

Within the state and non-state systems of education in Pakistan today, there are currently two prominent narratives regarding the purpose of education. The first is a social justice narrative tied to the recent constitutional amendment, Article 25-A, which makes education a right for every child. The second is an instrumental narrative linked with the future economic growth of the country. In other words, every child should have access to schooling because it is his or her right to do so and/or because it is imperative that everyone has access to participate in the national economy. These narratives are not dichotomous and some organizations and state policies intertwine both the instrumental and social justice aspects of schooling. Narratives in both sectors of education appear to develop from a top down level, aimed at rationalizing different types of programs and development efforts for marginalized groups in lower socio-economic levels of society. My research is interested in the non-state narratives held and disseminated by the transnational staff of non-governmental organizations. I will examine how transnational actors, who either studied abroad or travel outside of Pakistan frequently, form narratives about education in Pakistan. This includes asking how transnational educational development workers navigate and negotiate what it means to be an educated person for various levels of society through policy and non-state education development work.

As a doctoral student in Indiana University's Education Leadership and Policy Studies program, and a current US citizen, I seek the American Institute of Pakistan Studies Summer Travel Grant to facilitate travel to Islamabad, Pakistan to conduct preliminary dissertation ethnographic fieldwork amongst non-governmental organization staff members in the education development sector. I propose to spend five weeks in Islamabad (June 24 – August 3, 2015) interviewing employees and members of education development NGOs.

Because I am interested in how policies and narratives about the purpose of education are formed and disseminated, I take a critical qualitative ethnographic methods approach. This summer, I hope to gain access to and insights about contemporary development sector narratives regarding education in Pakistan in order to further investigate the global and local influences of the social justice and instrumental narratives about the purpose of education. This work will contribute to studies of development, education policy, globalization, philosophy of education and international and comparative education. This research will be preliminary work, supporting my larger dissertation project to commence in the summer of 2016.

In 2014, I carried out three weeks of preliminary research in Islamabad to gauge feasibility of long term work in Pakistan and through my previous contacts, interviews with staff members of particular NGOs have already been coordinated for this summer. I do have three years of spoken Hindi-Urdu language training and can read and write in Urdu, and while it will be very helpful, it will not be vital to the success of this study, as interviews will mostly be conducted in English.

This preliminary work is vital to my larger dissertation project to further identify stakeholders, deepen my connections with research contacts, and consider additional fieldwork sites in Islamabad. AIPS funding will enable me to conduct pre-dissertation data collection as well as establish additional relationships in the field of education development in Pakistan.