



EDITORIAL

Amidst the severe challenges that 2009 symbolizes for the country, it is a year of institutional hope for Idara-e-Taleem-o-Agahi (ITA). This is for two reasons, a) the launch of a pre-service program for tomorrow's teachers at the Institute for Professional Learning (IPL) affiliated to the University of Education, Lahore, and Higher Education Commission and, b) 2009 marked the sixth and extremely rigorous year of collaboration between ITA and the Pakistani Educational Leadership Project at Plymouth State University (PSU), USA, for the Pakistan Education Leadership Institute (PELI) certificate program. What makes this year so special is the maturing of the innovation initiated in 2008, namely, the in-country follow on component, to ensure that the skills and knowledge obtained at PSU are actually implemented within Pakistan. These are the Master Action Plans (MAPs) which the PELI Alumni 2008 and 2009 designed at Plymouth State University, and implemented within their respective contexts in Pakistan.

During 2009, the ITA team followed up on the MAPs implementation by the 2008 Alumni. This was done by physically visiting the alums sites during the implementation process and by collecting the reports on the MAP Implementation. The ITA-IPL team visited the MAP implementation milestones at different locations across the country. The documentation of MAP implementation was undertaken with rigor to reflect experiences and highlight all achievements of alumni. A documentation format has been created for all MAP reports in order to help the process for 2009 Alumni.

The PELI Alumni 2009 have begun MAP implementation and will be well served by the reporting tool thus created.



We hope that this will help in a more nuanced documentation. Seemingly insignificant events that the Alumni might otherwise have overlooked will be incorporated in their reports as will learning materials created during the MAP implementation.

The significance of the MAP implementation and reports cannot be emphasized sufficiently when linked to out of country certification for Pakistani educators. It has helped them use the PELI experience consciously in their working contexts as the MAPs have been designed around their area of work and interest. ITA IPL has just released a report dedicated to the MAP Implementation of the PELI 2008 alumni (www.ipl.org). This report showcases both the achievements and the lessons learnt from implementing the MAPs within Pakistan. This includes challenges of changing entrenched mindsets, the rewards of persisting against enormous odds and the immense achievement resulting from knowledge creation, a simple sharing of skills, knowledge and attitudes. A very tiny preview of these MAPs is provided in this Newsletter, in the "MAPs 2008" section.

The MAP implementation has been undertaken within the current volatile context of Pakistan. In each location, the PELI alumni are bravely facing severe situations for their very survival, FATA, Peshawar, Multan, Lahore, Islamabad, Quetta etc., coping with constant security threats posed by suicide bombings and threats. Such events have often resulted in the closure of educational institutions across the country. The PELI Alumni have faced this situation with



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a much needed
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Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA)

Plymouth State
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great resolve, including amending of MAPs as required within emergencies, but never giving up on implementation. The in-country PELI component is a humble effort at maintaining and upgrading educational activities and attitudes crucial for this country.

In 2008 and 2009, the Environment and its preservation was a major focus of the institute. With the signing of the Copenhagen Accord in December 2009, climate change is a major global agenda of leaders across the world. It is comforting to know that the PSU PELI initiative has already created a pool of valuable educators informed and able to act on this and other environmental issues.

The number of teachers nominated for the four week program at PELI in NEW Hampshire has now increased to 40 annually from 20 in the previous years. This is a major acknowledgement of continuity of small scale efforts, showcasing how small steps can create major ripples in teacher education and recent reforms in the country.

We look forward to a continuing and rewarding relationship between ITA-IPL and the Pakistani Educational Leadership Project at Plymouth State University to serve the Pakistani Educational System in accordance with the grand vision of **"Teachers Without Frontiers"**.

PELI Reflections by Class of 2009

Some reflections by PELI 2009 Alumni on their time spent in Plymouth State University follow.

Ms. Alia Rashid, SST, GGHS, Tarnab Farm, Peshawar said, "Before leaving (For PELI), we met people from different parts of Pakistan. We were even unacquainted about each other's languages and their culture. But we spent our time together in the USA like an extended family.

"On the other side of the world, when we arrived at Boston Airport, Madam Director Mrs. Blake and her staff welcomed us warmly. This gesture impressed me deeply.

"We were all educators and trainers but we lived in the university hostel like carefree students. ... We attended different sessions, art in education, literacy, conflict resolution and the science education workshop. These sessions enlightened us about literacy and conflict resolution techniques. I especially enjoyed the Science Workshop Watershed visit which was very interesting and informative. When it ended, we presented slides of different watershed areas of our own country.

"... Different community members of America arranged lunches and dinners for us during which we shared our experiences and shared cultural values between the two countries. The Pakistani Medical Community invited us for a dinner. We were extremely impressed by their hospitality, love and Pakistani dishes.

"...One thing that impressed me about the educational system of their country is that there is not a big difference between public and private schools. Students are facilitated similarly in both types of schools...

"...These events made me realize that the American people don't discriminate against others. They respect everyone, they encourage others and appreciate other people's work. They were a very friendly, loving and helpful people. The whole time we spent there, we never once felt alone or like strangers in their country. I was personally impressed by their discipline, punctuality, administrative systems and hospitality"

Dr Kausar Waqar, Instructor, AKU-IED, Karachi, had this to share about PELI 2009, "...In Pakistan, creative writing is a part of curriculum, but the predominant approach of rote learning limits the learning opportunities of these sessions. The teachers, being a part of the same system, find that they are only equipped with the pedagogy to perpetuate the same situation rather than trying out innovative ideas and practices.

"This particular project (The Writing Institute) helped the participants of PELI to access a high quality educational experience which provided new opportunities. The writing project 09 consisted of participants from a diverse background and geographical locations. There were teachers from Dominica, Canada, different parts of US etc. PELI participants were fortunate to have opportunity to be a part of this project for few sessions.

"...For most of us this was a unique experience. It accorded us the opportunity to reflect on our experiences and to find meaning in them. The topics chosen for these sessions were very relevant to our lives as teachers and as human beings.

"The welcoming attitude of everyone else made the PELI participants feel at home...

"The very notion of standing up in front of such large and accomplished group and sharing their own thought and work was unnerving for some of PELI participants. However, embracing diversity and valuing the ideas presented was demonstrated consistently, giving the PELI participants enough confidence to stand up and share their work. The participants not only developed confidence, they also found a new meaning and value in their experiences."

Master Action Plans (MAPs) a much needed component of PELI

In 2007, the PELI was expanded to include an in-country component. The purpose was to ensure that the skills and knowledge gained from the Institute were utilized in Pakistan. To this end, PELI Alumni 2008 and PELI alumni 2009 created "Master Action Plans," (MAPs) at PELI. These were detailed plans of an appropriate activity/(ies) that they would undertake in Pakistan over a stated period of time.

ITA undertook the responsibility of following up on these MAPs within Pakistan. The MAPs were discussed, refined and implemented with the active guidance and support for ITA which is also the funds disbursing body for MAPs.

MAPS 2008

The theme of PELI 2008 was, "Transform institutional and individual understanding of environmental stewardship and cultural heritage preservation and foster dialogue amongst diverse cultures found within both Pakistan and the USA on this theme,"

Relevant MAPs were designed and implemented in Pakistan. This was a challenging task at various levels, as is demonstrated by the experiences of some of the PELI 2008 Alumni given below:

MAP: Society for Nature Clubs in Schools

By: Mr. Khurshid Ahmed, Subject Specialist, University Public School, University of Peshawar

Achievements:

- ◆ Establishing a Society for Nature Clubs in three schools;
- ◆ Establishing an Environmental Youth Front for 13 non school going boys and girls age 12-20.
- ◆ Environment Awareness walks, debates and speeches.
- ◆ Including parents of members of the Environmental Youth Front resulting in their active participation in cleaning their neighborhood.

Challenges:

- ◆ Resistance to new ideas, especially to activities taking place outside the classroom
- ◆ Security Risks in Peshawar preventing free movement

Lessons Learnt:

- ◆ Nature Club leaders must be made accountable for the club activities



"Through my PELI-PSU experience, I learnt about an effective teacher-student relationship, the play-way method and on-the-spot learning. I have moulded that learning to our local context for maximum impact and acceptability." Khurshid Ahmed



MAP: Development of Curriculum for Environmental Literacy among Prospective Teachers

By: Aroona Hashmi, Lecturer, IER, University of the Punjab, Lahore

Achievements:

- ◆ Establishment of Nature Saviour Club at IER
- ◆ Lectures, Field Trips, Group Discussions, Feedback, Seminars, Research, Lobbying activities
- ◆ Situation Analysis of Pakistan's Environmental Situation
- ◆ Celebrations: Cleaning Week, Plantation Day

Major Achievement:

- ◆ Stopping illegal traffic on a major road passing through IER and the Punjab University
- ◆ Narowal Participants took up the issue of water pollution with Ministry of Environment

Challenges:

- ◆ Resistance from the university's Environmental Department to intrusion on their area of work
- ◆ Time Management

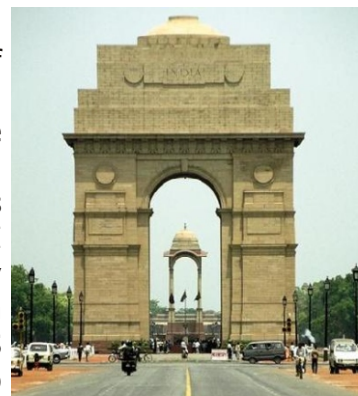
"This work has a spiritual dimension for me. During my PELI experience I saw how the people there give the gift of protection and preservation to the world, and how so many of us destroy everything. While I was still in New Hampshire I said a special prayer of thanks for having the opportunity to experience the beauty of Man truly living up to his stature and acting as the steward of the environment." Aroona Hashmi



The theme of the 2009 Institute was, **“Active and Responsible Citizenship through Education in Cultural Heritage Preservation and Environmental Stewardship.”** The 2009 cohort has just begun implementing its MAPs, the titles of which are given below:


Name	MAPs: Title
Aalia Rashid	Need to Protect Environment
Ali Amjad	Teaching Science for pre-service teachers
Amra Younus	Awareness program with reference to teacher training for waste reduction and water conservation
Anila Aziz	A study to see impact/effectiveness of teachers training program at elementary level
Beena Raza	Video Documentation of 2009 MAPs -
Fazeelat Saeed	To improve basic science education at secondary level through teacher resource center
Kausar Waqar	To equip teachers in the area of arts in education
Khalid Khan	Clean Environment
Mohammad Abbas Bhatti	Promotion of Environmental Literacy through NISTE Master Teachers’ training program
Muhammad Younus Khan	Promotion of Environmental Education in Schools
Muhammad Zafar Iqbal Tahir	Protect Mother Nature
Munir Ahmed	Teacher Training in Environmental Literacy, Global Warming, Water shed and Pollution
Nahid Parween Anwar	Develop Scientific Literacy Amongst Secondary Science Teachers
Naseem Afridi	Water Purification
Rukhsana Nazeer	
Shahida Bibi	Teachers Resource Center
Sima Shuja	Teacher Training on Assessment
Syed Hussain	Training of Teachers in Biology
Syed Talat Khurshed	Teachers Orientation Program according to new curriculum
Zaki Ullah	The Impact of Science on Environment

In order to maintain and improve the quality of professional learning delivered, a Capstone Conference is held annually, virtually or face to face. This conference includes PELI Alumni as well as key stakeholders from Plymouth State University and the US Embassy. The purpose is to review and reflect on the Institute itself and to share lessons learnt from out of country and in-country experiences after each PELI, especially those emanating from in-country implementation, professional growth and networking.



ITA-IPL is in the process of coordinating 2010's Capstone Conference. This will take place in Delhi, India, from 22nd to 26th March 2010. Participants will include representatives of PSU, PELI Alumni 2009 and past alumni, representatives of the Pakistani counterpart institutions, US Embassy in Delhi and Indian educators. The theme of the conference is, “Cross Cultural Explorations & Extensions in Environment, Heritage & Citizenship Education” This follows up on the theme of PELI 2009, exploring how it was implemented in Pakistan and what lessons were learnt from it. PELI alumni will be expected to share their experiences in order to reflect, review and improve upon them.

Institute of Professional Learning (IPL)

The Institute of Professional Learning (IPL) has been set up  with the purpose of improving the quality of education by providing high quality Pre-Service, In-Service & Certificate Teacher education program. IPL in 2009 initiated the B.A/B.Ed degree affiliated to the University of Education, Lahore and in the coming years will be adding BS Ed (four year degree) and Masters programs.

IPL has begun facilitation of educational and development sector of Pakistan in research and training services. Its services include student placement and visa acquisitions, designing and managing conferences, seminars and workshops at national and international levels.

IPL is enlarging its complement of professionally recognized teachers educators and researchers. It has created and is expanding partnerships with schools of excellence and is formalizing linkages with both national and international teacher education institutions. IPL is seeking accreditation from the HEC's National Accreditation Council for Teacher Education for formal recognition of all its programs.

Rolling out the National Curriculum for Early Childhood Education 2007

I Idara-e-Taleem-o-Agahi (ITA) has engaged in promoting Early Childhood Education (ECE) & Learning through play since 2008 in collaboration with Surf Excel Unilever Pakistan. In this respect, a series of trainings were organized for 400 teachers of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in multiple venues across various tehsils of Multan and Rawalpindi districts from October, to November, 2009.

These trainings were one of the CSR initiatives undertaken with support of the brand Surf Excel (UNILEVER-PAKISTAN) in which pre-dominantly government and non government school-teachers participated - the slogans "Dirt is Good," and "Har bachay ko HAQ hay Khailnay Ka!" have been taken to another level implementation in classrooms.

The 2008, and 2009 ECE trainings initiated the promotion of the concept of safe play and experiential learning so embedded in the ECE National Curriculum (ECE NC)2007. ECE NC 2007 roll out was the focus. This curriculum is an excellent initiative of Ministry of Education (MOE) Government of Pakistan which gives effective guidelines to teach small children, defines key learning areas and the competencies that need to be developed at this first stage of schooling.

To each teacher, aao mil kay seikhain taleemi basta or ECE Kit was provided, together with ECE guidelines and a copy of the ECE National Curriculum 2007 for ready reference.

Anita Ghulam Ali Teachers Awards 2009 Celebrating ECE in Pakistan

In 2008 the Anita Ghulam Ali Teachers' Awards were launched by ITA-IPL. These awards are meant to honor exceptional teachers across Pakistan from public and private sectors, bringing them into the limelight as living models of excellence in their field and thus encouraging others to aspire to their status.



The Anita Ghulam Ali Awards for the year 2008 were dedicated to the best science teachers of secondary

schools across Pakistan on pure merit. 3 out of 10 award winners happened to be PELI Alumni! The Anita Ghulam Ali Awards 2009 competition launched on the occasion of World's Teachers' Day 2009 conforms with ITA's support for ECE Training, it is dedicated to Early Childhood Education (www.itacec.org) and this is being coordinated by a PELI Alumni 2008 Razia Din Mohammad housed in IPL/ITA.

World Teachers' Day

5 5 October is a day to celebrate teachers and the central role they play in guiding children, youth & adults through the life-long learning process. ITA has been leading social dialogues on WTD each year since 2004 along with a survey to influence policy makers at all levels through focused recommendations. ITA organized the 2009 celebration of World Teachers' Day in collaboration with Oxfam, Dubai Cares & Pakistan Collation for Education (PCE).

A series of events were arranged to take place from 5th October 2009 to 25th October 2009. The programs were attended by students, teachers, head teachers, faculty members, Non Government Organisations (NGOs), International NGOs, Civil Society Organisations, Non-formal teachers, representatives of Pakistan Collation for Education, UNICEF & other teacher training institutions. The programs were focused on sharing information about the significance of World Teachers Day and the status of teachers according to the UNESCO recommendations of 1966 & 1997 as well as the 10 National Professional Standards for teachers in Pakistan. These are:

1. Subject matter knowledge
2. Human Growth & Development
3. Knowledge of Islamic Values/ Social Life Skills
4. Instructional planning & strategies
5. Assessment
6. Learning environment
7. Effective communication and proficient use of information communication technologies
8. Collaboration and partnerships
9. Continuous professional development & code of conduct
10. Teaching of English as second/foreign language (ESL/EFL)

The programs were kicked off from IER, Punjab University Lahore followed by Federal College for education, Islamabad, Government College for Elementary Teachers, Multan, University of Education, Faisalabad, Govt Girls Elementary School satellite town, Chiniot, Dr. A.Q Hall,

Razia

Razia

Govt. Boys High School Colony, Rahimyarkhan Govt Khadija-tul-Kubra Girls High School, Sheikhpura, In many of the regions of Rahim Yar Khan, Lahore, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Multan, Muzaffargarh, Shiekhpura, Faisalabad, Chiniot. the hosts were the insituttions of the PELI alumni. Thus the multiplier effect continues through myriad routes to create communities of practice and reflection.

National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE) & Pre-Step Training October 2009

PRE-STEP is a USAID Funded program that is working to enhance the quality of basic education in Pakistan through improved teacher education. The strategy is to strengthen the institutions that provide pre-service teacher education.

PRE-STEP, in partnership with the Higher Education Commission, Pakistan, organized a training session to be held from 5th to the 8th October, 2009, at Islamabad. The session was targeted at faculty from various universities across Pakistan. Ms Ayesha Fazlur Rahman, Coordinator Training and Documentation, ITA Islamabad, was part of the process for conducting the Monitoring and Evaluation of the training.

The faculty members invited had been involved in the development of the rationale, outlines and complete modules for the training of Higher Education teachers. These modules were developed and pilot-tested in the month of March, 2009. The feedback from the trainees and the report from the Monitoring and Evaluation team, which included Ms. Ayesha Fazlur Rahman, guided the module developers' modification of their work. The modules were then used in various universities across Pakistan and the feedback from the Resource Persons (the trainers using these modules) and the trainees shed further light on what amendments or additions had to be made to the module design. This was a project of the National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE) which works under the umbrella of HEC.

Collaborating for Professional Teachers Network - PTAN and AKU IED

On December 9th, 2009, a day long meeting was held in Lahore at the IPL under the leadership of Dr. Sadr ud din Pardhan PTAN and Baela Raza Jamil IPL /ITA which resulted in the formal launch of Professional Teachers Association Network (PTAN) with IPL ITA in Punjab. Three workshops are to be conducted in January 30, 2010 luanching 3 major PTAN associations on early childhood, social studies and science education. in Lahore & Multan.

PTAN is a cluster of nine voluntary professional

Ahsin

associations. Its focus is the continued self-directed professional development of teachers/head teachers in Pakistan. PTAN was formed in mid 2002, with a generous support from The Aga Khan University -Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) and Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan (AKF, P). PTAN has formed 9 professional associations originating in a need driven demand for continuous professional development.

List Nine..

The launch of PTAN in Punjab is the outcome of a collaboration between ITA-IPL and AKU-IED. PTAN will be implemented in Punjab through a phased two pronged concurrent process across Lahore and Multan:

- ◆ Initiating 3 day certificate workshops over three months in the areas of early childhood education (Lahore), science education (Multan) and social studies (Lahore) followed by 2 day course on Training of Trainers for sustainability
- ◆ Mobilizing of members for the professional associations
- ◆ Training of Trainers for 3 days to make PTAN under ITA /IPL sustainable and independent.
- ◆ For all enquiries of PTAN/Punjab under ITA call Mr. Ahsin,

Teacher Stories

The outstanding work done by PELI Alumni has been highlighted as part of a UNESCO project highlighting the experiences of educators. This consists of collecting and recording relevant stories. Misbah Javed Kiani, PELI 2008 Alumni and Lecturer at Federal College of Education, detailed comprehensively her struggle to introduce a new teaching pedagogies at her institution. Reflecting on the successful conclusion, she says, "It wasn't I as a person but a mind-set that had been victorious that day; the mind-set that believes in talking about issues in order to find their solutions, the mind-set that trusts young people's talent and respects their opinions ... all it took (was) A little bit of effort and a whole lot of trust, in my students, and in the process of learning as a critical exploration ...These little efforts make a big difference."

The complete story of Misbah's efforts along with the stories of other PELI Alumni can be read on the UNESCO website <http://www.teachereducation.net.pk/stories.html>

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Alumni Outreach Initiatives

In order to meet the challenge of creating Teachers without Frontiers, ITA constantly facilitates the PELI Alumni to take advantage of any opportunities that come their way. This year, ITA recommended many PELI Alumni, along with other personnel of its vast network, to the US Embassy for an English Language Training Opportunity to be held in Hyderabad, India, under the aegis of the US Embassy. Two of the nominations made by ITA were selected for the Hyderabad training.

ITA also nominated many PELI Alumni and other personnel for another English Language Training Program also held by the US Embassy. This is an online (E-Training) program. The final selection for this has yet to take place.

ITA is also active in ensuring that the PELI Alumni remain connected by encouraging them to register on the US State Alumni Website as well as providing access to the PELI Alumni blog-sphere hosted by Plymouth State University on its own PELI Alumni website.

ITA is currently involved in the process of facilitating PELI Alumni who have worked in the Environment Sector to link up with Ministry of Environment Initiatives.

Another initiative undertaken by ITA were carried out under the IPL umbrella. The Institute for Professional Learning (IPL) in collaboration with the US Embassy Public Affairs Section has planned a series of skills development workshops for English Language development. The US Embassy Islamabad offered the services of Beth Trudell, an English Language Fellow (ELF) who is in Pakistan for 10 months. The first phase of the workshop Thinking, Expression, Reading & Writing was conducted from 15 to 17 December 2009 by Beth Trudell. Thirty participants comprising IPL faculty, students, and ITA district teams from the districts of Lahore, Multan, Chiniot, Rahim Yar Khan, Faisalabad and Sheikhupura benefitted from this three days workshop.

The Ripple Effect

Innovative partnership helps transform education in Pakistan

by Jennifer Philion

PELI participants help PSU's Marguerite Crowell (left) demonstrate water analysis equipment at the Pemigewasset River in Plymouth. Photo courtesy of PELI.

This is not your average New Hampshire science field trip.

From the outside, it doesn't appear extraordinary. The classic yellow schoolbus is heading out on an itinerary that gives students a glimpse of a local watershed: a visit to the Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest, a scenic drive through Franconia Notch, and a stop along the Pemigewasset River for a demonstration of water analysis equipment.

Nothing unusual. Until you step onto the bus.

First, the students are all adults. Some of them are high school



science teachers from around the state. The rest of them are from halfway around the world—Pakistan, to be exact.

The two groups are working together on projects for an international watershed studies seminar, part of a U.S. Department of State-funded Pakistan project hosted by Plymouth State University and its sixth annual Pakistani Educational Leadership Institute (PELI).

Each summer, educators from across Pakistan travel to PSU to take part in the intensive, month-long institute, learning about American educational innovations and how to translate them for use in schools at home. The educators represent the wide range of cultures and communities that are part of Pakistan. Some come from large cities like Karachi, with an estimated population of 18 million; others come from the sparsely populated mountains of Kashmir or the deserts of Baluchistan. They are educators in public and private secondary schools and professors in teacher training institutions.

"These are remarkable people who face remarkable challenges in their country," says Blakeman Allen, who has been director of the project since 2006. "They are so hungry to get tools to take back to their students."

Allen works closely with the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Office of Citizen Exchanges, which provides the funding for the project and PELI, and with a partner Pakistani organization, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA) Centre for Education and Consciousness, which was founded in response to the "profound crisis of education" in that country.

"The goal is to create a far-reaching ripple effect," says Allen. The project trains educators here at Plymouth State who in turn train other educators when they return home. PELI alumni have reported sharing their institute knowledge with more than 100,000 of their colleagues across Pakistan since 2004.

Riding along on the field trip bus, Allen's Pakistan coordinator of in-country activities, Beena Raza, echoes the "ripple effect" message. "We want these educators to return to Pakistan and become agents of change," she says. "We're not just giving them a chance to take a trip; we're making sure they take something back that they have action plans they'll be able to implement when they return to their communities."

In the seats around her, PELI participants take in the scenery and get to know their New Hampshire counterparts. They discuss history, their jobs, and the weather. "Does it snow here?" one young woman asks, sending the locals into fits of laughter. They also talk about their long days in the institute—they generally are in classes and seminars for 12 to 13 hours each day.

Amra, a teacher trainer for a private foundation in Karachi that works with approximately 4,000 teachers across Pakistan, is on her first trip outside of that country. PELI's rigorous schedule can be exhausting, she says. "We're doing so many new things, learning, trying to keep it all in our heads. When I go to bed at night, I fall right to sleep."

But the experience is also inspiring. "We want to make the most of every day here," Amra says. "I will take what I learn and bring it back home to share with the people I work with."

Associate Professor of Science Education Mary Ann McGarry, one of the PSU faculty members leading the field trip, makes an announcement on the bus: "At the next stop, we can have tea." The Pakistanis react with cheers. Amra sinks back into her seat, smiling. "I cannot work without tea," she says.

The bus pulls into the Old Man of the Mountain Museum parking lot in Franconia Notch State Park, where everyone gathers for tea, hummus and crackers, and ginger cookies at picnic tables shaded by birch trees. One group walks to the Old Man's former viewpoint near Profile Lake, where the Pakistani educators admire the scenery and snap photos.

They're enjoying this trip into rural New Hampshire, a short respite in a fast-paced month. Along with watershed studies, this year's institute features instruction on conflict resolution and using art in education, as well as trips to Boston and Washington, D.C., where they'll meet with Pakistan's U.S. ambassador. The participants also visit local schools and participate in community events around Plymouth.

"It's been great to see the interest build in the community over the years," Raza says. "People have been very welcoming, and the interactions help expand the views of local citizens as well as the PELI participants, many of whom come from rural areas.

"We learn that there is far more that unites us than divides us. It's easy to say that, but difficult for people to truly understand until they've interacted."

Allen also admires the effect the Pakistani visitors have had on the

"What can we do to help them? What can we do to support them when they go back? These are the critical questions we try to answer."

The project encompasses both the intensive institutes at PSU and follow-up activities in Pakistan. Part of the project's support efforts include a three- to four-month in-country program for participants when they return to Pakistan, following up on the educational action plans they form in Plymouth and preparing them for success in their own communities. Those who have computer access also can keep in touch through a blog, and ITA offers activities and a support network for PELI alumni.

As a final step in completing their training in Plymouth, the Pakistanis gather with Allen and PSU's "Team Pakistan" of campus-wide staff, faculty, and community volunteers after an intense month together, everyone involved has become a close-knit group to deliver capstone project presentations and discuss how they will use what they've learned when they return home.

Allen gives guests an overview of PELI and talks about this summer's experience. The institute is about "people sharing lives and stories," she says. "We've welcomed this group as colleagues and as students. They have become friends and part of our hearts."

Raza speaks about the program's "extremely collaborative partnership, which is truly a cross-cultural exchange." The participants discuss the communities and jobs they will be returning to and what they hope to achieve there.

It's a bittersweet evening of celebration and well-wishes. Before their certificates are conferred and final goodbyes are said, Kausar, a teacher education instructor, eloquently sums up the experience:

"The greatest experience we have had over here is the relationships we have built with all of you.

PSU campus and the towns surrounding it. "Wherever I am in the community, people stop to ask me how they are," she says. "When you're working in international issues, there are a lot of 'one-year wonder' projects: they happen once, and that's it. While those can be great, the longevity of this project is admirable. PELI really is based on building relationships."

It's those relationships with the participants, alumni, and ITA Allen says, that help the PSU staff and faculty involved with the project to understand the needs of Pakistani educators and create programs that will be truly valuable for them.

"This is an extraordinary opportunity for everybody involved, in these two countries, to get to work with real people, real teachers," she says. "They are the ones who are trying to effect change in unbelievably challenging situations." As examples, she cites a PELI alumna who has seen the Taliban take over her girls school in the tribal areas, and another head of a tribal girls school who travels five hours roundtrip in dangerous conditions simply to get to work each day.

"The institute doesn't stop here. It goes on in various directions and various ways. From here onward, what we're raring to do is carry this experience forward and share what we have learned here not just the classroom learning, but the whole experience. That is going to have a ripple effect.

"We come from geographic areas all over Pakistan, from all different positions. We are able to influence many, many educators. We have come up with plans that relate to our own particular contexts.

"These ideas won't only stay in educational institutions. They will affect the general public. All of this translates into us being ambassadors for a new way of thinking, a new way of practice ... Breaking down cultural barriers to be able to work at grassroots levels. To be teachers without frontiers.

"And I hope we are successful."

Blakeman Allen

Director, Pakistani Educational Leadership Project at Plymouth State University



Photo courtesy of PELI

Website for Teacher Educators in Pakistan
<http://www.teachereducation.net.pk>

Must read: New Release by UNESCO & ITA
 Photo of Publication
<http://www.teachereducation.net.pk/stories.html>

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