

ABSTRACT

The Role of Sustained, On-Site Continuing Professional Development in the Promotion of a Whole-School Approach to Comprehension Strategy Instruction

This study examines the extent to which a sustained, coherent, on-site professional development approach, incorporating a school-based facilitator, can support the staff of a large urban primary school in the implementation of a research-validated approach to comprehension instruction. Informed by international research on effective professional development, the study promotes a differentiated approach, incorporating modelled lessons, one-to-one consultations, reflective dialogue and the development of an authentic community of practice. This research also explores changes in teacher knowledge and practice as a result of this professional development and examines its impact on pupil learning and engagement.

Qualitative in nature, this case study design explores the multiple perspectives of teachers, the principal and pupils across the first two years of the implementation process. Data gathered from questionnaires, semi-structured individual and group interviews, audio and video recording of lessons, in addition to researcher observations, was coded to facilitate the emergence of conceptual categories.

The complexity of implementing school-wide initiatives is highlighted by the study, with time, multiple reform efforts and the withdrawal of pupils impacting on teachers' ability and motivation to engage in educational reform efforts. The findings indicate that within a community of practice, teachers gradually assumed more control over their own learning, but that this is contingent on effective leadership and scaffolding from the facilitator. The study also suggests that modelled lessons and one-to-one consultations are integral features in developing an atmosphere of trust in which teachers are comfortable sharing concerns and anxieties.

Teachers valued the explicit and structured nature of comprehension strategy instruction introduced, and a dialogic approach which emphasised the collaborative development of personal interpretation of text was observed in many classrooms. Teacher scaffolding was identified as an area in need of further support.

The emergence of higher-order thinking skills was noted among **all** pupils, leading teachers to reconsider their perspectives of younger and weaker readers. Findings also indicate that through the use of Comprehension Process Motions, children in the infant classroom are capable of thinking strategically with minimal teacher prompting. In addition, increases in pupil engagement and perceptions of themselves as readers were noted.

In conclusion, the findings of this study reinforce the need for sustained, in-school support through the medium of informed, on-site facilitation in the development of a collaborative approach to the implementation of new initiatives. The development of active and engaged readers of all ages and the emergence of higher-order thinking skills emphasise the need for a whole-school approach to comprehension instruction.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis, *‘The Role of Sustained, On-Site Continuing Professional Development in the Promotion of a Whole-School Approach to Comprehension Strategy Instruction’*, is my own work and has not been submitted, in whole or in part, by me or another person for the purpose of obtaining any other qualification. All quotations from other sources are duly acknowledged and referenced.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Declaration	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Table of Tables	xi
Table of Figures	xi
Acronyms and Abbreviations	xii

Chapter One: Introduction (Pages 1-17)

1.1	Reading performances of Irish pupils	1
1.2	Inspectorate reports	2
1.3	Comprehension instruction in Irish educational documents	3
1.3.1	Primary school curriculum	3
1.3.2	Learning-Support Guidelines	7
1.3.3	Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) website	8
1.4	Comprehension Instruction in Irish Classrooms	10
1.4.1	Comprehension strategies	10
1.4.2	Higher order thinking skills	11
1.4.3	Collaborative learning	13
1.4.4	Dependence on textbooks and workbooks	13
1.4.5	Curriculum	14
1.5	Conclusion	15
1.6	Aims of study	16
1.7	Overview	17

Chapter Two: Literature Review (Pages 18-105)

Section One: Comprehension

2.1	Introduction	18
2.2	Definition of comprehension	20
2.3	Theories of meaning representation	21
2.3.1	Role of prior knowledge	24

2.4	Comprehension processes	26
2.4.1	Characteristics of good readers	26
2.4.2	Metacognitive activities of good readers	27
2.4.3	Cognitive activities of good readers	28
2.5	Evolving understanding of effective comprehension instruction	30
2.5.1	Distinguishing between strategies and skills	31
2.6	Strategy instruction	32
2.6.1	Gradual release of responsibility model	32
2.7	Transactional Strategies Instruction (TSI)	35
2.7.1	Single versus multiple strategy instruction	36
2.8	Dialogic teaching in the context of rich discussion	37
2.9	Comprehension within a balanced literacy programme	39
2.9.1	Word-level skills	39
2.9.2	Vocabulary knowledge and instruction	40
2.10	Comprehension instruction in the early years	42
2.11	Teachers' role in comprehension strategy instruction	44
2.11.1	Factors affecting effective teacher instruction	46
2.11.2	Points of Progress	48

Section Two: Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

2.12	Introduction	51
2.13	Definition of CPD	52
2.14	Role of teachers in CPD	54
2.14.1	Perceptions of knowledge in CPD	55
2.14.2	Beliefs and attitudes	57
2.14.3	Teacher overload	58
2.15	School culture	59
2.16	Communities of practice	61
2.17	Traditional approaches to CPD: The training model	63
2.18	Characteristic of effective professional development	66
2.18.1	Sustained support	68
2.18.2	School setting	70
2.19	Coaching / mentoring model	72
2.19.1	Observation	73
2.19.2	Dialogue	74
2.19.3	The role and qualities of the literacy coach	75
2.20	Leadership in the change process	78
2.21	CPD in an Irish context	81
2.22	Professional development in the implementation of the	83

1999 PSC	
2.22.1 Theoretical foundations of PCSP	83
2.22.2 Professional development of trainers/cuiditheoirí	85
2.22.3 Role of the cuiditheoir	86
2.22.4 Differentiation	89
2.22.5 Knowledge and methodologies	90
2.22.6 Policy planning	93
2.22.7 Future directions of CPD in Ireland: <i>Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life</i>	94
2.23 Building bridges of understanding: Theory and actual classroom practices in multiple comprehension strategy instruction	99
2.23.1 Selection of schools and participants	100
2.23.2 Professional development of literacy leaders	100
2.23.3 Dissemination of knowledge	102
2.23.4 Implications arising from study findings	102
2.24 Summary	103
2.25 Research questions emerging from the literature review	104

Chapter Three: Methodology (Pages 106-148)

3.1 Introduction	106
3.2 Method of research: Case study	107
3.3 Sampling	109
3.4 Site, setting and participants	109
3.5 Ethical implications	111
3.5.1 Gaining access	113
3.5.2 Informed consent	113
3.5.3 Privacy and confidentiality	115
3.5.4 Data storage	115
3.6 Study design	115
3.6.1 Comprehension strategy instruction in study school	116
3.6.2 Professional development approach in study school	123
3.7 Research design	127
3.8 Data collection	129
3.8.1 Observational data	129
3.8.2 Recorded observations	131
3.8.3 Questionnaires	133
3.8.4 Interviews	136
3.8.5 Group interviews	139

3.9	Data analysis	141
3.9.1	Coding	142
3.9.2	Video footage and audio transcript analysis	144
3.9.3	Quantitative data analysis	145
3.10	Reliability	145
3.11	Validity	146
3.12	Conclusion	148

Chapter Four: Presentation of Findings **(Pages 149-275)**

4.1	Introduction	149
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Section One: Continuing Professional Development

4.2	Previous professional development experiences	150
4.3	Initial reactions to CPD	153
4.4	Beneficial elements of CPD: Participants	157
4.4.1	Modelling	157
4.4.2	Collegiality	162
4.4.3	Pupils' reactions	165
4.4.4	Consulting in-house facilitator	168
4.4.5	Phased implementation with sustained support	174
4.4.6	Provision of resources	177
4.5	Beneficial elements of CPD: Researcher	180
4.5.1	Differentiated support	180
4.5.2	Informal learning through professional conversations	183
4.6	Challenges in CPD approach	186
4.6.1	Reluctant or sceptical participants	186
4.6.2	School factors	189
4.6.3	Dual role of teacher and researcher	194
4.7	Summary: CPD	196

Section Two: Comprehension Strategy Instruction

4.8	Concerns regarding instruction	197
4.9	Previous comprehension instruction	197
4.10	Concept of comprehension	200
4.11	Challenges	201
4.11.1	Time	201

4.11.2	Reading for meaning	202
4.11.3	Differentiation	203
4.11.4	Motivation and engagement	204
4.12	Structured approach	206
4.13	Atmosphere in CSI classrooms	209
4.14	Transactional Strategies Instruction	212
4.15	Cross-curricular application	218
4.16	Personal interpretation	223
4.17	Comprehension Process Motions	225
4.18	Summary: CSI	226

Section Three: Impact on Pupils and Learning

4.19	Role of strategies in comprehension	228
4.20	Pupil perception of reading	229
4.21	Pupil confidence	233
4.22	Internalisation of comprehension strategies	234
4.23	Higher-order thinking skills	238
4.23.1	Younger pupils	242
4.23.2	Quieter pupils	245
4.23.3	Less able readers	246
4.24	Summary: Impact on pupils and learning	249

Section Four: Dialogic Approaches to Comprehension Instruction

4.25	Focus groups	250
4.25.1	Authority	254
4.25.2	Questions	255
4.25.3	Feedback	256
4.25.4	Meta-level reflection and collaboration	258
4.26	Dialogic teaching among teachers in study school	260
4.26.1	Strategy use	261
4.26.2	Teacher modelling and scaffolding	265
4.26.3	Authority	268
4.26.4	Questioning	269
4.26.5	Feedback	271
4.26.6	Meta-level reflection: Connecting pupil ideas	272
4.26.7	Collaboration	274
4.27	Summary: Dialogic approaches to comprehension instruction	275

Chapter Five: Discussion of Findings
(Pages 277 – 319)

5.1	Introduction	277
5.2	Supporting staff in implementing change	277
5.2.1	Facilitator as coach	277
5.2.2	Creating a community of practice	282
5.2.3	Differentiated support	285
5.2.4	Complexity of CPD	288
5.2.5	Teacher overload	291
5.3	Teachers' knowledge, attitudes and practices	293
5.3.1	Complexities of developing teacher knowledge	293
5.3.2	Concept of comprehension and instruction	296
5.3.3	Teachers as strategy instructors	299
5.3.4	Balancing quality and quantity of instruction	302
5.4	Classroom instruction and pupil learning and engagement	304
5.4.1	Higher-order thinking skills	304
5.4.2	Younger pupils	306
5.4.3	Role of prior knowledge	309
5.4.4	Perceptions of reading	311
5.5	Limitations of the study	312
5.6	Future directions	314
5.7	Summary	317

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations
(Pages 320 - 334)

6.1	Introduction	320
6.2	Conclusions	320
6.2.1	Conclusions: Continuing Professional Development	321
6.2.2	Conclusions: Teacher change	323
6.2.3	Conclusions: Pupil learning	324
6.3	Recommendations	326
6.3.1	Recommendations: CPD	327
6.3.2	Recommendations: CSI	330
6.4	Concluding remarks	333

Bibliography

(Pages 335 – 371)

Appendices

Appendix A	Letters of information and consent forms
Appendix B	Sample anchor charts and CPMs
Appendix C	Teacher-designed material to support TSI
Appendix D	Literature used in CSI
Appendix E	Resources to support pupils' strategy application
Appendix F	Sample workshop presentation
Appendix G	Observation sheet
Appendix H	Provisional plan: Year Two
Appendix I	Information on instruction for parents
Appendix J	Questionnaires

TABLE OF TABLES

Table 3.1	Research design: Year One	127
Table 3.2	Research design: Year Two	128
Table 3.3	Data set	129
Table 3.4	Audio-visual recordings	132

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1	Comprehension strategies in study school	117
Figure 3.2	Spiral approach to CSI	118
Figure 3.3	Social skills developed in preparation for TSI	120
Figure 3.4	Strategy introduction: Year One and Year Two	123
Figure 4.1	When did you last receive CPD in English?	150
Figure 4.2	How would you rate your last English CPD experience?	150
Figure 4.3	How do you feel previous professional development extended your knowledge of comprehension instruction?	151
Figure 4.4	How do you feel previous professional development informed your classroom practice?	152
Figure 4.5	Rankings of importance of modelled lessons in CPD process	158
Figure 4.6	Rankings of importance of ‘facilitator as member of school staff’ in CPD process	169
Figure 4.7	Rankings of importance: ‘CPD took place over an extended period of time’	177
Figure 4.8	Rankings of importance of resources in CPD process	178
Figure 4.9	I think I am a ____ reader	230
Figure 4.10	Year One: Positive Attributes	230
Figure 4.11	Year Two: Positive Attributes	231
Figure 4.12	Year One: Characteristics of good readers	232
Figure 4.13	Year Two: Characteristics of good readers	232
Figure 4.14	Front cover of ‘Billy the Kid’ by Michael Morpurgo	259

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CAPER	Children and Parents Enjoying Reading
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CPM	Comprehension Process Motion
CSI	Comprehension Strategy Instruction
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Skills (formerly Department of Education and Science)
DIT	Dialogic Inquiry Tool
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EPV	Extra Personal Vacation
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IES	Institute of Education Sciences
ILSA	Irish Learning Support Association
INSET	In-service Education and Training
INTO	Irish National Teachers Organisation
MIC	Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
NA	National Assessments of Mathematics and English Reading
NAER	National Assessment of English Reading
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PCSP	Primary Curriculum Support Programme
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PPDS	Primary Professional Development Service
PSC	Primary School Curriculum
RAI	Reading Association of Ireland
RCSS	Regional Curriculum Support Service
RD	Research Diary
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SET	Special Education Teachers
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SDPS	School Development Planning Support
SSI	Single Strategy Instruction
TALIS	Teaching and Learning International Survey
TES	Teacher Education Section
TSI	Transactional Strategies Instruction

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

On the 8th of July 2011, Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairí Quinn, formally launched *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People* (Ireland, DES, 2011a), signalling a renewed focus on the nature of literacy teaching and learning in Irish schools. Cognisant of the central role literacy plays in the personal and social development of individuals, in addition to its importance in the economic performance of the country, the policy aims to identify and address issues currently impeding student learning. The impetus for this reform arose from the disappointing PISA (OECD, 2009a) results, in addition to disconcerting findings from the National Assessments of Mathematics and English Reading (NA) (Eivers et al., 2010).

1.1 Reading Performances of Irish Pupils

Considerable official attention has centred on Ireland's placement at 17th out of 34 OECD countries with regard to reading literacy in the 2009 PISA survey. Of most concern is the decline in standards when compared to 2000 results. In fact, Ireland has experienced the greatest decline in standards among all countries with valid data for this period. The results also indicate a significant increase in students performing at or below Level Two, the baseline for effective participation in society, rising from 11% in 2000 to 17% in 2009. In contrast, the percentage of pupils performing at or above Level Five, denoting strong reading performance, dropped from 14% to 7% during this period.

Adding to these findings, the 2009 National Assessments of Mathematics and English Reading indicates that high levels of primary school children are also failing to attain even fundamental literacy levels. A quarter of sixth class and second class pupils can demonstrate only the most basic reading skills, answering questions only when there is a direct match between the wording of

text and question. 10% of pupils at both class levels failed to reach this most basic level. The poor performance of both primary and second level pupils suggests widespread problems with the nature of literacy teaching and learning in Ireland.

In addition to these findings, numerous reports throughout the past decade have highlighted concerns regarding the teaching and learning of English in Irish primary schools (Eivers et al., 2005; NCCA, 2005; 2008). 2004 National Assessment of English Reading (NAER) findings, that there was no significant difference in the mean reading achievement of fifth class pupils when compared with 1998 data, are of great concern, as the introduction of the Primary School Curriculum (PSC) (Ireland, DES, 1999a), improved socioeconomic conditions and the provision of additional resources to schools, had been expected to positively impact on reading standards (Eivers et al., 2005).

Arising from all reports has been a recommendation to develop the higher-order thinking skills and comprehension strategies of pupils across all curricular areas, at classroom, school and system level (Perkins et al., 2011; Eivers et al., 2010; Ireland, DES, 2010a). The reports also raise concerns regarding the low engagement levels of Irish teachers in Continuing Professional Development. Perkins et al. (2011) note that second level English teachers attended on average 1.3 professional development days in the three years preceding PISA 2009. Similarly, second and sixth class teachers at primary level participated in approximately two professional development days on English in the three years prior to the 2009 NA. Both reports recommend professional development at an individual school level to address teacher knowledge and practice, and by extension student learning.

1.2 Inspectorate Reports

Successive evaluations by inspectors (Ireland, DES, 2005a; Eivers et al., 2005) have highlighted word identification and attention to word meanings as areas of effective instruction in Irish classrooms. However, concern is expressed

regarding comprehension instruction and the development of higher-order thinking skills (Eivers et al., 2005; Ireland, DES, 2005a; NCCA, 2005). In a recent report (Ireland, DES, 2010a), inspectors assert that the “unacceptably high” (p.18) levels of poor pupil learning can be attributed in part to inappropriate use of methodologies. Similarly, less than half of inspectors surveyed as part of the 2004 NAER (Eivers et al., 2005) believe that teachers have a good understanding of English teaching methodologies. Of note, is the absence of collaborative or co-operative learning in many of the classrooms observed and the ineffective use of talk and discussion (Ireland, DES, 2010a). It is recommended that lacunae regarding teaching approaches be addressed at a classroom, school and system level (Ireland, DES, 2010a). The need for more effective professional development to inform instruction and learning is highlighted within all reports (Ireland, DES, 2010a; 2005a; NCCA, 2005).

1.3 Comprehension Instruction in Irish Educational Documents

The findings of national and international reports indicate serious concerns regarding both pupil performance and teaching methodologies relating to literacy education. Failure to raise literacy standards, and the increase in pupils performing below the baseline for effective participation in society, suggest significant issues with the role of comprehension within the English Primary School Curriculum (PSC).

1.3.1 Primary School Curriculum

The introduction of the 1999 PSC (Ireland, DES) provided the first widescale opportunity to communicate the significant advances in literacy education since the launch of *Curaclam na Bunscoile* almost thirty years previously. However, the knowledge provided within the document did not fully reflect international research in effective literacy instruction. Word identification, fluency, comprehension and higher-order thinking skills are all identified as key elements

in instruction, but the information provided is limited, making no references to contemporary instructional models validated by research.

The statement that the “ultimate objective of reading is comprehension” (Ireland, DES, 1999b, p.61) appears to represent the constructivist principles espoused by the PSC. However, this constructivist nature of reading is in direct contrast with the narrow definition of comprehension within the document. Statements such as “learning to extract meaning from the text” (p.61) and “the reconstruction of meaning” (p.61) imply that meaning resides within the text, rather than being the interaction of text, reader and context. It also suggests that meaning is fixed rather than personally determined.

The PSC envisions the “development of higher comprehension skills from the middle classes on” (Ireland, DES, 1999b, p.61). In fact, prediction is the only strategy advocated between junior infants and second class that is considered by Block and Duffy (2008) to be highly successful comprehension strategies for instruction. The comprehension strategies to be developed in first and second class, “recalling details and events” and “retelling stories” (Ireland, DES, 1999b, p.29) are lower-order activities and do not appear on the list of research validated strategies (Block and Duffy, 2008). It is only in third class that comprehension strategies such as evaluation, analysis, assimilation and summarisation are to be introduced. Instead, a traditional approach to early reading instruction is advocated. Proficiency in word identification skills is prioritised in the early years, with comprehension only being developed when children can read with speed and fluency. This disregards current thinking on emergent literacy instruction, which holds that children’s comprehension abilities start and develop from birth (Block and Lacina, 2009) and that delaying comprehension instruction until automaticity in decoding is reached may be detrimental (Smolkin and Donovan, 2002; Shanahan et al., 2010).

Despite the international consensus among reading researchers on the importance of distinguishing between ‘skills’ and ‘strategies’ (Duffy et al., 1987; Afflerbach et al., 2008), there is much discrepancy and imprecision used in the language of the PSC. No explanation or definition is provided to help teachers understand the

differences between strategies and skills. Instead, the two terms are used interchangeably throughout the document, with third and fourth class objectives stating that the child should be enabled to “continue to develop a range of comprehension strategies” (Ireland, DES, 1999a, p.42), while fifth and sixth class objectives discuss the use of “comprehension skills” (Ireland, DES, 1999a, p.54). Such inconsistent use of terminology can render instruction both confusing and ineffective for teachers and pupils (Afflerbach et al., 2008).

The lack of clarity persists with regard to the specific comprehension strategies to be taught. The *Teacher Guidelines* clearly list ten comprehension ‘skills’ (Ireland, DES, 1999b, p.61), namely:

- Understanding
- Analysis
- Deduction
- Summarisation
- Inference
- Prediction
- Confirmation
- Synthesis
- Evaluation
- Correlation

Of the ten comprehension ‘skills’ addressed, only five correspond with those validated by international research – summarisation, inference, prediction, synthesis and evaluation. Teachers are merely provided with a list of the names of the ‘skills’, with no further explanation as to the nature of the strategy or its role in comprehension. Such information is insufficient to develop teachers’ knowledge or understanding of Comprehension Strategy Instruction (CSI) and disregards the complex nature of its implementation in the classroom (Hilden and Pressley, 2007; Klinger et al., 2004).

There is also a lack of consistency within the document with regards to comprehension strategies. The curriculum for third and fourth class (Ireland, DES, 1999b) names assimilation as a strategy for instruction, yet it does not appear on the complete list in the *Teacher Guidelines*. Similarly, of the seven

‘skills’ named for fifth and sixth class, confirming and problem solving do not feature within the *Teacher Guidelines*. There is also a clear lack of continuity between class levels. Research advocates that breadth and depth be added to the number of strategies taught as children progress through the school (Block and Lacina, 2009). However, only four of the strategies (deduction, analysis, prediction and evaluation) introduced at middle class level are further developed in the senior classes. Inference is regarded by researchers to be a complex strategy which needs to be introduced at a developmentally appropriate age (Yuill and Oakhill, 1991), yet it is one of the strategies which though introduced at middle class level, receives no further attention in subsequent years. Failure to clearly outline a coherent, developmental approach to CSI is likely to inhibit Irish teachers’ understanding of effective instruction and their belief in the importance of a long-term strategic approach.

Despite the large volume of research surrounding the nature of effective comprehension instruction, it receives insufficient attention in the current PSC. Though the importance of developing comprehension through oral activity is addressed, no information is provided as to the need for explicit explanation of strategies, teacher modelling, or gradual release of responsibility. Disregarding researchers’ belief that the teacher plays a critical role in the development of strategic readers (Gaskins et al., 1993), the brief paragraph covering this topic within the PSC summarises the role of the teacher as “enabling and stimulating the children, and developing and improving the quality and reflection through modelling, instruction and application” (Ireland, DES, 1999b, p.62). Without sufficient knowledge on pedagogical practices, change in instruction will be impossible.

The PSC recognises the failure of workbooks to develop comprehension strategies, stating that “they will not be developed effectively through exercises or assignments based on the individual skills such as are found in many workbooks and class readers” (p.62). However, the scarcity of information on alternative methodologies, in addition to the recognition that reading schemes “can be a useful resource” (p.19), does not facilitate the use of authentic reading material. The listing of activities to supplement instruction, such as sequencing

tasks, prediction assignments and cloze procedures, risks confusing teachers. Shanahan et al. (2010) caution against such instructional activities, as strategies do not involve worksheets as they do not reflect the active thinking involved in comprehension.

1.3.2 Learning-Support Guidelines

While the PSC contains some of the rhetoric of research on CSI, it contains little information for teachers on a cohesive approach to developing comprehension. The Learning-Support Guidelines (Ireland, DES, 2000), though published merely a year later than the PSC, address this lacunae to a certain degree. The document, distributed to schools to provide guidance on effective learning support for pupils with low achievement or learning difficulties, offers research-based information on comprehension and recognises that strategy instruction can “dramatically improve pupils’ performances” (p.78). The guidelines envisage struggling readers becoming independent and self-reliant. Whereas the PSC considers comprehension instruction to be the domain of middle and senior classes, the Learning-Support Guidelines recognise that children need such instruction from their earliest introduction to text.

Though the guidelines link comprehension instruction with improved pupil performance, no other rationale is provided for such instruction. Additionally, the importance attributed to explicit instruction may be negated by placing equal importance on other instructional activities. “Comprehension skills can be developed through suitable questioning and discussion, through cloze procedure and sequencing exercise, or through more direct strategy training” (p.78).

The Learning-Support Guidelines identify fourteen reading comprehension strategies, with only two strategies, prediction and summarisation, appearing on both PSC and Learning-Support lists. However, they do reflect many of the strategies advocated by Block and Duffy (2008), namely:

- Making and verifying predictions
- Relating prior knowledge and personal experiences to the text
- Generating questions while reading

- Identifying the main idea
- Providing a summary
- Monitoring understanding

Greater evidence of research-validated instruction is present in the Learning-Support Guidelines, which emphasises the importance of realistic situations and contexts in instruction. The five-step procedure outlined, includes information on direct explanation, modelling, gradual release of responsibility and independent practice. However, though the content reflects research findings, it fails to provide sufficient detail to support teachers' implementation of the instruction. It is also important to note that while the five-step procedure outlined provides pupils with procedural and declarative knowledge, it fails to address conditional knowledge. Instruction will be ineffective unless pupils understand the conditions under which they would apply the strategy (Paris et al., 1983) and current research advocates that all three knowledge bases form an integral part of instruction (Pearson, 2009).

While providing more research-validated information than the PSC, the Learning-Support Guidelines still fail to provide clear details that would facilitate the implementation of CSI in classrooms. It is also of concern that the audience for this knowledge is confined to special education teachers.

1.3.3 Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) Website

The Professional Development Service for Teachers co-ordinates and supports the development and learning of teachers on a national basis. Through their website, the PDST is in the position to provide the most current information on research-based best practices to a national audience. However, the current PDST website contains no information on comprehension instruction. This is available through links to the archived websites of the PPDS (Primary Professional Development Service) and the PCSP (Primary Curriculum Support Programme). The difficulty navigating the site in search of relevant materials may perhaps account for the fact that the website was found to be the least used resource by teachers when planning for curriculum implementation (Murchan et al., 2009). Many teachers report using other sites such as Scoilnet and the INTO as they

consider them to be more relevant to teaching. The disinclination among Irish teachers to refer to the PDST website limits its potential to provide an evolving understanding of current thinking on effective comprehension instruction.

The article on comprehension adopts a simple definition of comprehension as “the act of constructing meaning with text”. However, it does proceed to acknowledge the active role of the reader, though not the importance of context or purpose. Though skills and strategies are once again used interchangeably, the article recognises that explicit instruction of these ‘skills’ is required for some, as not all pupils acquire them naturally. However, despite increased clarity in providing a rationale for strategy use, the authors fail to name any strategies, opting instead for a series of activities that promote strategic thinking. These include Directed Reading, KWL and oral cloze procedure. The lack of clarity regarding comprehension strategies is further compounded in a second article entitled *Comprehension Strategies for Fiction*. Three strategies are included, namely, generating questions, sensory impressions and making connections, with some detail being provided as to the nature of appropriate instruction. The fact that making connections and sensory images are categorised as ‘after reading’ strategies is of concern as this is not consistent with the cognitive activities of expert readers. The article also includes drama activities such as conscience alley and role-on-the-wall, which may encourage further consideration of characters and their actions. However, the decision not to distinguish between cognitive strategies and drama activities serves to further dilute teachers’ understanding of comprehension strategies and may result in teachers believing that they are engaging in CSI when they are in fact using drama techniques to expand on the text.

The potential of Irish educational documents to impact on teacher practice, and subsequently pupil learning, is hindered by the lack of clarity and consistency in all information sources. This is most evident in relation to the specific nature of comprehension strategies and their importance in the construction of meaning. While some elements of research-based best practices are alluded to in Irish recommendations, ultimately no cohesive approach to the teaching of comprehension is identified.

1.4 Comprehension Instruction in Irish Classrooms

The scarcity and lack of coherence with regard to information on comprehension instruction has implications for the implementation of contemporary thinking regarding effective comprehension instruction in Irish classrooms. Subsequent to the introduction of the PSC, numerous national reports have raised concerns regarding issues pertinent to comprehension instruction, such as the dominance of reading schemes in Irish classrooms and the failure to develop the higher-order thinking skills of pupils. The adherence of Irish teachers to traditional approaches may be in part attributed to the paucity of research-validated information available at a national level.

1.4.1 Comprehension Strategies

While teachers acknowledge the importance of developing comprehension strategies, there is little evidence that this is being addressed in a coherent manner (INTO, 2004). The 2009 NA (Eivers et al., 2010) reports high levels of engagement with strategies among both second and sixth class pupils. Approximately 90% of teachers reported making predictions and discussing prior knowledge on a weekly basis. 71% of second class teachers and 86% of sixth class teachers ‘make generalisations and inferences’ at least once a week. Similarly, the INTO report on Language in the Primary School (2004) notes discussion of text with teacher questioning and recall and retelling being among the most frequently used comprehension strategies. However, it is important to note that 75% of the respondents also cited written exercises as a strategy, placing it higher than prediction (65%). This confusion surrounding the nature of comprehension strategies may arise from the failure of curricular documents to define what a strategy is and provide a coherent list of strategies to be introduced throughout the primary school.

Teacher focus groups reveal that while teachers are aware of the importance of oral language and discussion in developing comprehension strategies, this approach is not widely adopted. “In general, however, teachers had not

embraced, or perhaps did not understand the essence of the approach to comprehension that is recommended in the Teacher Guidelines for English” (INTO, 2004, p.23). In their analysis of teachers’ responses, the authors of the report conclude that teachers do not equate reflecting on, or responding to text with comprehension, considering them to be mutually exclusive areas. Fault for this narrow definition of comprehension is placed with the Teacher Guidelines and also failure to adequately address effective comprehension instruction during the PCSP seminar days.

Teachers have exhibited confusion and uncertainty regarding comprehension strategies. The review of curriculum implementation (NCCA, 2005) notes ambiguity among teachers as to whether pupils would be able to independently apply strategies such as making connections. Furthermore, some teachers attempt to separate reading and comprehension, expressing “a fear of turning children off reading if it was linked to comprehension” (INTO, 2004, p.26). It is clear that the vagueness and lack of coherence within Irish curricular documents is reflected in confusion and an adherence to traditional teaching approaches among teachers.

1.4.2 Higher-Order Thinking Skills

The development of higher-order thinking skills is regarded as fundamental, not only to the English Language curriculum, but is one of the principles of learning which underpins all subject areas of the PSC. While not explicitly stated as comprehension, advocating the development of questioning, summarising, analysing, making inferences and deductions, and interpreting figurative language and imagery, implicitly recognises the importance of comprehension strategies in all curricular areas. Researchers advocate such an approach, emphasising its value for both reading comprehension and content knowledge (Hapgood et al., 2004; Palinscar and Magnusson, 2001).

However, reviews of the PSC (NCCA, 2005; 2008) raise concerns regarding the development of such higher-order thinking skills, both in English and across other curricular areas. Among the teachers interviewed from the six study schools, some were unsure what higher-order thinking skills were, reflecting the

lack of clarity within curriculum documents. The majority of respondents, however, did recognise the central role the English curriculum plays in the development of such higher-order thinking skills.

Inspectors noted that, in English, teachers prioritise the development of “lower-order thinking, such as knowledge” (NCCA, 2005, p.44) providing little opportunity to foster higher-order strategies such as synthesis and evaluation. Failure to fully implement the curricular areas of English, Mathematics and Visual Arts by neglecting the development of higher-order thinking skills, emotional and expressive skills and pupils’ cognitive skills was noted in approximately one third of classrooms (NCCA, 2005). Findings indicate greater knowledge and guidance is required to raise teachers’ awareness of the importance of planning for higher-order thinking skills across the curriculum. Teachers from the study schools expressed difficulty in identifying how such thinking skills should be developed. The reports also indicate that teachers currently consider higher-order thinking skills to develop in an incidental manner through encouragement and discussion, rather than under the explicit direction of the teacher. “You try your best in the different areas, but I don’t know if enough is being done” (NCCA, 2005, p.232).

Recent incidental inspection findings (Ireland, DES, 2010a) note that effective English lessons were categorised by talk and discussion, with teachers using collaborative and co-operative learning to develop both comprehension and oral language skills. However, despite the emphasis on the importance of oral language in the PSC, 17.2% of the English lessons observed did not use dialogue to support pupils’ learning. While teachers are aware of the importance of discourse and collaborative learning, they do not understand how to make effective use of these methodologies to advance student learning. This is of great concern given that approximately one quarter of principals surveyed as part of the 2009 NA (Eivers et al., 2010) reported oral language difficulties among their pupils. It is clear the role of dialogue and discourse in learning is not fully appreciated within Irish classrooms.

1.4.3 Collaborative Learning

The PSC espouses a constructivist approach to education, with pupils learning not only from teachers, but also from interactions with their peers. This mirrors current thinking on comprehension, where conflict or tension created through multiple perspectives or resolved through collaborative discussion, ultimately leads to greater understanding (Wilkinson and Son, 2011). However, Irish reports indicate that despite the importance of collaborative learning, it continues to be underutilised in Irish classrooms, with whole-class teaching remaining the dominant approach, followed closely by individual work (McCoy et al., 2012; Ireland, DES, 2010a; NCCA, 2008, 2005; INTO, 2006). The Primary Curriculum Review (NCCA, 2005) finds that with regards to English, teachers provide more opportunities for activities which the teacher can direct or lead, but engage less frequently in activities which require a release of responsibility to pupils.

The absence of collaborative learning in lessons observed by the Inspectorate (Ireland, DES, 2010a), is considered to be a cause of concern. Teachers cite organisational issues such as class size and classroom layout as deterrents for adopting such an approach (NCCA, 2005). They also indicate that children's inability to work in groups is an inhibiting factor and cite concerns regarding meeting the needs of more able children in mixed ability groupings. Both reviewers and teachers conclude that underpinning this reluctance to engage with peer learning is a lack of understanding and guidance regarding its potential and also how to utilise it as a methodology (Ireland, DES, 2010a; NCCA, 2005).

1.4.4 Dependence on Textbooks and Workbooks

Reports indicate that textbooks and workbooks continue to exert a dominant influence on learning in Irish classrooms (McCoy et al., 2012; Eivers et al., 2010; 2005; NCCA, 2008; 2005; INTO, 2006; 2004). Consequently, teaching was found to consist of undemanding and repetitive tasks, with little emphasis on developing pupils' higher-order thinking skills or nurturing creative, emotional or imaginative responses (NCCA, 2005). It is also noted that in these instances, pupil interest and engagement in learning was low. Therefore, it is unsurprising

that the 2009 NA (Eivers et al., 2010) indicates higher performances among sixth class readers in classrooms where there is infrequent use of workbooks.

Of most concern is the role of the textbook as a curriculum guide, rather than a teaching resource. Difficulty engaging with the English Language curriculum (Eivers et al., 2010; NCCA, 2005; INTO, 2004) has resulted in teachers relying heavily on text books for planning and guiding their teaching and learning. The 2009 NA (Eivers et al., 2010) indicates that 77% of second class teachers and 74% of sixth class teachers use reading schemes for planning English lessons, while only 38% and 22% respectively used the curriculum or Teacher Guidelines. While teachers believe that by following the textbooks, they are addressing all areas of the curriculum, the NCCA raises concerns about the degree to which these resources reflect the concepts underpinning the curriculum.

It is interesting to note that despite the dominant role played by textbooks in planning, teaching and learning, teachers express dissatisfaction with the quality of material produced by publishing companies (INTO, 2006, 2004). There is criticism of the low level of importance attributed by reading schemes to the role of oral language in the development of comprehension strategies and the failure to address reflection before, during and after reading, as recommended by the PSC. However, despite these concerns and an awareness of the important role played by the teacher in the development of comprehension strategies, teachers “by and large, were content to rely on commercially-produced materials to teach them” (INTO, 2004, p.26).

1.4.5 Curriculum

The English Language curriculum has remained essentially unchanged since its introduction in 1999, despite advancements in understanding of literacy and equally increasing awareness of weaknesses of both the document and subsequent implementation in classrooms (Eivers et al., 2010; NCCA, 2005; Ireland, DES, 2005a; INTO, 2004). Efforts to address the failure of teachers to engage with the curriculum, merely restructured the existing content, with no change in knowledge or methodology.

In its response to *Better Literacy and Numeracy for Children and Young People* (Ireland, DES, 2010b), Mary Immaculate College, Limerick calls for a “significant reform”(MIC, 2011, p.34) of the English curriculum to take into account the extensive body of research on effective literacy instruction and its potential application across other curricular areas. This sentiment was echoed by other institutions such as St. Patrick’s College, Dublin and the NCCA, the latter noting that “the challenge is no longer to improve the primary curriculum by tweaking and/or adding further layers to it, but to improve it by changing it” (2011, p.28). Eivers et al. (2010) recommend that future changes to the curriculum should promote the use of self-regulated comprehension strategies across all class levels, using a variety of genres, including digital text. The authors also call for a balanced approach to reading instruction, assigning equal importance to basic skills, such as phonics, strategies to develop self-regulated learners, teaching pupils to acquire information from multi-genre text sets, and the integration of reading and writing. The launch of *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life* (Ireland, DES, 2011a) provides the opportunity to address the lacunae in the current curriculum document, presenting research-validated practice in a coherent manner, with sufficient detail and support to enable teachers to understand not only the change in teaching approach, but also the rationale behind it. Responsibility for the ‘revision’ of the English curriculum currently resides with the NCCA. The first elements will become available in 2014, with all levels being introduced from 2016.

1.5 Conclusion

The consensus arising from national and international reports is that significant lacunae within the English Language curriculum are inhibiting the development of a culture in which children engage in higher-order thinking, reflecting, questioning and evaluating text. Addressing these issues to provide children with effective comprehension instruction is of utmost importance and an urgent systematic review of the pedagogical approaches currently advocated to Irish teachers is required.

However, it is also clear from successive reports that much of the methodologies and approaches espoused by the PSC are not being implemented in Irish classrooms (NCCA, 2008, 2005; Ireland, DES, 2010a; McCoy et al., 2012; INTO, 2006; Eivers et al., 2005). Rather than embracing the vision of guided learning through collaboration and discussion, teachers have instead selectively integrated some elements of curricular reform into their established routines. Without addressing the difficulties of current professional development initiatives in changing actual classroom practice, the potential impact of future reforms of the English curriculum will be ineffectual. Therefore, equal attention needs to be attributed to the development of an effective instructional programme, reflecting contemporary international research and an appropriate professional development approach in its promotion and dissemination across a school.

1.6 Aims of Study

Arising from increased national and international attention in the area, the symbiotic relationship between the implementation of an effective comprehension strategy instruction programme and the nature of the accompanying professional development and support of the teaching staff in the study school will be the focus of this research. The study will consider research-validated best practice in both comprehension and professional development, uniting the two fields in the dissemination of a whole-school approach to comprehension strategy instruction underpinned by these dual theoretical foundations.

The thesis aims to explore the impact of sustained school-based professional development on teachers' approach to comprehension instruction, and by extension pupil learning and engagement. By examining the knowledge, attitudes and practices of the school community as it endeavours to transform its practice in this area, it is anticipated that a more comprehensive understanding of influencing factors in professional development will evolve. It is hoped that this

study will provide greater clarity in addressing the disparity between research-validated comprehension instruction and current pedagogical practice in Irish classrooms and most importantly the nature of support required by teachers to achieve this. This will have implications for future education reform efforts, both at school and system level, most notably current literacy and numeracy initiatives. Finally, it is envisioned that the findings will suggest future directions for research in facilitating school change.

1.7 Overview

Chapter Two provides an overview of literature pertinent to comprehension strategy instruction and Continuing Professional Development (CPD), creating a theoretical framework within which to evaluate relevant Irish documents and CPD experiences, in addition to a rationale for the current study. Arising from this synthesis and analysis will be the research questions which underpin the study.

An overview of the methodology employed in the study will be provided in Chapter Three. The context of the study in relation to site, setting and participants will be detailed, in addition to the nature of instruction received by the children and the professional development of the teachers. The chapter will also outline and justify the research design and instruments of investigation selected.

Chapter Four presents the findings gathered from the research diary, teacher and pupil interviews, questionnaires and transcripts. Chapter Five will analyse and interpret these findings, drawing together the emerging themes relating to the nature of school-based professional development in the implementation of curricular reform.

Finally, the concluding chapter will place the findings in light of current national educational reform, making recommendations as to the nature of professional development initiatives accompanying future reform efforts.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

SECTION ONE: COMPREHENSION

2.1 Introduction

“Literacy and numeracy skills are crucial to a person’s ability to develop fully as an individual, to live a full and satisfying life and to participate fully in our society” (Ireland, DES, 2011a, p.5). Recent national attention however has centred not only on the social and personal contributions literacy makes at an individual level, but on its importance in the economic development of society at large. Developing a literate population is no longer considered to be a luxury but an economic necessity (Snow, 2002), and providing effective instruction to advance literacy achievement must be considered a national priority.

The launch of a new national strategy, *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life* (Ireland, DES, 2011a), charts the course of literacy teaching and learning in Ireland over the next decade. Viewing literacy education as a continuum from early childhood into adulthood, the policy aims to develop a coherent and integrated education system in which literacy skills are systematically developed and consolidated from early childhood care and education (ECCE), through primary and onto second level education. To facilitate this, attention is to be focused on the English Language PSC, addressing serious lacunae within the current document. Equally, it is recommended that professional development targets teachers’ knowledge and skills, in addition to developing the capacity of school leadership to ensure that the curriculum will be implemented as effectively as possible.

Driving this reform is the ambitious target to significantly improve primary pupils’ performances on the NA by 2020. Specifically to:

- Increase the percentages of primary children performing at Level 3 or higher by at least 5 percentage points at both second class and sixth class
- Reduce the percentage of children performing at or below Level 1 in the NA by at least 5 percentage points at both second class and sixth class

Achieving these targets will require pupils to infer, interpret, integrate, examine and evaluate information within a text. In essence, the success of the national literacy strategy will be evaluated on pupils' ability to comprehend text.

This chapter will explore the literature relevant to comprehension, with particular emphasis on pertinent research-based studies. It begins by defining the concept of comprehension, identifying the pivotal roles of reader, text, purpose and context in the meaning making process. Theories of meaning representation will consider how knowledge is structured, stored and accessed by the mind, specifically focusing on its relevance for reading comprehension.

The activities and characteristics of expert readers are discussed, focusing on their conscious awareness, control and application of comprehension processes. Examining the strengths of able readers helps to not only identify the problems encountered by less experienced readers, but also shapes our understanding of effective comprehension instruction. This review will consider strategies shown to help weaker and younger readers to comprehend, placing them within an instructional repertoire designed to provide a holistic approach to CSI.

The role of comprehension within a balanced literacy programme of word identification and vocabulary is discussed. Following this, comprehension in the younger years is examined, focusing on the benefits early readers derive from both word level and comprehension instruction. Finally, this section will explore the important role of the teacher in CSI, identifying the factors which affect teachers' abilities to provide effective instruction.

2.2 Definition of Comprehension

Comprehension is a complex and dynamic activity involving the reader, text and socio-cultural context. Much debate has surrounded the definition of comprehension, with many definitions being proffered to account for both the product and the processes of reading comprehension. The issue is complicated further by the fact that the outcome of comprehension is neither static nor homogenous, varying according to individual, development and time.

For the purposes of this study the RAND (2002, p.xi) definition will be used:

The process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. Comprehension has three elements: the reader, the text and the activity or purpose for reading. These three dimensions define a phenomenon that occurs within a sociocultural context that shapes and is shaped by the reader and that infuses with each of the three elements.

This definition recognises the text's role as a skeleton or blueprint (Spiro et al., 1980) with which the reader interacts, simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning. As the reader actively engages with the text, multiple cognitive tools are used, focusing at word level on decoding and understanding individual words, while also integrating the content with existing prior knowledge to develop a personal understanding of the text (Rummelhart, 1994; Stanovich, 1980). Comprehension also undergoes developmental changes, influenced by factors such as increased cognitive ability, improved working memory and greater control over comprehension skills and strategies (Paris and Hamilton, 2009).

Defining comprehension is important, not only in the framing of research in the area, but also in determining the nature of instruction in the classroom. A teacher's understanding of comprehension will influence their pedagogical practice (Gill, 2008).

2.3 Theories of Meaning Representation

Reading is a challenging and complex process in which the reader interacts with the text to create a mental representation of its information, resulting in a change in the way the mind views the world (Kintsch, 2004). Examining the conceptualisations of this representation is of great relevance, as the extraction and construction of meaning is central to all definitions of reading comprehension. Furthermore, the actions of both researchers and instructors must be grounded in a rich theoretical context, which adequately accounts for all contributing factors in proficient reading comprehension.

Schema theory pioneered by Anderson and Pearson (1984) explains the structure and organisation of human knowledge as it is represented in memory. Central to the theory are schemata, cognitive structures representing units of knowledge, embedded within each other through the linkage and integration of experiences and information. Schema theorists provide insights into how readers process and understand text through the activation of relevant schema. Pearson (2009) notes that this is a “dynamic phenomenon” (p.26) as schema are updated or refined as new information emerges. A landmark study by Pichert and Anderson (1977) also points to the key role of schema in the organisation of learning, noting that the activation of a particular schema over another has a significant influence on the reader’s focus and recall of information within the text. Critics note the limited power of this model to represent comprehension, as it oversimplifies what is a complex cognitive activity (Sadoski et al., 1991; Alba and Hasher, 1983). However, despite such limitations, schema theory advanced many valuable premises which have shaped the current field of research, most notably placing the reader at the centre of the meaning making process and highlighting the key role played by prior knowledge in comprehension (McVee et al., 2005).

The construction-integration (CI) model, developed by Kintsch (1998, 2004), is currently regarded as the most complete and fully developed model of reading comprehension (Duke et al., 2011; Graesser, 2007). The model proposes a multilevel representation of text meaning, with the reader simultaneously

constructing and revising both a *text-base* and a *situation model*. The text-base represents a short-term, literal understanding, using knowledge of both the microstructure and macrostructure of the text to develop propositions or idea units to encapsulate the meaning of words and sentences. However, learning does not take place until this representation is fully integrated with existing knowledge at the second level of representation, the situation model. The representation of the content is enriched through the reader's provision of explanations, elaborations and generalisations, ultimately leading not only to better understanding of the text, but also to better elaboration and recall when the content is revisited (Diakidaoy et al., 2011).

The models of meaning construction proposed by schema theory and CI provide a theoretical framework within which the key roles of reader, text, context and activity can be considered. They also position prior knowledge at the centre of the meaning-making process.

Pearson (2009) considers one of the key contributions of schema theory to be the introduction of ambiguity as to whether meaning resides with the reader or the text. The author notes that through this perspective the meaning of text is not universal, but must be considered through the lens of individual readers, cognisant of their unique knowledge and cultural backgrounds. Kintsch (2009) advances the analogy of the reader as active constructor of meaning, both at text-base and situation model level, emphasising the interdependence of reader and text. The author notes that while a text may provide the reader with cues in relation to constructing a text-base, it will never be fully explicit and therefore active processing will always be required on the part of the reader. Failure to do so on the part of passive readers leads to an inadequate text-base and consequently difficulty comprehending. Kintsch (2009) also points to the lack of text cues provided in the development of a situation model, as this relies predominantly on individual background knowledge of the reader. The argument is extended to propose that learning or comprehension is inhibited in classroom environments in which teachers or pupils attempt to construct a universal situation model for the text.

Evolving understanding of the process of reading has resulted in an enlarged framework to address the complicated but valid contribution of one or more distant elements in reading, namely, author, text and context (Hartman et al., 2010). Developing a multi-component model acknowledges that while the psychological processes of reading may be universal, the location of the reader within a particular time and setting, renders the construction of meaning to be culturally specific (Rueda, 2005). Rosenblatt (1978) argues that meaning resides neither solely in the mind of the reader nor in the words on the page, but in the transaction between the two. Rather than view reading as a mechanical, clinical interaction, the deliberate use of transaction acknowledges the complex operations of a human mind within a social context leading to the development of individual interpretations and responses (Rosenblatt, cited in McLaughlin, 2008). Such a tetradic conception underpins the RAND definition of comprehension (Snow, 2002), identifying the interaction of reader, text and activity within a sociocultural context.

Cultural knowledge cannot be regarded as static, rather it is dynamic, evolving and developing with each new experience and interaction. Therefore, it follows that in addition to being unique and individual, interpretation of the text is also transient, reflecting the reader's response at a particular moment in time (Langer, 2004). In this instance Langer (2004) refers to schema as environments, acknowledging their situated and evolving nature, reflecting Rosenblatt's argument that "reading does not occur in a vacuum, but is deeply conditioned by the social context" (1978, p.135). Rueda (2011) asserts that educators need to be cognisant of the cultural background of their pupils and the degree to which this is reflected in the literature explored. However, the individualised nature of environments implies that even within relatively homogenous groupings, pupils will each have unique 'funds of knowledge' (Gonzalez et al., 2005) and therefore teachers need to develop practices which value a multiplicity of interpretations rather than seeking definitive answers.

Similarly, attention must be paid to the nature of externally generated purposes for reading in an educational context. Instances where pupils accept the purpose

for reading may result in comprehension, however concern arises where there is conflict between the externally mandated purpose and the intrinsically generated purpose of the reader, possibly leading to partial or inefficient comprehension (Sweet and Snow, 2003). Current research indicates that when pupils do not see the relevance of the prescribed purpose they will not engage in the effortful and resource consuming process of comprehension. Therefore, teachers not only need to be mindful of potential conflicts in setting a purpose but also share the learning intention of reading activities with their pupils.

2.3.1 Role of Prior Knowledge

A basic tenet of both theories is the crucial role played by prior knowledge in the construction of meaning, the two being intertwined in a virtuous cycle where knowledge deepens comprehension, in turn deepening knowledge (Duke et al., 2011). Johnston and Pearson (1982) find that prior knowledge is a superior indicator of comprehension than either intelligence or reading attainment tests. However, research indicates that the effectiveness of prior knowledge in the comprehension of text is determined by the degree to which it overlaps with the text (Kintsch, 1998), creating a learnability zone (Kintsch, 1993). In situations where the reader has insufficient prior knowledge, an overemphasis can be placed on the surface level features of the text, potentially connecting unrelated facts (Goodman, 1996), leading to a fragmented representation. In contrast, readers with poor text knowledge place undue importance on prior knowledge and in doing so risk distorting the overall meaning.

Despite the lack of recent research in the area of prior knowledge, its importance in both comprehension and instruction is widely recognised (Duke and Martin, 2008; Shanahan et al., 2010; Guthrie et al., 2004). Both schema theory and CI model position prior knowledge as an essential building block in the development of understanding and also as a potential factor in comprehension difficulties. Block and Pressley (2002) caution that ineffective activation of schema, either prior to or during the reading process, can cause the reader to focus on irrelevant features of the text, making tangential connections and thereby impeding sophisticated inferential understanding of text. Similarly, Kintsch (2004) argues that failure to effectively integrate text-base with the

reader's prior knowledge may result in encapsulated knowledge, which exists in isolation from all other knowledge, only to be recalled through directly referencing the text. Further research needs to be conducted in the area to understand how children develop the skills needed to integrate their constructed representation of the text with their prior knowledge and the potential impact that attention and working memory may have in the process (Paris and Hamilton, 2009).

Arising from these findings, research has focused on developing instructional approaches and activities to enable children to not only activate their prior knowledge, but to effectively integrate it with new concepts arising from the text (Strangman and Hall, 2004; Trabasso and Bochar, 2002). Pearson and Duke (2002) argue for such instruction to be undertaken from the earliest school years, given its fundamental importance in comprehension. Rather than focus on activities that prioritise text-base level understanding, recalling or retelling isolated details from short term memory, such instruction must address the deeper level of understanding at the situation model level, the point at which a coherent interpretation of the text is formed. Studies, in which pupils have been explicitly shown how to relate their prior knowledge to the text in this manner, have shown not only increases in student memory, but also improved explanations of the text (Martin and Pressley, 1991; Dole et al., 1991). Current research indicates that while readers may initially adapt and refine conceptions when they encounter inconsistencies between text and prior knowledge, there is a strong tendency to resist abandoning the older knowledge (Chi, 2005; Hynd, 2001). Therefore, it is clear that learning to authentically revise comprehension in an iterative manner must take place over an extended period of time.

Current interest in this area is focused on the development of students' background knowledge as an integral part of comprehension instruction (Hart and Risley, 2003; Neuman, 2006). Studies indicate that developing children's understanding of the world and how it works can improve reading comprehension (Guthrie et al., 2004; Palincsar et al., 2001; Romance and Vitale, 2001). Duke et al. (2011) identify the development of disciplinary and world knowledge as one of the ten essential elements of fostering and teaching reading

comprehension. Researchers argue that this is an area in which schools are currently underperforming (Duke and Martin, 2008), with much of the blame for poor knowledge development being attributed to an overreliance on basal texts. Neuman (2006) suggests that rather than expanding and broadening knowledge and vocabulary, studies indicate that basal readers systematically limit these components. Researchers propose instructional approaches using authentic texts from content areas. Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) (Guthrie et al., 2004), relying on teaching coherent, thematic units across curricular areas with pupils applying reading strategies to authentic text, not only develops knowledge but significantly improves reading comprehension and motivation (Guthrie, 2003; Guthrie et al., 2000).

2.4 Comprehension Processes

The previous section explored the capacity of a reader to construct and recall interpretations of the text, exploring the theories underpinning meaning representation and their implications for instruction. Further analysis is required of the explicit cognitive processes employed by readers in the construction of meaning, through examination of the activities and characteristics of expert readers. Good readers are strategic, metacognitive, active and purposeful, approaching a text with clear goals, whether they are reading for pleasure or information.

2.4.1 Characteristics of Good Readers

Increased understanding of the active role of the reader in the construction of meaning has coincided with a deeper awareness of the characteristics of strategic readers and the instruction necessary to develop them in all readers (Snow, 2002; Armbruster et al., 2001; Duke and Pearson, 2002). Understanding of the cognitive and metacognitive processes employed by skilled readers shapes and informs comprehension instruction of inexperienced and struggling readers.

2.4.2 Metacognitive Activities of Good Readers

The complexity of reading demands flexibility on the part of the cognitive activities of the reader, varying in levels of consciousness of these mental processes across the task. Metacognition has long been identified as an essential criteria for comprehension (Flavell, 1976; Baker and Brown, 1984/2002), involving consciousness awareness and knowledge of cognition and cognitive processes in addition to the ability to control, adjust and direct them to achieve the required purpose. Developmental in nature, effective metacognition is classified in terms of both knowledge and executive control.

Central to the “reflective aspect of metacognition” (Schraw and Dennison, 1994, p.460) are three subsets of knowledge: declarative, procedural and conditional (Paris et al., 1983; Paris and Hamilton, 2009). Declarative knowledge plays a pivotal role extending to self-characteristics, task-characteristics and task-relevant strategies (Schmitt, 2005), with procedural knowledge necessary in the control, regulation and direction of these mental processes. However, Paris et al. (1983) caution that the above knowledge is ineffective unless the reader possesses conditional knowledge, understanding the conditions under which these actions might be applied. Research indicates that should readers lack knowledge of any of these sub-processes they will either attend to the words in the text without actively constructing the meaning they represent or overly depend on their memory of text content (Baker and Bell, 2009). Consequently, current thinking on comprehension instruction advocates that all three knowledge bases form part of effective comprehension strategy instruction (Pearson, 2009).

Intrinsically linked with the intentionality and control of metacognition is the concept of self-regulation, with the application of cognitive processes being self-directed and intrinsically motivated by the reader (Pintrich and Zusho, 2002). An expansion of the concept of metacognition to include motivation (Paris and Winograd, 1990) recognises that actively employing cognitive processes in the construction of meaning requires effort, persistence and stamina, all characteristics of motivated readers (Ainley, 2006; Guthrie, 2004). In this regard any view of comprehension needs to address not only the skill involved but also

the will (Duke et al., 2011) as levels of motivation and reader interest determine the allocation of cognitive resources (Wade et al., 1993).

Examination of theories of meaning representation clearly identify the essential role of working memory. Researchers argue that as deficiencies in working memory are difficult to overcome through intervention, students would benefit from explicit instruction in the metacognitive processes of more experienced readers (Cain et al., 2004; Burton and Daneman, 2007). Interventions providing explicit metacognitive instruction have shown benefits for pupils of all abilities (de Jager et al., 2005; Van Keer and Verhaeghe, 2005), however younger and poor decoders require more support with continued restatement of metacognitive strategies (LeFevre et al., 2003; Baker, 2008). However, current research cautions against a view of instruction in metacognitive processes as an end in itself (Baker and Bell, 2009). While explicit instruction occurs on a conscious level, the goal of such instruction is the internalisation of these processes to the level where they are applied automatically by the reader.

2.4.3 Cognitive Activities of Good Readers

Active and purposeful, good readers have clear goals in mind as they approach a text, whether they are reading for pleasure or to seek information (Duke et al., 2011; Pressley and Gaskins, 2006; Armbruster et al., 2001). Before reading, the text is previewed, with the reader noting features such as subsections, structure and titles, enabling him/her to generate predictions regarding the content and where relevant, identifying sections that may pertain to their goal (Pressley and Gaskins, 2006; Pressley and Wharton-McDonald, 1997). As the text is read, this preview is updated and adapted to incorporate new information.

During the reading process, good readers are actively thinking (Armbruster et al., 2001) and evaluating the material, accepting or rejecting the ideas contained within it and ultimately deciding whether it meets the overall goal of reading. In this manner the reader may decide to continue reading or, if the text does not suit their purpose, may take the decision that it is not worth the cognitive effort to continue. The proficient reader is similarly selective regarding the ideas within the text, opting to skim over those bearing only tangential relevance, rereading

and stopping to consider those of more interest (Duke et al., 2011; Pressley and Gaskins, 2006) and making mental or written notes on central ideas.

As implied by schema theory and the CI model, prior knowledge plays a central role as good readers interact with the text, with smaller ideas being linked to form an overall understanding, which is in turn associated with what was already known (Pressley and Gaskins, 2006). Where compelling new ideas contradict their prior knowledge, able comprehenders have the capacity to revise their expectations accordingly, seeking clarification on issues that cause confusion and relating different sections of the text to each other. As the reader is aware of the implicit nature of text, prior knowledge is also employed to infer deeper meanings.

At all times experienced readers are conscious of their own understanding. When they encounter difficulties they are aware of how to resolve them, often generating images or using prior knowledge. Skilled readers can also determine the meanings of unfamiliar words and concepts through use of context cues (Duke et al., 2011; Pressley, 2000). Through monitoring the text, proficient readers remain aware of its characteristics, noting levels of difficulty, relevance to reading purpose and also the author's style, beliefs, intentions and potential bias (Pressley and Gaskins, 2006).

Aware of the differences between text genres, experienced readers employ different strategies for different texts (Duke et al., 2011). When interacting with narrative texts, attention is paid to key features such as characters, settings, complication and resolution. However, expository text requires the reader to construct a summary of the text as they read, constantly revising and adapting as they integrate new information.

Skilled readers are in tune with the content and emotions contained in the text and as in the Transactional Theory (Rosenblatt, 1978), respond to them in a variety of ways, with these responses being shaped by the prior knowledge of the reader (Anderson and Pearson, 1984). Good readers may employ strategies such as further generation of prediction, questioning and evaluating the ideas of the

text, making inferences and creating mental images (Pressley and Gaskins, 2006).

When finished reading, good readers often review and reread central issues in the text, continuing to process and reflect on its content even after reading has ceased. Despite comprehension being a complex cognitive endeavour it is one which proficient readers find pleasurable, satisfying and productive. They understand that the effort expended in employing the strategies outlined above results in a deeper understanding of the text.

In summary, good readers can be described as strategic, metacognitive, active and purposeful. It is this activity, engagement and enjoyment, characteristic of good readers, that distinguishes them from younger and less proficient readers (Cordón and Day, 1996). However, Pressley and Afflerbach (1995) caution that these characteristics are most likely in well-educated adults, reading in a field where they have particular interest and are motivated to expand their understanding. For a young reader to possess all characteristics is rare and where natural development occurs, it does so over an extended period of time. For the vast majority of children such constructively responsive reading can and should be taught.

2.5 Evolving Understanding of Effective Comprehension Instruction

Dolores Durkin's (1978) seminal research raised awareness of the discrepancy between the evolving understanding of the cognitive processes involved in reading comprehension, the characteristics of good readers and the pedagogical practices in elementary classrooms. With little evidence of instruction in comprehension observed, teachers used questioning as the primary tool to assess understanding, leaving comprehension to be *caught* not *taught*. Pearson (2010) regards this period of 'interrogation' as Wave Zero in the evolution of comprehension instruction. Characteristic of the instruction observed in this

period was the use of workbook exercises to target areas such as identification of main idea and summarising, with the belief that students would then transfer these to the reading process. The research also highlighted teachers' perceptions that instruction in phonics, structural analysis and word meanings were targeting overall comprehension. Durkin identified knowledge on how to teach comprehension effectively as the missing element and consequently research focused on what comprehension strategies needed to be taught, the nature of that instruction and the processes teachers go through in engaging with CSI.

2.5.1 Distinguishing Between Strategies and Skills

Researchers recognise that skills are activities that can be learned to automaticity and which readers are largely unaware of using (Block and Duffy, 2008; Paris et al., 1991), the activity occurring "below the level of conscious introspection" (Duke and Carlisle, 2011 p.200). In contrast to the smooth and effortless application of skills, strategies are deliberate, effortful and conscious actions on the part of the reader. Strategies are developmental in nature, initially they may require full attention and effort, overtime becoming more practised. Strategies are defined by Afflerbach et al. (2008 p.369) as "deliberate, goal-directed attempts to control and modify the reader's efforts to decode text, understand words and construct meanings of text". It is important to note that the reader may shift between the application of strategies and skills on multiple occasions during a single reading as they encounter difficulties in a text. However, the authors caution that misuse or inconsistent use of the term can render instruction confusing and ineffective for both teachers and pupils.

Alexander et al. (1998) explore the characteristics of strategies, noting that they are procedural and purposeful, in that the reader knowingly and consciously selects appropriate strategies to employ. Furthermore, they are wilful and effortful, demanding time and cognitive resources on the part of the reader. In addition, they are facilitative, their use enhances the cognitive performance of the reader and by extension, they are essential, as failure to use strategies is likely to negatively impact on competence and proficiency in cognitive tasks such as reading. The familiarity of the context, genre of text and nature of the task are all determining factors in the nature of the strategy use (Afflerbach and Cho, 2009).

2.6 Strategy Instruction

Multiple comparison studies validated the use of individual strategies to improve comprehension and memory of text among students. They included:

- Activating prior knowledge (Levin and Pressley, 1981; Pearson and Fielding, 1991)
- Creation of mental images to represent the text (Gambrell and Bales, 1986; Gambrell and Jawitz, 1993)
- Identification of main idea (Brown and Day, 1983; Brown et al., 1983)
- Analysing stories according to text structure and story grammar (Idol, 1987; Idol and Croll, 1987)
- Question generation (Davey and McBride, 1986; Rosenshine et al., 1996)
- Summarisation (Armbruster et al., 1987; Bean and Steenwyk, 1984)

The importance of these studies lies in the verification that comprehension strategies can be taught and also the identification of which strategies impact on students' understanding. However think aloud studies (reviewed by Pressley and Afflerbach, 1995) clearly indicate that rather than using strategies in isolation, proficient readers employ multiple strategies in an adaptable and flexible manner. If struggling comprehenders were to expertly orchestrate a collection of strategies in a manner similar to their more experienced counterparts, it would be necessary to develop instructional approaches for a repertoire of strategies.

2.6.1 Gradual Release of Responsibility Model

Pearson and Gallagher (1983) developed the notion of a gradual release of responsibility model to explore the dynamic and recursive role of the teacher during the instructional cycle, moving from instruction that is primarily teacher controlled, to shared responsibility, eventually releasing full control to the pupils. Effective instruction is characterised by cycles of:

- Direct Instruction
- Teacher Modelling
- Guided Practice

- Scaffolding and coaching
- Facilitating
- Independent Application
- Self-assessment and goal setting

(Raphael et al., 2009; Duke and Pearson, 2002)

Research indicates that younger and less experienced readers are not always able to detect the teacher's subtle cues (Duffy and Roehler, 1987). They benefit from direct explanation of the cognitive processes a successful reader employs, through the teacher 'thinking aloud' (Duffy, 2002), thereby making the implicit thinking process explicit. Both practices of teacher and pupil-led think alouds have been shown to be effective not only in improving overall comprehension (Snow, 2002; Kucan and Beck, 1997), but also increasing pupils' ability to monitor their comprehension during reading (Baumann et al., 1992). Researchers believe not only may thinking aloud reduce the impulsiveness of some pupils to continue reading without sufficient understanding (Meichenbaum and Asnarow, 1979), but the social interaction and structured nature of the dialogue also raises consciousness of metacognitive activities (Biancarosa and Snow, 2004).

Current research indicates that such direct instruction is more complex than initially perceived (Block and Duffy, 2008). Clear, concise, explicit explanations are determined by the individual needs of each class and therefore cannot be scripted. The onus is on the teacher to adapt and revise explanations in reaction to the responses of the pupils. This requires high levels of curricular and developmental knowledge on the part of the teacher (Block and Pressley, 2007). Pearson and Fielding (1991) caution that where teachers do not adapt the explanation to suit their audience it "might become more complicated than the task itself, leading to the possibility that students will become trapped in introspective nightmares" (p.851).

The gradual movement from teacher control to guided practice, through sophisticated teacher scaffolding, is considered to be a key element in resolving misconceptions and erroneous thoughts (Block and Duffy, 2008; Carnine et al., 1997). Initially, Rosenshine and Meister (1994) theorised that significant

improvements as a result of Reciprocal Teaching (Palincsar and Brown, 1984) could be attributed to high levels of direct instruction. However, further examination of the data showed guided practice to be the instructional component responsible for differences in performance. It is of concern that Dewitz et al. (2009) identify the lack of guided practice and application as the missing component in most comprehension programmes. Ivey and Fisher (2005) also suggest that rather than continuing to model strategy use at this stage, teachers resort to questioning students about their comprehension.

The success of comprehension strategy instruction is contingent on the successful independent application of strategies to new text. The risk of ineffective release of responsibility is underlined by the finding that after five months of such instruction, many children are still unable to transfer strategies to a new text without teacher guidance (Hacker and Tenent, 2002). The introduction of kinaesthetic movements, Comprehension Process Motions (CPM) (Block et al., 2008) into strategy lessons has impacted positively in this manner, supporting children in initiating strategy use without teacher prompting.

A CPM represents a unique cognitive process through means of kinaesthetic movement, operating as a second input system. Rather than solely using verbal repetition to internalise the comprehension process, CPMs draw on dual coding, using both linguistic and non-linguistic cues to represent the implicit and abstract mental processes. In addition to enabling more knowledgeable readers to represent this process in a concrete manner, novice comprehenders can also signal their independent strategy use to the teacher. In this way even less experienced teachers can identify the needs of their pupils and differentiate the instruction accordingly. Block et al. (2008) found this approach to be beneficial for all pupils, but most especially for younger readers. This may be attributed to the fact that brain imaging data indicates that children under six years of age experience significantly more difficulty processing abstract syntactical structure (Hahne et al., 2004). Indeed, this part of the brain does not reach full maturity until ten years of age.

2.7 Transactional Strategies Instruction (TSI)

Transactional Strategies Instruction (TSI) (Pressley et al., 1992) aims to facilitate the joint construction of personal interpretations by members of collaborative groups, as they apply strategies to the text. The long term goal of TSI is the development of active and purposeful self-regulated readers, capable of applying a collection of strategies across a diverse range of texts, constantly questioning and evaluating as they form a personal interpretation of the text (Brown et al., 1996). This is achieved through interactive collaboration in peer-led groups. Participation in such groups allows pupils to emulate the strategic processing engaged in by expert readers.

TSI approaches have been validated among pupils in first and second grade (Pressley et al., 1995; Brown et al., 1996). Brown et al.'s year long investigation with second grade readers indicated that not only were young readers capable of dealing with such instruction, but they benefited greatly from it, demonstrating a greater awareness of strategies and their uses. The findings of these studies lend strong support to the teaching of comprehension strategies from the beginning of formal reading instruction. Following observations of TSI classrooms, Wharton-McDonald (1998, p.218) notes that there was a "really intelligent" discussion of text. Similarly, Short and Klassen (1995) find that when teachers are involved in group discussions, they are not nearly as deep or as personal as when such discussions involve only peers.

Despite being held in high esteem by researchers (Wilkinson and Son, 2011; Shanahan et al., 2010; Reutzel et al., 2005; Harris et al., 2008), evidence indicates that TSI is not often adopted as an instructional approach by primary grade teachers (Dougherty-Stahl, 2004). Brown (2008) hypothesizes that this may be due to the daunting nature of TSI as it involves four key dimensions: comprehension strategy use, gradual release of responsibility, collaborative work and interpretive discussion. For teachers who are already balancing numerous competing demands such a framework may appear to be overwhelming (Hilden and Pressley, 2007).

2.7.1 Single Versus Multiple Strategy Instruction

Debate still exists regarding single strategy instruction (SSI) and multiple strategy instruction. It is clear that authentic use occurs as a co-ordinated activity involving a collection of strategies (Pressley and Afflerbach, 1995), but ambiguity exists regarding the nature of initial instruction (Duke and Martin, 2008). While Shanahan et al. (2010) find no evidence to promote multiple strategy instruction over SSI, Cain and Oakhill (2009) argue that the best approach may be to introduce the strategies individually while encouraging the children to integrate them and apply them in a collective manner. However, when Reutzel et al. (2005) compared the two approaches they found that while no differences existed in identification of the main idea, there was a significant difference in favour of TSI pupils in terms of recall of detail.

Researchers are becoming increasingly concerned that rather than being seen as part of the process of comprehension, strategies are regarded as the end goal (Duke et al., 2011; Pressley and Harris, 2006; Pearson and Fielding, 1991). In their definition of comprehension strategies for teachers, Shanahan et al. (2010) emphasise that strategies should not be confused with related instructional activities, do not involve worksheets and are not a means to provide students with comprehension skill practice. Rather than reflecting the fluidity and context-specific nature of comprehension, heavily scripted lessons, which are unresponsive to the specific context, result in rigid and inflexible instruction, where the focus is on use of strategies rather than their role in the overall construction of meaning (Duke et al., 2011; Duke and Martin, 2008). Such decontextualised instruction also ignores the developmental nature of strategies, as with increased experience of strategic reading, readers should become less aware of their cognitive processes (Afflerbach and Cho, 2009). The use of strategies for their own sake rather than part of a larger purpose may be due to pressure on teachers to teach strategies in the absence of proper professional development to provide understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of their actions. Fisher and Frey (2008, p.262) caution that without teachers adopting an appropriate framework, they risk applying strategies in a random manner, in effect becoming “strategy junkies”.

2.8 Dialogic Teaching in the Context of Rich Discussion

Motivated by concerns regarding the prescriptive nature of strategy instruction, in addition to an overemphasis on strategies themselves, current research emphasises the role of dialogue in the construction of meaning (Wilkinson and Son, 2011; Beck and McKeown, 2006; Van den Branden, 2000). The key components of TSI:

- Dialogue
- Increased levels of student control over their own learning
- Construction of knowledge and meaning through collaborative inquiry

have formed the foundation of thinking in this phase. Evolving from the concept of interpretation arising through collaborative interaction with the text, current dialogic theories point to the tension or conflict created by multiple perspectives or discourses as the struggle which ultimately leads to understanding (Wilkinson and Son, 2011). Meaning is constructed in a forum of different often competing voices, allowing individual perspectives to arrange themselves in a manner which “inter-animates and inter-illuminates” (Wegerif, 2006 p. 140).

Renewed attention to discussion has examined not only its effects on comprehension but also the nature of approaches to encourage quality discussion. In addition to being more effective than reading on their own (Beck and McKeown, 2006), high quality discussion of text also leads to increased levels of engagement in reading and associated tasks (Guthrie et al., 2006), supporting findings that students need to be motivated to apply comprehension strategies they have been taught (Duke and Martin, 2008). The increased levels of comprehension can be attributed to the need to justify and explain reasoning to others, in addition to the collaborative effort required in instances of comprehension breakdown (Van den Branden, 2000).

Research indicates that the effectiveness of discourse is determined by the quality rather than quantity of interaction (Wells, 1989) and has greatest effect for students of below-average ability (Murphy et al., 2009). The balance of teacher or pupil control in relation to text and interpretation can determine the

aesthetic, efferent or critical-analytic stance in interpretations. Currently an efferent stance is privileged in classrooms (Rosenblatt, 1994), with teachers controlling the discussion. In instances where the control resides with the students, prominence is given to an aesthetic or expressive stance. A critical-analytic interpretation evolves from shared control, the teacher controlling the text allowing the pupils to pay maximum attention to its interpretation. Discussions in which pupils have a greater voice and take an active role in the construction of meaning are characterised by the presence of a sustained and open exchange of views among children, authentic questioning on the part of the teacher and also questions which add to or incorporated the ideas generated by others (Applebee et al., 2003; Nystrand, 1997, 2006).

Increased attention has also been paid to the role of comprehension strategies in content areas such as history, geography and science (Wilkinson and Son, 2011; NICHD, 2000; Guthrie et al., 2004). The symbiotic relationship between strategy instruction and content areas enables pupils to apply strategies in an authentic manner leading to increased levels of learning and understanding of the subject material. Integration across curricular areas in this manner provides purpose and meaning for strategy use, with strategies being a means to an end rather than an end in itself. Research in this area has shown benefits for both reading comprehension and content knowledge (Hapgood et al., 2004; Palincsar and Magnusson, 2001; Guthrie et al., 2004; Romance and Vitale, 2001). Duke and Martin (2008) identify the integration of strategy instruction across multiple curricular areas as a future direction for research, highlighting the potential benefits it offers not only to student learning but also for teachers who have extreme demands on their time. For this instruction to be most effective the authors call for the development of appropriate scaffolds to support teacher activity and student learning.

Intertextuality, making connections not only within but also across texts, is also identified as an important component in developing dialogue leading to understanding (Hartman, 1995; Wolfe and Goldman, 2005). At present there is little evidence that such activity takes place in the primary years (Soter et al., 2008; Varelas and Pappas, 2006) or indeed among older readers (Goldman,

2004). A series of studies led by Pappas et al. (2003) and Varelas et al. (2006) examined the intertextual connections made by first and second graders during a read-aloud of information books. The authors highlight the importance of connections between texts in the tentative development of ideas raised by the text.

2.9 Comprehension Within a Balanced Literacy Programme

Research has consistently shown that there are a number of factors intrinsically linked to and integrated with comprehension, most notably vocabulary and word recognition. The IES panel (Shanahan et al., 2010) identifies six skills and knowledge considered to be crucial in the development of comprehension among young readers, namely:

1. Word-level skills
2. Vocabulary knowledge and oral language skills
3. Broad conceptual knowledge
4. Knowledge and abilities required specifically to comprehend a text
5. Thinking and reasoning skills
6. Motivation to understand and work towards academic goals

While none of these components are sufficient to individually assure comprehension, a deficiency in any area may be detrimental to overall understanding. Biemiller (2005) cautions that

teaching vocabulary will not guarantee success in reading, just as learning to read words will not guarantee success in reading, however, lacking either adequate word skills or adequate vocabulary will ensure failure

(cited in Butler et al., 2010 p.1)

Perfetti (2010) considers word-level skills and vocabulary development to be of paramount importance, pronouncing the interdependent relationship between decoding, vocabulary and comprehension to be “the golden triangle of reading skill” (p.291).

2.9.1 Word-Level Skills

There has long been a belief that the locus of problems experienced by poor comprehenders lies at the level of word recognition. When readers experience

difficulties recognising words, reading becomes slow and laborious, creating a ‘bottleneck’ in short-term memory, thereby impeding flow of thought and comprehension (LaBerge and Samuels, 1974). In addition, the reader’s cognitive capacities are exhausted by the process of word reading, leaving little energy to attend to text meaning (Perfetti, 1985). Improved comprehension derives not from the ability to decode, but the ability to do so to the point of fluency, thereby enabling greater cognitive capacity to be allocated to the meaning of text (Pressley, 2000).

The compelling evidence is that word recognition is a “necessary but not sufficient condition for good comprehension” (Stanovich, 1991, p.419). The priority traditionally attributed to this instruction in the early years can be partially explained by the finding that the ability to sound out and recognise words accounts for about 80% of variance in reading comprehension among first grade pupils (NICHD, 2000). Yet, approximately 10% of young children with adequate word recognition skills experience comprehension difficulties (Catts et al., 2003; Leach et al., 2003; Stothard and Hulme, 1995). This phenomenon increases as children grow older, with significant numbers of pupils demonstrating competent word identification skills, yet struggling to comprehend (RAND, 2002). Many researchers advocate a programme of comprehension instruction which supports the development of word decoding skills, with readers attending to the context in which words are decoded (Duke and Carlisle, 2011; Duke and Pearson, 2002; Roberts and Duke, 2010). Glenberg et al. (2007) caution that unless children index the written words to relevant concepts, reading will remain an unrewarding word calling activity, which children are unlikely to engage in independently of the teacher. To overcome this distorted view of reading, children must receive instruction reflecting the integrated nature of word recognition and comprehension in reading.

2.9.2 Vocabulary Knowledge and Instruction

The NRP identify vocabulary as one of five essential components of reading instruction (NICHD, 2000). Comprehension and vocabulary are highly integrated components of effective literacy programmes, being “difficult, if not impossible” to separate them (NICHD, 2000, p.4). Much research has centred on this

relationship (Donaldson, 2011; Baumann, 2009; Graves, 2000). Nagy (2007) attributes this interest to the strong correlation between comprehension and vocabulary, with good comprehenders tending to have extensive vocabularies (Anderson and Freebody, 1981). Despite the considerable information that has been uncovered, not all findings have been conclusive.

Research involving vocabulary acquisition indicates that vocabulary instruction can lead to improvements in comprehension (NICHD, 2000; Lubliner and Smetana, 2005). However, the form of the instruction must be appropriate for the age and abilities of the pupils. There are conflicting views on whether vocabulary is most effectively taught through direct or indirect instruction. Regardless of the method of instruction, Graves (1986) argues that for vocabulary instruction to affect comprehension it must be multi-faceted and of long-term duration, provide multiple encounters with words and semantic associations between words, in addition to promoting lexical access. Providing instruction that results in a deep understanding of new vocabulary requires careful and strategic planning on the part of the teacher (Baumann, 2009).

Sternberg (1987) strongly argues that most vocabulary is learned in context, through written text or oral interactions. Advocates of indirect instruction claim that children need to learn the meanings of words by encountering them in context and learning context cues to derive meaning (Stanovich, 1986; Buikema and Graves, 1993). Nash and Snowling (2006) found that an instructional approach promoting the use of context resulted in greater gains than instruction of individual words. Further research suggests that providing children with explicit instruction in the use of context engenders more pupil responsibility and develops conscious learners (Blachowicz and Zabroske, 1990; Buikema and Graves, 1993), ultimately resulting in the acquisition of new words through independent reading (Baumann, 2009). The extent of the impact of such instruction on comprehension has yet to be conclusively determined (Goerss et al., 1999).

Much controversy surrounds the NRP's (NICHD, 2000) conclusion that there is minimal research to support the role of extensive reading in vocabulary

acquisition (Blachowicz et al., 2006; Pressley, 2006). Cunningham (2005) argues that the volume of reading, both inside and outside of school, is a primary source for word learning. Listening to read-aloud is also promoted as a means of extending vocabulary, as high-quality children's literature contains unfamiliar and challenging vocabulary in an authentic context (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1998). However, Williams (2007) cautions that although a statistically reliable relationship exists between reading aloud and vocabulary development, the overall impact among young readers is modest. Other researchers indicate that the impact of shared reading on vocabulary development is more visible in the later grades (Senechal, 2006).

The lack of consensus over reading aloud may in part be attributed to the fact that it is not the activity itself that is beneficial but the nature of the instruction that accompanies it (Meyer et al., 1994). Cunningham (2005) prioritizes discussion sessions as part of a structured read-aloud approach over reading volume, in terms of vocabulary growth and development. These rich conversations provide opportunities for pupils to use new vocabulary in an authentic context with the scaffolding of the teacher (Snow, 1991), a support which is essential for those pupils who struggle to acquire new vocabulary indirectly (Robbins and Ehri, 1994; Sénéchal et al., 1995). Classrooms are envisioned as environments in which pupils are not only flooded with words, but where time is taken to consider their meanings and apply them in multiple contexts through games and activities which generate interest and motivation in words (Blachowicz and Fisher, 2004).

2.10 Comprehension Instruction in the Early Years

Research has predominantly focused on the nature of CSI for older readers (Hoyt, 2005; Stahl, 2004; Shanahan et al., 2010). Very little experimental research has examined strategy instruction below fourth grade (Beck, 2010). Consequently, little information has infiltrated the early years classrooms (Gregory and Cahill, 2010). Despite the paucity of research in the area, evidence indicates that effective CSI can increase the strategic ability of primary grade

readers (Duke and Carlisle, 2011; Roberts and Duke, 2010; Stahl, 2004), with even kindergarteners being capable of using multiple strategies (Block, 2004; Hoffman, 2011). Reciprocal teaching has been successfully adapted for students as young as kindergarteners (Myers, 2005), however its effectiveness is contingent on teachers' willingness and ability to implement the programme fully (Palincsar et al., 1991). Similarly, Brown et al. (1996) found that second graders engaging with a multiple strategy approach such as TSI, used more comprehension and word-level strategies than those who received a more traditional instructional approach. The IES panel considers this early instruction to be of extreme importance, as children who read with understanding at an early age have a greater access to knowledge and educational opportunities (Shanahan et al., 2010).

Traditional early reading instruction places a greater emphasis on *learning to read* than on *reading to learn*. However, emergent literacy instruction suggests that rather than waiting for a predetermined stage of reading readiness before introducing comprehension instruction, children's literacy and comprehension abilities start and develop from birth (Block and Lacina, 2009). Smolkin and Donovan (2002) hold that this "advocacy of decoding first and comprehending later" (Clay, 1998, p.253) may in fact be detrimental to children as "instruction in decoding does not naturally produce spin-off benefits in vocabulary skills and general knowledge" (p.179). While automaticity in comprehension takes longer to develop than in decoding (NICHD, 2000; Stewart, 2004), children need opportunities to be both 'code breakers' and 'meaning makers' from the earliest moments of their instruction (Muspratt et al., 1997). Such instruction demonstrates to the pupils that reading involves more than decoding individual words or sentences (Willingham, 2007).

The nature of instruction for younger readers must be adapted in consideration of their developmental needs, of greatest concern, the challenges of reading acquisition and lack of automaticity (Stahl, 2004). Teacher read-alouds, with a reduced emphasis on decoding, provide opportunities for both explicit comprehension instruction and rich discussion of text (Paris and Paris, 2007; Taylor et al., 2000; Taylor and Pearson, 2002), though current indications are

that teachers neither approach such instruction in “an intentional manner” (Dickinson, 2001, p.201) nor spend much time discussing the major issues in the story (Beck and McKeown, 2001). The IES panel identify four factors which they consider to be essential in supporting and scaffolding high-quality text discussion among children, namely, selection of appropriate literature, use of higher-order questioning, questioning to support and expand thoughts and the use of small groups. Researchers have also indicated that some strategies are more difficult than others (Yuill and Oakhill, 1991), suggesting that while younger students will apply strategies such as predicting and generating imagery easily, other strategies such as inferring are more complex and need to be introduced at a developmentally appropriate stage. Throughout the primary years, breadth and depth are added to the number of strategies taught (Block and Lacina, 2009). Research has yet to establish if a preferred order for the introduction of strategies exists and also what instructional supports can assist in the instruction and implementation of strategies in the early years (Block and Lacina, 2009).

2.11 Teachers’ Role in Comprehension Strategy Instruction

Yes, we have a vision of what it takes to create strategic elementary readers. What we now need is a lot of work to develop teachers who can create that vision, with as a starting point research in professional development of comprehension instruction teachers.
(Pressley, 2006, cited in Block and Parris, 2008 p. 407)

The previous section examined the theoretical underpinnings and characteristics of effective CSI. Much research has explored individual approaches and frameworks to enable the development of self-regulated, strategic readers, capable of developing a personal interpretation of text. Less attention has focused on the pedagogical and developmental knowledge required by the teacher and the processes they engage in to implement these frameworks (Duke and Martin, 2008). Current research indicates that teaching comprehension remains an ambiguous activity for many teachers (Onofrey and Theurer, 2007). Implementing CSI is both a complex and demanding enterprise for teachers and one which does not always achieve the expected result (Hilden and Pressley, 2007; Klinger et al., 2004; Pressley et al., 1989), with many teachers being

unable to learn how to teach strategies (Almasi, 2003; Mason, 2004; Pressley and El-Dinary, 1997). Gaskins et al. (1993) affirm the central role the teacher plays in the development of strategic readers, stating that the contents of any curriculum remain an abstract concept until they are realised through the transaction of the teacher and students.

A subtle and flexible approach to instruction extending beyond direct explanation, reciprocal teaching or individual strategies, is required for students to develop an integrated concept of what it is to be strategic (Duffy, 1993a). Teachers must be adaptive and responsive to the needs of individual pupils, using their own judgement to provide appropriate scaffolding and support in a flexible manner, which may initially conflict with teachers' desire to remain in control (Shanahan et al., 2010). The IES report recognises that this perception of losing control during pupil moderated discussions may be a potential 'roadblock' in developing effective instruction (Shanahan et al., 2010), reflecting Pressley et al.'s (1992) hypothesis that the change of instructional emphasis to being responsive to pupil input may account for teachers' initial discomfort when engaging with TSI. Ineffective support and failure to release responsibility in a gradual manner can result in pupils remaining task-focused when working directly with the teacher, but engaging in discussions not pertaining to the text when working collaboratively with peers (Hilden and Pressley, 2007).

In his observation of four second and third grade teachers, Duffy (1993a) noted that they adhered to a technical approach, strenuously resisting using their own judgement in instructional decisions, instead seeking explicit instructional sequences from the researcher. Hilden and Pressley's (2007) observations also confirmed initial teacher struggles to meet diverse needs in an opportunistic manner during the gradual release phase, with many teachers using written activities as an instruction tool, categorising strategic reading as a schoolwork activity rather than reflecting its authentic use. Teachers in Duffy's study (1993a) only experienced success once they accepted that prescriptive approaches designed ahead of time could not address the complexity and uniqueness of the needs of the children in each classroom. Rather than develop procedures, packages or routines to simplify the process, teachers need support to "embrace

the complexities” (Roehler, 1990, cited in Duffy, 1991 p. 15). The nature of support required by teachers to empower them to adopt a proactive role in CSI, thereby providing creative and adaptive instructional interactions, is an area of current research (Duffy, 1993a; Block and Lacina, 2009), with the greatest challenge being the provision of an accurate description of the flexible and adaptive role of the teacher (Williams, 2002).

2.11.1 Factors Affecting Effective Teacher Instruction

Effective classroom implementation of research findings is contingent on the subject-matter knowledge, curricular knowledge and pedagogical knowledge levels of teachers (Shulman, 1986). However, there is little understanding on how teachers’ knowledge of complex activities such as comprehension develops (Snow et al., 2005). Research findings indicate that for many teachers information on research-validated instruction is difficult to source, resulting in an over-reliance on teacher manuals, many of which have an assessment rather than comprehension focus (Kragler et al., 2005). Hilden and Pressley (2007) propose that for teachers to become effective strategy instructors, they must first be self-regulated strategic readers. Becoming cognisant of the implicit activities involved in reading can take more than a year to develop in teachers.

Concern has been raised regarding teachers’ ability to interact with text in a strategic manner. Kucan et al. (2011) observed that only one-third of teachers in their study group used inference and integration to a sufficient level to provide a coherent summary on the key ideas in a child’s text. The remainder of the teachers provided incomplete summaries or merely listed key points. In addition, many teachers attributed equal importance to all textual information, thereby limiting a critical analysis of the text. 85% of teachers were also unable to identify challenges the text may present for younger readers. Teachers who are unable to engage strategically with a text in this manner will also be unable to become successful strategy instructors (Keene and Zimmermann, 1997). In this manner, teachers are confronted by the dual challenge of learning to provide strategic instruction, while simultaneously acting as a more knowledgeable model of a strategic reader for pupils (Hilden and Pressley, 2007). The discomfort of adopting a new approach before fully understanding its theoretical

underpinnings is a factor in initial teacher reluctance to engage with TSI (Pressley et al., 1992).

Consistent findings indicate that many teachers prioritise the use of strategies rather than their role in the construction of meaning (Pressley, 2006; Duke and Martin, 2008; Reutzel et al., 2005). Kucan et al. (2011) note that many teachers responded positively to any student response which could be considered to be strategic, pointing to an awareness among teachers of the need to be strategic, but not the nature of its involvement in comprehension. In classrooms where strategy use is valued as an end in itself, rather than a means to an end, student engagement in collaborative discussion and analysis of the text is reduced (Hacker and Tenet, 2002).

Teachers' beliefs and attitudes determine whether they are willing to expend the time and effort required to become strategy instructors. Teachers do not adopt approaches they consider to be inconsistent with their view of good teaching or that they consider will require disproportionate amounts of effort (Ferro-Almeida, 1993). Pressley et al. (1992) caution that approaches which differ significantly from those teachers experienced at school themselves and those which they have implemented throughout their teaching career, will lead to higher discomfort levels. Individual strategies vary in levels of acceptability to teachers, largely determined by their conscious awareness of their own reading processes (Rich and Pressley, 1990). Activation of prior knowledge and generating sensory images rate highly among teachers, however summarisation received a relatively low score, not being regarded as a component of natural reading. With regards to TSI, teachers displayed a positive attitude to the collaborative, non-threatening environment and the opportunities for children to engage in higher-order thinking. Potential obstacles to successful implementation appear to be classroom management issues, concerning time and large class sizes (Ferro-Almeida, 1993). Hilden and Pressley (2007) identify beliefs and attitudes that can negatively impact on teachers' progress, namely, a reluctance to adopt a new approach, uncertainty about professional development and a belief that they are already sufficiently knowledgeable about CSI.

2.11.2 Points of Progress (Duffy, 1993b)

Becoming a proficient strategy instructor is a long-term, complex endeavour in which teacher progress can be positioned on a continuum, with nine identifiable points.

- **Confusion and rejection** – Duffy observed that teachers in this stage resist change, insisting that they could not deviate from the instructional path prescribed by basal readers. In their 2007 study, Hilden and Pressley also note that teachers reached a point where they could not receive any further information, needing time to synthesise what they had already covered.
- **Teacher controls the strategy** – During instruction at this stage the teacher uses the strategy without providing explicit instruction, thereby only the teacher is aware of the strategy. MacGinitie (1984) attributes the term ‘Ruth’s Law’ to this phenomenon of teachers focusing on and explaining the content but not the text, resulting in passive students who are unable to transfer learning to further texts.
- **Trying it out** – Realisation that weaker readers will not apply strategies unless they are made explicitly aware of them, results in teachers incorporating lists of strategies into their traditional instruction. Strategies are introduced in an isolated manner, often through worksheet practice, with the children receiving declarative, procedural, but not conditional knowledge. Teachers fail to provide information regarding how the strategy relates to the construction of meaning, other strategies or how it could be used in real life contexts.
- **Modelling process into content** – Teachers become more aware of the importance of student control of metacognitive strategies and explicitly model strategies through thinking-aloud with text, often the basal reader. Crucial to the lack of success at this phase is the failure to provide conditional knowledge and teachers’ concern about using the ‘right’ strategies.

- **The Wall** – Failure among students to integrate strategies and apply them outside the context of schoolwork, results in feelings of guilt and frustration for teachers, many feeling that it may not be possible to provide more authentic strategy instruction. By resisting the complexity of CSI, teachers seek a simpler framework or set of materials which will make strategies ‘implementable’.
- **Over the hump** – Teachers accept that CSI is complex and entails more than instruction in individual strategies. Hilden and Pressley (2007) observe that when teachers adopted such a discussion approach, the emphasis changed from quantity of text read to the quality of instruction with fewer texts, as teachers encouraged pupils to move beyond superficial application of strategies.
- **I don’t quite get it** – A belief still persists that there may be a ‘right’ approach to strategy instruction. At this phase teachers require reassurance and support to adapt strategies to meet the diverse needs of their pupils.
- **Creative-inventive** – Teachers accept the flexible nature of the instruction and are willing to tolerate ambiguity and risk failure. Control is released to the pupils.

While Duffy (1993b) failed to observe further progress during the study, he notes that both the teachers and the researcher felt that phase eight teachers would develop further, creating a yet unnamed phase nine.

Teachers are regarded as the key to effective CSI (Duffy, 1993b), with professional development one of the greatest challenges in making this possible (Hilden and Pressley, 2007). The IES report observes that multiple strategy instruction necessitates higher levels of professional development than individual strategy instruction (Shanahan et al., 2010). Structured professional development provided in teachers’ classrooms over an extended period of time have had the

greatest impact on classroom instruction (Duffy, 1993b). Features of successful professional development in this area include opportunities to implement the new instructional approach, with feedback and guidance from a more knowledgeable other, in addition to guides such as books and videos (Shanahan et al., 2010). Hilden and Pressley (2007) found the observation of videos to be less effective as teachers focused on discrepancies between the reality of their own classrooms and the example of exemplary teaching. The focus of discussion following the video centred on adapting the instruction to meet the needs of their imperfect classrooms.

Developing students into self-regulated strategic readers requires several years of appropriate instruction and regular opportunities to apply learning in an authentic context. Therefore, CSI must be considered a school-level approach, rather than the responsibility of individual class teachers (Hilden and Pressley, 2007). Strong leadership in a collaborative environment is central to developing such an approach. Hilden and Pressley (2007) found that teachers in schools with highly supportive principals were more dedicated to CSI and willing to take more risks when changing their practice. Duffy (1993a) cautions that to enable teachers provide flexible and adaptive instruction, the role of the staff developer must not be a prescriptive one. Rather, a partnership should exist, with equal importance placed on the opinions of teacher and coach when negotiating a plan for change. However, concern exists regarding the ability of current providers of professional development to meet these needs, with Pressley (2006) believing “the professional developers who are currently hawking such professional development do not know what they are doing” (cited in Block and Paris, 2008, p.407).

SECTION TWO:

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)

2.12 Introduction

Much of the research on reading comprehension development has centred on pedagogical practices to develop strategic readers who actively engage with text (Gambrell et al., 2007; Barr, 2001). Less attention has focused on the nature of the professional development required to ensure effective implementation of this research in schools (Ogle, 2008). Yet, within the discipline of reading instruction, research has indicated that it is professional development that has the greatest impact on teacher knowledge, attitudes and beliefs and consequently the greatest effect on student learning (Anders et al., 2000; Duffy, 2004). This is especially true with regards to CSI (Sailors, 2009). Professional development is widely acknowledged as central to maintaining and enhancing high standards in teaching and learning in schools (Goodall et al., 2005; Hargreaves, 1994; Craft, 2000), with the quality of teaching and the expertise of teachers consistently identified by researchers as reliable and accurate predictors of student achievement (Sailors, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Snow et al., 1998).

It follows that educational reform and professional development form a symbiotic relationship (McLaughlin and Oberman, 1999, cited in Villegas-Reimers, 2003), with a planned and supportive professional development programme being considered a key component in educational improvement plans (Guskey, 2003). However, while no effective reform takes place in the absence of professional development (Guskey, 2000), ineffective, fragmented professional development, that underestimates the complex and multi-dimensional nature of teacher development, will not result in long-term change in classroom practices.

This section will explore the characteristics of effective professional development considered to be essential in affecting teacher and student learning.

It begins by examining current understanding of the term and associated variants. The central role of teachers in the process will then be considered, with particular emphasis on knowledge, belief and attitudes in the change process, in addition to the challenges faced by teachers in the implementation process. Examining the complex and demanding nature of teacher development helps to identify the nature of support required for educational reform to be integrated into everyday classroom practice. The contribution of school culture in the acceptance of change will be discussed in relation to the provision of professional development.

As research indicates that most of the professional development provided remains traditional in format (Pedder and Opfer, 2011; Sugrue, 2002), the short-term, fragmented nature of such professional development will be contrasted with research-validated characteristics of effective professional development found to impact long-term change in classroom practices. This will lead to the proposal of alternative models of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Following this, the importance of leadership in the change process will be examined along with other factors in sustaining change within a school setting. The chapter concludes with an analysis of recent Irish CPD experiences, examining their design and implementation in relation to the criteria established for effective CPD.

2.13 Definition of CPD

The many terms surrounding CPD, ‘inservice’, ‘teacher training’, ‘professional learning’, ‘staff development’, are testament not only to the much debated, evolving understanding of this discipline, but also to the “conceptual vagueness” (Coffield, 2000, p.3) that surrounds this discourse. Friedman and Philips (2004) argue that the term professional development is ambiguous by nature. Fraser et al., (2007) also highlight the confusing nature of this concept, indicating that the term ‘professional’ may simultaneously refer to individual professional practitioners and collectively to the profession as a whole. Among educators, the continual updating of such terms may have contributed to a fragmented

perception of CPD and its role in teaching and learning. In reality, most teachers associate CPD with external courses (Kelly, 2006). Sugrue (2002) argues that vague concepts such as lifelong learning have little relevance in practice when a narrow definition of CPD means that learning remains detached from real life application. In essence, the lack of a comprehensive understanding of CPD is impeding a sustained impact on classroom practice (Fullan, 1995).

Currently, CPD is accepted as the most encompassing term, reflecting understanding that teaching is a lifelong learning process, requiring support and guidance at all levels (Lyons and Pinnell, 2001). Bubb and Earley (2007) argue that through its emphasis on ‘professional’, the term CPD may exclude some members of the wider school staff. The authors advocate the alternative term, ‘staff development’, to acknowledge that educational reform involves the entire school community. For the purposes of this study the most complete definition proposed by Day (1999) will be adopted:

Professional development consists of all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school and which contribute, through these to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives.

(p.4)

The equal value placed on formal and informal learning opportunities is a salient feature espoused by many researchers (Bubb and Earley, 2007; Ganser, 2000; Kunter et al., 2007). Formal experiences are considered to be structured learning environments within a mandated curriculum, such as workshops and professional meetings. By contrast, informal experiences comprise professional conversations and collaborative activities within a non-structured environment. The inclusion of formal and informal learning opportunities in CPD provides for transformative professional learning for teachers as it attends to the three dimensions of personal, social and occupational (Fraser et al., 2007). Banks and Smyth (2011) highlight that though informal learning has a crucial role to play in teacher development, formal learning may take precedence in many conceptions of CPD,

as it is more concrete and therefore easier to plan for and evaluate in large-scale surveys.

The reflective activity of those involved is also considered to be central to effective CPD (Kelchtermans, 2004). Provision of knowledge and expertise is not sufficient, as development can only take place when teachers are considered as more than their roles, being construed “first and foremost as people” (Waters, 1998, p.30), thereby creating a “personal interpretative framework” (Kelchtermans, 2004, p.220), a lens through which they can reflect on their mental representations of their job and the actions that give meaning to it.

Finally, Guskey (2000) emphasises the intentional, planned and systematic nature of professional development, arguing that for it to enhance teachers’ knowledge, skills and attitudes, ultimately leading to the goal of increased student learning, there needs to be a clear, purposeful vision guiding the actions. It is strongly argued that this vision of the improvements required needs to be shared at both individual and systemic level, as individual change cannot be sustained unless it is supported and encouraged at an organisational level. Therefore, the author calls for individual learning and organisational change to be considered as part of the same process.

2.14 Role of Teachers in CPD

There is unilateral agreement that not only are teachers crucial to school improvement and consequently student learning, but that they are the most significant factor in these reforms (Villegas-Reimers, 2003; Fullan, 1995; Earley and Bubb, 2004). Potts et al. (2000) indicate that teacher characteristics such as willingness to take risks, commitment to the change process and ownership of the innovation are important determining factors in the effectiveness of CPD. Uniquely, teachers play a dual role in such reform, being both the subjects and the objects of change. The rapid nature of change in a knowledge society places moral and cultural imperatives on teachers to become active change agents (Fullan, 1995).

The learning required on the part of teachers is multidimensional, requiring inner learning to make sense of new knowledge and outer learning in relating to and collaborating with others (Bolam and Mahon, 2004). Clarke and Hollingworth (2002) consider there to be three dimensions to professional learning –personal, social and occupational. While all three are interrelated, the impetus for change is thought to lie within the personal dimension (Bell and Gilbert, 1996) and consequently this must be the level at which CPD initially interacts.

2.14.1 Perceptions of Knowledge in CPD

Professional development aims to enhance the knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers in order to impact student learning. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) identify three broad classifications for the knowledge associated with CPD:

- Knowledge for practice – knowledge generated externally by researchers
- Knowledge in practice – knowledge generated by teachers through critical examination and reflective inquiry
- Knowledge of practice – practical knowledge generated through self-questioning and systematic inquiry

Professional development associated with the first conceptualisation of knowledge considers researchers to be the source of knowledge, with teachers the users. The purpose of such CPD is to disseminate or update teachers' knowledge-base, with teachers 'bringing back' best practice (Sugrue, 2011). As a result of not incorporating the accumulated experiences and prior knowledge of teachers, this perspective fails to acknowledge the principles of adult learning necessary for effective CPD. Grossen (1996) also argues that such approaches underestimate the complexity of educational change. Through the provision of educational theories, but not the fundamental details pertaining to them, the onus is placed on the teacher to do the majority of the work in devising an approach to integrate this new knowledge with their current practice, consuming limited time and resources in the process. Sugrue (2002) notes the appeal of this approach for researchers and policy-makers in times of rapid change as it delivers a universal, consistent message in a time and cost effective manner.

Drawing on the reflective nature of CPD, knowledge in practice believes “teaching is to a great extent an uncertain and spontaneous craft, situated and constructed in response to the particularities of everyday life in schools” (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999, p.20). In this regard, schools are seen as communities of learners where teachers develop new knowledge through action research, reflecting individually and with colleagues. The impetus for change is considered to originate through a personal sense of purpose, later impacting on instruction (Lieberman and McLaughlin, 1999). Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995, p.597) summarise such CPD as “providing occasions for teachers to reflect critically on their practice and to fashion new knowledge and beliefs about content, pedagogy and learners.” Incorporating new knowledge into a personal interpretative framework (Kelchtermans, 2004) involves interactions with teachers’ self-perceptions and their personal system of knowledge and beliefs about teaching. Designing CPD must involve the intertwining of both the professional self and subjective teacher, enabling teachers to consider not only their actions, but also the validity of their underlying values and beliefs (Kelchtermans, 2004).

The third conceptualisation recognises that not all knowledge can be considered either a social science or personal knowledge acquired through teaching, as in the first two perceptions. It challenges the notion of knowledge as absolute, instead believing that each participant brings a different perspective to the process (Sugrue, 2011). Such professional development aims to empower teachers to become transformative agents through collaborative learning in a professional community, which reads a wide range of texts to inform their own learning. The context in which learning takes place is acknowledged as important. As teaching and learning does not occur within a vacuum, teachers must consider larger social forces and movements in the construction of knowledge. Sugrue (2002) argues that for policy-makers, the degree of teacher autonomy envisioned in such an approach may be hard to accept. Such a power-shift would see teachers, not administrators, determining the nature of professional development and consequently reform efforts would appear differently in each setting.

2.14.2 Beliefs and Attitudes

Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) indicate that the success of any reform programme can be determined by the extent to which it changes classroom practice. Yet research indicates most teachers need time to change their practice, opting initially to make adaptations to their current instruction (Hughes, 2002), rather than embracing a full reform. Sparks (2000) notes that vast amounts of support, practice, coaching and collaborative work are required to impact on classroom practice. Key to teacher adoption of new initiatives is not only knowledge-building and opportunities for reflections, but most importantly, teacher beliefs regarding the new practices (Walpole and McKenna, 2004; Fullan et al., 2006; Guskey, 2002). For teachers to engage in the complex, time and energy consuming change process, they must firstly believe that there is a need to change their instructional practice, in addition to having the self-perception that they will be able to do so and finally, the belief that they will receive sufficient support and resources throughout the process to make this possible (Gregoire, 2003; Guskey, 2002; Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2002). Researchers indicate that self-efficacy beliefs are a determining factor in teachers' willingness to engage in the change process (Bandura, 1997; Goddard and Goddard, 2001).

However, research also indicates that the relationship between teachers' beliefs and change in practice is neither linear nor simple (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Rather, it is dialectic, oscillating between change in practice and change in belief systems (Franke et al., 1998). Consequently, CPD must be tailored to support this complex, evolutionary pattern, as teachers progress from a rudimentary understanding of the basics to a gradually more sophisticated framework of reference. While teachers initially need to believe in the rationale for change, they also desire practical and often highly prescriptive instruction for immediate implementation (Lyons and Pinnell, 2001). The authors argue that only after teachers have been supported to engage with the fundamental steps in a new instructional practice, will they be in a position to assimilate and appreciate the theory underpinning such an approach. This requires the facilitator to revisit the instructional rationale on multiple occasions, allowing for deeper understanding of the concept upon reflection and experience.

At the core of teacher willingness to engage in change is student achievement. Initially teachers require proof that the topics and approaches addressed through CPD will sufficiently improve student performance to negate the effortful and often difficult changes that will be required (Butler et al., 2004; Stein et al., 1999; Sparks, 2000). Lyons and Pinnell (2001) indicate that student performance also has a self-sustaining effect on teacher change, with evidence of the impact of the efforts on students motivating teachers and enhancing their engagement in the process.

2.14.3 Teacher Overload

All analyses of reform efforts conclude that time is a salient feature in successful adoption of new initiatives (Collinson and Cook, 2001; Cambone, 1995; Banks and Smyth, 2011), with teachers and researchers both indicating that failure to provide sufficient time is the greatest impediment in school reform (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Engaging with multiple innovation implementations over a short period of time can generate feelings of “overload, fragmentation and incoherence” (Fullan, 1999, p.27) among teachers. These feelings are further intensified when new policies and programmes are introduced independently of each other, as they often present divergent and competing priorities (Fullan, 1999). The author argues that information overload and superficial implementation arise in schools where every new innovation is adopted in an indiscriminate manner, with no overall vision, commitment or ownership to sustain the change process (Strike, 2004). Bryk et al. (1998) suggest the term “Christmas tree schools” (p.128) to describe the serial reform efforts engaged in by schools, with multiple innovations as “decorations, superficially adorned” (Fullan, 1999, p.27).

Irish principals currently regard teacher workload as the primary obstacle in curricular reform, with time for planning coming second (Loxley et al., 2007). Similarly, Murchan et al. (2005) see evidence of widespread “reform saturation” (p.224) among Irish teachers, which the authors claim is impeding progress in curricular support and implementation. The solution to teacher overload lies in the reconceptualisation of the traditional school day and the effective use of resources within the school setting (Trant and O’ Donnabhain, 1998). A

supportive community of learners can only be developed if schools strive to restructure classes, embracing different pedagogical practices such as team teaching and peer teaching, thereby enabling the release of some staff for other professional development activities. Generating a sustainable approach to professional development, in which teachers feel supported rather than overwhelmed, can only be achieved by addressing the use of time and human resources within schools.

2.15 School Culture

Research points to the culture of the school as a determining factor in the extent to which teachers apply the knowledge they acquire from CPD (Ogle, 2008; Guskey, 1986). Comprising the ever-evolving norms, beliefs and attitudes of all those who work within the setting, the unique culture of each school has the potential to positively or negatively support teachers' learning (Day and Sachs, 2004).

The complexity of the change process is increased due to the fact that school culture is socially constructed, being a manifestation of the values and interactions of the individuals who work there (Lyons and Pinnell, 2001). Some researchers argue that too much attention is attributed to the holistic notion of school culture. Rather than a universal view of attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, different individuals and groups within the staff hold different perspectives on the cultural norms (Firestone and Louis, 1999). Jeffers (2006) argues that teachers by their nature, identify like-minded individuals and form their own communities within the structure of the wider staff. Rather than comprising one homogeneous group, it may be more accurate to consider the school community as an interaction of various sub-cultures (Day and Sachs, 2004).

The traditional independence and isolation of teachers in their classrooms creates an "egg crate" environment (Lortie, 1975, cited in Fullan, 1995, p.230), with teachers working closely with students but in isolation from their colleagues. Opportunities for the authentic collaborative, reflective practice espoused by

researchers (Cochrane-Smith and Lytle, 1999; Sugrue, 2011; Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1995) are limited in an environment in which “closing your door and working alone” (Lyons and Pinnell, 2001, p.187) is considered the norm. Research findings indicate that unless this tradition of isolation can be counteracted, then even high-quality, sustained professional development will remain ineffective (Fullan, 2007a; Lyons and Pinnell, 2001). Day and Sachs (2004) argue that where leaders try to develop a superficial collegial culture in defiance of the accepted custom of the school, such dialogue generally remains at a surface level of planning, rather than probing deeper to examine the nature of instructional practice. The authors caution that CPD must take the context of each social setting into consideration, creating a challenge for externally initiated CPD to fully comprehend and appreciate an abstract, intangible phenomenon that is highly internal and informally developed and shared (Jeffers, 2006).

Changing the culture of a school to allow for genuine opportunities for critical thinking on the development of practice is thought to require extensive time and effort on the part of many people, regressing as well as progressing over the course of several years (McMahon, 2001). Supporting this process requires a change in emphasis from investment in organisations to valuing the expertise and experience of the people within the organisation. Harris and Lambert (2003) attribute the failure of many top-down initiatives to this misaligned focus. They state that following the initial implementation drive, these initiatives run out of steam as policy-makers have invested in systems over people and are outcome orientated rather than focused on the process of change. The preferred alternative is developing the culture of the school and system through a collaborative exploration of norms, values and beliefs. Sergiovanni (1996) contends that doing so requires a reconceptualisation of schools as communities rather than organisations. Communities, he argues, are centred around ideas and relationships. “They create structures that bond people together in a oneness, and that bind them to a set of shared values and ideas” (p.46).

2.16 Communities of Practice

CPD generates an internal conflict between being a learner in a learning context, while simultaneously assuming the role of teacher within a school context (Bell and Gilbert, 1996; Fraser et al., 2007). Unless this tension is resolved through support from colleagues and school management, knowledge acquisition will not transition into changes in practice (Fraser et al., 2007). Consequently, effective professional development relies on a culture of support within the school community, within which the norms of collegiality, openness and trust are established (Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

Wenger (1998) holds that all teachers exist as members of various communities of practice, but for learning to occur within this environment there must be engagement, understanding and discourse. Learning is a consequence of the group's interactions and not solely due to formal learning opportunities provided by courses or other professional development activities (Kennedy, 2005). Fullan (2003) supports this social view of learning, believing information to be transformed into knowledge through social interaction, and this knowledge in turn becoming wisdom through sustained interaction. It is at this stage that deep change becomes possible. Wenger (1998) suggests that power lies at the heart of successful CPD within a community of practice, with members' exertion of control taking precedence over external issues such as accountability or performance management. The mutual accountability that arises from collaborative negotiation, it is argued, provides greater potential for transformative practice than any externally mandated measures.

The challenge for school leaders and staff developers is to develop authentic collegiality and trust among staff members, in addition to providing the time necessary for teachers to engage in such a collaborative process. For collaboration and collegiality to be effective, leaders must foster a learning culture where educators talk more about teaching and learning than anything else (Francis, 2010). Furthermore, the community needs to be supportive of diverse ideas and one in which teachers are comfortable sharing concerns and taking

risks (Lyons and Pinnell, 2001). The authors believe that over time teachers become accustomed to professional dialogue in which mistakes are freely analysed. Until this is established, professional development leaders must play a formative role in fostering the norms for open and honest discourse. Fielding (1999) argues that current conditions are corrosive of, rather than conducive to, the formation of communities of practice. Externally mandated, standards-based reform efforts focus on technical functions rather than the primarily personal activity of teaching.

Francis (2010) notes that while schools have an abundance of highly qualified and capable teachers, they are unused to working as part of such a supportive community of learners, given the traditional solitary nature of teaching. Teachers are accustomed to acquiring knowledge on an individual basis. Collaborative approaches to CPD are currently increasing in popularity and recent research indicates that over an extended period of time it is more effective than individual approaches (Kennedy, 2011; Cordingley et al., 2005). While research does not advocate collaborative learning to the exclusion of individual learning (Kennedy, 2011; Clement and Vandenberghe, 2000), Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) caution that a ceiling effect operates with regards to learning that is not shared with other members of the community. Instead, researchers call for a balancing of collaborative work with the autonomous work of individual teachers, the format of this balance varying within individual settings and communities (Clement and Vandenberghe, 2000). One route proposed is the co-operative sharing of multiple sources of individual knowledge and learning, culminating in the cumulative creation of new common knowledge (Boreham, 2000). Hunzicker (2011) also highlights that for teachers, engaging in a supportive process of sharing viewpoints and problems, in addition to working collaboratively towards solutions is more enjoyable as part of a community than working alone.

The diverse nature of a school community raises questions regarding the optimum size of communities of practice. Wenger (1998) argues that attempting to view the whole organization as one entire community of practice dilutes the discontinuities integral to the interaction of diverse subgroups. He suggests that multiple communities of practice be viewed as interconnected constellations,

originating from the same root, belonging to the same community and having common members. Cordingley et al. (2005) tentatively suggest that pairs and small groups are optimum to ensure these communities remain personally and contextually relevant (Kennedy, 2011).

Others suggest that the very notion of community suggest inherent conflict, as all individuals hold diverse opinions and beliefs. In cases where community harmony is given precedence over issues causing conflict, opportunities for learning and development are subverted. Achinstein (2002) notes that it is whether areas of dissent are embraced or suppressed that determine the community's potential for professional development. Conflict should be challenged in a constructive manner to avoid derailment of the work at hand (Grossman et al., 2001; Uline et al., 2003). Only when such conflict is acknowledged and resolved can teachers work towards the pursuit of a shared vision (Taylor, Yates et al., 2011). Embracing differing viewpoints requires structured and purposeful support from leaders and facilitators, consistently focusing efforts towards a clear and shared goal (Guskey, 2003). Collaborative endeavours, which entail staff members encountering such conflict without the necessary support, can result in collaborative efforts being used in a less virtuous manner to block or inhibit progress (Little, 1994). The challenge presented for leaders is to harness the power of existing sub-cultures within the school, while encouraging and facilitating the development of new ones essential to the school's identified needs (Jeffers, 2006).

2.17 Traditional Approaches to CPD: The Training Model

Within CPD, the training model has traditionally dominated (Little, 1994; Kennedy, 2005). The objective of such an approach is to transmit knowledge or develop skills of passive participants. To this extent, the surrounding theory is generally explored with limited demonstrations or modelling of skills (Joyce and Showers, 1995). In spite of much criticism surrounding this model, it is acknowledged to be an effective means of sharing new knowledge (Hoban, 2002), providing a large number of participants with a shared knowledge-base

and a common vocabulary in a cost effective manner (Guskey, 2000). It also promotes transparency and equality among teachers, ensuring that complete knowledge of an innovation is held by all, rather than an elite few (Guskey, 1996). However, while such training may deepen the knowledge of teachers, such professional development approaches have been shown to be insufficient to foster the learning required to alter classroom instruction and practice (Boyle et al., 2004; Bubb and Earley, 2007).

Researchers point to the decontextualised nature of such knowledge provision as reason for its failure to impact on instruction (Kennedy, 2005). The dominance of a 'knowledge for practice' model (Cochrane-Smith and Lytle, 1999), with experts or specialists delivering lectures or providing workshops, fails to address how the knowledge will be used in practice. Such formal learning opportunities are unlikely to become transformative as they only address the occupational dimensions of professional learning, ignoring the personal and social aspects (Fraser et al., 2007). Furthermore, teachers indicate that they find such professional development approaches not only boring, but irrelevant to their work in the classroom, stating that they forget as much as 90% of the material presented (Sailors, 2009). Teachers report greater enhancement of knowledge and skills when the academic content is accompanied by active learning that is highly integrated in the school context (Garet et al., 2001). The negativity surrounding traditional approaches underlines Day's (1999) concern that the training model fails to "connect with the essential moral purposes that are at the heart of their professionalism" (p.49).

The prescriptive nature of this transmission model offers little choice or opportunities for teachers to become personally involved in the process (Guskey, 2000). This has raised concerns regarding the balance of power and control. Kennedy (2005) argues that the passive position of teachers, with little critical thinking or inquiry taking place, enables more dominant policy-makers to shape the agenda. This rigid structuring of knowledge has increasing appeal for administrators and other stakeholders during times of rapid change (Sugrue, 2003). The author suggests that CPD provision for the rollout of the PSC adhered to this 'top-down' model, arguing that though on the surface the workshops were

facilitated by teachers for teachers, in reality teachers were expected to 'bring back' knowledge to their classrooms without questioning the identity of those making the decisions or the criteria they used in the process.

Researchers also question the wisdom of placing time-based requirements on teachers to entice them to engage in continuous learning (Guskey, 2000). Rather than engaging teachers in a process of lifelong learning, they encourage teachers to view CPD as a series of short, disconnected courses lacking in follow-up or support. Setting aside specific days on the school calendar for professional development may establish a perception that CPD is separate from the everyday workings of teachers. Guskey (2000) cautions that professional development in this format may be viewed by teachers as an obligation to be endured, rather than an opportunity to develop a school culture that promotes learning for students and teachers alike.

Despite concerns expressed regarding traditional models of CPD, workshops and lectures can still form an integral component of an effective professional development programme, if issues such as duration, appropriate content, coherence and active learning are addressed (Birman et al., 2000). Traditional models of CPD tend to be short in duration, with most being 'one-shot' (Sandholtz, 2002). Extending training sessions over a longer time frame, with appropriate intervals for teachers to implement their acquired knowledge, with feedback and coaching, can foster the required beliefs and attitudes needed to fundamentally alter the content and methodology of instruction (Guskey, 2000). Teachers have also indicated their frustration with a lack of intensity and support provided through traditional workshops (NCES, 1999), calling for greater amounts of more effective CPD (Anders et al., 2000). Boyle et al. (2004) criticise the overreliance on external experts, almost to the point of exclusivity, among traditional CPD providers. The authors call for the strategic use of external expertise in conjunction with context specific resources and a strong system of internal collaboration. They note that while teachers respect the expertise of external authorities, they share common understandings and experiences with peers which are powerful factors in the change process.

2.18 Characteristics of Effective Professional Development

Designing effective CPD is a complex task, given the multiplicity of variables among settings, participants and innovations. It is clear that there can be no universal ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution (Honold, 2003; Piggot-Irvine, 2006).

However, in recent years researchers have reached a broad consensus regarding the key characteristics necessary for personal, social and occupational learning, sufficient to impact on classroom practice. Notably, the key to positive learning outcomes has been found to lie with schools achieving a balance of formal and informal learning opportunities, allowing for flexibility and collaboration, while making maximum use of internal expertise (Cordingley et al., 2005).

In a review of literature and research conducted in the area, Villegas-Reimers (2003) synthesises the characteristics of effective CPD. Namely:

- Teachers as active learners engaging in a constructivist process of reflecting, observing and questioning rather than a ‘transmission-oriented’ model
- The development is supported and sustained over an extended period of time rather than through ‘one-shot’, fragmented workshops and training sessions (Dillon et al., 2011).
- In contrast to the decontextualised models traditionally adopted, CPD should be situated within a specific context, engaging and integrating with the day-to-day activities of those who live and work there (Darling-Hammond, 1998; McLaughlin and Zarrow, 2001).
- Remain conscious of the principles at the foundation of school reform, the construction and support of school culture rather than merely developing skills (Guskey, 1995; Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999)
- Teachers are to be treated as reflective practitioners, being provided not only with theoretical knowledge and skills (Hawley and Valli, 2001), but also being allowed the time and opportunity to meaningfully engage with these, reflecting upon their impact on student learning, rather than passively accepting the expertise and knowledge offered by others (Dillon et al, 2011).

- While individual teacher's needs must be met (Hawley and Valli, 2001), learning is primarily a collaborative process (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1995; Swan, 2003). This entails meaningful interactions not only between teachers, but with all members of the extended school community.
- Professional development will differ from setting to setting and within a single setting may have many dimensions (Scribner, 1999). Guskey (1995) advocates attending to context, including cultural beliefs and practices, as the determining factor when planning for professional development. Schools and teachers are best placed to identify their needs and the forms of professional development that would best meet them (Scribner, 1999).

These broad principles of CPD form the foundation of more specific literacy-based initiatives. Developments in teachers' literacy practices, and by implication students' literacy development, are contingent on professional development which reflects a good understanding of the change process and considers the political and social factors involved, in addition to allowances for potential obstacles to change (Lyons and Pinnell, 2001). Anders et al. (2000) establish six criteria considered essential in all literacy reform efforts:

1. Participation must be voluntary, ensuring levels of personal commitment not present in a 'majority rules' format (Datnow and Stringfield, 2000; Borman et al., 2003). Such reform should also entail teacher-choice regarding the content, thereby ensuring that teachers will be interested in learning about and consequently implementing the new practice. Allowing teachers increased control over the content and process of professional development, not only increases feelings of empowerment and ownership, but has also been shown to increase teachers' willingness and ability to connect the material to the context of their own school, thereby internalising the learning (Boyle et al., 2004).
2. Intensive and sustained support must be provided for teachers during the implementation period.

3. Such support must be provided in the context of practice, with monitoring and coaching from other knowledgeable practitioners.
4. As they engage with change, teachers need time and opportunity to reflect upon their actions.
5. Teachers also need the opportunity to engage in collaborative dialogue with others.
6. Finally, individual literacy teachers must fit within a larger collaborative framework of professional development, one that incorporates colleagues, school-based teacher educators and school-university partnerships. Such school-university models can provide a balance between the need for collaborative, context sensitive inquiry learning and the need for informed theoretical knowledge and practice, substantively improving students' literacy development (Ogle, 2008).

2.18.1 Sustained Support

Designing CPD provision around the needs of adult learners entails that professional development efforts move from a 'one shot' model of little effect to a more coherent long-term approach, where teachers are supported in learning that is part of the everyday routine (Hunzicker, 2011; Lyons and Pinnell, 2001).

Guskey (2005, p.7) argues:

the more typical order of change in practice is first, student learning, second attitudes and beliefs last. And the reason that it is so, is that it is experience that shapes attitudes and belief; it's not the other way around.

Placing primary importance on experience signifies that the implementation and support received are of greater value than the initial information sessions that are the foundations of traditional CPD approaches (Bubb and Earley, 2010).

For a new methodology to move from tentative experimentation to routine, the teacher may need to use the practice as many as thirty times (Joyce and Showers, 1995). It is only when teachers move from acquiring knowledge and skills to the implementation process, that specific concerns and questions will arise (Fullan, 1982). This time of high stress and anxiety for teachers (Huberman, 1981; Guskey, 1986) is termed the "implementation dip" (Fullan, 1995, p.10) and for

teachers to persevere with their experimentation they require continued support subsequent to initial training. Hunzicker (2011) finds that teachers are more likely to take professional risks in environments in which they feel supported. Additionally, unless schools are clearly informed of the organisational supports required, teachers will become frustrated in their attempts to implement innovations they do not sufficiently comprehend, in an organisation which may unknowingly have structures impeding their progress (Guskey, 2000). By contrast, Frost (2004, cited in Durrant and Holden, 2006) argues that “teachers need practical support to enable them to deploy whatever energy and ingenuity they have in ways that are strategic and in harmony with overall school priorities” (p.1-2).

A sustained professional development programme must comprise of cohesively integrated learning experiences and opportunities, with time for exploration and practice, rather than a series of isolated workshops (Lyons and Pinnell, 2001). Knowledge which is revisited and analyzed with the wisdom gained from collective experiences, is more likely to form part of teachers’ personal interpretive framework (Kelchtermans, 2004). Fragmented approaches which fail to integrate this expanding knowledge or place them in context with previously advocated practice, causes teachers to regard innovations as ‘passing fancies’ unworthy of the necessary time and effort (Guskey, 2000). When teachers are provided with multiple opportunities to revisit knowledge, with increased awareness of its place in relation to school and national plans, their motivation and commitment to the process is increased (Hunzicker, 2011).

International findings among teachers, researchers and policy-makers, consistently indicate constraints on teachers’ time to be the key issue affecting change at both individual and school level. (Banks and Smyth, 2011; Collinson and Cook, 2001). Policy-makers are advised to consider both existing demands on teacher time and the amount of time required to adopt a new practice in their planning of educational reform. However, research indicates that the amount time invested in professional development does not directly correspond to positive outcomes (Guskey, 2003; Kennedy, 1998). Wenglinsky (2002) found that in an analysis of mathematical achievement, there was no significant

relationship between the time spent by teachers in professional development and the overall performance of students. Researchers conclude that teachers clearly require that professional development be conducted over an extended period of time (Hunzicker, 2011; Cambone, 1995). However, this time must be well-planned, purposeful and carefully structured, for it to impact on student learning (Guskey, 1999). To this end, schools need to distinguish between time spent as a group engaging in planning activities and opportunities taken to authentically operate as a community of practice, working towards a shared vision or ideal (Grossman et al., 2001; Taylor, Yates et al., 2011).

2.18.2 School Setting

While large-scale national or district level reforms offer the potential of an overall vision for improvement, their lack of success is attributed to a failure to adapt to the individual contexts of school settings (Guskey, 2000). Fullan (2007b) repeatedly argues that the school context is the origin of the change process, citing Elmore's (2004) belief that educators need to learn new practices in the setting in which they work. Improvement can be regarded as more about implementing the correct practice in the authentic work setting, than the level of knowledge or theory the teacher initially has as they start the process or acquires through a workshop model (Elmore, 2004; Guskey, 2007). The INTO (1993) have long called for school-based professional development as "it is there that learning and teaching take place, curricula and techniques are developed and needs and deficiencies are revealed" (p.41).

The effectiveness of an on-site setting is not determined by the mere physical location within the school, rather by the authentic interaction with the unique characteristics of the culture of each context. Decisions that are taken at school-level regarding professional development goals, actions, models and content are of greater relevance as they are made by those who have greatest understanding of the contexts which will impact on them (Guskey, 2002). On a pragmatic level, it is also noted, that with fewer individuals and agendas it can be easier to arrive at a consensus. However, researchers suggest that opportunities for continuous job-embedded professional development activities are the true potential for site-based designs (Fullan, 2007a; Hunzicker, 2011). Existing initiatives offer little

opportunity for teachers to observe or be observed by others in their own classrooms. Observation of literacy strategies within local school settings has been shown to increase motivation of teachers and enhance their beliefs about the feasibility of implementing the practice in their own classrooms (Grierson and Gallagher, 2009). Engaging in coaching, mentoring or study group activities creates seamless and integrated learning among teachers, asking them to consider new possibilities and offering support and guidance during the implementation process. Hunzicker (2011) believes that teachers place greater faith in such professional development as they consider it to be more 'real'.

In a study of elementary schools with extensive track records of commitment to literacy improvement, Mosenthal et al. (2004) conclude that all members of the school community shared a vision for student literacy achievement and assumed collective responsibility for it. Most notably, these schools did not adopt an external framework, rather they worked collaboratively to devise an approach that was specific to the needs of the school and gradually evolved over time, building and extending on previous successful innovations. It is also of note that teacher commitment to the process was increased by the sense of ownership such a school specific initiative generated.

However, researchers have raised concerns regarding professional development that remains exclusively site-based. Guskey (2000) finds that teachers and school leaders take a pragmatic view of school improvement, often favouring options that will reap immediate, tangible differences over those which require larger investments in time and efforts to show results. A review of school-based professional development decisions conducted by Corcoran et al. (2001) concludes that teachers "paid lip service to the use of research" (p.81) in their decision making processes, being more influenced by research on initiatives they already believed to hold potential, than practices with proven results. In this manner, the authors caution that decentralisation of power is in essence inhibiting schools' knowledge acquisition rather than fostering it. An optimum balance of informed, context specific decisions can best be achieved through strategic collaboration between knowledgeable professionals with a broader perspective of the theoretical foundations and school-based educators cognisant

of vital contextual characteristics (Guskey, 1996; Piggot-Irvine, 2006). Fletcher (2003) suggests the term ‘co-construction’ be applied to the reciprocal, supporting relationship between teachers and academics in both the construction and execution of the research agenda in schools (Hargreaves, 1998).

2.19 Coaching/Mentoring Model

The coaching/mentoring model is established on the philosophical premise that professional learning, situated in a school context, can be significantly enhanced through collaborative structured dialogue among colleagues, guiding one another to reflect upon and solve problems within the workplace (Kennedy, 2005; Rhodes and Beneicke, 2002). Interest in the area arose from the seminal work of Joyce and Showers (1982), in which the researchers devised a model of pairs of teachers supporting each other in a reciprocal cycle of analysis and feedback. Further research conducted by the authors indicated that teachers participating in a coaching relationship, not only practised new skills and practices more frequently, but also implemented them in a more appropriate manner than their colleagues working in isolation (Joyce and Showers, 1995). The importance of coaching in professional development has been continually highlighted by researchers. In a five-year landmark study of staff development, Bush (1984) discovered that including elements such as modelling and feedback, increased teacher implementation levels by 2-3%. However, the inclusion of coaching led to 95% implementation levels among teachers. Recent findings also point to the critical importance of coaching in the implementation process. In observations of teachers who had received similar initial professional development, Knight and Cornett (2008) noted the use of the new practice in 90% of classrooms where teachers also received coaching. Only 30% of those who did not receive coaching were seen to implement the new skills. Researchers conclude that in the absence of coaching, professional development can have negligible effects on practice (Neuman and Cunningham, 2009).

Research has also established strong links between literacy coaching and student achievement (Elish-Piper, 2011). In a longitudinal study, Walpole and Blamey

(2008) conclude that schools where literacy coaching was provided are more likely to make adequate yearly progress than comparison schools with no coaching. A further study conducted by Swartz (2005) found that literacy coaching contributed more to reading gains among grades K-4 students than a traditional professional development programme. More specifically, Elish-Piper and L'Allier (2010) identify time spent with teachers and the coaching actions of conferencing, administering assessments, modelling and observing as predictive variables in student reading gains among younger students. The increase in student performance may perhaps be attributed to the fact that the collaboration between teachers and coaches has been shown to increase self-efficacy and implementation levels of new literacy innovations (Cantrell and Hughes, 2008).

Though the role of coaching is widely acknowledged to enhance teachers' ability and willingness to implement new initiatives (Neufeld and Roper, 2003) and to promote the use of best literacy practices in classrooms (Blachowicz et al., 2005), literature in the field is mainly comprised of 'how-to-manuals' and descriptors of coaching activities (Rainville and Jones, 2008). Little research has specifically focused on the specific qualities of coaching which impact significantly on teacher implementation and student learning. The paucity of research conducted in this area may be attributed to the complexity of documenting the multi-faceted nature of school-wide professional development initiatives (Taylor et al., 2004). However, the authors also note that implementing and sustaining such initiatives is even more complex for practitioners.

2.19.1 Observation

Teachers interviewed about coaching identified the value of observation and opportunities for discussion as having the greatest impact on their professional development (Goodall et al., 2005). Studies which included extended observation opportunities for teachers, also noted increased levels of motivation and self-efficacy among the teachers (Grierson and Gallagher, 2009), positively altering their perceptions about the feasibility of implementing such practice. Positive changes in some teachers' views of professional development was also attributed to time spent observing teacher demonstrations (Butler et al., 2004). Engaging in

observation and subsequent feedback sessions is also thought to offer benefits for both the observer and the teacher being observed (Joyce and Showers, 1995). The former gains not only from seeing a more experienced colleague, but also analysing their actions and the children's responses. The latter benefits from receiving constructive feedback and an alternative insight into their instruction. Engaging in such collaborative activities aims to overcome the isolated nature of teaching, working towards the shared learning of a community of practice (Ackland, 1991). It also necessitates a careful distinction between supportive reflection and assessment. However, the effective implementation of a coaching model requires significant time commitments from the school and teachers, allowing for the co-ordination of schedules to facilitate the sessions (Guskey, 2000). This may require some reconceptualisation of time management and resource allocation on the part of school administrators.

Repeated opportunities to observe demonstration lessons are regarded as characteristic of successful CPD programmes (Lyons and Pinnell, 2001). Initial teacher viewing focuses on the pedagogical steps taken and materials used. The authors argue that teachers cannot attend to the finer details of instruction at this stage. They need opportunities to try the modelled practices themselves before appreciating the less superficial elements. It has also been found that multiple observations across different levels encourage a less prescriptive instructional approach among teachers, by reducing the tendency to imitate exact words and actions (Lyons and Pinnell, 2001).

2.19.2 Dialogue

Providing opportunities for teachers to engage in professional dialogue is regarded as one of the criteria of an effective CPD programme (Ofsted, 2001). Effective coaches can facilitate and engage in shared, reflective discussions without providing prescriptive directions (Knight, 2009), which serve to reduce teachers' ownership of the process. Researchers also point to the value of brief informal conversations between the on-site coach and teachers (Lyons and Pinnell, 2001). Casual conversations in informal settings, such as by the photocopier or in the staffroom, can not only provide valuable information for the coach regarding the teacher's progress, but can also support the teacher

between formal sessions. These unplanned ‘professional conversations’ (Jeffers, 2006) suit the nature of school life where conversations are often interrupted. In such a context, conversations in the corridors, staffroom and wider environment, provide leaders with an evolving view of school progress, while also effectively placing the change process at the heart of school dialogue.

2.19.3 The Role and Qualities of the Literacy Coach

With increasing interest in the area, the concept of a coach, in particular that of a literacy coach, is evolving (Walpole and Blamey, 2008). This complex position requires a rich background in content understanding, knowledge of the principles of adult learning, the ability to foster trust and build relationships over time, in addition to high levels of organisation and flexibility (Rainville and Jones, 2008; Toll, 2005; Lyons and Pinnell, 2001). The literacy coach’s knowledge and skills are considered to be determining factors in their effectiveness by researchers (Poglinco et al., 2003), teachers and coaches (Elish-Piper, 2011). In all studies reviewed by Taylor, Raphael et al. (2011), successful coaching was accompanied by ongoing professional development for internal literacy leaders, where the focus was not solely on updating literacy knowledge, but also developing the leadership skills of those involved. The International Reading Association (2004) has called for specialist training or certification to be provided for those who undertake this role to develop the required knowledge-base.

The selection of appropriate coaches is an area receiving increasing attention (Kennedy, 2005; Lyons and Pinnell, 2001), as the coach can determine whether a transmission or transformative view of professional development is adopted within the school. Coaches with limited knowledge-bases are more likely to engage in activities which maintain the status quo, rather than scaffolding a supportive but challenging analysis of research and practice. School cultures which do not value reflective enquiry limit the effectiveness of coaching, as the coach is perceived to be directing and judging rather than supporting and eliciting (Field, 2011). The Literacy Professional Development Project (Timperley and Parr, 2007) devised an approach where external facilitators nominated literacy leaders, with whom they would work to sustain change and establish a professional learning community within individual schools. As the

project progressed, it was noted that ongoing professional development for the external facilitator, internal literacy leader and the principal would be required to transform teachers' knowledge and practices (Taylor et al., 2007). During the second year of the project, this professional development focused on the facilitator's ability to initiate and sustain constructive conversations with school staff, regarding their perceptions of what needed to change and devising a plan to achieve it.

In addition to professional and content knowledge, literacy coaches also need to spend time working in the classroom. Lyons and Pinnell (2001) note extended absences from the natural environment of the classroom can lead to the erosion of teaching skills. A practising teacher also brings credibility to the process as one who has implemented the suggested innovation. To this extent Elish-Piper (2011) suggests that the position of literacy coach need not always be full-time and that there are benefits to the coach spending part of their time as a classroom teacher, being released to engage in coaching activities.

Rainville and Jones (2008) consider coaching to be a carefully orchestrated balance of positioning and power. The coach studied in their research was observed to wield differing levels of power according to the needs of each context, ranging from that of 'expert' when instructing a teacher, to a 'co-learner' when guiding teachers. Inhibiting factors associated with power struggles can be reduced if the coach had as an established informal relationship with the teacher. The authors conclude that strategic positioning by literacy coaches, placing themselves as co-learners rather than authoritative experts, could enable teachers to feel that they were in control of their own learning, thereby increasing confidence levels and motivation to experiment.

Staff perceptions of the coach is also a key factor in the reform process. A study conducted by Hustler et al. (2003) concludes that teachers' perceptions of the competence, knowledge and approaches adopted by the CPD facilitator could dramatically affect their attitude towards and understanding of professional development. Effective coaches have high levels of credibility among their colleagues, being considered to have specific expertise in the content area and

knowledge of school change (Guskey, 2000). Research indicates that teachers generally regard coaches as having such knowledge and appreciate the focus they place on the individual needs of teachers and the school (Marsh et al., 2005).

However, recent research findings indicate a lack of clarity in the role of the coach. Literacy coaches consider themselves to be supporting both teacher and student learning, while teachers believe the purpose of the coach is to provide support to them but not the students (Elish-Piper, 2011). Given Guskey's (2005) belief that change of practice is initially motivated by student learning, failure among teachers to connect coaching to student achievement may limit the effectiveness of this approach. Rainville and Jones (2008) caution that a collaborative working relationship cannot be established if miscommunication exists between teachers and the coach, due to different expectations about the role of the coach.

Concern has also been expressed that the role of the coach may be regarded as an administrative position (Knight, 2009). The perception of a literacy coach as an administrator is not unfounded as Deussen et al.'s study (2007) concludes that only 28% of a coach's time was actually spent working with teachers, with the largest portion of time spent on activities not directly related to professional development such as paperwork and attending meetings. Considering the coach to be an administrator rather than a peer may inhibit the openness of the relationship, discouraging the teacher from taking risks (Knight, 2009).

Effective coaching necessitates the differentiation of support to suit not only the needs of individual schools, but those of individual teachers (Knight, 2009). Elish-Piper (2011) calls on literacy coaches to prioritise the needs of those students and teachers who are not making sufficient progress through targeted coaching. Consideration should be given not only to student performance, but also to teachers' educational qualifications, experience and competence in determining the amount and nature of the support needed. Such a needs-driven model of support demands high levels of internal knowledge as the basis for informed judgements, in addition to sophisticated intra-personal skills to ensure that teachers feel neither stress at being the focus of coaching, nor neglect for

receiving less directed support than other colleagues. Grierson and Gallagher (2009) identify the need to provide differentiated levels of support as one of the greatest challenges involved in effective professional development, given the need to maintain consistency in the curricular messages presented (Chard, 2004; Fullan et al., 2006).

2.20 Leadership in The Change Process

Change is a complex and disorientating process for all involved and one which can have an unsettling or distressing effect on morale, confidence and performance (Hargreaves, 1994), as teachers contend with not being proficient in areas in which they are accustomed to knowing what they are doing (Fullan, 2001). These feelings are intensified when teachers do not share in the vision, commitment and ownership of externally mandated, top-down change. The personally threatening nature of change can be intimidating for teachers (Gregoire, 2003), leading some teachers to avoid engaging with the process entirely. These negative associations with the change process are further intensified in the modern climate of rapid change. Experts in the field suggest that “change is endemic” (Frost et al., 2000, p.5) and that schools are in the “middle of a sea of change” (Ainscow et al., 1994, p.2). To address these inhibiting factors, professional development opportunities need to be non-threatening, put teachers at ease when taking risks and develop an environment in which participants can be open and honest about the challenges and successes they encounter in the process (Cochran-Smyth and Lytle, 1999; Gregoire, 2003; Butler et al., 2004). Designing and providing such professional development requires effective leadership from within the school.

Characteristic of effective leaders is an understanding of change (Fullan, 2002), appreciating that it is a process not an event (Fullan, 2001) and one which can be perhaps led, but never controlled. Leadership is crucial during the implementation dip, when initial enthusiasm is tested as teachers encounter difficulties implementing new knowledge and skills. Emotionally intelligent leaders can empathise with the difficulties of teachers, while addressing the dual

issues of lack of technical expertise and the social-psychological fear of change. The former can be targeted through on-site coaching, while the latter requires a focus on developing emotional bonds and relationships in a supportive community of practice (Fullan, 2001; Dufour and Eaker, 1998; Lyons and Pinnell; 2001). Collaboration with colleagues in this manner has been shown to enhance self-efficacy in one's ability to successfully alter teaching practices (Cochran and Lytle, 1999; Butler et al., 2004).

Successful school leaders redefine resistance as a positive force in the change process (Fullan, 2002; 2001; Ford et al., 2008). Change interrupts normal patterns and interactions within a school and causes participants to create new ones (Ford et al., 2008; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985) in a process which can be highly ambiguous. Teachers appearing resistant to change may, after thoughtful consideration, be aware of counterproductive design elements, making its implementation in the particular school setting impractical or indeed impossible. Fullan (2001) contends that resisters generally have good reasons for doing so, seeing "alternatives we never dreamed of" (Maurer, 1996, p.49). In contrast, acceptance without consideration may provide immediate agreement and harmony, but such support is likely to disintegrate during the implementation dip (Duck, 2001). Failure to acknowledge and consider a counterargument can lead teachers to view the change agent as resistant, causing defensiveness and increasing levels of resistance (Ford et al., 2008; Folger and Skarlicki, 1999). Such hostile actions perpetuate a vicious cycle, in which resistance begets resistance (Powell and Posner, 1978). Tormala and Petty (2004) instead suggest that when leaders acknowledge and consider resistance messages, they defuse its power in the change process.

A Canadian study indicates that teachers value "visibility, modelling, support, high expectation, and decisiveness and courage" (Fernandez, 2000, p.241) in supportive principals. Other studies show that CPD implementation is most successful when school leaders believe such professional development is essential to change practice, are focused on the overall purpose of the professional development and are aware of existing procedures or policy which may conflict with the new intervention (Banks and Smyth, 2011). Successful

professional development is dependent on school leaders considering both structural and cultural implications (Sparks, 2000). In terms of organizational structure, leaders may need to alter or adapt school calendars and schedules, leadership practices, evaluation processes and belief systems. Cultural interventions to create norms of experimentation, collaboration and improvement may also be necessary. Sparks (2000) cautions that failure to address these issues can irrevocably damage the sustainability of the change process. However, Little (2001) finds that schools are not creating communities of practice in which teachers consider research in the context of their own setting. Rather, leaders spend most of the official time dedicated to professional development engaging in a process of motivating and inspiring teachers to adopt externally prescribed aims and objectives.

Reviews of schools characterised by exemplary histories of literacy improvement, show not only strong administrative and curricular leadership from the principal, but also strong influence and support from at least one other individual (Mosenthal et al., 2004). Harris and Muijs (2005) argue that a reconceptualisation of leadership in school improvement is necessary, moving from top-down decision making, to the devolvement of power and leadership to include both principal and teachers. Booth and Rowsell (2002) also advocate such a system of shared leadership, finding that the authentic sharing of responsibility leads to significant changes in teacher and student performance. Teachers who occupy leadership roles as facilitator, mentor and co-ordinators of professional development are of critical importance in successful implementation of new practices (Datnow et al., 2002). However, to offer effective support in their leadership of change, such teachers must critically engage with current theory and practice in the chosen field, in addition to research on adult learning and the change process (Durrant and Holden, 2006). Data from case studies conducted on teacher leadership highlights a need for changes in the vision and values embedded in the culture of schools (Harris and Muijs, 2005). Teacher resistance to this shift in professional development focus can arise if teachers do not sufficiently understand the thinking behind the sharing of leadership, or if they feel that they will not receive sufficient support for their work (Wasley,

1991). Effective teacher leadership requires investment of both time and resources from all involved.

2.21 CPD in an Irish Context

The past decade has seen unprecedented educational change in an Irish context, with the phased introduction of the PSC, increasing external demands for higher levels of accountability and performance from teachers, in addition to increasing levels of technology use in both instruction and learning (Sugrue, 2011). The continuous nature of such change has highlighted the need for Irish teachers to become lifelong learners, in addition to emphasising the central role of CPD in Irish educational reform efforts.

While the implementation of the 1999 PSC involved mandatory national professional development of all teachers, CPD in Ireland mainly consists of voluntary, short-term experiences, generally financed by the individual teacher, and providing little opportunities for interaction with and reflection upon new knowledge and methodologies (Conway et al., 2009; Banks and Smyth, 2011). The Department of Education and Skills employs an entitlement-based approach to professional development, awarding teachers three Extra Personal Vacation (EPV) days on completion of accredited courses, generally five days in duration, provided by Colleges of Education, and a range of private providers.

Recent CPD evaluation studies highlight the fragmented nature of such approaches, criticising their lack of learner-centred structures (Loxley et al., 2007; Granville, 2005; Coolahan, 2003; Sugrue, 2002). Harford (2010) argues that such CPD is narrowly defined and often lacking a solid theoretical basis, while Burke (2004) points to the absence of teacher involvement in the design and implementation of current CPD experiences. There is also concern that such an approach does not ensure the continuous development of teachers' knowledge and skills in areas such as literacy and numeracy (Ireland, DES, 2010a). Findings of the 2009 NA (Eivers et al., 2010) indicate that half of second class teachers and 39% of sixth class teachers had not received professional development in

English in the preceding three years. A review of courses offered by Education Centres confirmed that literacy courses were less popular than those relating to PE, music, SPHE, visual arts, conflict resolution and ICT. The lack of a coherent, sustainable approach to professional development does little to incorporate individual teacher learning into whole-school development.

Recent CPD has centred on equipping teachers to respond to curricular change, focusing on policy development and immediate needs, in the absence of a long-term vision (Harford, 2010). The Teacher Education Section (TES) of the DES acknowledges the current over-emphasis on national CPD initiatives and the consequent negative impact on school improvement needs (Ryan, 2006). The imbalance is also addressed in the recent Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) report (OECD, 2009b). Irish teachers rank well below the TALIS average in terms of the number of professional development days attended, participation in mentoring or peer observation and the number of observation visits to other schools. The report indicates that Irish teachers are more likely to collaborate through exchanging teaching material and resources, than participating as a member of a professional community by observing and providing feedback to colleagues. Teachers cite conflicts with work schedules and a lack of appropriate opportunities as barriers to the development of such communities of practice.

Given the dominance of curricular reform on CPD over the past decade, the next section will examine the approach devised to inform and support teachers in the implementation of the 1999 PSC, drawing on data from a large national evaluation of the PCSP, conducted from 2003 to 2005 (Murchan et al., 2005, 2009; Johnston et al., 2007). The theoretical underpinnings of this CPD experience will be considered, particularly in light of the interests of key stakeholders. The effectiveness of the professional development will be determined in terms of successful classroom implementation and perceived impact on student learning. Finally, recommendations of evaluation studies will be considered in relation to future professional development approaches.

2.22 Professional Development in the Implementation of the 1999 PSC

The Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP) was established in 1998 to coordinate and support the learning of over 26,000 teachers nationally in the implementation of the eleven subject areas of the PSC. Its creation, in addition to that of the School Development Planning Support (SDPS) shortly afterwards, signified a major commitment to professional development and was considered to be an indication that lessons from previous curricular reform efforts had been taken on board (Sugrue, 2011). A predominantly centralised approach was adopted to ensure that all 3,286 primary schools received similar information and support for learning. More localised support was envisioned through the establishment of the Regional Curriculum Support Service (RCSS). Subject-based professional development was provided in a phased manner, implementing approximately two subjects per year from 1999 until 2005/6. The support provided for each subject was largely uniform, consisting of four strands:

- Two days of seminar-based presentations to inform participants of new content and methodology, usually based in a hotel or education centre
- One school-based planning day
- The support of a school-based advisory teacher service (RCSS), at the request of the school principal
- Online support and information provided through a dedicated website (www.pcsp.ie)

2.22.1 Theoretical Foundations of PCSP

A major evaluation of the PCSP conducted by Murchan et al., (2005) indicates that key programme designers were cognisant of pertinent theories relating to the change process in the planning of the professional development. The authors indicate that the work of Michael Fullan was referenced and the planners were aware of the need for teachers to understand the theory behind curricular innovations before implementing the associated methodologies. Similarly, system planners discussed the importance of time in curricular reform, outlining the need for time to plan, to work collaboratively, to engage with curriculum documents and to become familiar with one subject before implementing another

(Murchan et al., 2009). However, Sugrue (2011) argues that there is little evidence of the relevant theories of professional development in the implementation process. Rather, the evidence points to the adaptation by key stakeholders such as the DES, NCCA, INTO and National Parents Council, each of whom had different expectations of the professional development. Representatives of the DES sought changes in children's learning, while the NCCA considered the implementation of the curriculum in its entirety to be the primary concern. Likewise, representatives of the INTO held a different view, being primarily concerned with providing reassurance to teachers that the curriculum was both manageable and implementable. It is interesting to note that despite the rhetoric of partnership espoused in this professional development approach, the formation of the PCSP has been seen to marginalise other potential contributors to the CPD process, most notably colleges of education and university faculties of education (Sugrue, 2011).

Murchan et al. (2005) also acknowledge that decisions relating to professional development and the PCSP were determined as much by practical and logistical considerations as by theoretical underpinnings. The authors note that due to the urgency to begin professional development, less attention was attributed to ascertaining if the model adopted would in fact impact on teaching and learning in the desired manner. While system developers spoke knowledgeably of the time needed for teachers to become familiar with the new knowledge and methodologies, the figure of six professional development days annually was determined based on the number of school closures it was considered that parents would endure (Murchan et al., 2005). Equally, the initial decision to phase the implementation process over six years was based, not on research findings or experiences from other countries, but as a compromise between those who wanted a longer implementation period and the DES who sought a three-year timeframe (Murchan et al., 2009).

Principles of adult learning were espoused in the planning process of the professional development, with learning considered to be taking place in a constructivist manner by providing teachers with both theory and opportunities to engage in learning through practical activities and experimental learning.

Teacher dialogue was also considered to be an essential component of the learning process. System designers sought to ensure standardisation in the delivery and content of seminars, through the creation of a script which trainers were expected to follow. However, 73% of trainers considered that they were expected to cover too much content in any one workshop and modified the tightly structured programme to allow for time constraints, often omitting practical activities and interaction with and between teachers (Murchan et al., 2009). Consequently, the message received, and the principles of learning underpinning its delivery, varied greatly from trainer to trainer.

The inclusion of a school-based planning day was considered to be evidence of the principles of adult learning and also an effort to redress the focus of top-down initiatives on systems rather than individuals (Harris and Lambert, 2003). Teachers were to be provided with opportunities to reflect upon their learning with colleagues in the environment in which they worked. However, reviews of the PCSP and the RCSS, conducted by Murchan et al. (2005) and Johnston et al. (2007), indicate that the premise of such on-site support was poorly understood. Rather than providing a forum where ideas could be shared and discussed as part of a professional community, the emphasis was placed on teachers working collaboratively to revise school curriculum plans. This change in emphasis may be attributed to external pressures to comply with planning requirements imposed by the Education Act (Ireland, 1998).

2.22.2 Professional Development of Trainers/Cuiditheoirí

The decision to second principals and teachers to operate as trainers (PCSP) and cuiditheoirí (RCSS) was popular with the teaching community as they were regarded to be dedicated and knowledgeable about their relevant subject matter (Murchan et al., 2005). This facilitator knowledge was predominantly developed in the course of a week's training in the June prior to employment, with supplementary training in subject matter and delivery methods included in a further three week's training the following September. There appears to be some discrepancy between official figures and those revealed by trainers' questionnaires, as English trainers reported receiving on average 64 hours of training. There was also a wide variance in this case, with some reporting only

having had one hour training, while the maximum time spent was 205 hours (Murchan et al., 2005). Within this timeframe, trainers attended presentations led by invited experts, but also spent much of this time preparing scripts and rehearsing seminars. It is of concern that in some cases there were such low levels of training, as facilitators with limited knowledge-bases are more like to encourage a transmission rather than transformative approach. Only in the later stages of the phased implementation were trainers provided with direct classroom experience of the new innovations. Trainers for Music and PE received initial training before returning to their schools to implement the knowledge and methodologies for a year.

Cuiditheoirí, many who had been previously employed as trainers, received an additional 70 hours training to enable them provide individualised, on-site support to schools as they engaged with the curriculum. A study conducted by Johnston et al., (2007) indicates that the methodologies employed in the professional development centred on presentations and workshops, with less than 50% of cuiditheoirí experiencing shadowing or mentoring. Participants were least satisfied with non-subject related material, stating that issues such as time management, decision making, facilitating and planning skills received only minimal attention. These are fundamental to the responsive and supportive role cuiditheoirí are expected to play in the change process. It is difficult to see how cuiditheoirí could be expected to engage teachers as reflective practitioners, when the transmission-orientated model of professional development they received themselves consisted of passively accepting the expertise and knowledge offered by others.

2.22.3 Role of the Cuiditheoir

The role of the RCSS was envisioned to provide tailored support to schools at the point of implementation, differentiating content and methodology to enable teachers and schools to engage with the curriculum in their unique context. Murchan et al. (2005) noted overwhelming levels of satisfaction from teachers, principals and education centres in relation to the work of cuiditheoirí, with the majority of those believing that the support offered by the RCSS should become a permanent feature of the primary education system. An INTO survey (2006),

conducted during the same timeframe, indicates that almost 90% of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the level of in-school support received in relation to the English curriculum.

Despite the widespread popularity of the RCSS, Johnston et al. (2007) find that 10% of schools made no request for a visit from the service and the average number of visits per school across all eleven subject areas was just three. Such low uptake levels mean that in reality, this CPD experience bears more resemblance to one-shot models than the coherent long-term approach advocated by Lyons and Pinnell (2001). There are numerous factors which may have hindered the impact of the RCSS. Education directors point to the inadequate number of *cuiditheoirí* working with 3,200 schools, with many *cuiditheoirí* working across multiple counties, visiting more than one school per day (Murchan et al., 2005; Johnson et al., 2007). *Cuiditheoirí* surveyed in the Johnston et al. study (2007) also cited geographical and time limitations, commenting that in some cases distances between schools were so great that more time was spent travelling than providing support.

System designers appear to have paid little attention to the internal working practices of schools in the creation of the RCSS. While national arrangements enabled *cuiditheoirí* to visit individual schools, teachers and principals struggled with the logistical accommodations that this necessitated, most notably supervisory issues. The imposition of a centralised support service, without allowing schools extra resources or personnel to facilitate its implementation, often gave rise to feelings of resentment, eradicating support for reform efforts (Johnston et al., 2007; INTO, 2006). Respondents described visits from *cuiditheoirí* as “chaotic” and “not days that you would look forward to” (p.228). Teachers felt the imposition placed on colleagues outweighed the benefits of learning. A collaborative learning community is unlikely to develop if teachers approach the process feeling stressed and frustrated. Instead the INTO (2006) calls for greater levels of in-class demonstrations, from which “the teacher gained much more on a practical level” (p.117).

Cuiditheoirí also expressed dissatisfaction with in-school arrangements, particularly with teachers' lack of preparation, with many staffs not having accurately identified their needs prior to the visit (Johnston et al., 2007). Consequently cuiditheoirí felt that much of their limited time was misused. Pressure to make maximum use of time may result in an imbalance of dialogue between the cuiditheoir and teachers. Both observations and questionnaires indicate that the locus of dialogue resided predominantly with the cuiditheoir rather than the teacher (Johnston et al., 2007). This imbalance may reveal a higher importance on the delivery of top-down knowledge, rather than allowing for participant reflection and control. The lack of provision for follow-up visits further complicated matters, as many cuiditheoirí felt they needed to cover as much content as possible in a single visit, as it was uncertain if there would be a follow-up visit. The intensity of such visits may have serious consequences for teacher overload.

It is clear from Johnston et al.'s study (2007), that teachers support the concept of on-site sustained CPD, designed to meet the needs of individuals. Teachers welcomed the opportunities to clarify ideas from earlier seminars, indicating that they had a better recollection of the knowledge after discussing it with the cuiditheoir. Teachers in a 2004 INTO study noted that this was especially true in the area of English. As the first subject introduced, many teachers felt they assimilated less than in later seminars, as they needed time to adjust to concepts such as strand and strand units. This revisiting of knowledge as teachers engage with implementation reflects the role of facilitator envisioned by Lyons and Pinnell (2001), with the facilitator revisiting the instructional rationale on multiple occasions, allowing for deeper understanding of the concept upon reflection and experience. Teachers also valued the opportunity to seek guidance on areas of the curriculum they were concerned about. However, it is of note that teachers did not feel comfortable or confident enough within a professional community to address these concerns in the presence of their colleagues (Johnston et al., 2007). Study data also reveals that while teachers valued this aspect of the support, they were slow to open up to cuiditheoirí, needing to develop a bond over multiple visits. The fact that less than 50% of schools received more than two visits from a cuiditheoir calls into question how effective

and widespread this feature of the support was. It also highlights the need for teachers to receive more frequent and long-term support during curricular reform.

2.22.4 Differentiation

Foundational to effective CPD is the belief that it must attend to the individual school context, in particular cultural beliefs and practices (Guskey, 1995). Study findings from Loxley et al. (2007) point to the low priority given to differentiation for school needs within the PCSP. Interviews with system planners indicated no concerted effort to tailor workshop content or materials to suit the needs of individual schools. Rather, there was an expectation that trainers would be cognisant of school contexts and make relevant adjustments. However, high levels of importance were placed on consistency and uniformity between workshops, with trainers being asked to adhere to a tight script, framework and slideshow designed at national level. In fact, only 34% of trainers felt they had received training to help them adapt content to suit the needs of individual schools (Murchan et al., 2005), with less (20%) believing they had been prepared to support teachers at different stages of their careers. In addition to the inflexible outline, trainers rarely knew the group or school they would be working with in advance, thereby limiting any opportunity to alter the content or approach to make it more relevant. The emphasis appears to be on ensuring the rigid transmission of knowledge at the expense of allowing schools to take ownership of the process, thereby supplying provider-driven rather than participant-led CPD.

Further evidence of the influence of dominant stakeholders on the regulation of CPD delivery is found in the decision, strongly supported by the INTO and NCCA, not to provide differentiated support for principals (Murchan et al., 2005). Despite extensive literature surrounding the importance of effective leadership in the change process (Fullan, 2008, 2001, 2002; Hustler et al., 2003), no extra support was provided to principals as the interested parties argued that all teachers were equal and no subset should be treated differently. However, 93% of principals felt they would have benefitted from professional development differentiated to meet their needs (Murchan et al., 2005).

Loxley et al. (2007) note that many PCSP personnel believed that it was beyond the capacity of a large-scale national initiative to differentiate professional development to suit the context and needs of individual schools. They felt that this was the responsibility of teachers and schools, and to this extent was best supported by *cuiditheoirí*. However, meeting individual schools' needs was not considered a priority in the training of *cuiditheoirí*. 63% of *cuiditheoirí* in Johnston et al.'s study (2007) felt the training they had received for working with small schools and teaching principals was either 'minimal' or 'none'. Further importance is given to this when it is considered that the majority of *cuiditheoirí* had been seconded from large schools (Murchan et al., 2005) and so could not draw on personal experience or knowledge when working with these schools. *Cuiditheoirí* also identified the need for further training when working with newly qualified teachers, schools with multi-classes, and schools with children with special educational needs (SEN). The high priority placed on knowledge delivery and planning, both at seminar and on-site level, was at the expense of teachers and schools identifying their own needs and receiving appropriate support to address them.

2.22.5 Knowledge and Methodologies

The success of CPD provided by the PCSP has generally been considered in terms of knowledge dissemination and acquisition, rather than change in practice or methodologies (Sugrue, 2011, Murchan et al., 2005, 2009). This is consistent with research conducted on traditional approaches to CPD, such as workshops and seminars (Boyle et al., 2004; Bubb and Earley, 2007; Strickland and Kamil, 2004), where 'knowledge for practice' models (Cochrane-Smith and Lytle, 1999) focus on provision of information, but fail to address how it impacts classroom teaching and learning. Murchan et al. (2009) find that 89% of teachers in their study agreed or strongly agreed that the seminars improved their knowledge and understanding of the English curriculum. However, while the vast majority of teachers could identify the key messages emphasised by the trainers during the workshops, there was evidence of confusion as high proportions also misidentified distracter statements as key messages. The authors conclude that while teachers may feel that their knowledge has been developed, the high levels

of ambiguity surrounding key messages indicate that few teachers have effectively synthesised the information to form a coherent message.

Also of concern is the perception teachers appear to have acquired from training days, that their current practice is already inline with much of the PSC (Murchan et al., 2005). The existence of such views may inhibit the change process at local level, as change in practice is fundamentally dependent on teachers' beliefs that they need to modify their instruction, in addition to the provision of sufficient support to sustain them through the process (Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2002; Gregoire, 2002; Guskey, 2002).

The acquisition of new knowledge is not in itself commensurate with change in practice (Guskey, 2000). While the PCSP seems to have succeeded in developing teachers' familiarity with the content of the curriculum (Murchan et al., 2009), it has been less effective in terms of change in practice and methodologies. Almost a third of teachers in Murchan et al.'s study (2009) expressed reservations about the contributions of the workshops in clarifying the teaching methodologies advocated by the PSC, with 22% of teachers admitting that they had not altered their teaching methodologies in light of curricular reform. For those who adopted new methodologies, DES inspectors question the degree to which they are being used to improve student learning (Murchan et al., 2005). Rather, it is suggested, poor understanding of active learning has led to teachers believing such methodologies to be the outcome, as opposed to a means to improving student learning.

There is concern that this disparity between knowledge and methodologies may not be unique to CPD experiences, and may instead be characteristic of PSC documents. This is despite the fact that one of the design principles of the PSC was that its objectives should detail not only the content to be learnt, but also the manner in which such learning should take place (Ireland, DES, 2011a). However, curricular reviews indicate, that despite its extensive volume, the PSC provides insufficient information and support for teachers in using a variety of teaching methodologies (NCCA, 2010, 2008, 2005; Sugrue, 2004), "the emphasis being on a theoretical rather than practical framework" (NCCA, 2008,

p.198). NCCA reports argue that throughout recent curricular reform, there has continued to be a need for more effective support for teachers in using different teaching methodologies, organisational settings, strategies for differentiation and promoting higher-order thinking skills (NCCA, 2005, 2008).

Recent research examining the school and classroom experiences of primary school children in Ireland suggest that teachers have failed to implement new methodologies advocated by the PSC (McCoy et al., 2012). There is little evidence of active learning, with textbooks and workbooks maintaining a dominant role in classroom activities. The report findings indicate that whole-class teaching is still the predominant approach used, supporting the findings of previous studies in the area (NCCA, 2005, 2008). Of most concern is the INTO (2006) finding that the practice of whole-class teaching has increased in the past decade, despite the methodologies espoused by the PSC.

However, there appears to be a large disparity in the methodologies employed according to the experience of the teachers. Almost three quarters of teachers with less than two years teaching experience used group work as a frequent mode of instruction and learning, compared to a third of teachers with thirty years experience. Similarly, less experienced teachers are more likely to encourage children to question each other, engage in hands-on activities and consider pupils' experiences and environment as starting points in learning. Such variation according to experience strongly indicates that while initial teacher education has impacted on the use of active methodologies in the classroom, CPD provided by the PCSP has not resulted in change in practice. McCoy et al. (2012) advocate the use of additional hours allocated to non-class contact time under the Croke Park Agreement (2011) for targeted professional development, in which colleagues can share experiences and expertise across a variety of pedagogical approaches.

Teachers require time and support to reflect upon new knowledge, incorporating it into a personal interpretative framework (Kelchtermans, 2004). The *cuiditheoir* service provided by the RCSS had the potential to guide and support teachers as they applied the new knowledge in context. Research advocates

modelling (Lyons and Pinnell, 2001), observation (Goodall et al., 2005) and dialogue (Knight, 2009) in a supportive environment over an extended period of time (Joyce and Showers, 1995; Bubb and Earley, 2010). However, the focus on the *cuiditheoir* as a provider of resources inhibited its ability to help teachers personally interact with the new knowledge in a manner which would impact on classroom practice.

Johnston et al. (2007) note that *cuiditheoirí* frequently provided details of classroom materials or resources while teachers took notes or made copies of the resources. Little attempt was made to model how such resources could be used in instruction to impact on pupil learning. The authors argue that one-way dialogue and lack of active learning are in direct contrast to the constructivist principles which the *cuiditheoirí* are espousing. To ensure that effective support is provided to teachers there needs to be greater clarity in the rationale and role of the *cuiditheoir*.

2.22.6 Policy Planning

The development of school plans for each subject area was a dominant feature of reform efforts, both on the part of schools and the PCSP. The promotion of planning received high priority in the training of *cuiditheoirí*, a fact which is clearly reflected in their subsequent work with schools (Johnston et al., 2007). Focus group discussions with DES inspectors indicate that schools now have a cohesive plan of instruction, with a greater degree of continuity between classes (Murchan et al., 2005). They also noted improved professional dialogue between teachers throughout this collaboration. However, Inspectorate reports (Ireland, DES, 2002, 2005a), also express concerns with the quality of this planning, citing examples of schools where the principal devised the plan without consultation with staff, and policies which have not been implemented in the classroom. Evidence indicates that many principals and teachers consider the purpose of school plans to be for use by external agencies such as inspectors, rather than as a beneficial process for the school community (Murchan et al., 2005). The high priority placed on planning, while teachers are simultaneously expected to change classroom instruction, is corrosive rather than conducive to reform. Rather than fostering authentic collegiality through discussion of

teaching and learning, the emphasis is placed on completing externally mandated technical functions within a restricted timeframe. The lack of ownership of the plans developed is perhaps reflected in teachers' consistent use of children's textbooks, as opposed to the collaboratively developed school plan, for both planning and teaching (Sugrue, 2011).

Teachers, principals and inspectors agree, that despite accompanying rhetoric of professional dialogue and collaboration, the process of curriculum planning placed undue pressure on staff, with all parties questioning the efficacy of the process (Murchan et al., 2005). The overemphasis on planning, at the expense of supporting implementation, is cited as a source of teacher and principal overload. These feelings of fatigue and overload are likely to have been compounded by the timeframe set for implementation. Little time was allowed for teachers to adjust and reflect as they were expected to implement, on average, two subjects per year, over the course of 6-7 years. This is likely to engender a sense of being subject to continuous change (NCCA, 2010).

2.22.7 Future Directions of CPD in Ireland: *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life*

Reviews of the previous curricular reform initiatives led to numerous recommendations for future professional development. Firstly, that the balance between in-school support and off-site seminars be redressed, with greater emphasis being placed on the former (Murchan et al., 2009). Additionally, CPD needs to reflect all three dimension of the knowledge-practice conception (Cochrane-Smith and Lytle, 1999), encouraging schools to develop a culture where teachers reflect on current practices in light of research, and demonstrating for as well as observing colleagues (Murchan et al., 2009; Conway et al., 2009). Developing a genuine community of practice requires the reconceptualisation of time and resources at a national level. Sugrue (2011) argues that 'stealing' time and relying on the good will of colleagues cannot form the foundation of collaboration and sharing expertise. Rather control needs to be devolved to schools to allow them to budget for substitute cover or other resources to enable release time for teachers.

Finally, while crediting the involvement of teachers in the planning, designing and provision of CPD, Murchan et al. (2009) call for the inclusion of other qualified and experienced personnel in the process. Sugrue (2011) advocates the adoption of school-university partnerships, an alliance which could offer both theoretical foundations and support for implementation in the context of the school.

The Teaching Council's policy paper on the continuum of teacher education (2011), espouses much of the internationally validated research in the area of CPD. Most notably it envisages a coherent, multi-level approach to professional development, providing differentiated learning opportunities for teachers. The move away from system-driven to participant-led CPD is of importance, as one of the primary functions of the council is to advise the Minister of Education and Skills in relation to the professional development of teachers. The adoption of such an approach offers the potential for a balance between formal and informal learning.

The launch of *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People* (Ireland, DES, 2011a) provides an opportunity to address concerns and recommendations expressed regarding the professional development provided for the PSC. However, despite rhetoric of school-based reflection and evaluation, professional development is likely to retain its transmission rather than transformative model, as no facilities or support have been outlined to enable schools to become authentic communities of practice.

While unequivocal about the importance of professional development in the change process, the report fails to give explicit details regarding the form such CPD will take. Much of the section entitled 'Improving Teachers' and ECCE Practitioners' Professional Practice' provides general statements on the need for professional development, but little detail surrounding the content or nature of provision. However, there are clear indicators that, despite many criticisms of the fragmented nature of CPD in Ireland (Sugrue, 2011; Loxley et al., 2007; Granville, 2005; Coolahan, 2003), professional development provided will

continue to follow a training model, relying heavily on courses. While coherence is sought, it is between the stages on the continuum of teacher education (initial teacher education, induction and CPD), rather than ensuring that individual teacher's professional development builds collaboratively towards a greater goal. It is also of concern that the references to CPD for primary school teachers within the objectives section refer almost exclusively to courses run by education centres and other CPD providers. Attendance of such courses every five years will be "an element of the continuing professional development that teachers require to maintain their professional skills" (Ireland, DES, 2011a, p.36).

Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life is being introduced at a time of unprecedented national concern regarding literacy levels, given recent disappointing scores on PISA (OECD, 2009a) and the 2009 NA (Eivers et al., 2010). It is therefore unsurprising that the DES seeks to prioritise literacy and numeracy in the school curriculum, and address the lacunae of the existing curriculum. While it is important to avail of the opportunity to devise a curriculum that reflects internationally validated best practice, the document advances a model which seeks to update teachers' knowledge-base, rather than considering the multiple factors involved in transforming practice. The details of the proposed changes are listed in seven brief bullet points, outlining the knowledge teachers need to have. These range from understanding the process of early reading to developing teachers' enjoyment and capacity in literacy. No information is provided to clarify how this emphasis will differ from the current curriculum, or how teachers will be supported in acquiring and applying this new knowledge. Equally, the paragraph on methodologies and approaches restates those espoused by the 1999 PSC, but fails to clarify how the previous failure of teachers to adopt these approaches will be addressed.

The report does address some of the criticisms of the professional development approach adopted in the implementation of the 1999 PSC, namely leadership and to a lesser degree differentiation. In contrast to the paucity of professional development for principals in previous reform efforts, *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life*, clearly places the management team of principal and deputy principal at the centre of school change, playing "a pivotal role in

creating a school climate that supports effective teaching and learning” (Ireland, DES, 2011a, p.39). The need for principals to understand the theory surrounding teacher learning, school organisation and reflective practitioners are acknowledged and these capacities are to be developed through courses, training, provision of materials and on-line advice and support. However, while such tailored CPD does recognise the unique role of principals and deputy principals in leading and supporting change, no provision is made for shared or distributed leadership as envisioned by Booth and Rowsell (2002). This narrow view of leadership, to the exclusion of literacy leaders within schools, limits potential for significant impact on teacher and student learning (Cobb, 2005).

There was also widespread criticism from teachers, principals and *cuiditheoirí*, regarding previous failures to adapt professional development to meet the needs of different schools (Murchan et al., 2005, 2009; Loxley et al., 2007). This initiative recognises the different needs of English-medium and Irish-medium schools, DEIS schools, the needs of English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners, children with SENs and ECCE. However, no reference is made to the size of the school, or the role of the teaching principal, issues which impacted on the effectiveness of recent professional development experiences (Murchan et al., 2005, 2009; Johnston et al., 2007). A premise of the report is that through a process of self-evaluation, schools will recognise individual strengths and areas for development. While this is laudable, it is unclear what support schools will receive while reflecting upon current practice, and indeed the guidance they will receive in addressing needs once identified. Without effective sustained support from knowledgeable others, there is a danger that self-evaluation will become another externally mandated task to be completed, rather than an opportunity for the school community to direct their own learning.

Given the marked difference between the current economic climate and that of the early 2000's, it is interesting to note any changes in proposed professional development approaches. Numerous references are made throughout *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life* (Ireland, DES, 2011a) to value for money, and it is clear from the explicitly stated targets, assignment of responsibilities and indicative dates that the government seeks maximum control of any financial

investment. The result is a top-down, highly centralised approach, using existing organisations and support, with minimal investment in new resources. The document explicitly states that “we know that additional resources will simply not be available to us as we seek to bring about very significant change” (p.15). This perhaps accounts for the decision to rely heavily on external course providers as the financial burden lies with individual teachers. This is especially interesting given criticism within the document on of the small range of summer courses available relating to literacy and numeracy, and equally concern regarding teachers’ uptake of such courses. Difficulties in provision and uptake of such courses will be addressed through the imposition of regulations on teachers and providers, rather than examining factors inhibiting current practice. The need for maximum return on investment may also account for the strong emphasis placed throughout the document on assessment at student, class and school level.

Of greatest concern is the failure to provide information on the nature of the professional development to be provided. The document *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life* repeatedly states its intention to “provide CPD courses” (e.g. p.40) or “provide guidance and training”, however the lack of specifics regarding this professional development raises questions as to its perceived importance in achieving the changes envisioned. Reference to professional development for teachers is limited to a paragraph in the accompanying briefing note (Ireland, DES, 2011b), detailing the Minister’s intention to assign responsibility for designing and delivering “a programme of training” (p.6) to the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), an amalgamation of the PCSP, RCSS and SDPS. No rationale is provided for the decision to rely almost exclusively on teachers in the planning, designing and delivery of CPD, despite calls for greater involvement of other experienced parties, such as universities (Murchan et al., 2009; Sugrue, 2011, NCCA, 2010).

However, there are indications that concerns regarding the training received by facilitators are being addressed as the briefing note (Ireland, DES, 2011b) states that the training of the national team of literacy and numeracy associate trainers will take place in the school year 2011-2012, with the training of teachers and

principals to begin in September 2012. While such an extended period of time offers much potential for the formation of a deep understanding of both curricular and professional development matters, no information is available as to how much of this time is to be allocated to training, or indeed the nature of the training. It is important to note that while wide-scale training may not be scheduled until September 2012, the PDST, a team of approximately sixty personnel, are currently providing support across all curricular areas at both primary and post-primary level, supporting DEIS schools and also providing assistance for Reading Recovery. It will be challenging for an already overstretched service to find sufficient time to develop a deep understanding of pertinent literacy and numeracy issues, in addition to an effective awareness of the change process.

Resorting to a tried and tested format of professional development in a challenging financial climate may appear to be a prudent move, as the DES (Ireland, 2011c) in its press release states that “the strategy has been developed in a way that keeps additional costs to a minimum”. However, the combination of greater responsibilities with more limited resources and personnel cannot but inhibit potential for reform. Teachers recognised the in-school support provided by the RCSS as being highly beneficial (Murchan et al., 2005; Johnston et al., 2007), many calling for it to become a permanent feature. While on-site consultation remains a responsibility of PDST personnel, it is difficult to see how sixty trainers can offer sustained support to all primary and post-primary schools, in addition to their other duties.

2.23 Building Bridges of Understanding: Theory and Actual Classroom Practices in Multiple Comprehension Strategy Instruction

The two-year ethnographic study entitled *Building Bridges of Understanding: Theory and Actual Classroom Practices in Multiple Comprehension Strategy Instruction* (MIC, 2009), sought to address the disparity between current research and information available in Irish primary schools, and also the significant

shortcomings of professional development, particularly relating to CSI. The creation of a professional learning community, comprised of one visiting professor, one college lecturer and nine classroom teachers, integrated the theoretical knowledge of the college lecturers with the craft knowledge of practitioners in the field. The school/university study aimed to:

- Explore current research and recommend practice in the development of a whole-school programme of effective comprehension instruction for Irish primary school pupils
- The dissemination of knowledge and expertise among staff in a diverse range of educational settings, through the in-school support of literacy leaders
- The development of active and purposeful readers, who can apply a collection of strategies, questioning and evaluating a text in the construction of a personal interpretation

2.23.1 Selection of Schools and Participants

Partners were sought for the school-based literacy research through an article in the April 2008 edition of the INTO's monthly magazine, InTouch. Cognisant of the importance of leadership in the professional development process, all interested principals provided a written commitment to the promotion of this approach in their individual schools, stating that if selected, the literacy leader would be provided with opportunities for whole-staff development on CSI during the second year of the project. Nine teachers of varying levels of teaching experience were selected from a range of school settings, representative of diverse provision within the primary education system, including disadvantaged, rural, large urban and a Gaelscoil.

2.23.2 Professional Development of Literacy Leaders

A high importance was placed on the professional development to be received by the literacy leaders to foster understanding and expertise in all components relating to comprehension development, thereby enabling them to provide effective support at primary level. When applying to participate, schools were informed that teachers would receive between 74-81 hours professional development, both on-site, in the college setting and in local education centres.

The research team met for three days professional development prior to the commencement of the school year, becoming familiar with the key elements of CSI through presentations by more knowledgeable others, modelling, collaborative discussions in which best practice was shared and opportunities to engage with appropriate children's literature. Throughout the two years, further support was provided through monthly meetings at which participants shared their achievements and concerns within their own educational settings, reflected on journal articles and other professional readings, shared resources and identified areas they perceived to be in need of further development. Presentations were made by both external experts in the field and also members of the research team who had expertise in areas such as assessment and TSI. During the first year, principals were invited to attend an evening seminar, to share knowledge of current research regarding effective comprehension instruction and to collaboratively discuss practical issues and concerns regarding future dissemination among the whole-school. Participants were also given the opportunity to share their knowledge and practice with a wider audience through presentations at the Irish Learning Support Association (ILSA) Annual Conference, Reading Association of Ireland (RAI) Annual Conference, as well as a number of regional presentations.

All participating teachers received support visits in the classroom setting during the first six months. Each visit was tailored to suit the needs of individual teachers, incorporating both modelling, observation and reflective discussion. Teachers within the research team also visited each other's classrooms to observe specific elements of instruction and reflect on pupil progress. Further opportunities for collaboration and support were provided through the creation of an online forum. The importance of collegiality and trust in the implementation of knowledge into practice was noted in the study's final report. "The esprit de corps and the formation of personal friendships engendered by these regular monthly meetings contributed greatly to the evolving knowledge of comprehension instruction throughout the two year period" (MIC, 2010, p.6).

2.23.3 Dissemination of Knowledge

Following the piloting of instruction in individual classrooms in the first year of the study, the literacy leader and principal collaboratively planned a systematic professional development approach to disseminate knowledge and support change in practice across the whole school. While the research team continued to provide support, guidance and opportunities to reflect, decisions pertaining to CPD were made at a local level by those who had the greatest understanding of school culture and the unique needs of the pupils and staff. This in-school, differentiated support involved modelling, observation, reflective formal and informal conversations, in addition to workshop presentations.

2.23.4 Implications Arising from Study Findings

Participating schools reflected positively upon the experience and there was universal commitment to the continuance of this approach to comprehension instruction into the future. Findings reflect a change in emphasis from testing to teaching comprehension in many of the study schools. However, as with international studies (Hilden and Pressley, 2007; Duffy, 1993b; Block and Lacina, 2009), it was recognised that “supporting teachers in a strategic approach to comprehension instruction requires much time and effort and must be collaborative, gradual and sensitive to the changing contextual conditions from classroom to classroom” (MIC, 2010, p.9). While whole-school professional development commenced in the second year of the study, all schools recognised the need to extend its implementation over a longer period of time.

Theoretical knowledge of the process of comprehension is found to be of great importance, both for change leaders and teachers, in the application of a strategic approach to comprehension instruction. The acquisition of this knowledge was facilitated through presentations, professional conversations and also the publication of an accompanying manual written by the research team. Arising from the study, the research team calls for greater guidance for teachers about the significance of a gradual release of responsibility model of instruction and the revision the PSC to provide explicit exemplars of such instruction among pupils of all ages and abilities.

2.24 Summary

This chapter outlined the evolution of comprehension strategy research, originating in the studies of effective readers and developing to include instructional approaches which gradually devolve responsibility for strategy use from teacher to pupil. Current research emphasises the key role of collaborative dialogue in comprehension, understanding being achieved through the reconciliation of diverse viewpoints. Comprehension should begin from the earliest years, adapting in accordance to the developmental readiness of pupils.

Successful CSI is conditional on effective teacher instruction. Becoming a proficient strategy instructor has been shown to be a long-term complex endeavour, where teacher progress can be considered along a continuum, with nine identifiable stages (Duffy, 1993b). Research has shown that professional development is an essential requirement for teachers to provide instruction that is differentiated to meet the needs of individual pupils.

The literature review considered the characteristics of effective professional development, reconceptualising schools as communities of practice, where staffs work collaboratively towards a common goal. Integral to effective CPD is the provision of a balance of formal and informal learning opportunities, through a coherent, sustained approach in the school setting. Knowledgeable of the unique culture of a school, an internal coach offers opportunities to model, observe and engage in professional dialogue. However, the potential of the coach may be restricted by administrative duties. Therefore, the role of the leader is essential in understanding and managing the change process.

Significant shortcomings are identified with the predominantly centralised approach adopted in the implementation of the PSC. Concerns have been expressed with the professional development received by trainers, resulting in limited content knowledge and difficulty differentiating CPD to meet the needs of individual schools. A lack of clarity in curriculum documents accompanied by

a fragmented, one-shot approach to professional development is reflected in little change in teachers' classroom practices.

Despite concerns expressed in numerous reports (Eivers et al., 2010; Johnston et al., 2007; Murchan et al., 2005), a transmission model is being adopted for professional development accompanying *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life*. Finally, the literature review presents an alternative approach to educational reform, examining *Building Bridges of Understanding*, a two-year study which incorporates research-validated comprehension instruction and an in-school distributed leadership approach to comprehension instruction.

2.25 Research Questions Emerging from the Literature Review

This review of literature has shown an evolving understanding of the nature of effective comprehension instruction. However, it also indicates that the impact of instruction is contingent on high levels of differentiated support for teachers over a sustained period of time. Providing professional development to disseminate knowledge in a manner capable of transforming practice has proved to be problematic, particularly in an Irish context. Given the paucity of research on the nature of professional development required to ensure effective CSI in schools, it is essential that this become the focus of research.

The exposition of the literature raises many questions relevant to whole-school implementation of CSI. It is evident that teacher attitudes and beliefs are central to their acceptance of the rationale for change and by extension active participation in the process. Therefore, it is vital that the progress of teachers as they engage with change be explored, to identify their perspectives on factors central to supporting them in the implementation process. Similarly, the research has illustrated the different professional development needs of individual teachers within a single educational setting (Knight, 2009), clearly indicating the need for a differentiated approach to CPD. Identified as one of the greatest challenges involved in effective professional development (Grierson and Gallagher, 2009), approaches which provide different levels of support must be further explored.

Arising from these issues, and developing on the findings of previous studies, the following research questions have been selected as the focus of this study:

1. To what extent can a sustained, coherent, on-site professional development approach, incorporating a school-based facilitator and school-university partnership, disseminate information on research-based best practice to support the staff in implementing change? Specifically, what elements of this support do the staff find most beneficial in the reform process and equally, what factors potentially inhibit the effectiveness of such an approach?
2. To what extent do teachers' knowledge, attitudes and practices evolve and change as a result of sustained, on-site support over an extended period of time?
3. How does this long-term, school-based professional development approach affect classroom instruction? Specifically, what changes can be observed in pupil learning and engagement?

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the theoretical foundations CSI, establishing that to become active and purposeful readers, capable of constructing a personal interpretation of the text, many children require explicit instruction in strategy use from the earliest years. The research also revealed that teachers find such instruction to be challenging and complex, and require high levels of sustained support to enable them to successfully implement such an approach. Effective professional development must provide support over an extended period of time, attending to the unique context and culture of the school, and providing meaningful opportunities for observation, discourse and reflection. Emerging from these findings is the hypothesis that differentiated support and guidance, provided to teachers by an in-school literacy leader, knowledgeable of both theoretical and school factors, can effectively facilitate the implementation of a whole-school approach to CSI. Thus, children's ability to use strategies in the construction of a personal interpretation of text will be enhanced. A two-year case study was designed to explore the impact of such an approach in a large urban primary school, focusing specifically on the following research questions:

1. To what extent can a sustained, coherent, on-site professional development approach, incorporating a school-based facilitator and school-university partnership, disseminate information on research-based best practice to support the staff in implementing change? Specifically, what elements of this support do the staff find most beneficial in the reform process and equally, what factors potentially inhibit the effectiveness of such an approach?

2. To what extent do teachers' knowledge, attitudes and practices evolve and change as a result of sustained, on-site support over an extended period of time?
3. How does this long-term, school-based professional development approach affect classroom instruction? Specifically, what changes can be observed in pupil learning and engagement?

This chapter will explore the nature of this case study research and the rationale for its selection. Information will be provided on the study sample, before outlining the intervention design over the two years of the project. In conjunction with this, ethical considerations associated with such an intervention will be discussed. This chapter will also describe the multiple data sources, their collection and analysis.

3.2 Method of Research: Case Study

Single-case study was adopted as the research strategy for this study. Qualitative in nature, this open-ended, reflexive and responsive approach facilitates the exploration of the multiple perspectives of teachers and pupils, and the contributing factors involved in the dissemination and implementation of a whole-school approach to comprehension instruction.

Stake (1995) observes that a case study can capture the complexity of an individual case, appreciating the interaction of multiple variables, relationships and the pivotal role played by the context and situatedness of behaviour. Reflecting the “unique, complex, dynamic and unfolding interaction of events, human relations and other factors” (Cohen et al., 2000, p.289), the holistic design of case study research can illustrate a more detailed understanding of developing and supporting a school-based approach to comprehension instruction. To fully capture the complex reality of the issue, multiple sources of data are generated and collected. Creswell (2007) points to the bounded nature of the phenomenon being studied. While the structure of the school imposes a

natural boundary, the case is also defined by the time available for data generation and the sampling procedures applied.

Focusing on the purposes of this study, the research may be considered to be an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995), as the exploration of the case offers further insight into the foundational theories. Researchers and consecutive reports have highlighted, not only the importance of CSI, but also the effective dissemination of school-wide approaches to same. The selection of a single bounded system, in the form of the study school, endeavours to illustrate the dynamics and contextual conditions involved in such a change of practice. The flexible nature of the research design allows issues to emerge in their natural environment, and subsequently conceptual categories to be assigned in an inductive manner, determined by the findings rather than theoretical understandings. However, while priority is placed in emic issues arising from the data, it is impossible to disassociate the analysis from etic issues, as these theoretical understandings not only form the framework of the research, but are also fundamental components of the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs of the researcher.

The purposeful sampling employed in the selection of the study school, in addition to the “idiographic” nature of case studies (Yin, 2009, p.15), place limitations on the generalisability of the findings. It may be argued that the purpose of case studies is an understanding of human systems, events and interactions within a complex but unique context (Cohen et al., 2011), and not on the ability to replicate or transfer findings to a wider audience. However, Yin (2009) claims that case studies can offer *analytic* rather than *statistical* generalisations, by contributing to the expansion and generalisation of broader theory, thereby informing and guiding future research. This is achieved through comparing and contrasting findings arising from the conceptual categories with the theoretical findings proposed in the literature review.

3.3 Sampling

For the purposes of this study, convenience sampling was used, as the researcher was also a teacher in the study school. Despite the purposeful selection, from many perspectives this school may be considered to be representative of the 93 primary schools nationally with more than 500 pupils enrolled. Though representing less than 3% of the total number of first level schools, large schools face particular difficulties in disseminating knowledge and co-ordinating whole-school instructional approaches. In matters relating to management and curricular instruction, the study school adheres to DES policy and guidelines and therefore may be considered to be typical of the wider field. However, in the year prior to the study, the school was one of nine selected to participate in the comprehension project, *Building Bridges of Understanding*, and therefore would be supporting the staff in a whole-school implementation of the programme over the course of the study.

The decision of the school to volunteer to participate in the project also pointed to a desire among the staff to reflect upon and change their approach to comprehension instruction. The purposeful selection of the school has implications for its potential generalisability to a wider population. However, the focus of this research is to provide a rich description of the uniqueness and complexity of this individual case, centring on exploring and understanding the study school in all its parts.

3.4 Site, Setting and Participants

The study school is situated in a large suburban, predominantly residential area. The co-educational school has been in existence for twenty-eight years and caters for the needs of almost 800 pupils. It has a three-form entry, with cases of four classes in two levels. The pupils are randomly assigned to class groups on entry into junior infants and it is school policy to maintain these groupings until sixth class.

The staff comprises of forty-one teachers, including an administrative principal and deputy principal, twenty-seven class teachers and twelve Special Education Teachers (SET). There are also eight Special Needs Assistants (SNA) working in the school. The staff varies widely in terms of experience, ranging from two Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT) in their first year of service, to two teachers with over thirty years teaching experience. Within the school there are three job-sharing partnerships. Furthermore, due to the large size of the school there is a high level of staff turnover between school years. Over the course of the two years of the study, seven teachers were absent on maternity leave. Consequently, at the end of the first year, five teachers who had engaged in the professional development left the school. Six permanent teachers returned to the school at the start of the second year. The level of staff turnover had implications for the nature of professional development provided.

In May 2008, the study school successfully applied to participate in a comprehension project, *Building Bridges of Understanding: Theory and Actual Classroom Practices in Multiple Comprehension Strategy Instruction*, under the directorship of Dr. Martin Gleeson, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick and Dr. Ann Courtney, University of Hartford. The researcher was nominated by the school principal to work as a member of the project team during the academic year 2008/9, participating in workshops and presentations to inform and develop CSI in Irish classrooms.

The school management team were aware of the centrality of the professional development of the staff to high standards of teaching and learning. Co-ordination of staff development had been assigned as a post of responsibility within the school, with staff needs being identified internally and appropriate CPD action being identified. School policy listed the organisation of staff development days, engagement of external expertise and attendance by a representative of the staff at specific in-service as possible responses. However, due to constraints and limitations arising from the implementation of the moratorium on promotions in the public sector (Ireland, DES, 2009), other administrative responsibilities were prioritised and this special duty was

terminated. Responsibility for staff professional development now rests with the principal.

In accordance with national policy, the school has a collaboratively produced English Plan, outlining a whole-school approach to the teaching and learning of English. The plan largely reflects the content of the PSC. With regard to comprehension, listening and speaking is prioritised in the early years, with greater emphasis on written response in the senior classes. Comprehension is addressed through prediction and the answering of literal, inferential and evaluative questions. Only at first and second class level does the document refer to children posing their own questions. Finally, the importance of reading aloud to pupils is emphasised at all class levels as a means of “hearing reading modelled, seeing others enjoy reading and continuing reading as a habit into adulthood” (School Plan, 2004). However, it is explicitly stated that text should be read without interruption, except to ask questions or to seek predictions.

The study school places a high value on literacy education and children have access to a class library whose stock is updated each term. The school also implements Children and Parents Enjoying Reading (CAPER), a shared reading initiative from junior infants to second class, designed to enable each child to read a book suited to his/her age and stage of reading development on a nightly basis throughout the school week. In recent years the school has introduced an eight week peer tutoring programme in third class, focusing on the development of accuracy and fluency in reading. Commercial reading schemes are used throughout the school, being supplemented by class novels from first to sixth class. The basal reading material is exclusively narrative until third class, where an additional book containing expository text is used. All class levels use at least one English workbook.

3.5 Ethical Implications

The research was conducted in accordance with the *Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*, published by the British Educational Research

Association (BERA, 2004, 2011), respectful of all participants, institutions and knowledge connected to the study. Ethical issues considered, included gaining access to the site and participants, informed consent, maintaining confidentiality and protecting the anonymity of all participants, and the secure storage of data.

Additionally, the researcher was cognisant that some teachers may prefer not to participate, but feel unable to refuse due to perceptions of being unhelpful to a colleague. Therefore, access was verbally renegotiated with individuals at each stage of data collection, prior to formally obtaining consent.

The dual role of researcher and teacher presented both benefits and ethical challenges during the course of the study. A supportive, respectful relationship existed between the researcher and study participants, with the researcher having extensive background knowledge of school culture and context. However, assuming the role of researcher altered this relationship and had the potential to cause tension among staff. Every effort was made to remain open and transparent with teacher participants regarding the study, while also respecting the pressures and time constraints placed on staff members by participation in the project and other school responsibilities. Staff were assured that their decision to partake in the study was completely voluntary and they should not feel under duress due to prior personal or professional relationships with the researcher. Equally, teacher participants were also assured that all material discussed or observed, either as part of an interview or in an informal conversation, would remain confidential and not be revealed to any other staff member.

The researcher was also cognisant of the impact her existing role as teacher could have on the contributions of pupil participants. Fine and Sandstrom (1998) indicate that a lack of trust in the researcher on the part of some children may account for their refusal to partake in the study. The impact of this factor is likely to be diminished as the children are acquainted with the researcher. However, it is also possible that the children may feel under duress to participate or to provide what may be considered to be favourable answers in an effort not to upset a teacher.

Children were explicitly and repeatedly informed that their participation was voluntary and would in no way impact on school performance or relationships with any teacher. The researcher and class teacher made no reference to the study throughout the course of the school day, unless in response to a pupil's question. Throughout the study, the researcher continually reminded pupils that questionnaires and group interviews were an opportunity to provide their honest opinion and that there would be no negative consequences to providing viewpoints which appeared to be critical of school or class procedures or pedagogy. Throughout the group interview sessions, the researcher stimulated discussion through questioning, but made no value comments to indicate agreement or disagreement with particular views. Neither comments made during these sessions nor questionnaire findings were referred to at any stage.

3.5.1 Gaining Access

Convenience sampling facilitated easy access to the study school, as the researcher had nine years experience working as a member of the staff. Formal access was granted from the Board of Management and the school principal. However this did not preclude individual participants from refusing consent.

3.5.2 Informed Consent

The principle of informed consent arises from each individual's right to freedom and self-determination (Cohen et al., 2011). Prior to the study, informed consent was sought from the school through the Board of Management, individual teachers, parents and children. Copies of letters requesting access, letters of information for participants and consent forms are provided in Appendix A. Though worded differently, each letter contained details of the project, a rationale for undertaking this research, the proposed role of the participant in the research, the nature of the data, in addition to the manner in which it was to be collected. The letters proceeded to inform participants of any future use of the data gathered and its secure storage. Participants were informed of the voluntary nature of their involvement in the project, retaining the right to refuse permission or withdraw from the study at any stage, without any adverse impact on the participant's relationship with either the researcher or the school. Details were

provided should participants wish to seek further information or clarification. In adherence to ethical guidelines, information sheets and consent forms were provided to participants on separate sheets, ensuring that they could reflect on the details throughout the study. Where different levels of participation were involved, for example observation and audiovisual recording, participants' consent was requested for each element, allowing some to agree to observation, but refuse consent for recording.

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that children who are capable of forming their own views should be afforded the opportunity to freely express them in matters which directly affect them, commensurate to their age and maturity. Children have the right, not only to be fully informed of the study, but also should be facilitated to provide or refuse consent, and these rights should be communicated in a manner which children are likely to understand (Alderson and Morrow, 2004). To this extent, consent was sought not only from parents/guardians, but also from students. The researcher met with individual classes, orally detailing involvement, consent issues, and the right to refuse to be part of the study. The researcher also emphasised that there would be no negative consequences should a child refuse or withdraw consent. For children from second class up, this information was provided in an information sheet, differentiated to suit age and literacy levels. Children were allowed time to review the information and consider their position before returning the consent forms to the researcher. At all times prior to the data collection, children were reminded that they could withdraw their consent or choose not to contribute.

Within the teaching staff, two members chose not to participate in the study. Among the sixth class pupils being observed, recorded and interviewed, in both Year One and Year Two, all pupils and parents provided consent, with one child refusing consent for recording purposes. Between one and three children in each class recorded opted not to participate and the teacher and researcher made arrangements for them to work with another class at the same level during the time of recording.

3.5.3 Privacy and Confidentiality

Every effort was made to ensure privacy for participants when conducting interviews or recording using audiovisual equipment. Due to the lack of space and busy nature of a large school, the majority of the teacher interviews were scheduled for outside of school hours, allowing the use of the researcher's classroom. Interviews scheduled during the school day were conducted in the deputy principal's office. Despite these precautions, on two occasions other teachers entered the room during the interview, compromising the privacy of the participants. With the agreement of both participants the interview continued following the disruption.

All identifiers were deleted from data gathered to maintain the confidentiality of participants. This extended to class levels or length of experience of a teacher, where this was considered to identify the participant in question. Information used to describe participants was presented in crude report categories, providing general rather than specific details.

3.5.4 Data Storage

Recordings of individual interviews, group discussions and comprehension instruction were conducted using a digital recorder or camcorder as appropriate. Immediately following the recording, the files were transferred to a computer hard disk before the original files were deleted and transcripts made. All recorded files and transcripts were stored as encrypted files on a password protected computer. Documents such as questionnaires, respondent validated transcripts and the research diary were stored in a locked cabinet, accessible only by the researcher.

3.6 Study Design

This two-year study has a dual focus, exploring a whole-school approach to CSI and the professional development required in its implementation. This section

will examine the instructional approach outlined by *Building Bridges of Understanding* (MIC, 2009), the CSI programme adopted by the school, and the nature of the support envisioned as part of the school/university partnership. The focus of the study will be on the extent to which such an approach develops the teachers' knowledge and consequently impacts on teaching and learning within the school.

3.6.1 Comprehension Strategy Instruction in Study School

In April 2008, the study school applied to participate in the school/university project, *Building Bridges of Understanding*, to develop a whole-school approach to CSI. As part of this initiative, one teacher, in this case the researcher, was nominated by the principal to collaborate with eight other schools and the co-directors of the project, Dr. Ann Courtney and Dr. Martin Gleeson of Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, while also piloting research findings in her own classroom. During this time the researcher worked collaboratively with two teachers at the same class level, piloting and exploring means of disseminating knowledge and supporting teacher implementation of this approach. This case study explores the first two years of the dissemination of this approach to comprehension strategy instruction across the whole school.

Comprehension Strategies

A difficulty associated with the PSC is the failure to clearly identify comprehension strategies for instruction. McLaughlin (2012) observes that publications have used a variety of labels in the naming of strategies. The school has promoted consistency in the language used in areas such as mathematics, therefore there was universal agreement on the need for a coherent and systematic approach to strategy instruction, with teachers using the same terms and references. In line with research findings that pupils benefit more from the introduction of a few key strategies (Block and Paris, 2008; Gill, 2008), the study school engaged with eight strategies, summarised in Figure 3.1.

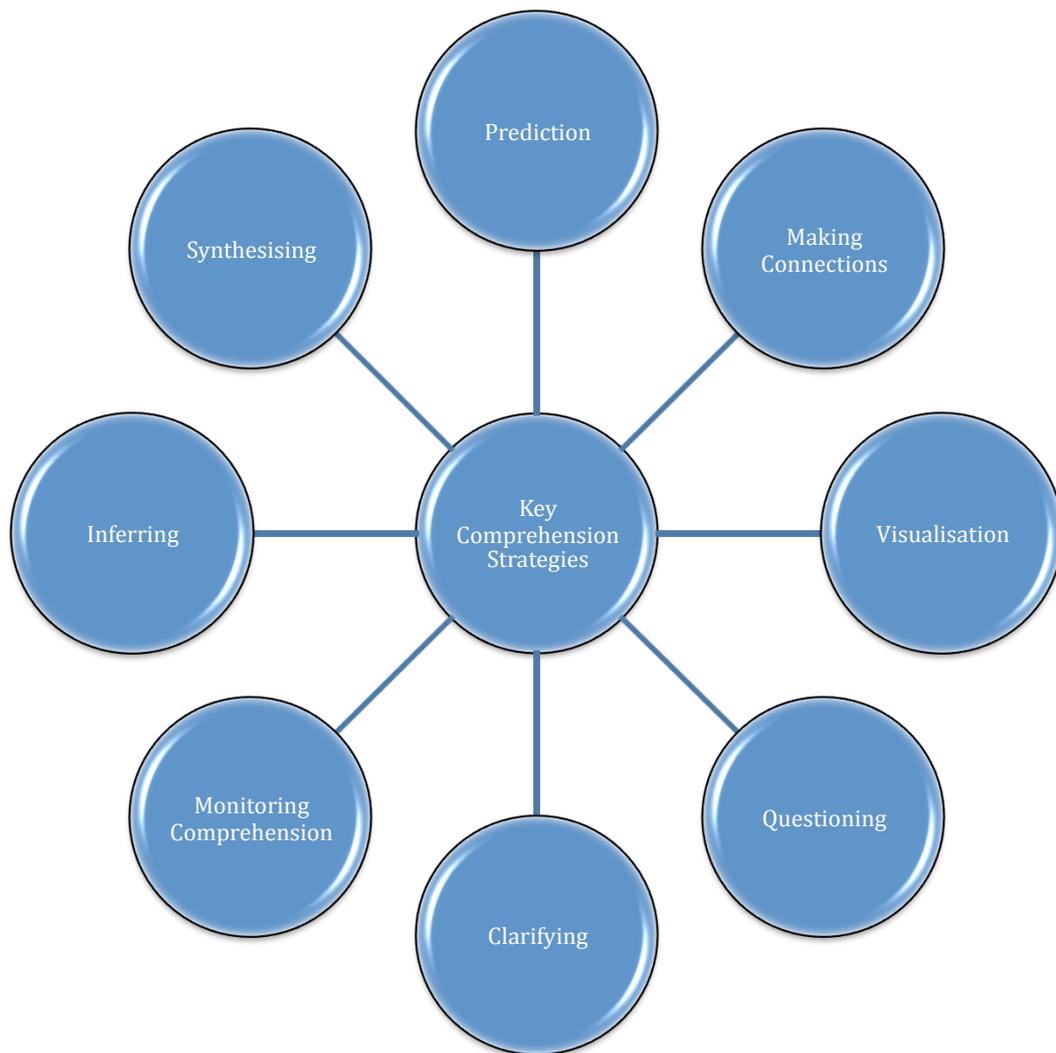


Figure 3.1 Comprehension Strategies in Study School

For instruction purposes, monitoring comprehension was introduced as two separate strategies: *clarifying* to denote difficulty comprehending an idea within the text and *declunking* to indicate failure to understand a word or phrase within the text. Drawing heavily on the work of Klinger et al. (2004), the decision to use the neutral terms ‘click’ and ‘clunk’ was a deliberate attempt to eradicate the perception that unknown words are synonymous with failure. The integral role of both formal and informal vocabulary development in comprehension was highlighted, particularly in the senior classes.

In line with international research, CSI began in junior infants, adding breadth and depth to the range of strategies taught throughout the primary school years. A spiral curriculum was adopted in planning the whole-school approach. Research indicates that young children apply strategies such as prediction and

visualisation with ease, but find higher-order strategies such as inference to be more challenging. Therefore, the school implemented an instructional programme which introduced strategies gradually and at a time considered to be developmentally appropriate. The phased structure of the school plan is summarised in Figure 3.2.

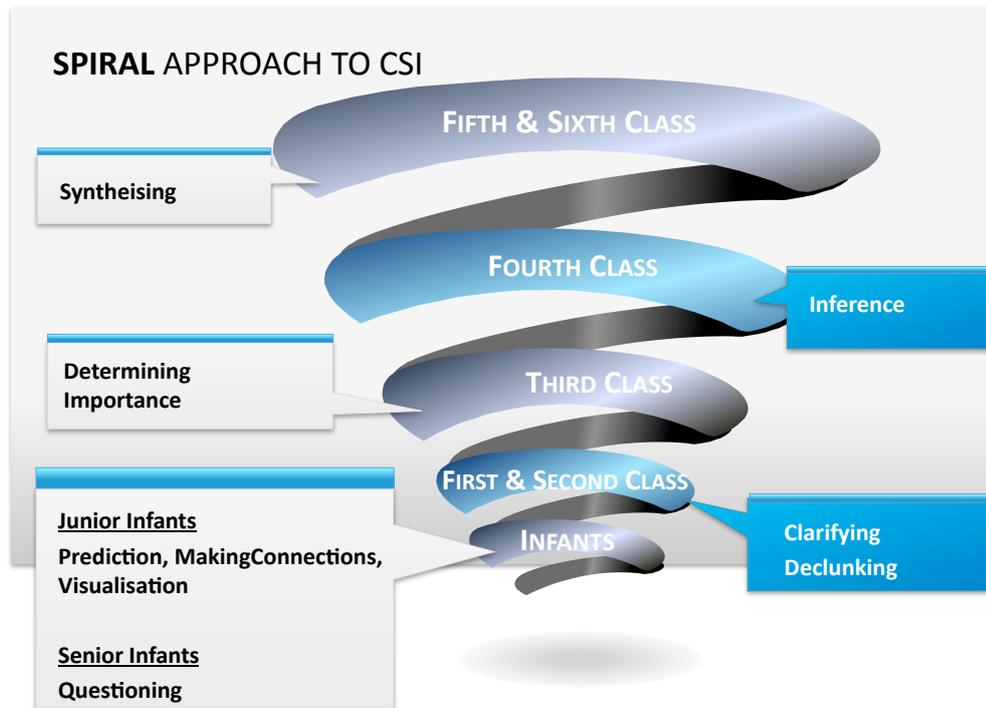


Figure 3.2 Spiral Approach to CSI

Comprehension Strategy Instruction

The proposed instructional programme is rooted firmly in research-based best practice. Explicit instruction is provided through teacher think-aloud during the reading of high quality children's literature. Responsibility for strategy use is gradually devolved to pupils through teacher scaffolding and the provision of opportunities for independent strategy application. As pupils become more familiar with a strategy, teachers and pupils collaboratively construct anchor charts, using the children's own words to act as an aide memoire (cf Appendix B). Teachers were advised to provide at least one read-aloud session per week, engaging in this instruction more frequently when introducing a new strategy. However, the length and frequency of read-aloud sessions were at the discretion of individual class teachers.

The introduction of this approach denotes a shift in the school from a traditional written focus on comprehension to a predominantly oral, collaborative interpretation of the text. This dialogic approach also entails a restructuring of power relations within the class (Reznitskaya, 2012), as pupils accept more responsibility for the direction and flow of discussions, questioning, introducing new topics and seeking clarification. A series of Comprehension Process Motions (CPMs) or hand movements was agreed by the staff to denote strategic thought on the part of the child (cf Appendix B). Pupil use of strategies, and by extension CPMs, across curricular areas was actively encouraged.

Comprehension Instruction: Transactional Strategies Instruction

The school plan outlined that TSI, peer-led collaborative groups constructing personal interpretation of text, would be introduced from third to sixth class. However, third class teachers were already implementing an eight-week peer tutoring project during the second term. Cognisant of the pressures created by teacher overload and the need to provide coherent literacy instruction to pupils, the researcher worked with the third class teachers to adapt elements of the peer tutoring to reflect research findings underpinning CSI. One second class teacher decided to implement TSI in her classroom.

Implementation of this approach consisted of groups of 4/5 children of different reading proficiencies using their strategies to devise a collaborative interpretation of text. In classes adopting TSI, teachers selected their mixed ability groups in October, using the following criteria:

- Teacher observation of reading ability and strategy use
- Standardised test scores
- Personality traits e.g. leadership qualities, shy, talkative
- Established friendships within the class

As children's ability to engage in a collaborative discussion and analysis of text was developed through whole-class read-aloud sessions, the teacher also developed pupils' ability to work in supportive and co-operative groups through separate group work activities in other curricular areas e.g. SPHE. Through this forum the teacher explicitly modelled and scaffolded the children's social skills

development so that a comfortable and supportive environment was created, which valued communication, collaboration and respect for divergent opinions. Figure 3.3 illustrates an example of a group contract detailing the skills developed during this period.

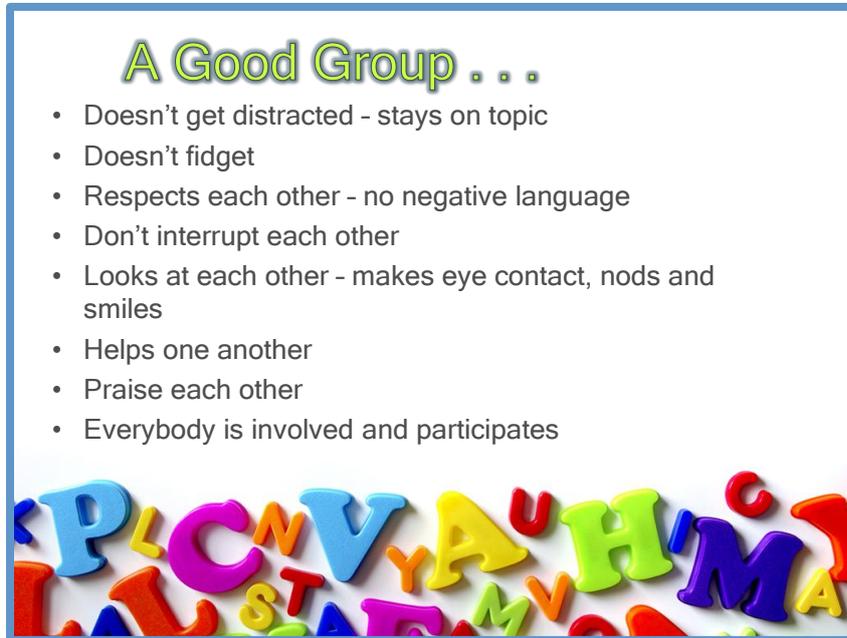


Figure 3.3 Social skills developed in preparation for TSI

Teachers maintained these groups throughout the year to establish rapport, trust and an environment in which children were comfortable expressing their thoughts and opinions.

The pace and introduction of TSI was determined by the readiness of the class. Fifth and sixth class teachers began instruction in January/February, while fourth class teachers implemented this approach in March/April. High levels of teacher control were assumed in the initial fortnight of implementation. SETs and SNAs assisted the teacher in this process. Teachers worked with one group per session in the introductory stages, gradually withdrawing control as the pupils assumed greater responsibility.

To support pupils in the initial stages of collaborative work, teacher-designed material was provided to structure the conversation (cf Appendix C). Pupils were assigned roles of:

- Leader
- Prediction Expert

- Declunker
- Questioning Expert
- Clarification Expert

through the selection of a role card. The purpose of this role was to further internalise strategy application in the construction of meaning. As pupils became more familiar with TSI, they no longer assumed roles and engaged in an authentic collaborative discussion.

Cue cards were designed to provide a framework for collaborative exploration of narrative and information text genres. As children became more proficient in the application of strategies, the script impeded the flow of conversation in the construction of meaning and was therefore left aside.

Finally, to enable children to become cognisant of the degree to which they applied strategies in the interpretation of a text, children collaboratively completed a self-assessment activity. They reviewed:

- How well they worked together
- The use of strategies in the comprehension of text
- Their discussion of the text
- Areas for future exploration

High priority was placed on the selection of reading material for TSI. Teachers used novels and other authentic material for these lessons, rather than the reading scheme adopted by the school. The emphasis was placed on material that engaged children's interest while simultaneously providing a vehicle for strategic reading.

Resources

The use of high quality children's literature to model strategic reading and to stimulate talk and discussion was an integral feature of the CSI approach. A high priority was placed on the acquisition of appropriate picturebooks for all class levels (cf Appendix D for list of books). The junior class libraries already stocked a wide range of suitable picturebooks. A selection was removed from general circulation to ensure that pupils were unfamiliar with the text before

instruction. Middle to senior class libraries prioritised novels with some informational texts. Sourcing appropriate materials for these class levels was problematic as they are not widely available through national booksellers or libraries. Working collaboratively with other teachers involved in the school/university partnership, a range of high quality picturebooks appropriate for older readers was identified and purchased through on-line retailers.

The following criteria were used in the selection of possible texts for instruction:

- The text is rich in meaning and open to multiple interpretations.
- Meaning is conveyed not only through text, but also through visual images and design elements.
- The text is likely to be new and unfamiliar to the children.
- The content of the text would likely be of interest to the children.
- If the topic is unfamiliar, enough contextual cues are provided to aid pupils in the construction of meaning.
- The text provides opportunities to expand pupils' vocabularies, without being so complex as to inhibit comprehension.

Teachers identified the need to specify books for each class level and accordingly, books were allocated and distributed to a teacher at each class level. Teachers required support and knowledge to use the picturebooks to develop comprehension, in particular attending to interpretation of visual images and design elements (Serafini, 2012).

Throughout the study teachers identified the need for specific supplementary material to support pupils' implementation of strategies. These were created and developed within the school. They included:

- Bookmarks to support pupils when clarifying (third to sixth class)
- Bookmarks to support pupils when declunking (senior infants to second class)
- Visualisation fans (senior infants)
- Material to scaffold and support pupils' engagement in TSI, i.e. cue card for narrative and information text, role cards, declunking cards, self-assessment forms (fourth to sixth class)

A copy of these resources is included in Appendix E.

3.6.2 Professional Development Approach in Study School

The school sought to support teachers in the implementation process through a sustained, coherent approach to professional development that could be differentiated to meet the needs of individual teachers and was responsive to the unique context of the school. The school was aware that while some elements of the professional development could be planned, the reflexive and responsive nature of the approach envisioned meant that a rigid and highly structured framework could not be imposed. The nature and level of the support would largely be determined by the needs of the staff at a particular moment in time.

A key feature of the approach was that it would be sustained, offering support to teachers at each stage of the change process. Consequently no end-date was set for the professional development, rather the principal and coach decided to review progress on a regular basis. A tentative framework for the phased introduction of strategies across two years was outlined (Figure 3.4). The study examines this initial implementation process.

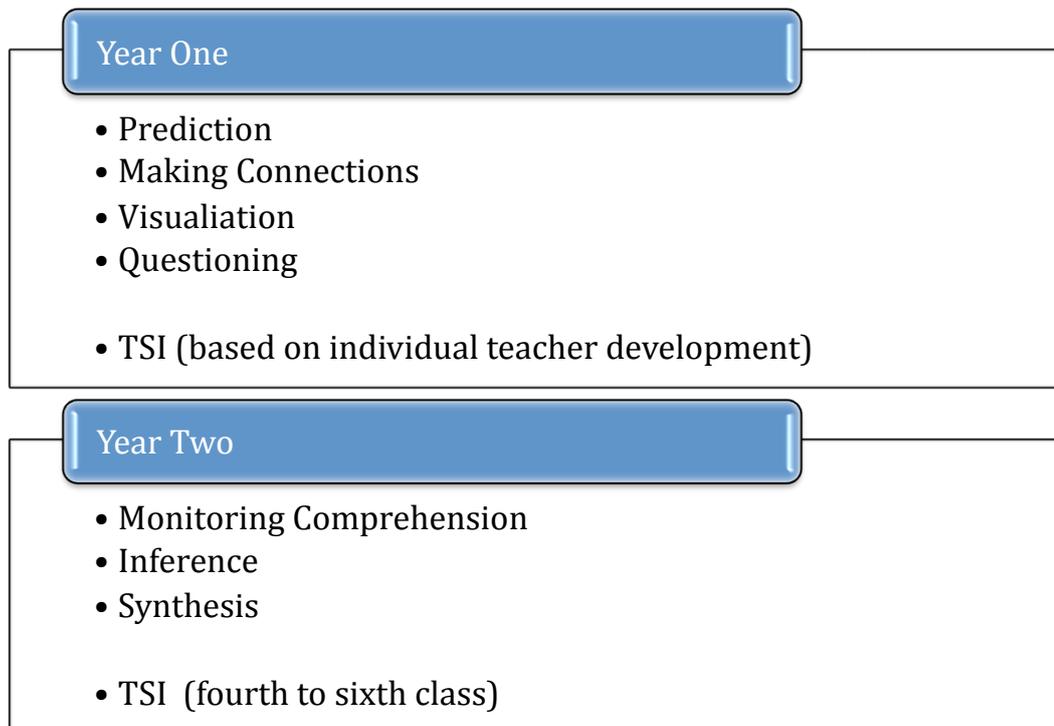


Figure 3.4 Strategy Introduction Year One and Year Two

A balance of formal and informal development opportunities was provided. Each teacher was provided with a copy of the *Building Bridges of Understanding* manual, co-authored by teachers and lecturers in the school/university partnership. This balanced theoretical knowledge with practical advice and guidance for teachers. Included with the manuals were three DVDs, capturing instruction of each strategy across a variety of class levels. The DVDs featured teachers and pupils from the study school.

Theoretical understanding of comprehension was also developed through the provision of termly workshops. The school management team ensured that time was set aside at each termly staff meeting to discuss the project. The initial meeting detailed the rationale behind CSI and the need for comprehension instruction, exploring staff perspectives of comprehension and outlining an overview of the programme. Subsequent workshops provided updates on instructional progress, examined samples of pupils work, clarified issues observed by coach or raised by staff, highlighted specific strategies or instructional elements and finally outlined future areas for development (cf Appendix F for sample workshop presentation). Though opportunities were always provided for teacher contributions, time constraints and a full agenda resulted in monologic presentations.

The meaningful engagement of teachers in the change process was also achieved through the provision of less structured professional development opportunities. As the CPD was situated in the site of implementation, teachers could engage in professional conversations with the coach and other colleagues, seeking clarification, advice or guidance at the point of confusion or difficulty. Support could be tailored to suit the needs of the individual teacher. Involvement of peers in many of the conversations assured teachers that this was a normal issue in the implementation process. Equally, the collaborative discussion of possible solutions offered the potential to expand the dissemination of knowledge beyond knowledge *for* practice to incorporate knowledge *in* and *of* practice.

Coaching and Observation

Integral to the professional development approach was the use of on-site modelling, coaching and observation, led by a knowledgeable and informed member of staff. Throughout the course of each year, all teachers attended at least four modelled lessons. Each scheduled coaching session focused on an identified strategy at a particular class level, with class level teachers, SNAs and SETs with pupils at this level, in attendance. The structure of each session varied in accordance with the nature of the strategy for instruction, the age of the pupils and the needs of participants. The general structure included:

- Meeting teachers to discuss progress/issues arising from previous instruction
- Sharing of good practice/reflection on pupil learning
- Outlining new strategy, key issues and aims for lesson
- Provision of optional observation sheet (cf Appendix G)
- Explicit explanation of strategy for children
- Modelled lesson
- Debriefing with children
- Reflection and analysis with teachers
- Provision of appropriate reading materials or other resources

The CPD approach positioned teachers as active learners rather than passive recipients of knowledge, as the teachers engaged in a reflective discussion of the impact of strategy instruction on pupil learning. Following the modelled session, teachers had the opportunity to apply their learning in their own classrooms. Concerns or queries during this implementation phase could be resolved through discussion with the coach or other colleagues.

Increased international attention is focusing on the importance of selecting a coach capable of leading and supporting a transformative professional development approach (Taylor et al., 2007; Rainville and Jones, 2008). The coach needs rich background knowledge in CSI and its position in literacy instruction, an understanding of the principles of adult learning, and the ability to foster and develop relations over a period of time. Within the study school, the researcher was nominated as coach as she had previously conducted research in

the area. Additionally, the researcher had worked as a classroom teacher in the school for ten years, therefore understanding the culture of the school and also bringing increased credibility to the process as someone who has implemented the instruction in their own class. Finally, the researcher worked as a mentor for NQTs in the study school, receiving regular professional development from the National Induction Programme for Teachers. In this context, the researcher had experience supporting teachers on the continuum of teacher education and in the co-ordination and planning of a coherent approach to professional development. Further professional development in both comprehension instruction and adult learning was provided through participation in the *Building Bridges of Understanding* initiative.

Facilitating on-site modelling and observation required reallocation of resources and personnel and co-operation of all members of the school community. Following discussions with the principal, deputy principal and coach, it was agreed that one afternoon a week would be dedicated to coaching activities. The coach's class would be supervised by an infant teacher. Teachers agreed to supervise colleagues' classes to facilitate participant attendance. A provisional timetable was distributed outlining coaching sessions for the medium-term. The coach devised a yearly plan (cf Appendix H) which was shared with the principal and deputy principal. Throughout the study the presence of student teachers in the school enabled further redistribution of resources, offering the potential for extra coaching and observation sessions.

School Community

The development of a community of learners was extended beyond the narrow conception of teachers and pupils. Initial focus centred on teacher and pupil learning. However, akin to Bubb and Earley's (2007) vision of 'staff' rather than 'teacher' development, the focus expanded over the course of the study to include SNAs, the school inspector and parents. During Year One the inspector made three visits to the school while working with NQTs. Following observation of strategy lessons in these classrooms, information on the initiative was provided by the principal and coach. The inspector monitored pupil progress in the two classes throughout the year. A subsequent visit was arranged in the final

term of Year One to view a whole-class read aloud with sixth class pupils and to observe them collaboratively analyse text in TSI lessons. Opportunity to discuss pupils' own perspective of strategic instruction was also provided. Parents were involved on both a formal and informal level. Teachers initially discussed the change in instruction during parent/teacher meetings. Subsequently further information and suggestions were provided through letters home (cf Appendix I). The school website and monthly newsletter were also used as sources of communication in this area.

3.7 Research Design

An outline of the study school's approach to comprehension instruction and accompanying professional development was discussed in the previous section. This research endeavours to examine the effectiveness of such a professional development approach on teachers' knowledge and instruction, identifying key elements which support teachers in the change in practice. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 outline the time line for the case study, detailing the introduction of strategies across all class levels and the collection of data over the two years of the research.

Table 3.1: Research Design: Year One		
Date	Research Focus	Participants
September 2009	Teacher Questionnaire	
	Principal Questionnaire	
	Pupil Questionnaire	<i>Focus Group</i>
October 2009	Staff Presentation	
	Class Level Meetings	
	Prediction	<i>Senior infants, 1st, 2nd, 3rd</i>
November 2009	Prediction	<i>4th, 5th, 6th</i>
	Making Connections	<i>1st, 2nd</i>
December 2009	Making Connections	<i>Senior infants, 5th, 6th</i>
January 2010	Staff Meeting	
	Making Connections	<i>3rd, 4th</i>
February 2010	Questioning	<i>Senior infants, 1st, 2nd</i>
March 2010	TSI Observation	<i>4th, 3rd</i>
	Questioning	<i>5th, 6th</i>
April 2010	TSI	<i>4th, 2nd</i>

May 2010	Visualisation	<i>Senior infants, 1st, 2nd</i>
	Declunking	<i>1st, 4th</i>
	Prediction	<i>Junior infants</i>
June 2010	Staff Meeting	
	Making Connections	<i>Junior infants</i>
	Teacher Interviews	
	Teacher Questionnaires	
	Principal Interview	
	Principal Questionnaire	
	Pupil Questionnaires	<i>Focus Group</i>

Table 3.2: Research Design: Year Two		
Date	Research Focus	Participants
September 2010	Staff Meeting	
	Teacher Questionnaires	
	Teacher Interviews	
	Principal Interview	
	Pupil Questionnaires	<i>Focus Group</i>
	Prediction	<i>1st, 3rd, 5th</i>
	Class Level Meeting	<i>Senior infants</i>
October 2010	Making Connections	<i>1st, 5th, 3rd</i>
	Questioning	<i>5th</i>
November 2010	Questioning	<i>1st, 3rd</i>
	Class Level Meeting	<i>2nd</i>
	Clarification	<i>4th</i>
	Visualisation	<i>1st, 5th</i>
December 2010	Visualisation	<i>3rd</i>
	Making Connections	<i>Junior infants</i>
January 2011	TSI	<i>5th class</i>
February 2011	Clarification	<i>1st, 3rd, 5th, 6th</i>
	TSI	<i>5th, 6th</i>
	Visualisation	<i>4th</i>
March 2011	Determining Importance	<i>4th, 5th</i>
	Inference	<i>5th, 4th</i>
	TSI	<i>4th</i>
	Class level Meeting	<i>1st, 2nd</i>
April 2011	Visualisation	<i>Junior infants</i>
	Synthesis	<i>5th, 6th</i>
May 2011	Determining Importance	<i>3rd, 6th</i>
June 2011	Teacher Questionnaires	
	Teacher Interviews	
	Pupil Questionnaires	<i>Focus Group</i>
	Principal Interview	
	Video Recordings	<i>Infant, junior, middle & senior classes</i>

3.8 Data Collection

This section will provide information on the multiple methods used in the generation of data. A summary of data sources in this study is provided in Table 3.3.

<i>Table 3.3: Data Set</i>			
Data Source	Sample	Year One	Year Two
Researcher Observation and Diary Reflection		✓	✓
Questionnaire	Principal	✓	
	Teachers	✓	✓
	Sixth class pupils	✓	✓
Semi-Structured Interview	Principal		✓
	Teachers		✓
Group Interview	Sixth class pupils		✓
Lesson Transcripts	Sixth class pupils	✓	✓
Video Footage of Lessons	Infant pupils		
	Junior pupils		
	Middle pupils		✓
	Senior pupils		

3.8.1 Observational Data

Robson (2002) observes that what people say they do can often differ from the reality of their actions. Observation enables the researcher to examine the validity of participant statements by comparing first-hand experiences to second-hand accounts. Sensitive to the context of the study, observation allows the researcher to appreciate the interaction of individuals, relationships, activities and events, often becoming aware of previously unknown elements or

discovering information participants are unwilling to reveal in an interview or questionnaire (Cohen et al., 2011).

In this study the researcher assumes the role of participant-as-observer. Conducting the observation over a two-year period facilitated a deeper understanding of the evolution in the change process and the unique interaction of personalities, contexts and resources over this time. The established role of the researcher within the study school ensured a natural relationship with participants, one which Gold (1958) notes may reveal ‘insider knowledge’. The participants are accustomed to the presence of the researcher and this should also reduce the impact of the Hawthorne effect. The observation of the teacher-researcher best approximates the natural environment and consequently the researcher exerts less control over the collection of data than other instruments such as interviews (Stake, 1995).

However, the biased and subjective nature of participant observation must also be acknowledged. The involvement of the researcher’s attitudes, beliefs and emotions shape not only the interpretation of events, but can also determine what is to be observed. The study addressed the potential bias of the researcher through the triangulation of multiple sources of data, contrasting the researcher’s perspective with the views held by various participants. Achieving a balance between participation and sufficient detachment to observe and analyse is challenging (Yin, 2009; Cohen et al., 2011), placing pressure on the researcher to become involved in as many group activities as possible, while also detailing observations in the form of field notes.

The researcher endeavoured to achieve this balance through the use of field notes and a reflective diary. Following observations of teacher modelling sessions, read-alouds, staff meetings and informal professional conversations, the researcher took immediate field notes, expanding on these in the research diary at the earliest convenience, thereby allowing the least amount of time to elapse between observation and reflection. Research diary entries included information on:

- Logistical factors such as time schedules, location, participants involved

- Notes on methodologies used and observed
- Reflections, interpretations and directions for future work

The reflective and inductive nature of the research diary enabled the researcher to synthesise thoughts on current and previous observations, thereby organising constructs to account for actions and behaviours. These in turn illuminated future avenues for exploration.

3.8.2 Recorded Observations

The collection of audio-visual material can reduce the impact of observer bias in the interpretation process (Cohen et al., 2011; Flick, 2009). The data facilitates repeated observation of fleeting interactions or events, thereby enabling the researcher to revisit the situation as a more complete understanding evolves over the duration of the study. Simpson and Tuson (2003) note that a more unfiltered record is achieved through the use of video recording. At the heart of recording is understanding how social reality is constructed in a specific context (Flick, 2009), therefore the ability to capture non-verbal gestures and interactions can provide greater clarity and insight into the subtleties of the case. The effectiveness of this approach is greatest when used in conjunction with other research instruments and the researcher has become familiar with the setting and participants (Heath and Hindmarsh, 2002).

Video and audio recording endeavours to capture the reality of the unique situation, however, the presence of the recording equipment can create the problem of reactivity (Cohen et al., 2011). The researcher noted that some of the pupils who would normally contribute to the discourse remained silent during the recording process. Teachers involved in the video recording also observed this phenomenon. Flick (2009) also cites the issue of when to initiate and complete recording as a source of researcher selectivity. Similarly, decisions taken on the nature of the camera's focus, capturing either a narrow or panoramic view, is a determining factor in the data gathered. In this study a panoramic view was used as the researcher sought to capture the interaction of pupils and teachers, rather than the reactions of individuals. In one recording the teacher placed the children in a circle, which while enabling the participants to interact fully, restricted the view accessible by the camcorder at any one time.

The recorded observation sessions are summarised in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: Audio-Visual Recordings			
<i>Date</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Recording Instrument</i>	<i>Role of Researcher</i>
December 2009 (Year One)	Sixth class	Digital voice recorder	Participant
April 2010 (Year One)	Sixth class	Digital voice recorder	Participant
September 2010 (Year Two)	Sixth class	Digital voice recorder	Participant
May 2011 (Year Two)	Senior class	Video recorder	Observer
June 2011 (Year Two)	Junior class	Video recorder	Observer
June 2011 (Year Two)	Infant class	Video recorder	Observer
June 2011 (Year Two)	Middle class	Video recorder	Observer

The data gathered captured teacher and pupil interaction during CSI, namely teacher read-alouds. Initial audio recording with sixth class focused on pupils' use of strategies in collaborative discourse and analysis of text. The researcher assumed the role of teacher, scaffolding and modelling to meet the needs of individual pupils. This teaching and learning can be compared and contrasted to the lessons recorded in the final term of Year Two. The researcher sought to establish to what extent the dissemination of knowledge through sustained in-school coaching and support had impacted on teacher instruction and consequently pupil learning.

A number of criteria were used in the selection of teachers and classes for recording purposes. The researcher wished to observe a class representative of each level within the school. The teachers approached by the researcher,

reflected the diverse range of experience within the school, ranging from five to twenty-seven years teaching. Two of the teachers were interviewed, enabling an analysis of instruction and perception. A third teacher declined the interview due to time pressures and work commitments.

Consent was initially sought from the principal and individual teachers, before approaching the pupils and parents. Where consent was not given, arrangements were made for pupils to work in a neighbouring class. To best capture the naturally occurring activities filming was conducted in the teacher's classroom. One teacher requested the use of an empty classroom as this would provide more space. Decisions on seating arrangements were taken by the class teacher, as the researcher explained that the focus was on the familiar, everyday events. To this extent the teachers also determined the length of the session, being asked to finish where they normally would.

Efforts were taken to limit the impact of the recording equipment in the classroom, placing it to best capture the group interaction, while not dominating the social situation. Pupils were reminded to speak out loud to allow the instruments to capture their voices. In some cases this may have intimidated quieter pupils. As pupils generally remained seated there was no disturbance caused by pupils unintentionally blocking the camera (Cohen et al., 2011).

3.8.3 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were employed in this research to ascertain the perspectives of teachers, pupils and the principal over the two years of the study. While this research is predominantly qualitative in nature, the questionnaires facilitated the collection of some ordinal data through use of rank ordering and rating scales. However, all questionnaires administered relied heavily on open-ended questions. Cohen et al. (2011) recommends the less structured word-based form of questionnaires for site-specific case studies, as they best capture the complexity and specificity of the individual case. The authors note that while open-ended questions present greater challenges in terms of analysis and comparison, they may offer 'gems' of information not accessible through other formats.

Central to the design of the questionnaires was the purpose for which they were intended, to determine participants' opinions on CSI and, in the case of teachers and the principal, the effectiveness of the accompanying professional development. The researcher was also conscious of layout, clarity and precision of wording, and the time it would take for teachers to complete the questionnaire. Principal and pupil questionnaires were piloted among the eight other schools involved in the *Building Bridges* initiative, while piloting of the teacher questionnaire was co-ordinated with one of these schools. Through this pre-testing, commonly misunderstood questions were identified and rectified, ambiguities in wording were rephrased for greater clarity and areas where respondents required greater room were highlighted.

Questionnaire: Principal

The questionnaire (cf Appendix J) was administered at the end of Year One to determine the principal's view on the benefits and challenges associated with comprehension instruction in the school. It also sought his views on the effectiveness of an in-school facilitator in the professional development approach adopted. Finally, opportunity was provided for the principal to identify areas for future development. This questionnaire identified issues for further exploration in the subsequent interview.

Questionnaire: Teachers

Four questionnaires (cf Appendix K) were distributed to teacher participants over the course of the study. The first questionnaire was administered in September of Year One to establish current comprehension instruction, knowledge and concerns. The researcher distributed questionnaires to the 36 teachers involved in the study and participants were given a fortnight to complete the survey and return it to the researcher. 28 questionnaires were returned.

A second questionnaire was distributed in June of Year One to establish teachers' perspectives on changes in instruction. Cognisant of the pressures on teachers at the end of the school year, the researcher opted for a short questionnaire, with a single focus on CSI. The open-ended questions focused

specifically on impact on pupil learning and the challenges in implementing a new methodology. 31 out of 36 questionnaires were completed and returned.

The third questionnaire, administered in the September of Year Two, predominantly focused on the professional development approach adopted in the dissemination of knowledge, as information on CSI had been previously collected. The format of the questionnaire differed slightly from those employed previously, including some closed questions and rating scales. Only 31 questionnaires were distributed as five teachers were returning following leave of absence and had not participated in the study in Year One. 23 questionnaires were returned.

The final teacher questionnaire was distributed in the June of Year Two. This was the most extensive of the four questionnaires as it sought participants' summative reflections and evaluations of CSI and an in-school teacher-led professional development approach. Open-ended questions, ranking and rating scales were utilised in this process. The low response rate of 21 questionnaires reflects the unprecedented pressures on the staff during this time. In addition to administrative duties associated with the end of a school year, teachers were also involved in the preparation of a school musical and the organisation of events to mark retirements in the school. Many participants expressed their intent to complete the questionnaire but were unable to find time to do so given other pressing commitments and responsibilities.

Questionnaire: Pupils

The researcher wished to explore any potential impact of the change in instruction on pupils' self-perception and reading habits. An open-ended questionnaire was administered to a sixth class at the beginning and end of each year of the study (cf appendix L). The Year Two sample was also provided with a blank sheet at the end of the study, on which they could record any observations or comments, unstructured or directed by the researcher's wording of questions. Convenience sampling was used in the selection of this group, as the school requested the researcher use her own class for the generation of this data. This caused the least disruption in the school as the sample group were also

used in the recording of read-aloud sessions throughout the year. No names were used on the questionnaires, however, a pupil code enabled direct comparison between September and June findings. The selection of sixth class prevented the use of the same cohort in Year Two. However, through the use of the same class level, limited comparisons can be made between Year One and Year Two.

3.8.4 Interviews

Stake (1995, p.64) observes that “the interview is the main road to multiple realities”. Conducting individual interviews as part of the study provided participants with opportunities to present their unique interpretation of the situation in their own words (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007), expressing how they feel about events, relationships and activities (Cohen et al., 2011). The collection of information from multiple perspectives also sought to supplement and illuminate data generated from other sources. Oppenheim (1992) also notes that interviews have a higher response rate than questionnaires, as the respondents are more involved and motivated.

Fifteen interviews were conducted with adult participants during the study. Observing participants’ cautious but guarded acceptance of the project in the first year, the researcher decided to defer use of interviews until the beginning of the second year, relying instead on questionnaires and participant observation. In the initial stages of the study, informal conversations with teachers revealed concerns about “not having the right answer” or that judgements may be made on their instruction. The decision to conduct interviews only when teachers had experienced some professional development allowed for greater comfort and confidence levels, while also enabling teachers to compare and contrast current and former methodologies.

Interviews were conducted with the principal at the beginning and end of Year Two, providing an account of the leadership process and an overview of the whole-school experience. Seven teachers were interviewed at the beginning of Year Two and six at the end of the study. The participants were selected to represent the diverse range of the teaching population within the school. They included teachers at different stages of their teaching career, teaching various

class levels and also included two teachers who were returning to the school following a leave of absence and therefore would be engaging in the study for the first time.

By agreement with the participants, the majority of the interviews took place in the school building, outside of school hours. Two participants arranged for the interview to be conducted in their own home. A further two interviews were scheduled for during school hours, a suitable time and location being arranged with the agreement of the school management. The researcher experienced significant difficulties arranging interviews at the end of Year Two due to a number of factors. As a teacher within the school, the researcher was cognisant of the increased work load and pressure experienced at the end of year, and therefore tried to arrange interviews in the preceding months. However, involvement in sacraments, school tours and preparation for school concerts, in addition to a large scale production of a school musical presented challenges in scheduling interviews. The unexpected announcement of the retirements of both principal and deputy principal created an atmosphere of unrest in the school while the staff awaited a decision on a new principal. This environment was not conducive to conducting interviews as many of the staff had more immediate priorities and concerns. While all seven original interviewees agreed to partake in a second interview, it was only possible to schedule three of these due to prior commitments and work responsibilities. A further three teachers volunteered to be interviewed at this time.

The semi-structured nature of the interviews enabled comparative data to be generated across participants, thereby increasing the reliability of findings (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007). The flexible approach also allowed the researcher to custom questions on an individual basis so as to probe deeper and acquire a richness in responses to deepen understanding of the phenomenon, clarifying any misunderstandings or uncertainties. Suoninen and Jokinen (2005) point to the importance of wording and phrasing in interviews, as it holds the potential to persuade or influence responses. Careful formulation, analysis and external review of topic questions prior to the interview, reduced their potential to lead or bias the respondent. The use of open-ended questions addressed not only

participants' concerns regarding right/wrong answers, but also acquired a personal and interpretative view of the world. Cohen et al. (2011) also note that open-ended questions may lead to unanticipated answers, thereby revealing relationships or conclusions previously unconsidered.

Rapport between researcher and participant can encourage co-operation and enable open dialogue. However, it is important to acknowledge and reflect upon the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee (Kvale, 2006; Nunkoosing, 2005). The role of teacher-researcher positions the teacher as a colleague and therefore endeavours to redress the power balance between the partners in the interview. Equally, increased knowledge of participants and the context in which they work allows for greater interpretation and clarity of subtle clues or inconsistencies. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) caution that the position of the interviewer as a peer may lead to a degree of reciprocity, with participants providing answers they consider the researcher may wish to hear. The use of a wide, triangulated data base was employed to address this concern.

All interviews followed a similar structure. Consent was formally sought to conduct the interview and all participants agreed to the use of an audio-recording device. Interviewees were assured that all material would remain confidential and that any names used would be replaced with a code. All identifiers that may allow identification would be deleted from both electronic and hard copies of the transcript. No notes were taken during the interview process as it was considered that this may distract or concern the participants. A copy of the questions was requested by two participants prior to the interview.

The principal's interviews discussed impressions of the English PSC and associated professional development experiences, followed by establishing his perspective on the challenges and support required by the staff of a large school engaged in educational reform. Initial impressions and expectations of the approach to CSI was compared and contrasted to the perceived reality, specifically its impact on teachers and pupils. The principal outlined the challenges and benefits of the current professional development approach, in particular the role of the principal and the in-school coach.

Teacher interviews opened with a general discussion on the importance of comprehension and teachers' sources of knowledge on appropriate instruction, before focusing on the nature of past and current CSI. Teachers provided insight into the impact of this instruction on the pupils. Professional development experiences were also a focus of the interview process, eliciting the elements of support that teachers found to be most and least beneficial in the change process.

Subsequent to the interviews, each participant was provided with a transcript for review and validation, allowing the opportunity for clarification on miscommunications or additional information to be provided. All responses concerned the inelegance of language or grammar rather than the essence of the message conveyed.

In the analysis of the interview data, the focus was not only on the unique insights of each participant, but also on the commonalities and differences in the perspectives of the principal and teachers of varying experience and class levels. Through classifying and ordering the units of meaning, the researcher sought categories which would allow the comparison of participant opinions. In this process attention was also paid to the failure of certain participants to refer to common themes or the emergence of such a theme among an individual participant. Cohen et al. (2011, p.427) note the "unavoidable integration of analysis and interpretation" in this process, with the researcher using informed intuition to derive conclusions from the cumulative data. Through integrating these conclusions with other data sources, the researcher sought to strengthen understanding, not only of the existence of multiple perspectives, but also the rationale behind such differences.

3.8.5 Group Interviews

Flick (2009) advocates group interviews as they better reflect the manner in which opinions are expressed and shared in a natural environment. They also provide opportunities for respondents to challenge or correct statements which are not socially shared or considered to be extreme. Cohen et al. (2011) propose group interviews as the most appropriate form of interviewing children, as the

interaction between members encourages responses, rather than relying exclusively on adult questioning. It also provides a less intimidating forum for discussion (Greig and Taylor, 1999).

While Flick (2009) suggests that such groups comprise of strangers rather than friends, many factors contributed to the researcher's decision to use a class as basis for the group interview. For pragmatic reasons, utilising an existing group format involved the least amount of disruption to other teachers and classes. This was considered to be important in respecting the goodwill and co-operation of the staff. Additionally, as the children were familiar with each other and the environment of the classroom, this was considered to be the most conducive to an open and honest sharing of opinions, within a limited timeframe. The researcher was cognisant that homogenous composition of the group narrowed the range of perspectives. However, it was hoped to achieve a deeper appreciation of the children's views on the change in instruction, as they shared common experiences and histories.

As a matter of convenience the principal suggested the use of the researcher's class. As sixth class pupils, they would have the greatest ability to reflect and offer opinions on the changes in instruction and their own strategy use. They would also have experience of all the comprehension strategies and engaged in TSI. The selection of this sample also enabled the researcher to compare conceptual categories arising from this forum with comparative data generated through questionnaires and read-aloud transcripts.

Consideration was given to the role of the adult in the interview process. Cohen et al. (2011) suggest that group discussions with children can enable them to challenge and question each other in a manner and using language which could not be accomplished by an adult researcher. The role of teacher-researcher presented both benefits and challenges in this context. The children were accustomed to engaging in collaborative discussions in which they were free to voice alternate and diverse viewpoints, therefore they were not intimidated or uncomfortable in this environment. However, the children were also familiar with the researcher in an authority role which could restrict the envisioned

informal sharing of opinions. Garbarino et al (cited in Gollop, 2000) indicate that children's school experiences lead them to suppose that there is a 'right' answer to the adult's question, resulting in many providing the answers they expect will please.

Efforts to minimise the authoritative role of the interviewer included deferring the use of group interviews until the pupils were comfortable and familiar with open discourse which encouraged reflection rather than accuracy. Rather than use traditional seating arrangements, the researcher asked the children to sit in an open circle, enabling them to comfortably engage with all of their colleagues. The researcher also used the same level chair as the children, positioning herself as an equal within the group. Throughout the discussion, the researcher remained aware of the potential impact of her responses, and was careful not to make any comments or gestures which could indicate a value judgement.

The group interview was structured so that following a reminder of the voluntary nature of their participation and right to withdraw at any time, pupils were informed of the expected length of the discussion, the topics which may be covered and the method of recording the data. Every effort was taken to avoid external interruptions, however, the interview was paused on a number of occasions due to announcements on the intercom. The interview began with a general discussion of reading preferences and patterns, also exploring any recent changes in this area. The dialogue then focused on children's understanding and perceived use of strategies. Finally, the children shared their experiences of collaborative discourse and peer learning. Questions from children were actively encouraged and opportunity was provided for pupils to raise topics or issues they considered to be pertinent.

3.9 Data Analysis

This section discusses the analysis procedures applied to the data collected. Multiple sources were employed, generating predominantly qualitative data which was considered to be interrelated. This study aims to explore the dual roles

of an effective CSI programme and a research-validated approach to professional development on teaching and learning within a school. While informed by research, the emphasis is on theory emerging from analysis of the data, respecting the uniqueness of the individual case and taking into account the complexity and interconnectedness of participant actions, with data being intrinsically linked to the context in which it is generated.

Transcripts of individual and group interviews were made to facilitate the construction of conceptual indicators in the analysis process. These, in addition to data generated from field notes recorded in the research diary and questionnaire responses, were inputted into the qualitative data handling software *NVivo9*, where the data was categorised using codes.

3.9.1 Coding

Straus and Corbin (1990) consider coding to represent the manner in which data is deconstructed, conceptualised and restructured in a new way, leading to the development of theories to explain phenomena. The analysis process originated with careful reading and rereading of each document source, noting participant definitions of situations, issues of interest, patterns and inconsistencies. Teddlie and Tashokkori (2009) observe that qualitative data analysis is an iterative process which necessitates multiple readings and reviews of documents.

As the quantity of documents read increased, understanding evolved, giving rise to the emergence of formative themes and issues. Initial observations and reflections during this phase of open coding were recorded in the form of memos and annotations saved in *NVivo* files. Earlier documents were revisited in light of new perceptions. Where possible, the labelling codes assigned were based on participants' expressions rather than on technical language arising from the literature review. Flick (2009) considers these codes to be closer to the studied material, allowing the theory to emerge from the data rather than be defined by previous research. Through successive reading and rereading, codes became more discriminating, with some of the earlier codes applied being modified or refined.

Throughout all stages of coding the researcher was guided by the list of essential questions provided by Flick (2009, p.310), considering:

- Which participants were providing the information and their relationship with other participants, in addition to the role of the participants in the implementation process
- The manner in which a phenomenon is addressed or not mentioned
- The order in which issues are raised and the intensity or emotions associated with this
- Timing: stage of implementation

Text was coded by sentence or paragraph level, rather than pursuing a more in-depth analysis of individual words. Time constraints and the quantity of data collected were considerations in this decision. However, the researcher also sought to develop a holistic view of the data (Dey, 1999), aware that fragmenting the text into small units risks decontextualising the material. Therefore, the decision to focus on larger units for analysis was ultimately guided by the research question which sought to understand the situatedness of the phenomenon.

Moving from a wide, panoramic view of the data, the researcher sought to refine and categorise the codes, as salient features of the research began to emerge. Conceptual categories were identified and named by the researcher, using *NVivo* to create appropriate nodes to which data could be assigned. Axial coding at this level is more interpretative than the previous concrete based categories. This more abstract analysis allows key themes or issues to emerge with greater clarity. Focus centred on the relationship between the categories, seeking causes, consequences, contextual or intervening conditions. Crucial to the validity of the interpretation at this stage was a further review of the data to ensure consistency within axial codes and that a common meaning is shared within this larger group (Cohen et al., 2011). The researcher verified that no negative cases, inconsistencies or contradictions existed which might dispute theories emerging. Throughout this process reflections and observations regarding similarities or differences between conceptual categories were noted by making theoretical annotations.

Finally, the researcher applied selective coding through the process of integrating the conceptual categories that emerged in the previous stages of open and axial coding. Robson (2002) states that selective coding enables the researcher to abstract the major study themes to a higher level by selectively comparing and contrasting codes. This process allowed the reorganisation of the analysis around the structure of these major themes. Therefore, selective coding framed the response to the research questions.

Of great interest at this stage were the perspectives gathered from various participant groups: teachers, principal, pupils. Using the constant comparison method, the researcher examined the pertinent conceptual categories to identify consistent or diverging viewpoints and the degree to which some categories may be exclusive to individual groupings. Relating these categories to the central phenomenon enabled the researcher to extend beyond a descriptive level, to elaborate and specify key dimensions to the emergent theory. Once formulated the theory was once again verified against the data, seeking not only sources which may enrich the theory, but inconsistencies which may help clarify or further refine thinking.

3.9.2 Video Footage and Audio Transcript Analysis

Through the use of video footage and audio transcripts, the researcher wished to consider the degree to which dialogic teaching was occurring in the study school. The Dialogic Inquiry Tool (DIT) (Reznitskaya et al., 2011) was adopted as a framework with which to compare and contrast the recorded interactions against the six key features of a dialogic approach, specifically examining the discourse patterns between all participants. Designed to enable primary level teachers study the quality of talk in literature discussions, DIT uses six evaluative criteria or indicators to determine if teaching can be considered to be monologic, transitional or dialogic. These are:

1. Authority
2. Questioning
3. Feedback
4. Meta-level reflection: Connecting students ideas
5. Explanation

6. Collaboration

In addition to placing the teaching and learning observed on a monologic-dialogic continuum, the transcripts will also be coded in light of themes emerging from other data sources.

3.9.3 Quantitative Data Analysis

Though primarily a qualitative study, some quantitative data was generated by questionnaire responses, mainly in the form of closed questions, likert scale and ranking activities. As the emphasis placed throughout the study was on the emergence of theory from the analysis of data, an exploratory data analysis approach was adopted. This entails the formulation of hypotheses through the visual representation of data rather than the testing of pre-existing theories. The data was then used to inform and develop theories emerging from the qualitative analysis. The software programme *Excel* was used to graphically represent teacher ratings of past and present professional development experiences as indicated by likert scales.

3.10 Reliability

Divergent opinions exist regarding the appropriateness of the concept of reliability in qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2011). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest terms such as ‘dependability’ or ‘credibility’ better suit this research genre. To this extent, Robson (2002) advises qualitative researchers to focus on “not only being thorough, careful and honest in carrying out the research, but also in being able to show others that you have been” (p.176). This research addressed these issues through careful and systematic coding in an iterative manner. Furthermore, explicit information was provided on the methods applied and the rationale relating to all research designs was discussed. The provision of rich detail in the information on site, setting, participant and research design should enable researchers to replicate this study in other settings, cognisant of the importance of the addressed contextual factors on findings.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) observe that in qualitative studies, reliability can be considered to be the fit between the data generated and what actually occurs in the natural setting. Therefore, the research has prioritised participants' perspectives and concepts over that of the researcher, adopting an emic rather than etic approach to the study.

Reliability was strengthened through the use of a semi-structured interview format, with the same structure, wording and sequence for many of the questions (Silverman, 1993). However, the researcher considered it to be important to gain further insight into participant's individual worldview through exploring unique issues raised. This less structured approach, in addition to the use of open-ended questions, impacted on the reliability of the interviews, but added increased understanding and awareness of the phenomenon being studied.

3.11 Validity

The purposeful sampling of the study school limits the external validity of the research. However, the focus of the study is on the unique case, aiming to explore a single school to appreciate the complexity of promoting and disseminating a whole-school approach to comprehension. Stake (1995) notes that "the real business of the case study is particularisation" (p.8). A rich and detailed description of participants, setting and culture are provided as Schofield (1996) suggests, that the provision of such in-depth details can enable other to determine the extent to which findings can be generalised to another context.

A further constraint on the validity of the study is the dual role assumed by the researcher as participant and its implications for researcher bias. Merriam (1998) argues for researcher bias to be clarified from the outset of the study, enabling readers to determine the extent to which this may impact on the inquiry. The researcher also adopted practices designed to limit researcher influence on the study. In the process of data collection, open-ended questions were preferred, allowing the participants' perspectives to emerge rather than being predetermined. The semi-structured nature of interviews also allowed for careful

analysis of the wording to ensure no preconceived notions were influencing answers. In addition, all questionnaires were piloted and revised to avoid potential bias in questions. Following interviews, transcripts were typed up and presented to participants for validation. Any misinterpretations or subsequent thoughts were addressed. Finally, priority was placed on participant interpretation over the researcher's thoughts and insights.

Researchers suggest that triangulation can address threats to validity (Cohen et al., 2011; Robson, 2002; Flick, 2009). In this study, data triangulation, through the use of multiple sources of information, strengthens the validity of the findings. Combined levels of triangulation are also present as the perspectives represented include individuals, groups and the organisation of the school. It should be noted that while the use of multiple data sources within distinct groups such as teachers and pupils sought consistency and conformity, claims to validity through triangulation were not the sole purpose of this data generation. The multiplicity in evidence also aimed to provide insight into the different experiences and perspectives of groups within the school community.

Further steps have been taken to satisfy criteria which Cohen et al. (2011) note may minimise threats to validity. Firstly, through prolonged engagement and persistent observation, increasing the researcher's knowledge of the individual culture and context of the study school, adding further insight into data analysis and interpretation. Additionally, in the process of data collection, instruments were chosen to suit the developmental needs of each participant group, with particular attention being paid to the concentration span of younger children. Finally, a 'chain of evidence' (Yin, 2009) was provided, detailing each sequence in the case study and its relevance to the research questions. This 'audit trail' (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2006) increases the extent to which the reader can understand the deductive and inductive processes by which interpretation was reached.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter has described in detail the research methodology used in the study and provided a rationale for adopting a case study approach and associated ethical implications. Detailed accounts of and rationale for approaches employed in the collection and analysis of data were provided. Finally, the chapter considered the reliability and validity of the study. The following chapter will present the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Through the analytic process outlined in Chapter Three, multiple conceptual categories were identified and further classified into relevant themes. The focus of this chapter is on the thematic presentation of salient findings. For maximum clarity, the chapter will be structured into four sections, initially focusing on the CPD approach employed. This will be followed by the presentation of findings related to comprehension instruction and subsequently implications for pupils and their learning. Finally, data generated through video and audio recording will be presented as evidence of monologic or dialogic teaching. It is important to note that these sections are intrinsically linked and therefore the categories cannot be considered to be mutually exclusive. A discussion of the findings in relation to the theoretical framework established will be the focus of Chapter Five.

Section One:

Continuing Professional Development

This section examines the data related to the professional development experiences within the study school. It begins by establishing a school profile regarding recent teacher engagement in CPD and satisfaction with previous professional development experiences. Perspectives from teachers, the principal and the researcher are synthesised to consider the key features in supporting a staff in the implementation of a new practice.

4.2 Previous Professional Development Experiences

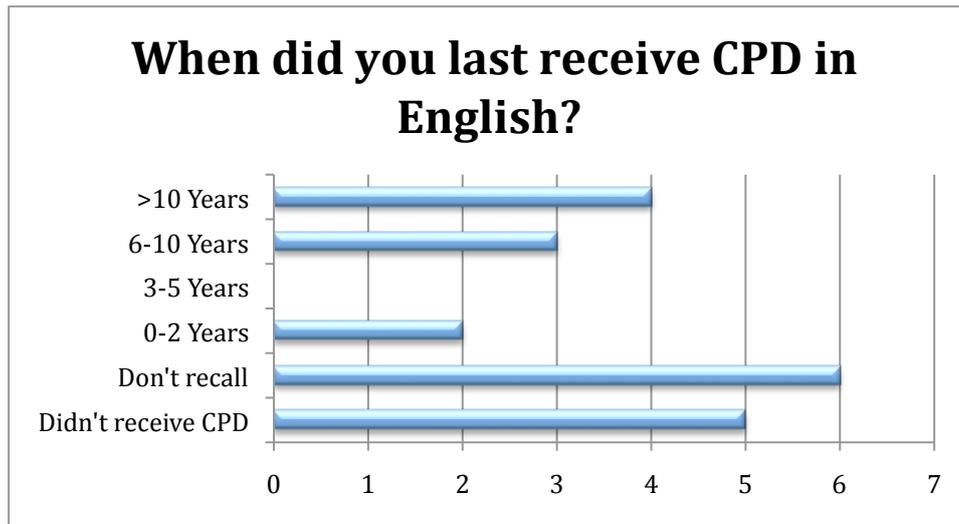


Figure 4.1

Findings from questionnaires indicate that only two of the respondents have engaged in professional development in the area of English in the last five years. The majority of teachers (65%) engaged in CPD in English more than six years ago or cannot recall the experience. These findings raise concerns regarding awareness among teachers in the study school of current pedagogical thinking in the area. It is also of note that a quarter of respondents have not received any professional development in English. Four of these teachers have more than five years teaching experience, indicating that they may be still relying on information acquired in college.

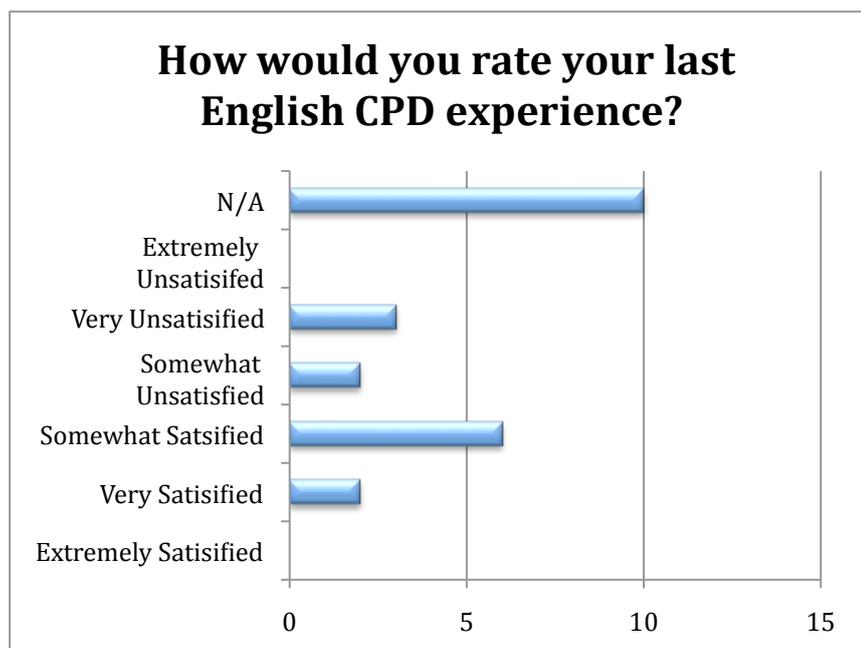


Figure 4.2

Teachers expressed mixed feelings regarding their CPD experiences in English, though the majority of teachers were unable to recall the particular experience.

“Being completely honest, it’s so long since I received the English inservice training I can’t remember what we did that day at all.”

[Questionnaire 3]

However, 32% of respondents were somewhat or very satisfied with this experience. Lower levels of satisfaction are indicated in relation to the development of knowledge related to comprehension instruction during this experience. Approximately 39% of respondents considered this area of professional development to be poor or average. At school level, the principal also indicated that comprehension received inadequate attention during the introduction of the English PSC.

“Looking back at it now in light of the development of the comprehension area, that was one area that was left, was just not as comprehensive as it should be.”

[Interview 1]

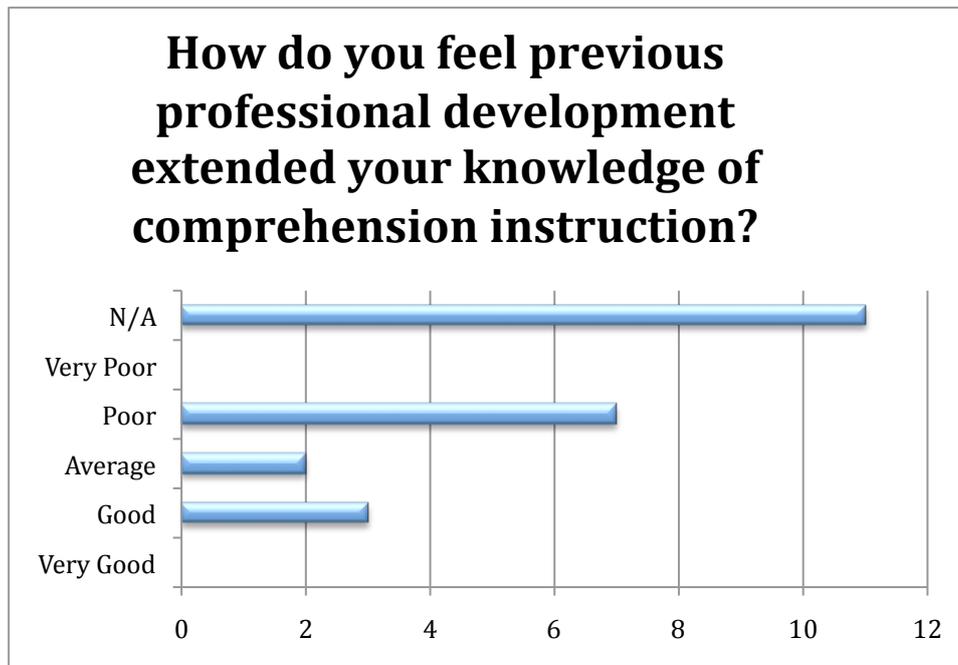


Figure 4.3

However, it is interesting to note that teachers indicated higher levels of satisfaction regarding the impact of professional development on classroom practice, with approximately 18% rating this as good or very good. It is difficult to understand how changes in methodologies, without the accompanying development of theoretical and pedagogical knowledge, can result in more than a superficial change in practice, as teachers are unable to knowledgeably adapt or alter instruction to meet the needs of individual pupils and contexts.



Figure 4.4

Greater levels of dissatisfaction regarding previous CPD experiences were expressed by both the principal and teachers during the interview process. Teachers were critical of the one-shot nature of workshop days, pointing to their failure to impact on classroom practice.

“They open up your eyes to different ways, you get ideas and you come in gung-ho for the next couple of days and you try it, but generally I think you revert back to the way you were.”

[Interview 2]

It was also suggested that the lack of teacher involvement and participation in the professional development process inhibited subsequent application.

“The instructor would stand up and say ‘this is how you do it.’ You go back to school the following day and you have forgotten half of what you heard.”

[Interview 8]

Information-overload was also cited as a fault, as teachers did not have the opportunity to engage with the knowledge in the context of the classroom.

“We were going through it grand, then it came to about twenty minutes before the end and I was lost at that point because I hadn’t used it and you have to use it, you have to digest a certain amount before you can approach the rest.”

[Interview 4]

A further shortcoming of the one-shot professional development approach identified, was the ability of teachers to decide not to engage with the new practice at any level, due to an initial perception that it may not suit their teaching style.

“I’ve never taken the whole lot onboard because I think you are the way you are and you know what works for you.”

[Interview 2]

From the principal’s perspective, the lack of a sustained approach created difficulties in facilitating the transition from trying out the practice to incorporating it into the daily routine.

“We have had people coming here now, for example modelling Gaeilge, people coming in here modelling SESE and it’s fine, but it doesn’t bed it down.”

[Interview 1]

4.3 Initial Reactions to CPD

Teachers were informed of the school’s decision to partake in the school/university partnership with Mary Immaculate College in September 2008,

receiving regular progress updates throughout the school year. A brief outline of the whole-school approach was presented to the staff in June 2009, with a more detailed introductory session held the following October. The researcher initially considered reaction to the staff meetings to be largely positive, observing “*many teachers coming up to discuss it afterwards.*” [Research Diary (RD), 9/10/2009]. However, subsequent interactions and data analysis revealed that though the staff presentation engendered interest and excitement among some, other teachers were left feeling overwhelmed and anxious. Questionnaire 3 suggests that 71% (n=17) of teachers viewed the project positively, while the remainder noted initial feelings of confusion and apprehension.

Those who were excited and interested pointed to their belief that the initiative would improve teaching and learning, citing comprehension as an area in need of attention.

“Initially I was very excited about it because before I felt that I didn’t have a very clear picture of comprehension myself as I was grabbing it from all these different areas. I had no set approach. So when I heard about Building Bridges it was perfect for me because I could see that it would be a development of it.”

[Interview 6]

Some teachers, though positively disposed to the initiative, had reservations regarding its relevance for the whole school.

“Positive – but didn’t expect that my learning support children would grasp concepts.”

[Questionnaire 3]

The principal also had high expectations of the project, regarding it as a means not only to provide “*a structured approach to comprehension*” which would complement other literacy initiatives in place, but also as a method of integrating all curricular areas, an identified area of difficulty within the school.

“We were conscious that because the revised curriculum was such a huge document, one of the tasks that all schools have to do is to adapt it, to see

how we can reach all aspects of this massive curriculum. We saw the comprehension programme as a way of actually doing that.”

[Interview 1]

In contrast, for other teachers, the introduction of a new programme added to their perceptions of overload.

“When I saw the folder first, it was the start of the year, I went ‘Oh sweetest God, more work on top of what’s already to be done. Can you leave us alone? We’re swamped already.’ I said ‘Oh, God’ and then when it was rolled out and you were told there was these 110 strategies or whatever. It was just totally overwhelming.”

[Interview 2]

While many of the teachers welcomed the initial overview of the programme, the quantity of information and work to be undertaken left them overwhelmed.

“First day, if I’m to be real and honest about it, a little bit overwhelmed because I thought there was a lot in it. The presenting really made sense to me and it was great to get an overview, but I suppose because it was all so new, it was a lot to swallow in one go..... I was with you a lot of the way, but then I sort of felt ‘I don’t know if I’m going to be able for all of this.’”

[Interview 4]

It is interesting to note that feelings of being “swamped” by the initiative distorted perspectives of the pace of reform for some. Despite being informed of the project in the year prior to the reform, a staff presentation on the 9th of October and modelling beginning at this class level on the 22nd of October, one teacher reported feeling that everything in the first year was compacted into the last few months.

“If it had happened in September, if we had known about it the year before and were told right, next year you’re doing four strategies, it would have broken the trauma of it or the kind of fear of it.”

“I felt it was all rush, rush, rush and that was a bit unsatisfactory. Maybe it was because we started it late last year. We didn’t have a full year for it.”

[Interview 2]

The principal noted that feelings of fatigue following several years of curricular reform, in addition to ongoing unrest and uncertainty regarding salaries and working conditions, could negatively impact on some teachers’ willingness to allow sufficient time to become comfortable with the reform process.

“Anything new is a threat. It needs to percolate through. The disadvantage of this particular system was that it has come at the end of a whole series of change. They may have thought this was an extra burden.”

[Interview 1]

References were made to past negative experiences engaging with curricular reform and the possible impact of this on future endeavours.

“Nobody likes change, or nobody likes something that’s going to be coming along..... I suppose in the last ten years we have taken on a revised curriculum and that has been a tortuous process in a lot of ways.”

[Interview 15]

Feelings of anxiety and unease dissipated among many of the teachers as they engaged with the professional development activities and implemented the instruction in their own classroom. The phased implementation, structure of the programme and observing teacher modelling appear to be key features in allaying the concerns of teachers.

“Terrified, because I thought it was going to be such a big thing. It turned out to be..... I’m not going to say easy to do, but it’s explained so well and there’s such a logical plan to follow that it’s not scary at all.”

[Interview 7]

Immediate positive observations among teachers centred on the active involvement of all pupils in the session. However, the researcher felt that some teachers “*are not seeing the dramatic results that they thought they would.*” [RD, 1/12/2009]. During a modelling lesson at middle class level, one teacher left the room as she felt she was doing this already. The subsequent dialogue among teachers focused on the fact that the predictions from the children were largely the same. In a later informal conversation, one of the teachers attending “*felt that there was a bit of a ‘backlash’ against the project.*” [RD, 16/10/2009]. The expectation of immediate results and the lack of understanding surrounding the instructional process, point to failure of the presentation model to convey adequate knowledge of the approach and the need for further development in these areas. The negativity among some is indicative of the complex range of emotions involved as teachers engage in the change process.

4.4 Beneficial Elements of CPD: Participants

Over the course of the study, staff engaged in a sustained, on-site approach to professional development which responded to school and teacher needs. This section explores the aspects of this CPD approach which the school community identified to be most beneficial in supporting them in their change of practice.

4.4.1 Modelling

The value placed on modelling by the teachers is highlighted by the fact that 80% of respondents to Questionnaire 4 rated it as the first or second most important element in their implementation of comprehension instruction, with all teachers giving it a top four ranking.

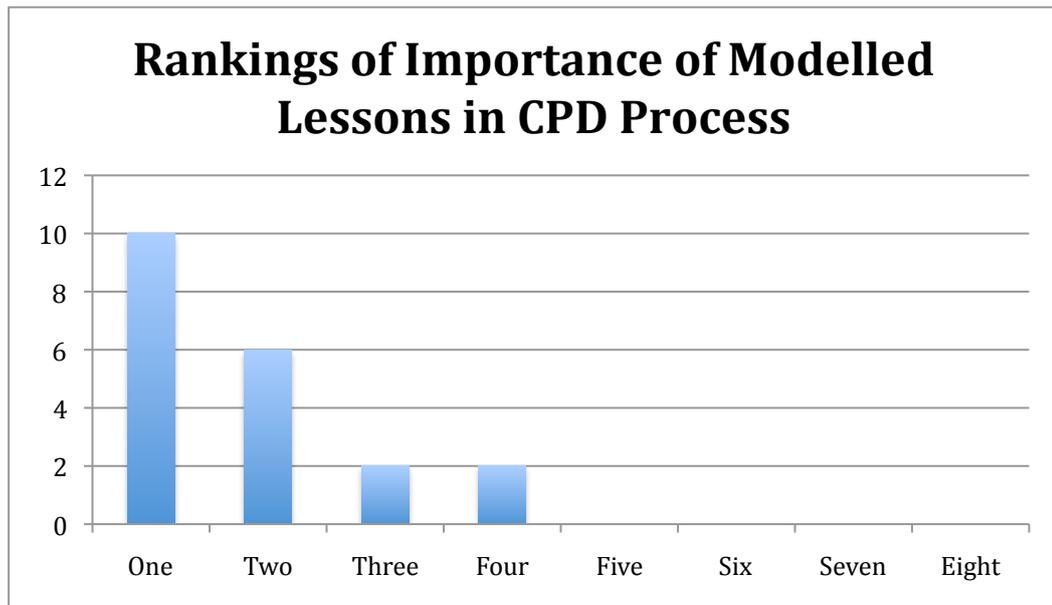


Figure 4.5

Teacher modelling was referred to as “vital”, “imperative” and “essential” by teachers, with the principal believing that there “was a tremendous importance to it” [Interview 1]. In the initial stages, teachers looked to modelled lessons for a starting point, seeking achievable first steps in the implementation process.

“Modelling was everything, because only for going into you and observing you with the classes, I wouldn’t have known where to start to be honest.”

[Interview 12]

Teachers also implied that without the presence of teacher modelling they would have been less inclined to engage with the reform process, paying only superficial attention to the new instruction.

“If you didn’t do that it would definitely be left in a folder inside a cupboard and there would be token gestures made towards it.”

[Interview 2]

The importance of modelling for visual learners was stressed, allowing the transfer of knowledge in a manner which cannot be replicated by text or word.

“If I can’t see it working in the classroom, then I won’t have the visual in my head and then it will go, it will never get done. Whereas if I am shown how it’s done I have less of a tendency to do what I always do.”

[Interview 6]

Modelled lessons provided a forum not only to observe the instruction, but also to actively reflect upon the teaching and learning, seeking clarification where necessary.

“The videos would be grand, but then we wouldn’t have the interaction and be able to sit down with you afterwards and discuss bits that maybe we had issues with or that we didn’t get after it.”

[Interview 12]

While the prospect of implementing a new methodology appeared daunting following the staff presentation, both principal and teachers reported an increase in confidence following modelling sessions. It appears that seeing the interaction of teacher and pupils increased teachers’ willingness to try to replicate this in their own classrooms.

“ When they saw it in action and when they said ‘I can do that myself’, then they gained in confidence.”

[Principal, Interview 15]

“For me that it’s real, it works. If you’re doing it with children and you’re talking about it for children, then you can actually see it in action and I’m willing to try it out then.”

[Interview 4]

Teachers were conscious of the contrast between their own conception of the proposed instruction before and after observing a modelled lesson, noting that seeing it in action resulted in a deeper understanding.

“I know when I was trying to do it myself at the start, I was only skimming the surface, but then when I saw you doing it and you delve into something - the smallest thing in a picture, you’d bring that into it,

whereas I'd never thought of doing something like that. So the actual modelling of it opened so many doors for me."

[Interview 7]

However, it also appears that modelling may have initially resulted in a narrow view of CSI, with teachers believing that there was only one correct approach. Early in the second year of the project several teachers referred to a 'right' and 'wrong' way:

"She said that she felt it was important to see each of the strategies being modelled as there is a right way to do things. The other teachers agreed."

[RD, 10/10/2010]

"People may think they have it right when they don't."

[Questionnaire 3]

It is interesting that later in the project no reference was made to a 'right' approach and the video recording reflected tailoring of instruction to suit the teaching styles of individual teachers. It appears that frequent opportunities to engage with the approach increased teacher understanding and confidence to adapt the methodology as appropriate.

The involvement of their children in the modelling process appeared to be crucial for teachers, allowing teachers to observe their interactions, responses "*and what stimulated them*" [Questionnaire 4], thereby revealing higher-order thinking among their children. Teachers also valued opportunities to focus on the engagement of individual children within their own classes.

"It was my children and I knew who to watch out for."

[Interview 14]

"She said that she always found it very interesting to watch me teach her class because she saw how they could react to the right question or prompt. She found that this showed her how she needed to develop with experience and that it wasn't as simple as just trying to copy what I was doing."

[RD, 11/4/2011]

It appears that teachers' comfort in observing modelled sessions with other classes at a similar level to them is contingent on confidence in their own instruction. For some teachers, seeing other classes construct a different understanding to their own highlighted the validity of multiple interpretations.

"It was actually interesting to go to a different class to see how they would respond and to go back to my own class and see that 'Oh my God, they took it completely differently than the other class did.' But that's brilliant too, you know it's whatever way they interpret it."

[Interview 11]

In contrast, other teachers saw differences in the interaction of children as a reflection of their own lack of progress or experience.

"When she had seen Teacher 13's class use inference, it reinforced for her the differences between the two classes. She felt that Teacher 13 has more experience and that allowed her children to make more progress."

[RD, 11/4/ 2011]

It is clear, that teachers valued observing *"someone who knows what they are talking about"* [Questionnaire 2]. However, the disparity in the children's reactions to the experienced coach and teachers engaging in strategy instruction for the first time, generated concern and anxiety in some teachers.

"When you see it done by someone who knows what they're doing, it's always a fabulous lesson. Yet when you come to do it, then it's a disaster. You wouldn't be as confident so you wouldn't be one step ahead."

[Interview 2]

The sustained nature of the CPD, allowed teachers multiple opportunities to observe modelled lessons, a feature which appears to have resolved many of the initial implementation concerns.

"I think what I found beneficial was, I saw it and then I tried it out in my classroom and then when we went back for our next step, you saw it all over again. It wasn't just an isolated step."

[Interview 10]

The recursive nature of observing new strategies while simultaneously analysing existing ones, may account for teachers' requests to avail of more modelling sessions. Almost one third of respondents to Questionnaire 4 considered that increased levels of observation would be beneficial. It is interesting to note that teacher confidence had grown sufficiently by the end of the second year for teachers to suggest that they might model for each other.

"More modelling please?! Perhaps we could go to each others' classes to watch and help each other too."

"Perhaps we could watch each other or help each other with the strategies that we are struggling with."

[Questionnaire 4]

A similar desire for more modelling was expressed throughout the interview process:

"If I was to get any more of the modelling, that would be one that I would definitely need."

[Interview 7]

"Maybe when teachers go and do something, to be able to come back and say 'I don't quite get that'. I know that we can do that now. But that you would see the person, the presenter do the strategy again..... I know it's time, but I think it's time well spent."

[Interview 4]

The desire of the staff to increase levels of modelled lessons testifies to the centrality of observing instruction in the change process. This appears to be also reflected in the principal's statement that *"it has become a central part of what we do in [School Name]."* *[Interview 15]*

4.4.2 Collegiality

Both the principal and staff found the involvement of the whole school, and most especially the support from colleagues, to be crucial features of the professional development approach. 13 respondents in Questionnaire 3, and 9 respondents in Questionnaire 4, cited *"support from colleagues"* or *"shared practice among staff"* as factors which enabled them assimilate the approach to comprehension

into their practice. The principal corroborated this finding, noting that the size of the school adds greater import to working collaboratively towards a common goal.

“I think that we need this collegiality approach and that it certainly worked in a big school. Only for collegiality nothing would work in a big school.”

[Interview 15]

Teachers responding to Questionnaire 4 pointed to “a really inclusive and supportive environment” with “a support network for asking for help or ideas” and “opportunities to meet with and discuss the project with other teachers”. This “positive school environment” [Questionnaire 3] suggests a professional community in which teachers feel supported by others and are therefore more confident trying new procedures.

“It makes it more of a solid structure that you know that when I do this if all else fails I have somebody to go to. It just puts a confidence into it that you’re willing to take maybe more risks and you’re not worried about the outcome.”

[Interview 10]

The data suggests that initially teachers collaborated through the sharing of ideas and resources or clarifying elements of the instruction observed during the modelled lesson.

“The whole-school approach was brilliant because I could approach the other first class teachers about it. They came to me also to say ‘what was that about again?’ and we’d swap resources and swap ideas and help each other out.”

[Interview 11]

As teachers became more experienced in strategy use, they encouraged less enthusiastic teachers to try the approach.

“One of the learning support teachers is helping with the fourth class TSI and has highly recommended the approach to the others.”

[RD, 15/4/2010]

The researcher observed that as teachers became more experienced in CSI in the second year, they increasingly sought clarification on pertinent issues. However, it appeared that teachers opted for the privacy of a one-to-one consultation with the researcher, rather than sharing their questions with their colleagues.

“I became aware of the increasing regularity with which teachers are asking me questions or seeking advice and how this rarely takes place during the modelled sessions.”

[RD, 3/2/2011]

Towards the conclusion of the second year, the researcher noted the emergence of an authentic sharing of concerns and major issues within the groups. It is likely that such an extended amount of time is required for individual staff members to feel comfortable sharing difficulties with their colleagues, trusting them to offer advice rather than judgement.

“While the teachers were undoubtedly under time and curricular pressures, they were comfortable talking about this in a group, which is something that they would not have done last year.”

[RD, 6/4/2011]

There is also evidence of an increased role played by teachers in shaping and directing the nature of the CPD throughout the second year of the project. As teachers consulted with their colleagues and observed pupil learning, they approached the researcher to suggest further avenues for exploration or areas in need of greater attention. This suggests not only high levels of engagement among the staff, but also increasing ownership of their learning.

“She said that she had spoken with the other teachers and had some advice to offer. They were familiar with prediction and making connections but would like to have a refresher course on the other strategies.”

[RD, 4/10/2010]

Despite a largely positive reaction to the creation of a professional community, for some teachers the involvement of colleagues in the CPD process exacerbated feelings of anxiety and unease. The collaborative process may contrast the

progress and positivity of many teachers, with those who have yet to reach this stage.

“She is also watching the other teachers and feels that they are progressing faster than she is.”

[RD, 10/10/2010]

Individual teachers expressed concerns regarding the pace of their strategy instruction compared to their colleagues.

“Teacher 25 asked her if her class had done prediction, connections and visualisations. Teacher 35 was concerned as she had only focused on predictions. She was panicked that she had done something wrong and immediately rushed into model connections.”

[RD, 1/2/2011]

In individual cases, working with others intensified pre-existing insecurities regarding their teaching methodologies and, rather than providing encouragement and support, the presence of the professional community strengthened the perception of being overwhelmed.

“The teacher told me that she has felt under pressure with other teachers implementing elements of the new curriculum and that she feels that she is being shown to be old fashioned.”

[RD, 4/2/2011]

4.4.3 Pupils’ Reactions

Both teachers and principal frequently referenced the enthusiasm and engagement of children as integral parts of the CPD approach. 13 respondents to Questionnaire 3 referred to *“the active involvement of children”*, *“being able to see and hear the responses of children”* or *“the enthusiasm of children”* as factors which enabled them to assimilate the instructional approach into their practice.

Key to teacher engagement in the process appears to be witnessing the immediate benefits it offers their pupils.

“Straight away I saw the benefits for the children. That was the thing about it, you could see immediate effect.”

[Interview 7]

“They very quickly saw the effect that it had on the children and that is the barometer. They could see that the children were totally enthusiastic about this and they saw the response of the children in their class.

Teachers will always follow what is best for their children.”

[Principal, Interview 15]

Nevertheless, despite the emphasis placed on the importance of early evidence of pupil learning, the gradual emergence of higher-order thinking among children appears to have instigated a change in attitude among some initially sceptical teachers. The researcher noted increased levels of interest among the teachers when the strategy of questioning was introduced.

“The teachers were visibly enthused by the higher-order nature of the questions. This is what I have been waiting to see. Teacher 7 thanked me repeatedly for showing it. It was interesting to contrast this with the reaction to prediction [the teacher left as she felt she was doing this already] or the muted reaction to connections.”

[RD, 5/2/2010]

The enthusiasm and motivation of pupils appears to be important in encouraging and sustaining teachers through the change process.

“They are so motivated. They can’t wait for English. When you see the feedback they give you.... you’re motivated and it’s just fabulous.”

[Interview 7]

The researcher observed a similar phenomenon in the case of the principal. Initial interest and belief in the project was generated from “*reading the manual*” and trust “*in the personnel that were involved in it*” [Interview 15]. As the school engaged in the professional development process, the principal’s confidence in the approach increased as a result of positive teacher feedback and the reaction of the inspector.

“My evidence would be from the Cúntas Míosúil [monthly account of teaching and learning] and from talking to them anecdotally about the thing.”

“Secondly then, I remember we had a visit from one of our local inspectors who saw it and he was blown away by the whole system. His thoughts were that these children were doing critical literacy analysis.

[Interview 15]

However, it was not until he witnessed the pupils’ interactions that he fully believed in the benefits of the instruction.

“The sixth class children were absolutely engrossed in the topic. When the lesson came to an end they uttered sighs of utter disappointment. I had never seen that before in any sixth class, because basically speaking in sixth class the quicker you get a thing over the better. That was just a huge experience for me to see it in action.”

[Interview 15]

For some teachers, the reactions of the pupils to the change in instruction consolidated personal opinions they had previously held.

“I always knew that learning support children work better with visual clues and through action, but seeing is believing. Even the weakest of my senior infants academically benefitted hugely.”

[Questionnaire 2]

It was also indicated that teacher faith in the instructional practice was reinforced through the use of the school’s pupils in the professional development approach. This is likely to have increased confidence that the approach was appropriate for, and met the needs of the school population.

“This has been tried and tested with our pupils so we know it works well.”

[Questionnaire 2]

At a school level, the enthusiasm and responses from children across all class levels signalled to teachers and the principal that the change in practice extended beyond individual classrooms and was impacting on the wider school community.

“She said that when she had been introducing prediction earlier in the year she had children from first class in the room and they immediately

started using signs for the other strategies. She said that she really knew that there was something going on here at this point.”

[RD, 9/2/2011]

If that is the effect it has on other children throughout the school, it's a profound effect really.”

[Principal, Interview 15]

The strategic thinking demonstrated by children appears not only to have convinced teachers of the value of this instructional methodology, but also to have raised awareness of the degree to which they engage in strategic reading themselves.

“The teachers thought the children were stubbornly persevering down the wrong path, when in actual fact they were building up a case and using text-to-text connections to develop a deeper understanding.”

[RD, 2/12/2009]

“She said she wished that she had had this experience when she went to school as she found it difficult to see the things that the children could see.”

[RD, 11/2/2011]

4.4.4 Consulting in-house facilitator

Despite modelling of strategies being most frequently cited as a beneficial element of CPD, teachers regularly clarified that its effectiveness was contingent on the continuous presence of follow-up support during the subsequent implementation process. 11 respondents in Questionnaire 3 indicated that having “someone ‘on-site’ that you could go to about it,” “live feedback and the chance to ask questions” or “the advantage of an in-house trained co-ordinator” enabled them to assimilate the approach to comprehension into their practice. 7 responses to Questionnaire 4 alluded to in-house support, suggesting at this stage in the professional development process that it is the knowledge that there is constant support which is of greatest benefit.

“Knowing that there were teachers available to help and support and answer any questions you may have.”

The value placed by teachers on the role of an in-school facilitator is corroborated by the high rankings it received when compared with other CPD elements (cf Figure 4.6). Two thirds of respondents considered it to be within the top three most beneficial elements.

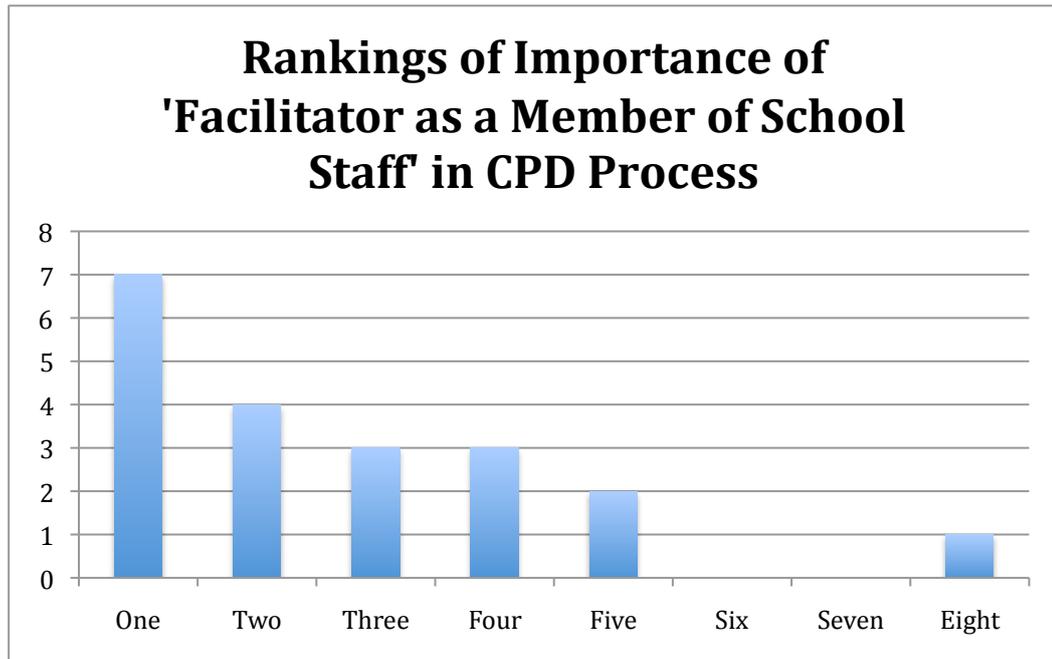


Figure 4.6

Across the school community, the presence of a staff member as an on-site facilitator was regarded as a “*very powerful model*” [Principal, Interview 1]. The principal regarded the continuous nature of the model as essential given the large-scale change of practice that was being initiated.

“The strategies are new for someone to come along from the outside and bring it in and then suddenly head off into the distant past. So, I see the model of a group within the staff, made totally up to speed with it and they disseminate that knowledge to their colleagues. I think that is a very good model.”

[Interview 1]

Individual teachers noted that having someone to consult with, increased their confidence, making the change in practice less overwhelming.

“I think it puts a bit of confidence in what you’re doing because you know that if all else fails you can go and ask that person. It doesn’t seem as daunting.”

[Interview 10]

Equally, they spoke positively of some of the practical features permitted by having the facilitator permanently on-site.

“I don’t know how a school would manage without a facilitator because imagine someone coming in and you’d probably have to do it after school... or find a time that everyone is free. But you really fit in with our timetable.”

[Interview 11]

Initially, teachers primarily questioned the facilitator on issues raised by observation of modelled lessons and later implementation of the strategies.

“ I need to be able to look at someone and watch them and see what they’re doing. Then I suppose I need support that when I come to problems with my class I need someone to talk to.”

[Interview 5]

The data suggests that the follow-up support during this implementation process was crucial to teachers overcoming initial difficulties. Receiving timely support didn’t require much effort on the part of the teacher and could enable them to continue to make progress that would be impossible through other professional development means.

“You had somebody on hand you could talk to at break time....which shouldn’t happen, but that’s the way teachers and schools are.....Just to have somebody there at the right time, rather than if you did the lesson and it went wrong, you’d say ‘Oh yeah, I must talk to someone about that.’ But at least when there is somebody on the spot you can say to them straight away, whereas otherwise I’d have forgotten about it by the time I’d go to a course.”

[Interview 16]

Throughout the second year of the project, the researcher noted a change in the nature of support required and the manner in which it was requested. Teachers become more proactive in seeking advice and guidance, assuming greater responsibility for directing their own learning, rather than rigidly following the plan set out by the facilitator. It is likely that greater familiarity, both with the method of instruction and the professional development approach, led to this greater devolvement of responsibility.

“I think the greatest change that I am seeing this year is the teachers are approaching me before I get to them. This is the advantage of being on staff as the teachers can seek advice at any stage during the day.”

[RD, 1/10/2010]

In addition to questions directly relating to instruction, teachers also sought advice on extending the approach to other subjects.

“She was wondering if this approach could be implemented in Irish. She realised that her class were not thinking about the meaning of the text in this subject.”

[RD, 8/10/2010]

Teachers in the second year also began to invite the facilitator into the class to observe, assist or remodel lessons.

“She was worried that perhaps she hadn’t approached it correctly as she had placed a large emphasis on the multi-sensory approach. She asked for me to go into her class and observe her teaching.”

[RD, 18/10/2010]

The emergence of this pattern in the second year of the project points to a growth, not only in the confidence of the teachers, but also the value they see in the instructional practice and their desire to use it for maximum effect.

It is interesting to note that the principal valued a different feature of the continuous presence of an in-school facilitator. While reference is made to the “consultative” and “quality control” roles played, the principal repeatedly emphasised the importance of the facilitator as a “driver” of change. Whereas the responses of the teachers suggested that the facilitator was viewed as a follow-up support to modelling, the principal appears to believe the reverse to be true.

“I would find it hard to see how you could actually implement such a programme without having somebody within the staff to drive it number one and people in the staff to model it number two”

[Interview 15]

This difference in perspective perhaps reflects the differing roles of teacher and principal in professional development, with the principal being cognisant of the need to sustain support until the initiative has been fully incorporated into daily routine. For the principal, the in-house facilitator played a crucial role in this process.

“You just can’t say we have Building Bridges in our school at the end of the day. It needs somebody to drive it on, to push it on. It needs a principal to be convinced about it. It needs skilled teachers in the school who are prepared to keep it on the agenda and to push it along until it becomes established.”

[Interview 15]

Furthermore, the facilitator is regarded as the means by which information can be disseminated among the staff in a timely manner, thereby developing a cohesive approach with teachers sharing common knowledge and methodologies. The principal’s concerns in this regard appear to be largely founded on recent experience implementing the PSC.

“It’s a challenge we’ve faced over the last number of years with the implementation of the revised curriculum. The fact that we’ve such a large school means that information can sometimes filter through slowly. I think again the fact that we had a driver in this made this very effective.”

[Interview 15]

The distributed leadership approach to professional development espoused by the principal, necessitated a reconceptualisation of the roles of principal, senior management team and teacher-facilitator, with the former two being considered to be supportive roles, evaluating progress and maintaining staff awareness of the importance of the initiative.

“We had to support the driver. The attitude of the senior management in the school was that this was a very good methodology, we need to

support it. How best can we do that? The best way we can do that is by whatever the driver says we need to do to push on, keep it on the agenda, keep going back over it, keep evaluating it and keep integrating it into what we do in the school.”

For teachers, knowing that the principal supported the approach was key to embracing elements such as modelling which required leaving the classroom to attend sessions and supervising other teachers’ classes on a regular basis.

“The teachers were concerned about the practicalities of attending modelled sessions, but I assured them that the principal had approved and encouraged their attendance.”

[RD, 22/9/2010]

“The fact that this was a school-wide programme being implemented by the principal i.e. from the top.”

[Questionnaire 4]

Nevertheless, despite the supportive role played by the management team and the importance attributed to the project, on a number of occasions the facilitator was challenged by conflicting duties and priorities placed upon her at school level. The extra responsibilities, in addition to the full-time teaching role of the facilitator made it difficult to fully meet the professional development needs of individual teachers.

“I have had extra duties placed upon me through the updating of the school’s administrative software. The principal has made it clear that I should consider this a priority and focus all attention on it.”

[RD, 28/1/2011]

Teachers appeared to appreciate the involvement of a colleague in the professional development process, allowing them to use this relationship to ask questions which they might otherwise find intimidating.

“You’re not afraid to ask a question because you don’t think that person will think you’re stupid. Whereas if you were in a big room with the whole staff there.....”

[Interview 16]

However, the researcher found it at times challenging to maintain a balance between the provider of information and advice, and the role of a colleague. Directing teacher learning, providing constructive feedback and ‘keeping it on the agenda’ while being sensitive to other school commitments and priorities, needed to be balanced with the researcher’s position as fellow teacher and colleague.

“It was also important to me to balance the role of disseminator of the professional development while also being a colleague and part of the teaching staff.”

[RD, 21/10/2010]

4.4.5 Phased Implementation with Sustained Support

The gradual introduction of strategies was a feature of the CPD approach which received the approval of teachers and the principal. 9 respondents to Questionnaire 3 praised the “staged”, “slow” and “step-by-step approach,” with one teacher adding that she “found it a natural progression.” For many teachers the pacing of the professional development alleviated feelings of being overwhelmed by large quantities of information.

“You would feel bombarded with information if you had to try to teach them all at once. It is easier to master one at a time.”

[Questionnaire 4]

This in turn, enabled teachers to feel confident and at ease when considering subsequent strategies.

“I felt very confident about where to start. I mean we started off and it was a gradual progression and there wasn’t an influx of information. I think that was the key to it. I felt comfortable with the first stage before I went onto the second stage and I wasn’t getting lost in the middle.”

[Interview 16]

Furthermore, teachers felt they benefitted from the opportunity to implement some of the instructional approach before continuing to receive more information.

“The timetable gave sufficient time to use and teach these methods in the classroom before introducing another strategy.”

[Questionnaire 4]

Both principal and teachers addressed the facility of the professional development approach to maintain awareness of the initiative over an extended period of time, thereby “*keeping it on the agenda*” [Principal, Interview 1]. For the principal, it appears that the phased implementation over an extended period of time offered the potential to transform the project from the rhetoric of policy into the reality of classroom practice.

“We cannot presume that because the programme is in the school now it is just going to be there forever more. It needs to become centralised and to be reviewed on a regular basis.”

[Interview 15]

Teachers and the researcher also noted the ebb and flow of teacher enthusiasm and energy, moving from initial highs following modelling, to feelings of fatigue and frustration in the process of balancing instruction with other school commitments.

“At lunch Teacher 2 spoke of needing to get back to the strategies. She is positive about them and sees the need and benefit of them but is finding it difficult to find time for them. From the nodding of heads around the table I can see that she is not alone in this.”

[RD, 15/1/2010]

Teachers noted that each subsequent modelled lesson and collaborative discussion refocused them and increased their motivation to persevere in the implementation process, keeping them “*stimulated throughout the year.*”

[Questionnaire 4]

“When you were teaching me a new strategy I would be all about it, you know, for the few weeks and then obviously it would kind of die off again.

But....then you'd teach me another new strategy and I'd be all about it again."

[Interview 11]

As the project progressed, teachers and principal increasingly believed that the professional development approach for such an initiative required a longer timeframe than the two-year period of this study. The principal first referred to the need for a long-term approach at the end of the first year of the study.

"Rolling out the programme throughout the entire school in one academic year proved challenging – another year working with the project would have born even richer dividends."

[Principal Questionnaire]

The origins for concern surrounding the pacing of the professional development, despite the continuation of CPD in the second year, appeared to originate in previous experiences with the implementation of the PSC.

"The time element.....but then we had that problem with the revised curriculum as well. There were subjects coming in this year and another next year. It's always going to be a problem like that. I would have preferred if it had been a slower buy in."

[Interview 15]

In contrast, it was only in the second year that teachers spoke of the need for continued support beyond a two-year time frame. The teachers did not appear to share the principal's concern regarding the pacing of strategy instruction, instead observing that the extended timeframe would enable them to become more accomplished with the instructional routine.

"I feel that it takes even more than two years to get a full handle on the process. I will probably spend the next two years mastering the strategies."

[Questionnaire 4]

“She also said that she supposed it took time to get used to the strategies and that surely the support would be something that would need to be continued further than the two years.”

[RD, 10/10/2010]

Findings from Questionnaire 4 also suggest that the timeframe of the professional development was of lesser importance to the teachers than the principal. Figure 4.7 illustrates that 58% of respondents gave ‘CPD took place over an extended period of time’ a ranking of 6 or higher. While this may not mean that the pacing of the initiative was unimportant to teachers, when considered in conjunction with data gathered from interviews and questionnaires, it suggests that teachers were comfortable with the timing of CPD, making it an issue of less importance.

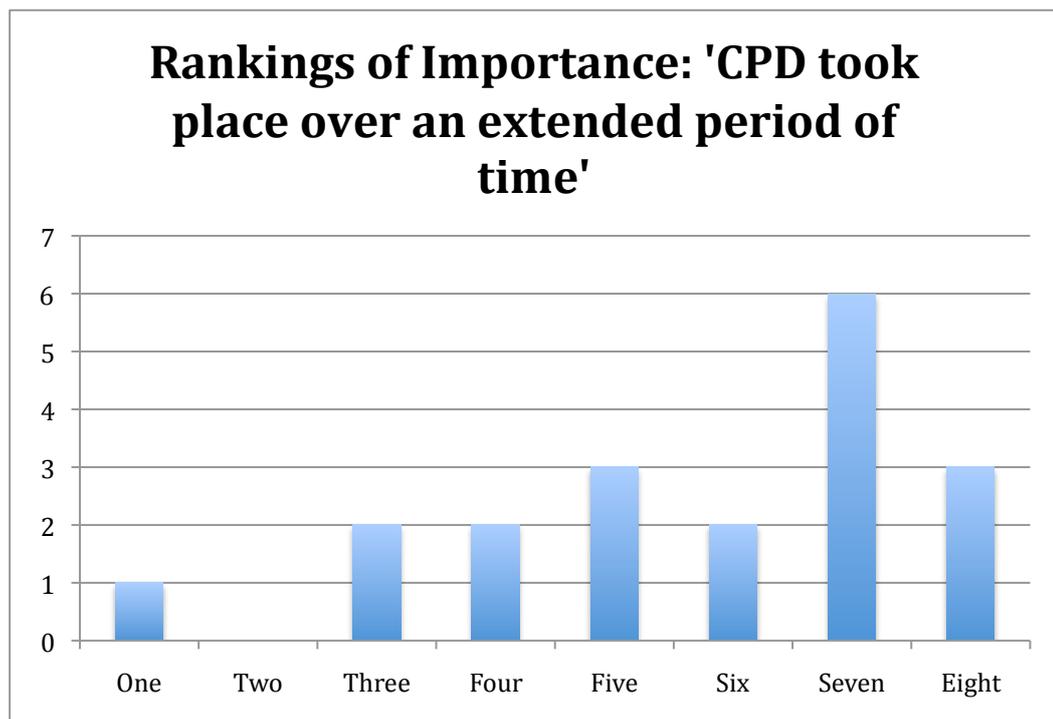


Figure 4.7

4.4.6 Provision of Resources

Across both years of the study, teachers referred to the importance of the availability of appropriate resources in the implementation process. 23 responses to Questionnaire 3 cited the key role played by books and DVDs in their change

of practice. Similarly high levels were noted the following year in Questionnaire 4, where 20 teachers credited the provision of resources as a supportive feature in the change process. It is noteworthy that in the second year, teachers predominantly referred to books, texts and bookmarks, no longer placing importance on DVDs of sample lessons. It is likely that teachers were increasingly confident of the instructional routines and therefore placed greater emphasis on the resources which would support this.

Findings from Questionnaire 4 corroborate the high importance placed by teachers on the availability of resources during the change process. 65% of respondents rated ‘provision of resources’ as one of the three most important elements in the CPD approach employed.

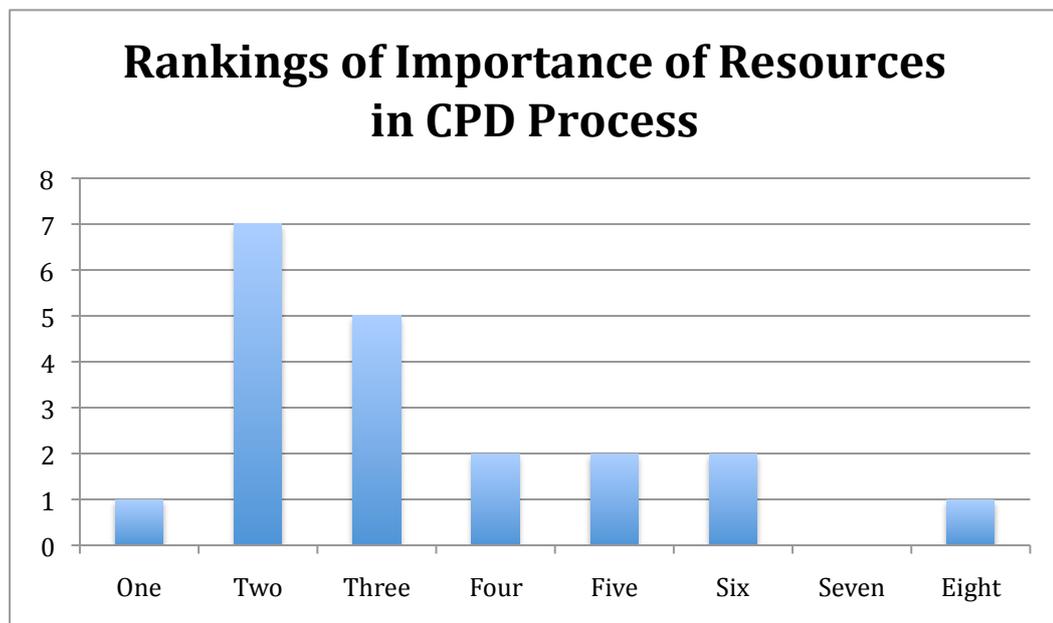


Figure 4.8

For teachers, it appears that the availability of resources was a “*major aid*” in making “*the project very easy to implement*” [Questionnaire 4]. The researcher noted that when she created visualisation fans for infants, a strategy some teachers were concerned with at this level, teachers were immediately motivated and eager to try the instruction with this support.

“The teachers were very excited with the resources. They loved the fan and were thrilled that I had prepared a full class set.”

[RD, 4/2/2011]

It was important for teachers that “*everything was ready to roll*” [Interview 14] before they initially implemented the practice. The provision of all necessary resources appears to have minimised the stress placed on teachers to prepare a lesson and allowed them to focus instead on the relevant instructional features. Of greatest concern for the teachers was the selection of picturebooks, as they realised that this was essential to “*keeping the children interested and enthusiastic*” [Questionnaire 4]. Teachers lacked knowledge and therefore confidence in choosing an appropriate text, relying on the facilitator to provide an age and strategy appropriate book for their initial instruction.

“Finding a picturebook which would give them enough to predict, because some of the picturebooks don’t have a lot to predict in. But it was great when you brought over your books and everything was ready to roll.”

[Interview 14]

As the project progressed, the researcher found that teachers responded best when all present at the modelled lesson received a copy of the same text, rather than other appropriate texts. This was corroborated by responses to Questionnaire 4, “*a copy of the same book to go back to the classroom with.*” It suggests that teachers initially replicated the questions and cues used specifically relating to the modelled text, before later transferring them to other pieces of literature.

Throughout the second year, the researcher was concerned by the reliance on facilitator-generated resources and sought to balance the need to support teachers with new strategies, while encouraging them to become more confident and personally involved in choosing books and resources for existing strategies. Most teachers adhered rigidly to the sample anchor charts, with some teachers using the photograph from the researchers’ class rather than adapting it with their own children. A few teachers altered the anchor charts or used a different format with their class.

“I cannot provide a scheme of work for teachers and it will be important that they find their own resources, but as teachers adjust to a new approach to comprehension, having a resource of appropriate texts to choose from is crucial.”

[RD, 4/2/2011]

4.5 Beneficial Elements of CPD: Researcher

The principal and teachers identified **modelling of instruction, collegiality, pupil response, the presence of an in-house facilitator, sustained support over an extended period of time and the provision of resources** as elements of the CPD approach which helped them assimilate the initiative into their practice. This section will examine further elements which the researcher considered to be instrumental in this process, namely, differentiated support and dialogue in the form of professional conversations.

4.5.1 Differentiated Support

Given the large size of the staff, teachers approached the professional development with a diverse range of emotions, knowledge and experiences. Therefore, it was impossible to adopt a universal approach to supporting and developing learning during the implementation process, requiring the researcher to not only work with small groups, but to tailor the CPD to meet the needs of individual teachers.

Initial differentiation of support was in response to apathy or reluctance on the part of some teachers to engage in the CPD process. Teacher 7's belief that she was already using strategies in her instruction prompted her to leave the modelled session, thereby necessitating a different approach to her colleagues who remained. The researcher speculated that she may *“need a bit of background knowledge in the area”* [RD, 16/10/2009] and met with her individually to reflect on the experience. In addition to engaging in individual discussions, the researcher also purposefully selected the classes for modelling in

the first year, using teacher comments as indicators to judge where the need might be greatest.

“Teacher 10 had great experiences with prediction and found that the children were using it in other subjects. Teacher 7 was undecided. She had used Halloween stories but felt a bit ‘iffy’. I had decided to use Teacher 7’s class because of this.”

[RD, 16/10/2009]

The researcher also found that working with a wide variety of classes enabled her to observe pupils’ application of learning and to use this knowledge to guide and support individual teachers.

“They were also responding to each other which was great to see. However, I noticed that the responses, while positively phrased all seemed to be ‘challenges’. I showed them how to respond by giving praise or to develop a point. Later I spoke to the teacher about this.”

[RD, 1/2/2010]

Working with the principal, extra supervision was allocated to the researcher’s class to facilitate some one-to-one coaching and modelling, particularly in the course of the second year. In this forum the researcher noted that teachers were more comfortable expressing concerns and were more actively engaged in the instruction, often co-teaching with the researcher. The established relationship between teacher and researcher enabled the researcher to evaluate the most appropriate level of involvement.

“There was a different dynamic working with this teacher than in the group sessions. She was more active and involved, not sitting back and observing. There are many factors I think could account for this Firstly, she is working with her own class with no other teachers present. Secondly, she has a greater level of experience than the other teachers with CSI.”

[RD, 3/2/2011]

Some teachers valued the one-to-one coaching using the teachers’ class as it allowed them to discuss the specific challenges the teacher encountered, as opposed to generalising the discussion to pupils at that class level.

“She said that she loved to be able to see me work with her class because she felt then that I understood the distinctive challenges she faced.”

[RD, 15/4/2011]

The researcher believed the progress of Teacher 7 to be testament to the effectiveness of the differentiated support provided. Individual conversations to address concerns and questions, coupled with group and one-to-one support, assisted the transition from a strong negative reaction on 16/10/2009, to a tentative but sceptical application of instruction in November 2009, and later on 5/2/2010 excitement at the evidence of higher-order thinking skills. Increased belief in the process facilitated her adaptation of CSI to incorporate it as part of the team teaching approach implemented at her class level, though with partial success.

“Teacher 7 has been reading aloud to her group and reports that the other groups find that distracting, as they all want to be part of the group. I didn’t expect the teacher to have integrated it so much into her teaching.”

[RD, 15/4/2010]

In May 2010, Teacher 7 exceeded the progress made by her colleagues, looking to implement TSI at second class level. Despite this change in attitude and belief, Teacher 7 still required tailored support to effectively engage with this element of the approach. At the modelled session, Teacher 7 discussed the mechanics of the instruction with the researcher, took the resources, but left without observing the interaction.

“She took the resources but never took the time to sit with the groups despite my encouragement. This reinforces my feeling that TSI is being used for the end result.”

[RD, 15/4/2010]

To address this concern, the researcher suggested that she be the one to introduce TSI to the children and to be present at a number of initial sessions. She also suggested that Teacher 35, an SET working with the class, be part of the process. This collaborative approach to CPD, tailored to meet the needs of the individual

teacher, resulted in a very effective experience for both Teachers 7 and 35, both of them contributing at the staff meeting the following November.

“Teacher 35 said that last year she had attended all of the modelling sessions and until she saw TSI in operation, she had believed that she had been doing the strategies all along and that there was nothing new. She said that TSI had brought it all together for her and it was amazing.”
[RD, 21/10/2010]

It was noted that teachers who were making progress also needed differentiated support. While grouping teachers by class level enabled the modelling of lessons in a manner which made maximum use of the time allocated by the school, it did not meet the needs of all teachers, especially those at different points of progress. Expressing honest opinions or raising concerns within a group where participants have largely different experiences can be uncomfortable for both parties.

“The teacher said that she could see it working with her children but that she would love to see it in action in other classes throughout the school. The other teacher looked at her and said ‘Really? You’d like to see it further up?’”
[RD, 20/9/2010]

Meeting the needs of individual teachers was the focus at the start of the second year of the project, as many teachers had returned from leave and changes in class level meant that some teachers were unfamiliar with instruction appropriate to the developmental needs of their pupils. The researcher tailored a number of modelled lessons to introduce strategies to individual teachers and provide refresher courses for others.

4.5.2 Informal Learning Through Professional Conversations

Formal learning sessions scheduled by the researcher, provided opportunities to introduce and explore CSI with groups and individuals through modelled lessons and subsequent discussions. However, the researcher found that availing of informal learning, predominantly through means of casual conversations, was an essential feature in extending and developing teacher learning and also in enabling the researcher to tailor support to meet individual needs.

In a large, busy school, teachers availed of incidental meetings with the researcher to clarify or probe issues, or to seek further support. These discussions took place in the staffroom, kitchen, walking along corridors, walking in from the gate in the evening, before school in the morning and most frequently in the photocopying room. In general, teachers used this opportunity to extend formal discussions on elements of the lesson they had observed, often updating the researcher on their progress in implementing the strategy.

“She repeatedly stressed how impressed she had been by the visualisation and the involvement of particular pupils with special educational needs. She told me that she had used the strategy to relax the pupils at the end of both Thursday and Friday and that both she and they had enjoyed the experience.”

[RD, 28/1/2011]

Teachers frequently wished to share occasions where pupils had been highly engaged or had demonstrated higher-order thinking. It was important that this happen in a timely manner as teachers would likely have forgotten these instances before their next formal session.

“As I was lining the children up at the end of the day, Teacher 42 approached me. She explained that she was still reading ‘Gorilla’ to the class. She said that she was only getting a small amount done but that there was so much discussion on it that she could hardly believe it.”

[RD, 17/10/2010]

The researcher also noted that many teachers used these informal conversations to seek reassurance or clarification before they began to implement the strategy in their own classrooms. Through these means, the researcher and the teacher could co-plan the lesson, later meeting to review progress.

“I spoke to Teacher 13 before school. She was asking advice about starting Determining Importance with her class. We discussed different ways she could activate the prior knowledge of her class.”

[RD, 15/3/2011]

It was through these professional conversations that the researcher could assess teacher progress between formal sessions and decide on future directions. This dialogue enabled many teachers to implement new aspects to the instructional approach, as they became more confident in CSI. In some cases this occurred prior to observing further modelled lessons.

“She reported that her children are instinctively making connections. It is two weeks until I can model for them again. We discussed important features of such a read-aloud and she is happy to try the strategy herself.”

[RD, 12/10/2009]

Equally, increasing levels of teacher knowledge brought a balance to the discussions, with teachers engaging on an equal level with the researcher rather than exclusively seeking information and advice.

“She said she assumed that there was no CPM as it [Determining Importance] differed in nature from the other strategies and she was struggling to see the need for a CPM. I echoed her feeling on this and thought it showed a depth of understanding on the purpose of CSI. We chatted together about it as we walked to the staff room.”

[RD, 3/2/2011]

Such discussions in the school environment often resulted in the sharing of positive experiences with other colleagues. This developed a genuine community approach to the CPD, with the approach being supported across the school, rather than being imposed from the top-down.

“We were in the staffroom at the time and she explained to the other teachers present that the strategies were having a profound effect upon the young pupils in her care and that they amazed her with the higher-order thinking they used when reading.”

[RD, 5/10/2010]

4.6 Challenges in CPD Approach

Though the CPD approach was tailored to meet the unique needs of the individual school, a number of challenges were encountered over the course of the study, namely the reluctance of some teachers to engage in the professional development process and a number of factors during the school year which impeded the implementation process. This section will explore the impact of these features on teacher learning.

4.6.1 Reluctant or Sceptical Participants

The introduction of a new instructional approach, accompanied by CPD sustained over an extended period of time, generated a variety of emotions among teachers, ranging from high levels of interest and enthusiasm to anxiety and uncertainty. The principal acknowledged the importance of those who are sceptical of the initiative, pointing to the role they play in fully evaluating the effectiveness of the instruction prior to it becoming a whole-school approach.

“In any group of people you are going to have people who are very enthusiastic, those who are going to go along with it, those who are critical of it. All of this is very important to have because if we are going to introduce this as a new system to the school it needs to be critically analysed. You need all kinds of eyes looking at it.”

[Interview 15]

The principal proposed that teacher beliefs that CSI may not be integral to their core instruction, coupled with the perception that this is a further imposition on an already overloaded curriculum, were at the heart of some teachers' reluctance to engage in the CPD process.

“You would also have the ‘also-rans’ who said ‘I have enough to do with my class without having to take on a new methodology when it is not central to what I have to do.’”

[Interview 15]

While teachers corroborate initial feelings of being overwhelmed and overloaded, there is also evidence that concerns regarding the suitability of the

initiative at particular class levels and the relationship between the methodology and the teacher's own style, are also key factors in the reticence to engage in the process.

"I wonder about doing them all so fast in infants. I wonder would it not be better to spread them up the school a bit more and maybe do them a bit better."

[Interview 2]

It is interesting to note that no negative or sceptical opinions were shared during any of the whole-school meetings, during which advocates of the instruction were vocal. While this was likely due to the more formal settings and expectations established by the presence of the principal and other colleagues, the imbalance of opinions resulted in a perspective that all teachers supported the initiative. In contrast, during one-to-one sessions, or in smaller class groupings in which teachers were more comfortable, participants were more open about their opinions of the instruction. Teacher reluctance was most often conveyed through body language and tone of voice, rather than direct opposition to the instruction.

"The teacher shook her head when I suggested that the strategies could be used across the curriculum."

[RD, 17/5/2010]

"As I left one of the teachers asked, 'are we finished with it all now?' It was clear from her tone that using strategies was a chore for her."

[RD, 22/2/2010]

However, within small groupings the negative perspectives of a colleague can detract from the collaborative atmosphere between teachers, in some cases making it an uncomfortable environment for colleagues.

"Once again the mood was determined by the view of one teacher. She felt that the strategies took forever and really too much time was spent on it. She was not seeing the benefit of the time she invested."

[RD, 17/5/2010]

“Afterwards one of the other teachers came to talk to me, concerned about the negative attitude of her colleague.”

[RD, 1/10/2010]

Maintaining the motivation of those positively disposed towards strategy instruction, while providing gentle support and encouragement to teachers struggling to accept the premise of CSI, required a balance of structured class level sessions, accompanied by more tailored individual support.

As the second year of implementation commenced, individual teachers explored their concerns with the researcher, with one teacher questioning the ability of younger children to comprehend.

“Building Bridges is confined to the book. That wouldn’t impact on life with these kids on a day-to-day basis because comprehension doesn’t come in. At the moment we’re only teaching words, we’re only doing the phonics and the sounds, so we’re not into questioning and answering and that kind of comprehension, that deeper level....we’re more surface level.”

[Interview 2]

However, despite the apparent conflict with her pedagogical philosophy, the data indicated that the teacher was beginning to feel less overwhelmed by the initiative and willing to implement it in her class.

“I’ve done it now so I’m not swamped by it. So I would definitely say it is easier.”

[Interview 2]

Nevertheless, without believing in the process, the instruction was likely to be perfunctory, adapting it to fit with existing practice rather than being transformative.

“Prediction, well you’re doing that anyway. It’s only just another name for it with a symbol and an explanation.”

[Interview 2]

“Teacher 21 is dividing her read-alouds into just listening one and ones where they have to use the strategies. She says she doesn’t like the ‘airy fairy’ stuff.”

[RD, 7/12/2009]

4.6.2 School Factors

Both teachers and the researcher indicated that overcoming the pressures and time constraints associated with working within a large school was one of the greatest challenges in providing effective support and implementing the initiative in the classroom. Particularly in the second year of the project, the researcher noted that teachers, though positively disposed to implementing the instruction, found it increasingly challenging to focus on the change in practice due to other responsibilities, commitments and events within the school.

“I have also felt that as the weeks move on and teachers come under more pressure their incentive is waning. They often say things like ‘I must get back to that,’ clearly indicating that this has not become part of their everyday teaching practice.”

[RD, 5/3/2011]

This conflict of priorities was shown to have a demoralising impact on teachers’ sense of purpose and motivation.

“She said that she is struggling to balance the demands being placed upon her at the moment and feels that she is achieving very little.”

[RD, 7/4/2011]

Throughout the year, focus on the project varied in intensity as teachers prepared for numerous annual events such as concerts, book fairs, art exhibitions and sacraments. The school scheduled rehearsal times in the weeks preceding the events and it was challenging for the researcher to arrange CPD sessions during these periods. As a member of the staff, the researcher had been aware of the major events which would demand the teachers’ attention and had made every effort to avoid placing undue pressure on the staff at this time. The researcher also observed the need to be respectful of teachers’ workload at specific times, most notably prior to Parent/Teacher meetings or while teachers were preparing bi-annual progress reports for each child.

“I am aware that as December, approaches Christmas concerts will begin to take priority and it may be harder to arrange read-aloud sessions with the teachers. I will finish the sessions on the 15th of December.”

[RD, 24/11/2010]

However, even with careful timetabling, many group sessions had to be cancelled or rearranged at short notice due to conflicting demands placed on teachers.

“We forgot that this was also the date for the book fair. Teachers 1 and 46 both sent apologies explaining that they were both required to be at the book fair at that time.”

[RD, 18/2/2011]

This was a consequence of devolvement of responsibility for events and CPD to individual teachers, coupled with a lack of consultation between those involved in the planning process. The absence of an individual with an overview of the requirements made of teachers at any given time, led to conflicts for time and resources and consequently exacerbated perceptions of being overwhelmed.

The additional time designated to these events negatively impacted on instructional time within the classroom, and by extension the time dedicated to CSI.

“This school is so busy with the book fair and the art exhibition and the musical...so much going on that it can be hard to get in your storytime.”

[Interview 11]

This was further complicated by the withdrawal of children for weekly activities such as choir, band and musical rehearsals. Teachers, particularly those working in the senior classes, found it difficult to plan for instruction when all children would be present.

“Time was and still remains a massive issue as with film, musical, choir, band etc. Having my class as a whole was a rarity!”

[Questionnaire 4]

“The upcoming concert is placing pressure upon the staff. Children are being constantly withdrawn for rehearsal and most of the staff are

involved in the production to some degree. It is a challenge for all the staff to remain focused on CSI and I see that the priorities have changed.”

[RD, 9/3/2011]

A further constraint caused by the school's involvement in multiple events and activities was that many teachers were unable to avail of opportunities to view instruction at other class levels. Additionally, the key role played by infant teachers in supervising classes to facilitate the sessions, resulted in them being unable to observe instruction at other levels. In this regard these teachers have a narrow view of CSI, understanding it only as it pertains to their class grouping.

“I know that you gave opportunities to go to see the older classes, to see how they do it there. But I never got to see it, I was never there, or something happened you know. School is so busy.”

[Interview 11]

Analysing their motivation levels across the study, teachers observed that they were highly engaged prior to Christmas, but found it difficult to sustain this as the year progressed.

“I think that my main challenge has been towards the end of the year because I kind of felt at the start that I had all this enthusiasm for it and I was flying at it. But as the last term came it was like ‘ok, I have to get this done and I have to get this done.’”

[Interview 10]

Many teachers appreciated the sustained nature of the CPD approach as it refocused them. However, for others this process reinforced the fact that they had not implemented the instruction, resulting in feelings of guilt.

“She said that she felt she hadn't given enough time to strategies since she came back from Christmas as she felt that every second was being given to meetings and visits. She was looking forward to the session as it would refocus her.”

[RD, 1/2/2011]

“In the earlier months she was enjoying the instruction with her class, but found the pressure from other commitments was impacting on her ability to engage with this approach. The teacher was feeling very overwhelmed and admitted that she dreaded coming to the coaching sessions because she knew that she hadn’t implemented the previous strategy and felt guilty.”

[RD, 6/4/2011]

The challenges created by in-school meetings and activities remained constant across the two years of the study. Initially teachers took little responsibility for conflicting schedules, sending word at the last minute that they would be unable to attend.

“I had arranged this session with the teachers weeks previously however this morning when I went to remind Teacher 26 about it she informed me that she was scheduled to teach drama in another class and wouldn’t be attending.”

[RD, 9/3/2010]

“I realise that Teacher 15 must not have looked at the timetable at any stage or she would have realised that she would never be able to attend any of the sessions.”

[RD, 17/11/2010]

However, as the second year of the study progressed, the researcher noted that teachers approached her more frequently to signal that they had a conflict with the schedule and to rearrange the session. The acceptance of greater responsibility on the part of the teachers may indicate increased belief in both the CPD and instructional practices.

“One teacher was due to attend a planning meeting. The deputy principal came to me to discuss this concern. Rather than the teacher miss the session, they were seeking some way around the clash.”

[RD, 1/10/2010]

“Teacher 8 explained that she would be unable to attend the meeting as a management meeting had been scheduled for that time. She asked if I would mind rearranging the session as she was anxious to attend.”

[RD, 8/2/2011]

While the activities and events outlined are characteristic of any year in the school, a number of unprecedented events occurred over the two years of the study. The combination of these events severely impacted on teachers’ ability to engage in curricular reform and placed great importance on the researcher’s role as a member of the community and her ability to be sensitive to the needs of the wider school community. At the outset of the study, the school caretaker passed away unexpectedly. The researcher deferred much of the CPD until she felt that the teachers and pupils were ready to re-engage in the process. High levels of sensitivity were required in the second year as two young pupils in the school passed away. Responding to these losses required intensive communication between the researcher, principal and teachers to determine the appropriate levels of CPD during these periods, and also the emotional well-being of the pupils.

“During the holidays a pupil in the school passed away. Naturally we are all shocked and grief stricken. Understandably CSI will not be a priority for either teachers or pupils on our return and I need to remain sensitive to this.”

[RD, 8/1/2011]

In March of the second year both the principal and deputy principal announced that they would be retiring in June. This immediately generated an atmosphere of uncertainty, leaving teachers concerned as to the future leadership of the school. In later months, it also resulted in a large number of events, the planning and co-ordination of which made demands on teachers’ time and energy. The researcher found facilitating reform to be extremely challenging in this climate, as teachers were unable to focus on or prioritise the initiative. Consequently, very few CPD sessions were scheduled in May and June of that year. It is interesting to note that while teachers felt overburdened and unable to engage in the CPD process, they regretted this change in focus.

“It should continue on, it should be solid and I think that maybe....and I know this last term was exceptionally chaotic so I’m thinking where could you possibly have slotted it in, but at the same time I think that in a normal year to have another almost refresher course in the last term would be great.”

[Interview10]

Unprecedented weather conditions across the two years also had unexpected consequences in the reform process. Closure for a week in November 2009 due to flooding resulted in teachers returning to work under increased pressure regarding instruction time missed and preparations for the Christmas Bazaar and concerts. At this early stage of implementation, many teachers were overwhelmed by the new instructional approach and the researcher was conscious that *“applying too much pressure at this time could result in a negative attitude to CSI”* [RD, 1/12/2009]. Further disruption was experienced in January and December 2010, when snow forced the closure of the school and the health and safety of pupils became the sole focus of the staff.

“The focus of the school was on the safety of teachers and pupils coming to school. The school was forced to close for two days and on other days opened late. Less than half the pupils made it to school. Coupled with Christmas concerts, neither the teachers nor I had time to focus on CSI.”
[RD, 8/1/2011]

4.6.3 Dual Role of Teacher and Researcher

Despite the importance attributed to the facilitator’s membership of the school community, balancing responsibilities as both teacher and CPD co-ordinator proved challenging within the school context. Responding to the needs of individual teachers was constrained by the fact that the researcher was not fully available to the staff, as release time could only be provided one afternoon per week and on some occasions even this was not possible.

“I had planned to do a read-aloud session today but it had to be cancelled due to infants Parent/Teacher meetings – no supervision for my class.”

[RD, 9/11/2009]

The formal timetabling of modelled lessons did not always account for the unpredictable nature of the classroom. On occasion the researcher had to cancel planned sessions due to urgent class related matters.

“I had arranged to meet second class teachers today but at the last minute I had to cancel due to a serious bullying incident in my own class. I really regretted doing this as I felt the teachers had arranged cover for their classes and prepared work. However, I couldn’t leave the class without resolving this issue.”

[RD, 25/1/2010]

Equally, the transition process from teacher to facilitator could be difficult at times of intense pressure.

“Just prior to the session I was called to the office by the principal on an urgent school matter. The issue was resolved over the course of the lunch break. However as parents were present, I could not excuse myself to go to the modelled lesson, even though I knew the discussion was coming to and end. I found it very difficult to go straight from an intense and unplanned meeting to a coaching session with little time to collect my thoughts.”

[RD, 6/4/2011]

Finally, as a teacher in the school, the researcher experienced similar time and work constraints to the rest of the staff. While this enabled her to empathise and take these factors into account in disseminating knowledge, it also limited the time available to engage staff in the CPD process. As with the staff, this phenomenon increased towards the end of the school year.

“March was a very difficult month in school due to the confirmation. I had completely underestimated the impact this would have, not only on my own teaching in class, but also on my availability to model for other teachers.”

[RD, 31/3/2010]

4.7 Summary: CPD

This section presented the data relating to CPD. Findings suggest that though all teachers spoke positively of the project in a whole-school environment, many were anxious and feeling overwhelmed at the prospect of a further change in practice. Teachers identified **modelling, collegiality, pupil learning, the presence of an in-house facilitator, the sustained nature of the support and the provision of resources** as beneficial elements in the change process.

The researcher indicated that **differentiated support and professional conversations** were also key elements of the CPD approach. It was observed that as teachers grew in confidence, they assumed more ownership of their professional development, actively seeking guidance and indicating areas for further development.

Finally, while sceptical participants played a valuable role in providing a critical analysis of the initiative, addressing their concerns was a key challenge in the CPD approach. Logistical factors relating to school commitments and the dual role of teacher as researcher were also considerations in this process.

Section Two: Comprehension Strategy Instruction

This section explores changes in comprehension instruction within the study school. It begins by examining previous instruction and teacher concerns regarding the ability of their pupils to comprehend text. This is contrasted with teachers' perspectives of a strategic approach to comprehension, identifying the key elements participants consider central to effective CSI.

4.8 Concerns Regarding Instruction

The ability of pupils to comprehend a text was a concern for both teachers and the principal, with participants citing standardised test results and anecdotal evidence to support these claims. There were also suggestions of a decline in comprehension levels over the previous years.

“We’d also be conscious that we’d be coming out about average in standardised test results. In recent times as well, the general profile of the school pupil-wise has changed and we have a higher percentage of children coming to school who may not have been exposed to the pre-reading activities that you would have in normal homes. That is manifesting itself now in our results.”

[Principal, Interview 1]

“I feel the standard of the children’s comprehension has declined since I began teaching in 1979.”

[Questionnaire 3]

As a consequence of concerns regarding pupils’ comprehension, the school has placed great importance on English as a subject. Despite this, some teachers have questioned the impact instruction is having on pupil learning.

“The level of teaching is pretty good and yet we are not seeing results, our children are not succeeding in anyway. They are not ahead, considering the amount of time we do, they are not even on target. So many are falling through the net and that has to be addressed in some way.”

[Interview 5]

4.9 Previous Comprehension Instruction

Interview data suggests that questioning was the predominant approach to comprehension instruction. It was also clear that comprehension was considered to be an exercise in matching specific wording in the questions to answers within

the text. As teacher knowledge of comprehension increased throughout the study, they reflected that they had given this area of instruction little attention in the past.

“It would be a kind of question and answer situation. Who got the answer right to that and who got the answer wrong to that.”

[Principal, Interview 1]

“Basically they were finding a word in the question and finding that word in the piece and that was their answer, instead of actually thinking about it.”

[Interview 7]

“I suppose if you weren’t thinking about comprehension specifically it seemed to be adequate. I can see how it could have been developed more, but I hadn’t given it thought at all.”

[Interview 5]

For one teacher her instructional approach was rooted in her own educational experiences as she had insufficient knowledge from other sources to apply an alternative approach.

“To be honest I didn’t really have knowledge of how to teach comprehension. I was never taught it in college, I was just going on my own memories of school and basically up to then I was going who, where, when, what, how – the basic questions.”

[Interview 7]

Factors which deterred teachers from further exploring the text appear to be a lack of knowledge and a desire not to upset pupils by asking questions they might be unable to answer.

“You could lose them when it comes to ‘what do you think would happen if...’ probably because I didn’t know the best way to go about it. Sometimes it was easier to just take your basic questions and ask them and the children were delighted because they knew the right answers.”

[Interview 5]

Both teachers and pupils acknowledge that this approach to comprehension was boring for the pupils and did little to encourage them to actively engage with the text as a single correct answer was usually being sought.

“In the past comprehension (oral and written) was seen as a monotonous chore.”

[Principal Questionnaire]

“Before comprehension would have been seen as very boring. ‘Right, open up the books now and let’s study the questions.’”

[Interview 11]

“It used to be boring just sitting there listening and you would be more tempted to just switch off.”

“You couldn’t really have an imagination about it.”

[Pupil Group Interview]

Pupils also indicated that they found previous read-alouds to be both boring and confusing. It appears that the lack of opportunity to interact with the text or to identify issues for clarification, distanced pupils from the text, consequently diminishing their ability to recall information later.

“It was just sitting there being bored listening to the story that someone’s telling you and afterwards not even talking about it.”

“I think that it was more confusing because when the other teachers used to read to us, I used to forget about what happened, but now I can remember and I have all the story.”

[Pupil Group Interview]

4.10 Concept of Comprehension

The primacy of questioning reflected a narrow concept of comprehension, further supported by data from questionnaires and interviews. Teachers' comments suggest that, rather than appreciating the complex nature of comprehension, they adopted a simplistic view which extended little beyond the notion of understanding the text.

“What I normally would say to people is ‘what is your understanding of comprehension?’ and they would always say to me, ‘I suppose understanding.’

[Principal, Interview 15]

“Before to me comprehension was that you understood what was in the passage, whereas there are obviously other layers to comprehension that you are building up from a very young age.”

[Interview 8]

It is also clear that for many teacher comprehension was a process by which a universal meaning was abstracted from the text, considering the meaning to reside within the text, rather than in the interaction of the reader with the text.

“Comprehension involves reading a text and being able to lift the vital information.”

“Interpreting what the writer is conveying in the text.”

[Questionnaire 1]

A minority of teachers referred to a more complex model of comprehension which involved context and prior knowledge. Such a concept also recognised the importance of comprehension for all pupils across all curricular areas.

“A process of constructing meaning by interacting with written language through reading. Understanding the information by relating it to prior knowledge or experience.”

[Questionnaire 1]

“You have to comprehend everything - surely comprehension is life, understanding what’s going on. If you can’t understand what’s going on in a class, how can you understand what’s going on in the world.”

[Interview 3]

It is interesting to note that for one teacher the belief that comprehension impacted on all instruction also implied that all instruction developed comprehension and consequently there was no need to adopt a whole-school approach in this area.

“I don’t think that you can say that this is how you teach comprehension because surely everybody, if they are teaching at all, is teaching comprehension in whatever way suits them. I don’t think that sitting down and having a staff meeting about it will improve it.”

[Interview 3]

4.11 Challenges

Teachers identified numerous challenges which impacted on comprehension instruction prior to the study. Many of these were resolved by the change in instruction. However, in some cases the introduction of CSI merely affected the nature of the challenge and also generated new difficulties for teachers.

4.11.1 Time

At the outset of the study, teachers identified time as a major challenge in comprehension instruction, indicating that they did not have sufficient time “*to dedicate to comprehension*” or “*to give full attention to the reading process*” [Questionnaire 1]. The principal also noted that the curriculum was overloaded and lack of time was a problem for many teachers.

Time management issues were also encountered during the study, teachers noting that the greater involvement of children in the interpretation of the text impacted not only on time, but also on the quantity of material read.

“Before you would read the kids a story and it would take five minutes, whereas now you could be reading a story for a week because there is just so much to study and so much involved in it.”

[Interview 11]

There were also suggestions that teachers found themselves more involved in the process and were consequently reluctant to end a lesson that was progressing well.

“I could keep going for two hours so I have to set a limit. When I say ‘that’s it’ you can see the children say ‘Aw..can I just say?’”

[Interview 7]

For many teachers, the time management challenges generated by this approach were outweighed by the benefits created.

“The project was time-consuming but definitely a worthwhile endeavour.”

“It is worth the time you invest in it. The long-term benefits during the year can be seen in many other areas of the curriculum as well.”

[Questionnaire 2]

4.11.2 Reading for Meaning

Prior to the study, several teachers expressed concern regarding the focus of some pupils on decoding words, failing to derive meaning from the text.

Redressing this balance was considered to be a priority for the study.

“The children I teach struggle with basic literacy skills. As a result the effort for the child goes into decoding with the result that the meaning is often lost in the process.”

“To develop the children’s ability at understanding text, not just reading them.”

[Questionnaire 2]

The change in instructional approach appears not only to have impacted on pupils’ attention to the meaning of the text, but has also raised awareness among

teachers that many pupils do not do this automatically and need explicit instruction in this area.

“They have started really thinking about a text and not just reading the words for the sake of reading the actual words. You know they are getting comprehension and understanding from it.”

[Interview 12]

“Since engaging in the Building Bridges scheme I have come to realise the importance of explicit instruction of comprehension strategies as some children are not aware of gaining anything from reading other than getting the words read.”

[Questionnaire 3]

4.11.3 Differentiation

Adapting instruction to meet the needs of all pupils proved problematic before the study. Teachers struggled to involve the weaker and quieter members of the class as the more able pupils dominated.

“Trying to get all the children involved in answering questions. Bright children try to take over.”

[Questionnaire 1]

“The main challenge is to get the weaker or quieter children to participate vocally in the process.”

[Questionnaire 2]

Meeting the diverse needs of those who could interpret the text without assistance and the pupils who needed more structured support presented instructional challenges for teachers.

“Getting to all children. The stronger children will develop higher-order thinking comprehension skills without assistance but it is so hard to get to the weak and middle children to improve their comprehension skills.”

[Questionnaire 1]

4.11.4 Motivation and Engagement

Furthermore, teachers found it difficult to engage pupils in comprehension lessons and to encourage them to interact with the text rather than viewing it as an externally mandated task to be completed.

“Ensuring all children are engaged in the lesson”

“Encourage to read for meaning rather than read to ‘finish’.”

[Questionnaire 1]

In direct contrast, during the study many teachers referred to the challenge of managing pupil interaction with the text, as all pupils wanted to contribute. Initially teachers were uncertain of the amount of time which should be allowed for collaborative discussion.

“The greatest challenge was limiting the number of responses from the children. They were bubbling over with enthusiasm.”

[Questionnaire 2]

“The other challenge was reining them in sometimes. It was like ‘I know you all have wonderful ideas but I need to teach...’ They did tend to get carried away.”

[Interview 9]

With increased experience of the instructional approach, teachers became more confident chairing discussions and determining the appropriate juncture to leave the discussion and continue reading.

“If there are twenty hands up for predicting and you just take three or four, they are used to that, they will get another turn the next time. But that was a worry at the start, would they lose the enjoyment of the story because of all the breaks.”

[Interview 8]

The concern that pupil enjoyment of read-alouds would be diluted by collaborative discussion was shared by many teachers initially.

“I felt that making predictions and making connections out loud, getting the time to talk, would disturb the whole flow of the book and the enjoyment of it.”

[Interview 6]

“I suppose the challenge was to stop them doing it when it wasn't appropriate....not stop them, but to stop them from stopping themselves enjoying a book.”

[Interview 14]

For one teacher this issue was only resolved by assigning some read-alouds to CSI and continuing the remainder in the traditional manner. However, she noted that once pupils were shown how to think strategically about a text, they wanted to discuss their thought processes in all read-alouds, regardless of the teacher's intent. It is interesting to note that some teachers continued to question their ability to enjoy the story, even though the pupils were independently opting to discuss the text.

“So you have Building Bridges stories and general enjoyment stories. Sometimes it's hard to get them to just enjoy a story and just to listen to it.”

[Interview 14]

Other teachers considered the benefits that accrued from this collaborative discussion outweighed the increased in time required to complete the text. It is interesting to note that one teacher used a constructivist view of comprehension to justify this.

“I don't care if it takes me a term to read a book if it gets the children talking and thinking and discussing and using all their skills. I don't care. It's not about the story, it's about what the children can get from the story.”

[Interview 7]

A sophisticated balancing of collaborative discussion and teacher reading of the text is needed. Pupil interest waned when they were not afforded opportunities for discourse.

“I thought that it was boring before we did the strategies, because you know when you fly through a book and the teacher’s like ‘well, tell me something about the story,’ and you’re after forgetting it.”

[Pupil Group Interview]

However, as pupils became more experienced strategy users, they appeared to desire a different pace to the lessons, seeking greater coherence between the discussion and reading of the text. Pupils only alluded to this at the end of the second year, when two respondents to the children’s questionnaire indicated that *“it takes too long with all the strategies.”*

“I found that the children got a bit tired of breaking down the stories. They wanted to read for enjoyment at times.”

[Questionnaire 4]

4.12 Structured Approach

Data from teacher questionnaires and interviews suggested that teachers had a narrow, text-based perception of comprehension and consequently instruction tended to be incoherent and question-driven. In contrast, CSI provided a structured approach which met the developmental needs of the pupils. Both teachers and the principal spoke highly of the *“step-by step”* [Questionnaire 3] nature of the instruction, providing a framework which would scaffold pupils’ development.

“We were delighted really to see there was a structured approach to comprehension, rather than the hit-and-miss situation that was there here-to-fore, of asking oral questions and eventually hoping that you would be able to get written questions and be able to get coherent answers really.”

[Principal, Interview 1]

When expanding on the concept of a structured programme, teachers alluded to two important elements, the structure of the instruction and also the greater clarity and structure in their own concept of comprehension. The deeper

understanding of comprehension also has implications for the effectiveness of instruction, with teachers working knowledgeably towards a goal.

“It gave me a structure for teaching. You start off with this...then develop into this, and finish with this. As a teacher, it’s a nice organisational flow for me as well, rather than finding my way.”

[Interview 10]

“It has given me a framework and modus operandi to effectively teach comprehension. Up to now I was hazy in what I actually wanted to teach in the area of comprehension, but the identification of the strategies and the order in which to teach them allowed for effective instruction.”

[Questionnaire 3]

Furthermore, one teacher suggested that her increased understanding of the pupils’ cognitive activity when engaging with a text has impacted on her interaction with the class.

“I am more aware of children’s thought processes as every step is very clearly mapped out by Building Bridges. I am therefore more patient and understanding.”

[Questionnaire 4]

It also appears that providing a framework and rationale for an oral approach to comprehension instruction has encouraged teachers to change their practice. Many teachers implied that they needed this validation to abandon a written approach which produced a visible finished product. Increased pupil contribution and a broader knowledge of comprehension may have enabled teachers to evaluate their responses, making them cognisant of pupil development and learning.

“It has been my view for some time that too much emphasis has been placed on written comprehension - people feel they’ve nothing to show for time spent on oral comprehension. This approach not only emphasised the importance of the oral side, but gives a proposed structure outlining the different strategies needed to be taught.”

[Questionnaire 2]

“Though I always felt the emphasis should be placed on ‘oral’ comprehension, it was difficult to depart from the ‘evidence’ of written comprehension. Now my satisfaction derives from evidence of independent thinking as opposed to teacher-led thinking.”

[Questionnaire 3]

The change in instructional emphasis appears to have led some teachers to reconsider what was being achieved previously.

“Any comprehension I would have addressed would have been a few random questions thrown out about a text to the class as a whole and then a lot of written work, which really isn’t showing their comprehension, it’s showing their writing skills mostly.”

[Interview 9]

The increase in teacher knowledge in this area has transformed comprehension from an element of reading instruction to an approach to teaching across all curricular areas. This signifies a change in teachers’ thinking regarding the concept of comprehension.

“The word comprehension means something totally different to staff now. They have seen it now as a kind of stepping-stone, a springboard to a whole range of activities, not only in English, but in all the other subjects as well.”

[Principal, Interview 1]

“It’s all oral work, which may have been on the back burner before. You did your comprehension and you did your reading and you were asking them questions about it and you had a short discussion on it. Comprehension done. Whereas now, comprehension takes over the lesson and it works its way right through it.”

[Interview 8]

In line with this perspective, teachers acknowledged the contrast between their previous evaluative and current instructional role with regards comprehension.

“I now teach the children strategies. Before this I took answers.”

“Up to recently, comprehension was something to be tested – mainly through questioning. Now I see the value of explicitly teaching each element of comprehension.”

[Questionnaire 3]

Teachers expressed their satisfaction at the changes in pupil learning due to this approach, noting that question and answer sessions encouraged lower-order thinking, which did not necessarily indicate pupil understanding.

“It is so easy to read a text with the class and answer the questions but I think that answering the questions does not necessarily mean that they understand what has happened.”

[Questionnaire 3]

In contrast, both teachers and the principal considered that CSI extended beyond a literal understanding of the text, to promote deeper thinking.

“It isn’t just plainly understanding what you are reading. There is a far deeper meaning to it and that’s what the children get, They are able to see deeper into what they are reading.”

[Interview 16]

“Before it was just answering questions at the end of things which was very, very, very basic bottom dollar, but this took it to a new level altogether.”

[Principal, Interview 15]

4.13 Atmosphere in CSI Classrooms

There was widespread consensus among teachers and pupils that this approach to comprehension instruction developed a relaxed atmosphere within the classroom, in which pupils felt at ease using strategies. Pupils noted that being with their peers and knowing that everyone would be afforded the opportunity to contribute were factors in reducing their anxiety.

“You will be with your friends and everybody will be heard and you can be just relaxed and not nervous.”

[Pupil Group Interview]

Teachers indicated that less formal seating arrangements helped to develop this atmosphere. They also suggested that removing the association between comprehension and written work has put the children more at ease, with many of them not associating this instruction with schoolwork.

“The kids kind of see it as timeout because it’s not about writing, it’s not an exercise, it’s a time when they can relax.”

[Interview 12]

Furthermore, it appears that the atmosphere developed during CSI positively impacted on pupil confidence to implement strategies initially or to contribute to class discussions. This was found to be particularly the case for pupils considered to be quiet or weak readers. Some teachers suggested that the combination of an atmosphere in which all views are valued and an explicit format for pupil contributions have been contributory factors in this change.

“It gives them the confidence that they know when they say something that it is going to be valued.....They know how to appropriately respond to say ‘I understand what you’re saying but....’ I think that it has given the confidence to the children who wouldn’t normally have the confidence to say what they want to say...or even the structure.”

[Interview 10]

Teachers and pupils considered the respectful manner in which pupils interacted and responded to each other to be central to creating this atmosphere. When identifying the important aspects of the change in practice, pupils in the group interview felt that *“children have a lot of respect for the people around them.”* Teachers also contrasted their ability to listen to other pupils with previous experiences, noting that these social skills were being developed concurrently with comprehension strategies.

“I think that it’s fantastic that they actually have to listen to each other because before this they would have been shouting across at each other.”

[Interview 8]

“I love the way that they talk to each other and respond to each other by looking at each other and saying ‘I am just going to piggyback on your

idea' or one of those things. I love to see that interaction between them because that wouldn't have been there before if they didn't have the strategies or the know-how of what to do."

[Interview 12]

Teacher and pupil comments also point to the development of a classroom environment in which pupils are comfortable offering alternative viewpoints in a constructive manner.

"If they have a different idea to someone else and they think that their prediction isn't really going to happen over something that they heard in the story, they should tell them in a polite way and not say 'that's not going to happen.'"

[Pupil Group Interview]

"She explained that there was such a positive atmosphere in her class as they all shared their thoughts and opinions. While sometimes they disagreed, it was always in a constructive manner and she felt that it was a very affirming experience for the children."

[RD, 23/3/2011]

It is interesting to note that teachers spoke of the ability of pupils to engage in such dialogue without teacher involvement. This suggests that teachers are gradually releasing responsibility to the pupils, allowing them to lead and direct the interpretation of text.

"What really surprised me was when the children were responding to each other, They're using mature vocabulary and responding in a mature way. A lot of the time I don't even need to be there, they are just communicating themselves and responding themselves."

[Interview 11]

"It opened up debates nearly. Just to see the children let loose. I didn't really even need to be there. But they were polite and mannerly about it."

[Interview 7]

However, the comments of one teacher raise concerns regarding the degree to which effective scaffolding is being provided to pupils.

“Now I know you’re supposed to have clues for prediction, but if a child that wouldn’t normally answer answers, I’m not going to say to that child ‘where are your clues?’ You just say well done, fabulous prediction.”

[Interview 7]

“Sometimes their connections weren’t really relevant. It was a connection, but it wasn’t a particularly relevant one, but still it got them involved. It’s just a matter of learning the skills to smile and move on.”

[Interview 9]

The provision of such non-specific praise, while intended to encourage future participation, does little to advance the pupil’s understanding of strategic thinking or to demonstrate its impact on the interpretation of text. While this phenomenon was not discussed by other teachers, the provision of single phrased responses was observed in some recorded footage, particularly in the younger classes. This raises concerns regarding the willingness of teachers to offer constructive feedback to younger or shy pupils.

4.14 Transactional Strategies Instruction

Both the principal and pupils were very clear in their praise of TSI. In the case of the former, he was struck by the ability of the pupils to remain task-focused while working collaboratively.

“He said that he was ‘blown away’ by it. He couldn’t believe that the children were so on-task and so business like about the way they were working together.”

[RD, 14/4/2011]

In their free response to the pupil questionnaires and during the group interview, the children expressed a clear preference for TSI, indicating that it facilitated greater involvement and therefore interest in the text. They also referred to its role in supporting their reading and comprehension.

“I like when everyone is involved.”

“I like TSI because you can talk about what you read and share your opinions and things you found interesting. It can help you learn more about the topic/story.”

[Pupil Questionnaire 4]

Findings emerging from the data suggest that teacher confidence was an important feature in the initial implementation process. It was observed that pupils responded better to the initial modelling provided by the coach, with teachers pointing to teacher confidence as the determining factor.

“I felt that your confidence and experience meant that the children followed the process better under your instruction than under mine.”

[Questionnaire 4]

However, teachers also believed that this was a long-term process and that as their understanding of strategy instruction evolved, they would become more confident and competent in this area. Their initial experience was positive enough to sustain them through this developmental phase.

“I think maybe when I as a teacher will have confidence in all of the strategies, then naturally TSI will come together. So I suppose you start encouraging them to use the strategies more when you are more confident as a teacher.”

[Interview 13]

“I will certainly be doing it in future because I think that it really helped with group work as well as individual understanding.”

[Interview 12]

One teacher expressed her surprise that her class didn't enjoy TSI, despite being actively and enthusiastically engaged in read-aloud sessions. She observed that *“they weren't using their strategies in the group and were finished too quickly.”* [RD, 24/3/2011]. When reflecting on this in a later interview, the teacher attributed this discrepancy to her own lack of experience and confidence.

“That could have been how I was approaching it....or my own confidence in it.”

She also indicated that rather than explore these issues further, she reduced the amount of time dedicated to TSI.

“They were doing it everyday and it might have been too much so I was doing it less often.”

[Interview 13]

There was some evidence of initial concern regarding the release of control to pupils, necessitating a change in role for the teacher.

“It’s just the change I suppose. I’m not the person at the top of the room in control of all the children. You are giving them more control over their learning experience.”

[Interview 12]

“Found it frustrating releasing control.”

[Questionnaire 4]

This was also considered to be a means of empowering the pupils by giving them full control over their own learning.

“TSI – letting the children go. Strategy instruction empowered them.”

[Questionnaire 2]

The role of teacher modelling and scaffolding, as responsibility was released to the pupils was found to be essential. Teachers were only able to engage with the pedagogical implications of the instruction once they had attended to the practical and logistical considerations involved with group work, such as classroom layout, pupil roles and noise level.

“They have worked on the practical matters such as getting into and out of groups and are much happier now with the manner in which the children worked. This appears to be equally as important as the work the children do in the group.”

[RD, 12/4/2010]

“The teacher went to many groups to tell them to lower the noise level. She asked me if I thought it was ok. I assured her that this was a normal working noise level. I asked her if they were all talking about the text and

she accepted that they were and on considering this point seemed happier.”

[RD, 7/2/2011]

Teachers were also surprised and initially concerned by the need to work with each group individually. Perhaps due to the active role of the pupils during whole-class instruction and the explicit modelling of TSI they had received, teachers expected all groups to be able to work effectively and independently from the earliest moment. They were taken aback to find that without initial teacher scaffolding, most groups resorted to reading the text without any evidence of strategic thinking.

“She told me that she had started TSI the evening before but that as she looked around she noticed that the other groups were just reading and she was concerned that she was after doing something wrong.”

[RD, 4/2/2011]

“She said that when she started with a new group she always wondered what they had been doing because they never had a clear idea of what should be going on.”

[RD, 24/3/2011]

The main challenge identified by teachers was resourcing appropriate text to engage the pupils and stimulate strategic thinking. Both the teachers and researcher found that in the early stages some novels did not support strategy use, as the prose was often more descriptive and in the opening chapters pupils needed more support engaging with the characters.

“I found that the group were shy and quiet but I attribute this to the poor piece of text. At the beginning of the chapter there was a lot of description. It was an example of authentic reading but it was a poor choice for the start of TSI.”

[RD, 9/2/2011]

“She felt that sometimes the novel could be too longwinded for the children and they had nothing to talk about.”

[RD, 9/3/2011]

The researcher resolved this issue within her own class by reading the opening chapters as a whole group and using TSI for subsequent chapters. Other teachers, impressed by pupil interactions with picturebooks, adapted the instruction to incorporate this genre into the smaller group setting. Further teachers expressed a belief that in the early stages, pupils responded best to information text. Among all teachers was a consensus that text selection was *“crucial to success”* [RD, 6/4/2011].

A further initial concern was the appropriateness of this instruction for weaker readers. However, both teachers and the researcher observed the active engagement of such pupils in a supportive, collaborative environment.

“He is always passive in class and I was worried that the others would have to coax him to participate but he was constantly using strategies and even volunteered to read. His reading was hesitant but the rest of the group was supportive. There was a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere in the group and this certainly helped him.”

[RD, 10/10/2010]

“She couldn’t believe the pupil who had shone in the session as he struggles at decoding and she thought it was wonderful to see him so active and thinking and reflecting upon the text.”

[RD, 2/2/2011]

Pupil responses in the group interview also support this finding, indicating that for many pupils this is a less daunting approach to reading. By maintaining the group format throughout the year, a rapport and understanding was developed, which appeared to place pupils more at ease when reading and discussing text with their peers.

“I think that it’s better in a group because you get used to who you’re with and in the class you’re really nervous. Once you read once in a group they know what you’re like reading and you won’t be as nervous.”

“You would be nervous reading in front of a whole class, but if there’s only four people in your group then you’re only reading in front of three. You wouldn’t be that nervous then.”

Despite the increase in pupil involvement, a whole-class forum was still an intimidating arena for some pupils who were more comfortable engaging in a collaborative discussion within a smaller group.

“The inspector also commented on some of the pupils being quiet and reflected that it was wonderful that they had the opportunity to contribute in smaller groups, as the large class group will not suit all pupils.”
[RD, 24/5/2011]

Given the difficulties encountered as a result of the high levels of pupil interaction within the whole-class setting, teachers welcomed TSI as a more viable means of supporting strategic thinking of all pupils.

“They all get a chance to talk about every part of it. In a class of 33 there are only so many opinions that you can listen to.”
[Interview 9]

Pupils supported this view, valuing TSI as a means of engaging in a discussion in a timely fashion. They indicated that they were often frustrated by the lengthy discussions associated with the whole-class approach.

“I think that it’s fun and that it’s better because there’s less people and it doesn’t take as long.”

“I think that it’s easier to read in a group because it doesn’t take as long and you can listen to everybody’s, but with the whole-class sometimes other people’s predictions and connections and stuff don’t get heard.”
[Pupil Group Interview]

Pupils also pointed to the importance of TSI in supporting their progress towards independent application. Many pupils noted that without the group interaction they would be unlikely to use strategies. This appears to highlight the crucial role of peer collaboration within small groups in achieving the long-term goal of internalisation of strategies among all pupils.

“When I read on my own I usually forget about the strategies, but when you read in a group other people will be using their strategies and it makes you think about your own.”

“It’s easy to learn them, but when you’re by yourself at home, if we got something for homework or if we were just reading a book ourselves, it’s hard to remember to use your strategies. In a group it’s easier because people remind us.”

[Pupil Group Interview]

Interest is expressed in the alternative perspectives discussed as part of this dialogic approach to comprehension. It is clear that pupils are not only listening to others in the group, but also actively considering their ideas, appreciating perspectives they may not have thought of. The pupils suggest that this collaborative approach has the capacity to change their opinion of a text.

“I think that it is more interesting reading in groups because if someone had an idea that you never thought of and it made the story more interesting for you if you didn’t really enjoy the story.”

“I prefer reading in a group in school because someone in the group could make a prediction or ask an I wonder question and you never would have thought of that and then that might give you another idea.”

[Pupil Group Interview]

4.15 Cross-Curricular Application

Developing a strategic approach to comprehension extended beyond the narrow confines of English reading for all participants in the study. Teachers noted that the pupils’ strategic thinking in all curricular areas reflected authentic engagement with text, rather than a response to teacher-mandated tasks.

“That’s the ultimate aim, that they’re not just reading for meaning when you give them a comprehension piece. That they are reading for meaning

all the time and that they are not just singing it off just because the teacher wants them too.”

[Interview 13]

It was also considered important that the pupils were actively interpreting images as well as text as this has implications beyond the classroom, particularly with multi-media sources.

“They tend to apply them to everything and not just to their reading. While I think that it does benefit their reading and their comprehension, I think that in the world we have today, where a lot of what they see is visual, they are applying it to that as well.”

[Interview 9]

The facility of CSI to integrate multiple curricular areas was a key feature for the principal, who saw this methodology as a means by which teachers could effectively engage with an overloaded curriculum.

“The actual cherry on the cake is that this famous comhtháthú (integration) word, we can bring in so many topics, so many different subjects into this methodology, that’s incredible.”

[Interview 15]

Rather than merely connecting to knowledge acquired in other subject areas, it is clear that both teachers and pupils have incorporated strategic thinking and collaborative dialogue as fundamental components of teaching and learning across all subject areas, thus highlighting its value to all participants. That teachers have extended this methodology beyond English suggests a broader concept of comprehension and its importance in pupil learning.

“I now view comprehension as an integrated and integral part of teaching almost all subjects.”

[Questionnaire 2]

“It has changed the way teachers teach and it has changed the way children learn.”

[Principal, Interview 15]

Teachers expressed their surprise at the ease and speed at which pupils began to independently apply strategies in other curricular areas, noting that in many cases this happened without teacher prompting or encouragement.

“The way it goes ‘viral’. Once you start it with the children there’s no going back as the children begin to use it across the curriculum spontaneously.

[Questionnaire 4]

Some teachers were taken aback by the spontaneous nature of this initial cross-curricular application, and due to lacunae within their own knowledge were uncertain as to the appropriateness of it outside English lessons.

“She said that they were eager to use them across the curriculum, but she had stopped them as she felt they were only for reading.”

[RD, 1/2/2010]

Equally teachers found that, though welcome, it was necessary to manage the amount and timing of pupil contributions so that they would complement rather than detract from teaching and learning.

“Teacher 1 said that in some instances this can disrupt her flow but that overall it added to her class.”

[RD, 9/3/2011]

“Sometimes I’ve had to ask them not to use the strategies as they’d start making connections when you’re trying to teach them a really important Maths strategy.”

[Questionnaire 4]

Despite the fact that pupils appear to initially apply strategies across the curriculum without teacher prompting, the development of this is contingent on effective teacher modelling and consequently is related to teacher belief in the process. One teacher indicated that she noted her pupils frequently used the strategies she was most comfortable teaching, but made less use of those she lacked confidence in.

“I found that they used prediction and especially connections mostly in other subjects. My own lack of confidence in some of the other areas probably caused them to not use them as much.”

[Questionnaire 4]

Only one teacher did not allude to the cross curricular application of strategies and remained vocal regarding her belief that this would not happen at infant level as it was beyond the capabilities of her pupils.

“The only changes you would see would be within their storytime but it didn’t effect their English, Irish or maths. I wouldn’t have seen anything else in the classroom. Definitely in the senior classes you could see huge potential for it, but that’s what I’m saying, at infants it’s a lot more literal and practical and it’s not deep thinking. It’s just on the surface level, the real literal level.”

[Interview 2]

It is likely that the teacher’s explicit delineation of CSI as only for some pages in certain books has not provided the pupils with a clear understanding of the cognitive processes involved and their importance in comprehension. It is interesting to contrast this with the opinion of the school inspector after observing lessons at the same class level. He remarked on the natural manner in which the pupils used strategies throughout the day to discuss and extend their learning. This shows not only the capacity of young children to independently apply strategies to develop their learning, but also the importance of teacher belief in the process.

“He had never seen infants do such before. He was also amazed at the way the children used the strategies throughout the day to express their thinking.”

“During the lesson several children used CPMs to offer connections and make predictions. This was most evident he felt during a science lesson on floating and sinking, where the children made predictions and connections and used these to draw conclusions.”

[RD, 15/4/2010]

It is clear that teachers regarded the broader application of strategies across all curricular areas as justification for the time consuming nature of initial modelling and its importance in pupil learning.

“The approach makes a very positive impact on all areas of the curriculum - so time spent on initial modelling and teaching is time well spent.”

“It is worth the time you invest in it. The long-term benefits during the year can be seen in many other areas of the curriculum as well.”

[Questionnaire 2]

Teachers also used this as a means of assessing the effectiveness of not only the approach but also their own teaching. As pupils began to independently apply strategies across different contexts, it could be assumed that they had developed a complete understanding of the associated declarative, procedural and conditional knowledge.

“It’s very hard to assess, but I mean the only way you can assess it is the way they bring it back within the classroom and there have been so many times when I have been so impressed with the stuff that they have come back to me with using the strategies.”

[Interview 11]

The data suggests that pupils’ independent strategy application reminded some teachers that pupil thinking was of primary importance in this process and that CPMs and explicitly naming strategies were instructional tools to achieve this.

“I mean Building Bridges I think has definitely infiltrated every area, every subject, because even if the children aren’t making the signs, I think that they are still thinking the way that we have taught them to think basically.”

[Interview 6]

The video footage indicates that for other teachers the focus remained on pupils clearly identifying the strategy they were using, rather than its involvement in the meaning making process.

When considering the benefits of strategic thinking in other curricular areas, pupils merely responded that *“it helps you understand them better. [Pupil Group Interview]*. When considering the same issue, one teacher believed that making connections helped the pupils to place their learning within the context of the wider world, rather than confining it to the artificial environment of the classroom.

“The connection was the most used. They often used the connection sign to link subjects and life outside of school with a lesson.”

[Questionnaire 4]

4.16 Personal Interpretation

Teachers’ comments indicate that multiple perspectives are now valued within comprehension instruction, with pupil schema and prior knowledge playing a key role in the construction of meaning.

“Allows for children’s different experiences to have a value.”

[Questionnaire 2]

“Allowing the children to become proficient readers by giving them the opportunity to use all their comprehension strategies and make their own of the passage.”

[Questionnaire 3]

This suggests that greater responsibility has been released to the pupils, allowing them to take an active role in the construction of meaning.

In addition to teachers adopting an open approach to differing viewpoints, it was also considered important that pupils appreciate the validity of alternative perspectives.

“Everyone sees a passage or story in a different way and it is important that the children recognise this.”

[Questionnaire 4]

It is interesting to note that pupils spoke positively of the views of others, observing that identifying aspects they might not have considered often made the text more interesting.

“If someone makes a prediction you wouldn’t be able to think of, you might never have thought of that at home. You might just have went past it, but in a group if they say it, it might make the book really interesting for you.”

[Pupil Group Interview]

It is clear that the pupils understand that their interpretation will be respected, even if it differs from that of the teacher.

“You can see your own side of the story.”

[Pupil Group Interview]

“The teacher has a different view.”

[Pupil Questionnaire]

Many teachers spoke of the fact that in CSI *“a child is never wrong.”*

[Questionnaire 4].

“Every child has a voice and they can’t be wrong.”

[Questionnaire 2]

“It’s not a right or wrong thing because it is a personal thing to them.”

[Interview 7]

This is a shift in perspective from previous instruction which predominantly sought known answers to teacher questions. However, the current ideology of all answers being correct may result in flawed interpretations being accepted without examination. In this manner, the instruction described does not appear to reflect a dialogic approach where multiple perspectives are welcomed, but challenged and considered in the construction of a deeper understanding.

4.17 Comprehension Process Motions

Teachers and the inspector considered CPMs to be a particularly effective feature of CSI. From a teacher's perspective, their use indicated that pupils had sufficient understanding of a strategy to apply it independently. Additionally, it scaffolded other pupils' strategic thinking, reminding them of the strategy and modelling appropriate use.

“It is great that everyone totally understands how to use these strategies and when they see someone making the ‘P sign’ it encourages other kids to do the same.”

[Interview 11]

The degree to which pupils internalised the strategies was indicated by use of CPMs when in other classrooms and contexts.

“Pupils from other classes get involved in my lessons and are eager to use hand signals. This has happened on three different occasions this year.”

[Questionnaire 4]

It also appears that using CPMs facilitated the release of responsibility from teacher to pupil, making pupils more active and involved in the comprehension process. This dynamic was also supported by increased awareness among teachers of the need for greater pupil engagement at all levels.

“Now I know that the children need to be involved in all steps of the process to benefit fully. I feel that the hand signals were very effective in this.”

“This clarity of purpose and the use of the ‘signal’ ensures that all children are empowered to participate.”

[Questionnaire 2]

Weaker readers were considered to benefit most from this approach, adopting it as a framework around which to build their thought processes. Teachers

considered the kinaesthetic nature of this approach to be crucial in developing an understanding of an abstract concept for these pupils.

“More holistic, multi-sensory approach ensures that the weaker children become more involved.”

“Always knew that learning support children work better with visual clues and through actions, but seeing is believing. Even the weakest of my senior infants academically benefitted hugely.”

[Questionnaire 2]

4.18 Summary: CSI

This section outlined participants’ concerns regarding both the reading performances of pupils and the accompanying instruction. The use of questioning as the primary methodology in comprehension appears to arise from serious lacunae in teacher knowledge in the area. Teachers praised the introduction of a **structured** approach to instruction which developed greater clarity in the concept of comprehension.

Change in instruction resulted in the development of a collaborative environment in which all pupils were confident expressing diverse opinions without fear of ridicule. However, it was noted that by emphasising the value of personal interpretation, many flawed perspectives remained unchallenged. Teachers expressed surprise at the ease with which pupils embraced strategy use and that at all levels they employed them effectively in other subject areas.

Despite initial concerns regarding the appropriateness of TSI for weaker readers, both teachers and pupils considered this instructional approach to be a less daunting forum in which all pupils contribute in the interpretation of text. Pupils valued TSI as they could all participate in the discourse in a timely manner, a feature which was less prevalent in whole-class situations due to increased pupil engagement.

Section Three:

Impact on Pupils and Learning

The previous sections explored the impact of research-validated comprehension instruction, supported by sustained in-school CPD on teachers and their instructional practice. The following section draws on perspectives from teachers and pupils to consider the impact of CSI on pupils and their concept of reading and comprehension.

Teachers and the principal expressed their surprise at the reaction of the pupils to the change in instruction. Teachers were struck by the ease with which the pupils not only grasped each strategy, but also the speed at which they began to apply the strategy across other areas of the curriculum. It is possible that teachers' surprise at the pace of this change may be rooted in their own struggles to implement the new instructional approach.

“I was surprised at the immediate buy-in from the children, their enthusiasm and the ease with which they were able to apply the strategies once modelled.”

[Questionnaire 2]

“They kind of just went with the flow of it. It didn't seem like a big upheaval, it was just a natural thing.”

[Interview 6]

A further unexpected feature for the principal and teachers was the level of pupil engagement and enjoyment in the comprehension process. It is clear from teacher responses to questionnaires, that pupils looked forward to this instruction.

“It's lovely to hear a happy ‘Yes!’ when you say it's time for reading.”

[Questionnaire 2]

“Each and every child enjoyed it. They looked forward to storytime and TSI every day.”

[Questionnaire 3]

The principal highlighted this change in attitude on observing senior pupils' reluctance for the instruction to end.

“He told her that in all his years teaching he had never seen children going back to their places still discussing the lesson.”

[RD, 18/3/2011]

4.19 Role of Strategies in Comprehension

It is clear that thinking strategically and engaging in collaborative discussions has increased pupil interest in the text and reading.

“I think strategies are very helpful because you can understand it more and talk about it to others and also they make it more interesting.”

“The reading is boring without all the strategies.”

[Pupil Questionnaire 4]

This increase in interest is perhaps explained by the fact that as pupils think strategically, they are actively considering the text. Failure to do so leads to difficulty recalling information. This feature of strategy application was identified as important to pupils, both in the group interview and in responses to the pupil questionnaire.

“The bad thing about our English reading is sometimes we read too fast and we don't go through what we read and that's why we use our strategies.”

[Pupil Questionnaire 4]

“When I'm reading and if I have only one or two strategies done on a page, when I get to the end I still forget. So then if I have used a lot of strategies on the page I can remember it more.

[Pupil Group Interview]

One teacher remarked on this contrast, reflecting on the low rates of information retention among pupils unless they read strategically.

“This approach has made me realise how little the children absorb from what they read when they are not given the strategies.”

[Questionnaire 2]

Pupils most frequently referred to the role of strategies in developing an understanding of the text and its importance in learning information.

“It can help me to learn more stuff and share information about the topic.”

“I think it makes you understand the story better.”

[Pupil Questionnaire 4]

It is evident that the pupils have a clear understanding of the contribution of comprehension strategies in constructing meaning and are aware of the personal benefits of thinking strategically. This suggests that pupils possess conditional knowledge regarding strategies and have experience applying them independently.

4.20 Pupil Perception of Reading

Anecdotal evidence from teachers suggests that CSI may be positively impacting on pupils’ attitude towards and enjoyment of reading.

“I feel that the children have a more positive attitude towards reading and that they find comprehension now more enjoyable because they are doing it in a hands-on way.”

[Interview 11]

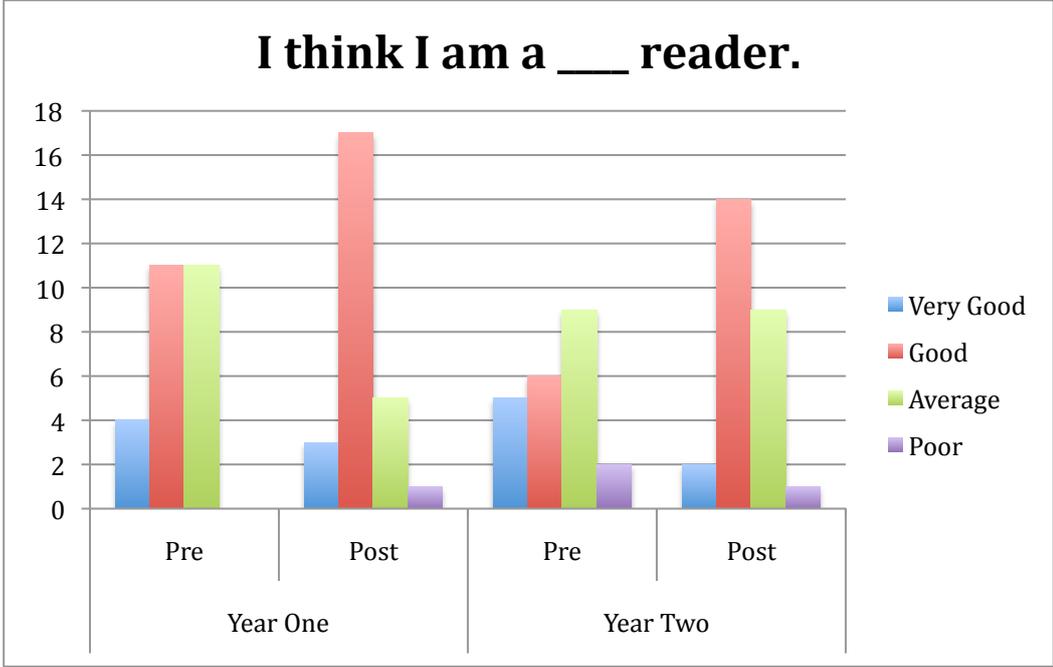


Figure 4.9

These observations are supported by findings emerging from pupil questionnaires, which suggest that among pupils there has been a change in their perception of themselves as readers (cf Figure 4.9). In both years, the greatest increase occurred in the ‘good’ reader category. There is also a slight decrease in those who considered themselves to be ‘very good’ readers. It is likely that a deeper understanding of the characteristics of a good reader has caused this re-evaluation.

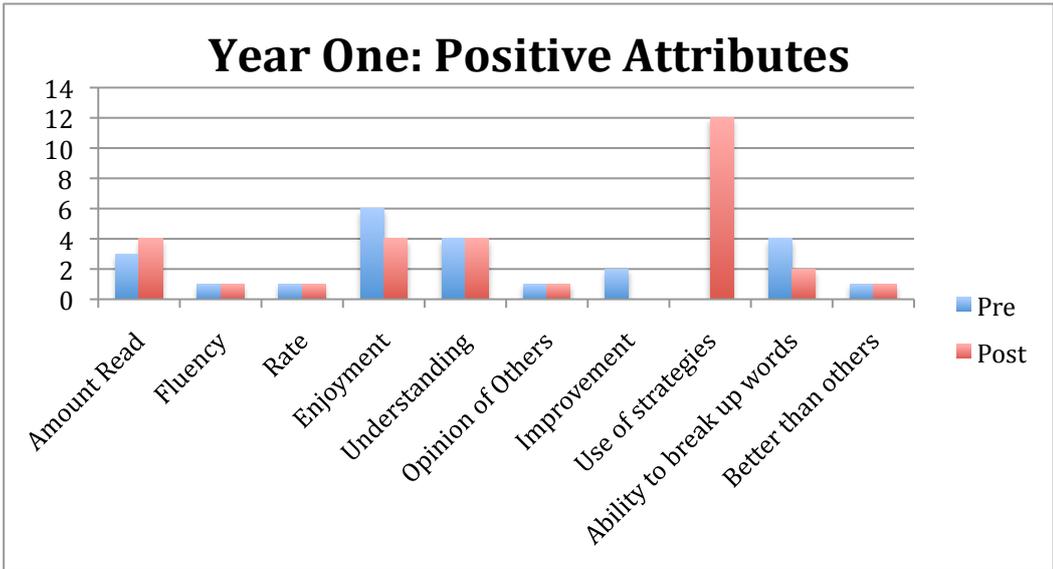


Figure 4.10

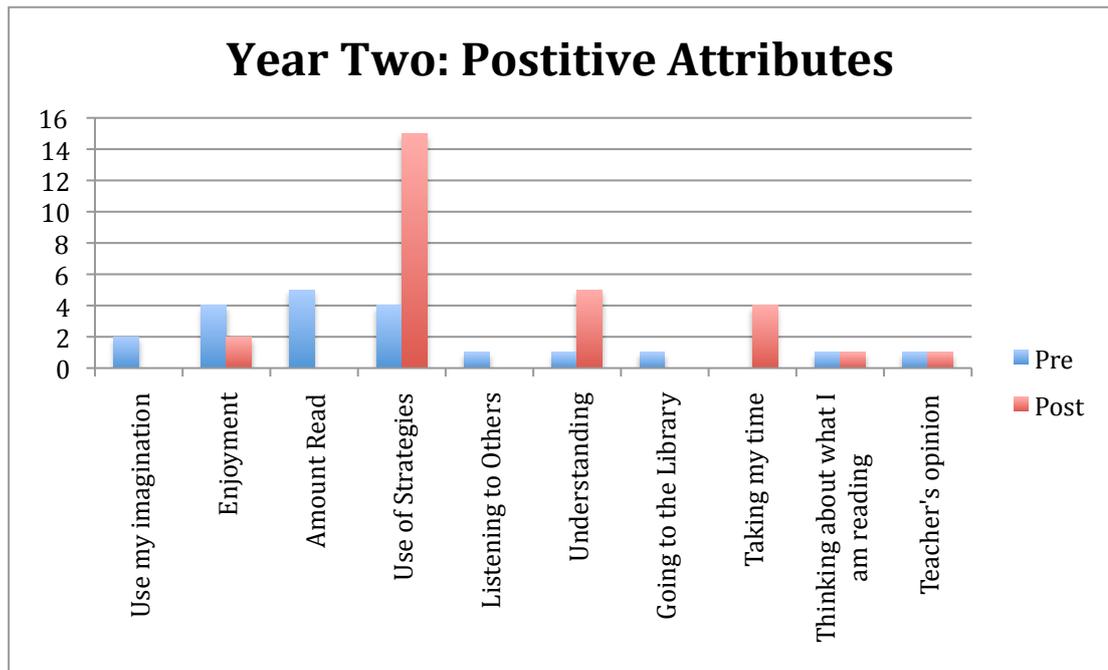


Figure 4.11

Figures 4.10 and 4.11 illustrate the characteristics pupils identified to justify a positive rating of themselves as readers. It is unsurprising that use of strategies received the greatest increases across both years, given the whole-school focus in this area during the study. However, it does indicate a strong link between strategies and effective reading in the minds of the pupils. The prominence of ‘enjoyment’ and ‘understanding’ in both years also reflects the purpose of strategies identified by pupils previously. It is interesting to note the emergence of ‘taking my time’ as a positive characteristic of a good reader. This suggests that pupils value time spent considering the meaning, over the rapid decoding of individual words.

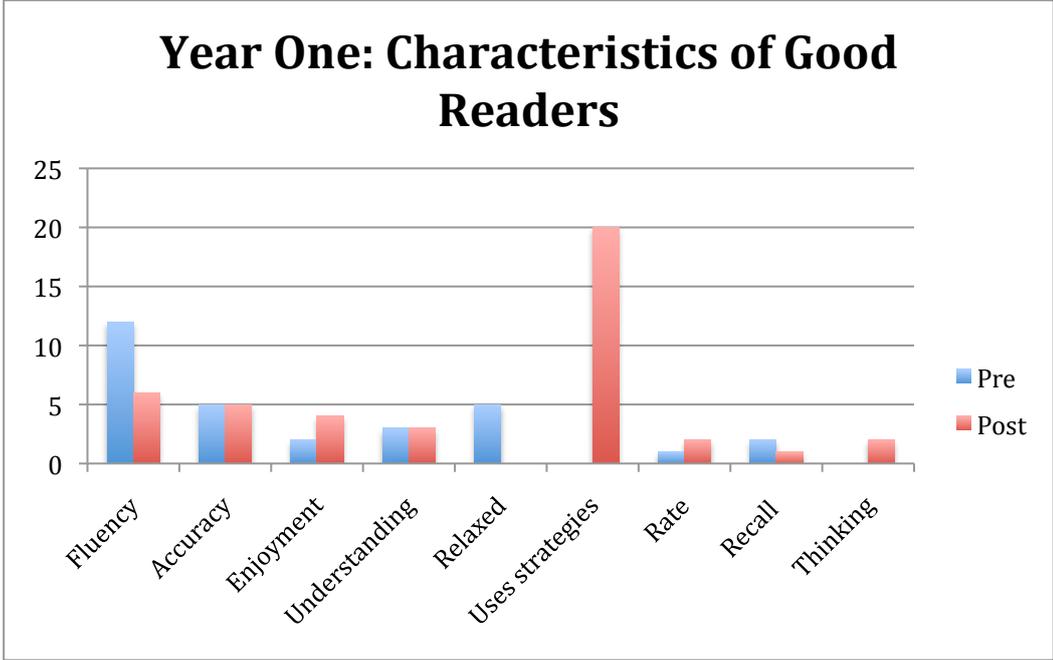


Figure 4.12

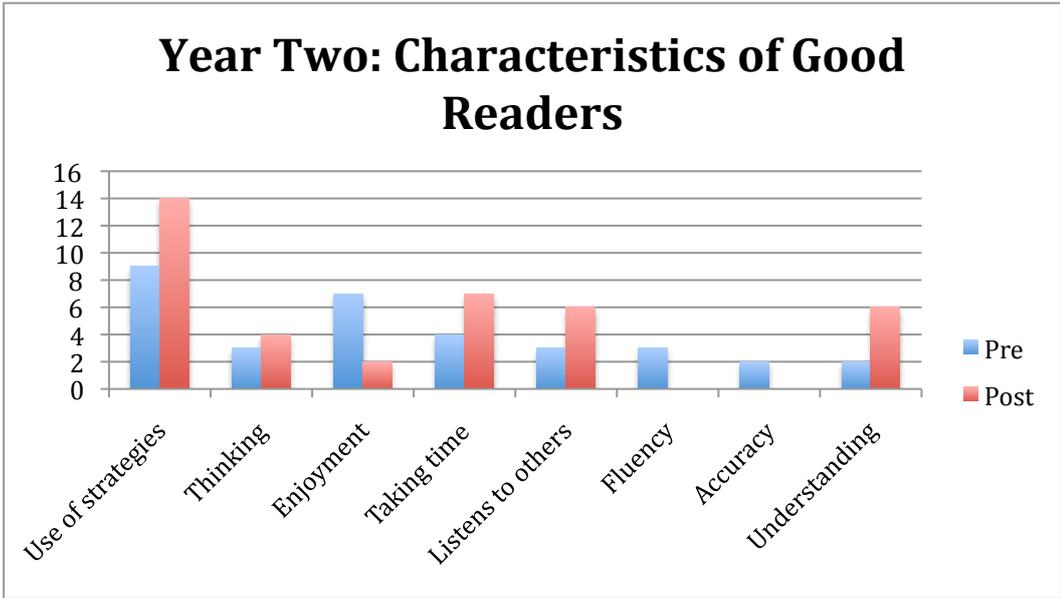


Figure 4.13

The importance pupils attributed to comprehension strategies in reading is further demonstrated in Figures 4.12 and 4.13. It is interesting to note that though ‘use of strategies’ is the most frequently identified characteristic at the beginning of the second year, it still receives the greatest increase. This suggests that the sustained nature of the instruction continued to impact on pupils’ understanding of comprehension strategies and their role in reading. It is clear that elements of CSI are impacting on pupils’ concept of a good reader, as evidenced by the

increase in characteristics such as ‘thinking’, ‘listening to others’ and ‘understanding.’

The decline in the ratings of ‘fluency’ and ‘accuracy’ across the two years is of note. It may be that pupils still consider these important features but prioritised other elements. However, the fact that no pupils identified them as key elements at the end of the second year may indicate an imbalance in reading instruction. It is important for pupils to realise that comprehension, fluency and accuracy all play important roles in the reading process.

4.21 Pupil Confidence

The transfer of responsibility from teacher to pupils was considered by teachers to be an “*empowering*” [Questionnaire 4] process for the children. During the group interview, pupils indicated that prior to the change in instruction, they did not feel that they were presenting their perspectives on the text. In contrast, they are now “*not afraid of giving my opinion and talking out loud*” [Pupil Questionnaire 4]. One teacher pointed to the provision of structure through appropriate language as a key factor in facilitating class discussion with greater pupil involvement.

“I also think it empowers the children for class and group discussion/comprehension as it gives them the ‘language’ to respond, discuss, to clarify etc.”

[Questionnaire 4]

It is also interesting to note that through the process of “*acting more as a facilitator when using strategies*” [Questionnaire 4], teachers themselves have had to consider alternative or previously unseen perspectives, as pupils “*often see it from a view I myself wouldn’t have thought of*” [Questionnaire 2].

There is clear evidence from teachers’ comments across all data sources that pupils appear more confident and assured when interacting with text and when engaging in class discussions.

“Children gain so much confidence when using strategies.”

“Confidence in self - when answers are not straight forward - no fear of voicing one’s own opinion.”

[Questionnaire 2]

For many teachers, the increase in confidence levels derives from pupil belief that all responses will be valued and respected, both by the teacher and their peers. In such an accepting and open environment pupils are more willing to share their opinions.

“It gives them the confidence that they know, when they say something that it is going to be heard and it is going to be valued.”

[Interview 10]

“It brought out a confidence in other children, children that thought before ‘I can’t answer that, I’ll be totally laughed at.’ But nothing is off limits with this.”

[Interview 7]

4.22 Internalisation of Comprehension Strategies

Pupil responses and researcher observation suggested a change in reading behaviour among some reluctant readers. It appears that through reading strategically, these pupils were more engaged in the process and consequently derived more pleasure from the activity.

“I can now sit down and read a book and not get tired of the book.”

[Pupil Questionnaire 4]

“I am taking out more (library books) because we learned to use our strategies. Like last year I didn’t take out that much because I found it boring just reading, but this year I can use my strategies in my head.”

[Pupil Group Interview]

However, other pupils believed that they are making less use of the library since the change in instruction. It is interesting to note that the quality and range of text were cited as a causal factor in this behaviour. It appears that exposure to a wider

variety of literature, including picturebooks, made some pupils more aware of personal preferences and equally more discerning in their choice of text.

“I think I’m taking out less because there are no really good books. They are all information books.”

“I’m taking out less because the books we are reading are much more interesting than the ones in the school library.”

[Pupil Group Interview]

Pupils are cognisant of their level of ability with regard to independent application of strategies. Many of the pupils within the focus group spoke of thinking strategically while reading themselves.

“I love being able to stop and think in my head when I read alone.”

“I use the strategies in my head when I read alone”

[Pupil Questionnaire 4]

However, other pupils were aware that they needed the support of their peers to engage in strategic reading of the text. It is evident from their comments that the initial obstacle to effective comprehension when reading independently is recall of the strategies.

“If we were just reading a book ourselves, it’s hard to remember to use your strategies. In school it’s easier because people remind us.”

“I think it is easy, but sometimes when you learn....when you are reading a book by yourself you forget to use it.”

[Pupil Group Interview]

It is also evident that the pupils were aware of the importance of internalising the strategies to the point of automaticity, and that this, rather than merely applying strategies is one of the characteristics of good readers.

“I don’t think that a good reader needs to stop and think about what they read, they just know.”

“I like to read alone by myself. I don’t have to stop every paragraph to think and use strategies, I make them automatically.”

[Pupil Questionnaire 4]

They were also conscious of their continued need for scaffolding when using some of the newer strategies, most notably clarification. It is interesting to note that their prior experience with CSI suggested to them that with time and guidance they would become more confident in this area.

“I think that if I was reading a book and I needed something clarified, I wouldn’t be able to do it because I don’t know how to do it on my own.”

“I think that it’s because it’s the newest one we’ve learnt and once we go onto a newer book and we have harder words, we’ll probably need to get things clarified more and get better at it.”

[Pupil Group Interview]

The internalisation of strategies to the point of automaticity, may perhaps account for some teacher concern regarding visualisation. While one infant teacher expressed her belief that this strategy was beyond the capabilities of her pupils, other teachers were concerned that despite teacher modelling and scaffolding, their pupils rarely discussed this strategy without teacher prompting.

“‘Cinemas’ – I did it- but I find it is the only strategy we use hardly at all.”

[Questionnaire 2]

“She also spoke about her visualisation lesson that day. She felt the children weren’t using this strategy.”

[RD, 8/10/2010]

Within the group interview, however, pupils indicated that visualisation was among the strategies they used most frequently, noting that rather than consciously generating sensory images, this happens automatically for them.

“My cinema just automatically switches on. I don’t have to do it. It just pictures in my head on its own.”

“It just comes when you’re reading. You don’t even have to think about it, using your cinema, until you’re talking about cinemas afterwards.”

[Pupil Group Interview]

Increased understanding of the long-term goal of CSI and the developmental stages involved, in addition to greater feedback from pupils regarding their own strategic thinking, may allay future teacher concerns in this area.

The independent and automatic application of strategies on the part of pupils was emphasised during read-aloud sessions in which the teacher chose not to use dialogue and discussion. Teachers observed that many pupils still used CPMs and expressed an interest in sharing their insights into the text.

“One teacher commented that she had tried this and the children refused not to use their strategies.”

[RD, 21/10/2010]

“You could see that a couple of them were still making their predictions. They were making their signs, but we just continued on with the story.”

[Interview 6]

While these comments raise questions regarding teachers’ understanding of strategic reading extending beyond specific instruction, it does indicate that some pupils not only comprehend when and how strategies are applied, but also find this approach to be preferable to more traditional teacher read-alouds. For some teachers, reflecting on the active role sought by pupils, enabled them to reconsider pupil thinking during these lessons.

“I could probably have emphasised it a little bit more. You can make these connections in your head. There were probably others making connections in their heads but just not making the symbol. There could be a lot more in the class using the strategies.”

[Interview 6]

Furthermore, there were indications, particularly among younger pupils, that CSI promoted metacognitive thinking which extended beyond the confines of the specific strategies identified in the *Building Bridges* programme. From the

earliest instruction, many pupils demonstrated strategic thinking in areas in which they had not received explicit instruction.

“Once again she reported that her children are instinctively making connections.”

[RD, 12/10/2009]

This may be unsurprising given that the intention of instruction is to replicate the actions of experienced readers. However, it does indicate that such pupils recognise that the classroom environment now encourages such thinking. As pupils became accustomed to CSI, many became more aware of their own metacognitive thinking, some struggling to classify this within the identified categories, but recognising it as a strategy.

“The teacher asked if there was any CPM of ‘T’. A child in her first class was making a ‘T’ sign to show that he was thinking. It is clear that he is thinking metacognitively and understands how strategies can be used.”

[RD, 10/10/2010]

In addition, for many pupils the strategies are intrinsically linked and consequently as instruction progressed, they struggled to identify the strategy employed.

“I can make a connection... and it’s a prediction as well.”

[So Far From The Sea Transcript]

While it is clear from earlier comments that teachers admire the structure and linguistic framework of the instructional approach, continued development of a flexible approach to multiple strategy use requires greater emphasis on thought processes rather than the ability to name strategies used.

4.23 Higher-Order Thinking Skills

Teachers’ expectations approaching the study centred on the development of “*abstract thinking*” and the ability of children to look “*beyond the very obvious meaning of the story to the higher-level thinking*” [Questionnaire 1]. However, examination of responses to the first questionnaire indicated that expectations

were differentiated according to age and ability, with higher-order thinking being reserved for more able, older readers.

“Acquisition of higher-order comprehension skills by older pupils and evidence of spontaneous response to text by all pupils.”

“To help the children get an understanding of topics at their level, whether it’s a deep and meaningful understanding for the better child, or just an ability to know what they are reading for the weak child.”

The belief that higher-order thinking skills can only be developed among older, more able readers was echoed by the principal.

“There has always been a bit of a worry in that we feel that children are maybe not capable of using higher-order thinking skills.”

[Interview 15]

However, from “a very early stage” *[Questionnaire 3]* teachers observed “the emergence of higher-order thinking skills” among pupils in all class levels.

Reflecting on elements of the study that surprised them, several teachers pointed to the development of children as thinkers, particularly their ability to identify significant elements within a text and pose insightful questions.

“I have been surprised by the questions that the children ask in relation to stories read - have developed a higher-level of questioning.”

“I have been amazed by what the children notice in the books and how they can relate to what is happening in their own lives.”

[Questionnaire 2]

One teacher noted that the cognitive thought processes demonstrated by pupils far exceeded her expectations.

“Children are capable of doing far more than I gave them credit for.”

[Questionnaire 2]

The principal also witnessed pupils engaged in a higher-order analysis of text, which would have been previously considered beyond their developmental capability.

“I have seen sixth class children being able to critically analyse a piece of text in a way that if you got it from a sixth year student in honours English we would be thrilled with them.”

[Interview 15]

It is clear that the ability of pupils to engage with a text at a deeper level exceeded the expectations of all participants. However, teachers repeatedly expressed their amazement at the interpretations pupils constructed, in particular the fact that they drew on elements unnoticed by the adults.

“They would come out with things that you wouldn’t have even thought of yourself.”

[Interview 13]

“Often see it from a view I myself wouldn’t have thought of.”

[Questionnaire 2]

One teacher observed the degree to which pupils worked in a sophisticated manner in this analysis, drawing on pictorial and text cues, in addition to knowledge of the author.

“They see stuff that I could be looking at the book and not see at all, you know. They really take clues from...not only the pictures, which for certain authors like Anthony Browne obviously would be fabulous for that, but they really start to take clues from certain words in the text, or something a character might say at the start of the book as opposed to later on in the book.”

[Interview 12]

The evolution of children’s higher-order thinking through this instruction has consequences for teachers’ knowledge level. Particularly in the senior classes, pupils knowledgeably spoke of metaphors and terms such as pathetic fallacy, features teachers were unaccustomed to encountering in primary classrooms. Supporting pupils’ application of strategies in this manner may require further development of both literary devices and picturebook design elements.

“One boy put up his hand and explained that this was pathetic fallacy. He had heard me explain it to an older class last year and had retained both the term and the meaning. Both teachers were extremely impressed by

this, with one teacher admitting that she had not known the phrase herself.”

[RD, 8/10/2010]

Pupil comments in the group interview suggested that for those who preferred picturebooks, it was the “*hidden messages*” which engaged them in this genre.

“I like picturebooks because you can spot clues and that might be in the same books, like Anthony Browne does....like for ‘King Kong’ he kept on doing apples in his books.”

“I prefer picturebooks because it makes you use your mind a bit more instead of reading a novel where you just read.”

One child reflected that he liked this genre as “*instead of thinking of words you can think in pictures*” *[Pupil Questionnaire 4]*.

The researcher noted many examples of increased attention to picturebook design elements such as ‘page fold’ and most importantly, the pupils’ ability to relate this to their interpretation of the text.

“Pupil 5 also explained that he thought the parent and child had a distant relationship as they were separated by the page join. He predicted that as their relationship developed they would come closer together, ending on the same page.”

[RD, 12/5/2010]

“The children also noted that for the first time Willy and Max appeared on the same page. At first they merely made this observation. I wanted them to consider the meaning that could be behind this - what could have changed. As the class reflected upon this Pupil 2 suggested that it might be that they are finally friends and that this could be like ‘The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas’ and that they will now both face the concentration camp.”

[RD, 18/2/2011]

Pupils from third to sixth class were observed discussing the use of colours, in addition to light and shadow within picturebooks, considering its significance for the story.

“They explored the clothing of the characters, noting that the father and shopkeeper were both dressed in dark clothing, while the young girl was brightly dressed. Pupil 7 proposed that this may be due to adults being worried by secrets or concerns that the young girl is unaware of.”

[RD, 5/5/2010]

“One of the boys thought that she might be a metaphor as she was dressed in white. She might represent the loss of their country.”

[RD, 11/2/2011]

“On one occasion a pupil noticed that Willy was in the light by an angel and Max was standing in a darker orange background and it looked like heaven and hell. The pupils worked collaboratively to establish that Willy’s life will be much easier than Max’s because this was a holocaust story.”

[RD, 18/2/2011]

4.23.1 Younger Pupils

Though more striking at senior level, younger pupils also demonstrated a sophisticated analysis of text which impressed their teachers.

“I am using the four strategies for senior infants and I can’t believe the improvement in the children’s understanding of texts read to them.”

[Questionnaire 3]

One teacher at this level was vocal in her belief that comprehension did not impact on instruction in infant classes and should be delayed until pupils had acquired basic decoding skills.

“They can’t do it because they are at a literal level, full stop. So comprehension doesn’t come into their world, because they are purely at a literal stage in development and everything is literal. It’s purely the

phonics, the letter sounds. They're not going into comprehension - they've years ahead of them for that."

[Interview 2]

However, the teacher did accept the ability of pupils to apply some strategies independently over an extended period of time.

"I suppose it's more the end of the year when you see that they could automatically start to give the predictions, the connections, the wonder questions, without being prompted. I suppose that was success in itself."

[Interview 2]

Visualisation was considered by this teacher to be beyond the scope of children at this developmental level. In contrast, other teachers and the researcher commented, not only on the ability of infants to create sensory images, but also their impact on the story.

"She told me that the children really used their cinemas in that read-aloud, telling her what Jack could feel and smell and see and hear. She thought this was brilliant and that it really fed into the drama she used in her class."

[RD, 4/2/2011]

"Some children focused on the sound of the mud, others the feel of it on the feet. Some children were squirming at the sensation. When they saw the cave one boy told me that he saw moss in the cave because he knew that moss grows there."

[RD, 4/2/2011]

When considering the modelled lessons with younger readers, the researcher noted greater independent use of visualisation at this level.

"I also noticed that many children used visualisation as a strategy, referring to how Zoe's hair would feel. I liked the way they used a multi-sensory approach to this, but I was struck by the contrast between the use of visualisation here and its lack of use by older readers."

[RD, 22/9/2010]

It is possible that in the case of younger readers this strategy has not reached the point of automaticity and therefore the pupils are more conscious of its use. It

may also be that the texts used for read-alouds at this level encourage greater use of the strategy.

Teachers praised the spiral approach to the programme design, building strategy knowledge in terms of breadth and depth as developmentally appropriate.

“They’ve had it from a young age and this has been a huge benefit. Maybe it would be difficult for a child in fourth or fifth to start learning these all of a sudden...but not for these kids.”

[Interview 11]

“There are obviously layers to comprehension that you are building up from a very young age.”

[Interview 8]

However, it was important that instruction match the stage of development of the pupils, with the researcher noting that greater levels of modelling and scaffolding were needed in the younger classes. This was particularly true when introducing a new strategy at infant level. While pupils enthusiastically made the CPM and used the language of the new strategy, many were in fact applying previously known strategies. Modelling, scaffolding and time resolved these difficulties.

“There was a bit of confusion in the beginning with predictions and connections, but with time this sorted itself.”

[RD, 2/12/2009]

A further challenge for infant pupils was the introduction of questioning. It quickly became evident to the researcher that the pupils had little understanding of the concept of a question or answer. Explicit instruction in this area before reintroducing the strategy resolved the issue.

“They were unfamiliar with questions. They used the language of ‘I wonder’ but were in fact making a statement. It was a situation where the children would need plenty of modelling.”

[RD, 22/2/2010]

With sufficient modelling and scaffolding, younger pupils demonstrated that they were as capable of higher-order thinking as their older counterparts. The

researcher noted their ability to attend to interesting features in the illustrations and extend them to support an interpretation of the text.

“They quickly saw many remarkable things in it, such as how things change from flowers to pigs. One girl saw the shape of the big bad wolf in the hedge and there followed a discussion on who the big bad wolf in this story might be and who he/she might be coming for.”

[RD, 22/2/2010]

Equally, when comfortable with the concept of questioning, senior infants pupils asked insightful questions to extend the thinking of both children and adults alike.

“The teacher began telling me about her experience reading ‘Jack and the Beanstalk’. She said she was really impressed when one boy asked an ‘I wonder’ question – “Where was Jack’s father in the story because if his Dad had been there then he probably wouldn’t have had to go to the market alone.”

[RD, 4/2/2011]

4.23.2 Quieter Pupils

As one teacher embarked on the project, she spoke of her expectation that the change in instruction may encourage quieter children to contribute more to class discussions.

“I would hope that the quieter children would get a turn or feel confident enough to have a good guess.”

[Questionnaire 1]

Throughout the study many teachers noted a change in the dynamic of classroom discourse, with quieter pupils having a greater input, thereby ending the dominance of some more vocal pupils. This change was attributed to greater confidence, but also to a more relaxed environment in which pupils were sure that their responses would be valued and respected.

“Even the child reluctant to speak in class got involved because they didn’t see it as a threat, they saw it as a collective activity. They saw it as something that really stimulated them.”

[Principal, Interview 15]

“They spoke of the involvement of a range of pupils, rather than a dominance of some more vocal pupils.”

[RD, 22/9/2010]

Teachers were impressed not only with the increased level of interaction among these pupils, but also with the quality of the contributions they made to the class discussion. It is clear that these pupils are both capable and interested in thinking strategically about a text in a collaborative environment which encourages multiple interpretations.

“The children that I would have said were very quiet in the class and didn’t say much and didn’t participate much and sometimes the things that they came out with, I would never have noticed in a million years.”

[Interview 9]

4.23.3 Less Able Readers

Addressing the specific needs of less able readers was a focus of many teachers at the start of the study. They expressed concerns that lack of fluency due to decoding difficulties was severely affecting their capacity to comprehend.

“Weaker readers have difficulty reading texts. They are so consumed by being able to read the words that there is no time for comprehension.”

“I am looking forward especially to weaker pupils learning ways and tools to help them get more out of a particular piece.”

[Questionnaire 1]

Rather than a programme to meet the particular needs of weaker readers, teachers recognised that CSI developed all pupils through the provision of differentiated instruction.

“Ability had no relation to the involvement of children. All inclusive.”

[Questionnaire 4]

“All children are capable of making contributions.”

[Questionnaire 2]

Surprise was expressed at the ease with which these pupils applied strategies effectively, particularly when considered in terms of previous difficulties in the area.

“The traditional approach hasn’t worked for them but the new methodologies have worked for them. The amazing thing about it is that we have seen children who would normally be classed as having learning difficulties, they have no difficulties with this particular area.”

[Principal, Interview 15]

As instruction proceeded, many teachers concluded that decoding proficiency impacts, but does not determine a pupil’s capacity to comprehend. This is revealed to a greater extent when comprehension is addressed orally.

“What became more obvious was that it was their reading ability to decode that was holding them back, not necessarily their intelligence or their comprehension skills.”

[Interview 4]

“They also commented on the ability levels of the pupils who were most involved. The teachers noted that these were some of her weaker readers. Teacher 29 noted that the pupils attending learning support would have no difficulty using the strategies in an oral situation.”

[RD, 20/10/2010]

The quality of the contributions made by weaker readers and their capacity for higher-order thinking caused many teachers to reconsider their capabilities in the area.

“ From a learning support point of view I was absolutely gobsmacked because I couldn’t believe that the children who were coming to me were able to make the type of predictions they were making or that they were tuned in as much to the story.”

[Interview 4]

“I had one girl on the spectrum and she would see the picture and try to tell me more about the mood of the story. I wouldn’t even have thought

about the colours on the page. I mean children that you wouldn't expect to learn things from - and I have learnt things from them a lot."

[Interview 9]

Several teachers expanded on this further, suggesting that from their perspective the weaker readers were often in fact the best at interpreting the text.

"The children who had the weakest word identification and vocabulary recognition skills, displayed the most proficiency in these strategies."

"I found that children with reading difficulties often were the high achievers in the area of comprehension."

[Questionnaire 4]

The change in instruction was considered to have positively impacted on the self-esteem and confidence level of less able readers.

"The children become more confident in expressing their views and opinions, with the weaker children becoming more vocal during English lessons."

[Questionnaire 2]

"Self-esteem. Obviously the weaker child...the better child's self-esteem in most cases is quite good anyway. But for the weaker child to be able to put up their hand and partake in class and to give a comment and for somebody else to respond by saying 'Oh, I think that's very good!' That's bound to help."

[Interview 16]

Factors attributed to this increase in confidence include a greater knowledge of how readers interact with a text, but also the change in emphasis regarding unknown words, rather than being obstacles to comprehension, they are now celebrated and explored in a positive manner.

“When they were facing the text they had more tools to help them on their way...and the fact that they could have a clunk and it wasn’t the end of the world. It was actually a positive.”

[Interview 9]

4.24 Summary: Impact on Pupils and Learning

Teachers expressed their surprise at the ease with which pupils engaged with CSI and their enthusiasm in thinking strategically. For the pupils, strategies not only increased their interest in the text, but they also were aware of their role in developing understanding. The impact of CSI was evident in the pupils’ change of emphasis from initial high ratings of reader characteristics such as fluency and accuracy, to placing greater value on their use of strategies and understanding as the study progressed. Pupils also noted that though they could apply some strategies such as visualisation automatically, others such as clarification still required the support of their peers. It was interesting to note that many of the pupils believed that good readers used strategies at a subconscious level.

Pupils were reported to be more confident in expressing opinions on text and greater engagement and involvement resulted in teachers acting as facilitators rather than leaders. The internalisation of strategies was evident as pupils continued to use CPMs and think strategically even when teachers expressed their intention not to engage in a collaborative discussion.

Despite expectations that higher-order thinking skills may be developed among older and more able readers, weaker and younger readers demonstrated these from an early stage. The capacity of less able readers to show deep insight into a text forced many teachers to re-evaluate their expectations for such pupils. Younger pupils were shown to require more support and scaffolding during the implementation process, receiving instruction which was appropriate to their developmental needs.

Section Four:

Dialogic Approaches to Comprehension Instruction

This section examines the teaching and learning related to comprehension within the study school to establish the degree to which instruction was dynamic and flexible, founded on discussion of multiple perspectives. Initially, transcripts from the two sixth class focus groups will be presented as examples of a dialogic approach to comprehension. Analysis of these transcripts will explore pupils' interaction and learning within a dialogic classroom, in addition to considering changes in the role of the teacher as this process evolves. This will be followed by an examination of transcripts from an infant, junior, middle and senior class. The focus of this analysis will be on the degree to which teachers within the study school have adopted a dialogic approach to enable collaborative interpretation of text.

4.25 Focus Groups

Pupils within both groups used strategies independently and knowledgeably, activating relevant schema to help them in their interpretation of the historical fiction picturebooks:

Focus Group 1

- 'So Far From The Sea' by Eve Bunting (Transcript 1)
- 'Henry's Freedom Box' by Ellen Levine (Transcript 2)

Focus Group 2

- 'Billy The Kid' by Michael Morpurgo (Transcript 3)

The children actively sought to use their schema to generate plausible explanations for images or ideas within text which confused them.

Pupil 6: I think it's going to be about Billy, because do you know how it has soccer and a picture of the war? I think it could be World War One and he could have played in the soccer match at Christmas in no-man's land.

[Transcript 3]

The teacher also directed the pupils to consider the effect their prior knowledge could have on developing understanding, rather than merely stating a fact.

Pupil 6: I have a connection to the title, 'Billy The Kid'. The outlaw Billy the Kid.

Teacher: Oh... can you tell us a bit more about the outlaw?

Pupil 6: His first kill was when he went to a bar with a man and he stabbed the barman to death with a knife. He went to prison but he killed two guards and escaped.

Teacher: That's quite a violent history. I wonder did Michael Morpurgo know that there was a character in history called Billy the Kid? Maybe if he did there will be similarities between the two characters.

Pupil 24: I have a connection, because they said that Michael Morpurgo was a teacher, so he would have known because if he was a teacher he would have taught all kinds of subjects.

It is also interesting to note that in instances where the pupils had a limited schema, namely African American slavery, they used parallels to other historical events with which they were more familiar to deepen their understanding of the events.

Pupil 8: I can make a connection between the box and the trains to the concentration camps because he would be crammed in the box and they were crammed on the trains too.

Teacher: That's really good. Do you think that Henry would feel the same way as the Jewish people felt when they were getting on the train?

Pupil 24: No, because they knew that they were going to die. He doesn't.

Pupil 23: Do you know the way I said that they would be taken away? Well when I said that I thought of the poem, well I think it was a poem anyway.... 'They came for the Jews, but I wasn't a Jew so I didn't speak up.'

[Transcript 2]

In the first transcript, pupils also used their knowledge of other authors' techniques to help them construct possible interpretations of the text, providing detailed explanations for their reasoning.

"The Mom and Dad might have died in the concentration camp and they might have a flashback like in Michael Morpurgo."

The teacher modelled this process for the pupils in Focus Group 2, thinking aloud to show pupils the importance of considering the author's writing style.

Teacher: So we know that Michael Morpurgo uses flashbacks a lot. We should be looking out for it in Billy the Kid. That's something that good readers do. If they know an author, they watch out for little things the author likes to do.

[Transcript 3]

The findings also indicate that pupils are paying more attention to the importance of the illustration in interpreting the story. In the first transcript, pupils used the illustrations as a basis for predictions and questions. However, when reading 'Henry's Freedom Box', pupils were more sophisticated in their analysis of the images, seeking symbols and looking to the meaning of colours to deepen their understanding.

Pupil 20: On that page it is like a leaf is separated from all the other leaves. I think that he is going to get separated from the rest of his family. It is a sign.

Pupil 21: It is interesting that at some of the sad stages of his life the writing is in white.

Individual pupils used the illustrations to extend or challenge the thoughts of others. The teacher scaffolded this interpretation for the class, to make explicit the important contribution of illustrations in considering the meaning of a picturebook.

Pupil 19: Can I respond back to Pupil 27? I think that he is the striker because if you look up in the top left corner there's a fellow in the blue gear and he's lifting up a small child and I think that small child is related to Billy.

Teacher: That's really interesting. That has made me think too. I know that when an illustrator is creating a front page for a book, he spends lots of time thinking about what is important to the story. He doesn't put anything there by accident and he gives us lots of clues about the story.

[Transcript 3]

There is no evidence in the first transcript that pupils were connecting to the emotions of the characters. This may perhaps be attributed to the fact that the transcript focused on the early stages of the picturebook when pupils were unfamiliar with the characters and their context. However, in the second transcript pupils, were in tune with the emotional development of the main characters, using both picture and text cues to help them in this process.

"I like the way he wiped away the tears, it shows us that he is heartbroken."

A discussion on Henry's inability to sing or hum once his children were sold, revealed that the pupils had not only considered, but deeply understood Henry's emotions.

Pupil 19: It's too joyful. Do you know when people are depressed they kind of hum to cheer themselves up? But he is gone way past that.

Pupil 20: Do you know like singing gets you happy? I think that singing would just give him a pain in his heart.

4.25.1 Authority

A comparison of the two transcripts for Focus Group 1 indicates that pupils assumed more control over the discussion. While the teacher did not have executive authority or control in either forum, the first dialogue consisted predominantly of a pupil-teacher-pupil format. In contrast, there was a greater level of interaction between pupils in the second transcript, Pupils 20, 26, 15, 24, 5, 23, 13, 18 and 16 collaborating before the teacher contributed to the discussion. Pupils were also in control of directing the conversation, asking the teacher to go back and posing questions.

In relation to Focus Group 2, there was a balance of interaction between teacher and pupils, signifying the gradual release of responsibility from teacher to pupils. Where pupils were confused, the teacher restated the issue and suggested possible courses of action. It is important to note that the teacher did not provide the answer, enabling the pupils to work collaboratively to propose other possible explanations.

Teacher: Ok. So what's confusing us is that they look older than children, but he's called Billy the Kid. Is there anybody who thinks they could help us work that one out? Maybe it's something we'll have to work out while we're reading...but does anyone have a suggestion now?

Pupil 28: May I respond back to Pupil 21? It might be a nickname or something.

Pupil 21: I never thought of that.

Pupil 6: Maybe he just acts like a kid.

[Transcript 3]

The pupils directed the attention and flow of the conversation, with the teacher responding to their lead. Throughout all three transcripts the pupils often asked the teacher to go back or look back, thereby assuming authority over the analysis.

Pupil 20: Do you know the last page?
Teacher: The previous page to this?
Pupil 20: No, that one. I think the fellow that is smiling is his guardian angel. He has showed up in three pages, so I think that's his guardian angel. He has been smiling all the time.

[Transcript 2]

4.25.2 Questions

In all three transcripts, questions were predominantly asked and answered by the pupils. However, in the first transcript, the pupils primarily questioned the presence of objects within the illustration, rather than explore or examine issues related to the characters or story.

"I wonder why they are wearing those puffy jackets for the cold if they are in the desert?"

"I wonder what those two planks are there for? They look really, really strange just standing there."

[Transcript 1]

In this instance the main questions asked by the teacher were in a modelling capacity:

"The kids are feeling scared and spooked and they are quiet. I was wondering why, if they are going someplace that they have been before?"

The open questions were phrased to prompt the higher-order thinking of the pupils.

"It's because that's the grave on the front and that's the grave of one of the parents. They have to drive miles just to get there because maybe they died up there in an avalanche."

In all but one instance the teacher refrained from taking a position in relation to the questions.

"Are they the stars you normally associate with the Star of David?"

Though a closed question which sought known information, this prompted the pupil to clarify his thinking for himself and others.

"No..... but I wonder if they mean something like that."

In the two later transcripts the teacher's questions served to scaffold and extend pupil's contributions, developing the thought process to lead to a fuller understanding. In this process the teacher strove to show the pupils the purpose of strategies in constructing meaning.

Pupil 23: It reminds me of, you know when they had to be pulled away from their Moms and Dads and they sold them. They took their Moms and Dads away from them.

Teacher: What time in history are you thinking of here?

Pupil 23: The olden times.

Teacher: Can we be more specific than that do you think because I think that you're making a really good point.... Is it Germany that you're thinking of?

Pupil 23: Yeah, with the concentration camps.

[Transcript 2]

Pupils were aware of their own understanding and used questions to seek and provide clarification.

"Did they say the son's name?"

"Who is Nancy?"

Pupils also questioned the character's actions and motivations, indicating that they were engaging with the text at a deep level.

"Why did he do that?"

4.25.3 Feedback

Across all three transcripts, teacher praise and feedback was specific in nature, clarifying the positive aspects of pupil response for others.

"I really like that..... I hadn't noticed the fact that they were the same mountains – but they are. So that confirms that we are back in the same place."

[Transcript 1]

Attention was drawn to the process of reasoning the pupil engaged in, rather than the conclusions reached, emphasising the role strategies played in the construction of understanding,

“I like how you used connections and your schema to help you.”

[Transcript 3]

However, in the early text the teacher missed opportunities to advance understanding of the role of strategies, not probing the responses of some pupils who discussed strategy use which does not appear to contribute to the interpretation of the text. In Transcript 1, Pupil 18 made a tangential connection between the name Thomas in two books. Rather than extending this thought to establish if the pupil could expand this connection to add to the understanding of the text, the teacher responded that it was interesting.

It is also of note that the teacher used feedback to provide the children with terminology that may be appropriate to their responses.

“So these two pictures could be a contrast between what’s really happened and what’s happening in his imagination.”

[Transcript 3]

In the first transcript the teacher’s feedback often challenged pupils to provide evidence to justify their thought processes or to clarify their thoughts.

“The only thing is....when I look at it, it doesn’t look like the graveyards I have seen before.”

In the later transcripts the pupils followed the teacher’s modelling and provided critical feedback for each other, in a respectful manner.

“It’s too early to know if that’s deliberate yet. But it is very interesting.”

[Transcript 2]

“I want to respond to Pupil 1. A kid wouldn’t really be in a war.”

[Transcript 3]

4.25.4 Meta-level Reflection and Collaboration

Within all three transcripts the pupils engaged with and responded to the ideas of their peers. However, there is clear evidence of pupil progress across this domain. In the first transcript, pupils connected to the ideas of others as a means of extending their own thinking. However, the majority of these responses were directed to the teacher, rather than discussed collaboratively among pupils.

“I have a respond to [Pupil 12]. I think that that might be it as well and do you know the way at the start we said it was kind of snowing there and sand there? It might be important that they are moving from the sand to the snow.”

[Transcript 1]

At this stage the teacher took a strong lead in scaffolding the integration and connection of ideas between pupils through specific praise.

“I like the way that when you agreed with her you added another bit of evidence in. This strengthens your prediction doesn't it?”

It is also of note at this stage in development, that the pupils were largely expanding on the ideas of others, rather than presenting alternative view points. Pupil ideas were extended, supported but not challenged. The teacher modelled how to ask questions which challenged pupils to clarify or rethink their perspective.

“I was really interested in the predictions [Pupils 17 and 18] were making. But I'm wondering, if this was just that their houses had been bombed, why would there be so much barbed wire and why would they need men with guns and a search light?”

In contrast, the later transcripts show evidence of pupils automatically connecting their ideas to the contributions from others.

“I'm thinking about what [Pupil 16] said, how would he get oxygen or anything like that?”

[Transcript 2]

“I can connect to what [Pupil 10] said. That could be his grandfather back in World War 1 and he could be thinking about him at war.”

[Transcript 3]

The pupils were also conscious of the interrelatedness of their ideas and actions.

“He brought that back into my mind when he said about the front cover.”

Teacher praise continued to reinforce the importance of connecting students’ ideas.

“I like the way that you are connecting it back to his heart twisting in his chest.”

There were high levels of collaboration between pupils in both groups in the later transcript. Pupils continued to support and expand on the contribution of others, often scaffolding the use of strategies for their peers. When a pupil in Focus Group 2 experienced difficulty organising and clarifying his thoughts, a fellow pupil showed him evidence in the illustration which supported his thinking.

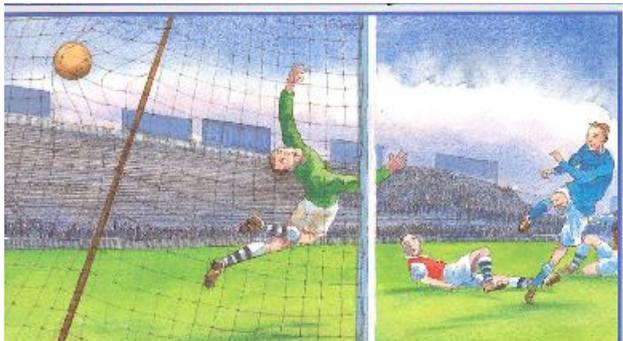


Figure 4.14

“Do you know the way you say it’s the goalkeeper? I’d say you’re probably right too. Most of the people in the picture are just standing but he’s doing a special back flip sort of thing.”

Front cover of 'Billy the Kid' by Michael Morpurgo

However, pupils also challenged the accuracy of some interpretations. When a pupil in Focus Group 1 suggested the presence of a guardian angel, the other children analysed its potential and pointed out inconsistencies which the pupil then counter-argued.

Pupil 18: They can’t see him but when we look at the book we can.

Pupil 13: But it looks like people in the book are looking at him.

Pupil 20: I think that this is a very good idea but Henry is looking at him so I think that he can see him.

Pupil 18: But he might be looking down the road at somebody walking down there.

The presentation of multiple perspectives in this manner led the children to consider characters and their qualities at a deeper level. Conflicting views regarding the identity of a character in ‘Henry’s Freedom Box’ forced the pupils to consider changes in Henry’s responsibilities.

“Henry is a father now so he’s not acting like a child anymore.”

Pupil 20 summarised the value of collaboration in interpreting text in his exclamation *“teamwork!”*

4.26 Dialogic Teaching Among Teachers in Study School

Footage from four class levels (infant, junior, middle and senior) indicates the position of teacher on a continuum of monologic to dialogic teaching. This section explores the degree to which teachers and pupils act as co-inquirers, collaboratively constructing an interpretation of text through the release of responsibility from teacher to pupils.

All four teachers began their instruction by drawing the pupils’ attention to elements such as title, author and illustrator. Of note is the fact that three of the teachers explicitly linked this information to beginning the comprehension process. The junior class teacher selected ‘Chocolate Chuckles’ by Pam Harvey as her text and through questioning enabled the pupils to make intertextual connections to other books with alliteration in the title. Pupils were then provided with a rationale for the alliteration:

“It gives you a little hint about the story doesn’t it?”

Both the middle and senior class teachers activated pupils’ schema for the author. The middle class pupils discussed the fact that a picturebook is an unusual departure for Roddy Doyle, while the senior class teacher asked for a recap of ‘The Memory String’, the previous Eve Bunting picture book read by the class. This appeared to be effective as during the read-aloud, pupils drew on their knowledge of Eve Bunting’s background to help them predict which war is approaching.

“I think it is the Civil War because it is the only American war I know!”

4.26.1 Strategy Use

The senior class teacher shared her intention for the lesson with the pupils from the start, making it clear that she personally wished to focus on the strategy of visualisation. After an initial prompt, pupils regularly discussed sensory images generated, in addition to a variety of other strategies. All teachers opened the discussion by asking pupils to generate predictions, drawing their attention to features such as the cover, title and that “*it doesn't have to be right.*” Across all class levels, several pupils immediately signalled their strategy use through CPMs. It is interesting to note that within one minute, infant pupils also showed CPMs for connections and questioning, indicating not only knowledge of these strategies, but also an internalised understanding of when, where and how they might be applied.

All footage shows evidence of detailed strategy use, which moved beyond single phrases. Pupils shared opinions and took personal positions on issues, using appropriate evidence to justify their thought processes.

“I think that the mom loves the babysitter more than the kids.”

[Infants]

“I predict everything she eats is going to be chocolate. Then she gets really sick and she has to go to the doctor. Then she gets a really bad illness and something happens to her.”

[Junior class]

In the two older classes, pupils made detailed and lengthy contributions which incorporated the thoughts of others, evidence from the text or pictures and knowledge of text genres in a skilful manner.

“I predict that it's a mystery book. There's new neighbours who move into the house and you can see the daughter and the dad but the mom has the hood up and she goes into the house and then the little girl in the picture....she's trying to find out so she becomes good friends with the daughter so she can find out what her face really looks like.”

[Middle class]

“I think that the names could be Gleam and Glow and I think.....you know how you said the people...they’re carrying all the bags and the chairs on their backs? I think whenever they see the fish it makes them happy. It just makes them happy and that’s why they probably named them Gleam and Glow.”

[Senior class]

Pupils in all class levels appeared highly engaged and involved in the story, automatically showing a variety of CPMs right throughout the read-alouds. It was interesting to note that in the two younger classes CPMs were only initially used when the teacher paused in the reading. However, as the story progressed, pupils indicated their strategy use while the teacher read, showing strategic thinking during reading independent of teacher prompting. The active nature of the pupils is shown by the need for all teachers to limit the responses of the pupils in order to continue with the text. Within the infant class, some pupils continued to discuss the book even as the teacher tried to resume reading. However, pupil involvement was lowest in the junior class, where pupils relied predominantly on predictions and making connections, only a few pupils questioning the text. The teacher generally accepted three pupil contributions before continuing to read, thereby curtailing the engagement of the pupils with the text. It may be that the desire of the teacher to complete the 60 page book within the session took priority over the authentic interaction of pupils with the text.

Despite individual teacher concerns regarding the ability of young children to visualise a text, it was the most frequent strategy employed by the infant pupils. This is unsurprising as it was the unstated focus of the teacher. These contributions encompassed a variety of senses and were deeply rooted in the context.

“I hear all of the sand in the sky getting wooshed around.”

“I can smell the dragons and the smoke coming out of them.”

Similarly, high levels of visualisation were noted in the senior class where it was also the learning intention of the teacher. At this level, images discussed were more detailed, strongly linked to the content and emotions and served to deepen the meaning of the text.

“I visualise they go off and they’re walking through all the deserts and sands and stuff, and all the sand’s going into their shoes and they’re all tired, and they need something to drink.”

Without specific teacher focus on visualisation, pupils at the other class levels made little use of the strategy, with one middle class pupil discussing his *“picture”* and no junior class pupil making reference to the strategy. Given the detailed responses of pupils at both class levels, it is most likely that they were applying this strategy automatically, but wished to discuss other features of the text.

Evidence of higher-order thinking skills is found within all footage. The infant pupils drew on the title and pictures in this process, noting links between lullaby and ‘puff-a-bye’ and also changes in the dragon’s smoke to reflect his mood.

“I know why they call it ‘puff-a-bye’, because dragons puff out smoke and they call it puff-a-bye because it’s a kind of lullaby.”

“I can see the ‘x’s he’s puffing out cos he’s really angry.”

One pupil also questioned the invention of glasses during this time period.

“I wonder how the guy...the babysitter discovered glasses?”

Pupils were also actively looking for patterns and consistencies within the pictures, merely identifying their presence rather than extending this observation to establish why this feature was important in the story.

“I can see the thing I saw the last time in the kitchen. I think it’s a teddy or something.”

There is less evidence of higher-order thinking at the junior level, perhaps due to limited pupil interaction with the text. However, one pupil demonstrated an ability to integrate evidence in a sophisticated manner to predict the plot at an early stage.

“Do you know the way her granddad said that if anyone could get his teeth out of his mouth then he would get new ones? And he likes Rice Krispie cakes? I wonder if the bread soda will explode into his mouth and his teeth will fall out.”

It is interesting to note that the pupils in the middle and senior classes drew on meanings associated with colours to derive a deeper meaning from the picturebook. The middle class pupils were particularly sophisticated in the process, with the teacher contributing to clarify the thought process for others.

Pupil 1: I wonder why is everything in the book rather grey and she's like colourful and it's confusing me.

Pupil 2: It's really dull. It's like a sad colour.

Pupil 3: And at the end it gets a little lighter.....

Teacher: You're going to predict that the colours are going to get brighter is it?

In contrast, the senior class teacher modelled interpretation of images and colours for her pupils at the beginning of the lesson.

“Can we notice the actual bleakness of the picture and bleak is associated with, you know, dark - kind of dreary, a bleak day. There's no leaves on the trees you know. It's not bursting with sunshine. It's not bursting with happiness.”

Several pupils followed this lead, offering tentative suggestions as to the relevance of colour in the book.

“I think that it will be a very colourful book because they are happy.”

“The background is all yellow at the back and the front is black. It's colourful and it's like there's some bad bits in the story and some good bits.”

At senior class level, the pupils were comfortable identifying unknown words and sought the meaning from colleagues. The teacher adopted a collaborative approach to ‘declunking’, and pupils were drawn on schema and context to determine the meaning. Pupils’ knowledge of working with words was clear as

they independently asked the teacher to reread the sentence and provided evidence to support their suggestions.

Pupil 1: What is the sentence of it?

Teacher: Very good. We'll go back over it in a sentence and see does it make sense.

Pupil 2: I want to respond to _____. I think it's army... because I think I've heard that word before.

Teacher: You've heard the word before and connecting to the word army. Ok.

Pupil 3: I think the word refugee means like evacuator, like immigrants... because like they said that war was coming and that they're all leaving.

However, the teacher's determination to release responsibility to the pupils and allow them to collaboratively explore the meaning of the word, resulted in the development of multiple interpretations of the word which were not fully resolved until later in the read-aloud. The teacher perhaps requires further support or experience to determine the point at which teacher intervention is needed to provide greatest clarity.

4.26.2 Teacher Modelling and Scaffolding

Indicative of the release of responsibility model, much of the teachers' focus was on providing scaffolding where necessary, rather than explicit teacher modelling. However, in the case of the junior class teacher, effective modelling was provided to the pupils, drawing on a shared schema to generate predictions.

Teacher: Do you remember the day we made the chocolate krispie cakes in the classroom? Wasn't there a mess there that day?

Pupil: Yes. Chocolate all over.

Teacher: So I predict that if she does making chocolate krispie cakes there's going to be a mess, isn't there?

Despite this, scaffolding of pupils' strategy use was less effective, as the teacher provided similar responses to contributions which impacted on the construction of meaning and tangential connections.

Pupil: I can connect to one of them because my uncle's name is Uncle Bill.

Teacher: Is it? Very good.

Equally, opportunities were missed to extend pupils' strategy use to show how it contributes to understanding. The lack of sufficient scaffolding placed emphasis on strategy use as an end goal, rather than the process of strategic thinking.

Pupil: Do you know the way the name of the story is 'Chocolate Chuckles'? My mom is always laughing so her nickname is chuckles."

Teacher: Chuckles.... Isn't that lovely.

The other teachers demonstrated different levels of comfort when scaffolding. The focus of instruction for the infant teacher was on scaffolding visualisation, which was achieved through targeted selection and questioning to extend the contribution to include as many senses as possible.

"Do you think you might smell, or hear, or see anything?"

The teacher also scaffolded application through extending pupils' responses with her own contribution.

"Very, very good. It's very hot so I can feel it as well."

The teacher appeared aware of individual proficiencies in terms of strategy application and differentiated support accordingly, directing particular pupils to use pictorial cues when making predictions.

"Look at his face....."

The middle class teacher provided timely reminders of key elements of strategies and textual features to scaffold pupils' application.

"Keep an eye on the illustration because sometimes there might be clues there."

Questioning is also used to scaffold pupils when they appear to be struggling to express their opinion.

Pupil: She's in a car crash and her whole face got injured and she..... and she.....

Teacher: So this happened to the mother?

Pupil: Yeah, and when her mom got out of hospital and everyone saw her face and they were all mocking her mad.

Where pupils appeared competent discussing their interpretations, praise rather than support was provided, thereby fully releasing responsibility to the pupils.

The senior class teacher appeared to be conscious of the contribution strategies should make to understanding, prompting pupils to extend their thoughts so that they impacted on the interpretation of the text. When pupils made simple predictions such as, *"I predict that the two fish are in the river and the people are going to find the fish,"* the teacher immediately developed the thought by asking *"and what do you think will happen if they find the fish?"* Furthermore, the teacher was confident using questioning to support children when clarifying the concept of 'underground warfare', opting to scaffold their understanding, rather than assume full responsibility and provide the answer.

Teacher: First of all underground. It's under the ground obviously. But why would you go under the ground during a war?

Pupil 1: Because it's war, you just want to dig underground... to go underground and then come up and attack the other part.

Teacher: The other side? The enemies? Yes, that's really good. Thank you for that. You're doing fantastic.

Pupil 2: I think when he says underground he might mean like a spy for his country.

Teacher: Ok, and he's going in disguise.

Pupil 3: Perhaps he means the trenches.

The teacher also appeared to be aware of the importance of using prior knowledge when reading historical fiction. When it became clear that the text did not centre on World War II, the pupils were asked to activate their schema for other wars such as World War I and the 1916 Rising. Pupils were conscious of apparent inconsistencies between the text and their schema.

“Like Word War I... like I wouldn't expect people to be keeping many fish.”

There is evidence that some pupils were automatically activating their schema throughout the read-aloud, perhaps internalising the explicit actions of the teacher.

“Connection to safe house. I think that Hitler...killed himself.... shot himself in a safe house.”

It is also interesting to note that pupils made intertextual connections to other historical picturebooks dealing with war, using this knowledge to help them understand terms such as ‘refugee’ and ‘safe house.’

“I have a connection to ‘Billy the Kid’, as they were going away from the war, they stayed in a safe house in Italy.”

4.26.3 Authority

Considering authority as an indicator of monologic versus dialogic teaching, there is evidence of the former in the two younger classrooms, with the teachers predominantly controlling both the form and content of the discussion. In contrast, instruction in middle and senior classes reflects shared authority.

In all classes the teacher chaired the discussion, with the pupils signalling their intent through the use of CPMs. This was necessary as the pupils were enthusiastic and eager to partake. On occasions in the middle class, multiple pupils tried to respond together, requiring teacher intervention to maintain control. The senior class teacher appeared to be very aware of the need to order the flow of conversation in a manner which would best reflect a natural interaction, prioritising pupil responses before continuing to a contribution which could redirect the group's attention.

“You are making a connection. Oh, wait I need to take the two responses here first.”

Interaction in the junior class reflected a teacher-pupil-teacher format in which the teacher initiated topical shifts in the discussion. In contrast, the engagement of infant pupils in the analysis of text signals a transition along the continuum towards a dialogic approach. Pupils had greater opportunities to freely engage in

the discussion and were comfortable directing the attention of the teacher to key features. They also challenged the accuracy of teacher statements.

“You said that the story was going to be about dinosaurs....it’s actually about dragons.”

In the middle and senior class footage, the pupils directed the flow of the discourse, introducing new topics for discussion and reacting to other pupils’ ideas. Both teachers engaged in the discussion to clarify thoughts or encourage pupils to further develop ideas. The senior class teacher prioritised pupil contributions, often interrupting her own thought process when a pupil signalled their intent to contribute.

“So how....oh wait, you’re visualising here.”

However, three of the teachers placed a strong emphasis on a ‘correct’ way of using strategies. Only the middle class teacher allowed the pupils to think strategically without explicitly naming the strategy they were using. The other teachers prioritised the declaration of the strategy over the flow of thought, often interrupting pupils’ contributions to model the naming of the strategy.

Pupil: We used bread soda in class as well.

Teacher: Make a connection, good boy.

Pupil: Is it that.....

Teacher: You’re making a prediction is it? You predict that.....

Emphasis on such a rigid structure does not reflect the dynamic nature of comprehension and indicates that teachers may be valuing the use of strategies rather than their role in the interpretation of a text. It may also be that teachers are expecting pupils to replicate the clarity and precision used in relation to naming strategies during teacher modelling.

4.26.4 Questioning

Limited use was made of teacher or pupil questioning in the junior class footage. The purpose of the teacher’s questions was to model the process, with the teacher

clearly showing the appropriate CPM and the pupils signalling their intention to respond. Though open-ended, the questions sought a ‘correct’ analysis from the pupils with no exploration of other alternatives.

Teacher: I wonder whose birthday it is?

Pupil: Probably the dad.

Teacher: Probably the dad. Any other suggestions?

The teacher only looked for a rationale when the correct answer was received.

Teacher: Why do you think it's her nana or granddad?

Pupil: Because they'd be a little bit older.

Teacher: They'd be a little bit older than the dad. So it's happy 80th birthday.

Where pupils independently asked ‘I wonder’ questions the teacher provided the answer. Initially the infant teacher sought answers from other pupils. Although several pupils sought to respond, only one answer was accepted and verified as being correct. Many pupils continued to indicate their desire to respond even after the teacher resumed reading, with some occasionally resorting to answering the question without being asked. As the read-aloud progressed, the teacher assumed full responsibility for answering pupil questions. On some occasions, opportunities to explore the pupil’s thinking were missed, leaving the question unanswered.

Pupil: I wonder why he is having cookies?

Teacher: Imagine having cookies for your dinner! Wouldn't that be just wonderful.

This reflects the perception of pupils in the group discussion, that they were not being afforded the opportunity to respond to the questions of their peers. It is interesting to note that when the infant teacher recognised the higher-order thinking involved in one pupil’s question, she did not suggest an answer, instead extending it with her own questions.

“What a good question! I wonder....because it is such a long time ago, I wonder how he discovered glasses? Do you think he needs glasses?”

However, the teacher did not allow opportunity for the pupils to collaboratively explore this issue, opting instead to continue reading.

Teacher questions in the infant footage were closed, seeking known answers.

“Where might he be going? School”

“What do you think is coming out of his nose?”

However, the teacher also used open-ended questions to challenge some pupil suggestions, prompting them to rethink or clarify their contributions.

“But if it was his dad.....wouldn’t he be happy to see his dad?”

These indicators suggest a transitional placement on the monologic/dialogic continuum.

No evidence of teacher modelling of questioning is found in the footage of middle or senior class instruction. Both teachers used questioning to scaffold pupils, extend their thinking or to make their strategy use explicit to others.

Pupil: Gleam is the silver one and Glow is the red one.

Teacher: Why did you make that prediction?

Pupil: Because that one glows like its name.

The teachers also used connections to develop strategies beyond the tangential form, to show how it could impact on the understanding of text.

Pupil: I can connect she looks a tiny bit like Little Red Riding Hood, the way she is dressed.

Teacher: So are you connecting that there could be a fairy tale theme to this book?

It should be noted that within both classes, the role of questioning was primarily assumed by the pupils and the teachers refrained from taking positions in these discussions, allowing the pupils to come to a collaborative decision.

4.26.5 Feedback

Teacher feedback in the junior class footage used short formulaic responses “very good,” “right”, without extending pupils’ answers for further exploration. Indicative of a monologic approach, this may be founded in the teacher’s belief that there is no wrong answer, expressed in an earlier interview.

“I mean there is no wrong answer in this whereas before if they didn’t get the point they would give you a wrong answer.”

[Interview 16]

Teachers of both younger classes appeared uncertain how to respond to pupils, often merely repeating their contributions with non-specific praise.

“So he wants a lullaby before he goes to sleep. Very good.”

However, the indicators suggests that the infant teacher may be progressing towards a dialogic approach. Rather than accepting all suggestions, pupils were encouraged to provide evidence for their contributions.

Teacher: Why do you think that?

Pupil: Because he and everybody sings to him. Cos his dad is up there now singing to him.

Occasionally the teacher offered further support for pupils’ thinking and showed the role of strategies in understanding text.

“So you know how he felt.”

The focus of the feedback of the other teachers was on developing the responses of the pupils, asking questions to extend their thinking. To this extent the teachers listened to and worked with the pupils’ responses.

“Ok. So would it be that the story starts off gloomy and it develops and it becomes a brighter ending?”

[Senior class]

Feedback stressed the reasoning process and sought clarification from the pupils, challenging them to be clear and explicit in their thought processes.

“And you’re saying....what is the connection with her mother’s face again? You need to clarify that for me.”

[Middle class]

4.26.6 Meta-level reflection: Connecting pupil ideas

There was no evidence of the teacher relating pupil ideas to one another within the footage taken from the infant or junior class lessons. Therefore the majority of pupil contributions remained unexamined by their peers and the conversation was structured as a sequential statement of facts. However, while neither teacher prompted pupils to consider the thoughts of others, some pupils did so automatically.

“I can answer ____’s question. He might have made them himself by his own material and he might have put them on himself.”

[Infants]

“And remember when someone said about....that his teeth might explode then if he had a cake?”

[Junior class]

The footage of the two older classes provides evidence of both teachers relating pupil ideas to the contributions of others, thereby facilitating the critical co-construction of meaning.

“So you listened to the predictions of [pupil] and the other children and you’re thinking something bad happened and you remember....you’re connecting with the film you have seen.”

[Middle class]

“You’re thinking of the word refugee here. We came across that word earlier didn’t we?”

[Senior class]

Pupils were aware of the contributions of others and actively referred to them in discussing the story, often extending or elaborating on their ideas.

“Mine is like [pupil]’s. I predict that her mom dies and when she looks in the mirror she sees her mom.”

[Middle class]

“I’m predicting....you know how [pupil] said that it is like a war? It said that they were going off for liberation and they’re saying like ‘mama’ and ‘papa’ and kind of like French people say. I think that it’s a war between America and France. And then it’s like....you know how New York has the Statue of Liberty? I think that France gave them that after they made peace?”

[Senior class]

4.26.7 Collaboration

While pupils in all classes used CPMs to respond to each other, differing levels of collaboration prevailed, largely determined by the teacher's role in the discussion. The monologic approach adopted by the junior class teacher limited pupil interaction, curtailing pupil responses, even when they signalled their intention to reply.

Pupil: I want to respond to [pupil]?

Teacher: Do you like what he said?

Pupil: Yeah.

The teacher did not encourage a collaborative approach to constructing meaning, neither providing nor seeking answers to pupil questions.

Pupil: I wonder if you ate one of the cakes would you explode?

Teacher: Do you think so?

However, pupils were actively considering these questions and on occasion made links to this thought process.

Pupil 2: ...the bread soda!

Though to a large extent the discussion in the infants' lesson remained a disjointed statement of opinions, some pupils developed or replied to children's observations.

"That's because she's the baby!"

The teacher assumed a lead role in the answering of questions. However, some pupils contributed further suggestions, though the majority of this occurred spontaneously, without the teacher asking the pupil. There was also evidence of pupils presenting alternative viewpoints in the co-construction of meaning.

Pupil 1: I think he's happy because his mom came back.

Pupil 2: Yes, look, his mom's back and he's getting...

Pupil 3: But he's sad!

Within the dialogic middle and senior classrooms, the teachers actively encouraged the social norms of dialogue and all pupils turned to face the child speaking rather than looking at the teacher. Within both classes, pupils presented differing perspectives on issues, such as which war was approaching (senior

class) and the meaning of the feather (middle class). They also worked together to expand interpretations.

Pupil 1: I think it is just a feather. Do you know the way with ink...they dipped it in ink in the olden days and you used to write with it. And I think that she took...that it was her Mom's and that on the front cover is a picture of her Mom when she was younger.

Pupil 2: And her favourite pen that she used all the time and she learned to write in....

Pupil 3: Her diary.

In each case the teachers allowed evidence for each perspective to be presented but didn't adopt positions themselves.

4.27 Summary: Dialogic Approaches to Comprehension

Instruction

Footage from four class levels was analysed to determine the level of dialogic teaching taking place. Pupil enthusiasm and active engagement was observed in all classes, the use of CPMs signalling the understanding of when, where and how strategies might be applied. There was also evidence of pupils taking personal opinions on the text and the use of higher-order thinking skills, particularly in the middle and senior classes, where pupils drew on colour and picture design elements in their interpretations. Higher-order thinking skills were less evident in the junior class, where pupils relied heavily on predictions and making connections. This limited response may be due to the teacher's determination to read the entire text.

Concerns exist regarding the ability of the teachers in the two younger classes to provide effective scaffolding and also release control to the pupils. Feedback within these classes tended to be short, formulaic and non-specific. In contrast the middle and senior class teachers listened to and worked with pupil responses, stressing the reasoning processes involved. Within all but the middle class,

emphasis was placed on the explicit identification of strategies by pupils, creating a rigid framework within which pupils can express their thoughts.

The format of discussion in the two younger classes followed a predominantly pupil-teacher-pupil pattern, with the dialogue largely consisting of disjointed statements of opinions. In comparison, the other teachers worked to use CPMs to direct the flow of conversation to enable pupils to respond to each other, thereby developing multiple perspectives of the text.

Chapter Five will consider the importance of these findings, informed by the relevant theoretical framework.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to examine the nature of the support required by teachers to implement a whole-school approach to comprehension, informed by current international research. This exploration is guided by three research questions. Firstly, *to what extent can a sustained, coherent, on-site professional development approach, incorporating a school-based facilitator and school-university partnership, disseminate information on research-based best practice to support the staff in implementing change?* This chapter begins by considering the insights to this question offered by the findings presented in Chapter Four, in light of the theoretical understandings outlined in the Literature Review.

Findings related to the two subsidiary questions

- *To what extent do teachers' knowledge, attitudes and practices evolve and change as a result of sustained, on-site support over an extended period of time?*
- *How does this long-term, school-based professional development approach affect classroom instruction?*

will be similarly discussed. The chapter then addresses the limitations of the research, outlining areas for future development. Recommendations for policy and practice will be the focus of Chapter Six.

5.2 Supporting Staff in Implementing Change

5.2.1 Facilitator as Coach

Teachers' willingness and ability to implement new initiatives is enhanced by the presence of a facilitator within the school (Neufeld and Roper, 2003). Within the current study, the role of the facilitator was designed to disseminate knowledge to teachers over an extended period of time, focusing on the application of this

knowledge on instruction which impacts on pupil learning. To achieve this objective the facilitator employed a multifaceted approach, integrating knowledge and instructional practice in the form of modelling, accompanied by reflective dialogue. The placement of the facilitator within the school also allowed interaction with individuals and small groups, to identify and address teacher needs and most importantly, to sustain the instructional approach throughout the implementation process. Within this study a developmental model of coaching was employed as the facilitator sought to actively involve teachers in their own learning, enabling them to guide and direct the level of support by identifying areas in need of further attention.

Eilish-Piper (2011) advocates a model of coaching with the coach working partly as a classroom teacher, in contrast to the popular model of a full-time coach with no teaching responsibilities. This study provides a unique opportunity to consider the effectiveness of this alternative model, in addition to identifying associated inherent challenges. Drawing on personal experiences of implementing the instruction within her classroom, the researcher was able to empathise with teacher challenges associated with CSI. The facilitator's knowledge and expertise increased teachers' faith in the value of the instruction. However, her role as class teacher also demonstrated that implementing such an approach was achievable within the school context. In this manner the model of teacher-as-coach offers a balance of *credibility* and *attainability*.

However, developing a teacher-as-coach model posed additional challenges for the researcher. The early stages of implementation were characterised by a heavy reliance on the coach for knowledge, direction and resources, as teachers lacked the necessary experience, understanding or motivation to guide their own learning. This dependency on the researcher for all matters related to teacher learning raised questions regarding the active role of teachers in the process and also placed heavy demands on the researcher to balance the duties of coach outlined above, with those of a full-time teacher. Increased ownership and assumption of greater control by teachers, particularly in Year Two, helped to alleviate much of this pressure. However, to fully achieve this model's potential, schools need to create a more formal structure, clearly delineating the roles and

responsibilities of the teacher-coach and also the responsibilities of the staff in their own learning.

This model of an internal facilitator, and its associated components such as modelling, received high levels of praise and support from both teachers and principal. The findings indicate that the continued presence of the facilitator within the school instilled confidence within the teachers and consequently they reported being more likely to take risks, as they were aware that they would receive all necessary support during the implementation process. Furthermore, a clear preference for the use of an **internal** facilitator emerged from the study, corroborating Boyle et al.'s (2004) findings. In direct contrast to previous negative experiences, where external facilitators did not understand the school's vision and consequently developed a poor rapport with the staff, teachers were more comfortable seeking advice from the internal facilitator because of their existing relationship. These findings are of increased significance due to the recent national decision to rely on external course providers and PDST personnel to deliver professional development as part of the *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life* initiative.

The facilitator also appears to be an integral feature in sustaining teachers through the 'implementation dip' (Fullan, 2001). The author suggests that all successful change processes are characterised by decreases in performance and confidence at the point at which the change is introduced. The findings of this study suggest that there are three key stages at which problems and confusion emerge, threatening the effective implementation of reform. Firstly, at the outset of the study many teachers believed that they were already providing strategic instruction and therefore did not need to change their practice. At this stage teachers' involvement in the change process was maintained through observation and dialogue at formal and informal sessions. However, greater commitment and belief in the instruction became evident with the emergence of pupils' higher-order thinking skills. This corroborates Fullan's (1995) assertion that behaviours change before beliefs. Secondly, teachers noted that they needed the support of the facilitator as they endeavoured to apply the instruction to their own context. This process inevitably generated questions which had not been considered

during the modelled lesson. Finally, while teachers felt they left the formal sessions enthused, this gradually waned as they engaged with other pedagogical and administrative requirements. In this context, the regular modelled lessons and the continued presence of the facilitator rejuvenated interest and motivation and kept the reform on the agenda.

Modelling was a further key aspect of the support provided by the facilitator which was valued by teachers. Findings clearly illustrate that the benefits it offered teachers changed and evolved over the course of the study. Initially teachers saw it as an orientation device, providing them with a starting point, without which, they would have been less likely to engage in the reform process. Furthermore, seeing the instruction in action appears to have increased confidence levels and created a belief that they themselves would be capable of achieving this. However, as Lyons and Pinnell (2001) caution, at this stage teachers were heavily reliant on the modelling provided by the coach, using the same text and wording in their instruction. While this is a natural starting point in an unfamiliar approach, the prescriptive nature of this instruction, in which teachers try to replicate the facilitator's actions, is in direct contrast with the flexible and responsive nature of CSI. As teachers became more familiar with the instruction, modelled lessons were used to compare the instruction observed, with not only their previous teaching, but also their current understanding of individual strategies. Many teachers noted that they believed they knew how to introduce a strategy until they observed the facilitator working with the pupils. In this manner, teachers gradually refined their understanding of CSI during Year One.

It is important to note the emergence of greater knowledge and confidence among teachers in the second year, with many of them expressing a belief that they needed to develop their own practice and that it was not "*a matter of copying*" the facilitator's actions. This awareness may be attributed to the accompanying reflective dialogue, which allowed teachers to focus on the pedagogical actions and intentions of the facilitator, as opposed to developing a rigid script. The continued release of responsibility from facilitator to teachers is clearly evident in participants' suggestions at the end of Year Two, that teachers

could model for each other. This offers the potential for teachers to look beyond the facilitator as the sole source of knowledge and expertise. However, the effectiveness of such a model is contingent on teachers having sufficient knowledge and understanding of CSI to provide instruction which reflects research-validated best practice. In the absence of such knowledge, teacher modelling may in fact be reaffirming the status quo, rather than developing instructional practice.

For the researcher, professional conversations within the school were integral to meeting the needs of individual teachers as they provided insight into both teachers' progress and challenges they encountered. This corroborates Lyons and Pinnell's (2001) belief that such casual conversations enable the coach to determine the direction of future professional development. It is interesting to note the different purposes such dialogue offered teachers, providing them with encouragement, confirmation or clarification on issues in a timely manner. Of importance is the finding that such opportunities for informal learning are essential to sustain teachers until the next formal session, as many teachers indicated that they may have forgotten the issue between modelled lessons. Addressing often minor concerns in a timely manner enabled teachers to continue the implementation with renewed confidence. Furthermore, it is clear that as teachers' knowledge and experience developed, they engaged in these conversations at an equal level, discussing teaching and learning experiences, as opposed to seeking information. In this manner, teachers evolved from passive recipients of knowledge to become reflective practitioners capable of meaningfully engaging with theoretical knowledge and associated instruction.

A final consideration in this professional development model is the roles and responsibilities of the principal and coach. It is evident that within this study, teachers and the principal held diverse views on the purpose of the facilitator, the former considering it to be as a support to teacher learning, while the principal believed the facilitator to be the "*driver*" of the initiative. This reflects Au et al.'s (2008) findings that while principals offer visible commitment to the reform process, efforts to sustain the practice are the responsibility of a literacy team. Indeed, the principal was clear that any support needed would be provided.

However, he believed that the “*monitoring of the implementation*” should be the exclusive responsibility of the facilitator. The complete devolvement of responsibility in this manner is of concern as Killion (2009) notes that if principals abdicate responsibility for curricular leadership to coaches, teachers may see this lack of involvement from the top, as an indication that the reform is not a priority for the principal and consequently not of great importance. Matsumura et al. (2009) advocate that to avoid this perception, principals should become active agents in the change process, observing modelled lessons and endorsing the facilitator in both implicit and explicit ways. Balancing curricular leadership and administrative duties within a large school is a challenging undertaking and the decision to grant high levels of autonomy to the facilitator arose from faith in the personnel involved. However, marked differences in the principal’s belief in the instruction were noted in Year Two, following observations of both whole-class and collaborative group discussions. The scheduling of such observations at an early stage in the implementation process may provide a greater demonstration of commitment to both the reform process and its impact on learning.

While this model of shared leadership was discussed among the management team, the failure to fully address it at a whole-school level had implications for its effectiveness. Many teachers looked to the principal for leadership, particularly in instances where professional development and other school priorities conflicted. There was also uncertainty regarding the authority of the facilitator to coordinate modelled sessions and the requirement on teachers to attend. CPD models in which the facilitator assumes responsibilities traditionally held by the principal, must be discussed at a whole-school level. This will ensure that all staff members understand not only the rationale behind such an approach, but also the specific roles and responsibilities of teachers, coach and principal.

5.2.2 Creating a Community of Practice

Researchers (Fullan, 2007a; Lyons and Pinnel, 2001) recognise the restrictive impact of traditional teacher autonomy and isolation within the school system on the implementation of an effective whole-school approach to professional development. Indeed, Fullan (2007b, p. 149) notes that “many teachers silently

play the privatisation card” as it entails less personal risk than a collaborative approach which makes their instruction transparent and visible to other colleagues. Deprivatising schools, considered to be a fundamental requirement of effective reform (Fullan, 2007b), can only be achieved where a culture of openness and collegiality exists. McMahon (2001) argues that extending this community beyond a superficial grouping of individuals requires time, in many cases several years. This process requires the development of new relationships, as teachers become not just colleagues working within the same building, but partners in teaching and learning, necessitating an atmosphere of trust, honesty and open reflection which develops over time. This study finds that creating an authentic community of practice is a developmental process, requiring time and effective leadership. Initial interactions between teachers resembled those described by Day and Sachs (2004), focusing on surface level discussions and the sharing of resources and ideas. Within this forum, the emphasis was firmly placed on supporting each other with practical considerations and consequently no diverse opinions or reflections were presented. While polite and friendly, the community at this stage in its development did not support teachers who were anxious or overwhelmed, as they were not comfortable sharing their experiences within this forum. The danger exists that if not further developed, this ‘contrived collegiality’ (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991) may in fact promote the status quo rather than facilitating change (Arthur et al., 2010). This highlights the importance of schools understanding the developmental nature of collegiality and the roles of teachers and the principal in its growth.

It is important to recognise the necessity of this transitional phase in developing communities, which can both sustain and direct teacher and pupil learning. For teachers in the study this process, though unfamiliar, was less intimidating as part of a collective than as an individual. Equally, the study suggests that within this collaborative structure, teachers were willing to take more risks as they felt that their colleagues were doing likewise. A crucial finding emerging from this study is that teachers believed that this in-school support model offered sufficient support within the school to address any difficulty that might arise during the implementation process. Initially, teachers sought this support from the facilitator, but with the development of authentic communities of practice in the

second year, many looked to their colleagues for clarification on issues. The findings of this research indicate that community control and ownership of the change process can only be achieved through the leadership of a facilitator, establishing the norms for open and honest dialogue and discourse in this stage of development and supporting teachers in the initial stages, when their colleagues do not have the knowledge or experience to do so.

The emergence of a genuine collegial community was observed towards the conclusion of the second year of the study, with evidence showing that not only did teachers no longer require the presence of the facilitator to meet and discuss the initiative, but most notably, that different groupings were assuming greater control in identifying future areas in which to focus attention. Informal discussions between teachers at similar class levels or indeed working on the same corridor identified commonalities both in terms of progress and areas in need of further exploration. This resulted in teachers approaching the facilitator, seeking to review certain strategies or focus on particular aspects of instruction such as the use of information text. As in the California school studied by Fisher and Frey (2007), this level of collaboration could only emerge when teachers had a common language and theoretical, as well an instructional framework to compare and discuss. Modelling sessions with individual class groups appear to have laid the foundations for this culture, allowing teachers to reflect upon and analyse the instruction observed, while also understanding the specific needs of other classes at this level. This scaffolding came to fruition with suggestions from teachers that they model lessons for each other and work in other classes to support their colleagues.

Strike (2004) suggests that such shared vision, commitment and ownership of the professional development process are fundamental to the sustainability of any reform. Increased ownership by teachers and consequently the devolvement of control from the researcher was beginning to emerge at the end of the study. This was marked by the independent integration of the CSI into other initiatives such as peer tutoring in third class. Additionally, teachers began to independently engage in conversations on future directions of comprehension instruction within the school. However, to sustain and further develop this collegial culture it is

imperative that a long-term structure be created to nurture collaboration among staff members beyond the initial implementation period and as the facilitator releases responsibility. This requires the formal provision of both time and opportunities for teachers to engage in reflective discussion and analysis. The requirement for all schools to arrange an extra 36 hours professional time under the Croke Park Agreement may provide the ideal forum to further develop authentic collegiality. It would also be important that the school continue to schedule opportunities for teachers at similar class levels to observe and support each other within the classroom. Without shared experiences and a common framework of reference it is likely that the community of practice could regress to a superficial exercise in planning.

The need for a structured approach to developing a collegial culture, with a knowledgeable facilitator directing and scaffolding group interactions in the initial stages, is of key importance in light of the publication of *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life* (Ireland, DES, 2011a). Expectations for schools are that they will be able to identify areas for development through a process of self-evaluation. Directing their own learning requires not only strategic planning on the part of the school, but also the staff's ability to critically reflect and analyse teaching and learning in a supportive environment. Failure to cultivate a culture of sharing in which concerns and challenges are openly discussed through a structured programme of shared experiences and dialogue, will be unlikely to result in a whole-school approach to teaching and learning. This research suggests that the presence of an internal, knowledgeable facilitator is imperative in supporting and scaffolding such discourse until teachers are comfortable and confident sharing both struggles and achievements within an open and transparent environment.

5.2.3 Differentiated Support

Lipson et al. (2004) recognise the importance of listening to teachers and appropriately differentiating professional development to meet individual needs as characteristic of successful schools. In addition to the development of communities of practice, Stover et al. (2011) argue that for meaningful change to occur, coaches must balance this with individual support which acknowledges

each teacher's personal development. The current study focused on groups categorised by their involvement in teaching individual class levels. However, while these teachers shared common pedagogical experiences and goals, they often differed dramatically in attitude, belief and confidence. Therefore, for many teachers their learning needs were not being met within the subgroup dynamic and thus required different levels of support.

Rainville and Jones (2008) believe that the greater control of learning assumed by teachers when working on an individual basis with the facilitator, not only increases confidence, but also leads to a greater willingness to take risks. Given the limited time available to the facilitator, formal learning opportunities in Year One focused predominantly on modelled lessons for class groupings, in an effort to support the maximum number of teachers. Individual in-class support was facilitated through the goodwill of colleagues and therefore needed to be used prudently. Reallocation of time and resources by the principal and deputy principal allowed for a greater level of one-to-one consultation in Year Two. The findings of this study demonstrate greater teacher involvement when interacting on a one-to-one basis during the second year, working with the facilitator rather than passively observing. This may be attributed to the combination of a greater focus on the individual teacher, in addition to their knowledge and experience amassed over the previous year. It is also clear that this interaction has the potential to change superficial implementation efforts to authentic engagement. Teacher 7's enthusiasm to implement TSI would not have been sufficient given her limited knowledge-base. However, tailored support in the form of co-teaching and the guidance of more experienced teachers helped make this possible.

It is clear that for any initiative to become fully integrated as part of a whole-school approach to instruction, consideration must be given to the professional development needs of teachers who join the staff at a later stage. This is of particular significance in a large school where a high turnover of staff can be an inhibiting factor on the sustainability of the approach. Concerted efforts must be taken to ensure that all teachers are cognisant of the school's instructional approach and competent and confident in implementing same. Within the study

school a schedule was designed which enabled the new teachers to observe modelled sessions from the start of the instructional programme, also providing opportunities for other teachers to review strategies of which they were uncertain. Emerging from the study is the finding that to ensure sustained implementation, it is essential that an individual within the school is aware of gaps in teacher knowledge due to long-term absences. It is evident that feeling uncertain regarding a methodology others are familiar with, impedes confidence and generates feelings of anxiety.

Current thinking regarding effective professional development advocates an approach which includes modelling of lessons (Butler et al., 2004), the development of a community of practice (Francis, 2010) and the provision of support at an individual level (Lyons and Pinnell, 2001). This study highlights the intrinsic and developmental relationship between these three key elements. As outlined earlier, modelled lessons provided both a focus and a forum for collaborative discussion. Though initially at a superficial level, this dialogue and regular interaction laid the foundation for later authentic collegiality through the scaffolding of the facilitator. Furthermore, through observing body language, interactions and teacher comments, the facilitator gained insights regarding individual teachers who may benefit from more tailored one-to-one support. Equally, many teachers were more comfortable initially discussing their concerns, anxiety or resistance with the facilitator on an individual basis, indicating that the necessary levels of trust and security had yet to be established within the community. Acknowledging and addressing these difficulties within a more confidential environment, not only enabled the teacher to engage with instructional issues at a deeper level, but also developed confidence in the consultative process. The development of such an atmosphere of trust and open dialogue at a one-to-one level signified a change in culture from the traditional privacy of teachers, and appears to have impacted on teachers' willingness to share both positive and negative experiences with the wider group. In this manner, modelling and one-to-one consultation should be considered to be necessary stages in developing a collegial CPD approach.

This research provides important insight into the complexity of implementing mandated national initiatives. Previous CPD approaches associated with the implementation of the PSC were heavily criticised for their failure to provide appropriate support for individual schools (Loxley et al., 2007; Murchan et al., 2005; Johnston et al., 2007), instead relying on an approach which emphasised uniformity. Rather than tailoring support to meet the needs of individual schools, the RCSS adopted a practice of redelivery of content and the provision of instructional resources and materials. Research indicates that such rigid top-down approaches to professional development will not impact on the teaching and learning as it does not differentiate for the needs of individual schools or teachers (Guskey, 2000). It is clear that effective professional development must address not only the dissemination of knowledge, but also the changing levels of support teachers and schools require in the implementation process. As change occurs within the context of the school, it is essential that reform efforts are focused at this level, placing greater responsibility on CPD providers to work in partnership with schools, rather than imposing an externally designed, universal framework for reform.

5.2.4 Complexity of CPD

Taylor et al. (2007) argue that the success of educational reform efforts are contingent on the degree to which they address the multiple layers in which they are embedded. This study highlights the complexity of supporting teachers in the change process, emphasising that this is not merely a matter of developing knowledge. Rather attention must be paid to the diverse needs of all teachers, principal and pupils, as well as the unique culture of the school and the climate in which the reform process is situated. Of equal importance is consideration of logistical factors, many unforeseeable, which could negatively impact on progress.

For teachers to fully engage in the professional development process, the CPD model must take into account the internal working practices of the school, adapting to suit the established operations and routines within the school. However, it is clear from this study that responding to the individual requirements of a school requires experience within the school of unwritten

procedures and arrangements, in addition an understanding of events in the school calendar which are likely to impact on staff interest and availability. Preparation for sacraments, games, school plays, musical and outside specialists in music, P.E. and drama are integral features of school life outside of the formal curriculum. Effective CPD planning must not only consider the timetabling of such activities, but also their potential effect on teachers' interest and motivation levels.

The complexity of the reform process is highlighted by the different nature of the challenges faced between the two years of the study. Concerns in Year One centred on practical arrangements which would facilitate an in-school approach, focusing on issues such as supervision of classes and timetabling. However, as this was a new initiative it was given high importance by the principal and teachers and was the sole focus of all professional development efforts. Despite the principal's belief that implementing such a programme would require sustained support over an extended period of time, in Year Two a number of other initiatives in English, such as team-teaching and a new phonic programme, were launched in the school. The decision to disregard the importance of allowing sufficient time to adopt a new initiative seems to have arisen not from a lack of understanding of the change process, but rather from a desire to adopt all programmes proven to be beneficial.

Of greatest concern here is the uncoordinated approach with which each 'programme' is developed. Failure to consider how each element interacts as part of the wider English curriculum limits the effectiveness of instruction and does little to expand teachers' understanding of literacy development. This may account for teachers initially regarding *Building Bridges* as a further programme to adopt, rather than the development of their instructional approach to comprehension. This lack of vision in the indiscriminate and superficial adoption of multiple innovations over a short period of time has been the focus of much research (Fullan, 1999; Strike, 2004). However, it is of great relevance in the current climate as pressure increases on schools to address areas of concern in both literacy and numeracy. Achieving the specific increase of at least five percentage points in the number of children performing at or above Level 3 in

the NA by 2020 (Ireland, DES, 2011a), will require schools to develop a coordinated and integrated approach to literacy development, fostering readers, writers and thinkers. This will require teachers to focus on the pedagogical intentions and methodologies of reform initiatives, rather than considering them to be isolated ‘packages’.

While Taylor, Raphael et al. (2011) note that school reform is always heavily influenced by factors beyond the school walls, the findings of this study highlight the effect of internal factors, most notably the impact involvement in such a diverse range of activities, has on reform efforts. Though considered an exceptional year within the school, middle and senior class pupils were withdrawn on a regular basis for rehearsals for the school musical, choir, band, drama and supplementary literacy and numeracy instruction. Despite providing the children with formative experiences, this significantly reduces teachers’ instructional time with the class and consequently their ability to implement a new methodology without time constraints. It is essential that leaders understand not only the theory behind the change process, but also how everyday activities can impact on instruction and teacher motivation. Equally, it is vital that instructional time within the classroom be prioritised, especially during large-scale educational reform efforts. To this extent schools must evaluate the effectiveness of policies regarding the withdrawal of pupils for literacy and numeracy instruction during the implementation of reform efforts. Restructuring this support could not only make increased use of in-class support, providing the class teacher with more time with the pupils, but also be extended to consider alternative roles which could support the implementation and development of the new instructional approach.

It is clear that any CPD model needs to attend to the fluctuations in teacher motivation that appear to be integral to the school calendar. The findings clearly indicate that teachers are enthused and eager to reflect on teaching and learning for the majority of the first term of the school year. Reform efforts need to account for a change in both focus and instructional practices that are characteristic of the Christmas period. However, it is clear that teachers require greater levels of support as they return to school following vacations. Of great

interest here is the finding that it is not necessarily their interest or belief in the new methodology that is affected, rather their ability to prioritise time for the instructional practice. It appears that as the school year progresses, teachers become increasingly focused on the need to cover material across a number of curricular areas within a limited period of time. Support is of greatest impact at this stage if it can address the manner in which the new instruction facilitates a cross-curricular approach to learning. However, rather than being driven by the need to cover curricula content, it is also important that teachers continue to focus on the development of pupils' skills and abilities which can be applied to all learning situations, thereby enhancing the overall goal of their instructional efforts. Finally, the sustainability of the reform is contingent on teachers continuing to implement the instruction in the third term, where the focus often shifts to administrative duties. At this stage, rather than developing new knowledge or instructional practices, the facilitator should centre efforts on keeping the reform on the agenda. It is clear that any school-wide reform effort needs to consider not only the unique needs of schools and teachers, but also the support levels required, as determined by the school calendar.

5.2.5 Teacher Overload

Anders et al. (2000) argue that voluntary participation ensures personal commitment and is an essential criteria in all literacy reform efforts. Despite the decision to implement *Building Bridges of Understanding* being taken at school level, in reality the matter was discussed by the principal and management team, with the final decision later communicated to the staff. Decisions made at a sub-committee level are characteristic of a large school, where it is often considered that the exploration of a topic at a whole-school level may not be conducive to reaching a consensus. However, for many teachers their voice is not heard in the process and they do not necessarily share the school's vision. The result is that, though the decision is made at a local level, for some teachers this is in effect an externally mandated imposition. Consequently, many teachers felt anxious and overwhelmed when hearing about the project. Higher levels of teacher involvement and consultation in the decision-making process may increase initial acceptance and engagement with the reform. This finding is of great importance

for large schools as they review current literacy and numeracy practices and outline areas for future professional learning.

The study findings corroborate international research, indicating that time is a key factor affecting change at both individual and school level (Banks and Smyth, 2011; Villegas-Reimers, 2003; Collinson and Cook, 2001). However, it is interesting to contrast the different perspectives of the principal and teachers. Teachers' immediate concerns centred on the time required to implement this instruction in an already over-loaded curriculum. In contrast, the principal did not refer to the demands placed on teacher time by the instruction as he considered this to be a cross-curricular approach and as such, one of the determining factors in its adoption was the potential it offered to alleviate teacher overload. The lack of a shared vision centres on a failure to communicate this aspect of the rationale to the teachers. Greater levels of dialogue in the early stages could reduce perspectives of overload, as teachers would understand that not only were the challenges they faced appreciated, but that the effortful and time-consuming process they were embarking on would help to address these issues.

Research has long advised policy makers to consider not only existing demands on teacher time, but also the length of time required to implement any new initiative (Fullan and Miles, 1992; Collinson and Cook, 2001). This is a feature that the principal was cognisant of throughout the study, often indicating that the initiative would be more effective if rolled out over a longer period of time. It is interesting to contrast this perspective with those of the teachers, who only considered the long-term development of their instructional practice in the second year. This may be indicative of different levels of commitment, with the principal anxious for the instruction to become part of a whole-school approach, while teachers perhaps regarding this as a 'passing fancy' (Guskey, 2000) due to previous fragmented reform experiences. The lack of sustained support and follow-through associated with previous initiatives, in addition to teacher comments suggests that such one-shot efforts had little impact on long-term instruction. It follows that teachers' expectations that this would be a similar

experience only altered as a result of continued support, modelling and opportunities to engage in reflective dialogue.

The superficial adoption of programmes within the school also placed time pressures upon teachers, with many indicating that this was the main cause of reform fatigue. In direct contrast, the principal cited external sources, namely the implementation of the PSC, as being responsible for this. Given this disparity between principal and teacher perspectives, it is essential that school leaders recognise the demands placed on teachers through internal as well as external reform efforts. Reform saturation could be dramatically reduced through strategic planning of all reform efforts over a five-year interval, developing a cohesive framework that integrates all teacher learning and considers its impact on existing instruction. Failure to address this issue, especially in a climate of self-evaluation in schools, will result in teachers being overwhelmed by a series of disparate programmes which may be implemented at a superficial level, thereby not significantly impacting on teacher instruction or pupil learning.

5.3 Teachers' Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices

5.3.1 Complexities of Developing Teacher Knowledge

This study indicates significant lacunae in teacher knowledge regarding not only comprehension instruction, but also literacy development in general. Similar to Durkin's (1978) seminal study, analysis of the data shows that emphasis within the school was on the assessment rather than instruction of comprehension. In the absence of research-validated approaches, teachers adopted traditional practices which placed primary importance on the use of reading schemes and workbooks to answer questions, with many ultimately regarding it as an exercise in matching the specific wording in the questions to answers in the text. While of concern, the paucity of knowledge in this area is unsurprising given the incoherent approach to comprehension outlined in the English PSC and the low levels of importance attributed to this area by the PCSP throughout much of the last decade. To effectively adapt and tailor instruction to meet the needs of pupils, it is essential

that teachers are knowledgeable of comprehension development and also its place within a balanced literacy curriculum.

The lack of a shared theoretical framework within which teachers could place CSI may account for teachers' initial preference for a prescriptive programme. Before engaging with the instruction, teachers sought definitive answers to questions such as the number and length of read-alouds per week, the quantity of text to be read per session, the number of responses to be taken in a discussion and the length of time to be spent on each strategy. Without a knowledge-base to inform their instruction, teachers feel they need specific direction to ensure that they are providing appropriate instruction. While modelling offers the potential for teachers to see the instruction in action and appreciate its potential impact on pupil learning, if used in isolation teachers may rigidly adhere to both the language and text used, in effect developing a script to follow. Unless teachers are aware of and able to recognise the developmental needs of pupils, they will struggle to tailor instruction in a manner appropriate for the opportunistic and flexible nature of effective comprehension instruction (Duffy, 1993a; Hilden and Pressley, 2007).

Considering Duffy's (1993b) Points of Progress, it is clear that seeking a scripted model of instruction is a natural stage in development, as teachers work to identify the parameters of the new instruction. Supporting teachers along the continuum to enable dynamic and responsive strategy instruction requires not only time and continued opportunities to observe, but also structured reflective sessions with a knowledgeable coach to focus not only on pupil learning, but also the opportunistic role of the teacher in supporting this. It is essential that the rationale behind teacher interactions and responses is clearly identified and understood. Given the paucity of teacher knowledge identified as part of this study, developing competence and confidence will require more frequent and structured opportunities for formal learning.

Dewitz et al. (2009) identify the lack of guided practice and application as the missing component in CSI. The findings of this study indicate that most teachers are providing opportunities for pupils to discuss their use of strategies, but

struggle in the provision of effective scaffolding to support them in this process. Once again, some of this difficulty may have its origins in a lack of knowledge. It is clear from the transcript that in the younger classes, teachers didn't differentiate between tangential connections and those with the capacity to develop the meaning of the text. It is unclear as to whether teachers were unaware of the difference between the two or merely uncertain how to proceed. The fact that teachers in the older classes did differentiate between the two, points to a third potential explanation, the belief that for younger children any contribution is an achievement and should be accepted.

In addition to this, it is clear that the release of responsibility to pupils generates feelings of uncertainty and frustration in many teachers regarding their new role in the learning process. Ivey and Fischer (2005) observe that during this phase teachers resorted to questioning pupils about their comprehension. However, this study indicates that teachers allowed independent application of strategies, but assumed almost complete control of the interpretation by responding to pupil questions rather than seeking other answers. It is most likely that teachers are unaware of the limiting effect of their actions in this regard, but are instead frustrated by the loss of control. The IES Report (Shanahan et al., 2010) identifies this as a potential obstacle to effective instruction. Increased understanding of the importance of effective scaffolding in the implementation process, in addition to reflective dialogue following repeated observation of this in action, will enable teachers to better appreciate their role during the gradual release of responsibility.

Consideration must be given to the differences in teacher control evidenced in the recordings of younger and more senior classes. Given the small number of teachers observed, it is possible that these differences arise from personal factors such as confidence or the degree to which the instructional model matches teacher belief. However, given that the change in instruction is greatest at the younger levels, it is likely that these teachers are retaining control as they believe that it is essential to effective instruction. For those such as the infant teachers, opportunities to view a recording of their instruction may enable the teacher to appreciate the potential for greater pupil learning and with the support of the

coach identify other avenues that could have been explored. Such an approach can only be successful where teachers are sufficiently confident and comfortable with both the instruction and the collegial atmosphere, thereby viewing this as a developmental rather than assessment process.

Differentiated support needs to be provided for those such as the junior class teacher, who controlled the instruction to such an extent that there was limited evidence of pupil thinking. In this context, proof of the ability of younger pupils to assume greater control in the interpretation process can be provided through observing colleagues at the same level, in addition to co-teaching with the coach. This in turn will identify areas where control should be released and the points at which greater teacher involvement is necessary. Much of the international focus of CSI has centred on older readers and classes (Beck, 2010). Developing an approach to inform and support teachers of younger classes in strategy instruction should be an area for future research.

5.3.2 Concept of Comprehension and Instruction

Current definitions of comprehension emphasise the interaction of reader, text and context in the construction of meaning (e.g. RAND, 2002), emphasising that this process develops a personal interpretation rather than seeking a universal meaning. In contrast, the findings of this study indicate that teachers view comprehension as the extraction of a singular meaning from the text, thereby placing greater emphasis on the text rather than the reader. This reflects the concept of comprehension espoused by the English Language PSC, but fails to acknowledge the central importance of prior knowledge in the process. This reinforces findings in the current study which identify significant lacunae within teachers' knowledge of comprehension and its associated components.

Such a simplistic model of comprehension is of concern, as this has direct implications for the nature of instruction provided (Gill, 2008). In the absence of an awareness of the cognitive activities of the pupils, or indeed any clearly identified learning intentions beyond understanding, teachers resorted to questioning to assess if comprehension had taken place. Soter et al. (2008) highlight the importance of teacher questioning which elicits higher-order

thinking or prompts elaborate responses. However, teacher comments regarding their difficulty eliciting responses from pupils suggest that this was not the case. The failure to develop comprehension instruction beyond models of ‘interrogation’ (Pearson, 2010), despite extensive knowledge generated through international research, points to significant difficulties with the PSC. It is essential that the review of the English curriculum as part of *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life*, provides teachers not only with a constructivist model of comprehension, but also extends this to explicitly describe instructional approaches which achieve this goal.

Diakidoy et al. (2011) argue that the high levels of engagement required in the construction of a situation model enhances recall of the content of a text. It follows, that the priority placed on developing a short-term, literal understanding of an isolated text may be responsible for the difficulties remembering information, noted by both teachers and pupils. Senior pupils were acutely aware, not only of the expectation that they should be able to remember text content, but also their inability to do so. Failure by teachers to address these difficulties risked damaging pupils’ self esteem and perception of themselves as readers. It is interesting to note that while pupils claimed that strategic thinking helped to rectify this issue, teachers did not allude to this positive outcome. It is likely that the shift in focus from teacher questioning to collaborative and personal interpretation of the text has reduced teachers’ awareness of the degree to which pupils can remember content. It is unclear if teachers are cognisant of the more sophisticated role recall plays in strategic thinking, with pupils integrating new content with prior knowledge and considering multiple elements of the text in the overall construction of meaning.

One of the most acclaimed features of the instruction among teachers was the structured nature of the approach, providing a clear framework within which their work was situated. The structure of this approach is in stark contrast to the inconsistency and lack of clarity associated with the PSC treatment of comprehension instruction, as teachers felt that they were working towards a larger goal and that pupil contributions verified this. Furthermore, it appears that the layout and planning of the programme helped to develop a clearer concept of

comprehension for teachers, recognising not only the importance of comprehension strategies in reading, but in learning across all curricular areas. It also enabled teachers to appreciate the developmental nature of comprehension and to recognise and discuss pupils' placement on this continuum. It is also important to note that the strength of this framework enabled teachers to engage in instruction, while simultaneously developing their knowledge in the area, with teachers rigidly adhering to a step-by-step process. This clarity and structure is of greatest importance at the outset of the implementation process, providing validation and a reference point for an approach which produces less physical evidence of work.

However, it is important that the highly structured approach does not belie the flexible and dynamic nature of comprehension. While instruction may be planned and provided in a systematic manner, application can only be determined by the combined interaction of reader and text which is time and context specific. Wilkinson and Son (2011) caution that if teacher/pupil dialogue becomes too structured, then it will ultimately inhibit future learning and the ability of pupils to become authentic strategy users.

Given that teachers' understanding of comprehension impacts on their pedagogical practice (Gill, 2008), it is important to consider developments within this area. In the second year there was greater awareness among all teachers that comprehension extends beyond the confines of reading instruction and is an essential component of all teaching and learning. Teachers were also cognisant of the complex nature of comprehension, involving more elements than they had previously perceived. However, few teachers expanded on the multiple elements and dimensions involved, raising questions as to the depth of this new understanding. Transcript findings indicate that some teachers have developed a constructivist view of reading and understanding, with teachers competently and confidently supporting children in the integration of text with prior knowledge. For other teachers, though they refer to a more complex concept of comprehension, their instructional practice attempted to simplify the process through higher levels of teacher control and the continued, though less frequent use of teacher questioning, seeking known answers. Duffy (1993b) noted a

similar phenomenon among teachers at Point 3, the ‘trying out’ stage of teacher progress, with strategies being incorporated into a literal view of comprehension. To progress beyond this point, teachers must prioritise pupils’ metacognitive thinking and view instruction not as a rigid sequence of steps, but as a flexible and responsive approach. The disparity between the complex view of comprehension espoused by some teachers and the simpler model adopted as part of their instruction, highlights the need for observation or co-teaching to inform an integral part of CPD approaches. While teacher comments and reflections provide direction for the most urgent areas in need of support, understanding teacher’s development along the progress continuum requires a knowledgeable and impartial observer.

5.3.3 Teachers as Strategy Instructors

The transition from an ambiguous approach to comprehension instruction to one which is validated by international research has prioritised for many teachers the need to adopt the ‘right’ methodology. It is likely that some of this concern arises from the disparity between initial understandings of comprehension strategies and the explicit approach employed in the modelled sessions. Duffy (1993b) suggests that this preoccupation with a correct instructional approach may persist until Point 8 on the continuum of Teacher Progression. However, it is interesting to note that for many teachers the concern in the second year shifted to the need to make sure that all members of the school community were implementing the correct approach. It may be that as teachers engaged in more reflexive dialogue they became increasingly aware of differing levels of confidence and engagement in the learning process. This move from focus on the individual to the collective signifies an understanding among teachers that for CSI to be effective it must be implemented at a whole-school level.

Researchers are concerned at the degree to which the application of strategies is regarded as the purpose of instruction, rather than part of the process of comprehension (Duke et al, 2011; Pressley and Harris, 2006). While observation of teaching in the middle and senior classes in the study school indicates an emphasis on the use of strategies to construct meaning, there is clear evidence that other teachers do not consider the influence strategy use has on overall

understanding. Kucan et al. (2011) consider this to be caused by a confusion among teachers between strategic activity and comprehension. Failure by teachers to appreciate the full importance of strategic reading and to support strategy use to the point of impact on meaning, risks such activities being considered school work rather than an essential component of authentic reading, thereby inhibiting the overall aim of CSI, developing self-regulated strategic readers.

Even among teachers who regard strategies as tools in the construction of meaning, there is evidence of a rigid approach to strategic thinking, which emphasises the naming of individual strategies. In this regard there appears to be confusion among teachers between the need for explicit explanation and identification of strategies by the teacher in the modelling process and the instinctive use of strategies as pupils become more experienced. This may be attributed to the fact that much of the modelling observed by the teachers entailed the introduction of new strategies. While teachers also observed the scaffolding of previous strategies, they would benefit from this element being the sole focus of the observation session. Meeting the time demands of this level of modelling by the coach within a large school would require a more formal arrangement to balance the needs of class instruction and teacher learning.

It is essential that teachers recognise that the value lies in the thinking processes engaged in by the pupils, rather than the clear identification of the strategy. This is of greater bearing as pupils begin to use multiple strategies in a flexible and adaptive manner. To support pupils in becoming authentic strategic thinkers, teachers must first appreciate the developmental nature of strategy use, ultimately leading to the point of automaticity where the reader is not consciously aware of their cognitive patterns (Afflerbach & Cho, 2009). It is interesting to note that the pupils are aware of the long-term aim of the instruction, knowing that good readers do not have to stop and think. It is likely that in the process of adjusting to a new instructional approach, teachers have focused on their own role in the instruction, rather than its developmental potential for pupils. As teachers become accustomed to CSI, this balance must be redressed.

This research highlights the dual challenge for teachers in becoming strategy users as well as strategy instructors. Many teachers spoke of the impact this instruction was having on their own thinking and their wish that they had received such instruction in school. Hilden and Pressley (2007) contend that for teachers, the process of becoming a self-regulated reader can take more than a year, creating challenges for teachers to provide their pupils with an accurate and explicit account of strategy use during this period. During this time teachers need not only support in implementing a new instructional approach, but also specialised knowledge in their own strategy use. Kucan et al.'s (2011) finding that almost one-third of teachers were unable to effectively infer and integrate information to the degree necessary for comprehension, emphasises the importance of ensuring that teachers are competent strategy users first, before considering their ability to provide instruction.

It is clear that both teachers and principal were impressed by the higher-level thinking of all pupils, in the middle and senior classes remarking that they were constructing interpretations beyond the expectations of the teacher. While this is testament to the learning potential of all pupils when provided with appropriate instruction and an engaging context within which to apply their learning, it raises concerns as to the ability of teachers to continue to expand and extend pupil learning and comprehension. The findings of this study indicate that primary pupils can confidently and competently discuss symbols, images and literary techniques such as pathetic fallacy, devices many teachers are unfamiliar with. Serafini (2011a) notes that reading teachers must first become more sophisticated readers before they can become sophisticated teachers of readers. It follows that teachers must learn to critically analyse and evaluate text in a more astute manner, appreciating devices used by the author to convey meaning through language or images. While knowledge of literary techniques could be developed through workshops or presentations, reading and discussing selected literature within the developing professional communities would promote not only appreciation of these elements, but also teachers' awareness of their own cognitive processes as they engage with the text.

Serafini (2011b) notes that instruction in comprehension strategies often focuses exclusively on the written text, with little attention being attributed to meaning conveyed through other media. The findings of this study indicate that through the use of picturebooks, pupils of all ages and abilities attended to visual images, design elements, in addition to the written language, demonstrating a capacity to adapt strategies to suit the multimodal nature of this genre. However, while the pupils could competently analyse elements such as the positioning of characters in the illustrations and the mood conveyed through the use of colour, an analysis of the transcripts indicates that teachers referred mainly to cues within the text. While teachers were surprised by the impact analysis of illustration and design elements could have on the overall interpretation, they echoed Kress's (2003) belief that visual systems of meaning are becoming increasingly important in pupils' daily lives. It is perhaps the dominance of visual images which has resulted in pupils being more skilled in the analysis and interpretation of this medium than teachers. However, to further develop this capacity, and in doing so prepare children to engage fully in the modern world, requires that teachers acquire not only pedagogical but also technical knowledge in this area. Serafini (2012) notes that to adequately address the needs of pupils involved in a discussion of historical picturebooks, teachers require knowledge of visual images, peritextual and design elements, as well as an appreciation of art history. The development of genre specific knowledge must become a priority of both initial teacher education and CPD if books are to be used as more than instructional prompts (Serafini, 2011a), instead being appreciated as a complex interplay of media, with elements contributing to the construction of meaning.

5.3.4 Balancing Quality and Quantity of Instruction

Wells (1989) contends that the effectiveness of instruction is determined not by the quantity of interaction, but by the quality. However, the impact of the greater involvement of children on the quantity of text read was an overriding concern for many teachers. The decision of the junior class teacher to limit pupil contributions in an effort to complete the text in one sitting, illustrates an imbalance between covering content and the active learning and engagement of pupils. In contrast, other teachers viewed the depth of analysis and the greater involvement of pupils as justification for the slower pace. Hilden and Pressley

(2007) argue that it is when teachers reach this stage of progress with emphasis being placed on the quality of instruction rather than the quantity of text read, that pupils will be encouraged to move beyond a superficial interpretation of text.

The findings of this study clearly indicate that the greater involvement of pupils in their own learning presented pedagogical challenges for teachers, not only during read-alouds but across all curricular areas. Teachers must adapt their methodologies to facilitate pupil contributions. However, doing so releases more control and responsibility to pupils, a feature not all teachers are comfortable with. The decision by some teachers to contain strategies to specific reading sessions indicates not only a narrow view of comprehension, but a reluctance to move beyond a knowledge transmission model. In contrast, teachers who have recognised the greater depth and understanding arising from pupils' active involvement in all lessons must learn to embrace this in a manner which harnesses the increased motivation and engagement of pupils, while still maintaining cohesive instruction. Achieving this balance of developing knowledge in a clear and logical manner, while also facilitating pupil involvement, requires a sophisticated understanding of both subject matter and learning styles.

Finally, pupil comments in the second year caution that enjoyment and understanding of a text must remain the overall purpose of CSI. It is clear that while pupils enjoy opportunities to engage in a collaborative discussion of the text, this must be balanced with opportunities to develop the storyline through reading of the text. Duke et al. (2011) argue that for most encounters with text, the emphasis should be on reading and by extension the use of strategies to develop understanding as part of this process. Providing adequate opportunities for children to engage in the collaborative process of meaning making, while simultaneously attending to the needs of the text, was a concern for many teachers and is an area which will require high levels of knowledge and experience. Given the large class sizes in the study school, it is of crucial importance that teachers adopt instructional routines such as TSI to allow the timely, collaborative exploration of text. This approach overcomes many of the challenges outlined above, as pupils believe they had the opportunity to discuss

the text with their peers without having to listen to ideas being repeated. Additionally, such a co-operative approach also provides a more authentic representation of the reading process, as there is a greater balance between the reading and the discussion of the text. Therefore, used effectively, TSI not only allows for a more cohesive process of reading and analysis of text among peers, but also encourages more active involvement from all pupils in the purposeful construction of meaning.

5.4 Classroom Instruction and Pupil Learning and Engagement

5.4.1 Higher-Order Thinking Skills

The development of higher-order thinking skills among Irish primary school children has been a fundamental recommendation of numerous recent reports (Perkins et al., 2011; Eivers et al., 2010; Ireland, DES, 2010a). This study clearly illustrates an approach which both instructs and supports children of all ages and abilities in this process. Integral elements of such an approach include explicit instruction in the cognitive processes of good readers, increased opportunities to share thoughts and opinions in an environment which encourages multiple perspectives and material which engages and interests pupils. All members of the school community admired the manner in which middle to senior class pupils used literary terms such as foreshadowing, pathetic fallacy and personification in a knowledgeable manner. More striking, however, is not the ability to retain and use the appropriate terminology, but the facility of the pupils to competently discuss the rationale behind the use of these techniques. To this extent, the pupils clearly demonstrated an understanding that at the heart of all literature lies the construction of meaning.

In many cases examples of deep thinking and understanding originated in the illustrations and design elements of picturebooks, an aspect of instruction which has received little attention in Irish classrooms in the past. However, it is crucial to recognise the ability of pupils to utilise these features to connect to the emotional content and empathise with the characters. An examination of the

study's transcripts indicates that younger pupils would benefit from more specific feedback in this area, helping them to extend their thought processes and fully realise the impact their observations could have on the meaning of the story. A deeper analysis of the cognitive actions leading to higher-order thinking would help not only develop the pupil's understanding of the role of higher-order thinking in comprehension, but would also model the process for his/her peers. In contrast, teachers currently appear to be impressed with evidence of such thinking, but lack the knowledge of how to extend this further.

National reports clearly indicate significant lacunae in teachers' understanding and knowledge of higher-order thinking skills, indicating that not only do many teachers believe that they develop in an incidental manner, but others are unclear as to what they actually represent (NCCA, 2005; 2008). A key contribution of CSI highlighted in this study is the identification of an instructional approach, which promotes and sustains higher-order thinking skills among all pupils and develops an awareness of such thinking among teachers. However, despite teachers' positivity about this aspect of pupil performance, it is clear that they are as yet uncertain of their role in the process and most importantly their ability to constrain the higher-order thinking of pupils. Though teachers in the younger classes enabled pupils to ask questions, their often subconscious answering of these questions did not facilitate the collaborative exploration of the topic, and thereby promoted the perception of a single correct answer. Given that numerous teachers testified that pupils often saw viewpoints unnoticed by adults, it is vital that they in turn recognise that valuing these alternative or deeper interpretations can only be achieved through greater involvement of pupils. To accomplish this teachers must reflect on their instruction, appreciating how their involvement or subconscious actions may be limiting pupil thinking.

Though higher-order thinking is one of the principles of learning which underpins all subject areas of the PSC, it is clear that teachers initially considered it to be beyond the capacity of weaker and younger pupils. Consequently, instruction prioritised the development of basic skills at the expense of opportunities to reflect, discuss and analyse. Inspectors noted similar practices at a national level, with the predominance of lower-order questioning and

knowledge development (NCCA, 2005). A key finding of this study is the re-evaluation of weaker and younger pupils by teachers as a result of their demonstration of higher-order thinking skills. The acknowledgement that many pupils had been underestimated signified a reconceptualisation of pupils' ability to comprehend. Previously, this had centred on a capacity to decode individual words. However, in a more constructivist environment, greater emphasis is placed on the ability to engage with the text in a meaningful manner and the cognitive processes necessary to achieve this.

Though teachers were clearly cognisant of the potential for all pupils, this did not appear to be fully reflected in the instruction observed in the younger classes. While pupils' questions generally explored unknown aspects of the text, teachers' questions were still predominantly lower-order in nature, seeking known information. Future reflection with the coach must address how teachers can move beyond recognising the capacity of all pupils to engage in higher-order thinking, and to appreciate their involvement in the process and in particular the elements of the instructional approach, which support and develop the thinking of pupils.

5.4.2 Younger Pupils

Dooley (2010) argues that increased attention needs to be paid to comprehension as a key component in early literacy development. Indeed, little experimental research has focused on CSI in early years (Beck, 2010). As with the work of Block (2004) and Hoffman (2011), this research shows that comprehension can and should be developed in infant classes, with teachers considering such instruction to have a profound effect on younger readers. However, it is also clear that such instruction needs to be tailored to meet the unique cognitive, emotional and developmental needs of pupils at this age. While infant pupils experienced little difficulties thinking strategically, they confused strategies in the initial stages of implementation. To this extent they required more explicit and extensive modelling and scaffolding than their older counterparts, corroborating the findings of Baker (2008). This study also shows differences in the strategies used by infant and older readers, highlighting the developmental nature of strategic reading. The findings clearly indicate that younger pupils

spoke more often about sensory images associated with the text, their awareness of this strategy being at a conscious level. In contrast, teacher and pupil comments suggested that for many older readers, visualisation happens at a subconscious level, in effect having become a skill rather than a strategy. Further research examining the differences in strategy application between infants and older readers would help teachers provide developmentally appropriate instruction in this area.

Equally, teachers must consider the readiness of pupils for individual strategies and any associated concepts which pupils may need to be familiar with, before the explicit modelling of the strategy. This was found to be particularly true in the case of questioning at senior infant level. It is vital that teachers recognise this phase as emergent comprehension and adapt the pace and nature of instruction according to the needs of the pupils. From a professional development viewpoint, increased planning and co-operation is required between teacher and coach before modelled lessons, to ensure that the pupils are familiar with the necessary concepts. It may also be beneficial to provide greater opportunities for teacher observation at this level, as though high levels of pupil interaction were evident from early on, the release of responsibility is more gradual than at other levels and therefore may not be as evident to teachers.

An important finding arising from the study is the ability of pupils to become self-regulated strategic readers from the earliest years, evidenced in the manner in which infant pupils were observed knowledgeably and consciously selecting and applying appropriate strategies without teacher prompting during the recorded read-aloud. This indicates that not only are young pupils capable of understanding and internalising declarative and procedural knowledge, they can also attend to conditional knowledge, appreciating when and why individual strategies can be applied. This demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of strategy use and one which the PSC considers beyond the ability of younger readers. Integral to this independent strategy application by younger pupils is the use of CPMs. The effective use of these kinaesthetic movements by all pupils, but most especially younger readers, corroborates the findings of Block et al.

(2008) that the use of a second input system helped pupils process the abstract notion of strategies.

There is a clear disparity between the performance of younger pupils and the belief held by many teachers and policy-makers that comprehension should only begin after automaticity in decoding has been achieved. Overcoming the legacy of this long-held view is challenging as indicated by the strongly held belief of individual teachers, that comprehension does not and should not impact on the lives of infants. It is essential that this perspective be addressed as pupils must understand from the earliest years that reading involves more than word recognition (Willingham, 2007).

It is evident that the pupils' strategic thinking is contingent on teachers' beliefs regarding the appropriateness of CSI for their pupils and their willingness to engage in the instruction. This was found to be especially true in younger classes. Teacher 21 believed that such cognitive activity was beyond the capacity of her infant pupils and therefore limited instruction to specific books. Consequently, no attempts by pupils to apply strategies across other curricular areas were noted. In direct contrast, the inspector observed other pupils at the same class level independently using strategies to draw conclusions during science experiments. Given the similar age and abilities of the pupils, the study suggests that this difference can be attributed to the instruction provided by the teachers and the degree to which opportunities for guided and independent application were provided. Other teachers found that pupils made greatest use of the strategies they themselves were most comfortable with, but made little use of those the teacher found challenging. These findings corroborate Roehrig et al.'s (2008) work, indicating that the effectiveness of instruction is determined by both teacher willingness and ability to implement the instruction fully.

Further developing pupil learning in this areas requires the expansion of teacher knowledge. There is evidence that infant pupils are identifying patterns and consistencies within picturebooks, but are unable to extend these observations to impact on the overall meaning. To do this will require intentional scaffolding on the part of the teacher. It is unclear whether teachers appreciate the importance of

images in picturebooks for young children or if they consider them to merely complement the text. Maximising the potential of young pupils in this area will require professional development to understand the construction and interpretation of multimodal texts.

The performance of younger pupils as a result of coherent CSI clearly illustrates that comprehension should not remain the sole remit of middle and senior classes as espoused by the PSC. It is essential that early literacy be developed as part of a balanced, integrated programme of instruction which assigns equal importance to basic skills and strategies, enabling pupils to become ‘meaning makers’ as well as ‘code breakers’ (Muspratt et al., 1997). Prioritising one element over another will not facilitate “spin-off benefits” in vocabulary and knowledge development (Smolkin and Donovan, 2002, p.179). Therefore, it is imperative that the PSC reflect international thinking on emergent comprehension and literacy instruction of pupils, developing a spiral approach to comprehension instruction which promotes the self-regulated use of comprehension strategies across all class levels.

5.4.3 Role of Prior Knowledge

Prior knowledge is placed at the heart of meaning representation by both schema theory (Anderson and Pearson, 1984) and the construction-integration model (Kintsch, 2004). Likewise, the findings of this study show that active integration of new and known information by pupils is fundamental to the personal interpretation of text. While younger pupils predominantly drew on personal experiences to extend their understanding and connecting to their emotions when similar instances happened to them, their older counterparts exhibited an awareness of the characteristics of individual text genres through the active use of world knowledge when interacting with historical picturebooks. In all four senior class transcripts, pupils drew on their prior knowledge to determine not only the historical setting of the event, but also likely complications or emotions this may entail for the characters. Of great importance is the sophisticated manner in which pupils referenced other known historical events and themes when faced with a lack of schema relating to the content of the text, most notably considering similar emotions evoked by the transportation of Jews during the

Holocaust and the sale of African-American slaves. This complex interplay of text and knowledge not only points to the active engagement of pupils in the comprehension process, but also suggests that many pupils are developing a personal interpretive framework within which multiple historical events are considered, thereby deepening understanding of both.

In this process pupils are simultaneously working as readers and historians, constructing a situation model capable of incorporating all known information in the development of a coherent interpretation. This is of great relevance when considered in light of the history curriculum (Ireland, DES, 1999c), which cautions that many accounts of historical events create a simplistic understanding of the nature and impact of the past. Instead the document envisions classrooms in which a complex appreciation of cause and effect, as well as empathy, are facilitated through dialogue, debate and the reading of historical fictions. While the authors consider these “abstract and difficult concepts” (p. 14) to develop knowledge and understanding of individual events, this approach to comprehension enables pupils to independently compare and contrast the human impact of multiple events, demonstrating a degree of skills generally considered to be beyond the capacity of primary school children.

Pressley and Gaskins (2006) observe that among the characteristics of good readers is an awareness of the author’s style, beliefs and intentions. The findings of this study also show that both teachers and pupils considered their knowledge of the author in the interpretation of text. Not only did pupils use their knowledge of literary devices previously employed by the author to provide clarification when confused, but they also attended to new features and departures from the norm. It is also noteworthy that the senior class pupils drew on biographical information on authors such as Michael Morpurgo and Eve Bunting, to frame and justify their interpretations, considering the knowledge these authors had as a result of their previous professions or place of residence. The extra dimensions to the analysis of text contributed by knowledge about the author, indicate the advantages of co-ordinating instruction to explore the works of some key authors such as Chris Van Allsburg, Anthony Browne and Lois Lowry, seeking patterns in style, technique or choice of material. The inclusion of a biography as part of

this author study may also enable children to consider how the author's life and experiences have influenced the story, in effect introducing the concept of potential author bias.

5.4.4 Perceptions of Reading

While much research has focused on the impact of strategic instruction on pupil performance (Pearson, 2006; Israel and Duffy, 2008; Block et al., 2008), few have examined its impact on pupils' perspectives of the reading process and by extension the attributes of an effective reader. Though not the primary focus of this research, the findings offer tentative insights into the impact of an explicit and coherent approach to CSI on pupils' attitudes to reading. Most notable is the increased number of pupils, across both years, who regarded themselves as good readers. Corresponding increases in the rating for use of strategies, point to this as a key contributory factor in pupils' re-evaluation of themselves as readers. This finding is further strengthened by the marked growth in 'strategies' as a characteristic of a good reader.

Establishing a link between strategy application and pupils' perception of themselves as readers indicates that CSI may have the potential not only to improve pupils' reading performances, but also to improve self-efficacy in their ability to do so. This is of crucial importance as Malloy and Gambrell (2008) argue that individuals' belief in their capacity to successfully perform a task is directly related to the effort they are willing to expend in the process. Engaging in strategic reading initially requires high levels of time, and for pupils to persevere they must believe that it will impact in a positive manner on their ability to understand the text. Indeed, Miller and Faircloth (2009) contend that knowledge of comprehension strategies is not sufficient as pupils may avoid using them if they lack confidence in their abilities.

These findings show not only a value for strategic reading, but also the constructivist principles which underpin it. Pupils moved from a skills-based perspective of a good reader which valued fluency, accuracy and recall, to one which emphasises the authentic purposes of reading, such as understanding, thinking and the involvement of others. This reflects Guthrie and Humenick's

(2004) belief that pupils' value of reading comprehension and motivation could be increased through use of children's literature, in a manner which promoted personal interpretation and opportunities to engage in collaborative dialogue. The emphasis on the authentic application of strategies in all reading and learning activities may also explain the decline in pupils' perceptions of the importance of fluency and accuracy. It is likely that pupils are unaware of their importance outside of school reading, due to a failure to make the purposes of such instruction explicit.

Pupil willingness to engage in the reading process appears to be contingent on text selection. It is clear that exposure to a wide variety of text genres increased pupil awareness of their own preferences. Therefore, to continue to extend this engagement to individual and personal reading, it is important that a diverse range of appropriate material be provided, which reflects the interests of the pupils. It is of concern that pupils reported a reduction in the use of the class library due to a poor selection of text. As the overall aim of CSI extends beyond the classroom walls, to develop purposeful readers who think strategically in their personal reading, it is vital that schools consider the degree to which they are facilitating the independent application of strategies through the provision of attractive and interesting reading material. This raises the issue of the place of picturebooks within the Irish book market. International trends in publishing have resulted in the creation of high quality picturebooks targeted at older readers. However, nationally, these books have yet to be fully appreciated by the public and their intended audience, due to the widely held perception that picturebooks are intended for younger readers. It is important that educators help address this misconception and extol the virtues of this genre. Equally, the entry of Irish authors into this market would enable children to see their culture reflected in a genre dominated by American and British authors.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

The aim of this study is to explore to what extent a sustained, coherent, on-site professional development approach could disseminate information on research-

based best practice to support the staff in implementing change. Understanding the full complexity of this process could only be achieved through the use of a case study model, which imposed some limitations on the study, primarily the generalisability of findings beyond the particular boundaries of the school. However, as effective professional development is deeply rooted in the situatedness and social context of the individual school, exploring the unique and dynamic interaction of events was considered a priority. Through the positioning of findings within a broader theoretical framework, it is hoped that this study may offer analytic rather than statistical generalisations (Yin, 2009).

Providing effective strategy instruction is a complex endeavour which can require several years for teachers to become proficient (Duffy, 1993b). While this study explored the implementation of this approach over a two-year period, depicting initial teacher reactions and varying levels of progress, it is clear that the staff require continued, sustained support beyond the study time-frame. Therefore, while this study extends beyond the initial implementation period, it cannot claim to examine the process to completion. Greater understanding of the differentiation of support and changes in teacher practice may be acquired through a longitudinal study.

The purposeful selection of the school impacts on the wider generalisability of findings. However, convenience sampling offered insights into the complex nature of educational reform within a large school. In addition, the placement of the researcher as an established member of the community allowed a level of access which may not have been otherwise possible. The subtle nature of social interactions integral to the change process could best be appreciated by a researcher with in-depth knowledge of the school culture and participants. The placement of the researcher within the study group therefore facilitated an inside perspective of school change. However, as acknowledged in the findings, the dual role of researcher and teacher constrained the availability and movement of the researcher within the field. Classroom duties increased the credibility of the researcher among teachers, but reduced opportunities for the researcher to observe and gather data from a wider audience.

A single researcher conducted the study, raising potential concerns regarding reliability. These were addressed through the triangulation of multiple sources of data across different time periods, with primacy always given to the participants' perspectives. The involvement of a research team would strengthen the reliability of the study, offering both internal and external perspectives. Additionally, the corroboration of coding decisions would extend the interpretation of data beyond the judgement of an individual (Silverman, 2001).

Minimising interruptions to the school required that the researcher use her own class as the focus group in each year. Given that these children were in sixth class, it was not possible to follow their progress over the course of the study. Consequently, direct comparisons cannot be made across both years. This request by the principal also limited the pupils' perspectives to those of senior pupils. These pupils were in the best position to compare and contrast changes in instruction and to verbalise their opinions. However, little research has focused on comprehension instruction of younger pupils and valuable insights could be gained from an indepth exploration of their perspectives.

5.6 Future Directions

Evidence from this study indicates several directions in which future research may inform and improve practice in the areas of professional development and CSI.

Firstly, as indicated in the limitations of the study, complete exploration of the reform process requires a longitudinal study. Situating the study within a school over a longer period of time would develop a greater understanding of the changing levels of support required as teachers assume more control of the process. It may also provide greater clarity on the nature of differentiated support required, as teachers progress at differing rates. Finally, the research may also consider the ability of the school to sustain the initiative as support levels are reduced.

Further expansion of this study should also consider the adoption of a mixed-methods design, employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches to seek a deeper understanding of this complex phenomenon. Initial pupil reading performances would establish a base-line against which all future achievement may be compared, thereby establishing if change in instructional practices results in a statistically significant improvement, as suggested by the qualitative findings of the current study. Classifying the data in terms of age and ability offers greater insight into the impact of CSI on weaker and younger pupils over the course of the study. The integration of both qualitative and quantitative data in this manner combines the diverse perspectives and classroom realities of the individual with rigorous evidence of student achievement.

An expansion of this study should also consider the wider development of teachers' knowledge, placing comprehension instruction within a balanced literacy programme which integrates word identification and vocabulary development. Given the lacunae in teacher knowledge regarding literacy development, such a study would focus on creating an awareness of the need to move from isolated, independent skill development lessons, to a cohesive approach which recognises the integrated nature of literacy instruction. Developing a coherent English curriculum should entail a complementary approach to reading and writing across multiple text genres. This research should focus on reading and writing for authentic purposes which reflect those the children will engage with outside of the classroom environment. The dual focus of such a study would explore not only the extent to which teachers could develop a research-based model of literacy instruction, but also the impact of purposeful and authentic instructional activities on pupils' reading comprehension.

This study also finds that teachers should assume more responsibility for their learning as their knowledge develops. Further research may examine models of professional development which provide teachers with opportunities to record and reflect upon their practice with the support of a coach. This reflective practice may highlight teacher actions which are unintentionally constraining pupil learning and thus empower the teacher to employ their theoretical

understanding to identify the nature of support needed to address these difficulties. Such an approach has the potential to be transformative in nature.

Equally, further research is required to identify the most effective use of the coach within the school. Elish-Piper (2011) proposes a model in which the coach also assumes teaching duties. This study reveals some of the challenges inherent in this model. Therefore, a more formal structure, in which the role and responsibilities of the coach are clearly delineated with the staff, needs to be explored, in this process examining the means to balance the often conflicting duties associated with both roles. Further development of the teacher-as-coach model offers the potential to tailor support to meet the needs of individual teachers and schools, while gaining instructional as well as theoretical knowledge through working in the classroom.

Increases in pupils' motivation and self-efficacy as a result of a dialogic approach to CSI warrants further exploration. Previous studies have predominantly focused on the impact of instruction on reading performance, yet as Duke et al. (2011) indicate comprehension involves both skill and will. Quantitative and qualitative data gathered from pupils of all ages may verify the tentative findings of this study. In addition, a longitudinal study of this nature may indicate not only possible differences in motivation among younger and older readers, but also the stages at which instruction impacts on pupils' perception of themselves as readers.

Teachers, the principal and the inspector noted the potential such strategic thinking offered pupils in future learning at second level. Research has focused exclusively on primary or second level, however an examination of the transition process would indicate the extent to which pupils transfer these skills and strategies. Furthermore, comparative study would explore the degree to which cognitive and learning skills developed at primary level are employed and advanced in subsequent educational activities. Understanding this transition process is essential in developing an education continuum, rather than isolated and independent learning experiences.

Finally, it is vital that the development of comprehension instruction also address the future challenges presented by digital literacies. The extension of current practice to include electronic media and examining the different nature of strategic reading this entails, must be explored at all class levels. This will first require a study of the digital literacy skills and knowledge primary teachers currently possess and also their attitude to and concerns regarding digital literacies. It is likely that many teachers will be anxious at the prospect of interacting with technologies with which the pupils may be more comfortable and competent. Consequently, it is essential that future studies identify such lacunae in knowledge and confidence and explore CPD models which may address these.

5.7 Summary

This chapter discussed some of the salient findings presented in Chapter Four within the theoretical framework outlined in the Literature Review.

The creation of a community of practice was considered to be fundamental in supporting staff in the change process. It was noted that though modelling and subsequent reflective discussion developed these groups initially, it was only in the second year that genuine collegiality emerged, with teachers assuming greater responsibility for their own learning. In addition, the findings highlighted the importance of tailoring instruction to meet the differing needs of individual teachers within the school. Sustaining this reform will entail considering the professional development needs of teachers joining the staff at a subsequent date.

Coaching is identified as integral in sustaining teachers beyond the initial implementation dip. However, greater clarity regarding the role and responsibilities of the coach is necessary to avoid an overreliance on this model for all knowledge development. This chapter also discussed the complexity of CPD which is amplified through the failure of schools to develop a co-ordinated

and timely approach to the implementation of reform efforts. Current practice in this area is in effect increasing teacher perspectives of being overloaded.

Significant lacunae were identified in teacher knowledge relating to both comprehension and literacy development in general. The discussion outlined the importance of a phased approach to knowledge development, in which both modelling and reading of professional literature could play complementary roles. In addition to poor theoretical knowledge in this area, it also emerged that teachers' concept of comprehension received little consideration and extended little beyond 'understanding'. Consequently, teachers valued a structured approach to instruction which placed their actions within a clearly defined framework. It is important that the presence of this structure does not detract from the flexible and dynamic nature of comprehension.

This chapter raised concerns regarding the use of strategies as ends in themselves in some of the younger classes. Equally, a rigid approach was adopted by many teachers which emphasised the naming of strategies rather than recognising the characteristics of strategic thinking. Additionally, as pupils became more confident strategic readers, they sought greater involvement in class discussions. The findings suggest that teachers must be cognisant not only of the need to provide opportunities for collaborative discussion, but also to balance this with continued reading of the text.

The emergence of higher-order thinking among all pupils was initially facilitated through the use of picturebooks, with senior and middle class pupils demonstrating a sophisticated knowledge of literary techniques. However, it is of concern that teachers remain largely unaware of their role in developing higher-order thinking skills, and indeed the potential of their actions to limit this. Furthermore, the discussion detailed the ability of infant pupils to become self-regulated strategic readers capable of choosing appropriate strategies without teacher prompting. This highlights the need for comprehension instruction of younger pupils to be tailored to suit their developmental needs, providing greater levels of scaffolding and modelling.

The sophisticated use of prior knowledge by older readers to bridge gaps in cultural knowledge was considered notable and points to the need to develop instructional approaches which integrate comprehension instruction with the development of world knowledge. This chapter also discussed findings that pupils' perceptions of themselves as readers had altered as a result of CSI, placing greater importance on strategy use as a characteristic of good readers. It was also suggested that the authentic nature of reading instruction and tasks led to an increased value among pupils on aspects such as understanding and thinking in the reading process.

Finally, the limitations of this study were addressed, in addition to outlining areas for future development. Chapter Six will summarise the implications of this study, making recommendations for policy and practice in the areas of CPD and comprehension instruction.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The primary purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which a sustained, coherent, on-site professional development approach can support a staff in implementing a research-validated approach to CSI, and by extension its impact on teaching and learning within the school. The data collected through questionnaires, interviews, observations and recordings was thematically presented in Chapter Four and discussed in relation to a theoretical framework in Chapter Five. This chapter will draw conclusions arising from these findings and make recommendations for policy and practice relating to CPD and CSI at both national and school level.

6.2 Conclusions

The impetus for this study arose from concerns regarding the reading performances of pupils on national and international tests, in addition to significant discrepancies between the instructional approach to comprehension advocated within the PSC and the findings of international research. In addition, the study sought to address the nature of professional development required in the implementation of such a research-validated approach, as previous studies have predominantly focused on the development of effective practices with individual classes. This two-year case study focused on the support required by teachers in the implementation of a research-validated, whole-school approach to effective comprehension instruction. It also explored the impact of this professional development approach on teaching and learning within the study school. The importance and relevance of this study increased during its implementation with the publication of *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life* (Ireland, DES, 2011a), bringing not only renewed focus on the need to

increase reading standards among Irish children, but equally signalling the launch of a new phase of CPD for Irish teachers and schools.

Despite the limitations associated with a single study case design, most notably difficulties generalising findings to a wider population, the richness of the data generated identified interesting dimensions to the CPD provided, in addition to teachers' engagement in the process and the subsequent active learning of pupils.

6.2.1 Conclusions: Continuing Professional Development

The initial implementation of new instructional practices has been shown to lead to a decrease in performance and confidence levels among teachers (Fullan, 2001; 1995). This study identified key stages where teachers required support during the change process:

- In the early stages, when many teachers believed that they were already providing strategic instruction
- As questions arose at the point of implementation in the classroom
- As enthusiasm waned between modelled lessons
- As teachers tried to balance the new initiative with other pedagogical, administrative and extra-curricular demands in the second year
- As teachers introduced collaborative group work in the form of TSI

The role of an internal facilitator was found to be integral in sustaining teachers through these periods, engaging in professional conversations which focused, informed and supported teachers.

The teacher-as-facilitator model offered a number of benefits in the CPD process, namely:

- Increased teacher interest and belief in the instructional practice as the facilitator was using this methodology with her own class
- The ability to empathise with the instructional challenges encountered by teachers
- Drawing on personal experiences to resolve issues or offer guidance
- The provision of literacy expertise in a manner which is unlikely to alienate or threaten teachers

However, key challenges identified with this model include difficulties balancing the duties of both full-time teacher and coach in the absence of a formal structure, and the heavy reliance of teachers on the coach during the early stages of implementation. Furthermore, the limited time of the facilitator was negatively affected by extra administrative duties, in addition to the same time and work constraints experienced by the teachers.

Increased levels of dialogue within schools are required to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the teacher, principal and facilitator within such a shared leadership model. Furthermore, the study indicates that principals should demonstrate support for the reform by attending modelled lessons at an early stage, thereby demonstrating their commitment to the initiative.

Creating an authentic community of practice is an essential feature of effective CPD as teachers are more willing to take risks when they feel their colleagues are doing likewise. However, developing these supportive communities beyond superficial levels requires both time and effective leadership on the part of the facilitator, establishing the norms for open and honest dialogue. This study identifies the integrated and integral roles of modelling and differentiated support in establishing a climate in which teachers are both secure and comfortable sharing experiences and identifying elements of the implementation process with which they are experiencing difficulty. Equally, findings indicated that through this multifaceted approach to CPD, teachers gradually assumed more responsibility for their own learning across the second year of the study.

Teachers placed great importance on the involvement of their pupils in CPD activities such as modelled lessons. Opportunities to observe pupils' interactions and learning increased teacher interest and confidence in the instructional approach. The study also finds that for many teachers, belief in CSI was intrinsically linked with observation of pupils' higher-order thinking.

Schools must also consider the individual needs of their teachers, most notably those who are not present for the initial CPD. Sustaining reform efforts at whole-school level requires that all teachers joining the staff at a later stage must not

only receive information regarding instructional approaches, but also sustained support in the implementation process.

This study highlights the complexity of implementing and sustaining educational change within a school due to a number of internal factors. A crucial finding of this research is that in a large school, teachers' instructional time is eroded by the withdrawal of pupils for multiple events, activities and literacy and numeracy support. This has implications for teachers' motivation and time to implement new instructional approaches. Of equal importance is the finding that teachers' ability to actively engage with reform efforts fluctuates in accordance with the school calendar, with periods following school closures and vacations, the final term and preparation for sacraments being identified as low points in the implementation process.

6.2.2 Conclusions: Teacher Change

Significant lacunae in teachers' knowledge of comprehension development prior to the research, resulted in an emphasis on assessment of pupil understanding, relying on the use of questioning, in addition to reading schemes and workbooks. This lack of a theoretical framework also generated a desire among teachers for a prescriptive instructional routine. Extending teacher understanding beyond the superficial imitation of observed actions requires multiple opportunities to observe the instruction, in addition to reflective dialogue with a knowledgeable other to identify the key pedagogical elements.

Teachers valued the explicit and structured nature of the comprehension approach with findings suggesting that this clarity not only impacted on the instruction provided, but also developed teachers' concept of comprehension. Within this framework teachers were able to discuss pupil progress and development. However, rigid adherence to a highly structured approach will not provide the dynamic and responsive instruction needed to develop authentic strategy users. The study indicates varying levels of teacher progress in providing such adaptive instruction.

Some teachers, particularly those in senior classes, possessed a constructivist view of comprehension, resulting in practice which encouraged the development of personal interpretations through the integration of prior knowledge with the text. For other teachers, changes in their knowledge of comprehension development resulted in instruction which prioritised the use of strategies, rather than their role in the construction of meaning. The occurrence of this predominantly in younger classes raises questions as to whether this issue originates in a lack of teacher knowledge or if teachers believe that younger pupils are not capable of developing their thinking to the point of understanding.

Providing effective comprehension instruction presents a dual challenge for teachers in simultaneously becoming both strategy users and instructors, requiring the development of both technical and pedagogical knowledge. The continued development of higher-order thinking skills among the pupils throughout the study identifies a similar issue. Senior pupils demonstrated a sophisticated use of literary devices and attributed equal importance to the text and illustration in the construction of meaning. This introduces aspects of literacy traditionally not addressed in the primary school and which consequently have not been addressed either through initial teacher education or subsequent CPD.

As pupils become more actively involved in their own learning, teachers must alter their methodologies to facilitate this engagement. Within this study, many teachers recognised the greater depth of understanding which resulted from pupils' strategic thinking in other curricular areas. However, balancing pupils' active involvement with the need to develop knowledge in a logical and coherent manner proved challenging.

6.2.3 Conclusions: Pupil Learning

Initial teacher and principal perspectives held that basic comprehension skills would be developed among weaker and younger readers, while higher-order thinking skills would be fostered among more able readers. The findings of this study revealed that through the provision of explicit instruction in cognitive strategies and opportunities to reflect on interesting and engaging material in an

environment which values multiple perspectives, higher-order thinking skills were also developed among younger and weaker readers. This in turn resulted in many teachers reconsidering their perspectives of individual pupils and their capacity to construct a meaningful representation of the text. However, it is also evident that teachers were largely unaware of their role in developing pupils' higher-order thinking skills and the importance of providing specific feedback to younger pupils, to enable them to realise the impact their thinking can have on the interpretation of the story. Equally, teachers must be cognisant of the constraints their actions can place on pupils' thought processes.

The study illustrates that not only can comprehension strategies be developed in infant classes, but that with the support of Comprehension Process Motions (CPMs), these pupils can become self-regulated strategic thinkers capable of applying strategies without teacher prompting. Instruction at this level must be tailored to meet the developmental needs of the pupils. This entails a higher level of modelling and scaffolding, in addition to considerable development of concepts such as questioning. The integral role of the teacher in this development is highlighted by the findings that the effectiveness of instruction is determined by the teacher's belief and willingness to engage in the process.

Both teachers and pupils noted the development of an atmosphere of openness and respect in which diverse views were listened to and valued. Pupils enjoyed hearing opinions which differed from their own, believing that as a result they considered aspects of the text which may have been overlooked. Placing an emphasis on personal interpretation also appears to have encouraged weaker readers and quieter pupils to contribute to class discussions.

TSI was considered to be a further forum in which quieter pupils could become more involved. The teachers, principal and inspector remarked on the high levels of pupil engagement and sophisticated analysis of text evident within these groups. Equally, pupils found the collaborative nature of this instruction to be less daunting than the whole-class environment and also reported that it helped them become self-regulated strategic readers.

The active integration of new and known information by pupils was found to be fundamental to the construction of a personal interpretation of text at all class levels. Senior pupils activated relevant schema when engaging with historical fiction and drew heavily on their prior knowledge in the construction of meaning. Pupils demonstrated an ability not only to activate relevant schema for the given subject, but also to extend this understanding by identifying how it was similar to other, often better known topics. This is illustrated by the sixth class pupils' comparison of the separation of families within the diverse time periods of the Holocaust and slavery in America. In this manner, the children used their rich knowledge of World War II to develop understanding of an issue they were less familiar with. Equally, pupils utilised their knowledge of author's styles, preferences and life stories in the construction of meaning from text, using this schema to resolve confusing issues and form predictions.

Finally, this study provides tentative insights into the impact of CSI on pupils' perceptions of themselves as readers, with increases in the category of 'good' reader among both focus groups. The responses of the pupils also suggest that they valued the constructivist principles of reading, placing increased importance on elements such as understanding and strategic thinking. The study proposes that this focus may be attributed to the use of authentic reading material in the application of strategies, enabling pupils to appreciate not only the process, but also the purpose of strategic reading.

6.3 Recommendations

Emerging from the findings and conclusions of this study are a number of recommendations regarding both future policy and practice in the area of both CPD and comprehension instruction. These recommendations will be presented for both national and school level.

6.3.1 Recommendations: CPD

National Level

It is vital that national reform efforts recognise the complexity of effective CPD and attend not only to the dissemination of knowledge but also the nature of support required to sustain teachers in the change process. This study recommends that:

- Effective professional development is contingent on the development of in-school facilitation to sustain the implementation of national, local and school-level initiatives.
- National reform efforts such as *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life* must consider how new instructional approaches will be introduced, supported and sustained at a local level.
- Developing the model of teacher-as-coach would tailor the reform to meet the needs of individual school contexts, while simultaneously increasing teacher confidence and willingness to engage in the change process.
- Schools must be facilitated in making alternative uses of staff and resources to adopt professional development models which include :
 - modelling of lessons
 - differentiated support
 - the development of communities of practice.
- Universities become involved in developing both the facilitator's knowledge of current research relating to pedagogical practice and also an understanding of the change process. The use of educational centres should be considered as a means of disseminating such knowledge on a national basis.
- CPD should be considered as a continuum of integrated school-based learning experiences in which teachers are active agents in their own professional development. The current model which grants teachers 3 EPV days on completion of a 20 hour one-off course develops a fragmented rather than cohesive approach to professional development and presents CPD as an option to be taken by individual teachers rather than an essential element in the progress of pupils, teachers and schools.

Professional learning should become an integral part of all school development plans and should not be associated with EPV days.

- Sufficient time to be provided for schools to implement educational reforms before the introduction of any further change.
- A database of recent professional literature across all curricular areas should be established to provide teachers and schools with easy access to current research.

School Level

Rather than responding to top-down mandated reform, this study shows that schools can become active agents in their own learning and development.

Specifically:

- Schools should appoint an internal facilitator to lead reform efforts within the school. Criteria for selection should include:
 - In-depth knowledge of adult learning, the change process and the curricular area in question
 - Experience teaching a wide range of classes within the school
 - Good interpersonal skills
- The roles and responsibilities of teacher, facilitator and principal need to be clearly defined at a whole-school level to ensure maximum engagement in the learning process and a unilateral understanding of the purpose of the facilitator. This increased clarity would also establish the expectation that teachers should assume an active role in their own learning.
- Devising a long-term structure to support the dual roles of teacher and coach. This should expand the model of providing supervision for the coach's class to the reallocation of personnel who would assume responsibility for teaching specific areas on a more formal basis.
- Principals should provide not only verbal affirmation of the work of the facilitator, but also attend modelled lessons and other formal CPD activities, demonstrating not only a visible commitment to the change process, but also an understanding of how instruction is impacting on pupil learning.

- Increased levels of dialogue are required to ensure all teachers embrace and understand both the initiative and the implementation process. Areas in need of further discourse at a whole-school level include the initial decision to implement a new instructional approach and the rationale and specific details of a shared leadership model.
- Schools would benefit from the development of authentic communities within which teachers are comfortable sharing not only positive experiences, but also concerns or anxieties. In addition to the formative work conducted by the facilitator during modelled lessons and one-to-one consultations, opportunities must be provided for groups to meet and reflect on a regular basis. It is vital that time designated for CPD under the Croke Park Agreement does not predominantly consist of presentations by external experts and instead embraces formal opportunities to collaboratively reflect on existing instruction and areas in need of development. These 36 additional hours may also enable teachers to extend their knowledge by reading and discussing professional literature in ongoing development of communities of practice.
- School managements must remain cognisant of the demands placed on teachers by multiple reform initiatives. To this extent, it is essential that new instructional approaches are not introduced in isolation, but rather emerge from a review of existing practices.
- The development of a 5-year plan for reform efforts would ensure not only that sufficient time was allowed for implementation, but also that new initiatives would be introduced in a co-ordinated manner. The principal and facilitator must also remain aware of the specific needs of teachers joining the staff following the initial implementation period.
- Efforts must be taken to protect instructional time. Though the multiple events and activities at middle and senior class levels each make a valuable contribution to the overall learning of children, it is vital that schools consider the cumulative impact of this withdrawal of pupils on teachers' ability to provide effective instruction to all pupils.

6.3.2 Recommendations: CSI

National Level

Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life provides an opportunity to address lacunae within the 1999 English Language Curriculum. Any update should take account of international research and include:

- A clear definition of comprehension which outlines the roles of reader, text and context in the construction of a personal interpretation which is shaped by prior knowledge.
- The long-term aims of CSI in the development of self-regulated, active readers who can knowledgeably and purposefully apply a range of strategies to develop a personal understanding of text.
- Detailed knowledge on the constructivist nature of the comprehension process and the variables associated with effective comprehension instruction including:
 - Word identification
 - Fluency
 - Vocabulary development
 - Oral language proficiency
 - Motivation
- A concise and coherent approach to comprehension instruction which begins at infant level and spirals in a developmental manner throughout the child's primary school experience.
- A clear definition of comprehension strategies, including a definitive list of strategies to be formally taught at primary level. This study suggests that explicit instruction in *prediction, making connections, visualisation, questioning, monitoring comprehension, determining importance, inference and synthesis* impacts positively on comprehension development.
- 'Skills' and 'strategies' should be clearly distinguished from each other and the terms applied consistently and accurately throughout all curricular documents pertaining to effective literacy instruction.
- The role of the teacher in CSI should be clearly outlined with theoretical and practical information on modelling, scaffolding and providing

opportunities for independent application through a gradual release of responsibility model. Providing teachers with exemplars of these three stages may be beneficial but must be accompanied by multiple opportunities to observe the instruction to avoid such examples becoming a rigid script.

- The curriculum must address the concept of emergent comprehension at infant level, identifying the developmental differences of younger pupils, in addition to their capacity to think strategically during the construction of meaning.
- The development of independent strategic readers should be developed through the use of collaborative learning approaches such as TSI at middle and senior class levels.
- Teachers' literary as well as pedagogical knowledge should be developed. Literary techniques such as pathetic fallacy and symbolism should not only be introduced but expanded to consider their importance on text interpretation.
- Comprehension should be seen as a crucial element of all teaching and learning and therefore should not be confined solely to the English Language curriculum.
- Curricular documents must address the teacher's role in the development of higher-order thinking skills and provide detail on instructional practices which advance the cognitive processes of pupils of all ages and abilities. Equally, attention should be paid to teachers' actions which may in fact impede the development of these skills.
- The curriculum should promote the use of authentic texts across a wide range of genres.
- Misconceptions regarding the appropriateness of picturebooks for older readers need to be addressed at national level so that children can easily access this reading material in Irish libraries and bookshops.

School Level

Developing self-regulated strategic readers requires the following developments at school level:

- Comprehension should form an essential component of a balanced, integrated literacy instructional programme **from the earliest years**.
- Lacunae in teachers' understanding of comprehension development must be addressed. This may be achieved through presentations by the internal facilitator, in addition to the reading of professional literature. To this extent it is recommended that schools become members of the Reading Association of Ireland and the International Reading Association, providing teachers with access to research journals such as *The Reading Teacher*.
- Teachers will benefit from directed focus on guided practice, developing the ability to provide specific feedback which may help pupils extend their thought processes to impact on the overall interpretation of text.
- It is vital that teachers appreciate that the goal of CSI is the construction of a personal interpretation of text and therefore, instruction should not confuse purposeful strategic thinking and strategic activity.
- In becoming effective strategy instructors, it is of great importance that teachers consider their own use of strategies when reading. To this extent, teachers may benefit from establishing reading groups within their community of practice, meeting to discuss non-professional literature and their cognitive processes while reading.
- Pupils in younger classes should be given further opportunities to not only question the text, but also to engage in collaborative dialogue on such issues. Teachers may need to re-evaluate their role in this process, chairing rather than leading the discourse.
- CPMs should be introduced to support pupils' self-regulated use of strategies across all curricular areas and in particular to actively engage younger pupils in the learning process.
- Instructional approaches should provide opportunities for pupils to read strategically at a whole-class, small group and individual level, receiving guided support and scaffolding from both teacher and peers. This study indicates that TSI develops pupils' learning in an atmosphere which

pupils find supportive and less daunting, Therefore, schools would benefit from the adoption of such collaborative approaches in middle and senior classes.

- Comprehension should be considered an integral part of teaching and learning. Therefore, teachers should encourage and promote strategic thinking in **all** curricular areas, facilitating collaborative discussions in addition to developing knowledge.
- Instruction should be adapted to facilitate the greater involvement of pupils in the learning process. Teachers must balance the role of pupils in directing learning through questioning and identifying avenues for further exploration, and the need to maintain coherence and clarity in instruction.
- Authentic reading material must be prioritised over reading schemes and workbooks, providing pupils with interesting and engaging material which encourages strategic reading. Such text should be representative of a wide range of genres and this variety of reading material should also be made available in class libraries.
- The use of high quality picturebooks should be promoted at all class levels.
- Exploring the writing styles and personal stories of key authors such as Eve Bunting, Anthony Browne and Michael Morpurgo may provide pupils with insight into what motivates them as writers and consequently lead to a deeper interpretation of the text.

6.4 Concluding Remarks

The PSC (Ireland, DES, 1999)

promotes the active involvements of children in a learning process that is imaginative and stimulating. Its overall vision is to enable children to meet, with self-confidence and assurance, the demands of life, both now and in the future. (p. 6)

These ideals espoused within the PSC are also the basis of the research-based approach to comprehension implemented as part of this study, aiming to develop pupils who critically and purposefully consider text, actively constructing an interpretation which draws on their own knowledge and experiences. Teachers

play a central role in realising this vision. However, this study illustrated that not only is providing the instruction necessary for achieving this long-term aim complex, but so too is the process of supporting teachers in the achievement of this goal.

Considering the personal, societal and economic necessity to develop individuals who are readers, writers and thinkers, it is essential that the focus of education moves from the transmission of knowledge to the development of strategies, which will enable pupils to become active agents in their own learning. This is equally true in relation to teacher learning. The current research shows that a CPD approach which uses an internal facilitator to provide sustained in-school support in the development of an authentic community of practice, can lead to increased involvement by teachers in directing and guiding their own learning, consequently impacting on instruction and pupil performance. At the heart of both the CPD and CSI approaches in the study, lies the development of teachers and pupils as life-long learners.

“Learning is like rowing against the tide. Once you stop doing it, you drift back.”

Benjamin Britten

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Yin, R.K. (2009) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 4th ed., California: Sage Publications.

Yuill, N. and Oakhill, J. (1991) *Children's Problems in Reading Comprehension*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Appendix A: Information Letters and Consent Forms

Letter Requesting Access: Board of Management

A Chara,

I am currently enrolled as a PhD student at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. My research dissertation focuses on developing a whole school approach to comprehension strategy instruction. I request permission to conduct this research in your school.

The two-year study aims to identify international best practice in effective comprehension instruction and to explore how to effectively disseminate such information to support the staff in implementing school change. The research will also evaluate children's perceptions of themselves as readers and their ability to independently apply comprehension strategies while reading.

International research indicates that explicit instruction in comprehension strategies develops active and purposeful readers who can independently apply strategies to develop a personal interpretation of the text. Studies also show that pupils of all ages can be taught to use these strategies. This research will examine how best to adapt comprehension instruction to meet the needs of pupils from Junior Infants to Sixth Class.

Each teacher will be asked to complete questionnaires over the course of the research. These questionnaires will help determine the support and professional development to be provided to the staff. Some teachers will also be interviewed allowing the researcher gain a deeper insight into the challenges faced by teachers at various class levels and also their immediate needs and priorities. No names will be used on the questionnaires or during the interview process.

The researcher may video some lessons with classes as part of the study. The children and parents will be made aware of the purpose of the recording and also of their right to reject its use. Children will not be identified by name during the recording and every effort will be made to ensure that recordings do not contain information which could identify or embarrass participants.

Only the researcher will have access to information from participants. All data and information obtained during this study will be kept strictly confidential. At the conclusion of the study, responses of both teachers and children will be reported as group results only. Should the study be published no individuals will be identified in any manner.

Informed consent will be sought from all participants – teachers, parents/guardians and where appropriate pupils. A letter detailing this study will be sent to teachers and parents requesting permission to participate.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary and any child or teacher ay stop taking part at any time. Parents/guardians are free to withdraw permission for participation at any time and for any reason.

I hope this request meets with your approval as I feel the study will be of great benefit to the school community.

Mise le meas

Treasa Bowe

Information Letter: Teachers

A chara,

I am currently enrolled as a PhD student at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. My research dissertation focuses on developing a whole school approach to comprehension strategy instruction. I would like to request your consent to participate in the study.

The two-year study aims to identify international best practice in effective comprehension instruction and to explore how to effectively disseminate such information to support the staff in implementing school change. The research will also evaluate children's ability to independently apply comprehension strategies while reading.

International research indicates that explicit instruction in comprehension strategies develops active and purposeful readers who can independently apply strategies to develop a personal interpretation of the text. Studies also show that pupils of all ages can be taught to use these strategies. This research will examine how best to adapt comprehension instruction to meet the needs of pupils from Junior Infants to Sixth Class.

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to complete a questionnaire at the beginning and end of each school year. You may also be invited to participate in a semi-structured interview, sharing your view of comprehension in the primary school and your vision for future developments.

Only the researcher will have access to information from participants. All data and information obtained during this study will be kept strictly confidential. At the conclusion of the study all responses will be reported as group results only. Should the study be published, no individuals will be identified in any manner.

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your consent at any time and for any reason. Please sign the accompanying form if you wish participate in this research. Should you have any questions or desire further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Míle buíochas as ucht do thacaíocht,

Treasa Bowe

Observation Consent Form (Teachers)

I agree to be observed and recorded by Treasa Bowe regarding comprehension strategy instruction and to allow this observation transcript to be submitted as part of a course requirement for the award of PhD.

I agree to the above only on the condition that my name is changed and that a pseudonym or code is used and all identifiers that might enable another to establish my identity are deleted from both electronic and hard copies of the transcript.

Date: _____

Interview Consent Form

I agree to be interviewed by Treasa Bowe regarding comprehension strategy instruction and to allow this interview transcript to be submitted as part of a course requirement for the award of PhD.

I agree to the above only on the condition that my name is changed and that a pseudonym or code is used and all identifiers that might enable another to establish my identity are deleted from both electronic and hard copies of the transcript.

Date: _____

Information Letter for Parents

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am currently enrolled as a PhD student at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. I am conducting a research project on developing a whole-school approach to comprehension strategy instruction. I request permission for your child to participate in the study,

The two-year study aims to identify the best international approach to teaching reading comprehension and how best to introduce it in a large school such as [school name]. During the study each child in [school name] will receive explicit instruction in comprehension strategies such as:

- Prediction
- Making Connections
- Questioning
- Visualising
- Monitoring Comprehension
- Determining Importance
- Inferring
- Synthesis

International research indicates that this approach to reading comprehension develops active and purposeful readers who can develop a personal understanding of text.

To teach the above strategies teachers will read picture books and novels to the children. Occasionally the read aloud sessions in your child's class may be recorded. The focus of this recording is on how the **teacher** provides the instruction and **not** on the performance of individual pupils. I will use this video to reflect on how effective my teaching was and how to approach future lessons. Occasionally the recording may be shown to other teachers to explain the teaching process involved. The privacy and confidentiality of children will be respected during such recording and **no child will be identified by name. No material will be included which might identify or embarrass your child in any way.** You and your child have the right to decide not to be involved in such recording at any time.

Only I will have access to information from your child. The information that is obtained during this research project will be kept strictly confidential and **will not** become a part of your child's school record. At the conclusion of the project, children's responses will be reported as a group result only. No individual children will be identified at any stage in the study.

Your child's participation in the study is completely voluntary and any child may stop taking part at any time. You are free to withdraw your permission for your child's participation at any time and for any reason. These decisions will have no effect on your future relationship with the school.

On the attached page, please indicate whether you **do or do not** want your child to participate in this project and return this note to the class teacher. Should you have any questions or desire any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at _____ or _____.

Yours sincerely,

Treasa Bowe

Information Letter: Parents of Focus Group Children

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am currently enrolled as a PhD student at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. I am conducting a research project on developing a whole school approach to comprehension strategy instruction. I request permission for your child to participate in the study,

The two year study aims to identify the best international approach to teaching reading comprehension and how best to introduce it in a large school such as - _____. During the study each child in _____ will receive explicit instruction in comprehension strategies such as:

- Prediction
- Making Connections
- Questioning
- Visualising
- Monitoring Comprehension
- Determining Importance
- Inferring
- Synthesis

International research indicates that this approach to reading comprehension develops active and purposeful readers who can develop a personal understanding of text. Your child will be asked to complete a questionnaire before and at the conclusion of the project. The questionnaire will establish developments in awareness of comprehension strategies and also in motivation to read. **No children's names will be used on the questionnaires.**

Only I will have access to information from your child. The information that is obtained during this research project will be kept strictly confidential and **will not** become a part of your child's school record. At the conclusion of the project, children's responses will be reported as a group result only. No individual children will be identified at any stage in the study.

To teach the above strategies teachers will read picture books and novels to the children. Occasionally the read aloud sessions in your child's class may be recorded. The focus of this recording is on how the **teacher** provides the instruction and **not** on the performance of the pupils. I will use this video to reflect on how effective my teaching was and how to approach future lessons. Occasionally the recording may be shown to other teachers to explain the teaching process involved. The privacy and confidentiality of children will be respected during such recording and no child will be identified by name. No material will be included which might identify or embarrass your child in any way. You and your child have the right to decide not to be involved in such recording at any time.

Your child's participation in the study is completely voluntary and any child may stop taking part at any time. You are free to withdraw your permission for your child's participation at any time and for any reason. These decisions will have no effect on your future relationship with the school.

On the attached page, please indicate whether you **do or do not** want your child to participate in this project and return this note to the class teacher. Should you have any questions or desire any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at _____ or _____.

Yours sincerely,

Treasa Bowe

Research Study on
Developing a Whole School Approach To Comprehension
Strategy Instruction

Informed Consent Form (Parent)

- I have read and understood the Parent Information Sheet
- I understand what the project is about and what the results will be used for.
- I know that my child's participation is voluntary and I can withdraw consent at any stage without giving a reason.
- I am aware that all information will be kept confidential.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Children's Information Sheet

I am making a video for my University work. It's like a project you might do in school. I am learning about different ways a school can use to teach children to read. If you agree I would like to video in your classroom while your teacher reads you a story. This video will help me understand how teachers use read aloud time to teach their children.

When you are being videoed there will be other children being videoed at the same time. It's not like a test –there are no right or wrong answers. You will be listening to a story and talking about it with your friends.

If, when we are videoing, you want to stop talking or move away from the video that's okay. If you don't want to be videoed you won't get in trouble.

The video tapes will only be seen by me. I will not let anyone else see this video.

If you have any worries after I make the video you can come and talk to me or to your teacher or parents.

Research Study on
Developing a Whole School Approach To Comprehension
Strategy Instruction

Informed Consent Form (Child)

- I have read and understood the Information Sheet
- I understand what the project is about
- I know that I don't have to take part and that I can stop taking part at any time.
- I know that the information will not be shared with anyone else.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Children's Information Sheet: Group Interview

November 2010

I am learning about different ways of teaching children to read. I would like to talk to you and your class about how children feel about the strategies you have been using this year. If you agree I would like to record you in your class while you discuss this with your friends.

This is not a test – there are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in your ideas and opinions on the strategies. You shouldn't feel that you have to agree with anyone else in the room if that's not how you really feel. I want you to be comfortable saying good things as well as critical things. I want to understand how you feel about this way of teaching.

If, when I am recording, you want to stop talking or move away, that's okay. If you don't want to be recorded you won't get in trouble. You can still be part of the group, I just won't record you.

The recording will only be heard by me and perhaps some people who are interested in using strategies with their class. I will not let anyone else listen to the recording.

I will not use your name at any stage so people won't know who you are.

If you have any worries after the recording you can come talk to me.

Informed Consent for Infant Classes

Hello everyone,

I am here today because our school is taking part in a project. You will all be asked if you would like to take part.

I want to find out the best way to teach children to become good readers.

You do not have to take part if you don't want to. I will give your parents some information about the project in a letter. You can talk about it at home with your parents and see if you would like to take part.

If you do want to take part, I will video your teacher reading a story to the class. You can listen to it and use your strategies if you want to. It's not a test. You will just be listening to a story and talking about it with your friends.

If, when we are videoing you want to stop talking, that's okay. If you don't want to be videoed you won't get in trouble.

The video tapes will only be seen by me. I will not let anyone else see the videos.

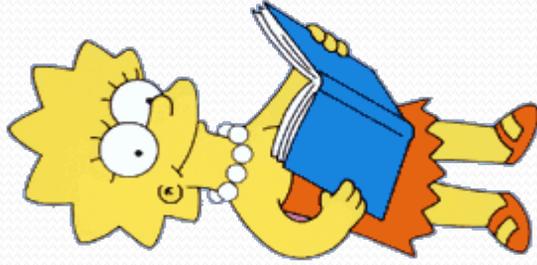
Does anyone have any questions?

Appendix B: Sample Anchor Charts & CPMs

Making Predictions



- I can make predictions
• **before and during** reading.
- I think about the **information** I know from the **cover, pictures** and the **story** and I use my imagination.
- I look at the **colours** and the **weather** for clues. I pay attention to **shadows** and **light**.
- I think about **what will happen next** and listen to the **author's clues** and look for hints from the **illustrator**.
- It doesn't have to be right!!





Making Connections

• We can make connections at **any time**.

• You think about something that happened in the story that **reminds** you of something else in:

- **The Story - Text to Text**
- **Your Own Life - Text to Self**
- **The World - Text to World**

• Sometimes I can make connections between two books.

• Our **background knowledge (schema)** is very important here.

It makes the story come to life and you can imagine it better.



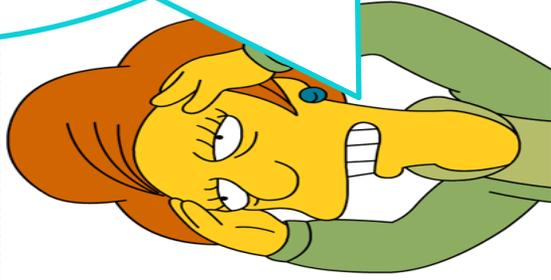


Questioning

- We can ask questions **anytime!**
- They help us to **think more** about what we read and understand it better.
- Sometimes we can find answers to our questions in the story or using our background knowledge.

• **Sometimes the author leaves us wondering!!**

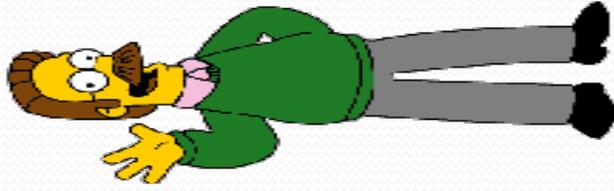
- Asking questions helps us to 'solve' the story by putting all the pieces together.





I would like to
RESPOND to.:

- I respond when I want to add to someone's strategy.
- I can respond when I have a question about what someone has just said.
- Listening to others respond can help me with my predictions.
- I always make **eye contact** with that person.
- I always have **respect** for the person I am talking to.
- I always use **positive** language such as "**did you consider...**"





I have a CLUNK!!



- **Slow down** - don't read too fast!!
- Do I know how to **read** the word or am I confused about its **meaning**?
 - Chunk - it - up!
- **Peel Back** the word - do you recognise any prefixes, suffixes or root words?
- **Skip** and read the rest of the sentence - then stop and **think**!
- **Backtrack** - read the sentence before and look for **clues**.
- What word would **make sense** here?



Visualising

• We use our '**movie**' to help us **picture** the story inside our heads. **Smells, sounds, taste and touch** can make your movie even better.

• We are like the **directors** of a movie.

• The words (**text**) are like the **script**.

• Change your movie as you get more information.

• Everybody will have a **slightly different** movie.





I need something
clarified

• I need something **clarified** if an **idea** in the story is **confusing** me.

• Sometimes it may be because I don't have the right **background knowledge**.

• **Other people** can help me clarify.

• Sometimes the **author** will help me to clarify an idea.

• I need to **stop and think**. Sometimes it helps to **backtrack** - other times I need to **read on**.





I want to
INFER

Inference is like working as a detective.

We are trying to figure out what the author means but **does not say**.

We look at body language, actions, words, and tone of voice for clues.

We look at the picture for extra evidence.

Our schema is really important here.

I need to ask myself do I know or do I think?



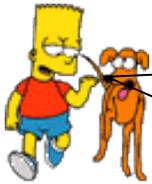


Synthesising

- Synthesising is like piecing together all the pieces of a **jigsaw**. On their own each piece will only give a little insight. You need to use all the pieces/strategies together to **fully understand** the story.
- We need to **stop and think** - to give our brains time to **sort** all the information we have gathered by using our strategies.
- Synthesis is the **glue** that holds all the strategies together.



Appendix C: Teacher-Designed Material to Support TSI



This is a **Fictional Story.**

Do we need to do a 'Previously On'?

Fiction Prediction Time!!!!

I'll make a prediction first.....

Does anyone else have a prediction?



Where will we stop reading?

Will we read together or as a single reader?

Don't forget to code!

Clunks

Does any have a clunk?

Are there any words for the interesting word wall?



Would anyone like to talk about the strategies they used?

Cinema?

Inferring?

Connections?

Is there anything that needs to be clarified?

Did you have any 'I wonder questions'?



Are we ready to read on?

How far will we read?



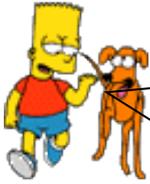
How are you going to organise your thoughts?

Will you:

- Use a graphic organiser
 - ⇒ Character
 - ⇒ Sequence of Events
 - ⇒ Connections
- Use Sketch to stretch
- Role On The Wall/ Page
- Discuss the theme/ topic
- Heart beat of the story

Does this story inspire you to do something different?





This is an **Information Report**

Do we have a **schema** for (information on) this topic?

What do you predict we will learn about here?
Can we use the sub headings or **bold** / *italic* words to help us make predictions?
What words (**technical language**) might we meet?



Do you have any questions on this topic that you would like answered?



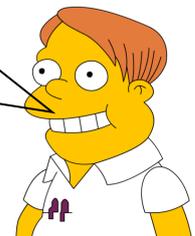
How will we find the important pieces of information?

**VIPs, Mindmap, Spidergram,
Main Idea Fish, KWL, Table, Time Line**

Where will we stop reading?
Will we read together or as a single reader?
Don't forget to code!

Clunks

Does any have a clunk?
Did you come across any technical language?
Is there a glossary to help us?
Are there any words for the interesting word wall?





Is there anything that needs to be clarified?
Did you have any 'I wonder questions'?
Did you find the answer to any of the questions
you had at the start?



Would anyone like to talk about the other
strategies they used?
What VIPs did you mark? Why?
What will we record on the **graphic organiser**?



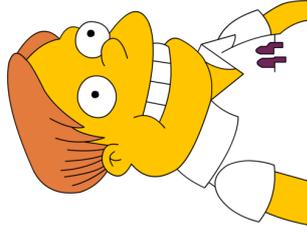
Are we ready to read on?
How far will we read?

Features Hunt

-  Title
-  Introduction
-  Subheading
-  Main Body
-  Conclusion
-  Bold words
-  Technical Language
-  Glossary
-  Captioned Diagrams / Photographs

Congratulations!

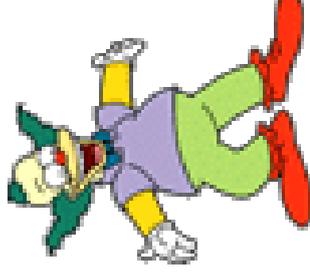
You are the
group's



DECLUNKER

Congratulations!

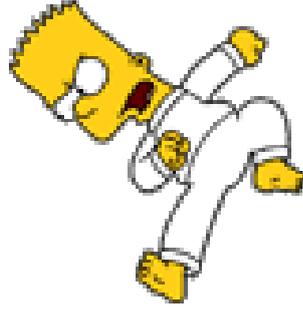
You are the group's



QUESTIONING
EXPERT

Congratulations!

You are the
group's



LEADER

Congratulations!

You are the
group's



PREDICTION
EXPERT

Interesting Words recorded by pupils during TSI



WOW!!!

These are our really interesting words

Halfheartedly



WOW!!!

These are our really interesting words

*Spy
Lathered
Incoherently*



WOW!!!

These are our really interesting words

*Imminent
Clad
robust*

Group: GMA Date: 22/11/2018

We Read: The Great Gilly Hopkins

How well did we work together?



Awesome



Good



OK



Improving

How well did we

Make predictions 😊

Talk about our cinemas 😊

Make Connections 😊

Seek clarification 😊

'Declunk' 😊

~~Infer~~

Ask I wonder questions 😊

Respond to each other 😊

The most interesting thing we discussed was

When we predicted about W.E he terrified
about Gilly.

Next time we hope to

We hope to work on our cinema and our
connections.

Self-Assessment following TSI

ip: Form 5

Date: 15/4/10

We Read: _____

How well did we work together?



Awesome



Good



OK



Improving

How well did we

Make predictions 😊

Talk about our cinemas 😊

Make Connections 😊

Seek clarification 😊

'Declunk' 😊

~~Infer~~ 😊

Ask I wonder questions 😊

Respond to each other 😊

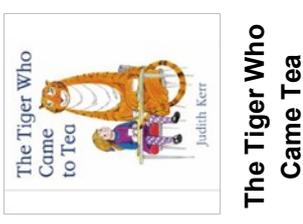
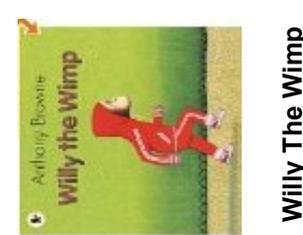
The most interesting thing we discussed was

How Willy got the cut.

Next time we hope to

find out more what Willie does in his life.

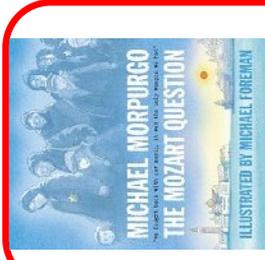
Recommended Literature For Introducing Predicting

 <p>The Tiger Who Came Tea Judith Kerr</p>	 <p>Dear Zoo Rod Campbell</p>	 <p>Willy the Wimp Anthony Browne</p>	 <p>Killer Gorilla Jeanne Willis</p>	 <p>Piper Emma Chichester Clark</p>	 <p>Gentle Giant Emma Carroll</p>
<p><i>A delightful tale of an unexpected visitor at tea-time.</i></p>	<p><i>A challenge to piece together the stranger's identity.</i></p>	<p><i>A story of a young girl resentful of her stepmother...</i></p>	<p><i>A frantic adventure as a mouse tries to escape a killer gorilla.</i></p>	<p><i>The story of a dog that has to find his place in the big bad world armed only with his mother's advice to be</i></p>	<p><i>A misunderstood giant surprises himself by becoming a</i></p>

Picture Books To Support Children's Use of Predicting

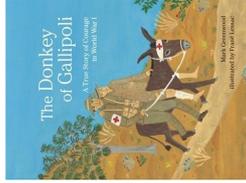
 <p>PEEPO! Janet & Allan Ahlberg</p>	 <p>Peepo By Janet Ahlberg</p>	 <p>Charlie and Tess By Martin Hall</p>	 <p>The Smallest Whale By Elisabeth Beresford</p>	 <p>The Watchmaker Who Saved Christmas By Carol Ann</p>
 <p>Percy's Friend The Owl By Debbi Glori</p>	 <p>Why Can't I Fly? By Ken Browne</p>	 <p>Moxie the Underdog By Sarah Hayes</p>	 <p>The Lamb Who Came To Dinner By Sarah Hayes</p>	 <p>Tiddler—The story telling fish By Carol Ann</p>

Recommended Literature For Introducing Predicting



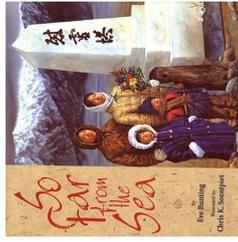
The Mozart Question
By Michael Morpurgo

A moving tale of secrets and survival bound together by the power of



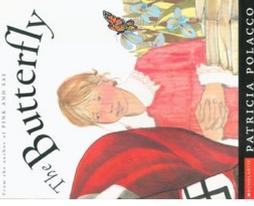
The Donkey Of Gallipoli

The true story of one man and his donkey and the twist of fate that brought two



So Far From The Sea

When Laura visits Grandfather's grave at the War Relocation Center, the Japanese American child leaves be-



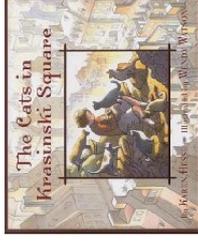
The Butterfly
Patricia Polacco

The innocence of a young girl in occupied France.



When Jessie Came Across The Sea
Amy Hest

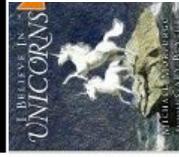
An immigrant girl adjusts to life in New York City.



The Cats in Kransinski Square

The story of those who fought back against the Nazis but with their

Picture Books To Support Children's Use of Predicting



I believe in Unicorns
By Michael Morpurgo



One Boy's War
By Lucy Huggins—



One Thousand Tracings



The Wednesday Surprise
By Eve Bunting



How To Live Forever
By Colin Thompson



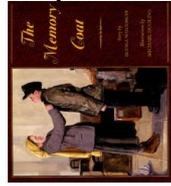
The Wolves In The Walls



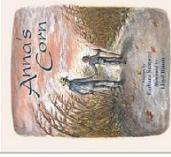
The Stranger
By Chris Van



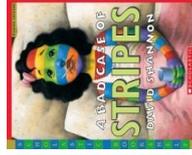
The Silver Swan
By Michael Morpurgo



The Memory Coat
By Elvira Woodruff



Anna's Corn
By Barbara



A Bad Case of the Stripes



The Tear Thief
By Carol Ann Duffy

Recommended Literature For Introducing Making Connections



The Snow Lambs

Sam can't sleep because he's worried about the sheepdog.



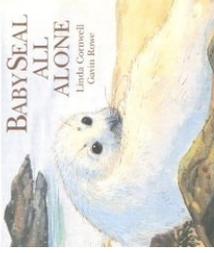
Charlie and Tess

Orphaned in a snow-storm during lambing season, a lamb is taken



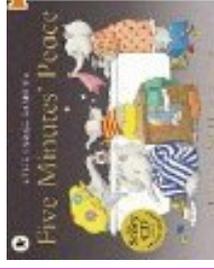
A Sound Like Someone Trying Not To Make A Sound

The story of a boy who can't sleep because he hears sounds.



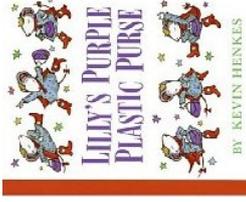
Baby Seal All Alone

The story of a small seal in a big world desperate for a friend.



Five Minute's Peace
By Jill Murphy

Mrs. Large just wants five minutes peace from her children.



Lily's Purple Plastic Purse

Lily loves school, until her teacher takes her purse to stop her play-

Picture Books To Support Children's Use of Connections



Home For Christmas



Tatty Ratty
By Helen Cooper



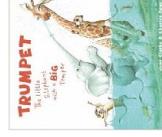
Penguin Post
By Debi Glori



The Sulky Vulture
By Sally Grindle



Seven For a Secret
By Laurence Anholt



Trumpet - The Little Elephant With a Big Temper



Can't You Sleep Little Bear



Camille & The Sunflowers



Emma's Lamb
By Kim Lewis

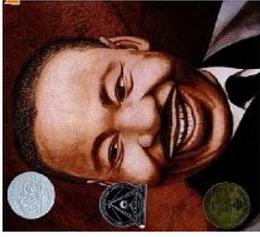


Rainbow Fish
By Marcus Pfister

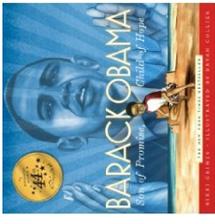


Peace At Last
By Jill Murphy

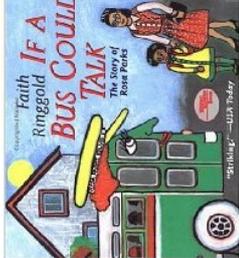
Recommended Literature For Introducing Making Connections



Martin's Big Words
Life of Martin Luther King Jr.



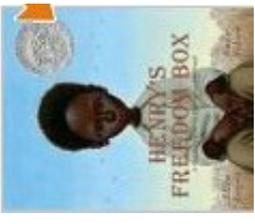
Barack Obama: Son of Promise, Child of Hope
Inspiring childhood of Barack Obama.



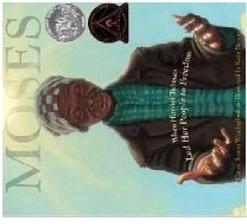
A If A Bus Could Talk
The story of Rosa Parks



Willy & Max: A Holocaust Story
The Nazis' theft of art during World War II and the present efforts to return stolen artworks to their rightful Jewish owners



Henry's Freedom Box
Henry Brown, a Slave who mailed himself to freedom



Moses
Harriet Tuban led her people to freedom (slavery issues)

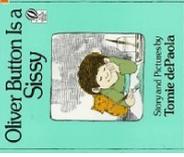
Picture Books To Support Children's Use of Connections



Thank You, Mr. Falker



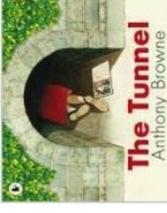
Going Home
 By Eve Bunting



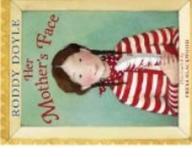
Oliver Button Is A Sissy
 By Tomie de Fries



The Memory String



The Tunnel
 By Anthony Browne



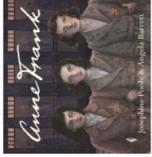
Her Mother's Face



Billy The Kid
 By Michael



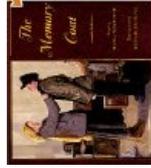
The Keeping Quilt
 By Patricia Palacco



Anne Frank
 By Josephine Poole



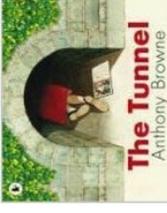
Voices In The Park



The Memory Coat
 By Eivira Woodruff



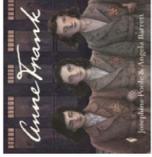
The Memory String



The Tunnel
 By Anthony



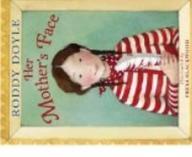
When Jessie Came Across The Sea



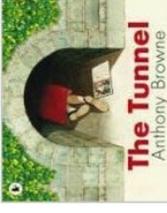
Anne Frank
 By Josephine Poole



Voices In The Park

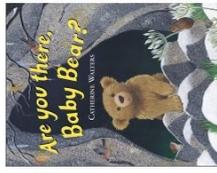


Her Mother's Face



The Tunnel
 By Anthony

Recommended Literature For Introducing Visualising



Are You There Baby Bear?

A little bear who goes out to search for his new baby brother or



The Big, Big Sea

Magical story of a memorable, moonlit walk by the sea.



The Hidden Forest

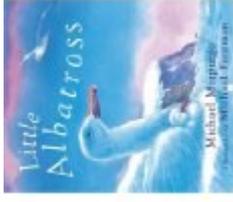
A boy who is unhappy with his fishing catch dives into the ocean to



Hurricane

David Wiesner

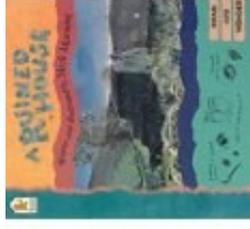
Two boys discover what adventures they could have on a fallen tree



The Little Albatross

Michael Morpurgo

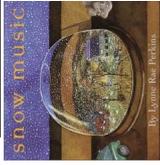
Little Albatross is left alone in the nest while his parents hunt for food.



A Ruined House

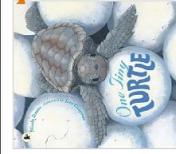
A highly descriptive tale of a house that has fallen into

Picture Books To Support Children's Use of Visualising



Snow Music

By Lynne Perkins



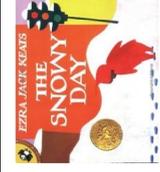
One Tiny Turtle

By Nicola Davies



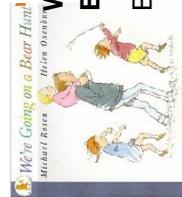
Grandfather Twilight

By Barbara Helen



The Snowy Day

By Ezra Jack Keats

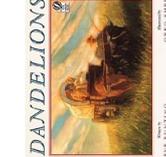


We're Going On A Bear Hunt

By Laurence Anholt

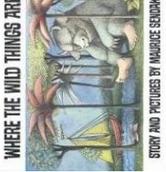


Bat Loves The Night



Dandelions

By Eve Bunting



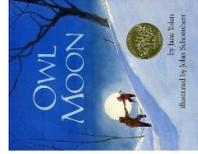
Where The Wild Things Are

By Maurice Sendak



Ratty Tatty

By Helen Cooper



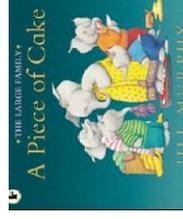
Owl Moon

By Jane Yolen



The Smartest Giant in Town

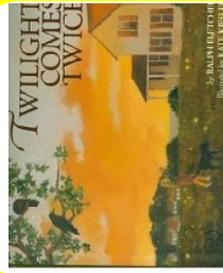
By Julia Donaldson



A Piece of Cake

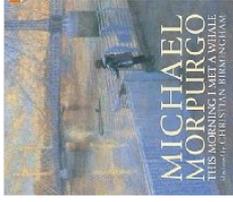
By Jill Murphy

Recommended Literature For Introducing Visualising



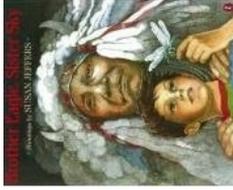
Twilight Comes Twice

Description of the world as twilight descends.



This Morning I Met A Whale

One boy's relationship with the whale that swam up the Thames



Brother Eagle, Sister Sky

A plea for an end to man's destruction of nature.



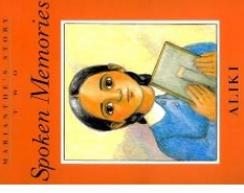
See The Ocean
Estelle Condra

Nellie enjoys her family's annual trips to the ocean.



Fireflies
Julie Brinkloe

A young boy is proud of having caught a jar full of fireflies, which seems to him like owning a piece of moon-



Painted Words & Spoken Memories

Two equally moving sides to Marianthe's story, the first as a new arrival to a foreign America, and the second of

Picture Books To Support Children's Use of Visualising



Home Place
By Crescent Drag-



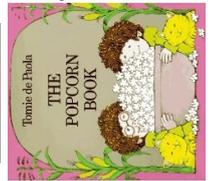
Dream Weaver
By Johnathon



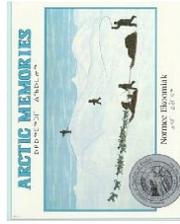
The Stories Julian Tells
By Ann Cameron



The Seashore Book
By Charlotte Zolotow



The Popcorn Book
By Tomie de Paolo



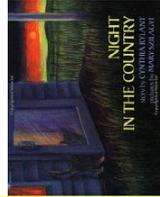
Arctic Memories
By Normee Ekoomi-



Sailboat Lost
By Leonard Everett



Through Grandpa's Eyes
By Patricia



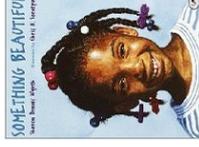
Night In The Country
By Sharon Wyeth



Lizard In The Sun
By Joanne Ryder



A Bad Case of the Stripes
By David Shannon



Something Beautiful
By Sharon Wyeth

Recommended Literature For Introducing Questioning



Zoo

A teasing examination of the relationship between man and animals, and



The Hidden House

Bruno, an old, lonely man made three dolls for company. But one day he left and the house began to



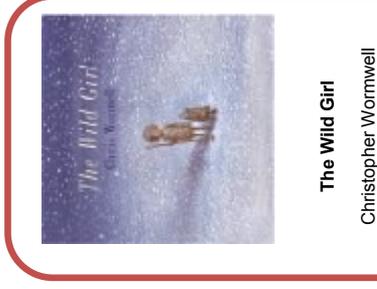
Leon and Bob

A boy is forced to make friends and is surprised at how easy



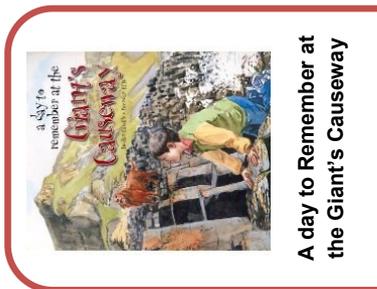
Lost and Found
Oliver Jeffers

The story of a boy who tries to return the penguin that turned up at his door to the place from whence he came



The Wild Girl
Christopher Wormell

This is the story of a little girl and her small brown dog



A Day to Remember at the Giant's Causeway

A boy and his Red Setter try and get home before the tide covers the Giant's Causeway. But is it all a dream?

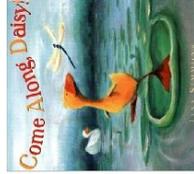
Picture Books To Support Children's Use of Questioning



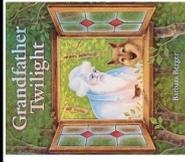
The Tunnel
By Anthony Browne



Amelia's Road
By Linda Jacobs Alt-



Come Along Daisy!
By Jane Simmons



Grandfather Twilight
By Barbara Helen Berger



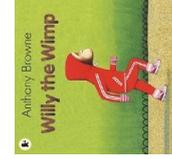
Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day
By Judith Viorst



Rainbow Fish
By Marcus Pfister



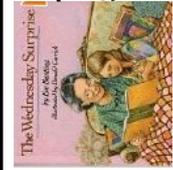
Farmer Duck
By Martin Waddell



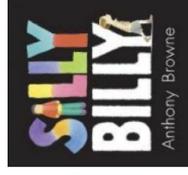
Willy The Wimp
By Anthony Browne



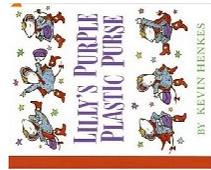
The Sleeping Giant
By Marie-Louise



The Wednesday Surprise

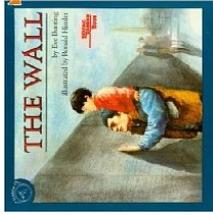


Silly Billy
By Anthony Browne

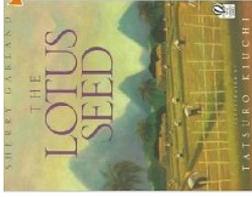


Lily's Purple Plastic Purse

Recommended Literature For Introducing Questioning



The Wall
A boy travels to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial with his father to seek out his grandfather's name.



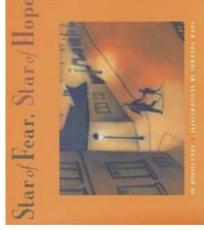
The Lotus Seed
A nameless Vietnamese narrator tells of her grandmother who, as a girl, accidentally sees the last emperor cry



The Stranger
Farmer Bailey thinks he's hit a deer while driving his truck, but in the middle of the road lies a man, an enigi-



An Angel for Solomen Singer
Cynthia Rylant
Old Solomon lives alone in a dreary hotel on N.Y.C.'s Upper West Side, longing for things he can't have



Star of Fear, Star of Hope
Jo Hoestlandt
Helen doesn't understand why her best friend must wear a yellow star



Probuditi!
Chris Van Allsburg
Calvin & Rodney have forgotten the magic word that will take their sister out of hypnosis.

Picture Books To Support Children's Use of Questioning



The Tunnel
By Anthony



The Three Questions



Train To Somewhere
By Eve Bunting



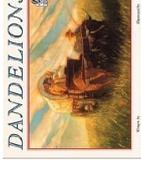
The Mozart Question



Fly Away Home
By Eve Bunting



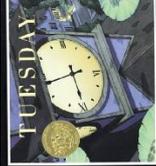
The Garden of Abdul Gasazi



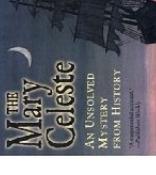
Dandelions
By Eve Bunting



Westlandia
By Paul Fleishman



Tuesday
By David Weisner



The Mary Celeste
By Jane Yolen



Grandfather's Journey



Appellemando's Dreams

The Tunnel
By Anthony

The Three Questions

Train To Somewhere
By Eve Bunting

The Mozart Question

Fly Away Home
By Eve Bunting

The Garden of Abdul Gasazi

Dandelions
By Eve Bunting

Westlandia
By Paul Fleishman

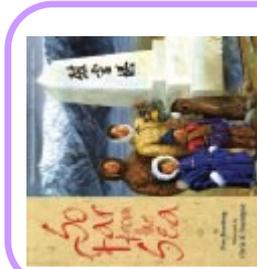
Tuesday
By David Weisner

The Mary Celeste
By Jane Yolen

Grandfather's Journey

Appellemando's Dreams

Literature For Clarifying



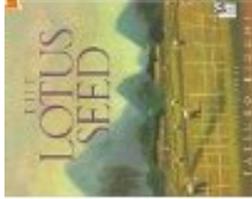
So Far From The Sea

A family revisit the site of Japanese relocation centre



The Sign Painter

Learning to distinguish between



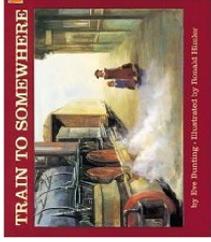
Lotus Seed

A nameless Vietnamese narrator tells of her grandmother who, as a girl, accidentally sees the last emperor cry on the day of his



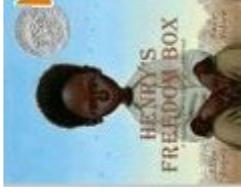
Fly Away Home
Eve Bunting

Tale of a boy and his father living in the airport



Train to Somewhere
Eve Bunting

Journey from New York orphanages into the west.



Henry's Freedom Box

The true story of Henry Brown, a slave who mailed himself to free-

Picture Books To Support Children's Use of Clarifying



Thank You Mr. Falker



The Three Questions



Under the Quilt of Night
By Deborah



The Man Who Walked Between Towers
By Mordicai



The Butterfly
By Patricia Polacco



A Bad Case Of The Stripes



Amazing Grace
By Mary Hoffman



Baseball Saved Us
By Ken Mochizuki



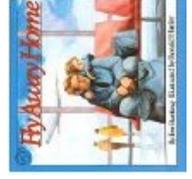
Willy and Max: A Holocaust Story



An Angel For Solomon Singer



The Stranger
By Chris Van Allsburg



Fly Away Home
By Eve Bunting

Recommended Literature For Introducing Determining Importance



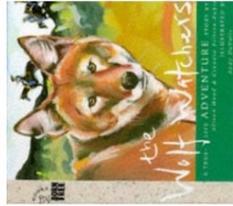
Ape

Details the five types of apes in the world.



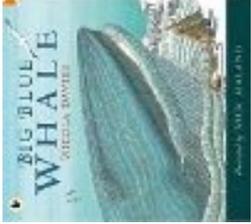
Bat Loves The Night

Combines story with information on lifecycle of bat.



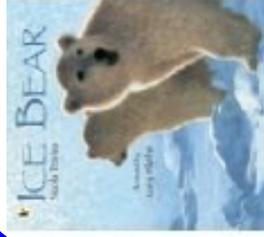
The Wolf Watchers

The Story of a pack of wolves who live in Ethiopia and a trio of scientists who try and stop the spread of



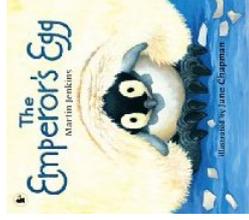
The Big Blue Whale

Information on largest mammal.



Ice Bear

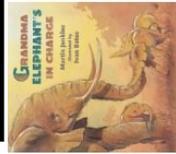
An informative book on the life of the polar bear.



The Emperor's Egg

Introduction to the life of the penguin.

Picture Books To Support Children's Determining Importance



Grandma Elephant is in Charge
By Martin Jenkins



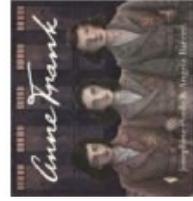
Walk With A Wolf
By Jannie Howker



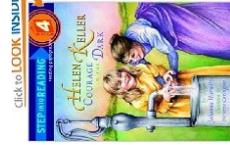
Dateline: Troy
By Paul Fleisch-



Should There Be Zoos?



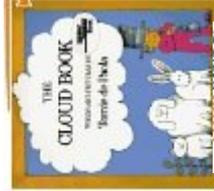
Anne Frank
By Josephine Poole



Helen Keller
By Johanna Hurwitz



Save Our Earth
By Ron Bacon



The Cloud Book
By Tomie de Paola



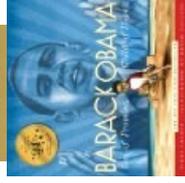
Hungry, Hungry Sharks



Exploring The Titanic

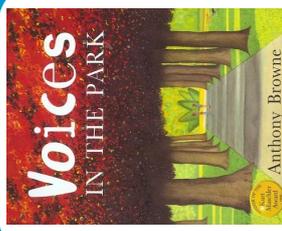


Two Bad Ants
By Chris Van



Barack Obama
By Nikki Grimes

Recommended Literature For Introducing Inference



Voices in the Park
By Anthony Browne

A visit to the park interpreted from



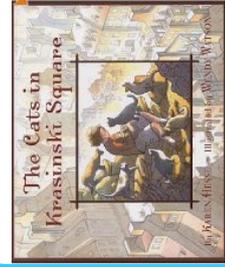
The Stranger

A challenge to piece together the stranger's identity.



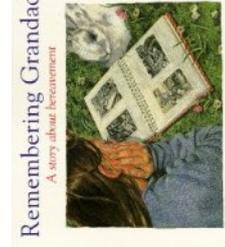
The Memory String

A story of a young girl resentful of her stepmother..



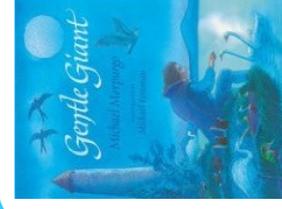
The Cats in Krainski Square
By Karen Hess

A little girl risks her life to help those still trapped behind Warsaw's



Remembering Grandad
By Sheila Isherwood

A story about bereavement.



Gentle Giant

A misunderstood giant surprises himself by becoming a local hero

Picture Books To Support Children's Use of Inference



The Tunnel
By Anthony Browne



Oliver Button Is a Sissy



Bull Run
By Paul Fleischman



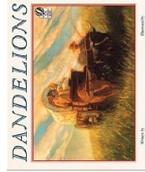
The Mozart Question



Fireflies
By Julie Brinkloe



Tar Beach
By Faith Ringgold



Dandelions
By Eve Bunting



Babushka's Doll
By Patricia Polacco



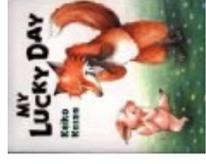
The Garden of Abdul Gasazi
By Chris Van



Her Mother's Face
By Roddy Doyle

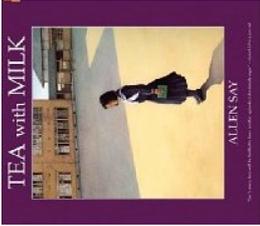


Teammates
By Peter Golenblock



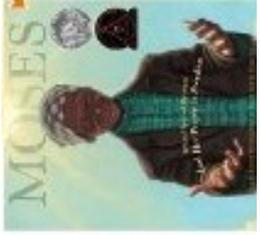
My Lucky Day
By Keiko Kasza

Recommended Literature For Introducing Synthesis



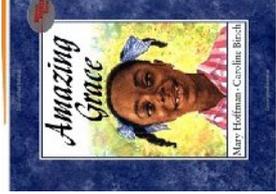
Tea With Milk

A young woman's challenging transition from America to Japan



Moses

Tubman's religious faith drives this handsome, poetic account of her escape to freedom and role in the Un-



Amazing Grace

Empowered by the strength of her imagination and the love of her mother and Nana, this dramatic, creative



An Angel for Solomon Singer

Old Solomon lives alone in a dreary hotel on N.Y.C.'s Upper West Side, longing for things he can't have



The Rag Coat

Minna, a young Appalachian girl, wants very badly to attend school, but she doesn't have a coat



Rose Blanche

Tale of a German girl who discovers the horrors of a concen-

Picture Books To Support Children's Use of Synthesis



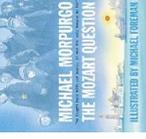
Train To Somewhere



Oliver Button Is a Sissy



Billy The Kid



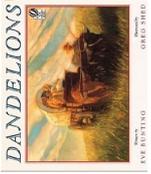
The Mozart Question



See The Ocean



Table Where Rich People Sit



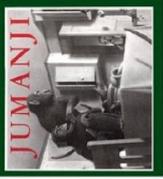
Dandelions



Star of Fear, Star of Hope



Smoky Night



Jumangi



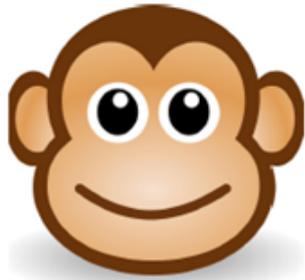
Teammates



Henry's Freedom Box

Appendix E: Resources to Support Pupils' Strategy Application

Visualisation Fan



I
hear



I
smell

My
Cinema



I
see



I
taste



I
feel

Appendix E: Resources to Support Pupils' Strategy Application

Clarification Bookmark



***I am **confused** about
an idea in a story—so
I need some***

Clarification

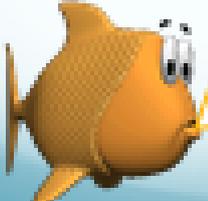
- Stop and think
- What is confusing me?
- Backtrack and look for clues
- Maybe the author explains it in the next paragraph—let's scan it!
- Can I make a connection?
- Do I need a schema?
- Does the author want me to be confused right now?
- Is this a very important idea in this story?



Appendix E: Resources to Support Pupils' Strategy Application

'Declunking' Bookmark

Lips the Fish



Get your **lips** ready.
Say the first few **sounds** of the word aloud.

Chunky Monkey



Chunk it up!
Look for a **chunk** you know.

Eagle Eye



Look at the pictures for clues.

Skippy Frog



Skip it! Skip it!
Read to the end of the sentence.
Hop back and think about the clunk.

Stretchy Snake

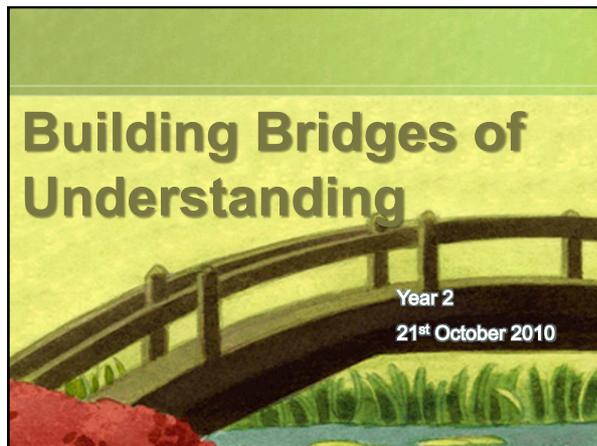


Stretch it out slowly.
Put the sounds together to figure the word out.

Trying Lion

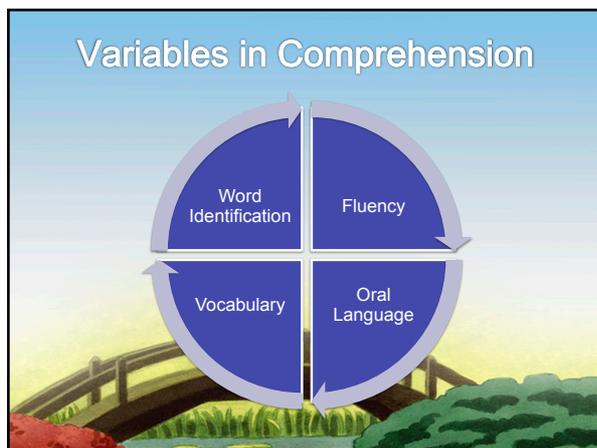


Try to read the sentence again.
Try a word that makes sense.



Overview

- What research is telling us
- Progress to date
- Feedback
- Remaining Strategies
- Transactional Strategies Instruction (TSI)
- Challenges



PATRICIA POLACCO
Thank you, Mr. Falker



Reading was just plain torture. When Sue Elyn read her page, or Tommy Bob read his page, they read so easily that Trisha would watch the top of their heads to see if something was happening to their heads that wasn't happening to hers.

The slide includes a book cover illustration for 'Thank you, Mr. Falker' by Patricia Polacco, showing a woman and a man reading together. Below the illustration is a quote from the book.

Research

- Classroom Observation (Durkin, 1978) much testing but little teaching of comprehension
- Focus on the characteristics of good readers
- Explicit teaching of a small repertoire of comprehension strategies to students has a large effect on comprehension (Anderson, 1992; Brown, Pressley, Van Meter & Schuder, 1996)



What Strategies

- Prediction
- Making Connections
- Questioning
- Visualization
- Monitoring Comprehension
- Determining Importance
- Inference
- Synthesising



How To Teach Comprehension Strategies

- Explicitly explain it to children
- Model during read alouds using think aloud
- Opportunities for children to use the strategy with **guided support**.
- At conclusion of lesson – **debriefing session**

Gradual Release of Responsibility

The diagram illustrates the 'Gradual Release of Responsibility' through three stages, each represented by a blue box with an arrow pointing to the next:

- All Teacher**: Practice & Instruction
- Teacher and Pupil**: Guided Practice
- All Pupil**: Practice and application

The pupil needs to have:

- Declarative Knowledge**: What the strategy is
- Procedural Knowledge**: How to use the strategy
- Conditional knowledge**:
 - When and where to use the strategy
 - Why the strategy should be used

Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978)

- It is not enough for children to passively observe the good reading behaviours of the teacher, they need to actively interact with good readers, in order to understand their thinking patterns.
- With the help of others, children are capable of performing tasks they would be unable to carry out on their own.

So, What Are Our Long-term Goals?

- To develop **active and purposeful readers** who are able to apply a **collection of strategies** to **construct personal interpretations of the text**, **evaluating and questioning** as they read.

Review of Year 1

Strategies

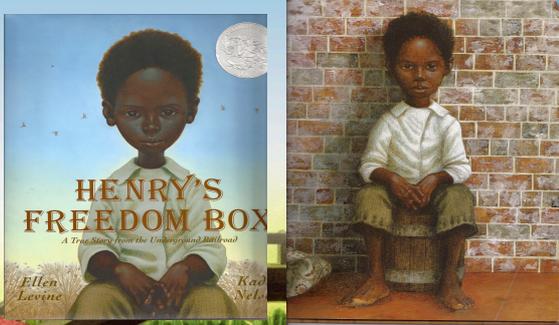
Junior Infants	Senior Infants- 6th			
Predicting	Predicting	Making Connections	Questioning	Visualisation

Achievements

- Active engagement of all pupils
- Higher order thinking of pupils
- Collaboration of staff – shaping the nature of instruction for _____
- Picture Books



Henry's Freedom Box



Why does Henry have the same expression on both the cover and the first page?

- Maybe it's because his life doesn't change. He is always doing the same thing, so he always looks the same

Why is there a sky behind Henry in the front cover but a brick wall on the first page?

- I think that the box Henry is sitting on is his Freedom Box. When he sits on it he can imagine he is free. He really is in front of the wall but in his imagination he is in an open field.
- I agree that he is dreaming of being free. Do you notice the birds that are flying in the background too. I think that the author is trying to tell us that the birds are free and Henry dreams of being like them.

I wonder why the wall has white paint on it?

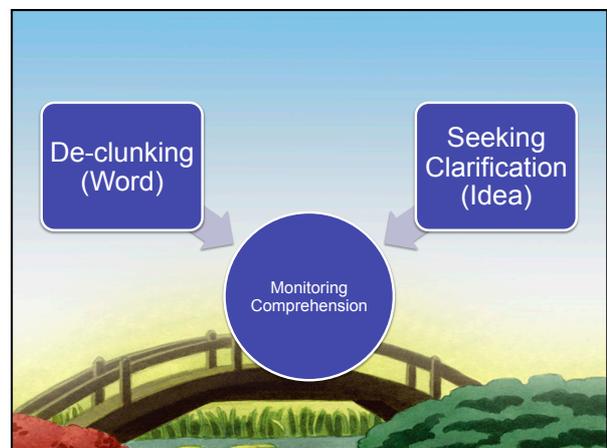
- I see the brown and black bricks. I think they represent the black people. The white paint over them is a sign that the white people rule over the black people in America at that time.

School Plan

Junior Infants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prediction • Making Connections • Visualising
Senior Infants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above • Questioning
Ranganna 1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As Above • Declunking • Clarifying

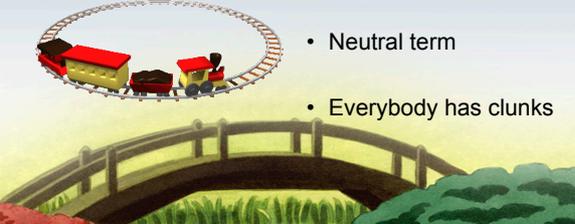
School Plan

Rang 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above • Determining Importance • TSI
Rang 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above • Inference • TSI
Ranganna 5 & 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above • Synthesising • TSI



Clicks and Clunks

- A clunk is a word that pupils find difficult to pronounce or decode.
- Neutral term
- Everybody has clunks

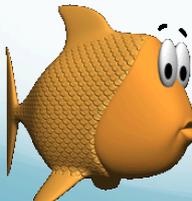


Declunking Buddies



Lips the Fish

Get your **lips** ready.
Say the first few **sounds** of the word aloud.



Eagle Eye

Look at the pictures for clues.



Stretchy Snake

Stretch it out **slowly**.
Put the sounds together to figure the word out.



Chunky Monkey

Chunk it up!
Look for a **chunk** you know.



Skippy Frog

Skip it! Skip it!

Read to the end of the sentence.

Hop back and think about the clunk.



Trying Lion

Try to read the sentence again.

Try a **word** that makes sense.



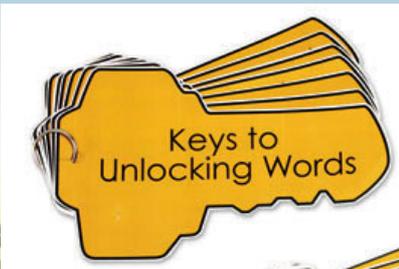
Helpful Hippo

Ask for help.



- **Slow down** - don't read too fast!!
- Do I know how to **read** the word or am I confused about its **meaning**?
- **Chunk** - it - up!
- **Peel Back** the word - do you recognise any prefixes, suffixes or root words?
- **Skip** and read the rest of the sentence - then stop and **think**!
- **Backtrack** - read the sentence before and look for **clues**.
- What word would **make sense** here?

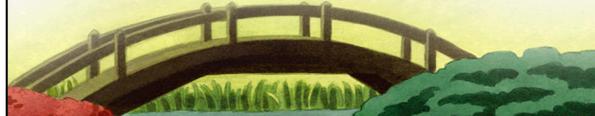
Declunking Support for Older Readers



Keys to
Unlocking Words

Activities to Promote Vocabulary Development

- Read alouds enable pupils to encounter new vocabulary in a **meaningful context**
- **Multiple encounters** with the new vocabulary is essential



Choosing a Picture Book



TRAIN TO SOMEWHERE
by Ben Hinkley - Illustrated by Arnold Hinkley

- The text should contain ideas which will interest and challenge the pupils to think deeply about the text.
- The text should contain a rich and interesting vocabulary.



So Far from the Sea
by Shigeo Fukuda - Illustrated by Shigeo Fukuda



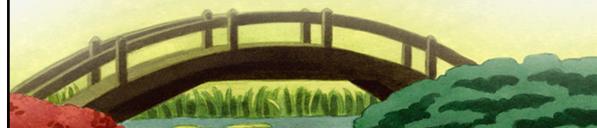
Determining Importance

- Separating the essential from the non-essential information
- Identifying key pieces of information or facts
- Sorting this information into appropriate categories
- Ordering facts in a logical way



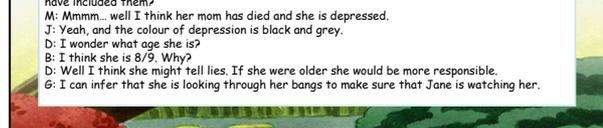
Inference

- Blending information from the text with the reader's schema to create opinions that are not explicitly stated in the text.
- Reading between the lines.
- Working as a detective to use the clues in the text to discover the hidden meaning.
- Needs to be distinguished from prediction.



Transcript

M: I can infer that Laura is talking out loud to the cat because she wants Jane to hear her.
 N: Yeah. If she didn't have the cat she wouldn't be able to show the memory string to her stepmom.
 K: I wonder why she's wearing no shoes - Maybe the stepmom is very mean.
 B: But she was kind at the start?
 K: That was only in front of her dad.
 B: But wouldn't the Dad find out and be very cross?
 K: It's like a connection to films with the evil stepmother.
 Teacher: That's a great connection K. I wonder is it like that in real life or is that only in fairytales?
 K: Oh yes, it's like that. Stepmons act happily in front if Dad but when they're gone they go back to shouting at her.
 G: But look Jane and the Dad are working hard and Laura is doing no work.
 K: Maybe Jane's right so.
 G: Yeah, it's just like your mom asking to to help.
 M: Do you notice that there are shadows in all of the pictures.
 Teacher: That's really well spotted M. I hadn't noticed that. Why do you think the illustrator might have included them?
 M: Mmmm... well I think her mom has died and she is depressed.
 J: Yeah, and the colour of depression is black and grey.
 D: I wonder what age she is?
 B: I think she is 8/9. Why?
 D: Well I think she might tell lies. If she were older she would be more responsible.
 G: I can infer that she is looking through her bangs to make sure that Jane is watching her.



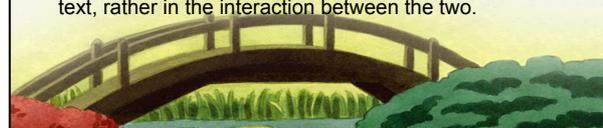
- Synthesising is like piecing together all the pieces of a jigsaw. On their own each piece will only give a little insight. You need to use all the pieces/strategies together to fully understand the story.
- We need to stop and think - to give our brains time to sort all the information we have gathered by using our strategies.
- Synthesis is the glue that holds all the strategies together.




Transactional Strategies Instruction (TSI)

(Pressley et al., 1992)

- Peer led collaborative groups constructing personal understandings of the text while simultaneously modelling strategy use for each other.
- Mixed ability grouping
- 4/5 readers
- The meaning does not lie solely with the reader or the text, rather in the interaction between the two.

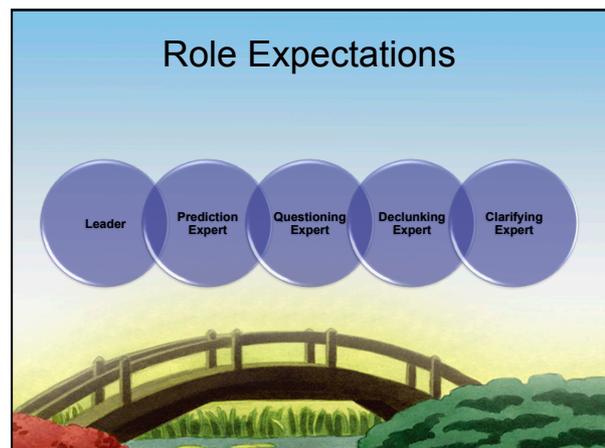


Appendix F: Sample Workshop Presentation



- ## Group Expectations
- All members are to take an **active** role
 - Language that may be used to include shy/reliuctant members of the group
 - The importance of **body language** and tone of voice
 - How to express your views in a **positive/constructive** manner
 - **NEVER** using the phrase 'That's wrong/ silly etc.'
 - **Compromise!!!** – My answer may not always be selected from the group
 - **Turn taking** – not dominating the group
 - Supporting each other
 - Making eye contact when speaking to each other
 - Maintaining only one conversation in the group
 - Remaining task focus
 - How to refocus members of the group
 - When to seek help/guidance from the teacher

- ## Introducing TSI
- Explain why we are doing this – sharing the learning intention
 - Review the success we have achieved in working together collaboratively
 - Be clear and explicit about the role and responsibilities of each group member.



Congratulations! You are the group's **DECLUNKER**

Congratulations! You are the group's **QUESTIONING EXPERT**

Congratulations! You are the group's **LEADER**

Congratulations! You are the group's **PREDICTION EXPERT**

P Prediction
C Clarification Needed
I Inferring
? I Wonder
Connection
Mind Portrait
Cinema
Soundtrack
Clunk

- ## Children With Special Educational Needs
- Children with SEN can assume a full and valued role as a member of the TSI group.
 - rewarding experience
 - Affirming experience
 - Self-esteem
 - The learning support or resource teacher can play an important role by preparing in advance for the next role they will assume.

Cue Card

This is a Fictional Story.
Do we need to do a Previously On?

Fiction Prediction Time!!!
I'll make a prediction first...
Does anyone else have a prediction?

Where will we stop reading?
Will we read together, silently or as a single reader?
Don't forget to read!

Clubs
Does any have a club?
Are there any words for the interesting word used?

Would anyone like to talk about the strategies they used?
Clubs? Sound-track? Mind Partners?
Inferring? Connections?

Is there anything that needs to be clarified?
Did you have any 2 wonder questions?

Are we ready to read?
How far will we read?

How are you going to organise your thoughts?
Will you:
• Use a graphic organiser
• Character
• Sequence of Events
• Connections
• Use Sketch to stretch
• Rule On The Wall/ Page
• Discuss the theme/ topic
• Hear? best of the story

Does this story inspire you to do something different?

Resources



WOW!!!
These are our really interesting words

Group: _____ Date: _____
We Read: _____
How well did we work together?

Awesome	Good	OK	Improving

How well did we ...

Make predictions Talk about our opinions
Make connections Seek clarification
Discuss Infer
Ask 2 wonder questions Respond to each other

The most interesting thing we discussed was

Next time we hope to

Teacher Involvement

- Initial fortnight of implementation – most involvement
- Support of LST, RTT
- Spend one entire session with each group modelling & scaffolding
- Release responsibility
- Supporting role

Common Challenges

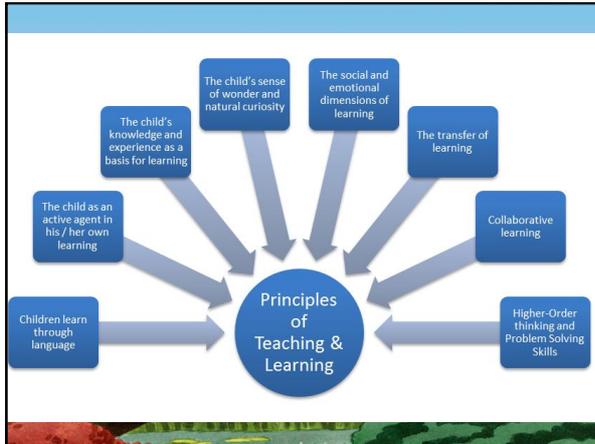
- Time to read/model
- Time management in reading session
- Books/ Resources
- Quieter pupils

TSI Footage

Common Challenges

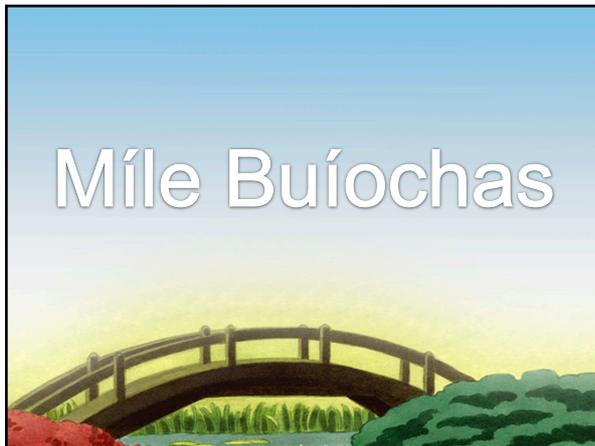
- “Tangential” strategies
 - “ I can make a connection. Red is my favourite colour.”
 - Point out that connections (strategies) help us understand the story (text) better.
 - Can you link the strategy better for him/her?
 - Model better use of the strategy

Appendix F: Sample Workshop Presentation



Final Note

- “The key to internalization – owning active comprehension – is several years of practicing these strategies every day. Strong teacher lead during the first year, with students encouraged more and more to use overtly and actively in partner reads and as they read in small groups on their own.” (Michael Pressley)



Appendix G: Observation of Comprehension Strategy Instruction			
Class:		Strategy	
Text		CPM	
Appropriateness of Text		Language used	
<i>The teacher...</i>	✓	Notes	
Explicitly explains the strategy			
Demonstrates how to use the strategy			
Explains how to use the strategy			
Explains when to use the strategy			
Explains why to use the strategy			
Guides the pupils to use the strategy			
Gives pupils appropriate support in use of strategy			
Provides corrective feedback			
Has children explain the strategy			
<i>The pupils...</i>	✓	Notes	
Are engaged and active			
Use the CPM			
Use the strategy			
Use other strategies			
Use higher order thinking skills			
Other observations			

Rubric For Engagement:

- 1: Only a few children are on task and attending to story. There are many distractions, including noise and movement. Instruction is severely undermined
- 2: About half the children are on task and attending to story, Instruction is undermined.
- 3: Most of the children are on task and attending to story. Instruction, in general is provided most of the time.
4. Almost all children are on task and attending to story, Instruction is being provided most of the time.

Appendix H: Provisional Outline For Year Two

Term	Week	Date	Class	Strategy	Text
Term 1	1	Wednesday – 1:30 pm 22-9-2010	5 th Class	Prediction	The Silver Swan
	1	Wednesday 11:50 am 22-9-2010	1 st Class	Prediction	The Hair of Zoe Fleefernbacher Goes To School
	2	Wednesday 1:30 29-09- 2010	3 rd class	Prediction	The Tear Thief
	2	Wednesday 29-09- 2010 11:50 am	Senio r Infant s	Review	
	3	Wednesday 6-10-2010 11:50 am	5 th Class	Making Connections	The Memory Coat
	4	Wednesday 13-10- 2010 1:30 pm	3 rd Class	Making Connections	Oliver Button is a Sissy
	4	Wednesday 13-10- 2010 11:50 am	1 st Class	Making Connections	Miss Nelson Is Missing
	5	Wednesday 20-10- 2010 1:30 pm	5 th Class	Questioning	The Garden of Abdul Gasazi
	6	Wednesday 3-11-2010 1:30 pm	3 rd Class	Questioning	Gorilla
	7	Monday 8-11-2010 12:30 pm	5 th Class	TSI Observation	
	7	Wednesday 10-11- 2010 1:30 pm	2 nd Class	Review	
	7	Wednesday 10-11- 2010 11:50 am	1 st Class	Questioning	Gonzalo Grabs The Good Life
	8	Wednesday 17-11-	4 th Class	Clarification	Star of Fear, Star of Hope

		2010 1:30 pm			
	8	Thursday 18-11- 2010 12:30 pm	4 th Class	TSI Observation	
	9	Wednesday 24-11- 2010 1:30 pm	5 th Class	Visualising	Twilight Comes Twice
	9	Wednesday 24-11- 2010 11:50 am	1 st Class	Visualising	The Big Big Sea
	10	Wednesday 1-12-2010 1:30 pm	3 rd Class	Visualising	Moonshadow's Journey
	11	Wednesday 8-12-2010 1:30 pm	4 th Class	Determining Importance	Anne Frank
	11	Wednesday 8-12-2010 11:50 am	Junior Infant s	Making Connections	Peace At Last
	12	Wednesday 15-12- 2010 1:30 pm	5 th Class	Clarification	The Memory String
Term 2	2	Wednesday 19-01- 2011 1:30 pm	5 th Class	TSI	
	3	Wednesday 26-01- 2011 1:30 pm	5 th Class	TSI	
	4	Wednesday 02-02- 2011 1:30 pm	4 th Class	Inference	Voices In The Park
	5	Wednesday 09-02- 2011 1:30 pm	3 rd Class	Clarification	Her Mother's Face
	5	Thursday 10-02- 2011 12:30 pm	3 rd Class	TSI Observation	
	6	Wednesday 16-02-	Senio r	Review	

		2011 11:50 am	Infants			
6	Wednesday 16-02- 2011 1:30 pm	5 th Class	Determining Importance	Barack Obama		
7	Wednesday 2-03-2011 11:50 am	1 st Class	Clarification	The Little Dreamer		C i l l B a r r a
7	Wednesday 2-03-2011 1:30 pm	4 th Class	TSI			
8	Wednesday 09-03- 2011 11:50 am	Junior Infants	Visualising	We're Going On A Bear Hunt		
8	Wednesday 09-03- 2011 1:30 pm	4 th Class	TSI			
9	Wednesday 16-03- 2011 1:30 pm	3 rd Class	Determining Importance	Big Blue Whale		
10	Wednesday 23-03- 2011 1:30 pm	5 th Class	Inference	The Tunnel		
11	Wednesday 30-03- 2011 11:50 am	2 nd Class	Review & TSI Observation			
11	Wednesday 30-03- 2011 1:30 pm	3 rd Class	TSI			
12	Wednesday 06-04- 2011 1:30 pm	3 rd Class	TSI			
13	Wednesday	3 rd	TSI			

		13-04-2011 1:30 pm	Class			
Term 3	1	Wednesday 04-05-2011 1:30 pm	5 th Class	Synthesis	14 Cows For America	

Revised Strategy Timetable

Date	Class	Strategy
16 th February	Fifth Class	TSI
2 nd March	Fourth Class	Determining Importance
9 th March	Fifth Class	Inference
16 th March	Third Class	TSI Observation
16 th March	Fourth Class (Rm 17)	TSI
23 rd March	First Class	Review
23 rd March	Fourth Class	Inference
24 th March	Second Class	TSI Observation
30 th March	Second Class	Review
30 th March	Fifth Class	Determining Importance
6 th April	Third Class	TSI
6 th April	Junior Infants	Visualisation
13 th April	Fifth & Sixth Class	Synthesis
4 th May	Third Class	Determining Importance

Appendix I: Information on CSI for Parents

Tips For Helping Your Child Read For Meaning

Dear Parents,

Reading for understanding is an essential life skill, especially in this information age. It involves much more than just being able to read words quickly and accurately. In the coming years your child will need to understand and evaluate information from many sources such as novels, textbooks, websites etc. It is vital that they can personally interpret and recall this information.

This year we will learn comprehension strategies that will help your child focus on the meaning of a text and also how to determine its main points or ideas. The children are already enjoying making predictions, connections and asking questions about the stories we are reading in school and I can see immediate improvements in their motivation and engagement.

We have introduced four strategies so far. In class, the pupils use hand signals to show which strategy they are using.



Prediction

- Using the clues in the text and other information we have to guess what will happen next.
- We make predictions before during and after reading.
- It doesn't have to be right.



Making Connections

- Making connections between information we have and the text helps us to understand and recall the story better.



Questioning

- Children will be more active and engaged in their reading if they have opportunities to ask and discuss their own questions about the story rather than searching for answers to the teacher's questions.

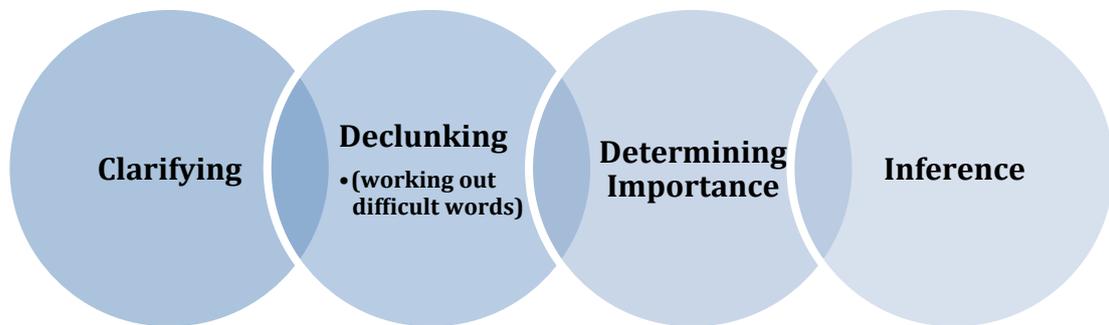


Visualisation

- Good readers create a picture of the story in their heads when they read.
- The signal for visualisation is the film signal used in Charades.

(The sign for a film in Charades)

Throughout the year I will also teach:



I will provide more information on each of these as I introduce them to the children.

As you can see there is a change in emphasis here from providing right/wrong answers to being able to explore a text and justify your opinions. This is an essential life skill and one which all children need support acquiring.

How can you help?

- Talk to your child about the strategies that he/she is learning in school.
- Listen to your child read and share your predictions, connections and the questions you have about the story. This will make reading an enjoyable experience for your child while also reinforcing the reading strategies.
- These strategies are not confined to reading – making predictions, connections, visualising and asking genuine questions can be used in many contexts throughout the day.

I would be delighted to discuss this further with you if you are interested and to show you the vibrant and exciting books we have purchased to share with the children.

Many thanks for your continued support,

Treasa Bowe

Appendix J: Questionnaires

Principal Questionnaire

In what way has this project been of benefit to the teaching of comprehension in the school?

**BUILDING BRIDGES
OF UNDERSTANDING**



Gairloch School



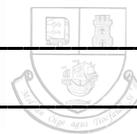
Greenmount N.S.
1854 - 2004

What were your greatest challenges in the implementation of the project within the school?



What has surprised you most about this approach to comprehension instruction?

What is your view regarding the approach to the dissemination of the project within the school (i.e. using an in-house expert)?



In your view were the teachers happy with the implementation of the project and will you as a staff embrace this whole school approach to the teaching of comprehension in the future?

Will new teachers receive induction in this approach?

To what extent have your expectations of the project been realised.

Please outline any suggestions which might benefit the implementation of this approach in the future?

Pre- Teaching Questionnaire

1. How would you define comprehension?

2. What, in your opinion, are the key elements in effective comprehension instruction?

3. Approximately, how much time do you devote to explicit comprehension instruction each week? _____

4. What resources did you use in teaching comprehension last year?

5. What is your greatest challenge in teaching comprehension?

6. In your opinion, what areas of comprehension do children find most difficult?

7. What are your expectations for this project?

8. Indicate your immediate priorities in terms of support as you begin this project.

9. Any other relevant information:

Teacher Questionnaire 2: June 2010

Number of years teaching: _____

Gender: _____

Class : _____

Tick the strategies taught this year:

Prediction

Determining Importance

Visualisation

Inference

Making Connections

Synthesising

Questioning

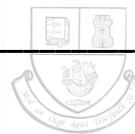
TSI

Clarifying

Briefly outline the value of the in-school support for the dissemination of the project (teacher modelling, picture books, manuals etc.).

How has this approach impacted on your view of effective comprehension instruction?

Outline the specific benefits of this approach for the children.



What has surprised you most about this approach to comprehension instruction?

What were the three most important things you learned from applying this approach?

1.

2.

3.

Please identify the greatest challenges you encountered and how these were resolved during the course of the year.

What advice would you give to a friend about to embark on this approach?

Do you think the approach impacted positively on children's reading comprehension scores this year?

To what extent have your expectations of the project been realised?

6. How do you feel **previous** professional development:
- (a) developed your **knowledge** of comprehension instruction
- Very Good Good Average Poor Very Poor
-
- (b) informed your **classroom practice**
- Very Good Good Average Poor Very Poor
-
- (c) **supported** your implementation of the curriculum
- Very Good Good Average Poor Very Poor
-
7. Have you observed a **cuiditheoir** model an **English** lesson? **Yes** **No**

BUILDING BRIDGES OF UNDERSTANDING

8. How did you feel when we first started the project (e.g. positive, negative, excited, confused, overwhelmed, interested)

9. Having engaged with the programme for a year, how do you now feel about it?

10. What factors enabled you to assimilate this approach to comprehension into your practice?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

11. At what stage did you notice the emergence of higher-order thinking skills among the children? _____

12. How would you compare the ***professional development approach/in-service training*** adopted by Building Bridges and previous professional development experiences?

13. What elements made it so?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

14. What are your objectives for this school year in terms of comprehension instruction?

15. What support do you require to do so?

16. Any further suggestions regarding the implementation of Building Bridges?

Teacher Questionnaire 4: June 2011

Class: _____ Gender: _____ Number of years teaching: _____

Section 1: Building Bridges of Understanding: Implications for Teachers

Tick the strategies taught this year:

- | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Prediction | <input type="checkbox"/> | Clarifying | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Visualisation | <input type="checkbox"/> | Determining Importance | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Making Connections | <input type="checkbox"/> | Inference | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Questioning | <input type="checkbox"/> | Synthesising | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Declunking | <input type="checkbox"/> | TSI | <input type="checkbox"/> |

1. What has surprised you most about this approach to comprehension instruction?

2. What do you consider to be the most important elements of comprehension instruction?

3. How has your classroom practice changed over the past two years?

4. Please identify the greatest challenges you encountered and how these were resolved during the course of the project.

5. How useful did you find the modelling of these strategies?

6. How effective did you think it was to pace the teaching of the strategies across the school year?

7. To what extent did the children apply the strategies in other curricular areas?

8. Outline the challenges encountered implementing TSI (if applicable).

9. What observations did you make during the modelling session of TSI?

10. What would you suggest to help in the future development of TSI in classrooms?

11. Will you continue to use this approach to comprehension strategy instruction next year?

Instructions: Please tick (✓) only one response. If you feel the statement is not applicable, leave it blank.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My understanding of comprehension was enhanced.					
I found the overall experience to be overwhelming.					
Opportunities to discuss and learn from colleagues were provided.					
The material was immediately useful.					
I found the programme to be interesting.					
My questions and concerns were addressed.					
The ideas and strategies were useful in improving student learning.					

Section 2: Building Bridges of Understanding: Implications for Children

1. How did the children find this approach to comprehension instruction?

2. Outline the specific benefits of this approach for the children.

3. Do you think the approach impacted positively on children's reading comprehension scores this year?

Section 3: Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

1. What was the most valuable resource available to you for the dissemination of the project (teacher modelling, manual, DVDs, articles, picture books, support of other teachers etc.)?

2. What were the best aspects about the approach to Continuing Professional Development?

3. What could be done to further improve this approach?

Please rank the following characteristics of the CPD you received in order of importance (1 = most important, 8 = least important)

	Rank
Peer group discussions	
Building Bridges Manual	
CPD based in school	
Provision of DVDs	
CPD took place over an extended period of time (2 years)	
Facilitator was a member of the school staff	
Provision of resources such as picture books, book marks etc.	
Observation of modelled lessons	

Would you recommend this approach to Continuing Professional Development to others?

Any other observations:

**Many thanks for the time taken to complete this questionnaire.
It is very much appreciated.**



Reader Questionnaire (Pre)

Class Level: _____

Pupil Number: _____

A good reader is _____

When I meet a word I don't understand I can _____

3. When I meet an idea in the story that confuses me, I can _____

I think I am a _____ reader because I _____

I _____ listening to the teacher reading stories because _____

What happens in your head when you read? _____

Do you enjoy reading by yourself? _____

Name your five favourite books: _____

Name your favourite author: _____