

### **Research Proposal**

#### **Nationalism in education: A study of how political agendas influence identity through schools in Pakistan**

The purpose of this study is to address the research question: *In what ways do agendas of nationalism manifest themselves through the education system in Pakistan?* Taking Pakistan as a case study, I seek to examine the role of the state in instilling a sense of belonging in its people. By looking at the government at the three scalar levels of federal, provincial, and classroom, I will examine the sense of nationalism that the government tries to foster in students through each of the three levels. I will also study what linkages and tensions exist across levels of government in manifesting an overarching nationalist agenda. Distinct from the ideological is the functional aspect of how political agendas compete within the education system. The research of these processes and their inter-connectivity is the second aspect of this study.

This research is important because there have been isolated studies of nationalism in the education system, such as on content of history textbooks (Nayer & Salim, 2005; Aziz, 1993). However, there is no comprehensive study of the entire chain of influence across government levels, exploring the cumulative and counteractive effect on variables on each other. Furthermore, much of current development and policy literature is prescriptive in suggesting how good policy should be made without factoring in how government agendas are set. Since Kingdon's (1985, 2003) formative work on agenda formation, only a few studies (Baumgartner and Jones, 2005; Grindle, 2004) have built on Kingdon's (2003) theory by documenting the processes of agenda formation as they actually play out at the grassroots level.

The timeliness of this study is of essence because it focuses on the non-literary and less explicit purpose of education – nation building – in a country that is struggling to reconcile conflicting narratives on what its identity must be. I argue that while Pakistan's education system has failed to deliver on basic literacy and numeracy skills, it has worked exceptionally well in changing the national identity of one generation to a narrative far removed from the nationalism ideals of previous generations and of the founding fathers of Pakistan.

I further argue that identity, which is typically understood to be deep-rooted and unchanging, can in reality be malleable and pluralistic if critical components of the education system are aligned to send the same message. Therefore, we should not only be able to study the evolutionary process of identity through education in Pakistan but, using lessons from the past, we should also be able to prescribe ways by which a more cohesive and stable Pakistani identity can be achieved.

Since this is a comprehensive study, I break down the main research question into six subsidiary and interrelated research questions. They are categorized into three sections to examine the distinct impact at the federal, provincial, and classroom levels. Research methods include content analysis, interviews and participant observations with participants who work within and in relation to the textbook and curriculum processes in Pakistan. Subsidiary research questions along with the anticipated expense for collecting pertinent data are included in the attached appendix.