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RESEARCH STATEMENT

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the last 25 years, the number of international organizations working in Pakistan's education sector has increased dramatically. At present, almost all international organizations are involved in educational development programs across the country, providing financial, technical, and policy-oriented support. While there have been many improvements, Pakistan's educational outcomes are consistently poor. In fact, Pakistan's enrollment, retention and student achievement rates remain the lowest in the region. Meanwhile, international and local financial assistance to education has continued to increase.

Given the inundation of involvement in education in Pakistan, 5.5 million children are still out of school (ACTED, 2011). Primary school net enrollment is 72.1 percent and secondary school net enrollment is less than 30 percent (UNICEF, 2011). Moreover, there are large disparities in enrollment, retention and completion between and within provinces. Why are more children not in school in a country where almost every major international and local organization is involved?

I am interested in taking a deeper look into international and local donor involvement in the education sector of Pakistan. I predict that harmonization- alignment and coordination- between donors is weak and that gaps in the reach of programs exist, which can and may have already lead to marginalization or exclusion of specific groups, and perhaps those groups that need the support most. If I receive the American Institute of Pakistani Studies Summer Research/Travel Grant I will conduct crucial pre-dissertation baseline research on the aforementioned issue. In addition, my research will include the history of aid and teacher education reform in Pakistan, as well as why and how different actors became involved in teacher education reform.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following comprise my current working research questions for my dissertation:

1. What is the history of aid and teacher education reform in Pakistan?
2. Why and how have different actors become involved in teacher education reform in Pakistan?
3. To what extent do international and local organizations involved in teacher education reform coordinate and align their programs and support?

METHODOLOGY

I plan to travel to Islamabad in August 2014 for 3-5 weeks in order to conduct pre-dissertation research on teacher education reform. The methods I will employ during this trip include:

- ❖ Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders- representatives from international and local organizations working in teacher education reform and policy officials in the Higher Education Commission- in Islamabad and possibly Lahore
- ❖ Document analysis of policy reports, organizational reports and budgets, etc.

FEASIBILITY/ACCESS

As a doctoral candidate in the International and Transcultural Studies Department at Teachers College, Columbia University, I am specializing in teacher education and policies, focusing my dissertation research on teacher education reforms in Pakistan. Prior to enrolling in the doctoral program, I worked for two years on the USAID Teacher Education Project in Pakistan. I spent nine months in Islamabad, collaborating with policy officials and key stakeholders in each provincial education department. I have a variety existing contacts with local and international staff as well as officials working with the Higher Education Commission. I am planning to meet with those individuals as well as establish new contacts and build rapport with key stakeholders in Islamabad.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

During my August trip, I plan to ascertain the feasibility of my dissertation research plans- to be carried out in 2015- and refine the research design by identifying trends and gaps in this critical area of education policy. In addition, I hope to compile a history of international and domestic aid and teacher education reform in Pakistan. Thank you.