



## POLICY BRIEF

# TEACHING LICENSE IN PAKISTAN A WHITE PAPER

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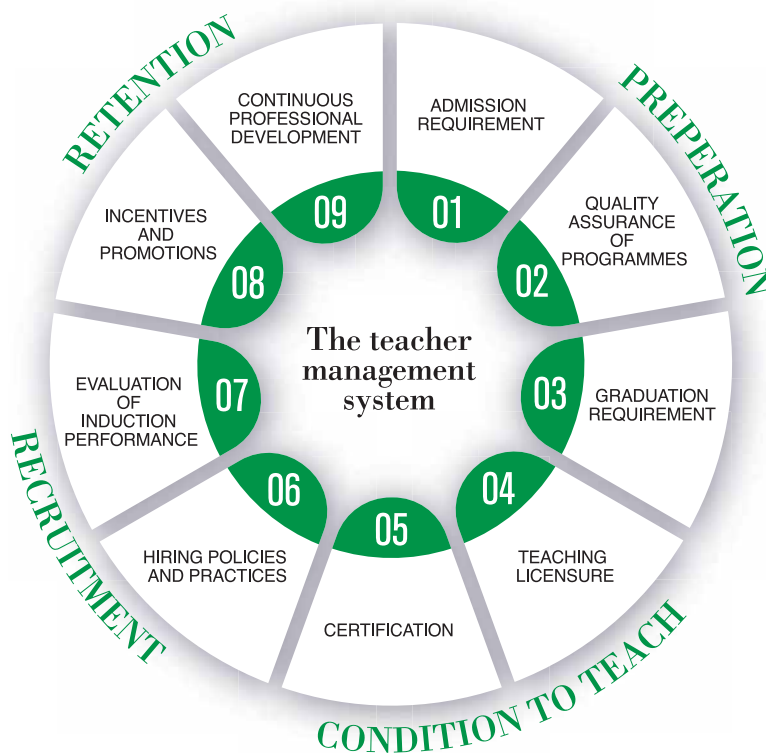
## THE CHALLENGE

At the heart of the quality of a nation, one can propose, is the quality of its teachers. Effective teachers have a huge positive impact on student learning and their lifelong performance and through that on the social and economic health of a country. Though, having good teachers has remained a policy priority in Pakistan, getting any serious legislation to ensure that those who join the teaching profession have the potential to offer quality pedagogy has remained an elusive dream. The performance of our students, as indicated by various national and international assessments like ASER (2019; 2022), TIMSS (2019), is below average. A more recent nation-wide study shows 65% students in science and 80% in mathematics have weak understanding level in elementary grades (Bhutta & Rizvi, 2022). No education system can improve students' learning without improving the quality of its teachers.

The biggest challenge before us is to ensure the availability of high quality teachers in Pakistan's classrooms.

## TEACHER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

International best practices unequivocally indicate that countries that perform well in league tables such as TIMSS have strong teacher management and licensure systems. A well-organised teacher management system has three main components: (a) preparation, (b) recruitment, and (c) retention. The preparation system ensures that good quality prospective candidates apply and are prepared through high quality teacher development programmes (degrees or certification). The recruitment system ensures that high quality graduates from teacher development institutions are selected, inducted and deployed in schools where they are needed the most. The retention system ensures availability of attractive employment conditions and continuous professional development of teachers so that they remain satisfied and up to date in relation to contemporary pedagogy. All these three components work in-sync to ensure that good teaching takes place in classrooms.



An education system that manages to achieve high performance in all these three areas results in high quality teaching and subsequent higher quality student learning

outcomes (e.g., see PISA, 2018 for China, Singapore, Finland, Canada, South Korea, in the table below).

### Teacher management system across selected countries with students performance

		PREPERATION				CONDITION TO TEACH		RECRUITMENT		RETENTION
PISA 2018 Ranking		Admission requirement	Quality assurance of programmes	Graduation requirements	Alternative routes possible	Certification	Teaching licensure	Hiring policies and practices	Evaluation of induction performance	CPD
China	1 <sup>st</sup>	⊗	●	○	Yes	Yes	Yes <sup>1</sup>	●	●	Yes
Singapore	2 <sup>nd</sup>	●	●	●	No	Yes	No	○	●	Yes
Finland	7 <sup>th</sup>	●	●	○	No	Yes	No	○	●	Yes
South Korea	9 <sup>th</sup>	●	●	⊗	No	Yes	No	●	●	Yes
USA	13 <sup>th</sup>	⊗	●	⊗	Yes	Yes	Yes	○	●	No
UK	14 <sup>th</sup>	⊗	●	⊗	No	Yes	Yes	○	●	No
UAE	46 <sup>th</sup>	⊗	○	○	Yes	No	Yes	○	⊗	Yes
Malaysia	55 <sup>th</sup>	●	⊗	○	No	Yes	Yes <sup>2</sup>	○	●	Yes
Pakistan	63 <sup>rd</sup> <sup>3</sup>	○	○	○	Yes	No	No	⊗	○	Yes
India	73 <sup>rd</sup> <sup>4</sup>	○	○	○	No <sup>5</sup>	No	No	⊗	○	No
Bangladesh	---	○	○	○	Yes	No	No	⊗	○	Yes

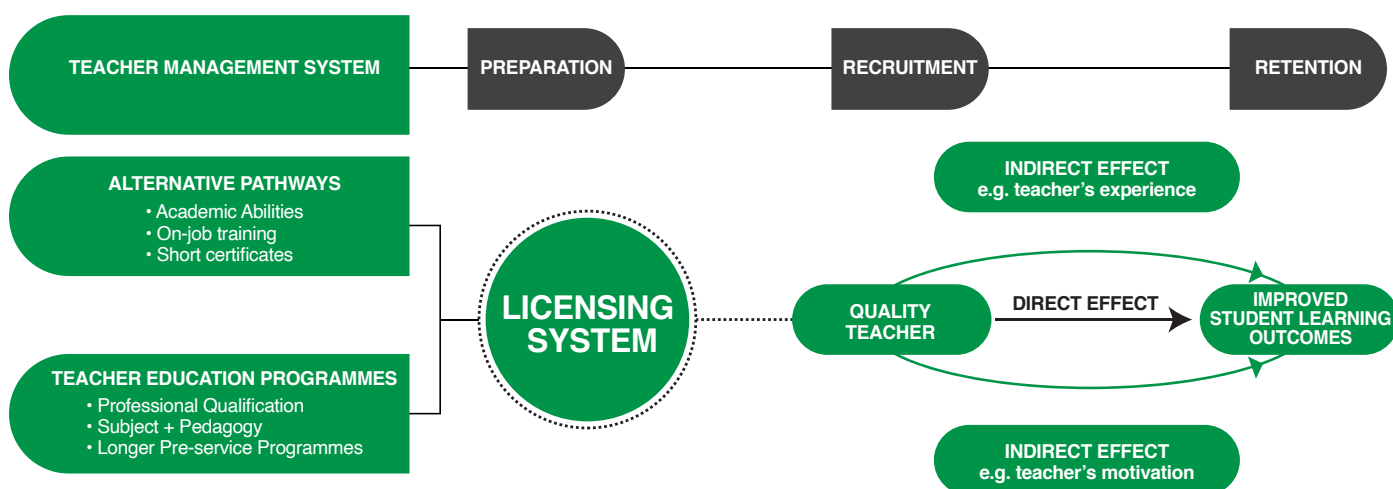
Key : ● Strong    ⊗ Medium    ○ Weak

Source: Analysis carried out by the authors; for technical footnotes see White Paper report

## TEACHING LICENSE: AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE TEACHER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Good systems also require various conditions: in the form of certification or licensure that need to be acquired by teachers before joining the occupation. Licensure, therefore, can improve the quality of teaching, which can have positive effect on students learning. These licensure

systems ensure that prospective teachers entering into the profession have met minimum requirements and are thus truly ready to enter the profession. This will help in recruiting good teachers. Further, the continuation of licensure requires these teachers to go through continuous professional development. In this way, the public is also assured that their teachers have met the minimum requirement of the profession to safeguard against harm to their children. Such licensure systems do not exist in Pakistan at the moment but are certainly needed.



## THE POLICY DIALOGUE – PROCESS

In order to explore the possibility of improving teaching quality through licensure in Pakistan, policy dialogues were carried out with international and national stakeholders. Three types of policy dialogues were conducted along with a survey on the views of stakeholders (n=982) about teaching licenses and teaching quality. First, seminar series were carried out with key international scholars. Second, one-to-one dialogues were conducted with the representatives of the licensure system in other disciplines (e.g., medicine). Third, a full-day policy dialogue event was organised with stakeholders for discussion on the Green Papers.

## CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHING LICENSE

### 1. Jurisdictional struggle:

In Pakistan, teachers as an occupational group do not have a clear influence and authority over teaching; alternative pathways are open for anyone to join the teaching profession. Teaching licenses should be introduced to regulate entry into the teaching profession. It is important to stress that initially, such regulations must take a gradual stance allowing alternates and gradually improving the system through continuous learning.

### 2. Availability of specialised and updated knowledge, and strengthening teacher preparation:

The teaching profession should be built on a recognised specialised knowledge base. A licensure system should keep teacher education in sync with teaching standards, and updated knowledge of content and pedagogy, through continuous professional education (CPEs).

### 3. Building as a profession:

There is a need in Pakistan to build teaching as a profession. Fundamental to a profession is accreditation within a recognised licensure system. This will raise the status of teachers and attract bright students towards teachers' education institutes.

### 4. Economics of licensing:

A considerable proportion of schools in Pakistan belong to the low-fee private sector. The teachers in these schools will not be able to afford licensure fees, hence they need to be provided subsidies from public sector financing.

### 5. Politics of licensing:

It is important that teachers' unions should be engaged in a consultative process to launch any licensure system. The consultation should keep in view the interests of children and continuous growth of professionalism amongst teachers.

## 6. Portability of licensing:

Keeping in view the devolved education management structures post 18th constitutional amendment, there should be a strong coordination between provinces to make teaching licenses portable to other provinces through an equivalence mechanism.

## 7. Incentives for licensed teachers:

Licensed teachers should be incentivised in terms of recruitment and salary structures, until such a time when all teachers become licensed.

## 8. Contractual teachers:

A clear policy of recruitment and regularisation should

be enacted. The regularisation should be made conditional upon performance assessment and licensure requirements.

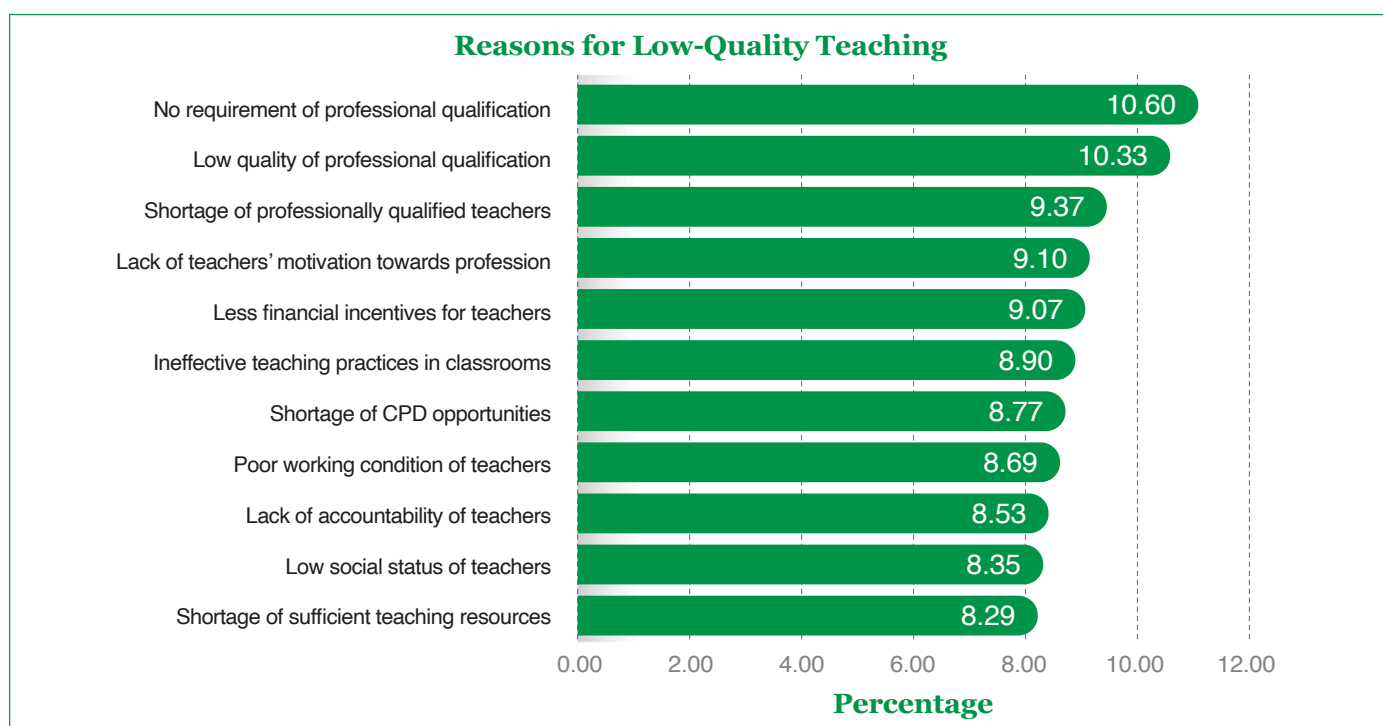
## 9. Process of licensure:

Initially a provisional license to in-service teachers may be given. Following preparation, a criterion-based assessment with some written tests can be trialled as an initial system for granting a teaching license with requirements for renewal through continuous professional development. A strong data management system is required to create feedback loops for continuous improvement.

## SURVEY RESULTS

The responses from the survey show that removal of professional qualification requirements, low quality of professional development and mismatches between the

supply and demand of teachers are the top three causes for low quality teaching in Pakistan.



## CONCLUSION

It is important that our focus should remain on improving the 'quality of teachers' and not the introduction of licensure for its own sake. We should take a holistic view of the teacher management system and reforms should be introduced in all segments – preparation, recruitment and retention, contemporaneously. In this holistic view, the licensure system could work as a stimulus to connect the teacher management system's components. However, it needs to be recognised that introduction of licensure will not be a simple technical issue but also a political and economic one.

We recommend that Pakistan's educational policy makers make the effort to strengthen the whole teacher management system, which would ensure that:

- Pre-service teacher education attains high value through the NACTE accreditation process.
- Licensing bodies at provincial levels (having coordinating functions like IBCC) introduce licenses in a gradual fashion by involving all stakeholders.
- Recruitment whether in the public or private sector should value the professional qualifications and licensure for future teachers; and create incentives for current teachers to attain both credentials and licensure.
- Schools and school management authorities must create a conducive work environment for their continuous development, and consequently benefit students' learning outcomes.

Last but not the least, the licensure system should not be used as a threat for the teachers but should be considered a professional requirement; accordingly it needs to be incentivised, and introduced in a consensual way.