability to effectively and quickly recognised relevant words in

the reading process has negative effect on the student's ability to effectively read and understand written text too.

Similarly, the study has disclosed that, the lack of or inadequate relevant background knowledge of either the teacher and / or the student on the subject matter has adverse effect in the student's reading and comprehension skills.

The research also unearth the lack of in-service training in the area of reading and comprehension as a contributory factor to the causes of poor reading and comprehension skills among students in the Senior High School. This is because many of the teachers rely on their initial training skills on this important aspect of the English Language Course.

The research also revealed that, majority of the teachers in practice have very limited knowledge on various reading comprehension methods, techniques, strategies, and approaches that abound in helping students improve upon their reading comprehension skills.

Also, the study uncovered that many teachers are to an extent engrossed in the teaching syllabus provided by the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service. This act by the teacher weakens teachers' ingenuity to improve upon existing structures and formats during reading comprehension lessons.

Finally, the study revealed that the time allotted for reading and comprehension in teachers' scheme of work is inadequate for any effective reading and reading comprehension related activities in the classroom. This lack of adequate time for reading comprehension in the classroom makes most teachers to rush through reading and comprehension lessons with their students resulting in poor reading and comprehension skills among students, especially in the study area.

5.2 Recommendations

Comprehension is the essence of reading. Reading comprehension therefore is a complex interaction among automatic and strategic cognitive processes that enables the reader to create a mental representation of the text. Comprehension depends not only on characteristics of the reader, such as prior knowledge and working memory, but also on language processes, such as basic reading skills, decoding, vocabulary, sensitivity to text structure, inferences, and motivation.

From the findings of the study however, reading comprehension has a significant effect on academic performance of students. It is based on these findings that the researcher recommends the following measures as possible means to help improve reading and comprehension skills among students of Kanton Senior High School.

Firstly, teachers should encourage their students to cultivate the culture of extensive reading which would promote the sense of urgency in the students to do intensive reading. With such a move, students read for fun and excitement thereby developing their reading skills and vocabulary repertoire.

Secondly, teachers should develop the habit of reading aloud in class using appropriate pronunciations, stress and intonation patterns. Since that method would help strengthen students' receptive and productive skills.

Thirdly, teachers should provide ample time for reading and comprehension lessons in the classroom. This would enable both teachers and students do an in-depth analysis of reading and comprehension lessons and text in the classroom.

Also, the government and other relevant stakeholders in the teaching and learning industry should help provide refresher courses for English language teachers to regularly and periodically update the teacher's knowledge on current yet relevant

approaches, methods, and strategies aimed at improving reading and comprehension skills of students. School administrators, teachers, PTAs, Old Students' Associations and other relevant stakeholders in education should help provide appropriate Teacher-Learner Materials and other language resources to improve reading and comprehension skills of students. Lastly, the student who is at the centre of this study in relation to reading and comprehension in the study area should be encouraged to build positive attitudes towards reading and comprehension skills acquisition in order to improve upon their academic performance. The researcher is of the conviction that any improvement in the reading and comprehension skills of students will translate into an improvement in the academic performance of the student.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Studies

The following suggestions are advanced for future research

(i) A study can be done to investigate ways of improving teachers' teaching methods and strategies in reading and comprehension text.

(ii) Also, a study could be made on the relationship between reading comprehension and academic performance.

(iii)Finally, a study could be conducted to establish the relationship between school culture and academic performance in English Language.

5.4 Conclusion

In effect, the results from the research work have satisfactorily actualised the realisation of the research objectives and have answered the research questions. In the first place, the research has ascertained the possible causes of poor reading comprehension skills among Students such as word cognition errors, lack of relevant background knowledge, inadequate in-service training for teachers, a lack of innovative

teaching strategies and inadequate time for reading and comprehension lessons among others have a reversal effect on students reading and comprehension skills and their academic performance.

Also, the results confirmed the second research objective that sought to assess the teacher's knowledge on the appropriate methods, techniques, and strategies needed to improve students' reading and comprehension skills in Kanton Senior High School. In that direction, the phonetic and syllabic methods, extensive and intensive reading methods, the SQ3R strategies as well as explicit strategy instruction strategies in which teachers make conscious efforts to teach children to read for comprehension.

In conclusion, the study has successfully identified, assessed, and evaluated the relevant methods and strategies needed to improve reading comprehension skills among students in the study area and has come to the conclusion that an improvement in the reading and comprehension competencies/skills of students will significantly enhance academic performance of students, in particular, Kanton Senior High School.
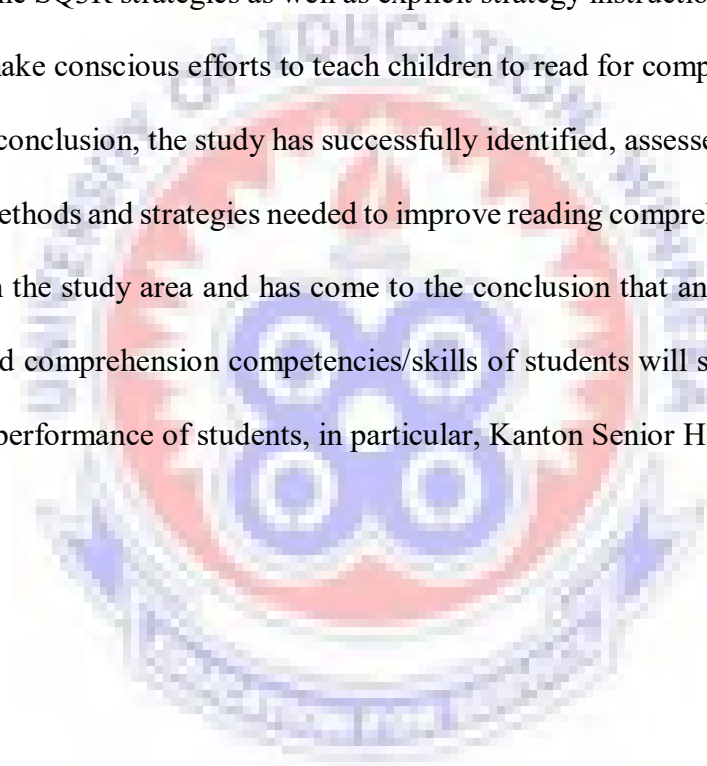
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APPENDIX 'A'

Passage used for Pre-Intervention Test

The former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, opened an exhibition on UN Peacekeeping in Accra in July 2000, and made this speech:

'I am proud to know that Ghana – our Ghana, my Ghana – can be relied on to play its full part. Ghana's commitment to the United Nations is well-known.

'It is a story almost as long as the history of independent Ghana itself. And like much Ghana's history, it is a story of ordinary men and women who have done extraordinary things. It began 40 years ago, when Ghana was one of the first countries to dispatch troops to the Congo, just 48 hours after the United Nations Security Council passed its resolution establishing its mission there.

'Since that day, Ghanaian troops have gone on to distinguish themselves by their courage and their professionalism,' Annan said.' In United Nations peacekeeping alone, ninety-eight Ghanaians have made the ultimate sacrifice, giving their lives in the service of peace.

'if every picture tells a story, this exhibition tells many striking tales,' Kofi Annan commented.

'Take the example of Major General Henry KwamiAnyidoho. In the darkest hour of Rwanda's tragedy, when the order came for the United Nations to withdraw, he at once decided to stay on with a small residual force. As he has since recounted, they could not run away, leaving the victims of genocide to their fate.

'Or take Major Comfort Ankomah-Danso: a wife, a mother, and a veteran of United Nations missions in Liberia, Lebanon and Rwanda. She admits that women were not always fully welcomed on these missions by their male colleagues or superiors. But, she says, since peace is the only thing that can save this planet, and since women make up more than half the planet's population, then of course women must take part in peacekeeping.'

a) **Words students could not recognised from the passage**

    a. Dispatch

    b. Withdrew

    c. Striking

    d. Recounted

    e. Genocide

    f. Colleagues

APPENDIX 'B'

Passage Used for Post-Intervention Test

The most memorable experience of my life was an incident that occurred some thirty years ago when I was in the fourth form in the secondary school. In those days, the speech-making and prize-giving day was always a great event. It was always a day when the results of the promotion examinations were announced to the students after weeks of suspense.

The afternoon commenced with all students taking their seats in the large hall, and the members of staff, led by the principal, filing in. There were also three guests, each of them an important figure in the town. The principal and the dignitaries made speeches admonishing the students to work hard in order to attain their goal. Then the prize-giving commenced. Soon, it was the turn of my class. For the overall best student, my name was called. This was not unexpected, the position having become almost identified with me. Amidst the clapping, I stood up and moved towards the principal whose outstretched hand held a fat book. I was already before him when he peered through his heavy spectacles, surveyed my figure and held back the book. There was a sudden silence. Students were amased at this turn of events. Then he explained: ''*you'll have your prize when you pay outstanding fees.*''

I stood there, almost petrified. Had I been warned of this disgrace, I would simply not have stood up, let alone bothering to go forward. There I was, the sorry focus of attention. I wished my legs would refuse their function but they did no such thing. On the other hand, they refused to beat a retreat, at least, for those burning seconds. Then suddenly spontaneously, the students started clapping and hailing me. Thus, my return journey was more loudly cheered than the inward journey.

For the prize in English, my name was also called. Of course I sat still, but the students hailed on. The prize was kept. For Mathematics, it was the same drama. Somehow the students' behaviour saved the day for me.

Poorly clothed, in torn tennis shoes and being a debtor. I was the talk of the school. The little fee I had paid that year was earned through doing menial jobs at weekends, supplemented with donations from some school mates. Father's financial difficulties had been aggravated by a protracted court case. He had no alternative but to ask me to withdraw from school and look for a job. This I had refused to do.

I had borne the cross gallantly until that day when the principal's action threatened to kill whatever courage remained in me. I ordered the tears to gush out to flood my sad face, but the ovation forced the spring to remain dry, I had the loudest ovation that day: the students' response to my plight was my own prize.

a) **Words students could not recognised from the passage**

     i.   memorable
    ii.   figure
  iii.   amased
  iv.   menial
    v.   protracted
  vi.   plight

APPENDIX 'C'

Interview Guide for Parents/Guardians

1. Do you have a library facility in your community/village/town?

Yes [   ]   No [   ]

2. If yes, how often do your ward utilise the library during holidays?
……………………………………...

3. If no, do you have enough reading materials such as textbooks story books, etc at home for your children's use during holiday?...

4. What would you think account for the poor reading skills of your wards?
……………………………………………………………………………………………

5. Do you visit your ward at school to check on his/her academic performance?

Yes [   ]   No [   ]

6. Do you provide your wards with the necessary materials needed to help him or her in studies?

Yes [   ]   No [   ]

7. What kind of assistance do you offer your ward when learning at home?..

8. What chores are assigned to your ward(s) after school and during holidays?
……………………………………………………………………………………..
……………………………………………………………………………………..

Thank you for your time and please feel free to call me if there is any additional information to share. Thank you.

APPENDIX 'D'

QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERED TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE

TEACHERS OF KANTON SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Please, kindly spend some minutes of your time to respond to the questionnaire to help assess the reading comprehension skills of students in the senior high school. Provide answers to all questions by giving appropriate information in the spaces provided. All information provided is solely for academic purposes and would be treated with absolute anonymity and confidentiality.

Instruction: Please tick **[√]** or provide brief response(s) where and when necessary. Accuracy of responses will be highly appreciated. Thank you for your time.

Section A: Demographic Characteristics of Respondent

1. Sex of respondent:

A. Male

B. Female

2. Age of respondent:

A. 20- 24 years

B. 25-34 years

C. 35-49 years

D. 50- 59 years

E. 60 years and above

3. What is the level of your Education?

A. Diploma in education ☐

B. Degree ☐

C. Masters' degree ☐

D. Cert 'A' ☐

4. How long have you been teaching in the school?

A. 1-5 years. ☐   B. 6-10 years ☐

 C. 11-15 years ☐   D. 16 years and above ☐

5. What is the average class enrolment in this school?_____

Section B: Causes and effects of reading comprehension challenges

6. Do you think students are faced with challenges in reading and comprehension?

A. Yes ☐   B. No ☐

7. Among the following reading comprehension challenges which one(s) is commonly

found among your students

A. Word recognition errors ☐

B. Problems relating to reading habits ☐

C. In appropriate word grouping ☐

D. Ignored or misinterpreted punctuations learners ☐

E. Any other(s), specify…………………………………………………….

8. To what extent do you agree with the following statement(s) about the effects of reading comprehension skills on student academic performance? Use a scale of 1-5 where: **1** strongly disagree; **2**- disagree; **3**- neutral; **4**- agree **5**- strongly agree.

	1	2	3	4	5
Reading appears to affect performance in all other academic subjects					
Reading comprehension is very important in second cycle schools as a tool to further learning and skills development.					
Reading comprehension is needed in order to interpret examination questions and to understand what the question requires.					
Reading comprehension challenges are the primary causes of failure in examinations among students.					
Reading comprehension skills help in gathering relevant information and concepts in school.					
Reading comprehension skills development is a process and should also be taught at the second cycle.					
Library lessons are often ignored in public senior high schools					
Library resources and reading material are not well established in public senior high schools					

9(a). Do you experience problems in teaching reading comprehension?

A. Yes ☐   B. No ☐

9(b) If yes, list some of the challenges?

    i.   ....

ii.   ....

iii.   ....

10(a). Are there areas you need assistance in your teaching of reading comprehension skills development?

A. Yes ☐   B.   No   ☐

10(b).   If   yes, specify...

11(a). Have you ever undergone any In-Service Training on teaching reading comprehension lessons since you completed your initial teacher training course?   A. Yes ☐ B. No ☐

11(b). If No, which area of reading comprehension challenges would you like to be given in-service training on?...

12. How often do you conduct library lessons?

A. Once a week ☐

B. Once a month ☐

C. Not at all ☐

D. Occasionally ☐

13. How do you rate the adequacy of reading materials in the school?

☐

A. Inadequate

B. Quite Adequate [   ]

C. Adequate [   ]

14. The time allotted for teaching reading comprehension on the teacher's scheme of work is

A. Inadequate [   ]

B. Quite Adequate [   ]

C. Adequate [   ]

15. Are your students interested in reading comprehension lessons?

A. Yes [   ]

B. No [   ]

16. How often do you use TLMs in teaching reading comprehension?

A. Often [   ]   B. Not often [   ] C. No TLMs [   ]

17. To what extent do you agree with the following statement(s) about the causes of poor academic performance in Kanton Senior High School? Use a scale of 1-5.

Where: **1**- strongly disagree; **2**- disagree; **3**- neutral; **4**- agree; **5**- strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Reading and comprehension challenges					
School administration					
Quality of the teaching staff					
Learner's previous academic background					
Teaching methods					
School community and environment					

18. Do you think most teachers of students with reading comprehension challenges are comfortable in handling such students and their challenges in regular classes?

A. Yes [＿＿＿]   B. No [＿＿＿]

19. To what extent do you agree with the following statement(s) about the effects of poor academic performance on students' social/emotional adjustment? Use a scale of 1-5.

Where: **1**- strongly disagree; **2**-disagree; **3** – neutral; **4**- agree; **5**-strongly agree.

	1	2	3	4	5
Poor reading ability leads to lowered self-esteem					
Reading comprehension challenges prevents students from reaching desired career goals					
Reading comprehension challenges deprive individual students of the opportunity to read for pleasure and enjoyment					
Reading comprehension experiences strongly influenced a learner's self-esteem and feeling of competency					

Reading comprehension failure can lead to misconduct, anxiety and lack of motivation				
A student's continuous academic failure can be attributed to a lack of relevant reading comprehension skills development.				
Adolescent poor readers have low self–esteem and self-motivation among their peers in class				

SECTION D: Methods and Strategies on Improve Reading Comprehension Skills

20(b). Do you assess your students on reading comprehension?

A. Yes [ ]   B. No   [ ]

20(b). If yes, what method do you use?...

21. What strategies have you put in place to help students with reading and comprehension skills development?

....

....

22. What would you recommend to the school administration in order to improve upon social and emotional problems among students in your school?

....

....

23. To what extent do you agree with the following statement(s) about strategies used by school administrators/headmasters/teachers to improve reading comprehension skills in second cycle schools? Use a scale of 1-5

Where: **1**-strongly disagree; **2**- disagree; **3**- neutral; **4**- agree; **5**- strongly agree.

	1	2	3	4	5
Supply adequate curriculum materials and equipment					
Offer library resources					
Offer information technology					
Provide vocational training resources					
Provide social skills training programmes					
Provide guidance and counselling services					
Have quality staff who can differentiate instructions					
Have staff who can offer study and academic skills					

24. In your discretion, what would you say is responsible for your students' reading

comprehension Challenges?

....

25. Recommend method(s) which will be most suitable for teaching reading

comprehension lessons:…………………….……………………………………..