

## To Investigate the Evidence of Positive and Negative Wash Back at Secondary Level

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to explore the possibility of creating evidence of positive and negative wash back by focusing on factors in the background of course completion per year and the use of hidden curriculum at secondary level. A sample of 170 students and 10 secondary teachers of the Government schools were taken in district Malakand. The data was collected through Likert scale. The investigator interviewed 10 secondary school teachers and 10 students of class 10 in three schools. The findings reveal that most of the secondary teachers in Pakistan were in hurry to finish their courses due examination which shows that there is more negative wash back rather than positive. The findings of the interview were strongly parallel with the questionnaire items.

**KEY WORDS;** examination, positive and negative wash back, hidden curriculum

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### INTRODUCTION

One cannot deny the fact that examination plays an important role in testing the ability of the students and keep them on the right track for further study. As Alderson and Wall (1993 [1]) are of the view that ‘tests are held to be a powerful determiners of what happening in the class. Almost every country of the world has its examination system for the evaluation of their students. But it is also the fact that examination influences the teaching learning process. The way in which examinations influence teaching and learning is commonly described as “wash back”. Other researchers preferred this “backwash”.

Many research studies show that a test affects participants, process and products in teaching learning process.

Students, classroom teachers, administrators, material developers and text book writers may be included under ‘participants’. Their perceptions and attitudes towards their work are likely to be affected by a test.

‘Process’ refers to any action taken by the participants which may contribute to the process of learning. Material development, syllabus design, changes in teaching methodology and the use of learning and/or test-taking strategies are included under processes.

‘Product’ means what is learned (facts, skills, etc.) and the quality of the learning (fluency, appropriacy, etc.) Tests have an impact on the learning outcomes as well.

Types of wash back

- (1) Positive wash back;

#### **Classroom settings**

1. Tests induce teachers to cover their subjects more thoroughly, making them complete their syllabi within the prescribed time limits.
2. Tests motivate students to work harder to have a sense of accomplishment and thus enhance learning
3. Good tests can be utilized and designed as beneficial teaching learning activities so as to encourage positive teaching-learning processes.

#### **Educational/societal system**

Decision makers use the authority power of high-stakes the introduction of new textbooks and new curricula.

Negative wash back

#### **Classroom settings**

1. Tests encourage teachers to narrow the curriculum and lose instructional time, leading to “teaching to the test.”
2. Tests bring anxiety both to teachers and students and distort their performance.

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3. Students may not be able to learn real-life knowledge, but instead learn discrete points of knowledge that are tested.
4. Cramming will lead students to have a negative positive toward tests and accordingly alter their learning motivation.

### **Educational/societal system**

1. Decision makers overwhelmingly use tests to promote their political agendas and to seize influence and control of educational systems

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

As regard the definition of wash back or back wash there is no other opinion than the influence of examination on teaching learning. According to Qi, L. (2007) [2]) wash back is the influence of testing on teaching and learning". (Shohamy, Donitsa-Schmidt & Ferman, 1996[3]) considered wash back as the connections between testing and learning". Messick, (1996[4]) is of the opinion that backwash is usually described as the effect of testing on teaching and learning practices.. This effect of wash back can be either positive or negative. Mostafa and Othman (2007[5]) have quoted Hubley ( 2004) that positive wash back or backwash assumes that testing and Curriculum design are both based on clear course outcomes which are known to both students and teachers/testers. If students perceive that tests are markers of their progress towards achieving these outcomes, they have a sense of accomplishment. Thus, tests must be part of learning experiences for all involved According to (Buck 1988[6]).‘There is a natural tendency for both teachers and students to tailor their classroom activities to the demands of the test, especially when the test is very important to the future of the students, and pass rates are used as a measure of teacher success. This influence of the test on the classroom (referred to as washback by language testers) is, of course, very important; this wash back effect can be either beneficial or harmful.’

As regard wash back as beneficial a study was performed by Mostafa and Othman (2007) on school-based oral English test: the backwash effect. The researcher concluded that beneficial backwash affecting the students tested in relation to the content of the test. In addition, the results also indicated that the conduct of the School-based Oral English Test did produce beneficial backwash on the students in the form of excellent performance in the oral test.

A study has been performed by Zang (2011[7]) on the negative influences of exam-oriented education on Chinese High School students: backwash from classroom to Child. His work was an essay type. The researcher essay explores the policy arguments and key assumptions underlying this pedagogical approach as well as the negative influences exam-oriented education systems have on Chinese students, who view education as nothing more than merely passing examinations.

Apart from these the wash backs some other effects as well. As the Bachman and Palmer (1996) consider wash back to be a subset of a test’s impact on society, educational systems and individuals. They believe that test impact operates at two levels: The micro level (i.e. the effect of the test on individual students and teachers); and the macro level or the impact the test may have on society and the educational system.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the evidence of negative wash back at secondary level

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of this research are:

- (i). to investigate that the secondary teachers complete course in time
- (ii) to examine the negative backwash effect on teaching learning in classroom instruction and Students’ performance

### **SAMPLE**

A total of ten teachers and 170 students from three schools in the district of Dir (L) Pakistan were selected as sample. The selection process was conducted through the technique of cluster sampling. The schools involved were as follow:

- (i). Government High School Sehsada 4 teachers and 46 students
- (ii). Government High School Ramora 4 teachers and 60 students
- (iii). Government High School Adam Dheri 2 teachers and 70 students

### **PROCEDURE / COLLECTING DATA**

This was a mixed method study so the instruments used to collect the data for this study were questionnaire and interview questions. Two types of Likert type scale questionnaires were constructed. One type of questionnaire

for the students and the other type of questionnaire was for the teachers. Both questionnaires were consisted of 14 items. Both questionnaires were reviewed by research experts. The items for the interview question set were formulated by the researcher himself based on the needs of the study. In the first phase the data was collected through questionnaires from both students and teachers and in the second phase the interviews were conducted. The interviewed teachers were those who were experienced English language teachers with more than 18 years teaching experience in secondary schools. The students were selected randomly for interview and their copies were checked according to the prescribed syllabus provide by provincial education department, Students' performance was assessed based on a manual which contained the framework and guidelines for the implementation of the school-based examination. Investigator himself visited the sampled school to collect data and arranged the interview section. The interviews were in two phases. First the teachers' interviews were taken and then the students. The interviewed were tape recorded and in written form as well.

**Findings and analysis of collected data**

**Using the 14 items Likert scale questionnaire for students on the wash back for the following percentage were obtained shown in the table;1**

**Table;1**

s.no	Items	Disagree or Strongly Disagree (%)	Not Sure	Agree or Strongly Agree (%)
1	Examination has no influence on my performance in my program at school	89 %	11 %	--
2	The courses I took in my program at secondary level help me to get prepared for examination.	14%	8%	78 %
3	My English and Mathematics teachers finish course in time	45 %	-	55%
4	My English and Mathematics teachers use hidden curriculum in class.	74 %	9%	17%
5	My teachers are always in hurry to finish their works.	24%	8%	68 %
6	My teachers always ignore tests.	30 %	-	60%
7	My teachers don't teach us according to prescribed syllabus.	32%	4%	64%
8	Examination compels me for selected studies	19%	--	81%
9	My teachers prepare me for examination only.	7%	--	93 %
10	I want to get high marks in the examination .Therefore, I study only subject content.	-----	--	100 %
11	My English teacher does not use English conversation in English class and only focus on book contents	10%	3%	87 %
12	Our English teacher doesn't use hidden curriculum, because there is no marks for oral presentation in the examination.	11%	3%	86%
13	There are some important questions in every subject that are included in papers time and again in board examinations.	33%	21 %	46%
14	Examination affects our teaching learning process every year.	27 %	26 %	37%

As presented in Table 1; that 89 % of the student were in a general accord with the idea that examination has great influence on their performance. Similarly 78% of the students are in the opinion that the courses they took in their program at secondary level helped them to get prepared for examination. 55% of students cleared that their English and Mathematics teachers finished course in time while 45 % said that their teachers did not completed courses in time. 74 % of the students confirmed that their teachers did not use hidden curriculum in class. 68 % students confessed that their teachers were always in hurry to finish their works. My teachers always ignore tests. 64 % students said that their teachers always ignored tests. Similarly 64% students were accord with the idea that their teachers did not teach them according to prescribed syllabus. As regard the selected study 81 % of the students said that examination compelled them for such type of studies. 93% students were of the opinion that their teachers prepared them for examination only. 100 % students confirmed that they wanted to get high marks in the examination .Therefore, they studied only subject content. 87 % students confessed that their English teacher did not use English conversation in English class and only focus on book contents. 86 % students confirmed that their English teacher did not use hidden curriculum, because there were no marks for oral presentation in the examination. 46% students told that there were some important questions in every subject that were included in papers time and

again in board examinations. 37 % students said that Examination affects teaching learning process every year. 27 % were not agreed with this idea, while 26 % of the students were not sure.

**Using the 14 items Likert scale questionnaire for teachers on the wash back for the following percentage were obtained shown in the table; 2**

**Table; 2**

s.no	Items	Disagree or Strongly Disagree (%)	Not Sure	Agree or Strongly Agree (%)
1	Examination has no influence on my performance in my program at school	90%	---	10%
2	The courses I teach in my program at secondary level help the students to get prepared for examination.	20%	----	80%
3	I finish course in time	20%	-	80 %
4	I use hidden curriculum in class.	70%	----	30%
5	Teachers are always in hurry to finish their works.	10%	---	90%
6	Teachers always ignore tests.	40%	-	60%
7	Teachers don't teach their students according to prescribed syllabus.	30%	%	70%
8	Examination compels me to teach selected topics to my students	80%	--	20%
9	Teachers prepare their students for examination only.	20%	--	80%
10	I want my students to get high marks in the examination .Therefore, I teach only subject content.	20 %	--	80%
11	I don't use English conversation in English class and only focus on book contents	30%	--	70 %
12	English teacher doesn't use hidden curriculum, because there is no marks for oral presentation in the examination.	10%	--	90%
13	There are some important questions in every subject that are included in papers time and again in board examinations.	30%	---	70%
14	Examination affects our teaching learning process every year.	20%	----	70%

As presented in Table 2; that 90 % of the teachers were in a general accord with the idea that examination has great influence on their performance. Similarly 80 % of the teachers are in the opinion that the courses they taught in their program at secondary level helped the students to get prepared for examination. 80 % of teachers cleared that they finished course in time. 70 % of the teachers confirmed that teachers did not use hidden curriculum in class. 90 % teachers confessed that their teachers were always in hurry to finish their works. 60 % teachers said that teachers always ignored tests. Similarly 70 % teachers were accord with the idea that teachers did not teach students according to prescribed syllabus. As regard the selected study 80 % of the students said that examination did not compel them for such type of studies. 80% teachers were of the opinion that teachers prepared their students for examination only. 80 % teachers confirmed that they wanted their students to get high marks in the examination .Therefore, they studied only taught content. 70 % teachers confessed that English teacher did not use English conversation in English class and only focus on book contents. 90 % students confirmed that their English teacher did not use hidden curriculum, because there were no marks for oral presentation in the examination. 70 % teachers told that there were some important questions in every subject that were included in papers time and again in board examinations. 70 % teachers said that Examination affects teaching learning process every year. 30 % were not agreed with this idea.

## Interview phase

### (1) Responses of the Students

To explore in greater depth to investigate the evidence of positive and negative wash back semi-structured interviews were conducted with the set of questions presented in Appendix C.

Interview questions aimed at gathering data concerning: the negative, neutral and positive impacts of wash back. For analysis of interview a thematic approach was adopted. As in this phase ten students were interviewed. Interviewees were facilitated to explicate their opinions.

The findings of the interview were strongly parallel with the questionnaire items.

To the items the responses of the students were as;

1). I think that Examination has no influence on my performance in my program at school. Because owing to examination we study more and more and try to attend the classes regularly. I think monthly tests play an important role in this regards. (Q#1 positive wash back)

2). There is no doubt that our English and Mathematics teachers finish course in time but don't use hidden curriculum in class. They want to cover the whole course because the papers include from entire books. So our teachers are always in hurry to finish their works and don't teach us according to prescribed syllabus. (Q#. 2, 3, 4 and 5 Negative wash back)

3). This is only examination that compels the students for selected studies. There are some important questions in every subject that are included in papers time and again in board examinations According to students their teachers prepare them for the final examination only, because they want to keep their passed percentage of students result only. (Q# 6, 7 and 10 negative wash back)

4). The students confessed that they wanted to get high marks in the examination .Therefore, they studied only subject content. (Q#8. Negative wash back)

5). There are no marks for oral presentation in the examination. Therefore their English teacher did not use hidden curriculum. (Q#9 negative wash back)

6). The question regarding that examination affects our teaching learning process every year. Most of the students said that they did not know because teaching learning process beloged to their teachers. (Q#11 Neutral wash back)

## **(2) Responses of the Teachers**

1) I think that Examination has no influence on my performance in my program at school. Because owing to examination we attend the classes very regularly and arrange monthly tests. But the course is very lengthy and we have to attend more classes per day. Therefore sometime we cannot give due attention to these tests. (Q#1 positive wash back)

2) Ya; our English finish course in time but don't use hidden curriculum in class. Because we have t to cover the whole course so, we are always in hurry to finish our works and don't teach us according to prescribed syllabus. There are many reasons for this, firstly the course is lengthy, secondly there are large numbers of periods of different subjects we have to teach to various classes and thirdly, the uncertainty in the form of strikes and terrorism etc prevailed in the area (Q#. 2 positive wash back but 3, 4 and 5 Negative wash back)

3). No, I think examination does not compel us for selected topics. However, we understand the importance of topics and give more importance to them. There are some important questions in every subject that are included in papers time and again in board examinations According to teachers who say that they prepare them for the final examination only, because they want to keep their passed percentage of students result only. (Q# 6, positive wash back and 7 and 10 negative wash back)

4). The teachers wished that they wanted their students to get high marks in the examination .Therefore, they teach only subject content. (Q#8. Negative wash back)

5). There are no marks for oral presentation in the examination. Therefore their English teacher did not use hidden curriculum. (Q#9 negative wash back)

6). Ya, Every year examination affect our teaching learning process. Sometime we don't find time to complete practical's to 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> classes. (Q#11 Neutral wash back)

## **Conclusion**

In the present study, the results revealed that their evidence which show the positive and negative and even neutral wash back which exert positive negative and harmful wash back effects on the student learning and teacher teaching learning process. In Pakistan secondary schools, a teaching schedule for a whole academic year which is syllabus on which teachers should rely their teaching, is provided to every institution. But unfortunately, these schedules are not followed. Some teachers finished the course very early and some very late. And at last the students are being taught in hurry fury mode that is very dangerous for the students at secondary level. Teaching and learning is usually based on a major textbook together with a set of workbook. The teachers only teach the contents and do not use hidden curriculum in the class. They don't use conversation in the class. Especially English teachers who are responsible to talk with their students in English, does not talk, because he considers that there is no oral

examination and no marks are awarded to students in examinations. Although the books have been prepared for the improvement of the basic skills ,i.e., reading ,speaking , writing and listening. However, it is the examination that compels the students to study more and more. And regularize the teachers to attend their class. The courses are lengthy and subjects are large in numbers and there is great shortage of teachers. The participants mentioned negative and detrimental wash back effects of the exam. This strong parallelism in the qualitative and quantitative data also strengthens the validity/reliability of the questionnaire and the trustworthiness of the interview findings.

### Recommendations

On the bases of conclusion the following recommendations are recommendations are made;

- (1) The main aim of the students is to get high marks. Therefore the high-stakes examinations in Pakistan should also investigate the possible solutions or the necessary modifications to be made on these examinations so that a positive effect may be exerted in the following years. The national and international objectives of the country are quite clear. In order to achieve these objectives, such solution-oriented studies may look into invaluable data.
- (2) The appointment of the teachers' at least secondary level should be on subject wise bases. Because most of the teachers at secondary level have the same subject at M.A or M.Sc level.
- (3) The teachers should be more familiar with the variety of standards available, it is to be hoped that they will use standards at different levels to assess their multi-level classes.
- (4) Then attention and focus should be on contents that reduce the negative wash back and improve the positive influence teaching and/or learning. And the students should be taught presentation skills and variety of expressions.
- (5) Programs in the form of training should be launched for teachers to use hidden curriculum, ie, conversation, providing of magazines etc, to develop fully English language environment.
- (6) Marks should be kept for oral examination as well.
- (7) The teachers should use techniques which improve the fluency, accuracy, functional grammar and vocabulary building.
- (8) The teachers should increase the confidence building in both subjects, I,e, Arts and science.

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**APPENDIX A**

Questionnaire for students **ON WASHBACK –**

Please respond to items. Numbers show degree of agreement: 1 = strongly disagree (SD), 2= Disagree(D), 3 = Not Sure (N.S) and 5 = Strongly agree (S.A)

s.no	Items	S.D	D	N.S	A	S.A
1	Examination has no influence on my performance in my program at school					
2	The courses I took in my program at secondary level help me to get prepared for examination.					
3	My English and Mathematics teachers finish course in time					
4	My English and Mathematics teachers use hidden curriculum in class.					
5	My teachers are always in hurry to finish their works.					
6	My teachers always ignore tests.					
7	My teachers don't teach us according to prescribed syllabus.					
8	Examination compels me for selected studies					
9	My teachers prepare me for examination only.					
10	I want to get high marks in the examination .Therefore, I study only subject content.					
11	My English teacher does not use English conversation in English class and only focus on book contents					
12	Our English teacher doesn't use hidden curriculum, because there is no oral marks in the examination.					
13	There are some important questions in every subject that are included time and again in board examinations.					
14	Examination affects our teaching learning process every year.					

**APPENDIX B**

Questionnaire for the teachers **ON WASHBACK –**

Please respond to items. Numbers show degree of agreement: 1 = strongly disagree (SD), 2= Disagree(D), 3 = Not Sure (N.S) and 5 = Strongly agree (S.A)

s.no	Items	Disagree or Strongly Disagree (%)	Not Sure	Agree or Strongly Agree (%)
1	Examination has no influence on my performance in my program at school			
2	The courses I teach in my program at secondary level help the students to get prepared for examination.			
3	I finish course in time			
4	I use hidden curriculum in class.			
5	Teachers are always in hurry to finish their works.			
6	Teachers always ignore tests.			
7	Teachers don't teach their students according to prescribed syllabus.			
8	Examination compels me to teach selected topics to my students			
9	Teachers prepare their students for examination only.			
10	I want my students to get high marks in the examination .Therefore, I teach only subject content.			
11	I don't use English conversation in English class and only focus on book contents			
12	English teacher doesn't use hidden curriculum, because there is no marks for oral presentation in the examination.			
13	There are some important questions in every subject that are included in papers time and again in board examinations.			
14	Examination affects our teaching learning process every year.			

## APPENDIX C

### Interview Questions for the students

- Q# 1 Do you think that examination has influence on your performance in your program at School?
- Q#2 Do your English and Mathematics teachers finish course in time?
- Q#3 Do your teachers use hidden curriculum in class?
- Q#4 Are your teachers always in hurry to finish their works. If yes why?
- Q#5 Do your teachers teach you according to prescribed syllabus?
- Q#6 What about selected studies (the investigator explained the term selected studies)
- Q#7 Do you think that your teachers prepare me for examination only.
- Q#8 Why you don't use hidden curriculum?
- Q#9 Why your English teacher does not use English conversation in English class and only focus on book contents.
- Q# 10 There are some important questions in every subject that are included time and again board examinations. Do you agree with this statement?
- Q#11 what are the effects of examination on your teaching learning process every year?

### Appendix D

#### Interview Questions for the Teachers

- Q# 1 Do you think that examination has influence on your performance in your program at School?
- Q#2 Do your that teachers finish course in time?
- Q#3 Do you use hidden curriculum in class?
- Q#4 Are you always in hurry to finish their works. If yes why?
- Q#5 Do you teach you according to prescribed syllabus?
- Q#6 What about selected studies (the investigator explained the term selected studies)
- Q#7 Do you think that you teacher prepare students for final examination only.
- Q#8 Why you don't use hidden curriculum?
- Q#9 Why English teacher does not use English conversation in English class and only Focus on book contents.
- Q# 10 There are some important questions in every subject that are included time and again board examinations. Do you agree with this statement?
- Q#11 what are the effects of examination on your teaching learning process every year?