

CIES 2016 Conference Proposal

The role, function, and purpose of education: An international comparative perspective

Translating and appropriating the right to education in Pakistan

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In 2010, Article 25-A of the Pakistan Constitution made free and compulsory access to education a right for every child ages 5-16 in the nation, as to be determined by provincial law. Additional policy interventions have been put into place at the national and provincial levels to better articulate educational goals and to increase access to quality education. In Pakistan, several factors impede turning the constitutionally mandated right to education a reality. Alif Ailaan (2014) estimates that approximately 25 million children between ages 5-16 are out of school, highlighting parental and/or child unwillingness, cost, distance, and conflicts with working as reasons for not attending or drop out. Based on interviews conducted in Islamabad during the summer of 2015, this paper examines how different entities in Pakistan take up the right to education in a variety of ways. While considering that national and provincial-level policies can be viewed as documents built on implicit prescribed behaviors and assumptions about the purpose of education, this paper also emphasizes the appropriation of the right to education as a response to locality (Levinson, Sutton, and Winstead 2009). In other words, what potentially competing conceptions of the purpose of education within Pakistan today play a role in the contextualization and potential transformation of the internationally influenced and nationally mandated right to education? In doing so, I push back on Merry's (2009) concept of vernacularization of rights to posit that something may in fact be lost in the process of translation and appropriation.