

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): A Need Analysis for Developing Entrepreneurship Education

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Abstract

The study explored areas in which measures are required to strengthen entrepreneurship education in the specific context of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). For this purpose, a need analysis based on thematic interpretation of experts' opinions was conducted. A qualitative method was used to collect data through open-ended questionnaires from those universities of China and Pakistan which are part of the Consortium of Universities under CPEC. Based on thematic analysis, four areas were found, which were: communications, cultural diversity, business knowledge, and business skills. Entrepreneurship education needs to be enriched in these four areas to effectively utilize the business potential of CPEC. Specialized entrepreneurship education programs and courses may be developed in these four areas through further research. The CPEC-specific entrepreneurship education programs may be launched at higher education levels for students, and diploma programs may be initiated for entrepreneurs. These four areas may be used as the conceptual framework for further scholarly studies to develop detailed course modules that will help in providing CPEC-relevant education to businessmen and entrepreneurs.

Keywords: CPEC; Entrepreneurship Education; Communication; Cultural Diversity; Business Knowledge; Business Skills

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): A Need Analysis for Developing Entrepreneurship Education

Introduction

China China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is sub part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). CPEC comprises the Pakistani part of the project. The assessment cost of the CPEC project is 62 billion US dollars (Ismail, 2021). It includes the development of road infrastructure and energy projects which will further extend to agriculture, and social and economic development (Ali, 2022). The special economic zones (SEZ) will be established along the CPEC route in selected areas which will further develop the business sector in Pakistan. There will be a need for human resources as it will generate job opportunities (Zaman, 2021). The supply chain will create several entrepreneurial opportunities both in the manufacturing and services sectors (Khan, 2022).

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is important to both countries as it centers economic development which further will have ripple effects on the growth of other sectors. Both countries have a history of friendly strategic, trade, investment, and business relationships (Kataria, 2020) as neighbors, but they differ in ideology, governance, education, culture, and economics (Hussain, 2019). The social interaction of common Pakistani people with China is low as compared to the United States, Arab countries, and Europe. This is because of the jobs, business, and immigration interests of Pakistani people in these countries. The social interaction between the people of China and Pakistan has gained momentum in recent years. However, the common experiences will take time to develop awareness about distinct cultures and systems. The CPEC is expected to provide opportunities to the entrepreneurs and businessmen of both countries to interact with authorities and business communities. This raises the need for awareness through information, orientation, and education (Shah, 2021).

To enhance interaction and understanding of business in two different countries having different cultures and economic structures, it is expected to be a complex, challenging, and long-term process. The interaction of Chinese and Pakistani entrepreneurs will further contribute to their knowledge about interrelated and complex contextual factors (Sun, 2020). To overcome these challenges, there is a need to provide relevant education to entrepreneurs (Trowler, 2002). Therefore, the goal of the study is to conduct a need analysis to identify major areas in which relevant business and entrepreneurial capabilities can be developed through entrepreneurial education for CPEC. The relevant combination of courses will make the entrepreneurial education best fit for the nature of the project. This study was intended to explore the broad relevant areas that need to be incorporated into entrepreneurship education for entrepreneurs to effectively invest their potential in businesses related to China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Literature Review

Entrepreneurship is a context-driven phenomenon whose scope is broader and it is flexible as it takes different forms in varying economies (Castaño, 2015). The recent trend is the promotion of innovative entrepreneurship by governments (Dhaliwal, 2016). The economies of China (Woo, 1999) and Russia (Yakovlev, 2006) are gradually transforming from state-owned industrial entrepreneurship to market-based entrepreneurship. In least-developed countries, micro-level entrepreneurship has evolved through social entrepreneurship which is rooted in intrinsic and need-based motivations (Hessels, 2008). In some countries,

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): A Need Analysis for Developing Entrepreneurship Education

tourism-focused public policies have provided opportunities for entrepreneurs (Jaafar, 2011). In oil-rich countries, the supply chain of the petrochemical industry has given birth to numerous small and medium companies (Aminova, 2020). Several factors shape entrepreneurship in a given country and consequently, every country comes up with its form of entrepreneurship (Mueller, 2001). These different forms evolve due to contextual factors like natural resources, culture, governance, economic structure, and education (Freytag, 2007). Entrepreneurship is flexible and it adopts itself in some form in an economy (Rundh, 2011). The goal is to minimize the failure rate for newly established small and medium enterprises. For this purpose, different types of subsidies by the government support the efficiency and equity of these firms (Holtz-Eakin, 2000)

Besides, the adoptive nature of entrepreneurship to contextual factors, it is important to understand that in all forms of entrepreneurship, the common component is innovation (Lounsbury, 2019). Countries need to develop innovative human capital for growth and development (Gomez, 2018). Innovative minds think forward, are open to testing, experimenting, and risk-taking, learn from experiences, and are open to embracing diversity (Sameer, 2018). Nations that invest in developing innovative people who serve diverse fields have experienced economic and social development (Content, 2020). Research studies have identified the diversity of factors that develop innovative minds (Shwetz, 2019). The prominent of these factors were literacy rate (Van der Sluis, 2005), public policies (Holtz-Eakin, 2000), resources (Klyver, 2013), political situation (Dutta, 2013), and economy (Bruton, 2008). But developing innovative minds is challenging and requires rigorous educational efforts (Thrane, 2016).

Entrepreneurial education aims to develop minds that are capable of generating ideas, identifying business opportunities, and resultantly coming up with new combinations (Vesper, 1997). Therefore, countries are investing in education to transform their human potential into human capital (Djordjevic, 2013). The educations from primary to higher education level are designed and delivered in ways, that contribute to the national objectives of the country including entrepreneurship (Obschonka, 2016). The curriculums at different levels include courses related to developing innovative minds with managerial capacities. The specific, advanced, and experiential-based education to develop entrepreneurial and business capacities is delivered at a higher education level (Bell, 2020). It includes a variety of courses in a scientific way while managing the combination in the right way is a challenge (Kuratko, 2005). Broadly these courses include sub-courses related to management, entrepreneurship, human resource management, financial management, and marketing. The core courses are usually the same globally, but elective and specialized courses are designed according to the requirements of every country (Sirelkhatim, 2015). The objective is to develop entrepreneurial and managerial capabilities (Mwasalwiba, 2010).

The designing of courses for entrepreneurship education is always challenging for academicians (Kuratko, 2003). The development of a relevant combination of courses includes several multifaceted philosophical, operational, and contextual issues (Gorman, 1997). Before the course design, a need analysis is done to find whether a specific economy for which human capital is to be developed is manufacturing or service-based. Accordingly, the courses are included. The entrepreneurial activities are shaped and structured by government policies in a country (Minniti, 2008). The industrial sectors require expertise in

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): A Need Analysis for Developing Entrepreneurship Education

human resource management and marketing (Faisal, 2007). Similarly, in some countries government invests in pilot projects that have the potential to expand, in such situations courses related to project management are included (Akhmetshin, 2019). Countries rich with natural resources such as oil, often seek foreign investment to establish companies that subsequently generate jobs that require different types of administrative and managerial skills (Liboni, 2019). The economies that require small and medium organizations usually focus more on entrepreneurship development to promote the indigenous system to support the economy (Deakins, 1998). All the mentioned scenarios may require the type of courses discussed. But there is no hard and fast rule. There may be different strategies for courses may be developed by different countries depending on their specific economic requirements (Gibb, 1996). For instance, the economy of the United States of America has a vast number of industries as well as service sectors but within that, they promoted entrepreneurship which has significantly contributed to their economic growth (Gartner, 1995).

Keeping in mind the worth of CPEC and its multidimensional benefits for the economies of both China and Pakistan, it is expected to provide diverse business opportunities for entrepreneurs (Wang, 2017). The platform of CPEC is expected to nurture entrepreneurship in the area (Wolf, 2018). Therefore, business or entrepreneurial education relevant to the expected business opportunities related to CPEC is of the foremost significance. The business objectives of CPEC can be achieved through the development of relevant business skills and knowledge. The general business education is offered by the universities in both countries (Syed, 2018). The research is required to explore business education in CPEC-specific areas. That may either be included in the courses already offered or through training or books, whatever is relevant, needs to be developed. There are 172 universities in Pakistan. Most of them offer business education programs. Phase 1 of CPEC which includes roads, infrastructure, and energy projects is near completion (Anam, 2019). But unfortunately, the entrepreneurship curriculum related to CPEC has not been explored (Siddiq, 2021). Pakistan is a developing country with a parliamentary form of government and has a mixed economy in which a large portion of its GDP is consumed by state-owned organizations (Shah, 2021). According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2017), the literacy rate in Pakistan is 57%. The law-in-order situation due to terrorism and conflicts in Afghanistan has hurt foreign investments for the last two decades (Zakaria, 2019). The political instability and lack of concrete economic policies were among the few factors that led to huge budget deficits. In this situation, CPEC is the ray of hope for economic development which is expected to foster development in other sectors as well (Iftikhar, 2020). In the given context of CPEC, there is the utmost need to develop human capital with relevant knowledge and skills (Rathore, 2020).

The economic significance of CPEC for not only China and Pakistan (Kousar, 2018) but for all stakeholders of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Wen, 2021), raised the need for research about entrepreneurship education to develop human capital with relevant and required levels of knowledge, skills and attitudes to facilitate in achieving the objectives of the projects effectively. The goal is to develop a mindset through education that can understand business laws, culture, conflict management, economy, and related factors of both China and Pakistan. This will enable the entrepreneurs to be more innovative and productive in finding business ways. Both countries are investing in developing basic infrastructure to facilitate

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): A Need Analysis for Developing Entrepreneurship Education

entrepreneurship and business. However, the success of CPEC will be dependent upon the length and width of business activities (Siddiqui, 2019). One of the economic components that will lead to the success of CPEC will be how well the entrepreneurs of both countries utilize this platform. This will be based on their performance. The capacity and capability of entrepreneurs can be enhanced through education.

Research Methodology

This qualitative study was based on contextual need analysis of entrepreneurial education for CPEC. The population of the study includes universities in China and Pakistan. "CPEC Consortium of Universities" which includes member universities from both China and Pakistan to enhance collaboration in higher education (HEC, 2022) was taken as a sample. It comprises 19 Chinese and 36 Pakistani universities. Open ended questionnaire was developed which was reviewed by a group of experts. The open-ended questionnaire was circulated among the sample universities through Google Forms. The collected responses were thematically analyzed in consultation with a group of experts. Further, the responses were organized through familiarization techniques. The relevant and potentially interesting phrases were coded. The patterns were identified and accordingly, themes were found. After the interpretative review, titles were assigned.

Findings

The findings of the study were as follows:

1. **Communication:** Different languages are spoken in China and Pakistan. Business reporting systems in both countries are different. The common means of communication for entrepreneurs about business ventures is missing.
2. **Cultural Diversity:** There is huge cultural diversity among China and Pakistan. The competency of entrepreneurs to manage diversity regarding CPEC requires consideration.
3. **Business Knowledge:** The business knowledge background that will be required according to the expected business types and opportunities that will be generated by CPEC has not been explored. The subjects of cross-border collaboration, geo-political economy, contracting systems, and methods to regularize shadow economy were the main identified fields.
4. **Business Skills:** It was found that entrepreneurial education in China and Pakistan does not include business skills related to CPEC. Specific skills related to business opportunities of CPEC were identified as: supply chain management, marketing, negotiations, and inventory management

Discussion

The need for common means of communication between individuals, businesses, and government organizations including language, contracts, and business reporting systems was identified as a major finding. Chinese and Urdu are the national languages of China and Pakistan respectively. There are several local languages in these countries. Research Studies have highlighted the significance of learning the Chinese language for interaction with common people of China (Niazi, 2019). English is a common language of communication between the two countries. It is second language in China (Xiaoxia, 2006) and Pakistan

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): A Need Analysis for Developing Entrepreneurship Education

(Warsi, 2004; &Wenfeng, 2008). A research study identified the need to learn the Chinese language “Mandarin” especially for people who work in lower-level management of an organization (Zafar, 2021) for interaction with blue-collar employees and supervisory staff, one must have a grasp of local languages. The contribution of Radio Pakistan was identified as the medium for the promotion of awareness about CPEC (Saleem, A. 2021). The various terminologies used in economics, business, trade, commerce, and banking are different in both countries. These terminologies may convey the same meaning but different nomenclatures. In a somewhat, similar economic interaction of the European Union, the linguistic diversity in EU legislation, procedures, and information, has provided access to the citizens in their languages (Bandov, 2013). The communication and accessibility of entrepreneurs to related policies enhances entrepreneurial activities (Shaheen, 2021). A unified business reporting system needs to be developed based on patterns in Chinese, Urdu, and English language which will enable the business community to conveniently conduct cross-border transactions.

The study found a cultural gap between China and Pakistan. The history, worldview, working habits, societal values, and working behavior of the people of both countries are distinct. The understanding of cultures is learned through experiences. Learning through empathetic understanding requires a long period. Education helps in developing cultural competence. The study identified the need to develop courses in areas of cultural history, behavioral skills, and diversity management. Moreover, bibliographies, documentaries, social networks, movies, cultural exchange programs, and orientation to arts and literature may provide an empathetic method to develop understanding among people of both societies. This may develop social skills among entrepreneurs like patience, empathy, and a growth-oriented mindset. Kratzke (2013) has studied the development of cultural competence among the students of healthcare through meaningful education. The study by Weaver (1998) suggested that instead of didactic techniques, the best way for educators is to use experimental teaching strategies to make learners aware of other cultures. In a study by Jie (2017) on planned behavior and international entrepreneurship intention reveals no significant relationship proposing further research in entrepreneurship education. But, Bhagat (2002) proposed a framework to comprehend the implication of four transacting cultural patterns, explained in dimensions of individualism-collectivism and verticalness-horizontalness, for its role in the effectiveness of cross-border transfer of knowledge. Future-based social challenges for entrepreneurs such as diversity, need further research to find means to educate entrepreneurs about managing cultural challenges (Asif, 2019).

There are approximately 2845 universities in China (Liu, 2020) and 172 in Pakistan (HEC, 2022). Most of them are offering business and entrepreneurial education through their business schools. Some of these business schools in China and Pakistan are of international repute. They are offering academic programs in different disciplines of management, business, and entrepreneurship. There is a need to develop academic programs including courses to enhance the business knowledge of entrepreneurs about CPEC. The academic programs in business schools contain courses in core business areas which are mostly similar worldwide. The elective courses and specializations are relevant to the economic context of a country. The local industrial and manufacturing business requirements are usually incorporated. To enhance the existing academic programs at universities of both China and

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): A Need Analysis for Developing Entrepreneurship Education

Pakistan, the study highlighted courses in the CPEC-related areas of geo-political economy, trade, cross-border collaborations, contracting systems, and shadow economy. Research studies in the same scenario in other countries explored insights and subsequently developed frameworks for traders to learn and operate in a geo-political economy (Wójcik, 2017). The knowledge of cross-border collaboration enables entrepreneurs to identify business opportunities (Autio, 2017). Learning contracting systems in different economies is a challenge for entrepreneurs as it is based on the legal system of a country (Hudson, 1994). China and Pakistan share a 596-kilometer border, where the shadow economy is rooted in the local cultures of the bordering regions (Rippa, 2019). To attain the business objectives of CPEC, the current education needs to be enriched (Saad, 2019). The cooperation among business schools of China and Pakistan needs constructive thinking for reforming entrepreneurial education according to future needs (Syed, 2018). To create a match between CPEC objectives and required human capital, the area requires scholarly research to identify future knowledge requirements.

The study identified the need to develop business skills in the areas of negotiations, marketing, and e-business. The research studies have highlighted the need for conflict management skills for people who work in diverse environments (Prause, 2015). When supplies from the Gawadar port of Pakistan are transported through the CPEC route to China, it is likely to create opportunities for inventory storage and supply businesses. It will be important for entrepreneurs to learn inventory management skills to achieve high levels of performance (Vastag, 2005). The skills to utilize international distribution and supply channels are also important (Rosenbloom, 2003). Similarly, the learning of skills is required to use information technology to conduct online business (Boedker, 2008). One of the objectives of entrepreneurial education is to transform business skills for graduates to enrich their skill inventory (Badawi, 2019). This can be achieved through accommodating relevant courses in the curriculum while those who already acquired basic and general business skills, their skill inventory can be enhanced through orientations, seminars, workshops, and booklets.

Conclusion

The study concluded by identifying four main areas in which business and entrepreneurial courses were required to be developed. These broader areas include communications, Cultural Diversity, business knowledge, and business skills. It will enrich entrepreneurship education to develop the capacity of the entrepreneurs for the productive utilization of the business potential of CPEC.

Recommendations

It is recommended to develop a scheme of studies including courses in four CPEC-related areas that were explored by this study. Language and communication courses will improve correspondence among entrepreneurs and organizations. Similarly, the courses that develop understanding and embrace diversity will help overcome cultural multiplicity. The knowledge of cross-border transactions, regional and international economy, and information technology must be added to existing education. In the same way, business skills must address operational and negotiation aspects. Based on these four areas, CPEC-centered

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): A Need Analysis for Developing Entrepreneurship Education

entrepreneurial and business education programs may be developed at higher education levels as specialized as well as core subjects; diploma programs may be initiated for entrepreneurs. These four areas may be used as conceptual frameworks for further scholarly studies to develop detailed course modules that will help in providing relevant education to businessmen and entrepreneurs and will increase the effectiveness of CPEC.

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China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): A Need Analysis for Developing Entrepreneurship Education

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China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): A Need Analysis for Developing Entrepreneurship Education

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