

## **Wash back Impact on Teaching and Learning of English Language from Literacy & Numeracy Drive Test: A Mixed Method Study**

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### **Abstract:**

The Literacy & Numeracy Drive (LND) test is a multiple-choice test, introduced by Punjab Government in 2015 in order to create accountability among teachers and to build strong foundation of education system at primary level which clearly affects its stakeholders. This effect is known as Washback which may be either negative or positive. The present study was aimed to explore the Washback impact on teaching and learning of English language from Literacy & Numeracy Drive (LND) Test. A survey questionnaire was administered to a random sample of 76 primary and elementary school teachers who were teaching to grade III from six Markaz of Tehsil Sadiq Abad in order to capture opinions of teachers regarding Washback effect of LND test and to what extent it influences curriculum, methodology and learning. A semi-structured interview was also conducted in order to further explore this complex phenomenon. The data was analyzed through SPSS 20 to analyze frequencies and percentages of the responses. Results revealed that there is a strong negative Washback from LND test that influences pedagogical skills of teachers and curriculum as they teach to the test. In addition, Whole attention was given to reading at the expense of other three language skills of speaking, listening and writing as these skills are not tested in LND test. This apparent negative Washback effect on instructional practices presents a challenge to a successful implementation of LND test system in Teshsil Sadiq Abad.

**Keywords:** Wash back, Impact, LND (literacy & Numeracy Drive), Teaching and learning, English Language.

### **INTRODUCTION**

“English is not a subject which can be taught, it is a subject which must be learned (Michel West).”

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English is a world language and is being schooled round the world. It is considered a best method of communication. It is learnt as primary language by native speakers and as a second language in various other countries. Pakistan is a multilingual country. It represents a complex linguistic society. It is included in one of those countries where English is regarded as a key to modernization and development. Keeping this concept in view, English is taught at all academic levels. Teaching English to a student at primary level in rural and urban areas is considered a herculean task by Primary English teachers. But English is the need of the hour and to produce efficiency and skill in this target language is the main concern of all the educational policy developers. Primary sector is considered as the base of all the educational hierarchy. For this purpose test is considered best tool to achieve the desired goal of educational development

Tests and examinations have always been remained focus of all stakeholders at various levels of education. They play important role in decision making. According to Haertel (2013) Tests are considered fundamental in decision making, evaluating progress of students, their weaknesses and also effectiveness of the stated official curriculum and educational system. Madaus (1988:84, as cited by Spratt, 2005:05) asserted that, 'It is testing not the official stated curriculum that is increasingly determining what is taught, how is taught, what is learnt, and how it is learnt.'" In Pakistan and many other Asian countries, tests and exams are used to measure the educational performance of institutes and such type of examination system are the source of intended as well as unintended consequences (Haertel, 2013).

In Punjab province, for the strong foundation of education system at primary level (grade III), Punjab government with the collaboration of Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) introduced Literacy Drive Policy. This policy was established in 2015 in the opposition of traditional and complex method of assessment, ghost schools and fake admissions. According to this policy LND app is utilized by monitoring officer in their monthly visits in each school. They assess 3rd grade students' performance in three subjects i.e. English, Math's and Urdu. Almost 329000 students are assessed and 6.7 million assessments are conducted by MEAs as of now. Result is uploaded by MEA on official portal.

Test become high-stakes when its result has important consequences for stakeholders, If expected results are not achieved (Jones & Jones). This lay greater pressure on students as well as teachers in the form of high - stakes testing (Oszakiewski & Spelman, 2011). LND test conducted at grade III is considered high-stakes because it led serious consequences in the form of financial incentives and sanctions to stakeholders specially for teachers and school administration ( Kashif et al. ,2019).

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Wash back:**The concept of Wash back was given by Messick (1989) ,in his article about constitutional validity in this article he has mentioned that :

"Wash back is a term that is used to measure impact of introduction of tests and exams on teachers, students and instructional practices as well. He also refer the extent to which tests exert pressure on stakeholders and force them to do things that they would not otherwise do and to what extent washback effect assist or avert language learning".

According to the above mentioned definitions of washback we may conclude that test not only influence teaching methodologies and classroom instructional practices but also measures the attitudes and behaviors of stakeholders towards curriculum. It can be defined as the test's influence on classroom practices which can be either constructive or destructive. Spolsky (1994:02, as mentioned in Pan, Y 2009:257) was of the view that it is used to measure the side effects of examination. Biggs (1995:03) asserted that change in teaching methods and students' learning strategies is termed as wash back. Gates (1995, Page.101) define Wash back as:"The influence that test exert on a teaching and learning". Another researcher Thornbury (2006, Page 228) define wash back as: The test's effect on classroom teaching and the way that measures the effect that leads upon to them.

#### **Types of Wash back:**

According to Zhang (2016), it is general agreement that language testing exert influence on teaching and learning in some way or the other depending on whether it has negative or positive impact on instructional practices (Hughes, 1989).Bailey (1996) explains four aspects in order to ensure positive washback effects – the purpose of language learning; authenticity of testing; students' autonomy and self assessment; and the feedback of test results.

Prodromou (1995) described negative Wash back as teachers may feel, "trapped in the examination preparation cycle "(page. 14) .Pan (2009) has discussed the negative impact of wash back on learning activities as teachers totally dismissed language learning and follow up activities in order to prepare students for students for exams.

#### **Language teachers and key wash back studies:**

According to Hughes framework, teachers are considered the most significant participants in wash back studies, among all other groups like counselors, policy makers, curriculum developers and administrators. Literature is enriched with various studies of teachers' issues regarding wash back effect to determine the type and intensity of wash back, teachers 'role is always significant (Marry S, 2005).In order to ensure proper use of system and for creation of positive wash back Two factors are mandatory; proper guidance and proper time (Ana Marta, 2010).Alderson and Wall (1993) stated that Wash back is very simplistic notion. Quality of wash back is not judged by the quality of tests. Exams exert negative wash back on teaching methodology, content and learning (Asma et al,2014).Student's learning approaches and teaching methods are factors other than the curriculum that are affected by testing (Crooks ,1988; Frederiksen,1984;Frederiksen and Collins,1989). Spolsky( 1994:55). Messick (1996:241) highlighted the concept of wash back considered to be the most prominent concept of applied linguistics. However one can conclude that an accidental and unintended side effect occurs when intended curriculum change is directly linked to the content of examination. Due to this sudden

change stakeholders are failed to meet the required results as successful curriculum change is a continuous process It cannot be done accidentally.

### **Challenges of English language learning in Pakistan:**

In Pakistan classification of education system is organized according to the medium of instructions keeping their assimilation with socioeconomic classes. The schools of this education system are divided into three categories as Public, Private and Islamic schools. These schools comprised of students belong to average or middle class families so they mostly use Urdu as a medium of instruction. While students of Elite and lavish private schools use English as a medium of instruction in classroom conversation during language learning. Brown, T. H., Mbatia, L. S. (2015). Thus English language has become a big challenge for teachers as well as students because of the multilingual classrooms. Because students belong to different social background so they use different local language in classroom conversation. This thing creates immense trouble for teachers as how they adopt instructional practices correspond to students' various local languages. There exists a poor learning quality in Pakistan because of the lower proficiency level of English language. Teachers have to use languages other than English or Urdu as a medium of instructions in order to interact with students of public and low-cost private schools. Moreover lack of highly proficient teachers of English, absence of English language as a medium of instructions are the main reasons of why students may not accomplish basic proficiency level at English language. Lysenko, L. V., & Abrami, P. C. (2014).

The question raises that researchers must need to know what potential factors are required to lessen the wash back effect of tests (Razavipour, Riazi and Rashid, 2011). Different researchers stated different arguments by viewing this issue from different perspective and concluded that high - stakes test promote student-centered pedagogical implications that proves beneficial in grading of schools as A, B, C, D on tests results (Au, 2007; Bush, 2003).

### **Narrowing of Curriculum:**

Valli, Croninger, Chambliss, Graeber, & Buese (2008) define curriculum by concentrating on the targets of language learning. They stated that curriculum is mainly used to foster rationale and analytical interpretation of skills that are associated with the series of concept. This is the most focused area of language learning and widely damaged by high-stakes examination. A number of researchers discussed this issue while delineating the effects of test and exams. (Berliner, 2011; Bersola, 2002; Bryant, 2010; Goodland, 1979; Johnson, 2004; Jones & Eagley, 2004; Kukucka, 2012; Mesler, 2008; Moses & Nanna, 2007; Pavia, 2012, Quzada-Hafflinger & Hippel, 2017; Schulz, 2005) are well- mentioned researchers in this context. Thus curriculum is affected by examination in a number of ways and variety of research work has been done on this in which researchers elaborated

how tests and exams induce instructors to minimize the prescribed curriculum or make amendments in accordance with the requirements of test .(Heywood, 2009 ; Madaus & Clarke, 2001 & Anagnostopoulos 2005) give heed to this issue by elaborating that curriculum like poetry, novel, short stories etc is reduced by teachers if they are no more needed to score high grades in tests. In this way tests and exams are the major cause of lessening the quality as well as quantity of curriculum. Thus by doing this practice teachers become active agents in aggravating the process of narrowing down the curriculum.

Berliner (2011) declared narrowing of curriculum is a dishonest and illegal practice in order to score high as well as to alleviate the pressure of tests and exams. In Australia and many other countries the tendency to overcome the extensive flow of wash back effect of tests and exams by confining skills and practices of students along with the selective pedagogical approaches are on drift and exams are held liable in this regard (Polesel, Rice, & Dulfer, 2013).After conducting the survey of teachers in USA (Pedulla, Abrams, Madaus, Russell, Ramous, & Miao, 2003) reported that narrowing of curriculum is a common practice in USA. Moreover (Nowak, 2009) stated that results of narrowing down the curriculum occur in the form of content being divided and lacking orderly continuity that enables students to achieve surface expertise in tested subjects but limited or almost no command in untested subjects.

There are certain other forms of narrowing down of curriculum used by various researchers.(Au, 2007) named it as narrowing of content ,allocating more time to the subjects that are more likely to appear in tests as described by (Jones & Eagley, 2004).According to (Valli et al., 2008) Narrow down the target values included in the curriculum and out place them according to the needs of exams is another form of narrowing of curriculum. Additionally (Bryant, 2010), was of the view that constricting those methods and approaches that are in favor of test preparation and focus on the information needed to score high grades in tests and exams.

### **Tested versus Untested subjects:**

Test curriculum is dictated by content which are more likely to appear in the test or exams. Only those restricted subjects are taught or become the syllabus at the expense of others which are likely to appear in test and exams (Jones, Jones, & Hargrove, 2003; Quzada-Hafflinger & Hippel, 2017).In grade three subjects of English, Math and Urdu are being tested in LND test .Due to this action the subjects other than these three as are declared non-tested subjects like Science, Islamiyat, Social Studies, Arabic / Computer and Drawing. Thus exposure of students to non-tested curriculum is restricted in order to meet the requirements of test standard (Hamilton, Stecher, & Klein, 2002).These tested subjects mainly focused by stakeholders at the cost of untested subjects (Amrein & Berliner,2002).Teachers play vital role in narrowing down the curriculum by giving more attention to subjects that are supposed to appear in test and exams and devoting more time to tested subjects as compared to untested subjects (Klein, Hamilton, McCaffrey, & Stecher, 2000). As being influenced by the effects of test, about 71% districts devote more time to tested subjects as Mathematics and reading

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other than the one subject that is declared as non tested subject (Renter, Scott, Kober, Chudowsky, Joftus, and Zabala (2006). This tendency towards certain subjects affects curriculum in the form of unbalanced state of curriculum. (Kemper, 2003). If it is not to be evaluated, it won't be taught" (Thomas, 2005, p.37). A survey was conducted by (Thomas, 2005, p.34), Von Zastrow (2004) of 1000 school principals. 25% principals stated that due to the influence of high stakes tests less amount of time is allocated to arts. Recess time is extremely decreased by teachers. That is the wrong practice to deprive students from being relaxed by reduction of recess time.

### **Teaching to the test:**

Another effect of high stake tests and exams is teaching to the test. This factor is documented by various researchers. When teachers' performance and future progress is associated to the results of tests then they are compelled to use teaching to the test strategy in order to meet the required results (Firestone, Mayrowetz & Fairman, 1998; Madaus & Clarke, 2001; Sullivan, 2006). In addition (Johnson, 2004) conducted his research on the tendency of teaching to the test. He revealed the fact that when test results become the cause of awards and punishment teachers feel pressure upon teaching practices and comprehend that teaching to the prescribed concepts is necessary tool in their way of achieving high standards regarding test results. Thus annoying culture of teaching to the test nourishes in this situation. Furthermore the research of Madaus & Clarke (2001, p, 54) and Carr (2012) on the effects of test on curriculum identified that while preparing students for tests teachers only teach those concepts which are prescribed by organizers as syllabus of the test. Results of the research conducted by Von der Embse, Schoemann, Kilgus, Wicoff, and Bowler (2017) revealed that when teachers acknowledge the fact that their performance is going to be evaluated on the basis of tests' result, they are accustomed to use those instructional practices that are beneficial from exams point of view. Among them teaching to the test is a common practice utilized by teachers in order to achieve desired targets.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The present research study is a mixed method research. The purpose of researcher in this study was to investigate the Wash back impact on teaching and learning English language from literacy & Numeracy Drive test. Survey Questionnaire and Semi-Structured Interview were used as data collection tools and data was analyzed through SPSS-20.

### **Research setting and Population:**

The present research study was conducted at the public girls' primary and elementary schools of tehsil Sadiq Abad. Female English teachers of these schools who were teaching to grade III students in order to prepare them for LND test were the population of this research.

**Research participants:**

The study was consisted of female participants only without any focus on gender differences. Due to practical consideration the present study was limited to six Markaz of tehsil Sadiq Abad. Simple random sampling technique was used by researcher in order to select the Markaz. Six Markaz were selected as per convenience of researcher which were comprised of both primary and elementary schools.

**Research Tool:**

Two types of research instruments were developed for both phases of the study. Firstly a survey-questionnaire that consisting of 14 statements based on two sub-scales ,I was about the Effect of Test on English Curriculum and Instructional practices(ETECIP) and II was the Pressure Associated to the Result of Test (PART) was designed and pilot tested. Data was collected on five point likert scale in which participants were asked to select one option from five options as Agree, strongly agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. Reliability of the tool was found 0.95. Secondly in interview protocol semi-structured questions were asked by 15 participants in order to depict the clear picture of teachers' thought and perceptions regarding wash back effect of LND test.(Johnson and Turner,2003).The purpose of qualitative part of the study was to provide deeper insights to information collected by questionnaire.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

The collected data was analyzed by using software of the statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS).The simple parameter of measurements like mean and standard deviation (SD) were used to analyze the collected data. The findings were drawn on the basis of the analysis of the collected data.

**Quantitative Research:**

**Table 1 Effect of Test on English Curriculum and Instructional Practices**

Statements	Responses					Mean
	SA	A	N	DA	SDA	
Test influence my teaching method	41	25	7	3	0	4.37
I focus on specific learning outcomes due to the test	26	46	4	0	0	4.9
I spend less time on teaching those subjects that are less likely to appear in test	20	53	2	1	0	4.21
I use LND booklet to prepare students for the test	41	33	2	0	0	4.51

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Tests promote teacher-centered instructions	34	32	11	0	0	4.30
Drill and repetition are common practice in my teaching	26	29	21	0	0	4.07
Test has positive effect on teaching	0	13	24	27	12	2.50

Table 1 reveals that most teachers surveyed felt that LND test was not an accurate way to assess students' performance. The mean response of 4.37 shows that teachers also felt that test affected their teaching method. Result also reveals that how results of LND test exerted pressure on teachers and students as well. Teachers' main concern was to prepare students for tests as mean response 4.07 shows that drill and repetition were common practice in their teaching. In contrast of these responses there were some responses of teachers who responded to the questionnaire as test had positive effect on teaching as shown by mean response 2.50.

**Table 2 Pressure Associated to the Result of Test**

Statements	Responses					Mean
	SA	A	N	DA	SDA	
I face pressure from self as I hold myself accountable for students' performance	25	36	09	06	0	4.05
I face pressure from Assistant Education Officer to have good results of test	30	36	08	02	0	4.24
I feel pressure from school principal to raise scores on test	28	35	12	01	0	4.18
My annual increment is also conditional to good result in test	25	36	14	01	0	4.28
Pressure to improve test score is de-motivating my teaching	45	30	01	00	0	4.58
I face verbal as well as written explanation by DEO(RYK) in case of poor results of test	32	33	11	00	0	4.12
I feel that there is no pressure to improve test scores	0	01	26	33	16	2.16

Table 2 displays that how results of LND test exerted pressure on teachers and students as well. The mean response of 4.24 shows that teachers had to face immense pressure from educational authorities as Assistant Education Officer to ensure good results in test. Teachers stated that they had to face economic crisis in case of poor results as their increments were conditional to good result in test .That is shown by mean response 4.12.Furthermore the mean response 4.58 shows that majority of teachers were of the view that pressure to improve test score was de-motivating their teaching. While few teachers felt that there was no pressure to improve test scores as shown by mean response 2.16.

**Table 3**

Mean score of all Markaz

Markaz Name	No. of Respondents	Mean
Sadar Sadiq Abad	09	4.05
Rahim Abad	11	4.09
Roshan Bhait	15	4.14
Qadir Pur	18	4.30
Sanjar Pur	14	4.19
Jamal Din Wali	09	4.17

Table 3 presents the mean score of all the six markaz.9 respondents were participated from Markaz Sadar Sadiq Abad and their overall mean score of all responses was 4.05.The participants belonged to Markaz Rahim Abad were 11 and their mean score was 4.09. The maximum mean score (4.30) was of the Markaz Qadir pur in which 18 participants were responded to the questionnaire. Similarly 15,14 and 9 participants were from markaz Roshan Bhait,Snajar pur and Jamal Din Wali, observing 4.14,4.19 and 4.17 respectively.

#### **Qualitative Analysis:**

The qualitative research questions contained in the post-survey interviews probed to investigate the perceptions of the participants particularly with regard to potential influences of the Literacy & Numeracy Drive test on teaching and learning English language in Grade III. The following themes emerged in response to the questions.

#### **Selective study:**

Teachers were probed to share if they modify curriculum in order to prepare their students for the test. Almost all teachers (15/15), regardless of school's geographic location and type, have described that a number of ways were utilized by to reduce the prescribed curriculum. One suggested way was focusing on important topics like grammar and self-writing in languages, (5 out of 15 teachers).Selective study were also found the most familiar practice within classroom in order to meet the required standard of education by focusing on tested subjects and even selective study within tested subjects. Teachers regardless of school location identified "I mainly focus on tested subjects. Tested subjects are further reduced by focusing on selective study." ; "LND curriculum developers prescribe SLOs on a monthly basis which demand teacher to focus on selective topics within tested subjects "(Teacher 1,13,15,20).

#### **Content in disequilibrium:**

In this section participants were asked to share their views regarding untested subjects and what effect of the LND test had on these untested subjects. The majority of teachers (13/15), irrespective of

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school type and location, have concluded that the LND test conducted by the MEA has disturbed the equilibrium in the curriculum. The reason behind this disequilibrium is more focus on tested subjects than untested ones. This section provides a detailed description of how different participants deal differently with tested and untested subjects. A teacher mentioned that, "I spend less time on teaching those subjects that are less likely to appear in test " (Teacher 2). Another teacher added, " Tested subjects are allocated more time It (Teacher 1).

### **LND booklet became the curriculum:**

When teachers were asked whether booklets contribute to the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom , many teachers regardless of school location and type stated that the LND booklet is almost aligned to the test because it contain test items that are similar to the actual LND test. One teacher commented: "Booklet contain mostly question that are supposed to be found in test. And these booklets provide numerous opportunities for students to be familiar with those questions"(Teacher 6).These booklets provide greater guidance about basic Student learning Outcomes to teachers as mentioned by the respondents, "I get a lot of guidance from LND booklet in order to prepare students for the test" (Teacher 1,4,7,10). Another teacher added as "LND booklet guide us what to teach and what not to teach"(Teacher 14,3,9,6). Another response is the clear evidence of teachers' major focus was the LND booklet, "I use the LND booklet to determine which concepts are needed to teach to 3rd grade students and then focus only on them" (Teacher 2,11,15,8).

### **Narrowing learning:**

Many interviewees, regardless of school geographical location, pointed out that the test is narrowing the learning of the students. Almost all of the teachers (15/15) were of the view that students are not assessed properly through the LND test. As indicated by a Teacher, "MEA take the tests of 7 selected students, and then ensure the assessment of the whole class in his tablet PC, which is not a proper assessment "(Teacher 12). Another teacher added, Whole class performance depends on seven randomly selected students and it's may be a risky task if the MEA select seven dull students of from the class"(Teacher 10).Similarly another commented, "Problems occurs when weak students are selected for LND test"(Teacher 5, 6,9,15).

Contrary to these comments, some teachers favored this assessment as, "Whole class can be assessed easily through random selection of students" (Teacher 14). Some teachers were of the view that the LND test is a proper way to assess the students randomly. It is evident from this comment, the MEA's random assessment through the LND test is a perfect way to assess not only the students' progress but also the quality of teachers' instructions"(Teacher 2,5,7,8,9,12,14).

### **Surrounded by pressure:**

When teachers were asked to share the pressure they feel regarding the results of the LND test. Almost all of the interviewees (12/15), irrespective of school location, mentioned that they face pressure associated with good result on the test. Teachers identified that they face pressure associated

with the poor results on the test. As mentioned by teacher "I have to face pressure from the principal, Executive District Officer (EDO), District Coordination Officer (DCO), District Education Officer (DEO) and Assistant Education Officer (AEO). Moreover teachers identified that "We face very much pressure regarding results of LND test due to the sanctions associated to this test"(Teacher 5, 7, 9, 11).

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The analysis of this research indicates that teachers experienced more effects of LND test conducted by the MEA on curriculum and instruction in grade III. Responses of teachers indicated that rewards associated with good result motivates them to teach only that syllabus covered in the test. Moreover they were of the view that students' performance in LND test would be enhanced by using sample tests in classroom practices and by incorporating higher order thinking skills. Results also revealed that teachers experienced pressures associated with result of test. The results revealed that there is strong negative wash back from LND test on curriculum, methodology and learning. The unintended consequences associated with the results of test influenced teachers. They use LND booklet and monthly prescribed SLOs in their classes in order to prepare students for the test. It was explored that school principal and district education authorities exerted pressure on teachers for the accomplishment of good result. It was also revealed that teachers use instructional strategies as memorization of structure and rules, drill and repetition, guessing and practicing the test on tablet PC, in order to reduce the exerted pressure. Teachers regardless of school location and type were of the view that test was not improving education at primary level due to the limited focus on untested subjects and selective study within tested subjects. Moreover test was considered less credible due to its unintended consequences and focus on the only skill reading at the expense of other three skills. These findings would contribute to a better understanding of this complex phenomenon in relation to LND test. Contrary to these responses there were found some teachers who responded to the questionnaire as test had positive effect on teaching. The study implicates that improvement in education at primary level would be brought out by providing pressure free environment to teachers and let them use instructional strategies that are best suited to the needs of students.

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