Reading Comprehension Strategies in Afghanistan

Teaching reading skills in primary schools of Badakhshan province

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ABSTRACT

Education is considered a basic human right. It plays an important role in socio-economic development of the human society. Reading is an essential life skill; children need reading as a foundation in order to have a successful life inside and out of school. Reading comprehension means to understand what you are reading.

The aim of this study was to explore teachers’ views about teaching reading comprehension and what they do to improve reading comprehension of students in rural and urban schools of the north eastern Badakhshan province. The data for this quantitative study was collected through questionnaire and observation.

The main findings of this study were that all teachers thought it is important to teach reading comprehension. The teachers used various strategies to improve students reading comprehension. The findings confirmed most of the results from the former research about the topic.
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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ABBREVIATIONS

MoE Ministry of Education
WIF Word Identification Fluency
PBSM Phonic-based sentence method
NAGB National Assessment Governing Board
DM Decoding Method
AREU Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
INTRODUCTION

Background
Education is a basic need and a human right. It plays an important role in the socio-economic development of each country (Unterhalter, 2009). As Saha (2011), stated that at the individual level education makes a person more productive as a member of labour force. Education can either be formal or non-formal. Non-formal education starts from home, where children start learning things from the people around. It is a well-known proverb that parents are the first teachers so children learn from their parents, siblings, society etc. However formal education is about learning and teaching in an organized institution like schools that have a well-systemized education and curriculum, it allows improving cognitive skills and certain personal empowerment (ibid.), but to have a greater education it is important to have effective reading practice. “Reading is defined as a basic life skill” (Akindele, 2012, p.1). To be successful in school and throughout life children need reading as a foundation. Having the ability to read properly can open doors for opportunities in life.

Reading engages two connected and fundamental processes called: comprehension and decoding (Mansory, 2012). The ability that individuals can figure out the pronunciation of a written word and define its meaning is decoding, while reading comprehension is understanding what you are reading. Reading comprehension is not only to practice, teach and learn but it is also a complex cognitive process that includes several processes like word recognition, fluency etc. (ibid).

Apart from other abilities, which are mentioned above, comprehension has two other connected abilities, which are extracting meaning from a text and constructing meaning. Extracting meaning from a text is: once the reading is done, the reader’s job is to extract what the author meant and when he or she extracts the meaning then the text can easily be understood and after the meaning is extracted and understood, it can lead the reader to construct it (ibid).

Reading comprehension is rarely taught in schools of Afghanistan and the curriculum framework provides a general overview of it, where it only says that, in primary school at first, students grow familiar with elements of basic education (reading, writing, speaking, listening, numeracy) with the basics of religious education and after that students will face new challenges, develop appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes (MoE, 2003). There is nothing such how to teach reading comprehension, it is more like decoding where the students learn how to pronounce a written word and define the meaning of it, but they do not understand what it really means because there is no particular subject where they teach students reading comprehension and students understand what they are reading.

This research is to establish and explore teachers’ views and practices about teaching reading comprehensions in Badakhshan province. Badakhshan is one of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan, located in the northeastern part of the country, sharing border with Pakistan, Tajikistan and China. This province is located 470- kilometres far from Kabul. Number of people living in Badakhshan is approximately one million. The ethnic groups living in Badakhshan includes Tajiks (Majority), Uzbeks, Pashtuns, Hazaras, Qirghiz and Baluch. Badakhshan boasts one of the highest rates of literacy in Afghanistan, as high as 85%, and more than 500,000 girls are enrolled in schools (AREU & World bank, 2004). Currently there are 665 schools in Badakhshan and 135 of them are primary schools with a total of around 13,600 teachers, and about 6000 of them are female teachers1. Main languages in Badakhshan are Dari, Uzbeki, Pashtu, Kyrgyz, Shughni, Munji, Ishkashimi, Wakhi but Dari is the 1st and

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1 Education department of Badakhshan (2014)
school language. Schools subjects are taught in Dari language and apart from other subjects Dari is taught as a subject too.

**Problem Area**
The world conference in Dakar 2000 had set a goal for the world to reach quality education for all the children in the world by 2015 (Mansory, 2000), but for Afghanistan it was until 2020 because Afghanistan had been in a state of war for almost three decades and the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan (MoE) has made endless efforts to improve the quality of education across the country and provide quality education to all the children (Ministry of Education, 2010). MoE developed a modern and standardized curriculum for a better education quality, they also provide pedagogical training to teachers (ibid), but one of the main challenges in the Afghan education system is that many students at different education levels (primary, secondary, high) are not able to achieve the competencies identified for a specific level. A great number of primary school graduates cannot do basic reading and writing which is a compulsory requirement for passing to the next educational level, teachers do not have adequate knowledge of the reading competencies and how they are taught.

In addition, the curriculum framework provides only a general overview of reading competencies and specifying requirements for teaching them.

There is no specific subject that particularly focuses on improving reading comprehension in primary level, students learn reading and writing through their mother tongue and they have it in schools as a subject.

**Aim**
The aim of this research is to explore views and practices of teachers about reading comprehension and how a teacher can help primary level students (grade 4-6) improve their reading comprehension.

**Research Questions**
1. What are teachers’ perspectives about teaching reading comprehension?
2. What are teachers doing in the classroom to improve reading comprehension?

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2 Afghanistan has two national languages, Dari and Pashtu. In Badakhshan, Dari is the native language of students and the school subjects are taught in Dari.
LITERATURE REVIEW

The focus of this study is on the literature related to reading comprehension and its strategies.

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension has been defined as the “process that excerpts and, at the same time, creates meaning by having the student interact and be involved with written language” (Shanahan et al., 2010 quoted in Watson et al., 2012, p. 79). Reading comprehension implicates many processes like word recognition, fluency, and two connected abilities, which is extracting meaning from a text and constructing that meaning (ibid). Here the reader extracts meaning from a text that he or she is reading and after understanding he or she will try to construct a meaning out of that text.

When students are reading a text they are actively involved in learning process (Bialostok, 2012). Students are not only required to memorize the text and understand the meaning of that text but they should correspondingly construct the meaning out of that text. This makes students think deeper while reading a text, which is a common way. In order to become a good reader, most of the teachers advice and instruct students to read a lot. Reading helps students increase their background knowledge, vocabulary, fluency etc. (Bialostok, 2012).

Teachers should motivate students to read carefully and not read only for taking tests or succeeding in exams (Ortlieb, 2013). One of the most important bases of reading comprehension is vocabulary (Alderson, 2000; Daneman, 1991; Laufer & Sim, 1985 cited in Jeon & Yamashita, 2014). In the process of literacy development there is a complex relationship between reading comprehension and vocabulary, having vocabulary knowledge enables the reader to comprehend the text easily and reading more will help readers develop their vocabulary (Grabe, 2009; Koda, 2005; Stanovich, 2000 cited in Jeon & Yamashita, 2014). For a reader it is impossible to read a text, if he or she has no knowledge of the words found in the text (Jeon & Yamashita, 2014).

As Watson et al., (2012) stated that having knowledge about a topic help students understand and recall the information on the topic. In fact (Dochy, Segers and Buehl, 1999 cited in Watson et al, 2012), have mentioned that 81 percent of students’ exam scores are linked to their background knowledge. Students reflect and recall on their background knowledge when they are asked questions. Many researchers have stated that background knowledge can expressively improve students’ comprehension of text (Watson et al., 2012). The comprehension problems that students face could be resolved by building background knowledge for students (McKeown, et al, 1992 cited in Watson et al, 2012). Many students with lack of background knowledge need to understand definite texts, and teachers can deliver that knowledge through previewing texts by offering summery of those texts, describe characters, and having a question and answer session with students about the topic (Graves, et al., 1983; king, 1994; Pressley et al., 1992 cited in Watson et al, 2012). Background knowledge is a very important part of comprehension and to understand a text, cognition and motivation affect the text as well.

To connect background knowledge with new knowledge students need to participate actively in their learning. A successful reader is able to control and monitor his own feelings, behaviours, and also understands what he is reading (Zito, Adkins, Gavins, Har- ris, & Graham, 2007 cited in Watson et al., 2012).

Apart from fluency, background knowledge and vocabulary, “grammar knowledge is a well acknowledgment component of reading comprehension” (Jeon & Yamashita, 2014, p.165). If grammar knowledge is completely developed in readers then it enables them to
analyse the information about phrase, clause and sentences in order to achieve comprehension. In the terms of relative influences grammar knowledge is often compared to vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehensions. To understand reading comprehensions it is important to know comprehension strategies too.

**Reading Comprehension Strategies**

In the past thirty years, researchers worked on comprehension strategies and skills to improve students’ understanding of a text and their ability to think critically about texts (Durkin, 1978/79; Goodin et al., 2009 cited in Ortlieb, 2013). Though comprehension could be improved through wide ranges of reading but researchers claimed that if all readers were taught to use the comprehension strategies they could improve comprehension to a great extent (Ortlieb et al., 2013; Scharlach, 2008; Shaw, 2013 cited in Ortlieb, 2013).

There are some reading comprehension strategies, such as, predicting/infering, visualizing, making connections, questioning, determining main idea, summarizing checking predictions, Making judgments (evaluation) (Ortlieb, 2013).

The word inference is defined as conclusion or judgment. Making inference means, “choosing the most likely explanation from the facts at hand” (Mansory, 2012, p.14). Sometimes you infer something has happened, not from your senses, but from what you know, and it makes sense to believe that it has happened. There is a difference in inferring and prediction, prediction means to guess about things that might happen in the future, while inferring is to infer about things that have happened but you didn’t witness them, it might be an educated inference. Nevertheless, inferring is an important strategy in reading comprehension and this strategy needs good readers with high order thinking capacity (ibid.).

According to Mansory (2012), a teacher should give students some stories and ask them to infer about it, good readers infer in order to understand more about what author really means. Questioning strategies could be used through inferring strategies when teachers ask students to talk about their inferring. A good reader asks himself questions and his inferring is based on his background knowledge and clues that he get from the text.

Summarizing is to point out keywords and take out less important issues. Hock and mallard (2008), describe that the reader requires skills, like he identifies the main idea, summarize it and ask questions about the information, as well as he makes inference.

Determining the main idea for the reader is to understand what an author meant to say. Bialostok (2012) stated that those students that have background knowledge could easily make a connection between background knowledge and the new information, which help them improve their understanding. While reading a text, students make a picture out of that information in their heads, and this picture help students connect their text with questions (ibid.). In this strategy students read the new text and connect it with their background knowledge and when the reader combines his background knowledge with the new information, he can make a new picture out of it.

**Teaching Reading Comprehensions in Primary Schools**

The most important years for a child is when he gets into the primary school (pioneer House, 2011 cited in Akindele, 2012). This could be a remarkable period for the child to develop his or her brain. Reading in primary school brings significant changes in students’ both academic and social skills (Kayiran and Karabay, 2012).

Today, to have a successful life in the world is having the ability to read and comprehend what is important. Still, reading comprehension is a kind of challenge for students, mainly for primary level students and also for those who has reading difficulties (Yildirim, 2013).
There are plenty of reasons why many students’ have difficulties with achieving reading comprehensions (ibid.). One of the fundamental requirements for a skilful reading comprehension is the ability to read a text effortlessly.

One of the five pillars of effective reading is reading fluently. According to Yildirim (2013), “Fluent readers are able to automatically process text and simultaneously understand, reflect the syntactic and semantic features of the text by reading with prosody” (p.134).

Due to complexity of designing focused instruction, often teachers have difficulty with teaching reading comprehension strategies, and in terms of the required time to learn and implement strategies many programs has been overwhelmed (Scharlach, 2008). Many school-age children struggle to learn how to read, and these reading difficulties often continue even in their adulthood (Ortlieb, 2013). With students who have difficulties in reading, teachers should be confident and raise their reading skills by monitoring them, they may face uncertainty regarding it in early 1st grades but this study found that the reading word identification fluency (WIF) could be more indicative (Nathan H. Clemens, et all, 2012).

Apart from comprehension, reading involves decoding, decoding is the ability to pronounce a written word and define the word’s meaning (Mansory, 2012). Decoding is a technique that works from whole to parts; for instance, at first the meaning of sentences, then words, syllables and sounds are introduced (Akyol, 2005, cited in Kayiran and Karabay, 2012). In 2004 and 2005, Decoding Method (DM) was implemented in the primary schools of Turkey, while before 2004 Phonic-based sentence method (PBSM) was planned as a reading and writing instruction in primary schools. According to this method, reading and writing starts with phonemes in primary schools (Kayiran and Karabay, 2012).

According to a study by Karadağ and Gültekin (2007) and Beyazıt (2007) cited in Kayiran and Karabay, 2012, stating, majority of teachers in Turkey found out that the decoding method is more effective than Phonic-based sentence methods in order to read and write in primary schools (ibid.). The primary school teachers stressed that those students who learned to read and write through decoding method faced less problems than those students who learn to read and write through PBSM (ibid.).

Based on many reports, from the last 20 years teachers are unable to make sense of a successful reading strategy (Schalach, 2008). The guidelines for a good reading strategy for the teachers has not been easily understandable so that they can learn and implement in their classrooms, guidelines for effective reading strategies should be prepared to be easily understood (ibid.).
METHODS

The method that I have used for this study is quantitative method. The data collection tools are questionnaire and classroom observation. Quantitative method has no greater or lesser importance than qualitative (Cohen et al, 2011), nevertheless I have selected quantitative method because it is scientific and easily measured, the researcher can use numbers as the unit of analysis. In quantitative method there is a tendency to focus on specific variables, it can be presented easily without needing complex statistics (Denscombe, 2010). “Every researcher can and should use numbers in their research” (Gorard, 2006 quoted in Denscombe, 2010, p.242).

Quantitative method is a powerful form of research. It is frequently associated with significant researches, but it can also function in small-scale researches, case studies and experiments (Cohen et al, 2011). In my research, I have collected data from Badakhshan province, which is one of the northeast provinces of Afghanistan.

The questionnaire is a research tool that relies on written information given by people in response to researcher’s questions (Denscombe, 2010). It is worth mentioning that, questionnaires are expected to include both opinion and factual questions (ibid,) and I have tried to have them both in my questionnaire. Observation is an individual way of collecting data. It is best to observe what actually happens because it does not rely on what people say, do or think. It appeals to direct evidence (ibid,).

To confirm that my questionnaire is clear and understandable, I have done a pilot study. According to Bell (2010), all data collecting tools should be piloted to see how long it takes the participants to answer the questionnaire, are the instructions clear enough, or if there are some items that need to be removed. I have done my pilot study with some schoolteachers in Faizabad and after making necessary changes I have distributed 64 questionnaires in 15 schools and I have observed 21 classes both in rural and urban areas. I have started collecting data from 2nd week of August and finished it in September. 21 schools were selected out of 645 in Badakhshan and they were selected through random sampling, and I have done random sampling because it is a method, where every unit of the population have the equal chance to be selected. Questionnaires were translated into Dari language.

The questionnaire was prepared for schoolteachers and it consisted of 23 multiple-choice questions. The questions included ranking questions and a couple of open questions. Apart from the questionnaire, I have done classroom observations for this research project which the observation had 14 criteria. Both my questionnaire and observation were based on the research questions. After finishing the data collection I started to analyse the data because analysing something means to gain a better understanding of it (Denscombe, 2010). The aim for analysing this data was to find out how things work by looking for evidence that I have already collected.

Limitations

There were few factors that limited my study while collecting the data. The study was not conducted in all planned schools due to security issues in some districts. Instead I had to collect data from only 15 schools (out of originally 18 schools). Thus the sample size was reduced accordingly, which limited the scope for generalization of study outcomes. Another issue I faced while collecting the data was when I visited schools and they thought I might be someone from the Ministry of Education and came to observe them and point out something negative in their lessons and report it to education department. Some of them tried to behave superficially. However after explaining the purpose of the research and giving assurance about the use of research findings only for academic purposes, the limitation was over come to a higher degree.
FINDINGS

This chapter describes my findings from questionnaires and observations on reading comprehension strategies, collected through distributing questionnaires to 64 teachers; 62 female and 2 male teachers, according to Badakhshan’s education department, most of the teachers teaching in primary schools are female teachers and observing 21 classes in the city and few districts of Badakhshan province. The aim of this research was to explore views and practices of teachers about reading comprehensions and how a teacher can help primary level students to improve their reading comprehension. The table below describes the answers to the questionnaire.

Part I: Questions of the questionnaire

In the below table 1, the background information of the respondents’ is provided.

Table 1: Respondents’ education background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Sex</th>
<th>12th grade</th>
<th>14th grade</th>
<th>BA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male urban</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female urban</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male rural</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female rural</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows the education level of teachers in both rural and urban areas. In the above table only 5% of female teachers in rural areas are 12th grade graduates while there are no 12th grade graduate teacher in urban schools. There are a large number of female teachers both in rural and urban areas with 14th grade degree. The percentage of female teachers in urban areas is 8% while there are only 2% of the female teachers with the same degree in rural areas.

Table 2: Respondents’ teaching experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>1-2 Year</th>
<th>2-5 Year</th>
<th>6-10 Year</th>
<th>More than 10 Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second table shows teachers’ experiences. A higher number of teachers had more than 10 years teaching experience, while there was not any teacher with less than 2 years teaching experience.

In the following lines teachers’ responses to question are summarised and presented in tables. When teachers were asked if they involve their students’ in teaching learning activities during their lesson in classrooms, all responded yes, they do.

However, when the data from classroom teaching observation has been summarised, it was observed that not all, but a high number of teachers involve their students’ in some kind of activities in the sampled observed classes.

3 Education department of Badakhshan Province.
Table 3: Relating new topic to students' previous knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching place</th>
<th>a) Ask them about previous lesson</th>
<th>b) One or more students present a summary of previous lesson to the class</th>
<th>c) Teacher present the summary of the previous lesson</th>
<th>d) Teacher checks students homework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>14 22%</td>
<td>7 11%</td>
<td>8 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>3 5%</td>
<td>12 19%</td>
<td>8 12%</td>
<td>12 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3 5%</td>
<td>26 41%</td>
<td>15 23%</td>
<td>20 31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the second question teachers were asked if they relate new topic with the topic students already learned and they responded for all options, majority of the teachers from urban area said that one or more than one student present summary of the lesson to the class in order to relate a new topic with the previous one, few of them said they present the summary of the lesson or check students home works, while in rural areas almost the same number of teachers said they ask students to present the previous lesson or teachers check students home works.

Figure 1: Connecting topic with students' practical life

One of the main questions asked from teachers was, how often they provide students with opportunities to connect the topic with their practical life. 9% of teachers both from urban and rural areas did not provide students with opportunities to connect the topic with their practical life. However, 91% of teachers both in rural and urban areas provided chances for students to connect the topic with their practical life. The teachers who provided such opportunities to students were also asked an open question to respond why they do so. Majority of the teachers said that it help students learn better and increase their understanding about the topic. A group of teachers said that relating the topic with practical life help students to remember the topic for a long time and they will learn the depth of the topic. About nine percent of the teachers said they do not relate the topic with practical life because for them it is not very necessary.
For the fifth question in the questionnaire, teachers were asked to rank which strategies of their teaching improves the most, a high number of teachers both in rural and urban schools replied that reading a text and understanding its meaning is most important while reading text fluently is the least important. Although some of teachers mentioned that reading fluently is important but majorities of teachers agreed that reading text, understanding its meaning and being able to explain the topic is most important.

To relate the topic with their practical life in most of classes’ students were asked to connect the lesson with their prior knowledge and if there is something from their practical life they can share it in the class.

Table 4: Students’ Reading aloud in front of the class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching place</th>
<th>a) Most often</th>
<th>b) Often</th>
<th>c) Rarely</th>
<th>d) Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next question asked from the teachers was: how often they ask students to read loudly in front of the class. 33% of teachers from urban areas and 23% of teachers from rural areas said that they often ask students to read aloud in front of the class. Only 3% of students’ in urban schools said they rarely ask students to read loudly while about 13% of teachers in rural areas mentioned that they rarely ask students to read aloud in front of the class.

Table 5: Respondents’ views on how to monitor students’ understanding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching place</th>
<th>a) Make them aware of what they do understand</th>
<th>b) Help them identify what they don’t understand</th>
<th>c) Use suitable methods to resolve problems in understanding</th>
<th>d) All of them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 shows that 28% of teachers in urban and 25% of teachers from rural areas said they help students identify what they don’t understand when they were asked how do they monitor students understanding. A less number of teachers both in rural and urban areas said that they make students aware of what they do understand. Almost 9% of teachers in urban areas said using suitable methods help students solve problems in understanding while 19% of teachers from rural areas selected the same answer.
Table 6: Teachers’ views about students’ need to be a good reader

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching place</th>
<th>a) Background knowledge</th>
<th>b) Vocabulary knowledge</th>
<th>c) Word recognition</th>
<th>d) All of them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers were asked what does a student mainly need to be a good reader. 23% of teachers from urban and 20% from rural area said that to be a good reader students mainly need vocabulary knowledge while only 8% from urban and 13% from rural areas said that to be a good reader having background knowledge is important, and only 5 to 6% of teachers respectively in urban and rural areas said students should recognize words in order to be a good reader.

Table 7: Students’ sharing ideas about the topic with their classmates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching place</th>
<th>a) Always</th>
<th>b) Usually</th>
<th>c) Sometimes</th>
<th>d) Rarely</th>
<th>e) Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 shows that the same number of teachers both in rural and urban areas said that they always give students a chance to share their ideas about the topic in the class and also about 44% of teachers both in rural and urban schools said they give students a chance to share their ideas about the topic in the class but only sometimes while 28% of teachers in rural areas said they rarely give students a chance to share their ideas about the topic with their classmates.

It was also observed that to some degrees teachers give chances for students to share their ideas about the topic with their classmates.

Figure 2: Ways of describing a story by students
As figure no 2, shows 86% of teachers in urban schools and rural schools said to describe a story, they ask students to draw a picture or make some charts about it while only 14% of them said they do not ask students to draw any chart or picture in order to describe a story.

Table 8: Effect of describing story in improving students' understanding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching place</th>
<th>a) It helps students focus on text structure as they read.</th>
<th>b) It provides students with tools they can use to examine and show relationships in the text</th>
<th>c) It helps students to write well-organized summaries of a text.</th>
<th>d) All of them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>7             11%</td>
<td>10                             16%</td>
<td>6                             9%</td>
<td>2             3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>16            25%</td>
<td>9                              14%</td>
<td>4                             6%</td>
<td>1             2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23            36%</td>
<td>19                             30%</td>
<td>10                            15%</td>
<td>3             5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers were asked if they describe a story through pictures and charts in the class, 86% of them both from rural and urban schools said yes and only 14% of them said no. Table 8 shows out of 55 teachers who had positive answer while they were asked letting students to describe a story through charts and pictures, 7 teachers from urban and 16 from rural schools said that describing a story through pictures and charts help students focus on text structure as they read, while a total number of 19 teachers both in rural and urban schools said that it help students and provide them with tools they can use to examine and show relationships in the text. Almost 9% of Badakhshan teachers in urban areas said that describing stories through pictures help students to write a well-organized summary of a text while only 6% of teachers in rural said the same answer.

Table 9: Using answering question strategies in improving students' understanding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching place</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers were asked if they apply answering questions strategies in order to improve students understanding, 52% of teachers in rural and 40% of teachers in urban schools said yes and only a fewer number of teachers, 4 % in urban and 2% of teachers in rural schools said no, they do not apply these strategies to improve students understanding. Most of the teachers in rural schools applied answering question strategies to some degree and some of the teacher in urban schools applied it to a high degree.

To see if teachers use the answering questions strategies, right after this question there was a question that they were asked, for what reason do they think this strategy is important.
Table 10: Reasons for importance of answering question strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching place</th>
<th>a) Answering questions gives students purpose for reading</th>
<th>b) Focus students’ attention on what they are to learn</th>
<th>c) Help students to think actively as they read</th>
<th>d) Encourage students to monitor their understanding</th>
<th>e) Help students to review content and relate what they have learned to what they already know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>4 6%</td>
<td>5 8%</td>
<td>8 12%</td>
<td>9 14%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>12 19%</td>
<td>2 3%</td>
<td>12 19%</td>
<td>7 11%</td>
<td>1 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16 25%</td>
<td>7 11%</td>
<td>20 31%</td>
<td>16 25%</td>
<td>1 2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 shows that 19% of teachers in rural schools answered that answering questions gives students purpose for reading, though in urban schools only 6% of teachers said the same thing. 8% of teachers in urban areas said that answering questions help students focus on what they are to learn and in rural schools only 3% of teachers had the same opinion. 25% of Badakhshan teachers both in urban and rural areas said answering questions encourage students to monitor their understanding although 31% of them mentioned that answering questions help students think actively as they read.

Table 11: Providing opportunities for asking questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching place</th>
<th>a) Always</th>
<th>b) Usually</th>
<th>c) Sometimes</th>
<th>d) Rarely</th>
<th>e) Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>8 13%</td>
<td>13 20%</td>
<td>7 11%</td>
<td>1 2%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>11 17%</td>
<td>14 22%</td>
<td>10 15%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19 30%</td>
<td>27 42%</td>
<td>17 26%</td>
<td>1 2%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another important questions that teachers were asked was, if they provide chances for students to ask questions in the class. 22% teachers from urban schools and 17% from rural schools said that they always provide chance for students to ask questions in the class. Almost 42% of teachers both from urban and rural schools of Badakhshan said that they usually provide chances for students to ask questions in the class. Only 2% of teachers from urban schools said they rarely provide chances for students to ask questions in the class, while no one from rural areas selected this option.
Table 12: Role of summarizing in understanding the topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching place</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12 shows that 44% of teachers from urban and 55% from rural schools said that summarizing the topic help students understand the topic, to which only 2% of the teachers in urban area disagreed and said summarizing the topic doesn’t help students to understand the topic.

Table 13: How summarizing helps students’ to understand the topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching place</th>
<th>a) It helps students to remember what they read</th>
<th>b) It helps students to identify the main ideas</th>
<th>c) It helps students to connect the main ideas</th>
<th>d) It helps students to Eliminate unnecessary information</th>
<th>e) Understand text</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>8 13%</td>
<td>6 9%</td>
<td>11 17%</td>
<td>2 4%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>11 17%</td>
<td>11 17%</td>
<td>9 14%</td>
<td>4 6%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19 31%</td>
<td>17 26%</td>
<td>20 31%</td>
<td>6 8%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13 shows the response of teachers regarding to 16th question that they agree about summarizing of the topic. 17% of teachers in urban schools and 14% in rural schools believed that summarizing of the topic helps students to connect the main ideas. While four percent of teachers’ in urban and six percent in rural schools responses were that students eliminate unnecessary information.

Table 14: Chances for students’ to ask questions in the class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching place</th>
<th>a) Most often</th>
<th>b) Often</th>
<th>c) Hardly</th>
<th>d) Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>8 12%</td>
<td>16 25%</td>
<td>5 8%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>17 27%</td>
<td>11 17%</td>
<td>7 11%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25 39%</td>
<td>27 42%</td>
<td>12 19%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14 shows the response of teachers regarding 17th question. 25% teachers in urban schools and 17% in rural schools agreed that they often provide chances for students to ask question in the class. 19% of teachers both in rural and urban schools said that they hardly provide chances for students to ask questions in the class, while no one said that they never do.
Table 15: Allowing time for students’ to guess the climax of the story

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching place</th>
<th>a) Always</th>
<th>b) Usually</th>
<th>c) Sometimes</th>
<th>d) Rarely</th>
<th>e) Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>7 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>9 15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers were asked if they give time for students to guess the end of the story. As it shows in the table 15, a large number of teachers both in rural and urban schools said that they usually give time for students to guess the end of the story. Four percent of the teachers in urban schools agreed on sometimes while 11% of teachers in rural answered to the same thing. 29% of teachers of both in rural and urban schools said they always give time for students to guess the end of the story.

Table 16: Helping students to guess meaning of a word

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching place</th>
<th>a) Always</th>
<th>b) Usually</th>
<th>c) Sometimes</th>
<th>d) Rarely</th>
<th>e) Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>2 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>7 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>9 15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16 concerns teachers’ helping students to guess the meaning of a word. 36% of urban areas teachers replied that they usually help students to guess the meaning of words, while 17% of rural areas responded they always help students for thinking of words’ meaning.

Table 17: Understanding meaning of a word

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching place</th>
<th>a) Ask them to find out the word’s meaning through other similar words</th>
<th>b) Ask them to find out the word’s meaning through its root</th>
<th>c) Ask them to find the word’s meaning through the context of the sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>5 8%</td>
<td>11 17%</td>
<td>13 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>4 6%</td>
<td>20 32%</td>
<td>11 17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9 14%</td>
<td>31 49%</td>
<td>24 37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17 explains things that teachers do to make students understand the meaning of a word. 17% of teachers in urban schools said that they ask students to find out the word’s meaning through its roots while 32% of teachers in rural areas answered the same thing. There was not a big difference between teachers in rural and urban schools while answering this, eight percent of teachers in urban and six percent in rural schools mentioned that in order to make
students understand the meaning of a word they ask them to find out the word’s meaning through other similar words.

In the 20th question teachers were asked what do you do to make your students understand the meaning of a word and right after that they were asked for what purpose do you use this exercise, most of teachers said it helps students to learn the real meaning of the word, while few other said apart from learning the real meaning of the word, it help students to understand root of the word.

Teachers were asked what the best way is to improve students understanding from reading a text and the majority of teachers said to sum up students understanding from the text and asking questions are most important and reading the text continuously, relating new topic with prior knowledge are less important while according to them memorizing the text and vocabulary building are not important.

At the end teachers were asked about the challenges they may face while trying to ask students to draw some charts or pictures to summaries a text and their recommendation to resolve the challenges, some of the teachers did not answer it but most of them mentioned not having enough teaching materials (charts, cards and etc.) could be challenges and to resolve it teachers need to guide students and it is not a big problem.

**Part II: Observation**

I have done observations in 21 classes in rural and urban schools. According to my research questions I have set some criteria and divided those criteria in three parts. First one is class arrangement, second one is reading comprehension and third one is kinds of questions that teachers ask from students and teachers’ reaction to students answer in order to perform comprehension.

**Table 18: Classroom arrangement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Comment(s)</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Well organized classroom</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teacher has lesson plan</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teacher is class friendly</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18 shows classroom arrangements; the majority of teachers both in rural and urban schools had a well-organized classroom, almost all the teachers had lesson plans. Two of teachers were very strict in the class while 16 of them maintain a friendly environment and only three of the teachers were very friendly in class.

**Table 19: Reading comprehensions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teachers asks previous lesson</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teacher asks students to memorize the text</td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teacher asks students to share their ideas in the class</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teacher asks new words from students</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 19 shows reading comprehension, to some degree majority of teachers ask previous lesson (13). None of the observed teachers asked students to memorize the text. 11 teachers both from rural and urban schools did not ask students to share their ideas in the class while to some extent 10 teachers asked students to share their ideas in the class. A high number of teachers ask students the new words but only 4 teachers ask students about new words.

Table 20: Kinds of questions that teachers ask from students and teachers reaction upon students answer in order to perform comprehension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>To some degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teacher asks open questions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teacher asks Yes/No questions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teacher ask students questions and wait for students to respond it</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teacher asks students to use their prior knowledge to understand the text</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Student answer was not correct still teacher encouraged him/her</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The students’ answer was wrong and teacher punished him/her</td>
<td>Threate to punish</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Teacher didn’t correct students’ wrong answer but he/she asked other students to answer it if they know</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21 shows the kinds of questions that teachers ask students and teachers’ reaction to students’ answer in order to perform comprehension. Almost all the teachers both in rural and urban schools to some degree or sometimes to a high degree ask open questions while only 1 teacher did not ask open questions. All teachers ask yes/no questions. Two teachers did not wait for students to answer the questions while other 19 wait for students to answer the questions. 14 teachers ask students to use their prior knowledge although the other six did not ask students to use it. Only one teacher threaten to punish students for not understanding the right answer, while 20 of them didn’t even threaten instead he/she encouraged them. 12 teachers encouraged students even when their answer was not correct while eight of the teacher didn’t encourage them. Only four teachers ask other students to answer the question when one was not able to answer to a high degree, other 14 teachers did the same thing to some extent while only 3 teachers didn’t ask other students to correct it, instead he/she said the right answer.

In the questionnaire teachers were asked if they ask students’ to memorize a text. According to them memorizing a text is not important and as I observed in classrooms also none of the teachers asked students to memorize a text.
DISCUSSION

Reading comprehension involves two connected and important processes called: comprehension and decoding (Mansory, 2012). Decoding is the ability that individuals can figure out the pronunciation of a written word and its meaning, while reading comprehension means to understand what you are reading. There is no specific subject that particularly focuses on reading comprehension in schools of Afghanistan, so this study is focused on teachers’ views and practices about teaching reading comprehension in Badakhshan province’s rural and urban schools.

What teachers think of teaching reading comprehension

As mentioned above, there is not a specific subject that focuses on reading comprehension in schools of Afghanistan and also the curriculum framework provides only a general overview of it. According to Mansory (2012), retelling involves reading a text silently or aloud and it is important to determine readers’ understanding of a text. In addition Bialostok (2012) thinks that reading help students increase the background knowledge, vocabulary and fluency. In the current study, teachers thought in order to be good readers the students mainly need vocabulary, background knowledge, word recognition and fluency respectively.

The highest percentage of teachers in urban schools thought that in order to be good readers, the students mainly need to have enough vocabulary, while most of the teachers in rural schools believed that a good reader needs to have sufficient background knowledge of the topic. The reason might be that teachers in urban schools think it is important to understand meaning of the concepts, but for the teachers in rural areas, it was important to learn the whole idea of the text.

According to Yildirim (2013), when students read the text aloud, it helps them generate and learn new words from that text. The proportion of teachers asking students to read loudly in front of the classroom is greater in urban areas compared to teachers in rural areas.

As stated in Yildirim (2013), National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) of Turkey, found that skilful reading comprehension is described as extending meaning from what is read by making inference, drawing conclusions, and making connections to their own experiences and when readers read fluently they are able to simultaneously process the text and understand it.

In my observation, a large number of teachers asked students about new words. In the view of teachers, reading the text and understanding its meaning are the two strategies that improve reading comprehension the most. Adding to that, teachers often asked students to read aloud in the class.

Ortlieb (2013), reported that summarizing is one of the eight reading comprehension strategies. Almost all the teachers in this study said that summarizing the topic help students understand the topic and a large number of them mentioned that it does not only help students understand but also connect them to the main ideas as well.

What teachers do to improve reading comprehension

To increase student’s participation in class, teachers should provide opportunities for students to take part in class discussion (Wilten, 2001). In this study, almost all teachers thought that involving students in class activities was important and as some of them were observed, they actually involved students to be active in the class and to relate a new topic with the topic they already learned, most of teachers asked students to summarize the topic.

Summarizing improves students’ ability to understand specific content for learning (Mansory, 2012). In this study, majority of teachers mentioned that relating the topic with
practical life help students remember the topic and learn it deeper. They have also mentioned they help students know what they don’t understand.

Yildirim (2013) stated reading comprehension means to understand what you are reading. Mansory (2012) reported that teachers could provide feedback for students in order to make them understand what they are doing is right or not. In order to monitor students understanding, a group of the teachers said they help students to identify what they don’t understand. Another group of teachers, however, said they make students aware of what they do understand.

As Bialostok (2012) mentioned, students feel comfortable and confident while sharing their ideas with their classmates and it will motivate them to take more part in the class when the teacher asks about main idea of the text. A large number of teachers said that they always give students a chance to share their ideas in class. My observation verified the fact that to some degree teachers give students a chance to share their ideas about the topic with their classmates.

According to Bialostok (2012), when students read a text they make pictures out of it and these pictures help students connect the text to their questions. Hock and Mellard (2005) suggest that students should read the text and then connect it with their prior knowledge and make images to conclude the text. In this study majority of teachers mentioned that they help students make connections and focus on the structure of the text through visualizing (making pictures and images).

Bialostok (2012) said that questioning improves students understanding and it exists as a fundamental element in learning and teaching. In order to make sense of the world, people always ask questions (ibid.). On this issue almost all the teachers said that they apply answering question strategies; some of them said because it focuses students’ attention on what they are to learn and some others said it help students think actively as they read. Majority of teachers both in rural and urban schools said they provide chances for students to ask questions in class. In the observation that I did, most of the teachers not only gave them chances to ask but also asked them questions.

Mansory (2012) reported that in order to be good readers, students should be given a chance to predict the end of the story. A large number of teachers both in rural and urban schools said they usually give time for students to guess the end of the story.

A high number of teachers in Badakhshan schools believe that word recognition is very important in reading comprehension. Most of the teachers mentioned that in order to make students understand the meaning of a text they ask them to read the text and guess the meaning of the words, as it helps students learn the meaning of the word and later on can be used in many different places by them. According to Watson et al., (2012), in reading comprehension there are two connected abilities; one is extracting meaning from a text and another is to construct that meaning. Teachers in this study were also doing the same thing, although there is no specific subject for reading comprehension but they were practicing it in their subjects.

In addition Alderson (2000), Daneman (1991) and Laufar and Sim (1985) highlighted that one of the most important bases of reading comprehension is vocabulary and also according to Grabe (2009), Koda (2005) and Stanovich (2000), having vocabulary knowledge enables the reader to comprehend the text easily and the more a reader reads the richer his vocabulary becomes. The observation approved the above findings as most of the school teachers did the same.

According to Watson et al., (2012), having knowledge about a topic help students understand and recall the information and a large number of teachers both in rural and urban schools of Badakhshan said to recall information or a topic, they usually ask students to talk
about knowledge they already know. It was also observed that most of teachers asked students to use their prior knowledge to understand a text.

The overall results of this study show equal responses in rural and urban areas with no big differences.
CONCLUSION

This study was aimed at exploring views of teachers about teaching reading comprehensions and what they actually do to improve reading comprehension of students at rural and urban schools in the north eastern Badakhshan province.

This study found that most of the teachers in this province both in rural and urban areas help students improve their understanding and ability to think critically about a text by using a variety of techniques and strategies with occasional differences. Although there is no specific subject for teaching reading comprehension or there might be chances that some of the teachers aren’t even familiar with the concept of reading comprehension, almost all of them apply most of the important reading comprehension strategies in their subjects i.e. visualizing, inferring/prediction, summarizing, making connections, questioning, and etc.

Teachers in far districts might not be familiar with visualizing strategy as such but the majority of teachers practically described a story or a text through pictures and charts and according to them drawing pictures and charts help students focus on structure as they read and it provides them with tools so they can use to examine and show relationships in the text.

As I found through questionnaire and observation, not having a separate subject for the reading comprehension but still applying almost all strategies in their subjects have a few reasons. One reason is having experience as most of the teachers had years of teaching experience. Another reason is having at least a 14th grade degree; there were almost zero number of 12th grade graduate teachers.

However, during the collection of data, a few elements limited my study. For this research, I wanted to visit distant districts and collect data from there as well but since some areas in the province are having security issues, I could not travel to distant districts. Teachers’ artificial behaviour in some cases also limited my research but as I explained the purpose of the study to them, they were convinced to be comfortable and as much normal as possible. Overall they applied most of the questions in their classes, which they answered in questionnaire.

Teachers in rural and urban areas suggested that classes could be more effective and students could be more productive if there were small classes with fewer students, which would help students learn better and concentrate, as an observer I do agree that classes with comparatively less number of students were well organized and all the students were given equal opportunities to participate in class activities.

This research is appropriate to the aim and research questions. It took place in Badakhshan province and it cannot be generalized on country level.
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ANNEXES

Questionnaire for Teachers

This research is about how teachers perceive reading comprehension. I assure that the information will be kept confidential and will be used for research purposes only.

Thank you very much for your corporation.

Age: .....................

Sex: Male □ Female □

Education: less than grade 12 □ Grade 12 □ Teacher Training College □ University □

Teaching Experience ............... years

Teaching Class: Boys □ Girls □ Mixed □

Grade: 4-6

Q 1: Do you involve students in classroom activities to help them understand the topic?
1) Yes 2) No

Q 2: How do you relate the new topic with the topic students already learned? (You can choose more than one option)
1) Ask them about previous lesson
2) One or more students present a summary of previous lesson to the class
3) Teacher present the summary of the previous lesson
4) Teacher checks students homework

Q 3: How often do you provide students with opportunities to connect the topic with their practical life?
1) Yes 2) No

Q 4: If yes or no why?

Q 5: Which one of the following of your teaching improves the most? (Rank the following from 1 to 3 (1 is less important, 3 is most important)
- Reading text fluently
- Reading text and explaining the topic
- Reading text and understanding its meaning

Q6: How often do you ask students to read loudly in front of the class?
1) Most often 2) Often 3) Hardly 4) Never

Q7: How do you monitor students’ understanding?
1) Make them aware of what they do understand
2) Help them identify what they do not understand
3) Use suitable methods to resolve problems in understanding
4) All of them

Q8: According to you what does a student mainly need to be a good reader?
1) Background knowledge 2) Vocabulary knowledge 3) Word recognition 4) All of them

Q9: Do you give students a chance to share their ideas about the topic with their classmates?
1) Always 2) Usually 3) Sometimes 4) Rarely 5) Never

Q10: To describe a story do you ask your students to draw a picture or make some charts about it?
1) Yes 2) No

Q11: If yes, how it helps students to improve their understanding?
1) It helps students focus on text structure as they read.
2) It provides students with tools they can use to examine and show relationships in text.
3) It helps students to write well-organized summaries of a text.
4) All of them

Q12: To improve students understanding do you apply answering questions strategies?
1) Yes 2) No

Q13: If yes, for what reasons do you think it is important?
1) Answering questions gives students a purpose for reading.
2) Focus students’ attention on what they are to learn
3) Help students to think actively as they read
4) Encourage students to monitor their understanding
5) Help students to review content and relate what they have learned to what they already know.

Q14: Do you provide chances for students to ask questions in the class?
1) Always 2) Usually 3) Sometimes 4) Rarely 5) Never

Q15: Do you think summarizing the topic helps students to understand the topic?
1) Yes 2) No

Q 16: If yes, how it helps students to understand the topic? (You may choose more than one option).

1) It helps students to remember what they read
2) It helps students to identify the main ideas.
3) It helps students to connect the main ideas.
4) It helps students to Eliminate unnecessary information.
5) Understand text

Q 17: How often do you provide chances for students to ask questions in the class?
1) Most often 2) Often 3) Hardly 4) Never

Q 18: When you read a story for your students, do you give them time to guess the end of the story?
1) Always 2) Usually 3) Sometimes 4) Rarely 5) Never

Q 19: When your students’ don’t understand meaning of a word in the text, do you help them to guess the meaning?
1) Always 2) Usually 3) Sometimes 4) Rarely 5) Never

Q 20: What do you do to make your students’ understand the meaning of a word?
1) Ask them to find out the word’s meaning through other similar words
2) Ask them to find out the word’s meaning through its root
3) Ask them to find the word’s meaning through the context of the sentence.

Q 21: What is purpose of this exercise according to you?

Q 22: The best way to improve students understanding from reading a text is: (Rank the following according to their importance from 0-5. 0 is not important and 5 is most important)

a) Ask them to memorize the text
b) Ask them to read the text continuously
c) Ask them to connect the text with their prior knowledge
d) Sum up their understanding from the text
e) Build their vocabulary
f) Ask them questions
Q 23: What challenges a teacher may face while trying to ask students to draw some charts or pictures to summaries a text? What are your recommendations for the resolving the challenges?

a) Challenges:

b) Recommendation:

Form No 2.
Classroom Observation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Codes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Well organized classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teacher has lesson plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teacher is class friendly</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teacher asks previous lesson</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teacher ask students to memorize the text</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Teacher ask students to share their ideas with their classmates</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Teacher ask new words from students</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Teacher asks open questions</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Teacher asks Yes/No questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Teacher asks students questions and wait for students to respond it</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Teacher asks students to use their prior knowledge to understand the text.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Student answered a wrong question and teacher encouraged him/her</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>The student’s answer was wrong and teacher punished him/her</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Teacher didn’t correct student’s wrong answer, but he asked other students to answer it if they know.</td>
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