
PAKISTAN CHINA ECONOMIC CORRIDOR AND THE CHALLENGES TO EDUCATION SECTOR IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan China friendship does not need any definition as both had cordial relations since their independence and have been working together for the progress and prosperity of their countries. Pakistan China Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a symbol of their coordination in developing not only Pakistan but also the region through different projects, including Socio-economic, education and health. The research focused on the educational aspect of this venture to provide opportunities to Pakistani youth in relevant fields; and to clarify what is being done to cope with the challenges, especially for employments in this huge economic investment. It is a qualitative analysis of the previously researched publications related to the theme of study.

KEYWORDS

CPEC, Education Sector, Challenges to Education, Youth Development, Human Resource

INTRODUCTION

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is not just a project of oil and gas, seaports, industrial, agricultural or infrastructure development but it also focuses on socio-economic and educational development in Pakistan. A flagship project under the slogan of “OBOR – ONE BELT, ONE ROAD” is to be connected and expanded to reach international markets of Asia, Europe, Africa and Middle Eastern region via land and Sea (Hali, 2014). This project has great importance for both; Pakistan’s strategic importance is the main target, not only for China but also for America in the region. This venture’s requirement is to develop member countries’ economic and infrastructural weaknesses, so that they can make the foundations of this undertaking strong. This includes educational development programs, to prepare human resources, especially the youth, to meet the job requirements now, and in the coming years. The aim is to support Pakistan to upgrade universities and other institutions, for Professional development to meet International Education Standards (Melange

Magazine, February 10, 2019).

Covid 19 has interrupted the routine life around the world not only economically, but also other walks of life were also suffered badly, education is one of them. There are 211 recognized universities in Pakistan, of which 128 are of public sector. Due to lockdown the world opted for online education, but schools, colleges and universities around Pakistan didn't have the online education model, facility, or technology, by which students could get the desired education online. China came forwards to help Pakistan develop this system by granting \$200,000 aid and 400 classrooms are being built for this smart education. In the first phase some 50 classes will be completed to increase the capacity of distance learning (Awan, Z. 2020).

Through Belt and Road Initiative and CPEC, Shanghai Electric has help Pakistan build many power projects to help Pakistan overcome deficiencies in this field. As we all know, many Pakistanis are studying in Chinese universities hoping to find jobs in Pakistan in CPEC related fields, Similarly, Shanghai Electric has launched a new education program with Confucius Institute at the University of Karachi (CIUK) for the employees of Thar Block-1 Integrated Coal Mine and Power Project, so that the employee can further better their skills under this program and get required knowledge of Chinese language. Pakistani workers and students from nearby areas can take advantage of this program. Already 40 workers and 60 students from different areas are enrolled to this program, which shows a positive response in this regard (Shanghai Electric, 2022). Both countries are working closely not only on language, but also science and technology and many other plans to overcome hurdles in smooth progress. One such institute is in Gwadar by the name of Pak-China Technical and Vocational Institute to provide technical education and skills to the youth of Pakistan. This institution has been outfitted with cutting edge apparatus for granting the best specialized instruction and abilities to the young people of Baluchistan. Youth learning skills and training here can get free accommodation, scholarships, and direct chance to get jobs in Gwadar port, where great opportunities are open for them (Ali, 2021).

Higher Education Commission of Pakistan and the China Association of Higher Education jointly launched "China-Pakistan Higher Education Research Institute" during the "4th Exchange Mechanism Conference of CPEC Consortium of Universities, "to increase collaborations between higher education institutions of the two countries. That will include a number of fields like sciences, economy, agriculture, education and socio-economic development. Scholarships will be granted for students of both countries to draw them close academically. This collaboration will help in exchange of teachers and students at university level to increase the collaborative research in different fields. This will make people acquainted with each other's cultures and living styles and social norms (cpecinfo, 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Saad, A., Xinping, G., & Ijaz, M. (2019). Alleged that CPEC will considerably improve the typical citizen's standard of life. They've discovered that the Pakistani people do not wish to see CPEC boost their educational level. In the context of high-quality education, our findings revealed unforeseen consequences. CPEC, on the other hand, has not yet launched any educational projects and has never commented on educational progress. As a result, their theories disclose what appear to be negligible academic findings. Furthermore, many Pakistanis attend Chinese colleges; yet they do not believe that the education system in Pakistan is receiving enough attention because of CPEC. People's perceptions of considerable job opportunities due to CPEC development were investigated in this study which are to boost the number of job opportunities in Pakistan's local communities and for the broader population. Furthermore, the CPEC is a huge project that has been acknowledged by millions of people and has created 20 million jobs in many areas and will make it easier for citizens to find employments and will help them escape poverty and social assistance. Overall, the CPEC is a valuable strategy for long-term economic growth.

Tadesse, E., Muhua, W., & Lei, D. (2020). Said in this era our educational system must be linked with ongoing development and changes. If we are to take advantage of the CPEC's opportunities, those in charge of education must upgrade the syllabus and resources available at our educational institutions.

Ali, A., & Sultana, S. (2018) Education can achieve the goals of cultural and social cohesion between both partners will enhance their working relations for long-term. Hussain, A. (2017) Discussed that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will also benefit Pakistan's education sector; multiple training institutions are being built in Gwadar, and plans are to open universities along the route in order to bring China and Pakistan closer.

CPEC and Pakistan's Education Sector

Pakistan has faced major economic problems including unemployment, lack of educational resources, and other social constraints. However, due to the economic corridor both countries look for long term benefit, Pakistan sees a valuable growth in employment as multiple opportunities will be unlocked in energy sector, industrial sectors, health, and education sector. On the other hand, China is looking for major opportunity of trade in global markets, creating trade routes through Pakistan, increasing economic opportunities (Saeed, 2020).

While the project is in progress it also plans to work on Pakistan's Youth and their Education and Professional growth, and their priority is to launch Universities offering Professional Education and collaborations with different Education Institutes and plan

to facilitate research institutes and provide international education platforms to the youth by helping them study abroad and plan the same for Chinese Students to study in Pakistan. China also plans to send their faculty and research professors to Pakistan to expand education criteria. The Scholars in both countries join hands in working together on different level of research works. China has announced Scholarship Programs for Pakistani Students and are welcoming them to study in Chinese Universities. This gesture is helping Pakistan to grow its literacy rate, which will be helpful for Pakistan's youth to work in local and multi-national corporations in future and will benefit professional growth down the track. (Maekae, 2013)

Opportunities with CPEC

The opportunities CPEC is creating in different sectors in future are huge. A great number of employments will be created in industries and development related projects like railway development plans, power sector, human resource developments like education, vocational trainings etc. are already initiated to cater the upcoming requirements (Catanza, 2015). As an example, more than \$11 Million is being invested in Pakistan's Energy and Power Generation sector, oil and gas industries, health care and upgrading of current infrastructure like development of new roads and railway network is in progress to upgrade existing trade routes besides new initiatives (Hadi, 2018).

Pakistani Students studying in China, are provided with secured environment and guiding them to access better opportunities in Professional Sectors. In China, there is no gender discrepancy or disparity; men and women are equal and given equal respect and values and opportunities in education and professional fields. Students in China adjust in the new situation easily which makes their stay easy during their study. Pakistan has always lacked in the education sector, especially Science and Technology, compared to other countries, whereas China is mainly focusing on them including education, and is providing intellectual exchange (Melange Magazine, February 10, 2019).

While we discuss the development and enhancement of Pakistan's education system through CPEC, a road map (to connect each town located in each state from where CPEC passes through) because we will need instructors/teachers and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to work and develop this sector in small towns. In terms of the ground realities, these towns have fewer opportunities for schools, colleges, and universities, and in order to provide them with well-experienced and reputed faculty in order to meet international education standards (Bilal, 2019). It is necessary for Pakistan to monitor all undertakings while implementing them under CPEC project. Pakistan's youth is being purposefully diverted towards education in order to achieve their goals, while the government of Pakistan is taking steps in the

right direction in greater interest.

It is obvious that to develop educated resources we have insufficient quantity and quality of institutions. In addition to enhance the youth's capabilities, we must provide higher standards to achieve required goals for the betterment of Pakistan's future (Ashraf, 2013).

Education and Economic Growth

It is also a fact that better education facilities offered to the youth, results in higher returns in economic growth, which adds to Pakistan's GDP (Kayani, 2017). To reduce the poverty rate in Pakistan, economic growth must be targeted on the maximum, as it is the backbone of the country's development. The education sector, along with socio-economic development must be focused on, to reduce poverty and increase in growth. Due to political instability and law and order issues, there has been less investments from Multi-National Organizations in the past years, which had a bad impact on economy, as well as on education. Now CPEC is providing this opportunity to invest in education, which plays the most essential role in the economic growth of Pakistan (Jawad, 2013).

Almost 70% of Pakistan's population is village based. In urban areas of Pakistan, the educational boards that conduct examinations, are demanding more teachers' training sessions, and the current faculty should be trained with international standard education material so that it can be implemented in institutions. However, in Pakistan, the ratio of institutes in rural areas is far lower than in urban areas. The education system must be more modernized and more practical in rural areas as well as in urban, which is badly needed. In order to make the maximum out of the assistance in economic development, we need to be fully equipped with latest equipment meeting world demands (Ahmad, 2013). The plans of CPEC are to develop routes to connected rural areas through roads, connecting cities and towns together, making traveling easy and most importantly, establish institutions in Pakistan to provide higher and post graduate level education. Research think- tanks, development laboratories, and training facilities, accommodating international faculties and scholars are needed in Pakistan, so that modern education can be implemented in coming years, so that Pakistan's literacy rate can be multiplied (Saeed, 2007).

Education is the only tool that can help boost the economic in favour of Pakistan. It is only possible when human resources are trained accordingly. As the growth ratio of population increases, the economic growth is also influenced. Despite the Investment between \$62 billion and \$64 billion (and is still increasing) on promotion of education, it still has a long way to reach the desired goal. (Kanwal, 2019).

CPEC is taken as a “Tool of Prosperity” for Pakistan, and the only solution between prosperity and economic growth is also funding education and is already establishing and will be collaborating with Pakistan (Rizvi, 2014). It is stated that, “To grow economically, a country has to strive hard towards better educational opportunities, leading to development (Mushtaq, 2017). In order to see a prosperous Pakistan with a steady economic growth is the key to success for Pakistan (Aslam, 2016).

HEC Pakistan is making six China study centres under the PC-1 titled "Academic Collaboration under CPEC Consortium of Universities." To promote understanding in research and development. First such centre is going to be built in UET Lahore. The main reason to build these types of centres is to promote Chinese culture and to showcase how China got developed in such a short period of time and how the country and their system is run. These centres will work on numerous joint initiatives such as joint research projects, training and talent cultivation, and joint conferences, seminars, and workshops through a competitive selection process. Through joint efforts with Chinese universities at least 100 students will be trained and will also publish minimum three books on CPEC and China-related subjects so that these students can learn Chinese scientific achievements and about their culture (The News, 2021).

CONCLUSION

After the economical projects both countries are working shoulder to shoulder in academic sector as thousands of Pakistani students are receiving higher education in China's world-renowned universities. Both countries are working together in fields of medicine to engineering, social sciences to humanities, management sciences to applied sciences, technology, and Chinese language courses. Pakistani students after receiving education in Chinese universities are coming back to Pakistan and starting their carrier in CPEC related projects which will be beneficial for both the countries as China is getting trained manpower in CPEC projects and Pakistan is creating employments for its people.

As CPEC Consortium of Universities Secretariat is based at Fudan, this university in China is ready to enhance collaboration with Pakistani universities in the field of medical, public health, business management and new engineering technologies. As both countries are working together in academic sector, which is a privilege for both the countries. Along with the recently settled China-Pakistan Instruction Centre, a strong foundation has been made for upgrading scholastic and instructive ties between Fudan University and Pakistani institutions and organizations in different disciplines.

Karachi University has also signed a MoU with Guangxi Normal University, China. Prof Dr Muhammad Ajmal Khan, former Vice Chancellor KU and President of Guangxi Normal University, China Prof Dr He Zubin signed the MoU at the Vice Chancellor's Secretariat. Under the MoU both universities agreed upon variety of

topics such as exchange of faculty and students, research and development, scholarships, establishing a joint Diploma and Bachelor/Master/Doctor Degree programs, under the umbrella of CPEC. Since the collaborating each other economically both countries are working hard in education sector to further strengthen the ties between friendly nations.

The importance of E- learning was realized during the Covid-19 era where students had no chance but to study online with social distancing. China a great power in technology and science, promoted this technology in Pakistani education system on rapid pace. Prior to corona virus spread, distance learning in Pakistan had been operated only by two universities: AIOU and Virtual University as this was their requirement; otherwise, there was no strategy for this system in Pakistan, as is the case of majority of underdeveloped countries. China suggested to update it according to new guidelines and make acquaintance with the operational technology of digital learning. Pakistan's current IT system must be strengthened and should install high-quality optic- fibre, as internet facility is essential for e-learning and reliance on it must be made secure, safe, and low cost since it is the lifeline, not only of future learning but economic stability is also depending on it.

RECOMMENDATION

1. The concerned authorities should utilize modern educational facilities such as the platforms for CPEC to facilitate students better.
2. Higher education experts should be involved and suggest in this sector in achieving the goals through CPEC.
3. The higher education institutes and universities in Pakistan should provide more hands-on experience to the students and facilitate them with the practical examples related to this Economic Corridor.
4. The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan should take some initiatives in starting research centres in China to provide opportunities to Pakistani students.
5. The universities and other related institutes should coordinate with the Government in achieving the goals of CPEC and the vision of 2025.
6. The provision of Chinese language course is also mandatory in all the higher education institutes of Pakistan that helps in facilitating the students in understanding the Chinese culture

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