

Full Summary – “Social Sciences Research”

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

Organized by Dr. Michael Hirsch, a cohort of five US scholars, from the fields of Sociology, Social Work, Education and Ethno-Musicology, led three weeks of mentoring and workshop sessions in Pakistan, focusing on research and teaching methods in the Social Sciences as well as the respective fields listed above. Many of the workshop participants had the option to receive individual mentoring from one or more of the scholars on top of attending the provided workshops. Additionally, the scholars led a round table discussion at the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS) and a panel presentation at Fatimah Jinnah Women University.

While Dr. Hirsch's program consisted of numerous workshops in many locations (University of Education, Higher Education Commission, Fatimah Jinnah Women University, National Academy of Performing Arts, etc.), we were only able to send evaluations to participants from the University of Education (UoE) and Higher Education Commission (HEC) workshops. At UoE, US scholar Dr. Tricia Jokerst led workshops separately on education-related topics from Dr. Hirsch and the other US scholars, so the participant groups were surveyed separately. The HEC workshops, on the other hand, were hosted by all of the US scholars in the cohort. The scores from the overall averages of all three programs were between one and three, signifying that the respondents reflected positively on the questions above. Participants responded that they would be very/extremely likely to attend another AIPS-sponsored program.

No written feedback was provided from the “UoE Hirsch” respondents and only one provided written feedback from the “UoE Jokerst” respondents. That particular respondent commented that while the workshop content was strong, there was little linkage to their curriculum development and teaching. In AIPS programs funded after this one, extra attention was given to the selection workshop participants to assure the workshop topic(s) would be relevant to those participating. The respondent from the “UoE Jokerst” workshop also mentioned that the workshop leader helped them improve their current research projects. While it is difficult to put together a cohesive evaluation of the UoE programs, more in-depth responses were provided from the HEC workshops.

It should be noted that the majority of the questions above from “HEC Hirsch” scored an average of between a one and a two (one being the best score). The participants found the workshop to be very informative and effective in helping them develop their research capabilities. Nearly all of them responded that they would be extremely comfortable “contacting the U.S. scholar [one of the scholars in the cohort] in the future for academic-related reasons,” which will hopefully lead to a continued academic relation in the future. On top of that, both questions asking how well they thought the program “allowed for the exchange of information between the U.S. and Pakistan” and “contributed to the mutual understanding between the U.S. and Pakistan” scored extremely well with an average of 1.15 and 1.23 respectively. These evaluations demonstrate the value of the HEC workshops to enhancing the research capabilities and networking opportunities of the participants as well as contributing to the exchange of knowledge and understanding between the two countries, which can ultimately lead to better relations.

Comments from the open-ended questions were overwhelming positive, noting the value of the program to enhancing the participants' research skills and desire for future programing similar to this one, as well as the impressive way this select group of scholars interacted with the participants. For example, one participant commented:

“I attend a lot of workshops/seminars, including ones by prominent people. I knew the content would be great. I did not anticipate your delivery and the ambience would be equally as great.”

Another participant wrote the following:

“As a participant, I found the workshop most informative, practical and of utmost most value. One could clearly see that all of the trainers were passionate about the subject and it reflected in the quality of teaching, which was faultless. The workshop was an extremely informative, enjoyable and above all valuable session and I look forward to putting some of the techniques I've learned today into practice. Thanks again for providing me an opportunity to attend the workshop. I have attended several similar sessions in recent years, but this was by far the best.”

Positive responses from workshop participants were common in the six-month surveys, as well. We received ten responses to the six-month surveys sent for the programs held by Dr. Michael Hirsch's cohort on “Social Sciences Research,” though it should be noted that not every respondent answered every evaluation question, so some question averages reflect averages of less than ten responses. Regardless, it was shared that those who participated have been able to pass on the training they received to over 13 instructors and 90 students (some responded that they were able to pass on the training, but 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). This demonstrates the continuing reach of the program.

Another way the program is able to have a sustained effect is through the scholars maintaining contact after the program end. According to the surveys received, over half of the respondents shared that they had been in contact with the other workshop participants since the end of the program, reinforcing the connections made during the program. A couple of the respondents shared that they had been exchanging information/working collectively on research topics with other workshop participants. To facilitate this, most of the participants (from the HEC workshop) are members of a WhatsApp group created as a result of the workshop. On top of maintaining contact with other workshop participants, over half of the respondents have been in contact with one of the US scholars since the end of the program. Of those who had been in contact, an average of 1.67 was given to describe how comfortable the scholars felt contacting the US scholar for academic-related purposes. When asked how likely they were to remain in contact with the US scholar in the future, they gave an average of 1.4, aligning with our goals of creating a sustained impact in the Pakistan scholarly field.

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:

“It provided me with a new enthusiasm, energy and never-give-up approach to conduct and get my research published. My mentor, Dr. Michael Hirsch, is willing to work with me in my future research endeavors in order to support me and facilitate me in becoming an independent researcher of high quality.”

“It has increased my theoretical and practical research knowledge.”

“This mentorship program helped me improve my teaching strategies and contribute more to my students, learning through various social aspects.”

“It helped me in the development of new courses.”

All of the participants who left additional comments/suggestions mentioned their desire for future programs similar to this one, encouraging further exchanges between the US and Pakistan.

To capture longer-term outcomes, another survey was sent to participants twelve months after the end of Dr. Hirsch’s program. We received five responses to these 12-month surveys. All five respondents noted that they passed on information learned from this program with other students/colleagues. Direct quotes are listed below:

“I have shared the knowledge learned with my students in the classes by applying the techniques learned and incorporating it in my teaching methodology. The knowledge was also being shared with other colleagues by disseminating the knowledge among them by arranging a workshop for the faculty members.”

“I was able to understand the basic American Education System at graduate level and have been informing my students about it as well.”

Once again, this demonstrates the ongoing effect of the program and way in which it is able to reach a larger number of instructors and students in Pakistan. The program was able to have a sustained effect by the scholars maintaining contact with each other and with the US facilitator a year after the end of the program. While most of the respondents have not been in contact with this program’s US facilitator, one participant noted the importance of their relationship:

“I have been in touch with Dr Hirsch. He is very knowledgeable person. I discussed with him the research tools of my research.”

When asked to describe major long-term outcomes of the AIPS program, one participant indicated the following:

“I was able to submit two research papers in national reputed journals and also presented two research papers in international conferences.”

This quote depicts one of the many ways that participants benefitted from the program. Although only five participants responded to this one-year evaluation survey, those who responded seemed to have been using the knowledge they gained from the program and spreading it to their students and colleagues. According to these responses, the program has been able to have a lasting impact on the participants and their academic and professional work in Pakistan.

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.