



CPEC's Educational Scope in Pakistan

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Abstract

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) appears as a major 'Prosperity Tool' which can help Pakistan to overcome her economic problems. CPEC has been researched up till now in various trade and commerce fields but its most important linkage with education was hard to find. This study examines "The Educational Scope of CPEC in Pakistan". The study broadens our horizon regarding the fields of education which are required in CPEC. It is a case study in the qualitative paradigm to explore the views of philanthropic elites, teachers, and students using interviews and documents. It reveals the employment opportunities, concept of SEZs, and availability of manpower for these SEZs along with the future of Pakistan's education. It is through this education that all educational institutes will be combined to form clusters of educational hubs linked together to foster manpower for Special Economic Zones(SEZs) and all other national projects in the future.

Key Words: CPEC, Education and Human Resource Development, Education in Pakistan, Educational Scope in CPEC, Education and Economic Growth, Importance of Education, Special Economic Zones (SEZs)

Introduction

China is the North-Eastern neighbor of Pakistan and shares a long history of shared friendship. The speediest economic advancement of China in the recent past ignited her vision to expand its philosophy of peace and congruence to the other countries of the region through trade and affluence. According to Rizvi (2015), China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a dream trade vision of China towards the accomplishment of its philosophy of expanding peace and harmony. By and large it is so far China's biggest trade investment abroad. Central Asia and the Middle East will be at the shortest distance to China through CPEC, where Gwadar is offering strategic access to Chinese containers in the Middle East, Gulf, Africa, and Europe through the Indian Ocean (Ali & Qazi, 2018).

More precisely it will also magnify China's lookout role towards the deeper sea limits beyond Iran which is less than an hour's distance from Gawader enhancing China's crucial influence towards its Western Borders. This project has a strong military commitment as well on the Pakistani side.

To achieve technological and economic efficiency we need an education that must be practically oriented and should specify a rightful place for every person in society. Brighter education reaps brighter future. The nations who understood the importance of education thirty years ago are amongst the developed countries of the world today. This means that education has to play a crucial part in the times to come. The sooner we realize it better it will be for us (Maekae, 2013). Afolabi and Loto (2012) while explaining the above mentioned facts state that each and every person acquires not the 'available' but the 'needed' education. Therefore, the place they occupy in the society is the rightful place for them.

Today's ascendancy of nations over the other nations is measured through the economic yardstick. Policies are guided by the major 'prosperity tool' and rankings are awarded to the nations who achieve their economic goals in a specific time frame under any type of circumstances.

The study, therefore, is aimed to achieve the following research objectives:-

- To highlight the educational scope of CPEC in Pakistan.
- To explore employment opportunities for students about CPEC in Pakistan.
- To identify the need to link different universities of Pakistan to foster manpower for availability to SEZs.

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- To analyze the future of Pakistani education about CPEC.

Literature Review

CPEC is Belt and Road Initiative's (BRI's) flagship project. The Karot Hydropower Station, a major introductory component of CPEC, was the primary venture supported by the Silk Road Finance. Estimated at \$62 billion generally, CPEC includes "expanding Gwadar harbor and building power pipelines, energy control plants, hundreds of miles of roads and fast track railways, fiber-optic cables and Special Economic Zones (Mobley, 2019).

Both the countries are eyeing towards their interest, Chawla, (2017). Towards the Pakistani side, this project worth \$46 Bn is to build or upgrade a whole new system to preserve financial and industrial framework while towards the Chinese side it is approaching the world through trade from the closest land and sea route. Whereas, highlighting the significance of CPEC he further comments that the CPEC, was introduced in 2014 and is seen as a "game-changer" which can advantage both Pakistan and China. A major advantage to China through CPEC is access to the Arabian Sea. Apart from this, Gwadar Harbour and the Gwadar-Kashgar gas pipeline that will connect Bay of Bengal to Yunnan Area in China through Myanmar are key perspectives of CPEC that can offer assistance to China to overcome its Malacca Problem (Rakisits, 2019).

The Financial Highway carries the gigantic potential to update and restore Pakistan's economic framework, with an additional benefit of lightening Islamabad's vital energy-related shortfall. Beijing's activity has been taken with the essential objective of updating all of Silk Route which China terms as One Belt, One Road (OBOR) Initiative "The venture partners, China, seeks to proceed with making strides on its western voting demographics while Pakistan's concentration is on enhancing its economy, comprising the foundation development of Gwadar Harbour, in conjunction with centering on power production and trade advantages programs" (Makhdoom, Shah & Sami, 2018).

Gwadar Harbour is an imperative component of CPEC especially for China as it provides her an approach to the Persian Gulf astride the straits of Hormuz. To her advantage, Pakistan has given China a 43-year lease of hundreds of hectares of land at the Gwadar Harbour for the development of an SEZ. Moreover, the harbor itself was rented to the China Overseas Harbour Holding Company for a period of 40 years in which the company will collect revenue at 91% from gross revenue of terminal and marine operations and 85 percent share from net income of free zone operation (Mobley, 2019).

The project which is initiated with the collaboration of both the countries, brings with it a huge infrastructure, interconnecting roads/ railway routes, sophisticated communication system, unfinished gas supplies, cluster of industries, trade and commerce and a variety of power generation projects and technological advances (Aftab, 2016). CPEC will boom the Chinese trade, expected to expand all over the globe and by adopting the route through Gwadar it will save a lot of automobile and shipment cost with a safe and shorter route replacing the straits of Malacca (Ali, 2015; Ali, Mi, Shah, Khan, Ullah, & Bibi, 2018).

Gwadar Harbour is considered one of China's major strategic step abroad, aiming to "assist China's civilian and Army activities" within the region. According to Huang (2018), CPEC is not only benefitting China in security issues but it is also to the financial wellbeing of northwest China. No other project of BRI "has the prospects to revive the economy of its [China's] far-flung and restive Xinjiang province." Lessening separatist opinions in Xinjiang may be a need that China trusts CPEC can offer through financial advancement (Ramachandran, 2015).

Education and Human Resource Development

Afolabi & Loto (2012) while explaining state that a well-conceived and enunciated educational reform caters to each and every individual of any country. It ensures that no manpower is wasted to provide for sufficient labor and each individual possesses his or her legitimate position to improve the development of the society.

Education could be a pivotal factor in any country. Being a major tool in human capital advancement, it plays a basic part in long-term efficiency and development at both miniaturized scale and large scale levels (Kingdom, Orji, & Job, 2013). It is the education that supplies the required labor for national development and improvement.

Education and Economic Growth

Glewwe, Maiga, & Zheng (2014) state that "To grow economically, a country must strive hard for her educational growth."

Webdesk (2016) who is an expert in meta-analysis of various studies, while discussing about employment describes that "With CPEC, which is a mega project and is expected to establish many SEZs other than planned, there will definitely be innumerable job prospects for the people of concerned areas and other qualified lot. He further described CPEC as a major "Prosperity Tool" for Pakistan. Husain, (2005) while advocating in his study has tried to prove an equation between prosperity and education and that rise in economic status in marketing, transport, and health is directly proportional to education.

Linkage Between Education, Human Resource Management and Economy

Education is the real tool that can effectively promote the economic conditions in favor of Pakistan provided we build up the human resource accordingly. Afza and Nazir (2007) while pressing on the need for human resource management (HRM) comment that HRM is that extraordinary instrument that can help progress the economic situation especially in Pakistan. While giving the statistical data Abbas and Ali and Jabeen (2015) also compared the relative proportion between growth rate of human capital and economic growth of Pakistan from 1960 to 2003.

Their findings showed about 40% of increase in GDP per person when accounted for human capital. They further were of the view that talent in Pakistan can increase this ratio tremendously. They also recommended based on the results achieved that education in Pakistan is appropriately funded otherwise, poor quality education, caused by low funding, may produce little impact than expected. Papademos (2007) has also very sound reasons to believe that education played a marvelous role in the progression of economic markets in Europe.

Importance of Education

It is by now quite evident that to produce the manpower inadequate quality and quantity we have to take the educational support through which the individuals have to be nurtured. This also determines the role of educational institutes at primary, secondary and tertiary levels (Fasasi, 2011, p.125). The findings of their study suggest that greater the education, greater will be the economic return or individual as well as family monthly income (Kayani, Akbar, Faisal & Ghuman, 2017). Sustainable economic growth is what we are presently targeting because it is a proof of development, it is important to make progress in reduction of poverty together with building up of social and economic base; especially the education. In the recent past; the state of economic growth in Pakistan has been deplorable. Amongst many factors like unfavorable economic growth, political instability, worst law, and order situation, the poor attraction for foreign investors and one of the biggest factors is negligence in the education sector which has caused the weak economic state or the current situation. One of the major findings of his research is that the relationship between education and GDP is positively correlated in Pakistan.

Education in Pakistan

Education is essential for economic growth in Pakistan. The education system in Pakistan which is divided from higher to lower into three levels i.e. The highest level is postgraduate and tertiary level, the second level comprises secondary and higher secondary, whereas, the lowest level of education is primary and secondary level (Ahmad, Rauf, Rashid, Rehman, & Salam, 2013).

Saeed (2007) has rightly depicted that every division has its own Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) which conducts the compulsory examinations at the end of grade 9 to 12. These boards are independent educational bodies that are spread throughout the country. Third world nations are also addressing the issues related to the professional grooming of their teachers which is the focal part of their educational policy document. The educational relationship with modern trends i.e. making education more practical and modernized especially in rural areas of Pakistan can hardly be found whereas, more than 70% of the population in Pakistan is village-based.

To meet the educational requirements of a mega project with which we have attached our aspirations and desires claiming it to be our savior in adverse economic situation is thus necessary. We have already established that to progress in the modernized world we need to be equipped educationally.

While highlighting the importance of education from investment point of view Hussain (2005) states that it is to our utmost advantage that we value the education in its right perspective. To reduce the load of economic pressures we must develop the right kind of atmosphere for investment in our country. The working efficiency of the labor force, the management and most of the institutions will strongly be influenced by the education they attain. Thus it is a key determinant of the investment climate. It is to be understood that all types of domestic or foreign firms are keener to finance when they know that they will be able to attract the expert workforce to make that investment more productive.

The current study examines the educational scope of CPEC in Pakistan. The study is based on the views and comments of Policy Makers, Vice-Chancellors of the universities on Western Route of CPEC, Teachers of the universities on Western Route and Students who have done their higher education from China obtained through semi-structured interviews and through documental analysis to provide a comprehensive account of the educational scope of CPEC in Pakistan, which influence the holistic view of CPEC. We have seen in the past that CPEC was a subject favourable to economists as it was more tilted towards trade and economy. Also, most of the researchers have conducted their studies on economics. Irshad (2015), Javaid (2016) have highlighted the socio-economic benefits of CPEC for Pakistan, whereas, other researchers as Iqbal (2017) have also conducted researches on aspects like trade and commerce concerning CPEC. Yet few of the studies conducted by Aslam, Khan, and Rafi (2016), Lee, Hu, Lee, Choi, and Shin (2018) cover logistics route security and employment opportunities. Moreover, it has also been discussed as a knowledge corridor where people with skills, semi-skills, and soft skills will be exchanged through regional connectivity created via One Belt One Road (OBOR). The idea

followed by the modern world of linking its education parallel to economic growth was probably a missing aspect that was hardly researched for CPEC in Pakistan. The probable missing aspect is, therefore, tried to be explored by conducting this study on the "Educational Scope of CPEC in Pakistan."

Methodology

The study depicts an overall view taken from the expert opinions of the Policymakers, Vice-Chancellors, teachers, and students for the educational scope concerning CPEC in Pakistan. Bassey (2007, p.142) the research is done in case study method in qualitative paradigm which is defined as "crucial investigation with the objective of reporting the facts and educational verdicts so that improvements can be affected in educational procedures". It is a process called case study design which does not only explore the important subjects related to a case but also explains the interpretation of what is found and constructing a meaningful story or reasons (Bassey, 1999; Gillham, 2000; Stake, 2007). Five Policy Makers (the one who worked as a pioneer in CPEC project) 10 Vice-Chancellor (of Public universities on the Western Route of CPEC), 10 teachers (of Public Universities on the Western Route of CPEC) and 10 students who had or are doing their higher education from China participated in this study. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique in which members of a sample are chosen with a purpose that can give the best information about the topic (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003). The study was conducted on Public Universities on the Western route of CPEC in Pakistan. The researcher interviewed both males and females in all the three categories of the sample population to get their valuable input for this study. The researcher has taken the purposive sampling technique which follows the chain sampling technique later for this research.

Data was collected via semi-structured interviews. All the interviews were recorded. Thereafter, recorded interviews were transcribed for coding. The interviews were taken in the English Language, as all the participants were well versed in the English language. The codes were assigned line-by-line and further reflections were summarized in such a way that the heavy data was reduced to become more manageable and understandable. The same way whole of the data was carried along through a systematic process of reduction taking the help of coding and summarizing in data analysis. The relevant quotes were transcribed as spoken. It was ensured that the process involved while doing data analysis should be done amicably by first making codes that were reduced to categories and these categories lead to themes and sub-themes which were finally explained in detail by giving examples (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The participants of the research were given assurance about Anonymity and confidentiality.

The importance of the Western Route of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), cannot be undermined as Pakistan will attain a lot of advantages with its completion. The linkage of Quetta to Gwadar via Khuzdar in Balochistan and Hakla to DI Khan Motorway will reduce the travel time to a greater extent. Moreover other projects planned on the Route under CPEC will be of great advantage to Pakistan. It is particular to mention that Western Route of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will be completed along with other 11 mega projects during 2020. The Hakla to Dera Ismail Khan Motorway –on the western route of CPEC will shorten time from Islamabad to D.I.Khan from five hours to just two and a half hour. It will connect country's southern cities such as Quetta and Gwadar (CPEC, 2019). While speaking in favor of Western Route (Husain, 2018) thinks that we must give priority to the Western Route, it has open valleys and very little population. From Gwadar to KKH, it offers the shortest passage which will be most beneficial to Chinese. The Western Route would open up doors of opportunities for the general population in terms of products and trade. The major subjects of interest could be welfare, education, drinking water, construction of health care institutes and credit offices to be made accessible to the communities living along the Western Passage to progress their financial and social conditions.

Among these routes, the Western route is considered more economically and politically viable as compared to the Central and Eastern routes. The Western road would be passed from Gwadar-Turbat-Panjgur-Khuzdar-Kalat-Quetta-Zhob-Dera Ismail Khan-Bannu-Kohat-Peshawar-Hasanabdal-and onwards (Habib, Rabi & Jabeen, 2015). The researcher went through a series of making diagrams which should have internal connectivity with each other (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). The researcher repeated the process numerous times with the central idea i.e. educational scope of CPEC in Pakistan focused to fit in the data while carrying out conditional plotting. While doing so many a drafts were prepared and erased once comparing it with the diversified data collected by the researcher. Finally this comparison and repeated drafting paid in acquiring some shape as illustrated in Fig 1. This making and remaking of drafts or pictures did not stop till the very end i.e. The final analysis of the themes and sub-themes because every time a subject was thought to be discussed data revealed its other angle to be unfolded. (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 215).

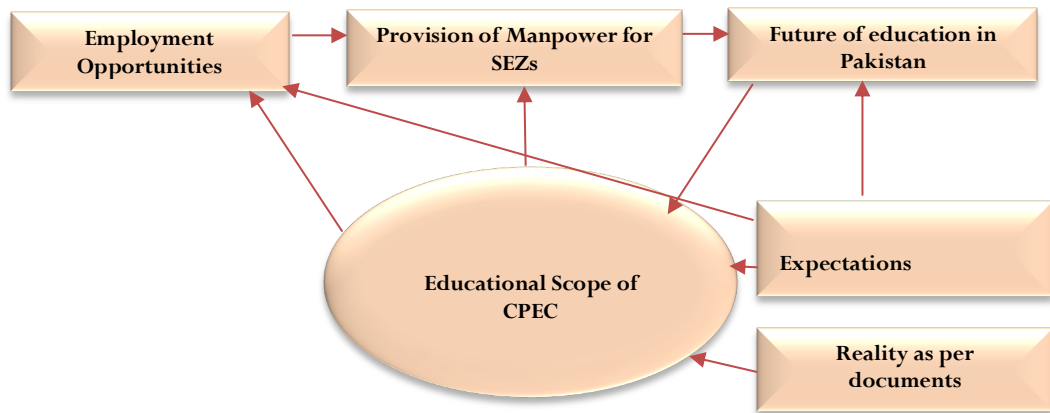


Figure 1: Thematic Map

The respondents were clear while giving their response that what constitutes the educational scope of CPEC according to their exposure in their relevant field. The scope of education in this particular project has remained masked for quite some time therefore, it revolved around employment opportunities which were also reflected in respondent's expectations but they came out with good suggestions for future of Pakistani education. However, the availability of manpower for SEZs has a major educational scope which if viewed in employment prospects will have better opportunities. Finally, the educational scope was also seen in the light of available documents to know the reality.

Findings of the Study

Employment Opportunities

Unemployment is one of the main concerns of today's students. CPEC is hoped and generally considered to alleviate all problems related to this shortly. While discussing about employment opportunities one of the renowned Policy Maker clarified: -

"We have to know about the difference between the National Development Program and a project which is considered as a 'prosperity tool'. Obviously CPEC cannot replace National Development Program."

It is agreed that we are focusing on a strong economic base which is to be achieved through slow and sustainable growth in the economy. One of the senior Professors commented on the same question as to under: -

"The economic base set by CPEC will ensure an increase in trade and commerce resultantly, creating a lot of employment opportunities for us."

Likewise one of the VC respondents commented that:-

"We must know that to avail the opportunities offered by CPEC we have to play smarter, this way our youth which is presently under the dark illusions will have ample job opportunities."

Provision of Manpower for SEZs

To provide manpower to the CPEC which includes qualified, skilled, business-orientated manpower available and trained from vocational/technical institutes obviously, fulfilling the requirement of the hiring company must be provided to SEZs along with fulfilling other requirements at other regions of the country. This requires a larger educational paraphernalia together with organizational base so as to run a colossal project like CPEC. While giving a new concept one of the VC respondents suggested that:-

"We have to avail all opportunities of CPEC by ourselves be it skilled, unskilled or soft skilled manpower trained from own educational or vocational/technical or other training institutes so that a clusters of feeding institutes for the establishment and running of SEZs is available by linking them together."

Another VC replied to the same question this way:-

"There are 9 SEZs presently planned but we need to have more SEZs in a phased program. We can then link these SEZs with our institutions and Universities. Let's say in Quetta we have fruit and packaging industry, we need agricultural or fruit-related research there, similarly, we have a marble industry in "Loralai" or towards "Bajour Districts". We need to open an institution that is with marble related things."

Future of Education in Pakistan

The future of Pakistan education will be broad having unorthodox means and ways to teach and employ the students. One of the eminent teachers highlighted that:-

"We can take the example of NUST where interdisciplinary relationships and tasks are taken on by the students irrespective of the fact whether they belong to a science or arts discipline and teaming them up in such a way that tasks are assigned and results are obtained as a team".

Expectations

Teachers and students were mainly considering the scope of education in CPEC about teachers and students exchange programs with China only. They were merely restricting themselves to academic level. One of the student respondent was of the view that:-

"It will mainly be exchange of teachers and students with China but let me tell you any type of opportunity or scope is related to us, so we are going to be benefited ultimately."

We will be misled if we think that without required educational qualifications we will be honoured and taken into CPEC folds and everything planned in CPEC is being planned for us only. In response to this misconception, the reply of one of the VC is:-

"Do not think that the Chinese are going to lower their standards to accommodate our youth. We will be miscalculating on this. To meet the aspirations of China we have to make efforts to come up to their bare minimum standards."

Reality as Per Documents

Some of the important areas of educational scope are highlighted below.

Connectivity

It includes the construction of various roads, railways, expressways, and new international airports and seaports. Railways to be built on the latest pattern whereas, interlinking and intra linking roads and international Airports provide flight operation related services, transportation, and services including all other services (Mehar, 2017). Which have been highlighted above have huge scope in all the related fields of education.

Information network infrastructure

The optical fiber cable network will be established to modernize our national data center along with another submarine cable landing station. This will need manpower to be trained from China, thus, enhancing the teacher/student exchange programs and build rich human resource in Pakistan (Long Term Plan for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (2017-2030), 2019, p: 14).

Energy-Related Fields

Industrial & Manufacturing Engineering, Chemists, meteorologist, geologist, anthropologist, mining experts, labor, administrators, environmental scientists and all related infrastructure required for construction and repair material like health and services will be required for coal, wind, solar energy, nuclear and hydropower plants developments in CPEC (Raza, Mohiuddin, Zaidi, & Osama, 2018; Abid, & Ashfaq, 2015).

Trade and Industrial Parks

Major areas of development in industrial capacity building sectors are chemical pharmaceutical, home appliances, and constructional material and equipment, engineering goods, agro iron, and steel industry will have a huge scope for related fields of education (Long Term Plan for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (2017-2030), 2019, p: 14).

Agricultural Development and Poverty Alleviation

Areas of scope can be dripped irrigation technology, agrarian technology, animal farming, tree plantation, nutritionist industry, seaborne industrial fields, comprehensive agricultural production, farmland water conservancy, biological breeding, production, processing, dumping of goods and items, illness and medicine industry, utilization of water and management, production and construction of reservoirs, post-harvest handling, expansion of green areas in the desert, insecticides, enrichers, machinery in association with horticulture and livestock medicine and vaccines (Ahmed & Mustafa, 2014).

Tourism

We are blessed with a variety of seasons and varied temperatures ranging from 50 degrees to - 50 degrees Celsius. The tourist all over the world deserve to see what we inherit, for this, we need to develop and upgrade tourist routes and railways from Khunjerabe to Hunza, Gilgit, Islamabad, Karachi and Gawarder port (Chen, Joseph, & Tariq, 2018; Ullah, Khan, & Haq, 2018; Manzoor, & Wei, 2018).

Financial Cooperation

To elevate stock exchanges and offshore financial business, trade finance, investment banks, financial market, assets management, e-banking, the financial lease may help the two countries. Smooth transaction of money, legitimate funds, opening up of mutual finance sector, the establishment of financial institutions and promoting financial servicing will prove to be fruitful (Long Term Plan for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (2017-2030), 2019, p: 14).

Discussion

It is but understandable that the first category comprising of Policy Makers and VCs were more experienced and had better vision and response concerning the educational scope of CPEC as compared to the other two categories. The response of the policymakers made it very clear that a national prosperity tool cannot replace the national development plan. Talking about VCs, their priority for their university, the projects assigned to them was understandable. Whichever university the researcher visited had something in industry or agriculture particular to that area, therefore, the VCs concerned were more tilted towards progression in that particular field in which the industry or agriculture was flourishing e.g. areas where agricultural was the main field the respondents stressed upon agriculturally based researches and progression. Areas where marble was a flourishing industry the respondents were more concerned about development and prosperity for that region in the marble industry. Few respondents gave very genuine engineering ideas and few were more concerned about the creation of the hub of universities and knowledge. While discussing the idea of linkage of universities with SEZs and provision of manpower either skilled, unskilled or soft skilled VCs and Policy Makers were probed comprehensively. This was an altogether new dimension that could hardly be found in the existing literature on the subject. A cluster of educational institutes assigned to prepare manpower duly trained and qualified according to the specifications and requirements of SEZs will prove a hundred times better than the unqualified and untrained manpower.

CPEC is an all-encompassing project which is not only for trade but has multi-facet scope. This seems in line with Esteban (2016) and Makhdoom, Shah & Sami (2018). The complete picture of CPEC is so complicated that it cannot be squeezed in a few lines. For education only we have so many varieties of fields that they start from the building of roads and railways and finish up at not less than building up of new cities, industrial areas, a cluster of industries and goes beyond fisheries and shipping, etc.

Conclusion

The current study explored the educational scope of CPEC in Pakistan. The results showed that with CPEC and SEZs there is a whole new road map of civilization, technologies, modernization and development of such a mega level that education will have a new dimension in Pakistan. The results further highlight the affiliation of SEZs with the educational hubs, and timely provision of manpower for these SEZs, will decide future course of action for Pakistani students. Education is a process which starts building up our moralities, our consciousness, positive attitudes and behaviors, with a hunch for achieving our goals through hard work and morality. The only way forward, treads through hard work, in which, there are no short cuts. Thus, a well-built student with character and morality will be an asset to the nation, no matter what post he occupies.

Time is not gone past; still, we can do something to alleviate deficiencies of the CPEC program at our end. Even if we start today and carry out thorough deliberation in every field which is highlighted above then our human resource development for those subjects, fields, disciplines will enrich our youth so much that our future will be in the hands of our youth rather than the Chinese youth.

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