

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Human Resource Development Challenges to Pakistan: What Should Be Next?

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Abstract: The main objective of the study is to highlight the nexus between the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a multidisciplinary complex project and the real insight of an ever-changing field of human resource development (HRD). The shove of 5 major components of CPEC is to enhance regional connectivity in bringing economic transformation that is posing a challenge on contributing countries to acclimate and activate its human resources. This review paper is an effort to make a nexus between the realities of human resource development and economic development available in the literature and to propose suggestions to the strategists for CPEC. Literature has tremendously emphasized the need and importance of HRD especially in the developing countries like Pakistan but there is least focus on the core practices of HRD needed for the economic competitiveness and splendid projects like CPEC. The CPEC provides Pakistan a unique opportunity to improve managerial practices (including change management, total quality management, contingency leadership etc.) in institutions of the entire country to progress through embracing and transmitting this collective move. Now this very serious time demands Pakistan to educate its human resource by emotions and soft skills and to make them proactive and transparent to have an accountable success of such mega projects. Moreover, dealing with brain drain challenge and benefiting from expatriate strategy are also pivotal challenges. Corruption free achievements in multi disciplines like supply chain management, marketing, production, information technology, research and development, human resource management can only integrate maximum benefits from such a matchless investment of around \$46 billions to be spent on Pakistan. A developed, knowledgeable, faithful and emotionally intelligent workforce can only assure realization of such development shift and achieving the desired milestones.

Keywords: HRD, CPEC, Economic competitiveness, development shift, sustainability

Introduction

The CPEC project (as a part of BRI) involved with the amalgamation of almost every industry. The CPEC provides Pakistan an exceptional prospect to refurbish with new technologies and value-added managerial practices in the country. Major areas of interest include energy, infrastructure, transportation, tourism and industries. CPEC imitates to the pertinent needs of Pakistan's economic development. The

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shove of 5 major components of CPEC is to enhance regional connectivity in bringing economic transformation that is posing a challenge on contributing countries to acclimate and activate its human resources. The capacity building of the existing human potential is the most alarming need that could make Pakistan a hub of progressive economic activity and to promote trade among regional countries. Quality and governance are two major challenges to Pakistan, rather hurdles to work on sub-plans under CPEC to achieve integrated efficiency and effectiveness from the mega plan.

The available literature massively emphasized on the need of human resource development (HRD) in CPEC context but least investigation is made in the HRD related and mandatory components. Therefore, this study is an effort to relate the literature on the obligatory components of HRD with the success of the complex projects like CPEC.

The main objective of the study is to highpoint the nexus between the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a multidisciplinary complex project and the real insight of an ever-changing field of human resource development (HRD). So the objectives of the study include:

- i. to briefly extract the related literature on CPEC.
- ii. to highlight the mandatory components of HRD for the success of the project.
- iii. to prove a nexus between the components of HRD needed for the success of CPEC project.
- iv. to recommend certain submissions for the CPEC strategists and beneficiaries.

The study will help to upgrade the academic and research collaboration both at the intra and inter-institutional levels. The submissions of the study are targeted to strategists by providing them more insight in developing more specific and realistic strategies for all at corporate, business and operational levels focusing more on all aspects of HRD. The study will add more value to the concept of “*technology transfer effect*” of CPEC and its relation with human resource career development. Institutions of higher education in Pakistan including HEC, research organizations, universities and professional institutes can benefit from the conceptual framing of the study in managing and reviewing their curriculum align with the knowledge, skills and attitude (competency) needs for the success of mega-complex projects like CPEC.

Literature Review:

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

CPEC, an economic corridor is one of the projects to fall under the Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI), announced in 2013. The vision of the project is to improve the lives of people of Pakistan and China by promoting bilateral connectivity, construction, explore potential bilateral investment, economic and trade, logistics and people to people contact for regional connectivity¹. Chinese government’s investment of \$46 billion in Pakistan initially and another \$500 billion over the next 15 years is an extraordinary investment that so far has no parallel even more than any USA assistance (Rahman A, 2016). This investment in energy and infrastructure initially is ensuring benefits from it realizing its vision of improving the lives of people in Pakistan.

¹<http://cpec.gov.pk/>

Components of HRD

After the emergence of the globalization, corporation's started to introduce professional management practices including human resource practices to have a positive impact on company performance (Delery & Shaw, 2001; Von Krogh, Ichijo, & Nonaka, 2000; Wright & Boswell, 2002) (Becker & Huselid, 2006; Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Recently employees are considered most important asset which an organization have, however their impact are felt by few organizations (Davenport & Pruzak, 2000; Schein, 2006; Syed-Ikhsan & Rowland, 2004). One of the HRM practice, Human resource development include the individual (training and development and career development) or organization (organization development) as the targeted beneficiary of HRD activities. HRD is a well-planned education, training programs, and mobilization and manpower developmental activities in order to create efficient organization which are highly economically independent and have a capacity to provide products and services to its external customers, but also can develop capable and efficient Human resource (Soni & Saluja, 2014). HRD involves professional practices such as, learning, performance and the change (Tanvir Kayani, 2008). Authors use term Human resource development to indicate career development, organizations investment in the learning of its people as a part of HRM approach, training and development, and career development of the employees (Bratton & Gold, 1999; Swanson & Holton, 2001; Vinesh, 2014). The basic idea behind HRD is that the organizations are made up of human and they rely on expertise of the humans in order to design and achieve their goals and the professionals of HRD are the advocates of individual, groups and work process and organizational integrity (Bratton & Gold, 1999; Swanson & Holton, 2001; Vinesh, 2014). The main goal of the HRD is to improve employees as well as organizations performance in term of effectiveness and productivity (Tabibi, 2011; 166). HRD is considered as a key source behind better relations, higher productivity, and greater profitability for any organization (Vasantham, 2015; 30).

The purpose of HRD is 'to improve organizational effectiveness and individual performance' (Australian Public Service Commission, 1998). HRD has an indefinite role in helping organizations to develop in an era of rapid and continuous change. HRD needs to develop individuals to have both the confidence and self-awareness to adapt to new challenges and the consequences of change (McAleese, 1999). The components of HRD include organizational development (OD), career development and training & development (Thomson & Mabey, 1994; Berrett, Mabey & Salaman, 1995; McLagan 1989; Watkins 1989). The strategies shift from training and development to learning (Nadler & Nadler 1989; Megginson et al., 1993; Walton 1999) leads organizations to career development and organizational development (Laird, Holton III, & Naquin, 2003, Cardon & Stevens, 2004, Castilla, 2005, Bolman & Deal, 2011). Career development is lasting process of managing work, learning, leisure and change in order to move towards desired future. () Career development focuses on the alliance of individual personal career aspects and the more objective career aspects of the organization in order to achieve the best fit between individual and organizational needs as well as personal characteristics (Upton et al., 2003). The nature of work, organizations, and careers in mega projects suggest a refreshing mode of career development into the HRD function more likely to the individuals as well as organizational aims (McDonald & Hite, 2005). HRD has a broader scope and many aspects with a cohesive reputation of covering HR development like emotional intelligence, skills, capacity building, economic, physical, social, political, psychological and intellectual (Tariq & Naseer, 2011).

- a. ***Economic (Financial) Development of HR:*** well-paid people can become developed human resource of a country having sufficient diet, medicines and hygienic livings (Khan, 2009).
- b. ***Physical Development of HR:*** The success of organization depends on effective performance of people occupying various roles in the organizational structure (Kumar, 2005). People cannot function and make

things happen unless they are physically well developed, healthy and free from diseases (Khan, 2009). According to Yip (1993) in developing countries, where a large proportion of the economic output is based on physical labor, a major reduction in work capacity can be of great economic consequence. Human resource development holds the key for economic development by enabling people to become more productive having physical fitness and motivation (Rao, 1995).

- c. Intellectual And Socio-Cultural Development:* HRD involves activities related to education, training, empowerment, awareness raising, skills enhancement, team building, community mobilization and development, organization development, entrepreneurship development, sensitization and conscientious, human resources planning and policies to improve their quality of life. Education in the narrow sense of schooling, but a broad concept including health, nutrition, employment, science & technology, equality and special attention to weaker groups, education being used as an instrument of peoples development and access to opportunities and facilities in all these areas. Kumar (2005) expressed that HRD is not only training for operational skills but also includes behavioral skills as it ultimately aims to create an enabling culture wherein the capabilities are “acquired, sharpened and used”. According to Schmidt and Kunzmann (2006) human resource development must be understood in a broad sense, incorporating formal training, self-directed learning, informal and collaborative learning activities.
- d. Psychological (Emotional and Motivational) Development:* Beyond a mechanical perspective, human beings react and work with emotions, needs, aspirations, expectations, etc., so both the aspects, i.e. the feelings and the job contents, are interlinked. Therefore, organizations with the job contents must pay attention to human feelings and needs (Kumar, 2005; Samad ,2007). Empowering workforce helps to improve motivation level and work commitment (Carter, 2009; Tuuli & Rowlinson, 2007) to work and maintain uninterrupted and effective operations is a very important factor in the promotion of productivity for economic growth.

The strategic significance of human resource development has become more superior to the regional collaborative efforts of the contributing countries to achieve sustainable growth including supply chain concept associated with superior financial performance (Ellinger et al., 2011, 2012).

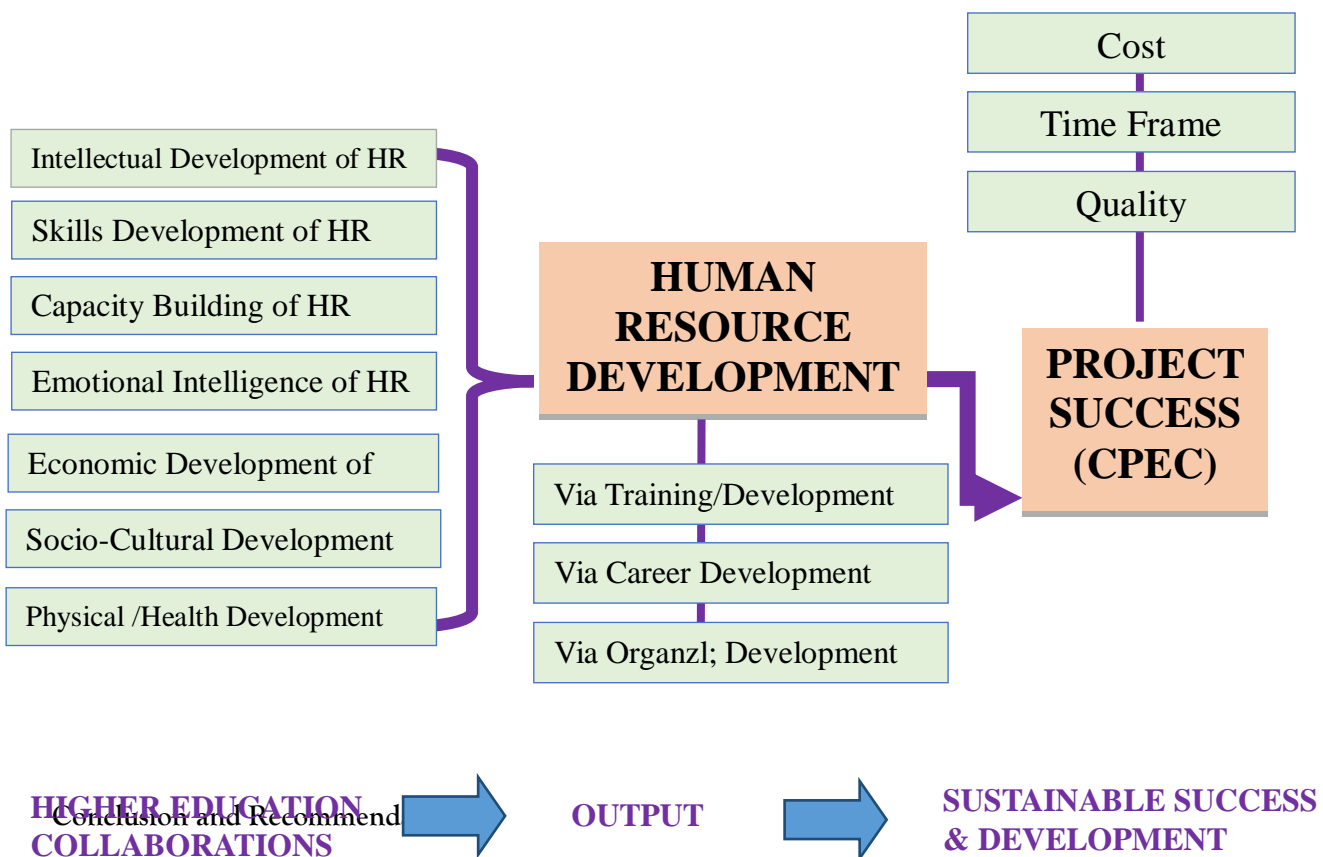
Project Success

Khan, Turner &Maqsood (2013) developed a model for a project success with twenty five success criteria including both “hard” and “soft” factors structured under five variables including project efficiency, organizational benefits, project impact, stakeholder satisfaction, and future potentials. The success of complex projects have concerns of size, completion timeframe (Toor & Ogrunlana, 2010; Wang & Huang, 2006) having two important measuring factors including success criteria and critical success factors (Muller &Jugdev, 2012; Turner &Zolin, 2012). Success factors focus on the cost, quality, the completion timeframe (Pinto & Slevin, 1987), strategic management, the behavioral skills (Jugdev & Muller, 2005), the commitment, coordination and ability of the project participants support winning project performance (Jha & Lyer, 2007; Doloi et al, 2011), communication, human resource development, cost, scope, risk and quality management (Papke-Sheilds et al, 2010). Besides that project managers with high emotional intelligence have positive impact on the employees in the troubleshooting and providing solutions for the success of the project (Peslak, 2005; Mount, 2006; Clarke, 2010, Mazur et al, 2014; Muller & Turner, 2010). The results of the study of Aqsa et al., (2018) explained that the dimensions of emotional intelligence including self-awareness and self- regulation of project managers have significantly positive impact on the success of construction projects.

CPEC, HRD and Higher Education Collaboration

Academic and research collaboration have proved its worth in developed countries and playing as a role model for the developing countries. It is the only source to expedite the success of projects having alliance and networking of all concerned partners to produce quality workforce (Amabile et al., 2001; Perkmann& Walsh, 2007; Zaugg et al., 2011). In academic collaboration, Higher Education (H.E) partnership with industry can amplify the process of human resource development needed to avail the CPEC presented opportunities (). H.E collaboration with world-class education institutions can facilitate the exposure to teaching methodologies, research, services and management approaches. Knowledge focused H.E cooperation results into highly skilled human resource essentially needed for economic value and wealth generation (Donovan, 2005; Bozeman, Fay & Slade, 2013). Integration with organizational strategy is central to human resource development’s ability to deliver value (Leimbach and Baldwin 1997).

Conceptual Framework of the Study



The review was aimed to extract the findings of studies on human resource development and to create a link with the benefits of CPEC for Pakistan if having developed resource accordingly. The review includes highlights of CPEC project, followed by the details and components of human resource development and finally the linkage between the two is shaped. This paper also represents a foundation for research that better establishes the HRD-CPEC connection. Moreover, the “soft side” of human development which is a relative lack of research is emphasized as one of the strong influencing HRD interventions in CPEC contexts. The major challenge to Pakistan is not just establishment of the economic corridor but the sustainability. The crucial role for sustainability can only be played by quality-workforce start from

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managerial level to first line management and even the operatives..Sustainable human resource development and training system have become imperative for the growth of any dynamic project operating in the today's environment. Sustainable growth and cooperation among project's various units requires sustainable HRD programs.As one of the goals of a successful human resource management is to satisfy the social, and economic needs of their workers, HRD can help employees to achieve their higher level needs as well, and provide them job safety and enhances their commitment, and engagement. HRD practices help managers of the project to reduce their employee turnover by developing their knowledge,skills , abilities and job related competencies , by providing them training and formal education program, assessment centers, coaching and mentoring programs and the resultant human resource would be highly motivated and absolutely imperative for the success. In broader perspective such talented and developed human resource would strengthen and stabilize the economy of a country as well in which they are working.

Human resource quality can be measured in terms of education, training, health and socio-economic conditions. Unfortunately, Pakistan with least size of skilled human resources is still far behind to take advantage of the opportunities created by globalization (Afza&Nazir, 2007) and to integrate with world markets. Other quality domains can be improved if primacy be given to knowledge, soft skills like leadership, creativity, managerial & learning skills and ability to accept change. HRD is a combination of intellectual, emotional, physical and competency developments of human resource through training and development. Furthermore, career development leads human resource to gain socio-economic development with more learning and overall consequence in terms of organizational development. Augmented pool of professionals, managers, entrepreneurs, executives and technocrats can assure the success (in terms of time, cost and quality) to retain and sustain strategic partnership ambitions behind the CPEC.This conceptual work considers interventions that can be developed and implemented in partnership with HRD professionals to improve the set of human resource skills for better understanding the aims of CPEC scheme and to extract paybacks throughout. Leaders and managers self-awareness may enable them to further develop the requisite set of skills and improve their value through coaching capabilities of their employees and teams.The integrated teamwork with high level of trust through managerial coaching of employees can help to be more effectively facilitate organizational change that are more encouraging to induce the operational innovation for improving complex supply chain processes of CPEC.Pakistan needs to provide such a concrete platform for the development of human resource by providing education opportunities that not only develop and prepare the local workforce ready to face the challenges of CPEC but also a mean to attract expatriates to come over, get training and work in Pakistan, minimizing the threat of brain drain.Brain drain is a critical challenge for Pakistan when talent is rarely acknowledged and appreciated (Arooj&Arooj 2012). It has talent and creativity, but deficiencies in the system to identify, develop, motivate and reward this talent pool make millions of professional and technical workers move abroad for employment (Khurshid 2013). Attracting and retaining talents are among the key human capital challenges and the strategy of expatriate attraction in Pakistan can ensure inverse of brain drain. The study suggests the strategies and policies for the retention of highly-knowledgeable workforce. The retention is critical for a developing country like Pakistanfor its economic growth. This situation stresses the government to collaborate the education agencies for sufficient attention towards training and development of the available human resource and employing the right persons for achieving optimum efficiency. The quality work force is pivotal for the sustainability of an economic corridor. Chinese partners are not just interested to build infrastructure but to make Pakistan a key collaborator having highly skilled professionals to sustain this partnership with economic and strategic

ambitions. Pakistan with its size of workforce is the 10th country in the world with the determined and incredible population between ages of 15-49 years. Studies have shown that investments in human capital are essential for sustaining economic growth over time (Arooj&Arooj, 2012). Developed countries including the United States of America, Japan, France, and Germany have enjoyed the sustained economic growth while spending on their human resource. The growth of per capita income and economic productivity can be ensured with heavy investment in workers trainings. The economists demonstrated a statistical relationship that is higher earnings have direct relation with education and trainings (Laird, Holton & Naquin, 2003). Highly educated individuals have the ability to self-discipline and tend to do well in labour market. Contrary, in Pakistan current education system, the edge is lost in the world comparison as the graduates given to industry may not feel entitled to work proactively and coming out from institutes as low quality labour force. In Pakistan the rural areas are characterised by poverty and making higher education impossible for kids who are enforced to earn. People join jobs with least knowledge and skills creating a huge attitude gap. In order to train the youth, the authorities must bound universities to develop skills with internship of at least 6 months as a requirement of degree. There is a need of a coherence among institutions of nation to create upgraded human resource with for this economic corridor. The national curriculum review committee of HEC has a serious responsibility to revise the curriculum at par to industry demands. Academia can guide, suggest and create upgraded human resource who can coped up, to enhance good governance and to meet international standards. The ambitious prospects of CPEC will bring China and Pakistan even closer and strengthen Pakistan's economy and that's making other countries including United States, India, Russia and certain Western countries uneasy with the growing influence of China in the region. But it is essentially an economic project meant to bring prosperity to the region and instead of making CPEC a controversial slogan, the people of Pakistan should understand the importance of the project as soon and should armed themselves with all required skills and competencies to enjoy the most out of it. The success in achieving this is possible through training and development of the workforce of every profession in change management, total quality management, contingency leadership etc. as an additional requisite qualification. Now this very serious time demands Pakistan to educate its human resource by emotions and soft skills and to make them proactive and transparent to have an accountable success of such mega projects where financial transparency is the key. Current market trends indicate that firms must become more proactive in the development of supply chain managers having a greater synergy of foreign and domestic policies that can assure the success of CPEC. The law and order situations in Pakistan need to be supportive for the successful implementation of the project. Media should play a prognostic role in CPEC for attracting investment and imparting confidence in the international community. There has to be a continuous appraisal of the challenges facing CPEC in economic, financial and logistic areas including human resource development. Only the highly qualified and skilled technocrats can check the feasibility and transparency of the mega projects mostly by debt finance. Serious actions need to be taken to reduce the corruption. Professional associations play a significant role in any profession (Kuchinke, 2003& 2010) and help in networking and knowledge sharing. In Pakistan, ministry of human resource development, TEVTA and HEC, Pakistan should collaborate with universities, technical institutes and other developmental authorities like SMEDA, PARD etc. to provide long-term HRD structures that will help the country in economic, social and societal development. Such collaborations must work extensively in the areas of organization development, performance management, leadership, project management, HRD interventions, change management, knowledge management and total quality management. Diploma and short certifications in these areas may be enforced to any kind of professional to enrich them with skills and attitude. If the project be let to devotedly work, it would change the fate of the regions in terms of infrastructure, industries, commerce & trade, energy production etc.

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