

Full Summary – “History Workshops”

When referring to averages, 1 = best/most desirable response, 5 = worst/least desirable response

Robert Nichols (Stockton University), David Gilmartin (North Carolina State University), and Matthew Cook (North Carolina Central University) organized and held two workshops for junior Pakistani scholars working towards PhDs in History as part of AIPS’ Junior Faculty Training and Exchange Program. The two History Workshops led by Dr. Nichols, Dr. Cook and Dr. Gilmartin were particularly relevant to the professions of the workshop participants and useful in helping them address challenges in the research and dissertation processes. In the post-program surveys, participants ranked the applicability of the workshop to their professions and their overall satisfaction with the program extremely highly (1.2 and 1.14 respectively). Many commented on the ways the workshop contributed to the improvement of their dissertations and understanding of history research in general. They also highlighted the way in which this program introduced them to a more inter-disciplinary approach to studying history. Some of the responses are listed below:

“The US Professors/Scholars addressed almost all the problems faced by the researchers while conducting research at archives in Pakistan and also topic relevant issues and ambiguities by sharing their valuable suggestions and experiences.”

“It was very helpful as the workshop was focused to our PhD project. Therefore, all the activities held in the workshop were very much relevant for the improvement, and for the development of high caliber of research. It was also helpful in making our research more productive to our society and nation.”

“It helped me a lot in the conceptual understanding of my research area and opened up a new mind of thinking programs regarding historical methodologies.”

“1. Through this workshop I came to know about some new research techniques that are used in the USA which can be useful in improving my research skills. 2. I was also able to get to learn about the topic of research of other participants and their work which I found good to know about various trends in historical research. The discussion with other participants was also useful to expand the understanding of my own topic.”

In addition, comments from both the program participants and program leaders emphasized the desire for further and more frequent programming similar to this one:

“The trainers of the workshop were more research oriented as compared to Pakistan....the workshop, research process and writing skills of dissertation were explained in a more sound way. I think such workshops would be arranged time and again.”

“The workshop provided us with the opportunity of having a face-to-face meeting with great professors/scholars who gave us their valuable suggestions and,

personally, I liked the discussion and question-answer sessions related both to the Research Proposals and Books excerpts. In my opinion such workshops should be regularly arranged to provide necessary mentoring to our scholars most preferably in the initial period of their research-work."

These workshops allowed the participants to build connections with the US scholars and other workshop participants. As a result, the participants responded with an average of 1.27 to when asked how comfortable they would be contacting the US scholars in the future for professionally-related reasons, and they gave an average of 1.73 for how comfortable they would be contacting the other workshop participants. This will hopefully lead to a sustained impact of the program as the US scholars continue to mentor those who participated in the workshop and those in Pakistan continue to share the learned information with one another. Demonstrating this, one respondent already has plans to pass on the information learned in the workshop with their students:

"Now I can share my knowledge of this workshop to my students and will tell them how international scholars taught and think about different problems of subject of history."

Six months after the conclusion of Dr. Nichols's program, a follow-up survey was sent out to participants. We received fourteen responses to these surveys. It was shared that those who participated have been able to pass on the training they received to over 68 instructors and 268 students. Some responded that they were able to pass on the training, but they did not list a specific number of instructors/students with whom they were able to share the training, so they are not included in those numbers. For example, one participant responded with the following:

"I discussed with my colleagues in college, with my fellows in university and uploaded on social media."

This demonstrates the wide reach of the program and its ongoing effect on participants and other instructors and students in Pakistan. Almost all of the respondents (13 out of 14) stayed in contact with other workshop participants since the program ended. While many of the scholars noted that the workshop participants were their colleagues, their responses demonstrated the impact the program had on their working relationships:

"The workshop provided the platform for academic interaction with my peers. It helped me in discussing general research processes with them and few of...are doing research on the Punjab therefore with the I can discuss the dynamics of Punjab more conveniently."

"The participants are my university fellows and we often meet on seminars and in libraries and share our work progress and also exchange ideas that may help in our research."

"I have a regular contact with many of them. And we are highly appreciated this workshop in the betterment of our skills."

Half of the respondents have also remained in contact with at least one of the US scholars since the end of the program. An average of 1.29 was given to describe how comfortable the scholars felt contacting the US scholar for academic-related purposes. These respondents, on an average of 1.29, noted that they are likely to remain in contact with the US scholars. Of the respondents who have not stayed in contact with one of the US scholars, all of them indicated that they would feel extremely comfortable contacting the US scholar. This all aligns with our long-term goals of creating a sustained impact in the Pakistan scholarly field.

It should be noted that all of the questions above which required participants to answer on a scale of one through five, scored averages of between one and two, with one being the most desired response. The participants' positive responses were noted in the open-ended questions, too. The comments below demonstrate some of the ways the participants benefitted from the program:

“This whole program was productive, informative and quality wise extreme good which helped students to determine their actual topic and helped in making sense in choosing topic. Such type of program should take place to make students acquainted with up to dated methods of research.”

“For PhD researchers who don't have opportunities to visit the US universities for research and learning this program was a good for them to know about the trends and techniques in research being utilized in the Us universities. If this program takes place in Pakistani universities more often it can help the Pakistani researchers to not only improve their own research but also share their research with the scholars in the US universities.”

“All scholars guided clearly and share research material with me especially I am very obliged to Dr Robert who sent me resource material related to my research project and support me a lot at every stage of dissertation writing.”

Lastly, ten of the respondents disclosed that they have started working on new research projects all or partly due to the training received from this program. Four respondents have published their research since the end of the program, and all four participants noted that this program contributed to the research process. Overall, the “History Workshops” program has connected scholars in the US and Pakistan, and it has supported scholarly research in Pakistan, as demonstrated by these responses.

These comments best reflect the original content from the participants' surveys. However, due to variances in English language proficiency, grammatical errors and compilation purposes, direct responses have been paraphrased and/or edited for readability. Whenever possible, direct quotations were used and will be marked by quotation marks.