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Semester: Autumn 2026

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ALLAMA IQBAL OPEN UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD

Course: Higher Education (828/ 8306) • Level: BS/ BED

Semester: Autumn 2026

Assignment No. 2 (Units 5–9)

SOLVED ASSIGNMENT GUIDE

(For Study & Reference)

Note: This guide is prepared for study and reference purposes. Students are advised to read the relevant units of the course book, understand the concepts, and write the assignment in their own words.

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Question 1: The System of Higher Education in Malaysia and Its Difference from Other Developing Countries (20 Marks)

Critically discuss the system of Higher Education in Malaysia. How is this system different from the systems of higher education in other developing countries?

Introduction

Malaysia is frequently cited as one of the most successful developing countries in higher education. Within a few decades it moved from a small, elite system centred on one or two universities to a large, diversified and internationally visible system that educates a high proportion of its own youth, attracts large numbers of foreign students, and deliberately uses higher education as an instrument of national unity, economic transformation and export earnings. Its progress was guided by explicit national plans, legislation and quality machinery rather than left to chance. This answer describes and critically discusses the Malaysian system — its structure, governance, finance, private sector and internationalisation, together with its weaknesses — and then explains how it differs from the higher education systems of most other developing countries, including Pakistan.

Historical Development and National Goals

Modern higher education in Malaysia began with the University of Malaya (founded in Singapore in 1949 and established in Kuala Lumpur in the early 1960s). After independence, and especially under the New Economic Policy (1971–1990), Malaysia expanded higher education rapidly with two intertwined goals: to produce the skilled manpower for a modernising economy, and to correct ethnic economic imbalances by greatly increasing the participation of the Malay (Bumiputera) majority in universities and in modern occupations. Successive Malaysia Plans treated education as a central development investment. In the 1990s the government, facing demand it could not meet from public funds alone, reformed the legal framework — notably through legislation of the mid-1990s governing universities, private higher education and accreditation — and deliberately invited private and foreign providers into the system. Enrolment grew many times over, participation of the university-age group rose to levels far above most developing countries, and Malaysia set itself the further goal of becoming a regional education hub.

Structure of the System

The Malaysian system is diversified. At its head are public (government-funded) universities, including research universities such as the University of Malaya, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Sains Malaysia and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, which combine teaching with substantial research. Alongside them stand a large private sector of universities, university colleges and colleges, many of them linked to foreign partners; branch campuses of foreign universities, such as Monash University and the University of Nottingham campuses in Malaysia, which award their home degrees on Malaysian soil; polytechnics and

community colleges providing technical and vocational education; and teacher-training and other specialised institutes. A national qualifications framework places certificates, diplomas, bachelor's, master's and doctoral awards on a single ladder with defined standards, so that students can move between institutions and levels. Governance is exercised through the ministry responsible for higher education, while quality is overseen by a national qualifications/accreditation agency (the Malaysian Qualifications Agency) which accredits programmes and maintains the qualifications framework.

Access, Equity and the Private Sector

Malaysia expanded access by a deliberate partnership of public and private provision. When public university places proved insufficient for qualified school-leavers, the state licensed private institutions instead of simply turning students away, and supported students through a national student-loan fund (PTPTN) which lends to students in both public and private institutions. Private colleges developed the famous 'twinning' arrangements, in which students study part of a foreign degree in Malaysia and complete it in Britain, Australia or America, drastically cutting the cost of a foreign qualification. Ethnic policy shaped access: admission preferences and quotas long favoured Bumiputera students in public universities, a policy credited with creating a Malay professional and middle class, though also criticised — including within Malaysia — for meritocratic and quality concerns and for pushing many non-Bumiputera students into the private sector or abroad. The system thus widened participation dramatically, but distributed its benefits and costs unevenly across communities.

Finance, Quality Assurance and Internationalisation

Public universities are financed mainly by government, with growing expectations that they generate income through research, consultancy and fees. The decisive features of Malaysian finance, however, are the national loan scheme, which turned students into supported investors in their own education, and the mobilisation of private household spending through regulated private institutions, which expanded capacity without equivalent public capital cost. On quality, Malaysia made accreditation compulsory and created a single agency to register institutions, accredit programmes and maintain the qualifications framework; private institutions cannot legally operate or advertise programmes without approval and accreditation. Internationalisation is the system's most distinctive success: Malaysia actively markets itself as an education hub, offering English-medium programmes, foreign branch campuses and twinning degrees at costs well below Western countries, reasonable living costs and a Muslim-friendly, multicultural environment. As a result it hosts a very large population of international students, including many from Asia and the Middle East, earning export income and raising the international visibility of its universities, several of which now appear in world rankings.

A Critical Appraisal

Critical discussion requires noting the system's weaknesses as well. Graduate unemployment and underemployment have periodically appeared when expansion outpaced the labour market, raising questions about programme relevance and soft skills. The proliferation of private colleges produced wide variation in quality, and accreditation has had to discipline weak providers. Ethnic admission preferences remain controversial, and critics argue that they cost

the public universities some talented students and complicate claims of pure merit. Language policy has swung between Malay and English as the medium of instruction in science and professional fields, creating uncertainty. Public universities complain of detailed government control limiting their autonomy, and research output, though growing fast and well funded by regional standards, still trails the world's leaders. These are real problems, but they are the problems of a system that has already achieved mass access and is now struggling with quality and relevance at the frontier — a different order of problem from that of countries still struggling to provide basic access.

How Malaysia Differs from Other Developing Countries

- Planned, state-led expansion: Malaysia expanded through explicit national plans, targets and legislation, whereas in many developing countries expansion is unplanned, driven by political announcements of new institutions without staff, funds or standards.
- Regulated private partnership: Malaysia legalised, licensed and quality-controlled a huge private sector and foreign branch campuses as a matter of policy; in many developing countries the private sector grew in a legal grey area, weakly regulated, with doubtful quality and no integration into a national framework.
- A working national student-loan scheme: The PTPTN loan fund supports students across public and private institutions. Most developing countries, Pakistan included, have either no student-loan system or a negligible one, so finance remains a direct barrier or a pure family burden.

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- Single qualifications framework and compulsory accreditation: Malaysia's qualifications agency and framework bind all providers to common, public standards; in many developing countries accreditation is partial, voluntary in effect, or confined to public institutions.
- Deliberate internationalisation and education exports: Malaysia treats higher education as an export industry and a national brand, hosting foreign branch campuses and large numbers of foreign students; most developing countries are net senders of students and foreign exchange, losing money and talent abroad — Malaysia itself reversed exactly this outflow.
- Linkage with economic policy: Malaysian higher education is consciously tied to manpower planning, industrial policy and national unity goals, with technical and vocational routes (polytechnics, community colleges) built into the system; in many developing countries general academic degrees dominate and the link with employment is weak.
- Higher participation and funding: Malaysia sustains participation rates and per-student public effort far above the typical developing country, reflecting a sustained political decision to invest in education as the core of development.

Conclusion

Malaysia's higher education system is a diversified, planned and internationally oriented system in which strong public research universities coexist with a large, regulated private sector, foreign branch campuses, a national student-loan fund, compulsory accreditation and a single qualifications framework. Critically, it still faces problems of graduate employability, uneven private quality, ethnic-policy controversy and limited university autonomy. It differs from most developing countries in precisely the features that explain its success: expansion by plan rather

than drift, private provision harnessed and regulated rather than ignored, finance shared through loans, quality assured nationally, and higher education wielded deliberately as an instrument of economic transformation and export earning. For countries like Pakistan, Malaysia is therefore not merely an example to admire but a practical model of how policy, finance and quality machinery can be combined.

Question 2: Financing of Higher Education and the Role of Cost-Effectiveness Analysis (20 Marks)

Explain the ways used for financing of higher education. Also highlight the role of Cost-Effectiveness Analysis for justification of investment in higher education.

Introduction

Higher education is expensive. Universities need qualified and therefore well-paid teachers, laboratories, libraries, buildings and equipment, and their students are taught in smaller groups than schoolchildren. Every country must therefore answer two questions: who pays for higher education, and how do we know the money is well spent? The first question is the subject of the financing of higher education; the second is addressed by economic appraisal techniques, among them cost-effectiveness analysis, which compare what an educational investment costs with what it achieves. This answer explains the principal ways by which higher education is financed — government funding, tuition fees and student support, private and community sources, income generation and external assistance — and then explains the meaning and role of cost-effectiveness analysis in justifying investment in higher education, with reference to Pakistan.

Ways of Financing Higher Education

1. Government (Public) Funding

In almost every country the state is the largest financier of higher education, because education produces public benefits — skilled citizens, research, national development — that justify tax support. Government finance takes the form of annual grants to universities for salaries and running costs (recurring grants), development grants for buildings and equipment, special grants for research and priority programmes, and funding channelled through bodies such as Pakistan's Higher Education Commission. Grants may be given as block grants, which the institution allocates internally, or as line-item budgets controlled in detail by government. Public funding guarantees access independent of family wealth and allows the state to steer the system, but it is limited by the total tax revenue and by competition from schools, health, defence and other claims — in Pakistan public spending on all education has historically been around 2 per cent of GDP, far below the 4 per cent policy target, so universities chronically feel underfunded.

2. Tuition Fees and Cost-Sharing

The second great source is the student and family, through tuition and other fees. The principle of cost-sharing holds that since graduates personally earn much more than non-graduates, it is fair that they repay part of the cost of their education rather than placing it all on taxpayers, many of whom are poorer than the graduates will become. Fees range from nominal charges in many Pakistani public universities to full-cost fees in private universities. Because fees charged at the time of study would exclude the poor, responsible cost-sharing is combined with student support: scholarships and fee waivers for merit and need, and student loans — ideally income-

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contingent loans of the Australian type, repaid only when the graduate's income permits — which convert an impossible lump sum into manageable future payments. Cost-sharing without such support is unjust and self-defeating; with it, fees become a legitimate and necessary pillar of finance.

3. Private Sector and Community Finance

Private finance establishes and runs whole institutions: private universities and colleges in Pakistan, Malaysia and many other countries are financed by their promoters, by fees, and sometimes by the business groups, trusts and religious or community organisations behind them. Community and philanthropic finance — endowments (waqf), donations, alumni giving and sponsorships — has a long and honourable history in education, from the great endowed universities of the West to institutions in Pakistan supported by trusts and benefactors. Philanthropy can fund buildings, chairs, laboratories and scholarships, and alumni endowments, still weak in Pakistan, are a resource universities everywhere are learning to cultivate.

4. Institutional Income Generation

Universities increasingly earn part of their income: consultancy and research contracts for government and industry; testing and laboratory services; continuing-education and short courses for professionals; patents and technology transfer; renting facilities; and commercial use of university farms, presses and hospitals. Such self-generated income rewards relevance and reduces dependence on a single source, though it must be regulated so that commercial activity supports, and does not displace, teaching and basic research.

5. External and Other Sources

Developing countries also receive external finance for higher education: grants and loans from international agencies and friendly governments for buildings, equipment, scholarships and faculty training abroad, and partnership funding for joint research. Industry may finance chairs, laboratories and student internships. Finally, efficient management is itself a source of finance: money saved by ending waste, sharing facilities, using distance and online modes with their low cost per student, and proper maintenance is money available for teaching and research.

Table 1: Main Ways of Financing Higher Education

Source	Form it takes	Main consideration
Government	Recurring and development grants; research funding through HEC	Guarantees access and steering; limited by total public revenue
Students / families	Tuition and other fees (cost-sharing)	Fair where graduates earn more; must be paired with loans and scholarships
Student support	Scholarships, fee waivers, student loans	Protects poor and meritorious students from the effect of fees
Private sector & community	Private institutions; endowments, donations, alumni giving	Mobilises non-state resources; needs quality regulation
Institutions themselves	Consultancy, contracts, short courses, services, patents	Rewards relevance; must not displace teaching and basic research
External assistance	Foreign grants, loans, scholarships and joint research	Useful supplement; cannot substitute for domestic effort

Cost-Effectiveness Analysis: Meaning

Cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA) is a method of economic appraisal used when the benefits of an activity cannot easily be expressed in money. It compares alternative ways of achieving a

defined educational objective in terms of the cost of each alternative per unit of effectiveness — for example, cost per graduate, cost per student completing with a given standard of achievement, or cost per unit of measured learning gain. It differs from cost-benefit analysis, which attempts to value benefits in rupees (such as graduates' lifetime earnings) and compare them with costs; where outcomes are multiple or hard to price — as with much of education — cost-effectiveness analysis is the more practical tool. The unit cost is usually built from total cost divided by the number of students, adjusted for drop-out and repetition (cost per successful graduate rather than per entrant), and for the quality of the outcome achieved.

The Role of Cost-Effectiveness Analysis in Justifying Investment in Higher Education

- It shows which mode delivers a result cheapest: By comparing cost per graduate in campus, private, distance and online provision, CEA demonstrates, for example, that open and distance education can produce a graduate at a fraction of the campus cost — a powerful justification for investing in institutions like Allama Iqbal Open University when the objective is mass access.
- It exposes waste: High drop-out and repetition mean that money spent on students who never complete is largely lost. Cost-per-graduate calculations reveal inefficient institutions and programmes and justify reforms — better student support, semester systems, advising — that raise completion.
- It guides choices among competing investments: A ministry choosing between a new campus, expanding an existing university, funding student loans or strengthening distance education can use CEA to see which option achieves the stated goal — more graduates,

more science graduates, more trained teachers — at least cost, and can defend that choice publicly.

- It justifies higher-education spending to finance ministries and the public: Demonstrating that a rupee in a given programme yields more trained nurses, engineers or teachers than the same rupee elsewhere converts the case for higher education from assertion into evidence, strengthening budget negotiations
- It supports equity decisions: CEA can be applied separately to target groups — cost per female graduate, per graduate from a rural district — showing which delivery method most cheaply achieves equity goals, and justifying scholarships or distance provision aimed at them.
- It disciplines quality claims: By insisting that effectiveness be defined and measured (completion, achievement, employment), CEA prevents cheapness alone from masquerading as efficiency: a programme that is cheap because it teaches nothing is not cost-effective, because its effectiveness is zero.

Cost-effectiveness analysis has limits that honest use must acknowledge. Educational outcomes are multiple — knowledge, skills, values, research — and not all can be captured in a single effectiveness measure; comparisons must use like-for-like quality, or they reward the shoddy; and data on costs and outcomes in many institutions are weak. Used with these cautions, and alongside cost-benefit and rate-of-return studies, CEA is an aid to judgement, not a substitute for it.

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Conclusion

Higher education is financed from a combination of sources: government grants above all, tuition fees under the principle of cost-sharing, scholarships and student loans that protect the poor, private and community finance including endowments and philanthropy, income generated by institutions themselves, and external assistance. No single source suffices, and healthy systems deliberately diversify. Cost-effectiveness analysis justifies and directs this investment by comparing the cost of alternatives per unit of achieved result — per graduate, per completer, per target-group success — thereby exposing waste, guiding choices between campuses, loans and distance provision, and giving governments and the public evidence that money spent on higher education is money well spent. In a resource-poor country like Pakistan, such analysis is not an academic luxury; it is the means by which scarce rupees are made to educate the greatest number to the highest standard.

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Question 3: Need and Role of Assessment in Higher Education in Pakistan and the Role of the Teacher in Assessment (20 Marks)

Highlight the need and role of assessment in higher education in Pakistan. Also discuss the role of the teacher in assessment from a higher education perspective.

Introduction

Assessment is the process of gathering evidence about students' learning and judging it against defined standards, so that degrees can be awarded, students can be guided, and institutions can know whether they are teaching successfully. In higher education assessment carries exceptional weight, because a university degree is a public certificate: employers, patients, clients and the state trust that the graduate actually possesses the knowledge and skill the

degree proclaims. In Pakistan, assessment is also the most criticised part of the system — dominated historically by a single annual external examination, memory-based questions, complaints of leakage, unfair marking and rote learning. This answer explains why assessment is needed and what roles it performs in Pakistani higher education, and then examines in detail the role of the teacher in assessment at the university level.

The Need for Assessment in Higher Education

Assessment is needed, first, because without it there is no certification: society cannot distinguish the trained doctor or engineer from the untrained, and degrees lose all meaning. Second, it is needed because students study what is assessed; assessment is the strongest single influence on how and what students learn, so a system that tests only memorised reproduction will produce memorisers, while one that tests analysis, application and creation will produce thinkers. Third, institutions and the state need assessment data to judge quality, accredit programmes and direct improvement. Fourth, students themselves need assessment during their studies — feedback — in order to know where they stand and how to improve; a degree course without feedback until the final examination abandons the learner. In Pakistan these needs are sharpened by mass enrolment, the proliferation of public and private institutions of uneven quality, and public anxiety about standards: credible assessment is the main guarantee that expansion has not destroyed the value of the degree.

The Role (Functions) of Assessment

- Certification and selection: Summative assessment at the end of courses and programmes certifies achievement, awards degrees and classes, and provides the basis on which employers select graduates and universities select students for postgraduate study.

- Motivation and direction of learning: Examinations and assignments motivate effort and signal to students what the institution truly values; well-designed assessment directs learning towards understanding, application and independent work.
- Feedback and improvement of learning: Formative assessment — quizzes, assignments, presentations, mid-term tests with comments — tells students and teachers what has been learned and what has not, in time to correct it. This diagnostic role is as important as the certifying role, though historically neglected in Pakistan.
- Quality assurance and accountability: Assessment results, external examining and moderation allow universities, the HEC and accreditation bodies to compare standards across institutions, detect weak programmes and hold institutions accountable for the degrees they issue.
- Curriculum and teaching evaluation: Patterns of student performance reveal defects in curricula and teaching — a question everyone fails, a topic no one can apply — and so assessment feeds back into the improvement of teaching itself.
- Fairness and public trust: Transparent, honestly conducted assessment protects the meritorious student, especially the poor student without influence, and sustains public confidence in universities. Conversely, leaked papers and corrupt marking destroy that trust and punish honesty.

The State of Assessment in Pakistan: A Brief Critical View

Traditionally, Pakistani universities and their affiliated colleges relied on the annual external examination: one paper at year's end, set and marked externally, dominated by essay questions rewarding reproduction of notes and guide-book material. Its defects are well known — it tests

a fraction of the syllabus, encourages selective study and rote learning, gives students no feedback during the year, concentrates all risk in one sitting, and is vulnerable to leakage and impersonation. The spread of the semester system in universities, with internal assessment, mid-terms, quizzes, assignments and presentations, was intended to cure these defects and has improved continuity and feedback where honestly implemented; but it has brought its own dangers — teacher bias or favouritism in internal marks, grade inflation, and uneven standards between institutions. The policy conclusion is not to choose one system blindly but to combine continuous internal assessment with external moderation and safeguards, so that assessment is at once fair, valid and educationally beneficial.

The Role of the Teacher in Assessment

From a higher-education perspective, assessment is not an administrative chore added to teaching; it is a core professional duty of the university teacher, who is at once the designer, administrator, judge and user of assessment. The teacher's role includes the following responsibilities.

- Designing valid assessment: The teacher frames the learning outcomes of the course and designs questions and tasks that actually test them — not only recall, but comprehension, application, analysis and evaluation — aligned with what was taught. Constructing a good paper or assignment, with a marking scheme prepared in advance, is skilled academic work.
- Conducting formative assessment and giving feedback: The teacher sets and marks assignments, quizzes and presentations during the course, returns them promptly with comments that show the student how to improve, and uses the results to re-teach what the class has not grasped.

- Marking fairly and consistently: The teacher marks against the scheme, not against personal liking, handwriting or reputation; uses moderation, second marking or external examining where the system provides it; and resists pressure — from students, parents or influence — to alter marks. In internal assessment under the semester system, this integrity is the teacher's heaviest responsibility.
- Maintaining security and honesty: The teacher protects the confidentiality of papers, supervises or cooperates in the honest conduct of examinations, and acts against cheating and plagiarism, including teaching students academic integrity and the correct use and citation of sources.
- Recording, analysing and reporting results: The teacher keeps accurate records, analyses class performance for what it reveals about teaching, presents results to boards of studies and examiners' meetings, and helps defend the standard of the degree in those bodies.
- Guiding and counselling students: Assessment results are the basis of academic advice — which courses to choose, where to concentrate effort, whether postgraduate study is realistic. A teacher's honest, kind interpretation of results is part of the pastoral duty of higher education.
- Evaluating and improving assessment itself: The teacher reviews whether questions worked as intended, whether marking was consistent and whether the assessment matched the outcomes, and revises the course and its assessment accordingly — closing the loop between teaching, learning and assessment.

The teacher's role also has an ethical summit: at university level the teacher often assesses students whom he or she has personally taught, in small postgraduate classes by name and

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face. Professionalism — anonymity where possible, criteria made public in advance, willingness to explain and, on proper grounds, to review a judgement — is what makes such a system trustworthy.

Conclusion

Assessment is needed in higher education to certify competence, direct and motivate learning, feed back information to students and teachers, assure quality and protect fairness and public trust. In Pakistan its historic weakness — a single note-based external examination — has been partly addressed by semester-based continuous assessment, which in turn demands safeguards against bias and inflation. In all of this the teacher stands at the centre: designing valid assessment, assessing formatively and feeding back, marking fairly and securely, analysing results and guiding students. A university's assessment is, in the end, only as good as the professionalism of its teachers, which is why their training and integrity in assessment deserve as much attention as the design of the system itself.

Question 4: Problems of Quality and Access in Higher Education in Pakistan and Viable Actions to Deal with Them (20 Marks)

Elucidate the problems of Quality and Access as faced by the higher education sector in Pakistan. Suggest some viable actions to deal with these problems.

Introduction

Quality and access are the twin challenges of every higher education system, and in Pakistan they are locked in a difficult embrace: the country must educate far more young people than it does now, yet it must do so without further diluting standards that are already widely doubted. Access means the opportunity for qualified students — whatever their income, gender, region

or background — to enter and succeed in higher education. Quality means the fitness of education for its purpose: competent teachers, relevant curricula, adequate facilities, honest assessment and graduates who can actually do what their degrees claim. This answer first sets out the problems of access, then the problems of quality, in the Pakistani sector, and finally suggests viable, mutually reinforcing actions for dealing with both together.

Problems of Access

Pakistan's participation rate in higher education — the proportion of the 18–23 age group enrolled — remains low, in the region of one in ten young people or fewer, well below regional competitors and far below developed countries. Behind the low average hide sharp inequalities. Access is limited by poverty: even modest fees, transport, hostel and book costs exclude poor families, and the need for young people to earn pushes them out of education. It is limited by geography: universities and good colleges are concentrated in big cities, so rural students — above all rural women — must migrate or give up. It is limited by gender: female participation, though improving and strong in some urban institutions, remains low in conservative and rural areas where distance, safety and custom restrict women's movement. It is limited by the weak school pipeline: many students, especially from public schools and less developed districts, reach the entry stage without the English, mathematics and science preparation to compete for merit seats. And it is limited by information: first-generation students often do not know what programmes exist, what they lead to, or what support is available. The result is that higher education, which should be the great equaliser, too often reproduces the advantages of the already advantaged.

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Problems of Quality

Quality problems are equally serious. Many institutions suffer from a shortage of qualified faculty: a large proportion of university teachers lack PhDs, vacancies persist, and recruitment and promotion have not always been purely merit-based. Physical facilities lag behind enrolment: overcrowded classrooms, outdated laboratories, poor libraries and unreliable internet are common, especially in affiliated colleges, which educate the majority of students yet receive the least attention and funding. Curricula in many programmes are outdated and weakly connected to employers, so graduates emerge with degrees but without the communication, digital and problem-solving skills the labour market demands — a mismatch visible in graduate unemployment alongside employers' complaints that they cannot find suitable staff. Assessment based on rote reproduction (discussed in the previous question's context) certifies memory rather than competence. Research is thin outside a few institutions. Governance problems — political interference, campus politicisation, irregular academic calendars in the past, and weak institutional management — further erode quality. Finally, the rapid growth of private institutions of very uneven standard, and of affiliated colleges approved without rigorous inspection, means the label 'degree' covers wildly different realities, damaging the reputation of the whole sector.

The Quality–Access Tension

It is important to see that the two problems interact. Expanding enrolment without adding teachers, rooms and money lowers quality; restricting entry to protect quality excludes the poor and stores up social frustration; and poor quality itself restricts real access, because a worthless degree is not genuine opportunity. Pakistan's task is therefore not to choose

between quality and access but to expand access in ways that carry quality with them — through modes with low cost per student, through honest minimum standards for every institution that enrols a student, and through finance that follows need.

Viable Actions to Deal with These Problems

Actions for Access

- Expand low-cost modes: Invest in open, distance and online provision — Allama Iqbal Open University, the Virtual University and blended programmes — which reach rural students, women at home and working people at a fraction of campus cost, with the same insistence on honest assessment.
- Build where the students are: Establish campuses and quality colleges in underserved districts, upgrade existing district colleges with staff and laboratories, and provide hostels and safe transport, especially for women.
- Finance the student, not only the institution: Create a national student-loan scheme on income-contingent lines, expand need-based scholarships (such as HEC need-based and provincial schemes), and target support at women, rural students and students with disabilities.
- Strengthen the pipeline: Improve school science, mathematics and English teaching, run university foundation and bridging programmes, and provide career guidance in schools so that able poor students can actually compete.

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Actions for Quality

- Faculty first: Fill vacancies on merit, require and fund PhD and professional development for university teachers, evaluate teaching, and reward good teaching and research in promotion.
- Enforce minimum standards without exception: Through the HEC, accreditation councils and university affiliation inspections, require every institution — public, private or affiliated college — to meet published standards of staff, facilities and assessment before it may enrol or continue enrolling students, and publish the results.
- Modernise curricula and assessment: Revise curricula with employers at the table, build in communication, digital and practical skills and internships, and reform assessment towards continuous, outcome-based testing of understanding and application, externally moderated.
- Fund laboratories, libraries and connectivity: Direct development funds to the unglamorous essentials — labs, books, journals, internet — and to affiliated colleges where most students actually study.
- Protect academic governance: Guarantee merit-based appointment of vice-chancellors and faculty, keep campuses free of political interference, maintain the academic calendar, and make institutional leadership accountable for published performance indicators.

Actions That Serve Both Together

- Raise and stabilise public funding towards the long-promised 4 per cent of GDP for education as a whole, with a protected and growing share for higher education, distributed

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by transparent formulas that reward enrolment of disadvantaged students and measured quality.

- Use data: Maintain reliable statistics on enrolment, completion, cost per graduate and graduate employment by institution and group, so that policy targets the real bottlenecks rather than impressions.
- Link universities to their regions and employers through advisory boards, internships and applied research, raising both relevance (quality) and the willingness of communities and firms to support expansion (access).

Conclusion

Pakistan's higher education suffers restricted and unequal access — by income, geography, gender and weak schooling — alongside pervasive quality problems of faculty, facilities, curricula, assessment, research and governance. The two problems feed each other, and both must be attacked together. The viable path is to expand through low-cost distance and online modes and district-level institutions, finance needy students through loans and scholarships, and simultaneously enforce non-negotiable quality standards, invest in faculty and facilities, modernise curricula and assessment, and govern institutions on merit with stable, increased funding. Access without quality is a fraud on the student; quality without access is a privilege of the few. Pakistan needs, and can afford, neither.

Question 5: The Significance of Continuing Education and the Role of Technology in Promoting It (20 Marks)

Highlight the significance of continuing education for a society and an individual. What role, according to you, can technology play in promoting continuing education?

Introduction

Continuing education means the learning that adults undertake after, alongside or instead of their initial schooling and degrees — part-time courses, professional updating, literacy and second-chance programmes, short certificates, community classes and self-directed learning throughout life. Its premise is simple: in a world where knowledge, technology and occupations change within a single working lifetime, education cannot be finished at eighteen or twenty-two. What a person learned in youth becomes obsolete; new skills, new laws, new machines and new diseases arrive continuously. Societies and individuals that keep learning adapt and prosper; those that stop learning fall behind. This answer explains the significance of continuing education for the individual and for society, and then examines, with a personal and practical judgement, the role technology can play in promoting it — a role of special importance for a country like Pakistan.

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Significance of Continuing Education for the Individual

- Keeping employable: The most immediate significance is economic. A teacher must learn new curricula and methods, a nurse new treatments, an accountant new tax law and software, a farmer new seed and weather information. Continuing education protects the worker against obsolescence and unemployment, and opens promotion and career change: many adults use it to move from a declining occupation to a growing one, or to convert experience into a recognised qualification.
- Higher income and security: Adults who upgrade their qualifications generally earn more and enjoy greater job security; for the self-employed and small business owners, courses in accounts, marketing or digital skills can decide whether an enterprise survives.

- Second chances and confidence: Continuing education redeems interrupted beginnings. The worker who left school early, the woman whose education was cut short by marriage, the prisoner or the retired person can re-enter learning without the humiliation of sitting in a child's classroom. Success in adult learning rebuilds confidence and self-respect, which spread into family and community life.
- Health, family and personal growth: Educated adults make better decisions about health, children's schooling and household finance; educated mothers in particular transform the prospects of the next generation. Beyond utility, learning is itself a good: it keeps the mind active in old age, gives structure and society to retired life, and satisfies the human appetite for understanding — in Islamic as in other traditions, the pursuit of knowledge is a lifelong duty, from the cradle to the grave.

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Significance of Continuing Education for Society

- A workforce that can change: Economies develop by moving into new activities — from agriculture to industry to services and digital work. That movement is impossible unless existing workers can be retrained at scale. Continuing education is the machinery by which a society changes its own workforce without discarding a generation.
- Productivity and innovation: Firms and public services staffed by continuously learning employees adopt new technology faster, waste less and innovate more. National productivity — and therefore national income — depends heavily on this quiet, continuous upgrading, not only on the initial education of the young.
- Social inclusion and stability: Second-chance and literacy programmes draw the excluded — the poor, rural women, minorities, the disabled — into economic and civic life. Societies

that offer their adults no route back into learning accumulate resentment and instability; societies that do, convert potential frustration into participation.

- Better citizenship and public services: Continuing professional education for teachers, health workers, police, judges and officials directly raises the quality of the state as citizens experience it. Civic and community education strengthens democratic habits, public health behaviour and disaster preparedness far more cheaply than remedying their absence.
- Inter-generational effects: Adult learning, especially of mothers, is among the strongest known predictors of children's enrolment, health and achievement. Investment in continuing education therefore pays twice — once in the adult, once in the child.

Barriers That Continuing Education Must Overcome

If continuing education is so valuable, why is participation everywhere lower than it should be? Adults face barriers of time (work and family leave little), money, distance, low confidence after earlier failure, lack of information, and programmes designed for the convenience of institutions rather than of working learners — daytime classes, distant campuses, rigid entry requirements. Any serious promotion of continuing education must attack these barriers, and that is exactly where technology enters.

The Role of Technology in Promoting Continuing Education

In my view, technology is the single most powerful instrument ever available for promoting continuing education, because it directly dissolves the classic barriers of time, place and cost — provided it is used as a servant of learners and not as a fashionable ornament. Its specific roles are these.

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- Learning anywhere, at any time: Recorded lectures, e-books, podcasts and mobile applications let a nurse on night duty, a shopkeeper after closing time or a mother after children sleep study in fragments of free time. The smartphone, already in the pockets of most Pakistani adults, becomes a campus that never closes and never asks the learner to travel.
- Radically lower cost: Once prepared, digital material can serve ten thousand learners almost as cheaply as ten. Open educational resources, free courses (MOOCs) and the distance systems of Allama Iqbal Open University and the Virtual University of Pakistan show that technology-based provision can bring the cost per learner within reach of the poor and of the state alike.
- Reaching the excluded: Technology crosses the distances that defeat rural learners and the social restrictions that keep many women at home; a woman in a conservative household can attend a virtual class, consult a library and earn a certificate without leaving her home, and learners with disabilities gain through text-to-speech, captions and adjustable formats.
- Personalised and practical learning: Learning platforms can test the learner, adapt the pace, translate content, and give immediate feedback; simulations let a technician practise on a virtual machine and a health worker rehearse a procedure safely. Short, skill-focused online courses and digital certificates let adults assemble exactly the learning their job requires.
- Connection and support: Discussion groups, messaging communities, online tutors and video sessions cure the loneliness that makes adults drop out, while radio and television — still vital where internet is weak — carry lessons to whole regions, as educational broadcasting has long done in Pakistan.

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- Recognition and records: Digital certificates, verifiable online credentials and learning records make adult achievement visible to employers, encouraging both learners to complete and firms to sponsor learning.

Technology also has honest limits, which policy must respect. Connectivity, electricity and devices are unequally distributed, so a purely online strategy would exclude precisely the poorest adults; digital literacy itself must be taught; practical skills still need workshops and supervised practice; and unregulated online provision includes worthless and fraudulent courses against which learners need the protection of accreditation. The wise model is therefore blended: technology for content, flexibility and scale, combined with local study centres, occasional face-to-face sessions and honest examinations — the pattern Pakistan's open and virtual universities already embody.

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Conclusion

Continuing education is significant for the individual because it preserves employability and income, offers second chances and confidence, improves health and family decisions and enriches the whole of life; it is significant for society because it makes economic change possible, raises productivity, includes the excluded, improves public services and benefits the next generation through educated parents. Its promotion is blocked by the adult barriers of time, money, distance and confidence. Technology — mobile, internet, broadcast and digital platforms — attacks precisely those barriers by making learning available anywhere and at any time, at low cost, in personalised and supported forms. Used wisely, in blended systems with honest standards and attention to the digital divide, technology can turn continuing education

from a privilege of the few into the normal habit of a whole society, which is what Pakistan's development requires.

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