

American Institute of Pakistan Studies and  
Pakistan Higher Education Commission

Workshop on Research Methods for Ph.D. candidates of Government,  
International Relations, and Political Science, December 5-8, 2010

Workshop Report  
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For over a decade, restrictions on research have been well known to U.S. scholars working in Pakistan. But strenuous efforts by AIPS have yielded new programs to promote scholarship for American and Pakistani scholars. These include, in both Pakistan and the United States, dissertation research opportunities, and lecturing visits, international conferences, and, in Pakistan, a series of doctoral dissertation workshops, co-sponsored with the Government of Pakistan's Higher Education Commission.

Professor Rifaat Hussain (Defence and Strategic Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University) and I conducted a workshop on research methodologies for Pakistani doctoral students of government, international relations, and political science, from December 5 to December 8, 2010, in Islamabad.

The workshop was the fourth in the series of dissertation workshops. The first AIPS / HEC dissertation workshop in Pakistan was conducted in May 2009 by Professor David Gilmartin (History, North Carolina State University) and Professor Robert Nichols (History, Stockton College) and involved Ph.D. students of history. Professor Kamran Ali (Anthropology, University of Texas Austin) and Dr. Humeira Iqtidar (Cambridge University) conducted a workshop in May 2010 for Pakistani doctoral students in anthropology. The third workshop, conducted by Professor Anita Weiss (International Studies, University of Oregon) and Saba Gul Khattak (Pakistan Planning Commission), was for doctoral candidates in women studies, and was held in November 2010.

Professor Hussain and I selected 12 participants, from nine universities, including the University of Bahawalpur, Hazara University, the International Islamic University, Karachi University, the National Defence University, the University of Peshawar, the University of Punjab, Quaid-i-Azam University, and the University of Sindh, Jamshoro. There were no applicants from Balochistan or the Northern Areas.

Projects related to civil society and the university in Pakistan,

constitutionalism in Pakistan, the law of armed conflict, international refugee law, and international financial institutions, military–civilian relations, political parties, and the non-profit sector in Pakistan, various security issues in South Asia, and the origins of violent extremism.

We gave participants an agenda and reading material in advance so that we could be productive from the start. Participants also received others' proposals and, during the workshop, material that illustrated methodologies under discussion.

The workshop participants were thoughtful, engaged, receptive, and well prepared. Participants were asked to come to the workshop each day prepared to answer specific questions about the reading (on methodologies) and about their own projects. Participants prepared presentations on their central question or hypothesis; whether it would be better to answer their question or to test their hypothesis using a case oriented or a variable oriented approach (or both); and how to define concepts, identify variables, and select indicators.

Charles Ragin's *The Comparative Method*, 1987 and Professor Hussain's presentation on variables, measures, and indicators allowed for successively focused presentations and for generally beneficial discussion. Where necessary, we transformed assertions into hypotheses (or null-hypotheses) and questions into questions that could be answered with research and analysis.

Participants were asked to revise and resubmit their proposals in light of the advice given at the workshop. Some have done so and reshaped their proposals in significant ways.

The three and a half day workshop improved, I think, the quality of the proposed research methods. One participant reported that "We got very helpful counseling regarding our proposal, research questions and methodology," said one of the workshop participants. "This will prepare us to cope with upcoming difficulties in the process of our research."

The service of all staff of the AIPS Islamabad was truly commendable. Center Director Nadeem Akbar and Deputy Center Director Mr. Ghulam Rasool provided us with the applications well in advance of the workshop, handled adeptly last minute HEC directives arranged participants' travel, and readily providing workshop material to participants.