

# The Books are Harder: Enhancing the Teaching of Reading Comprehension in The Senior Primary Classes

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The following research was conducted during her final year of study on the Bachelor of Education programme in DCU Institute of Education, prior to completing an MA in Education in UCD. Aoife has experience teaching in a wide variety of contexts, particularly urban DEIS Band 1 primary schools and working with young people at risk. Aoife is the current coordinator of the Finglas Community Lifelong Learning Hub (funded by the HEA under PATH 1), established by DCU Educational Disadvantage Centre with the Dublin Northwest Partnership in order to promote diversity within the teaching profession. Aoife Joy Keogh is a current PhD student in UCD School of Education. Her research interests include literacy education, educational disadvantage, education policy, and access to higher education.

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## INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a reader's ability to construct meaning from written texts (Snow, 2002; Anderson & Pearson, 1984). Reading comprehension is an unconstrained skill which develops across the lifespan of the child (Paris, 2005; National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA], 2019). As students progress throughout primary school, they will undoubtedly encounter more complex reading tasks. Reading tasks requiring the synthesis of multiple comprehension strategies and texts of increasing complexity can pose challenges to readers in the senior primary classes (Shanahan, 2019; Cartwright & Duke, 2019). Additionally, students must maintain a high level of motivation and engagement in order to select suitable reading strategies and persevere when challenges arise (Guthrie & Klauda, 2015; Guthrie et al., 2007). This article provides an overview of an action research project (ARP) which focuses on enhancing the teaching of reading comprehension in the senior classes of primary school in order to enable students to overcome such challenges.

This research describes the experiences of a final year BEd student undertaking school placement with a cohort of sixth class students in an urban non-disadvantaged Irish primary school with a class size of twenty-eight students.

Throughout this experience a number of key issues were encountered with regards to the teaching of reading comprehension, leading to the development of the research question: *How can the use of specific pedagogies focusing on reading comprehension enhance the teaching of reading comprehension in senior classes?* Two sub-topics were developed in light of key issues which arose when teaching reading comprehension. The first sub-topic was the synthesis of multiple comprehension strategies. While individual comprehension strategies were taught to students using of the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) Model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983), students struggled to synthesise multiple comprehension strategies simultaneously when interacting with texts. Duke and Pearson (2002) state that “good readers use multiple strategies constantly” (p.210). To aid students in mastering this skill, this research endeavoured to identify best practice with regards to teaching children how to draw on multiple comprehension strategies when engaging with texts. Secondly, students were not equipped with the tools to unpack more complex texts which are prevalent within the senior classes. This research examined whether this problem could be overcome through the use of the pedagogies of close reading (Fisher & Frey, 2012) and dialogic teaching (Burbules, 1993; Murphy et al., 2009), in order to engage children in deeper comprehension of these complex texts.

This research design reflects that of Action Research, a cyclical research process involving the four principles of planning, action, observation, and reflection (Lewin, 1946). This research design lends itself to research within the education sector given its foundation in reflective practice, a key principle underpinning the teaching profession (Teaching Council, 2016). This research investigated how the teaching of reading comprehension in senior primary classes could be enhanced in light of the challenges experienced by a final year student teacher when teaching this aspect of reading instruction on school placement. The data sources analysed entailed planning documentation and self-evaluations from the school placement under consideration. Thematic analysis was undertaken to identify ways in which key issues within the development of students’ reading comprehension could be mitigated through enhanced reading instruction within the context of a Balanced Literacy Framework.

## **CONTEXT**

Literacy is considered to be “an essential component of the right to education and a prerequisite for accessing other human rights” by United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2019, p.4). Research has indicated clearly the importance of functional reading skills as a tool for personal, social and economic development and empowerment (Nelis et al., 2021; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2019; Murphy et al., 2019). In the context of this research, it is important to note that reading comprehension is an unconstrained skill which is developed across the lifespan of the child (Paris, 2005; NCCA, 2019). While unconstrained skills cannot be taught in a brief period of focused instruction and are acquired gradually through experience (Snow & Matthews, 2016), it is imperative that there is explicit instruction for the teaching of complex unconstrained skills throughout the primary years (Dougherty Stahl, 2011). In consideration of constrained skills theory (Paris, 2005), the teaching of reading comprehension is pivotal in the senior primary classes in ensuring students’ progression and development within reading (NCCA, 2019).

In relation to the national curricular context, the Primary Language Curriculum (PLC) (NCCA, 2019), (national curriculum for Literacy Education in Irish primary schools) is underpinned by the concept of a Balanced Literacy Framework (BLF) (Kennedy et al., 2012). This research focuses on the teaching of reading comprehension in the senior primary classes within the context of a BLF. Within a BLF, a wide variety of approaches are used to teach reading and writing; and oral language and vocabulary instruction are embedded within this teaching, alongside specific opportunities for word study (NCCA, 2019; Pressley, 2015; Kennedy, 2014).

A BLF is a nonprescriptive framework in nature which targets the needs of the students and explores their interests while using “a systematic approach to the development of the essential skills for literacy” (Kennedy & Shiel, 2010, p.381). One such essential skill is that of reading comprehension. NCCA (2020) outlines that “comprehension lies at the heart of all reading and therefore plays a central role in a balanced and integrated approach to literacy instruction” (p.4).

In consideration of the national policy context, research has shown an enduring relationship between students’ primary literacy education and achievement within post-primary school (Smyth, 2017; Smyth & McCoy, 2009; McCoy et al., 2010). This in turn poses implications with regards to students’ progression to higher education later in life. Additionally, although Ireland ranks fourth in Progress In International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (Eivers et al., 2017), a considerable difference in literacy achievement exists between children in disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged schools (Kavanagh et al., 2017; Weir & Denner, 2013). This is despite a continuous emphasis within policy on initiatives designed to narrow the gap e.g. *the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (Department of Education [DE], 2011)*, and *the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) Strategy (DE, 2005; 2017)*. *The Higher Education Authority (HEA) (2018, 2022) highlights the need to take a prevention and early intervention approach to exclusion, stating that “exclusion begins early in education and effects future options” (2018, p.7)*. *Given the importance of students’ literacy development with regards to progression to higher education, it is vital that prevention and early intervention approaches to exclusion also target primary school students’ literacy education.*

## **METHODOLOGY**

The methodological approach taken to this research was Action Research (AR). This action research project (ARP) can be classified more specifically as qualitative desk-based action research. McNiff (2002, p.7) describes AR as a “systematic investigation” of one’s practice. This structured investigation provides practitioners with opportunities to identify challenges in their classroom and “reflect, consider options, implement and evaluate potential solutions” (Alberta Teachers Association [ATA], 2000, p.4). Within this research, two key issues were identified within the teaching of reading comprehension and the AR process was undertaken to devise actionable solutions for these problems.

This ARP was carried out using Lewin’s Action Research Model (Lewin, 1946). Figure 1 demonstrates the four principles of this model: planning, action, observation and reflection. ATA (2000) highlights the continuous cyclical nature of AR. The cyclical nature of this research design lends itself to research within the education sector, as it provides educators with the opportunity to reflect on their practice and explore and apply solutions within their classroom in a flexible manner. This flexibility is vital for understanding the dynamic social context of the school environment.



*Figure 1. Four-Stage Action Research Model (based on Lewin, 1948, cited in Hung & Tsai, 2017)*

As part of the AR process, qualitative data was identified and gathered in light of the research question and its sub-topics. This data consisted of planning and evaluation documentation from a school placement undertaken during the author’s final year of study on the Bachelor of Education programme. A variety of data sources were chosen so as to triangulate the data and increase the validity and reliability of the research findings (Grady, 1998). These data sources comprised of: one progressional scheme (PS) for Literacy Education, two lesson plans (LP1 and LP2) for Literacy Education and the two lesson evaluations (Eval 1 and Eval 2) which correspond to these lesson plans.

These planning and evaluation documents were chosen as data sources as they pertained specifically to the issues being investigated by the research question and its sub-topics. By analysing these particular data sources, possible solutions could be developed for the specific problems which arose within the planning and teaching of reading comprehension within the context under consideration. The data sources were analysed through the process of deductive coding. Coding involves grouping data into categories based on common characteristics or criteria (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Anchor codes were assigned to the two sub-topics of the research question, which were also the key themes identified within an initial literature review. A set of sub-codes was then devised based on the literature reviewed within each of these themes. A data analysis tool (see Table 1) and rating scale (see Table 2) were used to interrogate the data sources using the anchor codes and sub-codes. This data analysis tool enabled the strengths and weaknesses to be identified in relation to the two key themes.

Category	Key Criteria	Reference	PS	LP1	LP2	Eval 1	Eval 2
The Synthesis of Multiple Comprehension Strategies	Explicit Teaching of Comprehension Strategies (ET)	Shanahan (2019) Duke and Pearson (2002)					
	Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (GRRM)	Pearson and Gallagher (1983) Shanahan, Callison, Carriere, Duke et al. (2010)					
	Metacognitive Awareness (MA)	Shanahan (2019) Flavell (1979) Kennedy (2018) Guthrie and Alao (1997)					
The Comprehension of Complex Texts	Close Reading (CR)	Shanahan, Fisher and Frey (2012) Fisher and Frey (2012) Lehman and Roberts (2013) Paul and Elder (2003)					
	Dialogic Teaching (DT)	Burbules (1993) Murphy et al. (2009) Soter et al. (2008) Kennedy et al. (2012)					
The Relationship Between Reading Comprehension, Motivation and Engagement	Mastery Goal Orientation (MGO)	Guthrie et al. (1999) Dweck and Leggett (1988)					
	Choice (C)	Kennedy (2018) Gambrell (2011) Guthrie and Alao (1997)					
	Social Collaboration (SC)	Serafini and Ladd (2008) Gambrell (2011) Guthrie et al. (2007) Soter et al. (2008)					

*Table 1. Data Analysis Tool*

5	4	3	2	1	0
Key criteria clearly present in data source and used consciously by the teacher to a very high level. The enhancement of the teaching of reading comprehension as a result of key criteria is markedly evident.	Key criteria clearly present in data source and used consciously by the teacher. The enhancement of the teaching of reading comprehension as a result of key criteria is clearly demonstrated.	Key criteria clearly present in data source, its presence leading to some enhancement of the teaching of reading comprehension.	Aspects of key criteria can be seen in data source, its presence leading to some enhancement of the teaching of reading comprehension.	Aspects of key criteria can be seen in data source, however its presence does not enhance the teaching of reading comprehension in any capacity.	Key criteria absent from data source.

*Table 2. Rating Scale for Data Analysis Tool*

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As outlined in the previous section, a data analysis tool and rating scale were utilised to examine the aforementioned data sources (See Table 3). The findings from the data analysis are organised thematically according to the two key issues which emerged within this data analysis in relation to the teaching of reading comprehension in the senior classes. These themes are as follows: (i) Teacher Instruction of Comprehension Strategies, and (ii) Choice of Text. Sub-themes also developed within these main themes.

Category	Key Criteria	Reference	PS	LP1	LP2	Eval 1	Eval 2
The Synthesis of Multiple Comprehension Strategies	Explicit Teaching of Comprehension Strategies (ET)	Shanahan (2019) Duke and Pearson (2002)	4	4	3	4	3
	Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (GRRM)	Pearson and Gallagher (1983) Shanahan, Callison, Carriere, Duke et al. (2010)	4	3	2	3	2
	Metacognitive Awareness (MA)	Shanahan (2019) Flavell (1979) Kennedy (2018) Guthrie and Alao (1997)	2	2	1	2	1
The Comprehension of Complex Texts	Close Reading (CR)	Shanahan, Fisher and Frey (2012) Fisher and Frey (2012) Lehman and Roberts (2013) Paul and Elder (2003)	2	2	2	1	2
	Dialogic Teaching (DT)	Burbules (1993) Murphy et al. (2009) Soter et al. (2008) Kennedy et al. (2012)	4	2	3	2	2
The Relationship Between Reading Comprehension, Motivation and Engagement	Mastery Goal Orientation (MGO)	Guthrie et al. (1999) Dweck and Leggett (1988)	4	4	3	4	3
	Choice (C)	Kennedy (2018) Gambrell (2011) Guthrie and Alao (1997)	2	1	2	1	2
	Social Collaboration (SC)	Serafini and Ladd (2008) Gambrell (2011) Guthrie et al. (2007) Soter et al. (2008)	3	2	2	2	2

*Table 3. Completed Data Analysis Tool*

### *Teacher Instruction of Comprehension Strategies*

The PLC (NCCA, 2019) recommends the use of explicit strategy instruction when teaching reading comprehension. The importance of explicitly teaching individual comprehension strategies was also highlighted in the literature reviewed (Shanahan, 2019; Duke & Pearson, 2002). Explicit teaching of comprehension strategies had a strong presence in all of the data sources. However, two key issues relating to teacher instruction of comprehension strategies decreased the effectiveness of this explicit teaching. These issues were (i) over-reliance on independent use of comprehension strategies, and (ii) lack of teacher modelling and collaborative practice of strategic control.

The analysis of the data sources evidenced that while the GRR Model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) was implemented throughout the progressional scheme (PS), there was an over-reliance on the children’s independent use of comprehension strategies. Although there was a clear emphasis on teacher modelling and shared practice when first introducing comprehension strategies (See Table 3.1), future use of the strategy was almost always exclusively independent use. Eval 1 and Eval 2 demonstrate that the lack of further opportunities for guided support from the teacher or collaborative practice of the comprehension strategy led to the children using the strategy in an inconsistent manner or disregarding the strategy when reading (See Table 3.1).

Through analysis of the data sources, a clear need for teacher modelling and collaborative practice of strategic control within the teaching of reading comprehension became apparent. Strategic control is a key aspect of metacognition in reading (Flavell, 1979). Strategic control relates to when a reader selects a particular strategy, or combination of strategies that seem suitable for task at hand (Shanahan, 2019). In the literature reviewed the need to teach children how to synthesise comprehension strategies was highlighted (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Shanahan, 2019). When analysing the sub-code of Metacognitive Awareness (MA) within the data sources, it was noted that the children struggled to select and draw on appropriate comprehension strategies when they read texts independently. This demonstrated the need to model and engage in collaborative practice of strategic control as outlined by Shanahan (2019).

<p><i>Progressional Scheme – Example of Introducing Comprehension Strategy</i></p> <p><b><u>Modelling the Strategy of Visualising</u></b> [Whole Class]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using the “making movies in our minds” example, I will model the visualising strategy through drawing using the poem “Springtime” by Derbháil Clarke.</li> <li>Using the “thinking out loud” strategy as I draw and getting the children to co-construct the visualisation with me by asking the children questions.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Shared Experience of Visualising Strategy</u></b> [Whole Class and Individual Work w/ support]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion: the steps taken while visualising.</li> <li>Reading and analysing the poem “Springtime” by Derbháil Clarke.</li> <li>Purposeful oral re-reading for fluency: emphasis on accuracy</li> <li>Vocabulary development and dictionary work.</li> <li>Identifying important pieces of information.</li> <li>Children express visualisations through drawing.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Evaluation 1</i></b></p> <p>“The children’s work showed that they were very capable of analysing and writing about the poetic techniques being used in the verse they were assigned. Most children could give an example of where the technique is used. I felt that the use of visualising was inconsistent in the children’s diagrams. Some children drew generic pictures rather than labelled diagrams reflecting the verse they were assigned.”</p> <p><b><i>Evaluation 2</i></b></p> <p>“As the piece was very descriptive, many of the children struggled to comprehend the text due to the number of descriptive images present in the poem. I tried to combat this by modelling visualising to the children but I feel that further work needs to be done to ensure they don’t overlook this strategy when they read independently.”</p>	<p><b>Sub-code 1b: Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (GRRM)</b></p> <p>Clear emphasis on teacher modelling and shared practice when first introducing comprehension strategy. The premature introduction of independent use diminishes the children’s understanding of the comprehension strategy and leads to inconsistent use or disregarding the strategy.</p> <p><b>Sub-code 1c: Metacognitive Awareness (MA)</b></p> <p>Comprehension strategies are taught in isolation. As a consequence the children fail to draw on appropriate strategies and use multiple strategies simultaneously when reading independently.</p>
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*Table 3.1. Examples of Analysis of Sub-code 1b (GRRM) and 1c (MA) in Data Sources*

## CHOICE OF TEXT

The data sources analysed featured the use of a variety of texts. Through the analysis of these data sources a noticeable issue came to the foreground in relation the choice of texts used. The literature outlines that the complexity of a text depends on many factors including text structure, organisational features and content (Cartwright & Duke, 2019), as well as the reader’s individual ability and background knowledge (Shanahan et al., 2012). The data analysis indicated a need for the examination of (i) the affordances and limitations of texts in relation to readers, and (ii) the discussion approaches taken when interacting with these texts.

Through the analysis of the data sources, the need to examine the affordances and limitations of the texts being used for the teaching of reading comprehension in relation to the ability of the students in the class became apparent. In LP1 the text used provided many opportunities for the analysis of poetic techniques (See Table 3.2). However, the complexity of this text with regards to the students’ ability is highlighted as an issue in Eval 1 (See Table 3.2). The vocabulary and text structure of the poem were major limitations of the text in relation to the students’ prior knowledge and experience. This was evident in the use of texts throughout the PS. Had the affordances and limitations of the text in relation to the students’ ability been considered, the use of suitable pedagogies such as close reading could have been planned for within the lesson. Close reading is the revisiting of a short section of complex text that has already been read, with a specific lens or focus (Fisher & Frey, 2012). The use of this strategy would have enhanced the teaching of reading comprehension by enabling the students to re-read and analyse short sections of the complex text using a suitable lens, thus deepening their comprehension (Fisher & Frey, 2012; Paul & Elder, 2003).

<p><i>Lesson Plan 1 – Development Activity</i> <b>Visualising: Diagrams of Imagery and Analysis of Poetic Techniques</b> [Pair/Independent Work]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each pair/child will be assigned an image/line/verse from the poem and given a template to draw and label a diagram of an image in that verse.</li> <li>• The students will also analyse and write about the poetic techniques being used in the verse and give an example of where technique is used.</li> </ul> <p><i>Lesson Plan 1 – Development Key Questions</i> <b>Poem Questions: Imagery and Poetic Techniques</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What important words in this line tell me about the image being created in the poem?</li> <li>• What image/s is/are created in this line/verse of the poem?</li> <li>• What poetic techniques does the poet use to create these images?</li> </ul> <p><i>Evaluation 1</i> “I think many children struggled with using the comprehension strategy of visualising as the structure of the poem and the formal language caused confusion at points. I felt that while I taught the vocabulary words, the children may have benefited from more time interacting with the text, re-visiting parts of it and analysing it before engaging in the independent task.”</p>	<p><b>Sub-code 2a: Close Reading (CR)</b> It is evident in the activities and key questions of LP1 that the text used offers many opportunities to analyse the poetic techniques that the children are exploring. However Eval 1 illustrates that the children could not fully engage with the analysis of the poetic techniques as the text content and structure proved to be highly complex in relation to the children’s existing knowledge and experience of poetry. More in-depth analysis of the text in advance could have enabled the teacher to plan for close reading of complex sections of the text.</p>
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Table 3.2. Examples of Analysis of Sub-code 2a (CR)



The literature indicates that the use of dialogic teaching can increase students' comprehension of complex texts (Burbules, 1993; Murphy et al., 2009). The literature reviewed highlighted the implications of different discussion approaches for children's comprehension of complex texts. Soter et al. (2008) group discussion approaches according to three distinct stances: (i) expressive, predominantly focusing on the affective response of the reader to the text; (ii) efferent, predominantly focusing on acquiring information from the text; and (iii) critical-analytic, involving the interrogation of texts in search of underlying arguments or beliefs that can be inferred from the text. Research has shown that an expressive stance produces more pupil-led talk than other stances and better enables students to co-construct their interpretation of the text through continuous negotiation with others (Murphy et al., 2009) Thus, the use of discussion approaches which take an expressive stance can be highly effective in enhancing children's comprehension of complex texts.

Through this data analysis it became apparent that while dialogic teaching was consciously planned for in the PS and LPs (see Table 5, Key Criteria (DT)), the lesson evaluations demonstrate that the implementation of dialogic teaching was not fully effective within LP1 and LP2 due to the emphasis placed on teacher-led discussions and an excessive focus on an efferent stance (Soter et al., 2008) (See Table 3.3). The implementation of an instructional model such as Literature Circles which involves small groups of students engaging with self-selected texts in a guided manner facilitated by the teacher (Daniels, 2002; Kennedy et al., 2012). Such an instructional model could have enabled the children to comprehend the texts at a deeper level by providing an opportunity to engage in pupil-led discussions facilitated by the teacher which take an expressive stance (Murphy et al., 2009; Kennedy et al., 2012).

<p><i>Lesson Plan 2 – Development Key Questions</i> <b>Comprehension Questions: ‘London Spring 1941’</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What pastime is this poem based on?</li> <li>• The poem has positive and negative lines, give 2 examples of each.</li> <li>• How many descriptions of destruction can you find in the poem?</li> <li>• Can you list 2 things that were unaffected by the bomb?</li> <li>• What lines tell us that it is springtime or summertime?</li> <li>• What is a Moses cradle? How did it get its name?</li> <li>• Did you like/dislike the poem? Why?</li> <li>• Why do you think the baby is on its own? Where might its parents be?</li> <li>• What poetic techniques can you see in this line?</li> <li>• Why do you think the poet says if they could paint, they’d show them? Do you think what the poet saw was out of the ordinary by this opening line?</li> </ul> <p><b>Evaluation 2</b> “When asked the key questions following the reading of the poem, the children were very capable of finding and relaying the information from the poem. I felt that the more higher order questions generated greater discussion and was more engaging for the children. The use of think pair share allowed the children to further develop their answers and co-construct meaning.” “In future I would focus less on lower order ‘scan and search’ questions and more on open-ended higher order questions.”</p>	<p><b>Sub-code 2b: Dialogic Teaching (DT)</b> In LP2 it is clear that the discussion of the text is very much led by the teacher and focuses on the children’s ability to retrieve information from the text rather than the children’s own emotive response. Eval 2 illustrates the greater effectiveness of open-ended questions and pupil-led talk. Taking a more expressive stance towards the discourse would have enhanced the children’s comprehension of the poem.</p>
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*Table 3.3. Examples of Analysis of Sub-code 2b (DT) in Data Sources*

## **CONCLUSION**

This research study focused on the teaching of reading comprehension in the senior classes of primary school within the context of a BLF. Specifically, the efficacy of specific pedagogies focusing on reading comprehension were examined in relation to the enhancement of teaching reading comprehension. The research methodology of AR has enabled the exploration of key issues encountered by the author when planning for and teaching reading comprehension as a student teacher. The four principles of planning, action, observation and reflection that constitute Lewin's Action Research Model (Lewin, 1946) (See Figure 1), form the basis of reflective practice which underpins the teaching profession (Teaching Council, 2016). This cyclical nature of AR implicates that researchers can apply their findings in an authentic classroom context and continue to reflect upon and improve their practice in light of this action. As such, ARPs can provide teachers with the foundation for engaging in the self-evaluation of their practice throughout their career.

A limitation of this research is the deeply contextual nature of the research methodology utilised within this study. As qualitative research explores nuanced social phenomena, findings are not generalizable (Creswell, 2012). As such, certain limitations exist with regards to the universal applicability of these research findings within all school contexts. Given the deeply contextual nature of this study, the transferability of findings will relate to the context under consideration. Practitioners will be required to make judgements appropriately to determine the similarity of the study context to their own environment. However, the new knowledge and insight provided by this research may be valuable for many school communities and can be shared with other professionals for this reason. This imparting of knowledge could impact the professional practice of the educators in these communities, and consequently the broader context of primary Literacy Education in Ireland with regards to the teaching of reading comprehension (McNiff, 2002).

While this research focuses on the practice of an individual teacher in an urban non-disadvantaged context, there is a lack of evidence-based guidance for schools on how to adapt literacy practices to support students experiencing socio-economic disadvantage in DEIS primary schools in Ireland. This extends to the teaching of reading comprehension in the senior primary classes. As discussed in the context section of this paper, students' primary literacy education impacts their later achievement in post-primary school, and thus their progression to higher education (Johnson et al., 2021; McCoy et al., 2010; Smyth, 2017). Further research on the ways in which pedagogical practices utilised to teach reading comprehension could be adapted in schools experiencing socio-economic disadvantage would enable prevention and early intervention approaches to exclusion to be undertaken (HEA, 2022, 2018).

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