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**Name:**

**Registration No.:**

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**Program: MA/MEd**

**Semester: Autumn 2026**


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**ALLAMA IQBAL OPEN UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD**

**Course: Educational Guidance & Counselling (843) • Level: MA/MEd**

**Semester: Autumn 2026**

**Assignment No. 2 (Units 6–9)**

**Total Marks: 100 • Pass Marks: 40 • Credit Hours: 03**

**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 then write the assignment in their own words. Copying this guide word for word is not recommended.*

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## Question 1: Steps and Factors in Test Selection in Schools (20 Marks)

*Elaborate on the steps or factors to be considered by a counsellor in test selection in schools.*

### Introduction

Tests are among the most powerful tools of a guidance programme: intelligence, aptitude, achievement, interest and personality measures help the counsellor to understand a student, predict likely success in a course or occupation, identify learning difficulties and evaluate the effects of teaching. But a test is not automatically good because it is printed, foreign or expensive. A badly chosen test produces misleading scores, and decisions about a child's subjects, future and self-image may then be built on error. Selecting a test is therefore a professional act with definite steps and criteria, and the counsellor — not a salesman, a head teacher's preference or mere habit — must be responsible for it. This answer first sets out the sequence of steps in selecting a test, and then elaborates the technical and practical factors — purpose, validity, reliability, norms, fairness and practicality — that must be examined at each step.

## Step One: Define the Purpose and the Decision to Be Made

Selection begins not with catalogues but with a question: what decision will this test help us to make, and about whom? A test needed to screen Class VI pupils for remedial reading help is a different instrument from one needed to guide Class X students toward science or humanities, to select students for a scholarship, or to explore the interests of a student in a career counselling interview. The counsellor therefore states the purpose precisely, identifies the population (age, class, language, background), and decides what kind of information is genuinely lacking — a test should never be given merely because it is available or because 'testing' looks impressive. This step also forces consideration of alternatives: sometimes observation, records or an interview will answer the question better and more cheaply than any test, and the ethical counsellor tests only when test information will actually be used for the student's benefit.

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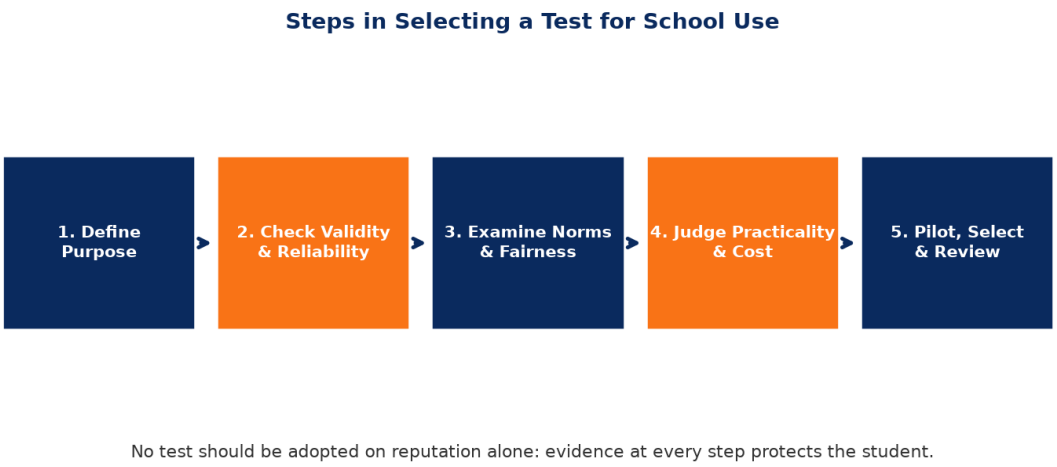


*Figure 1: The sequence of steps in selecting a test for school use.*

## Validity: Does the Test Measure What It Claims to Measure?

Of all factors, validity is the most important: a test that does not measure what it purports to measure is worthless however impressive its other qualities. The counsellor examines the evidence in the test manual for content validity (do the items properly represent the subject or ability, judged against the curriculum actually taught?), criterion-related validity (do scores agree with outside evidence such as later achievement or teachers' assessments, and do they predict future performance where prediction is claimed?), and construct validity (does the test really measure the trait it names, such as verbal reasoning or mechanical aptitude, rather than, say, speed of reading English?). Face validity — whether the test looks acceptable to students, teachers and parents — also matters in schools, because a test that users regard as irrelevant or unfair will not be taken seriously. A manual that offers no validity evidence for a population similar to one's own students is a warning sign, not a detail.

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## Reliability, Standardisation and Norms

Reliability is the consistency of the test: would the student obtain approximately the same score on another occasion, with a parallel form, or under a different scorer? The counsellor looks for the reliability coefficients reported in the manual (test–retest, parallel-form, split-half or internal consistency) and prefers values of about 0.80 or above for decisions about individuals, while remembering that reliability sets a ceiling on validity. Closely connected is standardisation: a standardised test has fixed instructions, time limits and scoring procedures, so that every student is tested under the same conditions. Finally, norms: most school tests are interpreted by comparing a student's score with the scores of a defined reference group. The counsellor must ask who the norm group was — its size, age range, region and

representativeness — and how recent it is. Norms collected on foreign or urban elite samples may seriously misrepresent a rural Pakistani child, and in such cases local norms, where available, or cautious criterion-based interpretation is preferable to false precision.

## Fairness, Language and Suitability for the Students

A test can be valid and reliable for one population and unfair for another. The counsellor examines the language of the test: a reasoning test administered in English to students whose medium of instruction is Urdu or a regional language may measure English proficiency rather than reasoning. Items must also be checked for cultural and gender bias and for content that assumes experiences (for example, urban facilities or foreign customs) that many students have never had. Reading level, instructions and examples must be within the students' reach, and the test's length and difficulty must suit their age and attention span, so that scores reflect ability rather than fatigue. Provision for students with disabilities — large print, extra time or alternative formats where the manual permits — is also part of fair selection. In Pakistan this factor deserves special weight, because many available tests were constructed abroad or for a different medium of instruction, and uncritical adoption transfers that disadvantage directly onto the child.

## Practicality: Administration, Scoring, Cost and Competence

Even a technically excellent test fails in a school if it cannot be administered and used properly. The counsellor therefore weighs practical factors: the time required (a test needing three hours of individual administration may be unusable with a class of fifty); whether it is individual or group administered; the clarity of its instructions; the ease and objectivity of scoring (objective keys or a reliable marking scheme); the cost of booklets, answer sheets and manuals within a

limited school budget; and the availability of parallel forms for retesting. Above all stands the competence factor: some tests are restricted to trained psychologists, and a counsellor must never select a test he or she is not qualified to administer and interpret. Choosing a simpler test that staff can use correctly is professionally better than choosing a sophisticated test that will be misused, and where specialist assessment is needed, the correct decision is referral, not improvisation.

*Table 1: Checklist of factors in test selection.*

| Factor | Key questions the counsellor asks | Warning sign |
|---|---|---|
| Purpose | What decision will the scores inform? For which students? | Testing done for show, with no planned use of results. |
| Validity | What evidence shows it measures the intended trait for students like ours? | Manual gives no validity studies, or studies on very different populations. |
| Reliability | Are reported coefficients adequate (about 0.80+) for individual decisions? | No reliability data, or coefficients far below accepted levels. |
| Norms | Who was the norm group, how large and how recent? | Old, small or foreign norms applied uncritically to local students. |
| Fairness and language | Is the language and content fair to our students' background and medium? | Items depend on unfamiliar culture or on a language students barely read. |
| Practicality and competence | Can we administer, score, afford and correctly interpret it? | Test needs time, money or qualifications the school does not have. |

## Final Steps: Trial, Decision and Review

The selection process ends with verification in one's own setting. The counsellor studies reviews of the test in professional sources, consults colleagues who have used it, and where

possible tries it out on a small sample of students to check timing, clarity and scoring before adopting it for consequential decisions. He or she then records the reasons for the choice, files the manual and norms for reference, plans how results will be communicated to students and parents in understandable, non-labelling language, and ensures that test materials and protocols are stored securely, since exposed items destroy a test's future value. Selection is not once-for-all: the counsellor reviews each adopted test periodically, because curricula change, norms age, better instruments appear, and a test that was suitable five years ago may no longer be so.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, selecting a test in a school follows a disciplined sequence: define the purpose and the decision first; then judge the instrument's validity above all, its reliability, standardisation and norms; then test it against the fairness, language and practicality requirements of the actual students and staff who will use it; and finally trial it, document the decision and review it over time. A counsellor who follows these steps protects students from the two opposite errors of school testing — refusing to use helpful evidence at all, and treating any printed score as truth — and ensures that tests serve guidance, which is their only justification.

## Question 2: Advantages and Limitations of Group Counselling (20 Marks)

*Discuss the advantages and limitations of group counselling.*

### Introduction

Group counselling is a counselling process in which a trained counsellor works with a small group of students — commonly between five and ten — who share a common concern, meet

regularly for a set number of sessions, and help one another, under the counsellor's leadership, to understand and deal with their problems and to grow personally and socially. It must be distinguished from group guidance, which is mainly the giving of information to larger groups, and from group psychotherapy for severe disturbance, which belongs to clinical settings. In schools, group counselling is used for such concerns as examination anxiety, shyness and social skills, adjustment to a new school, study problems, grief, and the ordinary developmental difficulties of adolescence. Because one counsellor (or none) must serve hundreds of students, the method is attractive; but it is not a cheap substitute for individual counselling, and it has real limitations. This answer discusses both sides in detail and indicates when the method should and should not be used.

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## Advantages of Group Counselling

The first advantage is economy and reach: in the same hour, one counsellor can help eight students instead of one, which in a Pakistani school with no full-time counsellor may be the difference between some help and none. Second, group counselling provides universality — the discovery that 'I am not the only one'. The student who believed his or her fear of examinations, family problem or shyness was a unique defect experiences profound relief on hearing peers describe the same feelings, and hope grows from seeing others improve. Third, the group is a social laboratory: students receive honest feedback from peers (which adolescents often accept more readily than adult advice), practise new behaviour such as speaking up, listening and resolving disagreement in a safe setting, and learn social skills that transfer directly to classroom and life. Fourth, members learn by modelling and by helping: explaining a coping strategy to another member strengthens it in oneself, and the experience of

being useful raises self-esteem — what group-work literature calls the helper-therapy principle. Fifth, peer support and belonging themselves are therapeutic: the group becomes a reference group whose healthy norms encourage attendance, honesty and effort. Finally, group work suits many adolescent concerns better than individual work, because adolescence is a peer-centred stage; problems of friendship, peer pressure and identity are naturally explored where peers are present.

- Economy: more students are served with scarce counsellor time, and preventive groups can be run before problems become severe.
- Universality and hope: shared problems remove isolation and stigma; members are encouraged by one another's progress.
- Peer feedback and social learning: members practise communication, assertiveness and cooperation and observe models of coping.
- Belonging and support: group acceptance satisfies a basic adolescent need and sustains change between sessions.

## Limitations of Group Counselling

Against these strengths stand serious limitations. The first is confidentiality: the counsellor can guarantee his or her own discretion but cannot guarantee that every member will respect what is shared, and in a school — where members meet daily in corridors and classrooms, and in a community where families may know one another — this risk is real; sensitive disclosures about family matters can spread as gossip with painful consequences. Second, individual needs can be submerged: time is shared, the quiet member may receive little attention, a dominant member may monopolise sessions, and a problem needing deep individual exploration receives only

partial treatment. Third, group pressure can harm as well as heal: members may conform to group norms against their judgement, may be scapegoated, or may copy undesirable behaviour; poorly selected groups can even reinforce the very habits (for example, truancy) they were formed to change. Fourth, group counselling is unsuitable for certain problems and persons: students in acute crisis, those with severe emotional disturbance, highly suspicious or extremely shy students, and matters involving abuse or strong stigma usually require individual help first. Fifth, the method makes heavy demands on the counsellor's skill — selection and screening of members, setting ground rules, managing conflict and resistance, and ending the group properly — and in untrained hands a group can do damage. Sixth, there are practical difficulties in schools: finding a common free period, a private room, and parental consent, and protecting group time from the demands of the timetable and examinations.

*Table 2: Group counselling — advantages and limitations at a glance.*

| Advantages | Limitations |
|---|---|
| Serves many students with scarce counsellor time. | Confidentiality cannot be fully guaranteed among members. |
| Universality: students learn they are not alone; hope increases. | Individual problems get shared, limited time; quiet members may be missed. |
| Peer feedback, modelling and practice of social skills. | Risk of conformity, scapegoating or learning undesirable behaviour. |
| Belonging and peer support sustain change. | Unsuitable for acute crisis, severe disturbance or highly sensitive disclosures. |
| Especially suitable for common adolescent and developmental concerns. | Requires considerable counsellor skill in selection, leadership and follow-up. |

## Conditions for Using Group Counselling Well

The balance between advantages and limitations is decided largely by how the group is run. Members should be screened and, as far as possible, grouped by similarity of concern and compatibility, with informed agreement (and, for younger students, parental knowledge) about the group's purpose. Ground rules — above all confidentiality, respect and the right not to speak before one is ready — are established in the first session and enforced throughout. The group should be small enough for everyone to participate, meet for a defined number of sessions with clear goals, and be led by a counsellor who monitors each member's progress and remains ready to offer individual sessions or referral to any member whose needs exceed what the group can provide. Group and individual counselling are then not rivals but complementary parts of one programme, and the counsellor chooses between them — or combines them — according to the problem and the student, not according to convenience alone.

A practical example shows the balance clearly. A group of eight Class X students with examination anxiety can, in six weekly sessions, learn the nature of anxiety, practise relaxation and study planning together, encourage one another through mock examinations and visibly improve as a group, at a cost of six counsellor hours instead of forty-eight individual hours. The same format would be the wrong choice for a student disclosing abuse at home, whose matter is confidential, urgent and individual, and who should never have been placed in a group for it at all. The advantages and limitations are therefore not abstract properties of the method in general; they appear or disappear according to the match between the method, the problem, the members selected and the skill of the leader, and judging that match in each case is the counsellor's professional responsibility.

### Conclusion

To conclude, group counselling offers real and distinctive advantages: economy of scarce professional time, the relief of universality, peer feedback and social learning, belonging and mutual support, and a natural fit with the peer-centred concerns of adolescence. Its limitations are equally real: confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, individual needs may be submerged, group pressure can harm, some problems and students are unsuited to it, and it demands skilled leadership and organisational effort. The professional conclusion is therefore neither enthusiasm nor rejection, but discrimination: used for suitable common concerns, with careful selection, ground rules and supervision, group counselling is one of the most valuable instruments a school possesses; used carelessly as a cheap replacement for individual help, it can fail the very students it was meant to serve.

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## Question 3: Rationale for a Training Programme for Educational Counsellors in Pakistan (20 Marks)

*Develop a rationale to justify a training programme for educational counsellors in Pakistan.*

### Introduction

A rationale is the reasoned case for a proposal: it shows that a real need exists, that the proposed action answers that need, and that the benefits justify the cost. The proposal here is a systematic training programme to prepare educational counsellors for Pakistani schools. At present the country has thousands of schools and millions of students but virtually no trained school counsellors: guidance, where it exists at all, is left to overloaded teachers and head teachers without preparation in counselling, testing or career guidance, while national education policies have repeatedly recommended guidance services that were never staffed.

This answer builds the rationale step by step — from the needs of students, the failures of the present situation, and the educational, psychological, social and economic benefits of trained counsellors, to the objectives and design features that a justified training programme should have — so that the case can stand before policymakers, universities and school authorities.

## The Need: Students' Problems Are Real and Growing

The first element of the rationale is the scale and seriousness of student need. Pakistani students face intense examination pressure and competition for limited seats in desirable institutions and professions; a large proportion make subject and career choices blindly or under family pressure and later change courses, repeat years or drop out. Unemployment and underemployment among educated youth produce frustration and a sense of wasted education. Alongside these educational problems, schools increasingly meet anxiety, depression, family breakdown, poverty-related stress, mobile-phone and social-media misuse, substance abuse in some urban settings, bullying, and the effects of violence and displacement — problems that untrained goodwill cannot handle and that are frequently punished as indiscipline instead of being understood. Girls, first-generation learners, students with disabilities and rural students face additional barriers with no one in the school whose duty it is to notice and help. A service cannot be run by nobody: if these needs are accepted as real, the first requirement is personnel trained to meet them.

## The Gap: Why Existing Staff Cannot Simply Absorb the Work

It is sometimes argued that teachers and head teachers can do this work without special training, which would make a training programme unnecessary. Experience refutes the argument. Counselling is a skilled professional activity: it requires knowledge of human




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development and personality, mastery of counselling skills and ethics (including confidentiality and its limits), competence in selecting, administering and interpreting tests without misusing them, knowledge of educational and occupational information, and supervised practice in real interviews. Without training, well-meaning staff give premature advice, break confidences, misuse test scores as labels, miss signs of serious disturbance, and fail to refer cases that need specialist help — errors that can harm students and discredit the very idea of guidance. Teachers also lack time: a teacher carrying a full timetable and classes of fifty cannot add confidential counselling, record-keeping and follow-up to an already full day. The rationale therefore rests on a simple point: guidance is real work requiring real competence, and competence on a national scale can be produced only by an organised training programme.

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## Educational, Psychological and Social Justification

The benefits of trained counsellors justify the investment from several directions. Educationally, counsellors improve achievement and retention: students helped to choose suitable subjects, study effectively and resolve problems early are less likely to fail, repeat or drop out, so the public money already spent on their schooling is not wasted. Psychologically, early, skilled help prevents small problems from becoming disorders, supports students in crisis, and promotes mental health in a country where specialist services are scarce and stigma is strong; the school is often the only place where a young person's distress is visible at all. Socially, a counsellor strengthens the link between school, family and community, supports girls' continuation in education, helps marginalised students claim scholarships and facilities they are entitled to, and contributes to a school climate of fairness and safety rather than fear. A trained cadre also

generates the records and follow-up data that planners need to see whether policies are working, which at present barely exist in Pakistani school guidance.

## Economic and Policy Justification

The economic argument is equally strong. The costs of unguided education — repeated classes, dropouts after years of public expenditure, graduates trained for occupations they leave or never enter, and the private cost to families of wrong choices and private tuition bought in desperation — far exceed the cost of training counsellors. Internationally, school counselling is a recognised component of quality education, and Pakistan's own education policies and its commitments to inclusive, quality schooling under Sustainable Development Goal 4 point in the same direction; what has been missing is not policy language but the training pipeline to turn language into staff. Universities and open-university distance programmes (such as those of Allama Iqbal Open University) already possess the academic infrastructure in education and psychology to run such training at scale and in-service, so the proposal builds on existing capacity rather than starting from nothing.

## Objectives and Design of the Justified Programme

A rationale must also show that the proposed programme is capable of producing the promised benefits, so its main features belong in the justification. The programme should (1) recruit suitable candidates — graduate teachers with the right personal qualities of empathy, integrity and emotional stability, selected partly by interview, since counselling cannot be taught to everyone; (2) provide a curriculum covering guidance principles, counselling theories and micro-skills, psychological testing and its limits, career guidance, child and adolescent development, mental-health first aid and referral, record systems, and research and evaluation;

(3) require substantial supervised practicum in real schools, because counselling is learned by doing it under feedback, not from lectures alone; (4) operate at more than one level — short certificate training for teacher-counsellors in every school, and diploma or master's-level preparation for full-time counsellors and district-level coordinators; (5) include Pakistani content — local languages, family structures, available occupations, scholarships and welfare services — rather than importing foreign material uncritically; and (6) be linked to recognised posts, grades and career progression, because training without employment and status will not attract or retain good candidates. Stated in this form, the programme is not a vague wish but an implementable plan whose each element answers a demonstrated need.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the rationale for a training programme for educational counsellors in Pakistan rests on four pillars: student needs are extensive, growing and largely unmet; the work requires professional knowledge, skills and ethics that untrained staff, however devoted, cannot be expected to possess; the educational, psychological, social and economic benefits of meeting those needs exceed the cost of training by a wide margin; and a feasible programme design exists, using existing universities and distance education to train teacher-counsellors and specialist counsellors with supervised practice and recognised posts. Until such a programme is established, national policy in favour of guidance will remain words on paper. Training the counsellors is the necessary first investment from which every other guidance activity — testing, career guidance, records, parental work and student welfare — follows.

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## Question 4: The Role of the Principal in the Educational Guidance Programme in Pakistan (20 Marks)

*Discuss the role of the principal in the context of the educational guidance programme in Pakistan.*

### Introduction

No guidance programme survives in a school against the indifference of its head, and few fail where the head actively leads them. In Pakistan the principal (head teacher or headmaster/headmistress) is the administrative, academic and moral head of the school: he or she controls the timetable, the allocation of rooms and duties, staff meetings, discipline, relations with parents and the education department, and the general climate in which any new service must take root. Guidance is usually introduced into a school that has never had it, staffed by teachers with no training in it, and judged by parents who may misunderstand it; in that situation the principal's role is not one role among many but the decisive condition of success or failure. This answer discusses that role under its main heads: leadership and policy, organisation and administration, support and supervision of staff, liaison with parents and community, provision of facilities and records, and evaluation — with attention throughout to Pakistani conditions.

### Leadership: Giving Guidance a Place in the School's Purpose

The principal's first role is leadership of ideas. He or she must himself or herself understand what guidance is and is not — not a punishment room, not a clerical record exercise, and not a luxury for examination classes only — and must present it to staff, students and parents as part of the school's educational purpose: helping every student to develop, choose wisely and

overcome difficulties. The principal sets this tone in staff meetings, in addresses to students, and in dealings with parents, defends the programme when it is criticised as a distraction from examination results, and insists, by personal example, on the values guidance requires: confidentiality, fairness, listening to students and treating problems as occasions for help rather than only for punishment. Where the principal visibly refers students for help, respects the counsellor's confidential work and asks for guidance information when decisions are made, the whole staff learns that guidance matters; where he or she treats it as paperwork, no circular can save it.

## Organisation and Administration of the Programme

The second role is organisational. The principal constitutes the guidance work as a definite programme: appointing or nominating a suitable teacher as teacher-counsellor or guidance coordinator (choosing for aptitude and acceptability to students, not merely for a light timetable), forming a small guidance committee of interested staff, and approving an annual plan of activities — orientation of new students, subject-choice guidance at the proper points, career talks, parent meetings and follow-up of leavers. Administration includes the unglamorous essentials without which goodwill evaporates: a place in the timetable for guidance periods and for counselling interviews, a room or at least a private corner where a student can talk unheard, secure storage for cumulative records and test materials, a modest budget line for occupational information, tests and stationery, and official permission and cover arrangements when the counsellor must visit homes, employers or other institutions. The principal also integrates guidance with the school's other systems — admissions, examinations, discipline and health checks — so that information flows to the counsellor and help flows back.




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*Table 3: Summary of the principal's role in the guidance programme.*

| Area of principal's role | Principal's main actions |
|---|---|
| Leadership and climate | Understands and advocates guidance; models confidentiality, fairness and a helping attitude toward students. |
| Organisation | Appoints teacher-counsellor, forms guidance committee, approves annual guidance plan and timetable time. |
| Facilities and resources | Provides private space, secure record storage, materials and a small budget. |
| Staff support and supervision | Arranges training, protects counsellor's time, reviews programme progress in staff meetings. |
| Liaison | Connects programme with parents, community, education department and referral agencies. |
| Evaluation | Reviews outcomes (choices made, dropouts, follow-up) and improves the programme year by year. |

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## Supporting, Supervising and Developing Staff

Third, the principal is responsible for the people who do the work. He or she encourages and, where possible, arranges training for the teacher-counsellor — releasing him or her for in-service courses, workshops and university programmes in guidance — and protects the counsellor's allocated time against being swallowed by substitute teaching and clerical duties, the commonest way guidance dies in Pakistani schools. Supervision by the principal is supportive rather than inspectorial: he or she discusses the programme's progress, numbers and kinds of cases (without demanding confidential details of individual counselling, which must remain protected), difficulties encountered, and needs for the coming term. The principal also enlists the whole staff, since guidance is a cooperative service: class teachers are expected to observe students, contribute records, refer cases and cooperate with follow-up, and the

principal recognises this contribution instead of letting guidance be regarded as one teacher's hobby. Handling of referrals to outside agencies — health, psychological, welfare — also normally passes through the principal's office, which gives the programme authority and continuity.

## Liaison with Parents, Community and Authorities

Fourth, the principal is the programme's bridge to the world outside the school. Many Pakistani parents are unfamiliar with guidance and may suspect counselling of being interference in family matters, a sign that their child is 'mad' or 'bad', or a device for pushing the child away from the family's chosen career. The principal's standing with parents gives him or her the unique ability to explain the programme at parent-teacher meetings, to secure parental cooperation in individual cases, and to present career and subject information in terms families respect. The same liaison extends to the local community (employers, training institutions, health and welfare agencies that receive referrals or provide speakers and visits), and upward to the district education authorities, whose approval, posts and funds the programme needs and to whom its results must be reported persuasively. A principal who can show an education officer concrete outcomes — fewer dropouts, better subject choices, successful placements — is the programme's best advocate for resources.

## Evaluation, Records and Improvement

Finally, the principal is responsible for knowing whether the programme works. This means ensuring that basic records exist and are used: cumulative records maintained, numbers of interviews and referrals logged, subject-choice and leaver-destination information collected, and an annual review conducted in which the staff ask what guidance achieved, where it failed

and what will be changed next year. Evaluation in a school guidance programme is modest and practical rather than academic, but without it the programme cannot improve, cannot defend its timetable and budget, and cannot learn from mistakes such as a career talk that misled students or a testing exercise whose results were never used. The principal's insistence on this reviewing habit converts guidance from a set of good intentions into an accountable school service.

### Conclusion

To conclude, the principal's role in the educational guidance programme in Pakistan is comprehensive: leader who gives guidance legitimacy and a helping climate; organiser who appoints suitable staff, provides time, space, records and funds, and weaves guidance into the school's systems; supporter and supervisor who trains and protects the counsellor and mobilises the whole staff; liaison officer who wins the trust of parents, community and authorities; and evaluator who reviews results and improves the programme. Professional counsellors and trained teachers are necessary, but in the conditions of Pakistani schools they are not sufficient: it is the principal who turns their individual efforts into an institution. Programmes that flourish can almost always be traced to a head who understood this role and performed it.

## Question 5: Major Constraints to Launching a Guidance and Counselling Programme in Pakistani Schools (20 Marks)

*What are the major constraints to launching a programme of guidance and counselling in Pakistani schools? Discuss in detail.*

## Introduction

Successive education policies in Pakistan have recommended guidance and counselling in schools, yet decades later the service barely exists outside a small number of private institutions. The explanation is not a single obstacle but a system of mutually reinforcing constraints — financial, human, organisational, cultural and conceptual — which defeat isolated attempts and explain why good intentions have repeatedly failed to become working programmes. Understanding these constraints in detail is not an exercise in pessimism; it is the necessary first step in designing a launch strategy that has any chance of success. This answer discusses the major constraints in turn: the absence of trained personnel and of training facilities; financial limits; overcrowded schools and an overloaded timetable; an examination-dominated system; weak policy implementation; attitudes of administrators, teachers, parents and students; lack of facilities, tests and local materials; and problems of language, culture and coordination, and it closes by indicating the directions in which the constraints can be loosened.

## Shortage of Trained Personnel and Training Facilities

The fundamental constraint is human. A guidance programme needs counsellors, and Pakistan has almost none in its schools: no regular cadre or sanctioned posts of school counsellor exists in the public system, teacher-education curricula give guidance at most a theoretical mention, and very few university programmes offer specialised, practice-based preparation in school counselling with supervised practicum. The result is a circular trap: schools cannot appoint counsellors because none are trained, and training institutions do not train them because no posts exist to employ them. Where a willing teacher is informally given the role, he or she works without training, without recognised status and usually without time allowance, so the

service depends entirely on one person's unpaid enthusiasm and collapses when that person is transferred — a frequent event in government schools. Any serious launch must therefore solve the personnel problem first, at least at the level of trained teacher-counsellors, or every other provision is decoration.

## Financial Constraints

Closely connected is money. Public education in Pakistan is chronically underfunded relative to enrolments, and school budgets are consumed by salaries and basic necessities; in that competition a new service with no examination results to show loses easily. Yet even a modest guidance programme costs money: a counsellor's post or time allowance, a usable room, furniture and secure storage, printed occupational and educational information, psychological tests and their scoring materials, record forms, and transport for visits and referrals. Private schools can pass costs to parents, which is why guidance appears there first, but a national programme cannot be built on fees. Financial constraint also operates indirectly: poverty among families pushes children into work, early marriage and dropout, generating needs far beyond what a new, thinly funded service can meet, and tempting administrators to conclude that guidance is unaffordable idealism rather than a practical investment.

## Overcrowding, Workload and the Examination-Dominated System

The daily organisation of Pakistani schooling resists guidance. Class sizes of forty to sixty, double-shift schools, multi-grade teaching in rural areas and pupil–teacher ratios far above counsellor norms leave teachers no time to know students individually, let alone counsel them, keep records and follow up cases. The timetable is completely occupied by examinable subjects, and the whole system — school reputation, teacher assessment, parental demand —

is dominated by board examination results. In such a system any period given to guidance is treated as stolen from 'real' teaching, counselling interviews are interrupted or never scheduled, and the counsellor is the first teacher withdrawn for substitute duty, invigilation and clerical work. Guidance asks the school to value development, adjustment and informed choice; the examination machine values only marks. Until guidance outcomes are recognised in how schools are judged, this structural constraint will keep defeating launches from inside.

## Weak Policy Implementation and Administrative Attitudes

Policy failure forms a fourth constraint. Guidance has appeared in policy documents without the machinery that turns policy into service: no approved scheme of studies for counsellor training linked to posts, no job descriptions, no supervisory structure at district level, no budget head and no monitoring indicators. Administrators at district and school level, themselves products of the examination system and often unfamiliar with guidance, may regard it as a foreign fashion, a threat to discipline, or a source of awkward questions about punishment and failure. Frequent transfers of heads and officers break continuity, and innovations dependent on one supportive officer die with his or her posting. Corruption and patronage in appointments, where they occur, further damage a service whose essence is trust and merit. In short, the administrative environment offers a new guidance programme neither protection nor reward, and frequently active, if passive-looking, resistance.

## Attitudes, Stigma and Lack of Awareness

Cultural and attitudinal constraints are as powerful as financial ones. Counselling is widely misunderstood: many parents and teachers equate seeking help with mental illness or bad character, so a student sent to a counsellor may be stigmatised by the very act meant to help

him or her. Family privacy is strongly guarded, and discussing family matters with an outsider — even a teacher — can be seen as dishonour, particularly for girls, whose access to a (possibly male) counsellor raises additional concerns in conservative communities. Elders' authority over subject, career and marriage choices leaves little recognised space for the student's own decision-making that guidance exists to support, and some parents fear the counsellor will undermine family decisions. Students themselves, accustomed to authoritarian schooling, may not trust that confidences will be kept. A programme launched without a sustained awareness campaign among parents, teachers and students therefore meets suspicion at exactly the points where it needs cooperation.

## Lack of Facilities, Tests and Indigenous Materials

Material constraints complete the picture. Many schools lack a spare room of any kind, so the basic condition of counselling — privacy — cannot be met; records cannot be kept confidentially without secure storage; and occupational information about Pakistani careers, institutions, scholarships and entry requirements is scattered, outdated or available only in English and in cities. Psychological tests present a special difficulty: most standardised instruments were developed abroad, in English, on foreign norm groups, and their uncritical use with Urdu- or regional-medium rural students produces invalid results and unfair labels, while developing and norming indigenous tests requires research funding and psychometric expertise that are scarce. Guidance materials in Urdu and regional languages — career booklets, study-skills guides, group guidance units — are likewise limited. A launching school therefore faces not only staffing problems but the absence of the ordinary tools of the trade in usable local form.




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*Table 4: Major constraints at a glance.*

| Constraint | How it blocks a launch |
|---|---|
| Personnel | No sanctioned counsellor posts and almost no practice-based training; service depends on untrained volunteers. |
| Finance | No budget head for posts, room, tests, information materials and records. |
| School organisation | Overcrowded classes, full timetable and examination pressure leave no time, space or status for guidance. |
| Policy and administration | Recommendations without machinery, supervision or continuity; indifferent or resistant administrators. |
| Attitudes and stigma | Counselling equated with illness or disgrace; family privacy and elder authority resist student counselling. |
| Tools and materials | No private room or secure storage; foreign tests and English materials unsuited to local students. |

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## Directions for Loosening the Constraints

The constraints are severe but not absolute, and naming them points to a realistic launch strategy. Begin with people: create recognised teacher-counsellor roles with time allowance and train serving teachers through university and distance programmes, while pressing for a proper counsellor cadre in the longer term. Begin small and visibly: a basic programme of orientation, subject-choice guidance, records and referral in a willing school, led by its principal, demonstrates value more convincingly than a province-wide paper scheme. Win the community: parent awareness meetings, involvement of respected local figures, female counsellors for girls' schools, and scrupulous confidentiality counter stigma. Use low-cost tools first — locally written Urdu career information, teacher-made records, group guidance — while

universities develop and norm indigenous tests. Finally, connect guidance to what the system already values by documenting its effects on dropout, subject failure and examination performance, so that administrators see it as serving results rather than competing with them. Each element of this strategy answers a specific constraint named above.

## Conclusion

To conclude, launching guidance and counselling in Pakistani schools is constrained by an interlocking set of obstacles: the absence of trained counsellors and of the training and posts that would produce them; inadequate finance; overcrowded, examination-dominated schooling that leaves the service no time, space or status; policy that recommends without implementing; administrative indifference; social stigma and misunderstanding among parents and students; and a shortage of private space, local-language materials and valid indigenous tests. No single reform removes them all, which is precisely why past launches have failed. But each constraint has a corresponding remedy, and a phased strategy — trained teacher-counsellors, principal-led small beginnings, community awareness, low-cost local materials and evidence of results — can loosen the system constraint by constraint until a genuine national service becomes possible.

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