LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AMONG THE STUDENTS OF GRADE-VIII STUDYING IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS OF SINDH

[1]Abdul Ghafoor Buriro, [2]Shahid Hussain Mughal and [3]Jawad Hussain Awan

[1]IBA Community College Dadu, Pakistan
[2]Education Department, Sukkur IBA University, Sukkur, Pakistan
[3]Institute of Information and Communication Technology, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan
[1]abdul.ghafoor@iba-suk.edu.pk, [2]shahid.mughal@iba-suk.edu.pk and [3]jawad.awan@scholars.usindh.edu.pk

ABSTRACT*: The objective of this study was to explore the language proficiency among the students of grade-VIII studying in government schools in Sindh province. The secondary data collected from the sample of all the middle schools of all districts of Sindh province through SAT-Project 2015-16 was used to reach at the findings. The students were given test booklet containing three areas of skills including mathematics and science along with language contents (Sindhi,, Urdu and English).The Results show that there is significant difference in language proficiency among the students of grade VIII studying various schools of all districts of Sindh.*

Key Words: Languages Proficiency, SAT Project, Middle Schools,Sindh Province,

2. Research background or context

The increasing global advancement in ICT [1,2] and communication led the requirement of English language making it the common language people learning. Nowadays more than 80% worldwide organizations make use of English language [1]. According to famous quote of the Nehru who said English is one of the major windows to enter the world and Michel West has termed it language which must be learnt. In Pakistan, mostly people use of bookish language [2].Sindh with the collaboration of British council came up with program called SPELT and ELT by AKU Karachi to development skills.

The language play vital role in the development of students' abilities to learn other things. In Pakistan Urdu is national language besides mother tongues like Sindhi, Punjabi, Balochi and Pashtoon. Still the method of translation from other languages into English is being used [3].Since years the way English is being taught in Pakistan it seems it does still follow the old and vintage method of teaching .The method plays important role in teaching of any language and other reasons like crowded classes, assessment and lack of facilities are key to failure in teaching languages.

The importance of English in our lives is as important as other studies. Learning of additional language like English in Pakistan is considered important and has become symbol of social status. In Sindh, the primary schools focus on basic mother tongues teaching and English language teaching takes place form grade VI, which in private schools starts with pre-schools classes. The improvement in languages means you are trying to have more control over transformation of ideas from one place to another. As said by [4] the transformation of man from animals to a civilized man is due to the role performed by language. The spoken language has much importance in planning the foundation of literacy, it is to be analysed why students not getting what a teacher is to him/her.

We can define language as the process of information and retrieve whenever required. The [5] in his theory of social development stated that we learn through interactions and the process of learning is inner system which develops speaking and social integration [6].

The role played by the medium in which the syllabus is taught has been the talk of the all times[7]. The study conducted by [8] reveals that teachers here in Pakistan who teach English have their own deficiencies in teaching.

The results of Standardized Achievement Test(SAT),2012 which tested the capacity of grade VI students of Sindh province revealed that in languages Karachi was leading with overall 48% followed by Hyderabad and Jamshoro[9].Next year's SAT-2013 test the languages results shown that still Karachi was leading with 43% but this the language results of Tharparker district out passed the Hyderabad and Jamshoro remained third [10].

The ASER Report shows that in Sindh private schools lead in English language skills with 49% as compare to that of public schools who average 19% only.[11].

There are at least 25,00 middle schools in Sindh majority of them belong to girls and 90% situated in rural areas.[12] .With no surprise the ASER-2012 survey revealed that 90% of the parents chose other language (Sindhi) best for their children as compare to Urdu or English.[13].

The importance of English language has increased ever before and in our country the workforce which know to read and write in English are better paid off. Today quality education means the level of proficiency in languages and specially teaching of English at elementary level is very important. The policy steps taken by government like NEP 2009 languages have been given preference and Punjab proved it practically by making English medium of instruction but in Sindh there seems no possibility of such thing. The Sindh Education Sector Plan 2013-16 has sought recommendations for the way forward for implementation of English language in Sindh province. The provision of quality languages education at middle level is easy to implement but hard to monitor the results. The big program of teaching English at middle is also challenge due to the availability of qualified and trained teachers who teach in English Language rather than in Urdu/Sindhi.

The study conducted by Open Society Foundations in four districts of Sindh show that over use of mother tongue is observed in grade-8 students and Khairpur district show that there teachers are mostly using English words as compare to other districts.[14].

The teaching of languages in Pakistan as second language faces many challenges including students and tutors who go

through the same problem ultimately giving high ratio of failures and school drop outs.[15].

In Pakistan like other countries the poverty is one of the main causes of low literacy rate. According to study of an Indonesian [16] the factors like family, social and school play key role in learning of English as second language. There is also relation between social status and learning of English as second language [17].The family education has impact on learning as educated family gives more guidance to children as compare to that of belonging to low socio class[15].

The end of British was the beginning of English language getting its roots in subcontinent and several decades it has now become second language mandatory to success in career and life. The demands for the learning of English have now increased [18]. Majority of schools in Pakistan now use English as medium of instruction and despite that Urdu is still being used during classes[19].Students belonging to Pakistan feel it difficult to converse in English and to improvise it they join learning centres where again the focus is on grammar not on how to use it in day to day communication [20].

The role of language, especially English in Pakistan is required to be discussed. The location of Pakistan is also important to veto nations including USA, UK and other Western countries which created demand for English language learning. The need of curriculum for the proper teaching of English is the need of time as the demand is there, but quality teaching is still question mark.[19].The standards of English in today's graduates has fallen down due to poor methods of written and spoken English[21].The famous linguist Ms Fauzia Shamim[22] in Pakistan the English is termed source of development for both individuals or countries.

The culture of Sindh has also major impact on learning languages, especially English as we are still not ready to accept it as need of time and development of societies without cultural and language[23].

2. Research problem

The language proficiency at grade 8 level has more importance it is the stage from where they will get into the secondary schools and decide their future, In middle schools Sindh the status of English learning/teaching is of very low quality as compare to other provinces of Pakistan. The aim of my research is to explore the reasons behind the problems faced by students at the middle in Sindh, which in the will gives us the way forward for rectifying loop hole and enhance the quality of English language like mother tongues. The study will further help in sorting out the new ways for improvement in teaching of English language at grade -8 students of the Sindh Province. Though the Sindh government has a strong will to meet the goals of SDGs and EFAs to improve upon the overall quality of education specially at elementary level including in private sector, but we still looking for betterment. The study tries to look for new ways to face the challenges currently faced students and teachers at middle schools.

3. Research Questions

The study contains the following research questions.

- What is the current status of languages at middle schools of Sindh?
- What are the problems faced by students while learning languages?
- What teaching pedagogies and other resources are available for teaching of languages?
- What is ratio of Languages teaching in Rural and Urban Sindh

4. Population of study

The population under study would the grade-8 students of Sindh province studying in government schools both in rural and urban areas.

5.   Sample and sampling strategy

The sample population consists of all students of grade-8 of schools in districts of Sindh, schools represent both rural and urban based be it boys, girls or mix schools. The comparison among districts shall be made on the results of languages in grade-8 students of all districts.

6.   Data description

a.   Sources

The data sources for conduct of this mini research are the secondary data of Standard Achievement Test for the year 2015-16 available online on its official website.

b.   Strategies

The strategies to collect data and then analyse the same include the first thorough study of the SAT reports, extract the required information regarding the subject topic and use the MS-Excel to further analyse the data accordingly.

c.   Tools

The data tools used for the collection of this secondary data include the test booklet containing the MCQs of the three subjects Languages (English, Sindhi & Urdu),Mathematics and Science. As our focus shall be the languages therefore we shall use data relating to languages only.

d.   Measures

The statistical measures for quantitative data analysis shall be used here in this mini research report however some numerical qualitative measures may be used where it required.

e.   Validity & Reliability of the data contents

The validity of the questions included in the questionnaire for SAT test is ensured by including the recommendations of experts while creation of test for each subject so that we get what we want or what has been the curriculum taught to grade-8 students and making it sure that it does not derail and create bias for the final data interpretation.

The Reliability of the data is the ability of students to repeat same results every time they take the test. Therefore a pilot test was conducted to check whether the results are repetitive or not.

Subject	Content Strand	Content Strand Average	Subject/Overall Average
Languages	Reading	50.24	37%
	Writing	24.92	

f.   Timelines

The data collected from secondary available data sources shall represent the year 2015-16 in which period the data was collected from selected schools of Sindh.
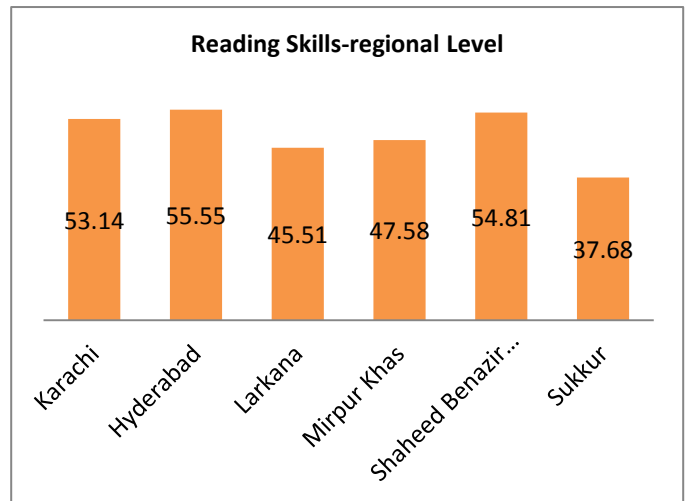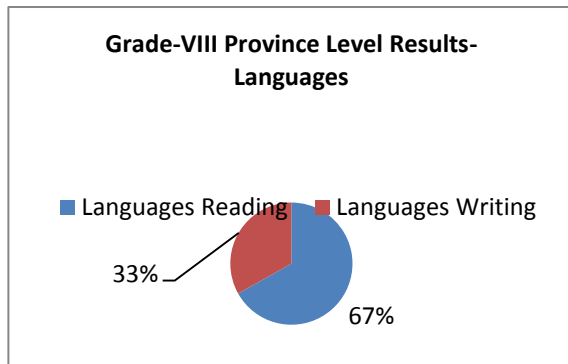
7.   Data analysis

The data analysis was done by using MS-Excel by extracting the results of grade-8 level languages including English, Urdu and Sindhi. The separate analysis was done for district and province level and comparative analysis for the rural and urban results. Further the data analysis shall also comprise of the content such as Reading comprehension and writing skills.

a.   Province Results (Overall & Content Strand Based)
The province level results show that the languages out numbered science and math at grade-VIII level. The content analysis further revealed that reading comprehension was better than writing skills of students in grade-VIII mainly showing poor teaching practices to improve writing skills in province.

Province Level (Overall and Content Strand Averages)

b.   Regional Level Languages Results (Content Strand)
The regional analysis comprised of following regions of Sindh Province.

S.No	Region Name
01	Karachi
02	Hyderabad
03	Larkana
04	Mirpur Khas
05	Shaheed Benazirabad
06	Sukkur

The results for the languages at regional basis show that Karachi region score was high as compare to other region and regions like Sukkur and Mirpurkhas went down. In reading comprehension the Hyderabad outpaced other regions as Shaheed Benazir Abad and Karachi were scoring slightly lower and regions of Sukkur and Mirpurkhas were very poor in scores. Further in-depth analysis based on individual school shall provide true picture of reasons behind failure in teaching languages effectively.

The following table and graph shall make it easier to understand the variations among regions in language content strands.

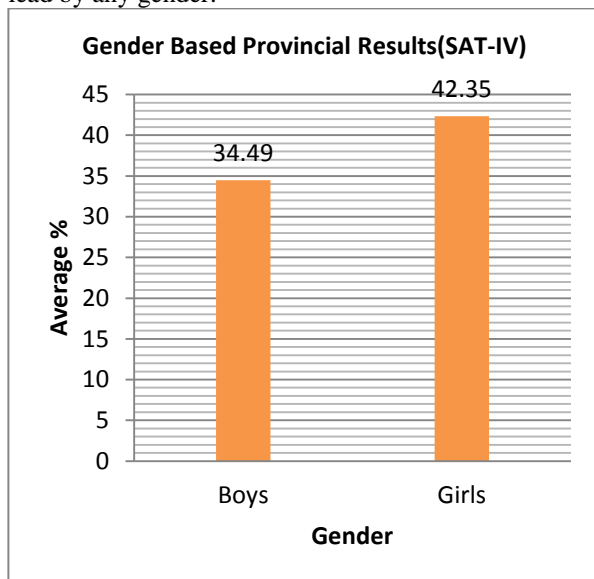| S.No	Region	Reading Average %	Writing Average	Overall %
1	Karachi	53.14	36%	44.77
2	Hyderabad	55.55	22.68	39.11
3	Larkana	45.51	20.1	32.8
4	Mirpur Khas	47.58	20.33	33.96
5	Shaheed Benazir Abad	54.81	25.19	40
6	Sukkur	37.68	18.85	28.26

Writing-Graph
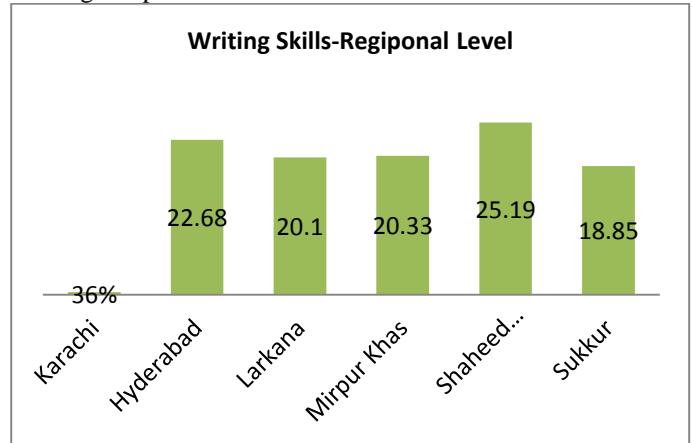
c.   District Level Results of Languages at Grade-VIII (Content Strand)
The Sindh province comprise of overall 29 districts including districts of metropolitan city Karachi. The results at district level again show that grade VIII students score more in reading comprehension as compare to writing, surprisingly the district Jamshoro led the scores in reading and Karachi's Korangi district led in writing section. More than twenty districts of Sindh scored 50% in reading, 06 district with par score above 30% in writing and remaining districts failed to reach 30% which is matter of concern for districts to improve writing skills of students. The high variation among district show lowest performance and the standard deviation of 15-20% is of the level where one needs to rectify the policies.

S.No	District	Reading Average	Writing Average	Overall Average	
1	Korangi Karachi	53.97	41.36	47.66	10.08
2	West Karachi	53.25	36.96	45.11	7.53
3	Central Karachi	53.1	36.71	44.91	7.33
4	Jamshoro	61.88	26.37	44.13	6.55
5	South Karachi	50.99	35.61	43.3	5.72
6	East Karachi	52.73	33.26	43	5.42
7	Shaheed Benazirabad	58.08	25.99	42.03	4.45
8	Malir Karachi	55.24	26.55	40.89	3.31
9	Tando Allah Yar	56.57	24.87	40.72	3.14
10	Sujawal	59.24	21.11	40.18	2.6
11	Badin	56.41	23.73	40.07	2.49
12	Umerkot	57.75	22.08	39.91	2.33
13	Mitiari	58.6	20.57	39.58	2
14	Sanghar	53.49	25.13	39.31	1.73
15	Kambar-Shahdadkot	55.17	22.91	39.04	1.46
16	Dadu	58.09	19.5	38.8	1.22
17	Naushero Feroz	53.02	24.54	38.78	1.2
18	Thatta	52.6	23.84	38.22	0.64
19	Tharparkar	58.58	17.7	38.14	0.56
20	SUKKUR	46.23	27.39	36.81	-0.77
21	Hyderabad	50.17	23.25	36.71	-0.87
22	Kashmore	53.79	17.66	35.72	-1.86
23	Tando Mohd Khan	49.02	21.44	35.23	-2.35
24	Larkana	43.27	20.03	31.65	-5.93
25	Jacobabad	38.93	19.45	29.19	-8.39
26	Shikarpur	39.26	18.97	29.11	-8.47
27	Ghotki	36.78	19.73	28.25	-9.33
28	Khairpur Mirs	36.84	17.42	27.13	-10.45
29	Mirpur Khas	32.78	21.38	27.08	-10.5

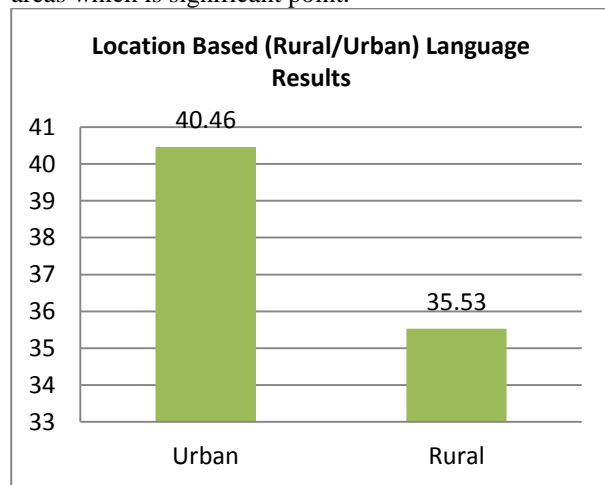## d.   Gender Based Provincial Language Results

The results based on gender category shows slightly difference in mean scores as girls are ahead of boys but with slight high score which is not very significant enough to show lead by any gender.

higher than urban areas and number of girls' students are higher in urban located school than rural areas mainly due to social factors. Our analysis show that girls have edge over boys in languages on gender basis and on the basis of location, urban schools have 5% more mean score than rural areas which is significant point.

Gender Based Provincial Results(SAT-IV)

e.   Location Based Results (Rural/Urban)

The schools in Sindh are located in both urban and rural areas and data of SEMIS [24] the quantity of middle schools is

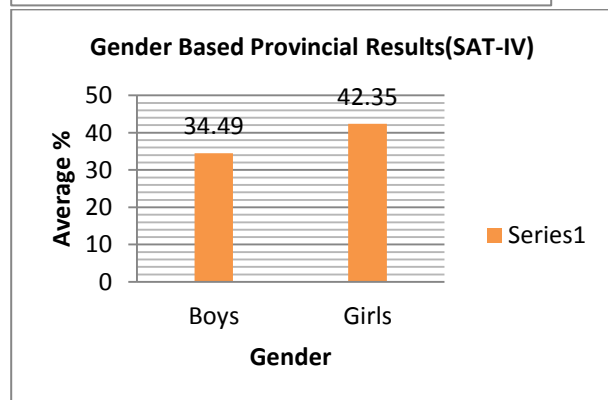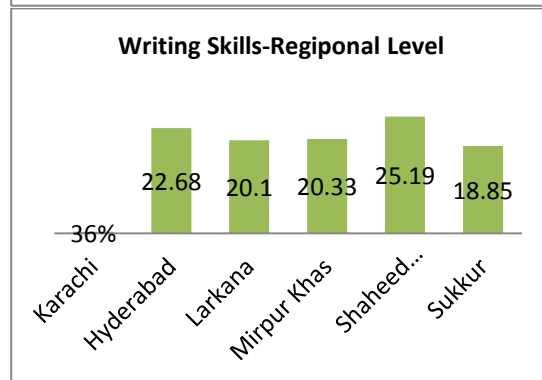Location Based (Rural/Urban) Language Results
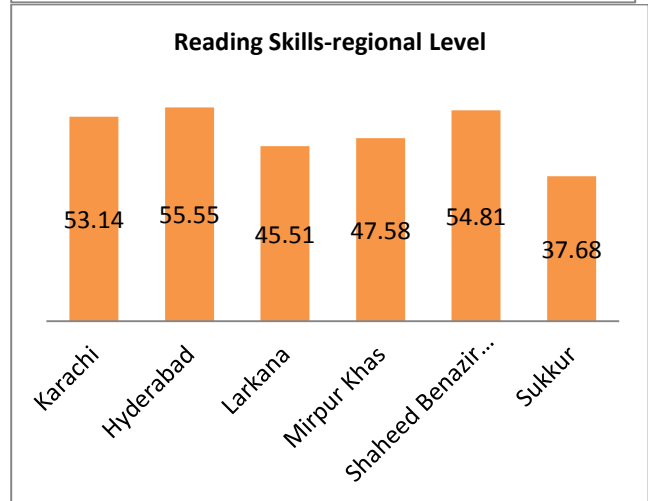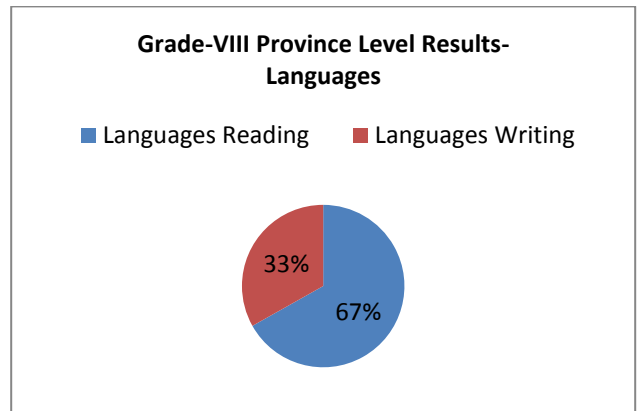
8.   Findings

After going through the analysis of secondary data of SAT-IV and extraction of the language results for the grade VIII, our findings show that overall language teaching/learning at provincial level middle schools difficulties faced by students
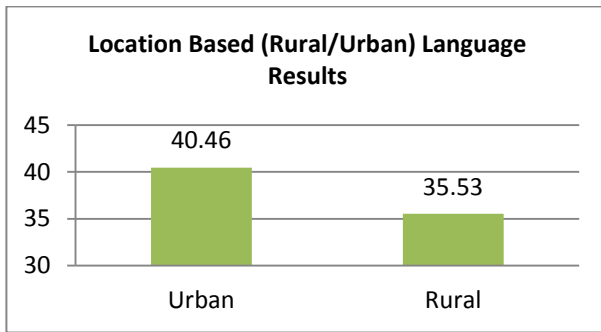
in writing abilities as average score of reading (50.24) is higher than of writing score which is 24.92 almost half of the reading comprehension. The reasons behind our province lacking writing skills can be attributed to shortage of trained teachers of Sindhi,Urdu and second language English. Our research further revealed that at regional level out of six regions Hyderabad holds significant score of 55 in reading, followed by Shaheed Benazir Abad with mean score of 54.81 and Karachi on third.if we look at the writing skills Karachi has clear edge over other regions with mean score of 36 or 36%.The Karachi is metropolitan city, therefore, teachers and other resources are doing well in that region but situation in Sukkur and Larkana regions is very worst.

The district results analysis show that in Hyderabad region district Jamshoro has highest mean score of 61 in reading comprehension followed by district Matiari and Sujawal, worst performers again belong to north Sindh mainly Ghotki and Larkana with mean score below 40%.In writing skills three districts of Karachi have significant score followed by Jamshoro. The Sindh government has taken steps to improve overall condition of schools by implying public-private partnerships, measures like teacher capacity building and revised curriculum with strict policy implementation in weak performing districts shall improve language proficiency in students of middle level.

The finding relating to gender parity show that in Sindh province the girls are more efficient in language learning as compare to boys where girls mean score is 42 and boy hold score of 32 which clearly show that girls are doing better in languages as compare to that of boys. Likewise location based analysis show that middle schools based in urban areas have more mean score of 40.46 and rural area based middle schools fall 5% less than urban score (35%).During our analysis of language skills of middle schools we found that the difference in mean score is significant enough to revise the policies for middle schools where students are unable to read and write in language subjects like English, Urdu and Sindhi. The importance should be given to English language as second language and has importance in today's advance world of opportunities. The mother tongue subjects like Sindhi in Sindh and Urdu in urban areas should also be given due importance as students at middle level should be enough skilled in their own languages to do better at English language. The results further give insight that schools based in regions like Hyderabad, Karachi and Shaheed Benazir Abad have good control over language teaching and situation regions like Larkana and Sukkur is not much encouraging and ask for prompt actions to overcome disabilities of grade schools in that regions. The girls versus boys ratio is also showing slight difference as girls are doing better.

The below are the figures extracted from SAT-IV and analysed on MS-Excel;

Grade-VIII Province Level Results-Languages

- Languages Reading
- Languages Writing

33%
67%

Reading Skills-regional Level

Karachi	Hyderabad	Larkana	Mirpur Khas	Shaheed Benazir...	Sukkur
53.14	55.55	45.51	47.58	54.81	37.68

Writing Skills-Regiponal Level

Karachi	Hyderabad	Larkana	Mirpur Khas	Shaheed...	Sukkur
36%	22.68	20.1	20.33	25.19	18.85

Gender Based Provincial Results(SAT-IV)

Gender	Average %
Boys	34.49
Girls	42.35

Series1

Location Based (Rural/Urban) Language Results

9.   CONCLUSIONS

The Pakistan is aspiring to meet the challenges of 21st century and fulfill the requirements of global commitments to SDGs to improve overall poor condition of education and poverty which are key reasons behind failure of nations. The vision 2025 is one the strategies to meet the goals of 2030 under which country has to uplift the living standard of its citizens by providing with them safe environment, quality education and technical skills. The Education in Sindh is taking off for improvement in wake of recent policy actions like public-private partnership to improve and monitor the delivery of quality education. After going through results analysis and findings from SAT-IV report regarding grade VIII (middle schools) students we can conclude that there is a gap between the teaching and learning process it may be attributed to untrained teaching staff and lack of facilities for middle schools so that they are unable to impart language proficiency among them. There is also need of paying attention to regions like Larkana and Sukkur. The special trainings of teachers in particular language must be initiated along with revision of language curriculum coming with specific improvement specially in writing skills because results show drastic situation. The situation in rural areas is also alarming as findings show that language proficiency in middle schools of Sindh are less productive than schools situated in urban areas. The government of Sindh should play role to improve language teaching at schools' levels especially at grade VIII level because it is the stage after which they enter secondary and higher secondary education where they have to choose about their careers and language proficiency mainly in English, becomes vital for them to succeed in future.

10.   Strengths and limitations

As our research is based on quantitative data, thus, is necessary to define what quantitative research is and what strengths and limitations faced during utilization of secondary data available of SAT-IV report. Quantitative data can be defined as the information acquired through surveys from large respondents which answer the questions like what, when and who. In our case the respondents are the students of grade-VIII of schools based in Sindh. The secondary data of SAT-IV report was extracted to answer our research questions with help of MS-Excel statistical tools (Mean and %age) the data was rearranged according to our requirement.

a.   Strengths of Our Research

The sample was well selected so the findings relating to grade-VIII language students can be representative of whole population. The process of analysing secondary data with the help of MS-Excel was very easy to compute and make graphs and the data was reliable as it was compiled by the experts of education and IT sector of Sukkur IBA SAT-project team.

b.   Limitation of Study

The limitation of secondary data is that it is already analysed and original data collection would have got a lot of time & cost. As we have just extracted the required data from the already compiled study therefore our statistics could be new and not matching with original findings.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

[1]   Mackay, 2002.
[2]   Nunan, 1988.
[3]   Warsi, 2004.
[4]   A. Huxley, Interviewee, [Interview]. 1958.
[5]   L. Vygotsky, Social Development Theory, 1962.
[6]   N. F. a. C. R. Douglas Fisher, Content-Area Conversations, 2008.
[7]   Khalique, 2008.
[8]   S. G. a. R. Aziz, "Teachers' Level of Proficiency in English Speaking as Medium of instruction," *Bulletin of Education & Research university of Punjab,* pp. 1-10, 2015.
[9]   SAT-IBA, "Standardized Achievement Test 2012," Sukkur IBA, 2012.
[10] SAT-IBA, "Standardized Achievement Test," Sukkur IBA, 2013.
[11] ASER-Punjab, "Annual status of Education," SAFED, 2015.
[12] D. Ali, "Policy Analysis of Education in Sindh," UNESCO,PAKISTAN, 2011.
[13] Z. Mustafa, "The languages in Sindh Schools," *Dawn Newspaper,* Dec 2015.
[14] SAHE, "Teaching and Learning English Sindh Schools," *SAHE.*
[15] A. R. Tariq, "Difficulties in Learning English as Second Language," *Academic Research Internation,* 2013.
[16] I. Surabaya, 2011.
[17] N. Rathod, "Social Facors in Seond Language Acquisition," 2012.
[18] Paik, 2008.
[19] A. J. Rizvi, "General Factors Hindering Pakistani Students in Acquistion of English as Second Language," *Journal of Literature,Languages and Linguistic,* 2016.
[20] B. &. Rasool, 2008.
[21] Mansoor, 2005.
[22] F. Shamim, 2011.
[23] B. Sheeraz, "The importance of Culture in Second And Foregin Learning," *Dinamika Ilmu,* 2015.
[24] RSU, "SEMIS Report," 2015.