

Teacher Licensing Reform in Sindh: Role and Impact of STEDA: An Analysis of Policy, Implementation, and Challenges

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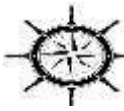
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Abstract

The licensing of teachers is one of the most important policy tools that can be used to improve the quality of education and professionalization of teaching directly in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4, which focuses on inclusive and equitable quality education. In Pakistan, Sindh has a first mover advantage with regard to operationalizing formal Teaching Licensing Policy framework through the Sindh Teachers Education Development Authority (STEDA). This paper is critically examining the framework design, execution and initial results of the Teacher licensing policy in Sindh, largely centering on the capacity of institutions, gaps in implementation, equity and scaling issues. The methodology of the study is a qualitative approach of policy analysis complemented with descriptive quantitative data, based on the secondary data, administrative records, and outcomes of the first licensing test along with the SWOT analysis and review of the comparative policies of the regional and international model. Methodology used in the study was qualitative policy document analysis, SWOT, and review of comparative policies with regional and international models. The evidence indicates that despite the policy providing a clear regulatory framework and establishing transparency and standardization in teacher certification, the overall pass rates remain low, there are still considerable disparities between urban and rural regions, unequal incentives by the targeted cadres, inadequate preparation and professional development services, and weak monitoring procedures. When compared to regional and international licensing models, it can be seen that it is in alignment with global best practice as well as having significant contextual gaps. The study concludes that teacher licensing in Sindh is a significant structural reform, but in order to guarantee sustainability, inclusivity and a significant influence on teaching quality, it is necessary to systematically strengthen capacity building, incentive alignment, operational clarity, and continuous professional development.

Key Words: Teaching License Policy, White Paper, STEDA, Continuous Professional Development, Standardizing Teaching



Introduction

Teaching as profession, has always been a perennially debatable topic in Pakistan. Quality education hinges on many factors, from content knowledge to the learning environment and quality of teaching (Azhar & Imran, 2024). In the 21st century, every student is exploring a new innovative teaching method rather than fully depending on rote-learning techniques. This shift underscores the decisive role teachers play in either enhancing or hindering the learning process (Cherkasov et al., 2019a, 2019b; Fryer and Bovee, 2016; Hubackova and Semradova, 2016; Nortvig et al., 2018). Based on the demand for more innovative ways of teaching and struggling with out-of-school children issues, various initiatives have been introduced to boost the status of Teaching in Pakistan, especially in Sindh, such as introducing the Best Teacher Award & Teaching Licensing Policy. However, its scope, quality, implementation strategy, validity, and scalability still need to be addressed and reviewed.

Sindh, a province with a population of 56 million and a growth rate of 2.55%, is a diverse region in Pakistan (Oad, et al., 2024; Imran & Akhtar, 2023). In 2023, The Sindh Teachers Education Development Authority (STEDA) under the School Education & Literacy Department, along with different stakeholders, including Durbeen and AKU-IED, took a big initiative by introducing a Teaching Licensing Policy & Test for Teachers, becoming the pioneer of it in Pakistan and transforming Teaching as Profession.

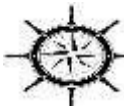
STEDA was established in 2012 via provincial legislation to elevate and regulate teacher quality across Sindh. In a sector long affected by inconsistent teacher standards, political influence, and lack of professional rigor, STEDA's creation represented a significant structural intervention to standardize teacher accreditation, training, and licensure (Imran, Zaidi, & Khanzada, 2023). Under the STEDA Act, STEDA is responsible for accrediting teacher education institutions and programs, developing professional standards for teacher education and licensure, monitoring the quality and effectiveness of teacher training STEDA, recommending policies for recruitment, in-service training, licensing, and professional development (Imran, Zaidi, & Rehan, 2024).

Its major function is to regulate the teacher training & development in both public and private sector STEDA. It maintains a database of teacher education providers and accredited programs and advises the School Education and Literacy Department (SE&LD) on teacher-related HR processes. STEDA acts as a quality assurance body, bridging policy and practice between the government, academia, and training partners.

Background

The Teacher Licensing Policy 2023: An Overview of its Development and Implementation

The Teaching License policy is based on the White Paper, a study conducted by AKU-IED (Private Academia) and developed collaboratively by STEDA, AKU-IED, Durbeen, and various education sector stakeholders. This study and policy inspired from international models such as those in the US, UK, and Singapore, and have been adapted to fit Sindh's social and educational context. The objective of this policy is to oversee educators (teachers) through a licensing test, similar to other professions, so that a teacher is acknowledges and pursue teaching as a career.



The Teaching License policy was approved by the Sindh Cabinet and formalized through notifications and amendment to service regulation (Imran, Sultana, & Ahmed, 2023). The teaching license specified in the policy is applicable only to educators in Primary, Elementary, and Secondary schools (Imran, et al., 2023). It does not include higher educational levels or subject specialists who are recruited under the current recruitment policy of the School Education & Literacy Department. The candidates must possess an ADE degree or B.Ed. degree or equivalent. A third party body known as STS administers the Teaching Licensing test. With the assistance of CRQ/ERQ and MCQs, the test addresses the content and pedagogical knowledge. The license is valid for a duration of five years, contingent upon completion of three credit hours of CPD. Financial incentives are also provided to motivate the teachers to pass the Teacher Licensing test, like an incentive of Rs. 2000 to HSTs, the possibility of promotion (especially to BPS-16) and regularize part of the contract teachers.

Research Objectives

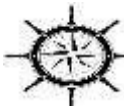
The objective of the study is to oversee a critical analysis of the Teaching License policy. Especially the aspect of identifying the structural challenges with the policy formulation, implementation gaps, and the constraints of its scalability and sustainability in Sindh. The proposed research will also aim at offering fact-based recommendations that can assist the stakeholders to address the problems they may encounter during the implementation and scaling of this policy initiative.

1. To achieve the conceptual and regulatory foundation of the Sindh Teaching Licensing policy.
2. To identify the policy implementation gaps and also assess institutional, governance and coordination challenges.
3. To evaluate the scalability of Teaching Licensing initiative and the risk involved in the sustainability.
4. To develop actionable policy recommendations.

Literature Review

Conceptual Foundations and Global Context of Teacher Licensing

Teacher licensing is another professionalization tool suggested by Ghamrawi et al., (2023) to achieve minimum quality standards and improve education. Globally, the success it has made in trying to better the quality of teachers and performance of students is still debatable (Ahmed, Ahmed & Buriro, 2023). There has so many licensure systems in many countries such as in the US, Finland, South Korea and Qatar and all of them are sensitive to the surrounding environment and priorities in education (Hafeez, Iqbal, & Imran, 2021). The alignment of licensure policies' with teachers' needs and contextual realities is critical to fostering



professional development rather than mere regulatory compliance (Ghamrawi et al., 2023).

Evidence on Teacher Certification and Licensing Impact

In the developing nations, empirical studies show a mixed finding on teacher certification and their impacts on educational outcomes (Phulpoto, Oad, & Imran, 2024; Oad, Zaidi, & Phulpoto, 2023). The Gambian and Chilean studies do not support any significant improvement in the test and teacher performance by students that could be attributed to certification alone (Kusumawardhani, 2017; Pugatch, 2017). The research studies conducted in India, Indonesia, Kenya, & China do not support any significant gains of students' achievement and teacher performance that could be directly associated with certification only (Kusumawardhani, 2017). It is worth mentioning, that uncertified contract teachers can at times be better than certified civil service teachers, i.e. the quality of teaching cannot be considered as a pageant guarantor of good quality of teaching (Pugatch, 2017). In Indonesia, a large-scale certification did not identify any significant short-term effects of certification on student or teacher performance, but certification had long-term adverse effects on the occurrence of non-teaching side employment by teachers (Kusumawardhani, 2017). Licensing exam may increase the entry costs and administrative burdens, potentially limiting teacher supply without clear quality gains (Abdallah and Musah, 2021).

Teachers' Perceptions and Professionalism Related to Licensing

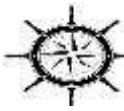
Teachers' perceptions play a significant role in the success of licensing reforms (Khan, Hussain & Ahmad, 2023). The teachers in Qatar did not express any criticism related to the clarity and potential pedagogical gains of licensure, but doubted individual person professional gains, and were more likely to perceive licensure as a burden and unrelated to practice (Ghamrawi et al., 2023). Also, the aspects of gender, experience, and age are applicable because more experienced and older teachers are more likely to be critical (Ghamrawi et al., 2023). In the same aspect, the teachers in the UAE scored higher on the social skills and lower on the profession-related skills and professional development that imply discrepancies in the implications of the licensure on professionalism (Abdallah and Musah, 2021). The distinctive features of the effective licensing system would probably revolve around the professional development, collaboration, and reflective practice rather than concentration on the compliance with the regulations (Ghamrawi et al., 2023).

Teacher Licensing Implementation Challenges and Scalability Gaps

In Qatar, shift in licensure models without teacher involvement cause resistance and unclear benefits. Ghamrawi et al., 2023; Abdallah and Musah, 2021, suggested that the international standards without locally & contextually adjustments limit their relevance and acceptance. Furthermore, certification program often involves high costs with uncertain returns, especially when salary increases are unconditional (Kusumawardhani, 2017; Pugatch, 2017). In addition, licensing frequently fails to motivate collaboration or innovation among teachers (Ghamrawi et al., 2023).

Research Methodology

The research is based on the policy analysis approach, which investigates the teaching licensing process in Sindh with the help of SWOT analysis and descriptive quantitative methods. It starts



with the gathering of secondary data in various sources such as official policy documents, teaching licensing examination results, related academic literature and published articles. Such data are reviewed and systematized to comprehend the policies in place and how they are implemented. Then, a SWOT analysis is done to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to the existing licensing system. Simultaneously, the results of the examination and the associated data are analyzed using descriptive quantitative analysis to determine the trends and patterns. The synthesis of these analysis processes gives a holistic analysis of the teaching licensing system in Sindh.

Data Analysis

Analysis of Sindh Teacher Licensing Result

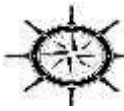
Table 1
SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Establishes clear standards and transparency.	Low pass rates (16%) and readiness gaps in the workforce.
Third-party oversight objectivity.	Inequitable access for rural teachers and insufficient CPD framework.
Policy embedded in law & service rules.	Unclear pathways for experienced but unqualified teachers.
Potential to uplift teaching as a profession.	Incentives are uneven by cadre and slow to implement.
Opportunities	Threats
Pathway for international/provincial recognition.	Resistance from stakeholders, unions and administrative delays.
Alignment with the best practices.	Risk of exclusion or demotivation of non-passing teachers.
Long-term professionalization of the sector.	Scaling up current resources is too slow.

Demographics

Table 2
Demographic Profile of the Participants

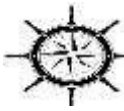
Profile	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender		
Female	1559	38.98
Male	2441	61.02
Geographical Location		
Sukkur	706	17.65
Karachi	305	7.6
Larkana	308	7.6
Hyderabad	301	7.5
Others	2380	59.5
Service Status		
Pre-service Teacher	977	24.42
In-service Teacher	3023	75.58



Institution-wise Distribution and Performance Analysis (B.Ed.)

Table 3
Institutions wise Performance

Institute	Total Candidates Participated	Pass Candidate	Pass Ratio %
Shah Abdul Latif University Khairpur	1901	244	12.84%
Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU)	710	93	13.10%
University Of Sindh	617	65	10.53%
University Of Karachi	129	69	53.49%
Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Shaheed Benazirabad	96	3	3.13%
Sukkur IBA University	95	63	66.32%
University Of Karachi (UoK)	50	13	26.00%
The Shaikh Ayaz University Shikarpur	38	10	26.32%
Government Elementary College Of Education(GECE)	34	21	61.76%
Federal Urdu University Of Arts, Science And Technology	23	7	30.43%
Indus University	13	2	15.38%
Preston University	10	2	20.00%
Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University Lyari Karachi	10	3	30.00%
Virtual University Of Pakistan	8	0	0.00%
Hamdard University Karachi	7	4	57.14%
Jinnah University For Women	6	2	33.33%
Iqra University, Karachi	5	1	20.00%
Preston University, Karachi	3	2	66.67%
Ziauddin University Karachi	3	1	33.33%
Jamia Millia Government College Of Education Malir, Karachi	2	1	50.00%
New-ports Institute Of Communications And Economics, Karachi	2	1	50.00%
Sindh Agriculture University, Tando Jam	2	0	0.00%
Sindh Institute Of Management And Technology	2	0	0.00%
International Islamic University (IIU), Islamabad	1	0	0.00%
Islamia University, Bahawalpur	1	0	0.00%
National College Of Education Mehrabpur	1	0	0.00%



National University Of Modern Languages Islamabad	1	0	0.00%
Sindh Madarsatul Islami University Karachi	1	1	100.00%
University Of Sufisim And Modern Sciences Bhit-shah	1	1	100.00%
University Of The Punjab	1	1	100.00%
Others	227	36	15.86%
Total	4000	646	16.15%

Overall Performance of the Participants

Table 4
Performance of the Participants

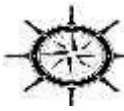
Variable	Count	Percentage
Service-Status wise Result		
Pre-service Teacher	201	31.11%
In-service Teacher	445	68.89%
Total	646	1
Overall Result		
Pass	646	16.15%
Fail	3354	83.85%
Total	4000	1

Cadre wise Teacher Licensing Test Results Sindh Phase One

Table 5
Cadre-wise Performance of the Participants

Cadre	BPS	Appeared	Passed	Pass Rate	Incentives (Key)
PST (Primary)	14	112	22	20%	Promotion to BPS-16/EST, CPD
JEST/JST (Elementary)	14	434-450	297	68%	Promotion to BPS-16/EST, CPD
HST (Secondary)	16	12	11	92%	Rs. 2,000/month, No promotion in next grade CPD
Private Sector	N/A	977	201	21%	Recognition, Career Advantage, CPD
All Govt Sectors	-	3,023	445	~15%	Above, varies by cadre

In total, 4,000 candidates appeared for the exam, and only 646 passed (16% overall pass rate). While the Sector Split was approximately 24% from the private sector, the government sector was dominated by JESTs/JSTs, which was valuable for promotion. The geographical pattern of passed candidate reflected in results were from Sukkur, Karachi, and Larkana divisions for government, Karachi for private sector. The cadre-wise participation and performance observed



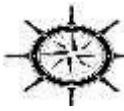
as PSTs 22 passed/112 appeared; HSTs 11 passed/12 appeared; JESTs/JSTs 297 passed out of 434-450, majority promoted to BS-16/EST.

The results also showed urban bias in passing candidates; rural teachers were underrepresented.

Teacher Licensing South Asia & Regional Countries and Its Comparison to Sindh Licensing Policy:

Table 6
Teacher Licensing Comparison of South Asia & Regional Countries

Country	Licensing System	Entry Qualification	Renewal/CPD	Exam/Test	Incentives/Status	Commentary
Pakistan (Sindh/STE DA)	Third-party exam, formal license, valid 5yrs	B.Ed/ADE/MA (Ed)	Mandatory for renewal	Content+ Pedagogical	Promotion, allowance, CPD	Model for replication in provinces
Nepal	Mandatory, Teacher Service Commission	Bachelor's, National exam	Required	Centralized	Permanent appointment	Most formal in South Asia
India	TET (Teacher Eligibility Test), state protocols	B.Ed/Diploma/UG/PG	Variable	State/National	Job eligibility, CPD	Exam focused; renewal less strict
Bangladesh	Certification required for public sector	Bachelor's, NTRCA exam	Indirect	Yes	Job eligibility	Similar to Pakistan, less renewal
Sri Lanka	Diploma + exam; National system	Diploma/BA	Yes	Yes	Career progression, CPD	Structured, high standards



Bhutan	Diploma + exam; CPD mandatory	Diploma/BA	Yes	Yes	Job security, progression	Small, highly regulated system
Iran	Degree + post-grad diploma, exam in some cases	Master's, Diploma	Limited	Yes	Status, pay, mobility	More rigid in state schools
Turkey	Degree + centralized exam	Undergrad + exam	Rare	Yes	Career progression	Similar recruitment standards
Egypt	License, formal test, 5-yr renewal	Bachelor's, Professional diploma	Yes	Yes	Renewal required	Recent reform, strong framework
Jordan	License for new teachers, renewal required	Bachelor's, exam	Yes	Yes	Default license for existing, full for new	Modern, progressive
UAE	Strict license, CPD, periodic exam	Bachelor's + exam	Yes	Yes	Promotion, CPD	International best-practices
Saudi Arabia	Standards set, evolving towards formal license	Bachelor's	Evolving	In process	Recognition, career	Transition phase

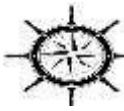


Table 7
Documentary Weaknesses in STEDA Policy (and regional parallels)

Identified Weakness	STEDA /Pakistan	Seen in Other SA/Regional Countries
Operational guidelines	Partially clear	Partial/inconsistent (India, BD)
Transition for experienced teachers	Limited clarity	Problematic (Turkey, Iran, Bangladesh)
M&E (Monitoring/Evaluation) Framework	Early stages	Common issue (Nepal, BD, India)
CPD/renewal detail	Vague	Often variable, not enforced
Portability	Not defined	Rarely present across region
Access/Equity	Needs strengthening	Rural/remote gaps in most settings
Incentive uniformity	Uneven	Most countries struggle with this

Sindh's Teaching License policy aligns most closely in spirit with teacher licensure frameworks in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Jordan, and the UAE, all emphasizing formal licensing, renewal requirements, promotion incentives, and test-based entry to professionalize teaching (Oad, et al., 2024; Hussain, et al., 2023).

Contrariwise, India and Bangladesh pay more attention to qualifying exams to enter but do not pay much attention to renewal and regular relicensing, although this can change with upcoming reforms that can bring more rigor to it. Alternatively, to becoming stagnant, dynamic regulation, unlike in Iran, Turkey, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia that demand university degrees and exams as conditions of licensing and ongoing professional development (CPD) as prerequisite of the program. The UAE is one of the most developed countries with the highest international standards, the development of digital tracking, and full CPD that provides a valuable example to Sindh and Pakistan about combining licensure and performance incentives to maintain high-quality teaching.

Challenges and Weaknesses

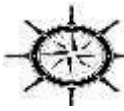
Preparation and Capacity: The lack of pre-test training and orientation and particularly involving teachers in rural and remote areas. Gaps in CPD and test preparation assistance may disadvantage the older, experienced teachers lacking modern expertise and credentials.

Scaling and Sustainability: With the present capacity (646 licensed out of 148,000+ teachers), implementation would require more than 200 years unless accelerated, and highlight the dire need to scale-up. [aku](#)

Incentives: Financial and promotional incentives were not fully offered to all cadres under the policy, which resulted in an uneven motivation and moral among the cadres in PST, JEST, HST, etc.

Administrative Issues: Delays in provision of benefits, uncertainty on renewal of licenses and absence of a holistic M&E system.

Systemic Risks: Without a significant CPD and a career advancement, policy risks will turn into a box-ticking exercise.



Comparison: Although modeled loosely based on such countries like the US and Singapore, the documentary weakness such as incomplete operational guidance, transition frameworks, and CPD modules, and portability.

Conclusion

The teacher licensing policy of STEDA is a baseline move towards professionalization and quality assurance of the teachers in Sindh, in accordance to best practice being observed all over the world. Nevertheless, the paper concluded that there are still significant challenges in the process of converting policy into sustainable impact. Low pass-rates, unequal treatment of rural and in-service teachers, unequal incentives at the various cadres, and lack of clarity regarding the processes of professional development and renewal will hold back the reform unless it is accompanied with systematic capacity-building, strong monitoring and stronger integration of licensing with continuous professional development (CPD). This reform will have its full potential only when it is carried out in a systematic way in terms of improving inclusiveness, capacity building, having a transparent and even incentive structure, as well as periodical review of the policy. The momentum of reforms, their scalability, sustainability and equitable high-quality education in Sindh can only be achieved through continuous research, stakeholder involvement and responsive policy management.

Recommendations and Suggestions

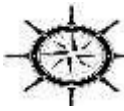
This study recommended that the funds allocation for in-service preparatory and CPD programs should be expanded with a focus on rural and under-resourced teachers. In addition to this, there is dire need to develop specific transition pathways and recognition for experienced teachers who are unable to meet the new degree requirements.

Digitizing test preparation and registration, increasing test frequency, and partnering with more third-party organizations is also be the best possible way to scale up and coverage of the teachers. Clarity in policy benefits such as incentive, promotion and renewal processes for all cadres recruited through the prevailing recruitment policy enable the environment to motivate teachers and increase their participation in the licensing test in initially phases.

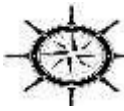
Create a clear and robust M&E framework that is connected to learning outcomes and teacher performance, work with other provinces to pursue international recognition frameworks for license portability. The study also recommends that clear test administration steps, appeals, feedback, and license renewal procedures should be improving.

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