



**Title: Educational Convention-Connecting Pakistan and Asia Pacific**

**Event Date:** October 28, 2025

**Venue:** IFQ Hotel, Islamabad

**Time:** 11:00-16:00

**Executive Summary**

The Consortium for Asia Pacific and Eurasian Studies (CAPES), in collaboration with iae Global, organized an educational convention to empower youth to meet their academic aspirations in a changing educational environment. Together, they aimed to bridge Pakistan with the Asia Pacific region through educational exchanges. The event underscored education as a bridge between Pakistan and the Asia-Pacific, emphasizing academic exchanges as tools for diplomacy and soft power. There is a visible shift from Western universities to Asia-Pacific destinations such as Australia, Singapore, Japan, China, and South Korea due to changing geopolitical dynamics and demographic opportunities.





## Event Highlights

The chief guest of the event was Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, former chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC). He, along with the CEO of iae global, Michael Barnes, and the President of CAVES, Dr. Khuram Iqbal, shared their insights on the prospects of educational exchanges with students and faculty from different universities.

The welcome remarks were given by the President of CAVES Dr. Khuram Iqbal. He emphasized the role of education as a bridge for global connectivity. In the past, Pakistani students preferred Western universities, mainly those in the USA, UK, and Canada, due to the pre-existing diaspora, open-door policies, and inclusive environment. However, with changing geopolitical dynamics the educational landscape is also changing. Currently, youth are considering the options beyond Western universities, mainly in Australia, Singapore, Japan, China, and South Korea. The demographic changes due to falling birth rates and an ageing population in the Asia Pacific countries can be utilized as an opportunity for Pakistani students through educational exchanges. He also suggested that this diversification from west to east can help Pakistan in building its soft power.

Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, while speaking on the occasion, mentioned that HEC has already drafted the Transnational Education Policy, which has already been implemented to encourage the joint

degree programs and offshore campuses of foreign universities in Pakistan. HEC also worked to create a gender balance in Pakistani society by giving females and males equal opportunities of learning and gain knowledge. He suggested that the youth should avail the opportunities of studying abroad. They should work towards diversification of skills and knowledge to become more creative. This can help in brain gain as interacting with others helps you in adapting to a new environment and learning new skills and knowledge. Lastly, he emphasized that future research should be based on the areas that can serve humanity, such as climate change, food security, and the eradication of terrorism.

Michael Barnes, CEO iae global, praised Pakistan and especially HEC for having a high level of education and making advancements in science and technology. He highlighted the fact that the number of Pakistani students in Japan has increased by 50% recently. He also acknowledged the CAPES working enormously in bridging the gap between Pakistan and the Asia Pacific. Nonetheless, he recommended that more agreements, customized programs, and training initiatives can further refine the capabilities of Pakistani youth. At last, he suggested that after learning from advanced and established institutions abroad, the Pakistani students should travel back to serve their nation. They should tell what Pakistan is in reality and change the picture of what is portrayed in the media.

Moderated by Umair Pervez Khan, General Secretary of CAPES, the event was followed by a focus group discussion and concluded with the MoU signing between CAPES and iae global. The focus group discussion, chaired by Dr. Khuram Iqbal, comprised of chief guest, the CEO of iae Global, along with distinguished faculty from different universities.

### **Recommendations**

1. CAPES along with its partner organizations should arrange education conventions on regular basis to raise awareness and facilitate students for studying abroad.
2. HEC should monitor and support universities in executing the Transnational Education Policy through clear benchmarks, reporting standards, and regular audits.
3. CAPES should formalize Pakistan–Asia Pacific Educational Corridors (Australia, Japan, South Korea) to promote student and faculty exchanges.
4. Establish a centralized digital portal (via CAPES) featuring scholarships, admission guidance, and success stories for Asia-Pacific institutions.
5. Visiting faculty, teaching staff from foreign universities should be encouraged (attracted) to come to Pakistan for teaching and research.
6. Encourage dual/joint degree programs, co-supervised research projects, and exchange fellowships between Pakistani and Asia-Pacific universities.
7. Advocate mutual recognition of alternative English and regional proficiency tests beyond IELTS to widen accessibility.

8. Promote research collaborations on climate change, food security, renewable energy, and peace studies aligned with the SDGs.
9. Ensure gender inclusivity by guaranteeing equitable opportunities for female students and faculty in exchange programs.
10. Create a structured alumni network of Asia-Pacific returnees to mentor, share expertise, and support Pakistan's innovation and policy ecosystem.
11. Encourage returning students to serve as Education Ambassadors to improve Pakistan's image abroad and strengthen cultural diplomacy.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, the discussion included that awareness is the key among the Pakistani students. Therefore, proper communication platforms should be developed. Moreover, Additionally, Michael Barnes noted that Pakistan has basic regulatory policies like the TNE policy, but more research in the area is required. Quality and reporting structure compliance is lacking currently, which needs more effort. Pakistan needs such partners who can collaborate with the government or institutions in developing a two-way strategy. Dr. Khuram suggested that departmental-level cooperation can be developed, especially between Australia and Pakistan. Visiting faculty, teaching staff from foreign universities can come to Pakistan and teach the students to advance the courses. University-to-university level cooperation needs to be developed to diversify the testing methods from IELTS to others. At last, Pakistan has great intellectual potential for which new platforms and opportunities are required to refine the raw talent.