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Beyond Infrastructure: China's AI Education Revolution Opens New Horizons for CPEC Educational Cooperation



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"Educational technology has emerged as a new bridge connecting Pakistan and China, strengthening cooperation through knowledge exchange, digital learning, and innovation."

With the advent of the artificial intelligence (AI) revolution in education, China has taken a groundbreaking initiatives to redefine the higher education landscape in the digital era. China has announced a series of pioneering AI-driven projects and initiatives for higher education too. The developments, announced at the 2026 World Digital Education Conference, held in Hangzhou, extent the message of the start of a new era in the educational modernization of China, while also highlighting new opportunities for the collaboration between Pakistan and China under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).



One of the main highlights of the conference was the introduction of the first batch of 18 higher education AI agents for both educational and academic purposes. These intelligent systems are designed to be used in various fields of education and have been incorporated into the China's national Smart Education platform, offering teachers and students high-end digital teaching tools to support teaching and students' academic productivity.

According to China's Ministry of Education, the AI agents are intended to support “AI-assisted teaching and AI-assisted learning” and aid teachers in enhancing teaching effectiveness. The ministry added the technology aims to help overcome learning difficulties among students while enhancing their ability to be more independent in their studies. This is a glimpse of China's push for the more knowledge-based and digital economy and for the more education-based economy.

For Pakistan, these developments are particularly relevant as CPEC enters a new phase emphasizing innovation, technology, and human capital development. While early phases of CPEC concentrated on energy, transportation, and infrastructure projects, recent cooperation has increasingly focused on education, science, digital technology, and workforce development. The conference also showcased 20 "model cases" of digital education that has gone global. They involve multiple programmes of sharing of resources, cooperation between academics across borders, international export of education services and the promotion of education standards. China is hoping to build up further the educational connectivity and international cooperation through joint curriculum development, transfer of credits, academic exchange and cooperation on research.



Education experts argue that digital transformation has joined the national development agenda. The collaboration with China could enable Pakistani educational institutions to gain access to cutting-edge technology in the field of education, high-tech digital learning platforms and AI tools for education. Such collaboration will enable improvement in the quality of teaching, increase the availability of teaching materials and reinforce the power of research in higher education institutions.

"The unveiling of 18 AI-powered teaching and learning agents at the 2026 World Digital Education Conference demonstrates China's commitment to educational innovation and provides a model that could support Pakistan's digital transformation in higher education under CPEC."

The emergence of AI-assisted education also aligns with Pakistan's efforts to modernize its educational system and prepare graduates for future labor markets. As industries increasingly adopt digital technologies, universities must equip students with new competencies related to artificial intelligence, data literacy, critical thinking, and technological innovation. Partnerships with Chinese institutions could support curriculum modernization and help bridge existing technological gaps.

Beyond technological benefits, the conference outcomes reinforce the importance of people-to-people connectivity between Pakistan and China. Educational exchanges have long served as a cornerstone of bilateral relations, with thousands of



Pakistani students pursuing studies in China through scholarships and academic cooperation programs. The expansion of digital education initiatives offers new avenues for collaboration through virtual classrooms, online joint degree programs, and cross-border research networks.

Furthermore, digital education could be internationalized to enhance academic mobility and foster more cooperation between the universities participating in the CPEC projects. Joint learning platforms and AI learning environments can offer opportunities for students and researchers from both countries to jointly solve problems, innovate and create knowledge production.

These developments are seen by analysts as part of China's overall efforts to assert itself as the world leader in EdTech. China's pioneering advances in Artificial Intelligence, digital infrastructure, and educational reform are ushering in a new era of learning, with the potential to influence the world. The adoption of these innovations in Pakistan could help



in meeting the country's objectives in terms of quality education, technological progress and economic competitiveness

The achievements unveiled at the 2026 World Digital Education Conference demonstrate that the future of CPEC extends beyond physical infrastructure and economic cooperation. Increasingly, the corridor is becoming a platform for knowledge exchange, technological collaboration, and human capital development. As artificial intelligence transforms education globally, Pakistan and China have an opportunity to deepen their partnership through innovative educational initiatives that prepare future generations for the challenges and opportunities of the digital era.

The collaboration between Pakistan and China, as part of the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), can shift from the infrastructure-led cooperation to a knowledge-led cooperation. The introduction of AI-based learning platforms, smart educational systems, and digital teaching tools in both countries could significantly enhance the quality and accessibility of higher education. The trend of AI enhanced teaching and learning system in China, particularly the national Smart Education campaign, provides a potential blueprint for AI modernization in the Pakistani higher education system. The shift would not only boost the possibilities for teaching and research in the classrooms, but also help address issues that continue to plague the education sector such as lack of quality education, poor digital facility, and less qualified faculty.

At a broader scale, the collaboration in the field of education technology under CPEC can boost digital transition and foster the region's knowledge economy. Cooperation such as the development of digital teaching materials, transnational online courses, faculty exchanges, and research cooperation on the basis of artificial intelligence can help strengthen the link between the two universities. This collaboration over the years can help establish a workforce of skilled individuals with expertise in AI, data science, and new



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technologies. To sum up, the improved educational dimension of CPEC is likely to transform it into a corridor of economic connectivity but it will also serve as a platform for innovation, human resource development and knowledge sharing in the region in the long term.

"In this evolving partnership, educational technology becomes more than a tool—it becomes a bridge connecting economies, institutions, and futures across borders."