

**Program Evaluation of School of Intensive Teaching (SIT) in
Balochistan: A comparative study of Texas and Balochistan
Education Policy on ESL**

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Abstract:

Zahir Hussain, also known as (AKA) Sir Zahir, had just arrived in Pakistan after attending Vincennes University at Vincennes, Indiana, where he had received his Associate of Arts Degree in English and teaching English as a Second Language (ESL), when he decided to initiate a language institute in the name of American Language Center. After mobilizing his painstaking efforts with meager resources, he finally established this non-profit English language teaching institute at Panjgur in the year 1993. He currently runs a state of art English language Institute in the name of School of Intensive Teaching (SIT) at Hub. His facility is equipped with the cutting edge technology, effective teaching methodologies, and a language teaching and learning library.

The first part of this paper informs its audience about the difficulties Zahir has faced, animosities he has endured, and challenges he has overcome in his trajectory as an English language teacher. The second part extensively compares and contrasts American State of Texas's Education Policy (Texas Education Agency's Chapter 89) mandated for English as a Second Language (ESL) Program for its public schools.

Keywords: Applied Linguistics, English for the Speaker of Other Languages (ESOL), English as a Foreign Language, English Language Learners (ELL), and Teaching English in Balochistan.

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Background:

Panjgúr is a small rural area in the Pakistani Province of Balochistan. Balochistan, the size of U.S. state of Texas, is geographically positioned in southwestern Pakistan: Iran on the west, Afghanistan on the north, and Arabian Sea on the south. Pangjúr has a projected population of 480,000 people, and surrounded by rugged mountains. The people of Panjgúr are very religiously inclined.

Zahir Hussain, a graduate of Vincennes University at Vincennes, Indiana-U.S.A., had a goal which he had flourished and nurtured for many years to establish an institution which could provide English language instructions to the underprivileged students, especially the girls in his hometown. Therefore, upon his return from the United States, he started teaching English language at an English language institute in Quetta, the capital of Balochistan. He taught there for six months while he advocated his mission of establishing an English language center in his hometown. He established and mobilized a support group, a social catalyst; within the community to help foster his life-long dream. He explored and utilized different avenues for promoting his longstanding dream of opening an English language center at Panjgúr.

In the past, people of Panjgúr would send their children 500 miles away to Karachi or Quetta to study English. For those parents, it was a great opportunity to rally support for Zahir's proposal to launch an English language institute in their hometown because it was economically very advantageous for them. However, they were small in number. There were not enough people onboard to bring their children to this newly conceived English center soon to be instituted. After six months of rigorous campaigning, Zahir finally decided to take the next step and moved to Panjgúr and began his dream project. He published pamphlets and banners, and launched a full scale campaign with the assistance of his family and friends including some of the prospective students' parents. He disseminated and propagated the message of inaugurating an English language center in every corner of Panjgúr. He was immediately countered by the religious fanatics with their anti-English language center campaign. This convulsed his initiative but

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not his morale; thus, he continued his instigation movement with a greater force.

Implementation of the Project:

He started the first batch of 60 students in 1993. There were 45 male students, a great and 15 female, which a great number were from extended family. The religious enthusiasts commenced preaching from the pulpit that Zahir is an American agent, and being paid to brainwash our children with American culture and liberalism. It is a part of a bigger political paradigm harboring western interests. Teaching children English, especially taking the girls, who have never been out in the public, out of our homes and to be taught by male teacher is against our cultural norms and way of life. He is challenging and dishonoring our customs and traditions. He wants us to abandon our religion and moral ethics on behest of America. Many people believed their propaganda because he had just returned on a State Department funded scholarship. They further stretched their preaching that he is here to brainwash our girls. He wants to make our girls what you see in American television and movies. This resistance proved to be a heavy setback for the progress of his English Center. But he pressed forward relentlessly with the hope of increasing the enrollment later in the next quarter but unfortunately there was not a substantial increase in the enrollment. However things turned a corner after the first batch of graduates. The parents and even families of the non-participating students saw that those who participated were able to gain admissions into reputable Pakistani universities and academic institutions, they slow began to join the camp of the supporters. Furthermore, the language graduates were able to participate and even pass the prestigious Civil Superior Services (CSS) examination of Pakistan; those accomplishments were only attainable through excellent English language proficiency. The fruits of the language program motivated curious parents who wanted their children to be able to achieve same kind of academic honor and career achievements; they began to bring their children to American English Language Center.

Fruit of the sustainable efforts:

After two years of painstaking and expeditious labor, he successfully managed to draw a much diverse demographic with 300 students, 210 boys and 90 girls. At that point, the female students were being taught by his female graduates in a partitioned area. In 1998, the population progressed to 500 students, 300 boys and 200 girls. In the meanwhile, anti-English and anti-American campaign did not cease. They were rather getting furious and frustrated that why their efforts were not producing any results. They decided to strike with a new series of rigorous propaganda, but the language program continued to triumph. By 2010, the language program diligently gained a total of 1800 students, 600 girls and 1200 boys. This was the biggest victory of this grassroots educational movement.

After this remarkable accomplishment coupled with persistent demand of the parents in the community, Zahir decided to establish co-educational school, pre-k to 12, in the morning while the center was being operated in the evening. This new development made the anti-elements very angry.

Reaction of Anti-Education Elements:

First, the anti-elements mobilized their like-minded people and brought them onto the street chanting slogans to *stop poisoning and polluting the minds of our innocent children and adulterating our society and culture*. They carried out a series of demonstrations and death threats, but school continued to flourish. Things escalated when they fired at the gate of the newly built school while children were gathered in the courtyard for an assembly. This incident created chaos and panic. The school administration reported it to the police, but no steps were taken to stop this mania. When he still continued with his pursuit, they threatened him with blowing up his school and targeting his life. He still continued amidst of death threats. They attacked his school with hand-grenades but luckily they did not explode. He called the police and army, and this time they came with bomb disposal squad and safely defused the explosives.

Burning of School Van:

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When all of these events and circumstances did not derail him from his mission, finally, one day the extremists stopped his school van that was transporting 9th and 10th grade girls to school. They unloaded the van, pushed and mishandled the students, and beat up the driver, his uncle. They told his uncle that this is the last warning, and if you and your nephew do not stop, we will kill you the next time. They torched his van and left the scene.

After this incident, all schools were closed in protest in the area. Students, teachers, administrators, and parents marched in protest to the office of the Deputy Commissioner, the political administrator of the area. They demanded immediate arrests of the perpetrators and their accomplices and demanded to be provided with immediate security and protection. This protest continued for months and the teachers and school administrators along with the parents decided not to open the schools until the matter was resolved, because that would endanger the lives of the students and the faculty and staff. The teachers formed a committee and travelled all the way to the provincial capital and met with the chief minister and governor and demanded the arrests of the culprits. They were told to go back and open the schools and nothing will happen. When they went back and were preparing to reopen the schools, Zahir's school was torched in the middle of the night. Despite the fire, school was soon open for operation. He started getting life threatening letters and calls. In the same time, another education activist like him, who was actually one of his former students of his but running his own school and language center in a different part of Balochistan, was tragically shot dead in his car while on a drive. Upon that incident, Zahir moved out of the Panjgur. He is settled in Hub-Balochistan now. He also changed his language school name from American Language Center to School of Intensive Teaching (SIT). He currently has two campuses in Panjgur with 900 students, 540 male and 360 female. School is co-ed until grade 8, and boys and girls are separated in 9th and 10th grades. And he also has a brand new sophisticated campus fully equipped electronically and operational in Hub-Balochistan.

Texas Education Agency (TEA)§89. 1201. Policy versus Balochistan Education Policy:

Texas Education Code mandates that every student with a home language other than English, with a limited English language proficiency must be provided with an opportunity to participate either in a bilingual or English as a Second Language (ESL) program. Province of Balochistan Education Law, on the contrary, does not have any specific laws for students with limited English proficiency; therefore, public schools do not offer any ESL program. Although students speak Balochi as their home language, Pakistani education laws impose Urdu only as the medium of instruction in Balochistani public schools; whereas, other provinces have both Urdu and regional languages, such as Punjabi, Sindhi, and Pashtu, instruction option. In Balochistan, English was traditionally taught from grade six onward, but recently, English teaching policy has been changed and it has been adapted as a compulsory subject from prekindergarten to 12th grade. In Texas public schools language arts is taught as a core course, whereas in public schools in Balochistan, Urdu is taught as a compulsory subject for improvement of arts of language. Furthermore, Texas State law ensures that certified teaching personnel are hired in order to provide a full opportunity to English language learners to master necessary knowledge and skills. The Province of Balochistan education laws, on the other hand, neither requires nor provides any training or certification in ESL. The elementary school teachers teach English based on their knowledge of language they learned from K-10. The minimum qualification for an elementary school teacher is a 10th grade diploma also known as Matric in south Asia.

Chapter 89 of TEA ascertains that the goal of ESL programs in Texas public school should be to capacitate English language learners' competencies in four major areas of language learning, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, through incorporated use of second language methods. Even though the Province of Balochistan does not have ESL program or a goal, American English Language Center has a profound goal which they strictly follow. Their goal is very similar to State of Texas's goal. American English Language program's goal is *to build learners' competencies in four major modes, listening, speaking, reading, and*

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writing, integrating language and content for promoting personally and academically meaningful language development.

The English Language Committee (ELC) is an equivalent of Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) of Texas Public Schools at American English Language Center. ELC plays a crucial role bringing the community and the language program together to help assuage the English language deficiency of the English Language Learners (ELL) in Panjgur. ELC is a non-profit community-based entity that represents the local population, the schools in the area, and the language program. It consists of 3 members; 2 members are from the local community, and the 3rd one is a teacher at the language center. They are all university graduates who have also graduated from the language program. The prime responsibility of the ELC is to help promote and foster the positive and effective role of the language program to the stakeholders of the community. Every two years, the ELC members retire and a new ELC is established; however, the retiring members remain as member emeritus and continue to advocate and support the language program and its vitality and effectiveness for the community. The instrumental role of the ELC, in addition to the role of a social catalyst, is to help establish, deliberate, and articulate curricula and instructional practices which are culturally and meta-linguistically sensitive, cognitively effective, and linguistically and pedagogically efficacious. Moreover, ELC acts as a decision-making body with respect to ELLs placement and assessment which positively affect the students learning process. The roles and responsibilities, including required time contribution, of ELC are explicitly communicated to prospective ELC members prior to the formation of the committee. The qualifications of the ELC members are; to be an influential community leader, a college graduate, and a graduate of the language program. The English Language Committee (ELC) operates as a link between the community and the language center.

School of Intensive Teaching (SIT) Aims and Objectives:

As the name indicates, School of Intensive Teaching program is an intensive English Language Program established to