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Introduction

In over a decade of research among Pakistani migrants to the UK, subsequent generations and return migrants, I often found difficult to get to grips with the meaning that research participants attached to 'education'. Nonetheless, education was very often a topic of conversation, even when I did not prompt interviewees to speak about it.

I would some time meet illiterate first generation migrants who would be adamant that they would want their children to be educated. At my question 'why?', they would find it hard to answer, often retreating to an economically motivated argument that left no space to anything more than education as 'qualifications on paper' that would lead to a secure job. Corollary to this would be that no curriculum in Arts and Humanities would be an acceptable route in education for their children.

A few times I had the (unresolved) doubt that the emphasis on education was put for my own benefit, as if it had been internalised that education was something valued by Europeans. Many more times, however, education, in its extremely vague designation, was referred to as the solution to the 'backwardness' of one's community- members of the second generation referred to education as the solution to the alleged gender discrimination, lawlessness, lack of integration of their parents.

If many of them saw in British education a possibility of civic growth , many others were still worried about the 'bad habits' that their children, especially the girls, would pick up in British schools, especially as the teachers were seen as not willing to instil discipline in the pupils. These are the parents who rely on school for qualification, not for moral education. Among these, a difference between boys and girls would often be made- girls would get a good deal of moral education or preventive measures, while boys were left to their own devices until they 'messed up' and they were due their punishment. (Bolognani 2007). Moral education was not necessarily linked to mosques though, as most of mosque education happens before the child turns eight. Many parents would consider sending their children to Islamic schools because of their lack of trust in the educational system (Khanum, 2000, p. 131), a trend that seems to be consistent (Bolognani 2014).

At times I would meet research participants who were not educated beyond the bare minimum, but had been very successful business-wise, hence defeating the equation education=better jobs. These individuals were not looked down by other members of their community because they were not educated; rather, they were looked upon with respect as 'grafters'.

Trying to evaluate what education means for a whole group (Pakistani migrants and further generation), seems a useless exercise-of course different sub-groups, families and individuals will have different approaches to education depending on their biography. However, biographies are inscribed into history and into a structure. Migration history and the structural constraints of education (such as opportunities and discrimination) must influence the reflections that individuals in the Pakistani diaspora operate around their beliefs and choices. For example, the fact that in Bradford

Pakistani families often opted for Catholic and Church of England schools for their daughters because of the perceived similarity in sexual mores, meant that some girls received better education than the counterparts who were sent to inner city state schools. Furthermore, discourses around education can be internalized and can be reacted to in a way that will shape social performance. For instance, the emphasis by the government on the role of schools in integration, may be taken up by the focus population and either internalised or challenged. In addition to this, in UK there has been for years an alarm on the low educational achievements of Pakistani youth.

Feliciano (2005:841), writing of migrants and subsequent generations in the US, points to statistical evidence that shows how pre-migration educational attainments also matter:

Understanding why some national-origin groups excel in school while others do not is an enduring sociological puzzle (...) the more positive selection of Asian immigrants helps explain their second generations' higher college attendance rates as compared to Europeans, Afro-Caribbeans, and Latinos. Thus, the findings suggest that inequalities in relative pre-migration educational attainments among immigrants are often reproduced among the next generation in the United States. Immigrants do not reflect a random sample of the population from which they came. However, the question of whether immigrants represent the "best and the brightest" or the "poorest of the poor" has been debated throughout immigration history.

My argument in this paper is that often the unintended consequences of education choices for children of migrants have disrupted predictable patterns such as the ones exemplified by Feliciano. This has happened when students attended schools where diversity was given careful attention by teachers and migrants' children were offered a plethora of imaginary opportunities that would have not been available even in fantasy within the family.

Data

This paper is based on data collected both in UK and Pakistan for two different projects. The first one was in 2008, funded by the Institute for Public Policy Research and looked at experiences of return among first and second generation migrants to the UK (15 semi-structured interviews). The second (2011-2012) was Possibilities and Realities of Return Migration (PREMIG) and consisted of 15 interviews in the UK, 8 interviews in Pakistan, 4 focus groups in the UK and 2 focus groups in Pakistan (one with returnees and one with locals). The coherence of collating the two data-sets stems from the fact that both projects covered issues of return migration and had similar sampling strategies. Furthermore in neither research projects, education was a core question, but in both it spontaneously emerged as an important feature of both migration and return experience.

Why the emphasis on education?

Literature on Pakistani diaspora has unanimously taken the attitudes towards education of Pakistanis settlers in Britain as the thermostat of the state of the myth of return: when for instance Pakistanis in Bradford started asking for halal meat in school and particular provisions for PE when their daughters were involved, sociologists have defined that moment as the watershed of the dismissal of the return plan in favour of a settlement vision (Bolognani 2009). Schools, from the public policy point of view, have thus been elected as territories where a whole range of integration factors are tested- education achievements, use of English, negotiation of uniforms, PE, religious studies, religious holidays, racism, etc. But why have Pakistanis in Britain invested so much and in ways different from other minority ethnic populations, in education? For a population that was prominently a labour migrant population, education was not necessarily the main road for a better living standard- this is supported by the fact that the richest men in Pakistani communities are entrepreneurs who often are very poorly educated and sometimes do not even speak English well.

Ghazala, an illiterate woman in her seventies who arrived from the Potowar region as a young wife, has always resided in Birmingham and still does not speak English, says when the children start going to school, you are kind of stuck. Suffering from nostalgia, at the beginning of her life in Britain she would long for Pakistan where she would have an easier life in her extended family and in a hot climate; still, she would not take her children out of school. What makes an illiterate person who would have better life conditions elsewhere, believe in education in UK and invest blindly into it? For Ghazala, education in UK was the entry ticket to a world of security-she had a fantasy (as she knew nothing about the educational system) that getting a UK education would automatically offer a secure job forever, it would provide all the skills (social and practical) to anchor her offspring in a promising future.

The father of Zulfiqar, who would have been the same age of Ghazala, and lived not too far in Mirpur, had migrated to UK in the 1960s but decided to return as soon as he had collected enough money to do the crucial family house building improvements. When his son, Zulfiqar, was invited to join an uncle in UK, he was against the idea because he had seen how easy it was to make money in UK without an education, and was afraid his own son would be lured by the appeal of easy money and would drop his education which he valued above anything else.

These two examples seem to support Feliciano's view that the educational background at migration predicts the educational achievements of further generation migrants-if migrant parents value and have a good understanding of educational processes, their off-springs are more likely to do well in education. For instance, Indians in the UK, who come from a more heterogenous background, perform much better in education in the UK, and are more likely to attend schools beyond their catchment area, suggesting school selection criteria that go beyond logistics. Recently an interviewee in his

50s in Bradford told me that his father had seen that educated people were able to deal with the difficulties that life threw at them better, because he had worked at sea and had been exposed to different ways of life; for this reason he pushed his son to get educated, the first one in the extended family, but he really struggled, because all his Pkistani friends and his family members were working and making money, and he felt frustrated and a 'loser' for not making money.

My hypothesis is thus that although level of education at migration can be an important predictor of further generation's educational achievements, this cannot be the only predictor. There is a connotation, that can often be an inaccurate fantasy, about education, that will push parents to educate children even when they have an inadequate knowledge of what education really consists of. Furthermore, while Feliciano writes about the United States, where the system of education is more prominently fragmented between state education and private education, in the UK (at least for the time being) the educational offer is relatively less fragmented, especially thanks to faith schools who offer free education for a number of pupils of different faith, which is often of a very high standard. This means, that in spite of some parents with a negative education standard at migration, their offspring are given a positive start. The unintended consequence of this, is that even where parents have (often misguidedly) sent their children for education convinced that it would improve their chances to establish themselves financially and securely, often schools become important in the formation of young adults in different ways, making schools important for far more than for qualifications expendable on the job market.

Return migrants and the unintended consequences of their education abroad

Interviewees who had lived abroad mainly for studies, generally presented very positive views of their experience in the UK, but often expressed critical comments expressed on some examples of further education. Although the ones who went to England to study had been dreaming of it for very long, their overall impression was not as positive as they would have imagined. Paying the price of their own high fame were the biggest institutions that according to both Leila and Imtiaz did indeed give them an advantage as far as having a degree from a 'brand name', but did not seem to impart a special level of knowledge. Imtiaz found that his Law studies were much easier in London than they had been in Pakistan:

They only have more teaching aids and technology, but Law is better taught in Pakistan (Imtiaz, male, in his 30s, lawyer, Mirpur)

This mirrored Laila's comments on her less than satisfactory experience about her course:

LSE was a great disappointment I had this idea of a bastion of different politics, and it is definitely not, it is a money making machine. It was not deeply challenging in any way. (Laila, female, 34 year old, lawyer, Lahore)

However, studying at LSE had provided Leila with a great life experience, great resources and also a degree that in her opinion was more important in securing a good job in Pakistan:

My experience in the UK was important because the MA meant a lot. That was the thing about being in LSE even if I was disappointed at the course. (...) I still think that that degree mattered (in securing the job in Pakistan) more than the other from Canada. (Laila, female, 34 year old, lawyer, Lahore)

Study experiences were generally appreciated more when done in less famous institutions. With fewer expectations, there the interviewees were still matched with very sympathetic and hard working lecturers, excellent infrastructure and great intellectual stimulus. Shazib, who did an MBA in London with a concentration in banking, commented:

Although Pakistan is said to be an Islamic country, a Muslim country, but I could find more support for it [Islamic Banking] in the UK than in Pakistan. I got the liberty to do research, the liberty to speak, the liberty to write, and the best thing that I like was that all the study was research based. Pakistan does not offer any research based Masters Degree. (Shazib, male, 39 year old, corporate banker, Lahore)

The theme of the rule of law penetrated views on education, too:

The system is well defined, it has a lot of merits and it has lots of advantages compared to the Pakistani system. In the Pakistani system there is a lot of cheating when exams come, the British system is more developed, advanced, more comprehensive and thorough (Afsar, male, 23 year old, corporate banker, Karachi).

Education as bildungsroman (aspirations beyond qualifications)

Upon being asked if the time he spent in Europe had changed him in any way, Sohail enthusiastically replied in the affirmative, saying that there were many skills he picked up and traits and relationships he had developed in the UK that he could not have done at home. He said that his experience of migration exercised a powerful influence over his development, considering the “*bachpana*” meaning “immaturity” that characterised his personality at the age of 16 or 17 when he had originally migrated. Earlier, he had been used to moving in a relatively limited family circle, whereas during his time in the UK, he was able to meet people from outside this circle and learn how to live with them with great love and consideration. Sohail confidently asserted that “*shaayad yahaan rahke itna kuch na hota; ghar ghar hota hai...*” meaning “Perhaps, had I remained here (in Mirpur), all this couldn’t have happened,

since one's home is, after all, one's home", the implication being that to be outside one's comfort zone is good in an educational sense. He still stays in contact with many of the friends he made in the UK, often phoning them on weekends. When he visits every so often, they extend him a warm welcome, picking him up, seeing him off, taking him out to dinner and making plans for his entertainment.

I thought for years I would like to have an experience abroad more for cultural knowledge and life experience than strictly for education. (Moeen, male, 32 year old, Professor, Lahore)

Most interviewees wish that their children will go to study in the UK one day, even if the education system in Pakistan is likely to improve, because experience in the UK is seen as shaping a better character:

Going to the UK made some changes in my personality and life style, positive changes. If I hadn't gone I would be the same person. It has not changed my nature, but I have developed some positive aspects in my personality. (Fazil, male, 31 year old, lawyer, Multan)

A 'civilising process'?

A participant stated that laws in the UK are implemented properly in contrast with the situation in Pakistan. Thus, due to their experience of life in the UK, returnees learn to follow rules and regulation ("*seekh ke aate hain*" meaning "They return, having learned."). One of the participants said that after returning from the UK, people become civilized ("*sudhar jaate hain*" meaning "They become reformed"). They follow traffic rules and interact properly with people around them. Moreover, due to working conditions in the UK, returnees are accustomed to working vigorously ("*ziyaada mahnat karna shuru' ho jaate hain*" meaning They start working harder). Return migrants start working harder even in the Pakistani context. They feel no shame in doing any kind of work ("*sharam mahsoos naheen karte*" meaning "They feel no shame"). This marks them out from the local population.

Tariq and Dr Naheed liked the UK teaching style and the level of personal attention given to students and the amount of interest professors took in individual development and felt that this would not have been the same if they had studied in Pakistan.

Even less educated interviewees who went through some schooling in order to improve their English had a rather good impression of the teaching methods employed. They mentioned field trips and multidisciplinary and fun approaches as the main enjoyable features they encountered.

Education as contamination

Anila knows some people who have returned from the UK because they want to teach their own "culture" to their children. She says that "*goron... angrezon ke saath... woh to phir usi rang men bacche rangte hain na*", meaning "(studying)

with local British people, children inevitably get dyed in that same hue”, and made anxious by this possibility, parents move with them to Pakistan, so that they can familiarize them with their own “*maahaaul*”). They often put them in schools which teach more Arabic.

Another participant explained that when people from Mirpur go to the UK with the intention of studying, they become conditioned to the foreign environment. When these people return, they feel proud to be British and avoid interaction with the locals (“*woh to hamen dekhte hi naheen hain*” meaning “They don’t even look at us”). The participant referred to the returnees as superior people (“*oonche log*” literally “superior people”) who do not feel comfortable mingling with the local population. Another participant stated that one of his cousins who returned after studying in the UK doesn’t even respect his mother (“*apni waalida ki bhi izzat naheen karta*” meaning “He doesn’t even respect his own mother”).

Conclusions

As expected, views on education among Pakistanis in Britain, just like anywhere else, differ. As Feliciano points out in his study on migrants’ further generations and education in the States, the education standard of the pioneer generation is a good predictor of the achievements of the further generations. In the UK context, however, this prediction is diluted and challenged by the availability of school options. Where a parent who is illiterate, has scarce understanding of the potential of education, and may send a child to a Catholic school because of the similarity of the customs to the Muslim ones, the unintended consequence may be that the child will get a better education than at an inner city state school. As one of the interviewees put it, once your child goes to school, you are stuck. Even parents that had a very basic understanding of education as the process by which one gets qualifications to get a secure job, may eventually find themselves involved in a number of school-led activities that are likely to have an effect on their integration. This parallels the analysis of migration for education made by the majority of the interviewees who had returned to Pakistan. Nearly the totality of the sample was prompt to attach to the main reason for migration, the more abstract notion of ‘life experience’, often coloured by the idea of cosmopolitanism and open-mindedness. Due to this reason, even the optimists who saw the education situation of Pakistan improve at a fast rate, would still hope that their children will go to the UK for their higher degrees, mostly for the ‘life experience’. Such abstract label was normally attached to notions of learning how to live with diversity, learning from meeting other people with different backgrounds, and make the most out of British public space. While the private space of homes was appreciated in Pakistan, the public space in Britain stirred much admiration, especially as far as work environment and the rule of law went. Striking a balance between the longings for a more personally conducive private or public space was what made the decision of returning back home difficult.

Although urban middle and upper class migrants were likely to set off with a very clear agenda and they knew already when they would return, this was not the case for all. What could impinge on the decision to return seemed to be mainly the sense of achievement and the extended family necessities. When an individual had met all they were expecting to achieve in the UK, even a job offer may not be appealing enough for them to stay on once the thought of the relatively more successful use of one's British experience was brought to mind. If an individual instead came from a less privileged background they seemed likely to stay on until at least some kind of achievement, professional or educational, was met. This may not only be linked to a question of honour and the will to show to their community back home that they had made the most out of the British opportunities. It also seemed related to the practical fact that the general perception among rural migrants to UK was that it took much bigger a capital to start a business in Pakistan than it would require in the UK to have a job that allowed a good life style.

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The field of education has been at the forefront of migration social policy concerns for at least three decades in the UK. The debate around integration and education revolves mainly around two aspects: the ability of migrants to integrate depending on their level of education, and the challenges brought by migrants to the set-up of British schooling.

This paper shows that education is indeed a major field in which issues of integration are explored, negotiated and can either get stuck or resolved. However, individuals experience such challenges in very different ways, depending

on their personal history. Education therefore results into a subjective term, enriched with connotations that belong to realms beyond social policy. Education often becomes the central core of the migration experience as it is re-told in semi-structured interviews.

Education can indeed become a status signifier that highlights the achievements of a migration trajectory, but can also become the place where aspirations beyond the ones of formal qualifications are projected. For instance, schools and universities become the main fields where to experience diversity and where

discrimination is faced and overcome. Often, both first and second generation migrants end up seeing education as a process of self-discovery through social interaction and even through the discovery of world literature. As a consequence, education becomes a much more personal endeavour that fits well with the idea of migration as a bildungsroman or 'coming-of-age-story' and a plethora of possibilities for integration trajectories.

The paper is based on the project *Possibilities and Realities of Return Migration (PREMIG)*.