

# Implementing strategies during literacy to aid the improvement of learners' comprehension skills

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## Introduction

This action inquiry project was instigated by the researcher because developing learners comprehension skills was identified as a 'professional itch' – an area of her practice requiring research. In her varied employment settings, a common thread has been that reading capability does not always match the level of comprehension. Learners often read fluently and accurately but when questioned to determine understanding they respond at a lower level. A commonly used description for this is learners 'barking at print' (Samuels, 2000). Additionally noted were difficulties in understanding non-literal meanings of the text; learners find it particularly difficult to make inferences from what they have read.

## Method

Several steps were completed in order to gather information for this inquiry project.

Firstly a group of learners were targeted, these were identified using reading scores from school data.

Learners were then observed by the researcher and focus issues surrounding comprehension were identified

Reading and research was then undertaken by the researcher to identify possible strategies to aid comprehension. The SQ3R method was selected, developed by Robinson, 1946.

Next an intervention was planned (over a four week period) using the strategy which the researcher adapted to suit the needs of the learners involved.

Methods of data collection were:

- pupil voice activities (focus group interviews, questionnaires),
- observing learners (and making field notes),
- analysing learners' work
- reflecting on personal journal entries (following observations and discussions with colleagues).

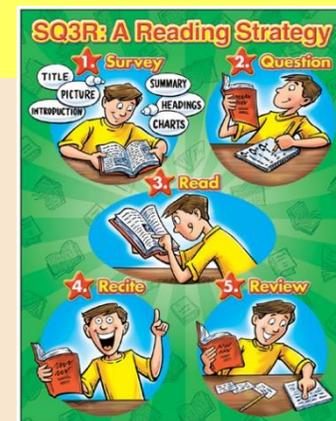
Finally data was analysed and findings evaluated.

"Making mindmaps helps me to like...er...see the answers to the questions better. I feel like I can...like...look for the information now because I know that I can (pause) ermmm put it somewhere...and then, like (pause) go back to it later" (Sam, 2015)

## Results

Two key themes emerged from the intervention, these were:

1. Learners required and benefitted from scaffolding provided by the SQ3R framework.
  - Increased motivation to complete comprehension tasks
  - Improvements in quality of comprehension work
2. Learners showed positive changes in reading behaviour and increased engagement with reading as a result of SQ3R
  - Keen to learn
  - Increased independence
  - Learners showed a more positive attitude to reading



## Conclusion

Utilising SQ3R worked as a strategy to aid learners' comprehension skills. This result was evidenced by learners' improved quality of work.. The intervention had a significant impact on learners' attitudes to reading and reading behaviour which was an unexpected positive outcome. The longer term impact of SQ3R requires further follow up study, e.g. implementing the strategy in different subject areas , perhaps Science or RE.

Findings from the inquiry have been shared with colleagues via a staff meeting led by the researcher. Modelling of its use has also been shared; staff have been enthusiastic about implementing SQ3R. The researcher intends to monitor progress over the next term.

## References

- ROBINSON, F.P. (1946) *Effective Study*. San Francisco: Harper and Brothers
- SAMUELS, S. (2000) *Application of basic research in reading*. London: Sage.