

On Returning to Pakistan after Studying in the UK: The Life Stories of Three Teachers

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter is based on life-story interviews of three Pakistani teachers who came to the UK to pursue higher education (i.e. PhD). The chapter focuses on their lives in the UK and how this experience influenced their life, attitude, and behaviour after they went back home. Drawing on Bourdieu's notion of habitus as the analytic tool, the present study focuses on, firstly, the dilemma faced by these teachers in the UK due to the cultural and educational differences, and how each of them learned to cope with it. Secondly, the present study looks at the dilemma faced by these teachers upon their return home after acquiring education and spending five years of their life in the UK and how they continue to struggle to cope with it. The chapter aims to understand and highlight the identity crisis faced by the participants due to their experiences in two completely different cultures.

INTRODUCTION

For the most part, the cases of interest in education and social services are people and programs. Each one is similar to other persons and programs in many ways and unique in many ways. We are interested in them for both their uniqueness and commonality. We seek to understand them. We would like to hear their stories. We may have reservations about some of the things the people tell us, just as they will

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question some of the things we will tell about them. But we enter the scene with a sincere interest in learning how they function in their ordinary pursuits and milieus and with a willingness to put aside many presumptions while we learn.

Stake (1995, p. 1) starts the first chapter of his book with the above words. I also started this study out of an interest in the lives of people, in this case, teachers. That is the reason behind choosing life stories as a method of data collection. Holland and Quinn (1987, p. 345) define life history as, ‘a presentation of his or her experiences and sense of self that is a collaborative product’ of the participant and the researcher.

This chapter is based on the stories of three teachers who came to the UK for their PhDs, and how this experience changed their perception of themselves, the society in general and towards teaching and learning in particular. Each of these teachers had their prior education in Pakistan, i.e. before coming to the UK. After their Masters in English, each of them taught English language and literature in a state-run university, University of Sindh, in Pakistan.

I am one of the three participants of the research. However, I will keep myself – the researcher, in first person and myself – the participant, as third person throughout. This will make it easier for the readers to differentiate between the researcher and the participants.

By using life story interviews, this research brings forth in-depth data acquired and helps us hear the voices of the participants clearly. This research intends to provide concrete examples of how people’s temperament and behaviour changes so extraordinarily during the few years of stay outside their home country. The findings are expected to help readers understand the issues and problems faced by a foreign student, in the UK particularly. This study therefore aims at understanding identity issues and the sense of displacement participants of this research faced, both during their study tenure in a foreign country (UK) and upon their return home (Pakistan).

I have chosen Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* to discuss my data, the reason being that *habitus* has an empirical relevance. Bourdieu describes his concepts (field, capital, *habitus*, symbolic violence, etc.) as ‘open concepts designed to guide empirical work’ (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 107). In an interview with Beate Kraus (cited in Bourdieu et al., 1991, p. 252), Bourdieu suggests that the practical world has its own logic, and it cannot be limited to theoretical knowledge. He maintains that, therefore, an agent knows the social world around him better than any theoretician. Bourdieu’s concepts help to explain the social order of the empirical world. In this research, *habitus* serves as the analytical tool for achieving a greater understanding of social phenomena of transformation through time and space. The next section is intended to explore Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*, with reference to my research. It is followed by the stories of the three participants. After that, I discuss my data with

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