



POLICY BRIEF

TEACHER LICENSING

IN GHANA

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POLICY ANALYSIS



TEACHER LICENSING IN GHANA.

Introduction

The issues of teacher quantity and quality to influencing student achievements in the educational precinct have been a strenuous task for policy stakeholders. Adopting a new regulation (licensing) to guide the evaluation of all educators (teachers) serving in position may be a good assessment portfolio to enhance teaching in education. Educators and Teachers graduating from the colleges of education and universities often may or may not meet the standard to impact through the transfer of knowledge. Even though these educators' evaluation mechanism for professionalism has the tendencies to keeping knowledgeable and skilled teachers in the classroom and poor performance teachers out, it is imperative to standardize the profession. Over, the years, alternative methods of classroom teaching have been developed in response to the dire need for teachers to get themselves updated on methodologies and modernized approaches to handling subjects and students. It is often seen when students fail in schools (subjects); student failure are attributed to teachers shirking their classroom responsibilities.

This analysis was primarily undertaken to help provide a wider lens through which one might view the significance of teacher licensing in the educational sector of Ghana to unearthing the professionalism and touchstone of teacher licensing and certification.

Background

Good teaching may guarantee good educational success for quality education and student development. Teacher and teaching have long been the critical and most considered indicators by policy makers, parents, and the entire society as to where and who should provide tuition and transfer of knowledge to children. Parents are compelled to school their children in educational facilities with good teachers and a serene educational setting. In Ghana, education reforms have had little impact to addressing teacher crisis that have direct influence on quality education and

student outcome/human development. This has been as a result of ineffective enforcement of these reforms.

Improving the quality and quantity of the teaching workforce entails a number of delicate issues to be attended to, including; teacher welfare that cuts across, good accommodation, access to health care, security and many other trivial but indispensable necessities that have been shirked by government. In addition, infrastructural needs, teaching aids, credible supervision, data on teacher efficiency and post in-service training workshops have various consequences on quality education and student achievement.

Just as teachers are blamed for the failure of their students; teachers also censure the blame on government for failing to providing the infrastructures, learning aids, incentives, and motivation, to facilitate teaching. Teachers again, criticize parents for sidestepping their role as parents or guidance. Teachers are located in the nucleus blaming government and parents, while government and parents also blame teachers for circumventing their roles.

Ghana had had enough of the blame game, so we turn to an alternative that presents have more advantages towards enhancing the quality of tuition; Teacher Licensure. The Education Act, 2008 (Act 778) makes provision for the implementation of Teacher Licensure in Ghana.

According to Act 778, the National Teaching Council (NTC) is to “register teachers after they have satisfied the appropriate conditions for initial licensing and issue the appropriate license”. However, since 2008 this function of the NTC has not yet been implemented despite efforts at initiating it.

In Ghana, public school teachers are enrolled in the colleges of education to be trained as “professional teachers” or attend university of education as tutors. Public school teachers are trained for a three-year diploma in basic education and a four-year bachelor of education from the university. Teachers from the colleges of education are often described as trained teachers or “professional teachers” as against those from the universities (tutors). Teacher professionalism is an undefined concept in the Ghana Education Service (GES). Trained teachers are directly posted by GES to schools where their services are most needed immediately while graduates from the University of Education have to apply to schools after National Service, desiring as a choice to teach in the public or private school. The trained teachers are fully confirmed as teachers after a year of regular teaching by Circuit Supervisors (CS), the confirmed trained

teachers may choose not to further or upgrade his academic credential till pension. In-service trainings and workshops are organized periodically for teachers and tutors to meet the new adopted methods of teaching and mastering of certain subjects. Teachers and tutors are promoted as experiences are gained over the years. This trend runs throughout the life cycle of teachers. Promotion is often done through upgrade of teacher's academic qualification, number of years practicing and rarely by recommendations from superiors or Director of Education.

Analysis

Professionalism

Like the physicians or attorneys, teachers are required to procure a license so that, the consumer may somehow be assured of the quality of the “product” being provided (Roth and Swail, 2000). As consumers or end users of products, our mind is pre-conditioned to look out for some features of standardization of the products we purchase. Just as we look out for these features of standardization on products, we do same for the schools, friends and teachers we allow children to encounter. Good teachers are critical to the development of children. It is clear that the single most important thing that a school can provide to ensure the success of students is a skilled knowledgeable teacher. Good teachers –those who know what to teach and how to teach it – produce successful students, but teachers who are undefined or ill-equipped do not produce successful students (Center for the Future of Teaching and learning, 2000).

According to Ingvarson and Hattie (2000) a professional certification system is not in itself a pay scheme, but it does aim to provide a service to the profession, to the public and to the employing authorities seeking a credible basis on which to provide incentives for professional development and recognition to teachers who reach high standards. One of the main reasons for the establishment of a licensing system is to increase the effectiveness of professional development for teachers. Based on a well-established evaluation system, a teacher's ability to transfer knowledge adequately will be tested, this will ensure that teachers churned out are equipped to teach and mentor children. Licensing will be a benchmark for the professionalization of teaching across the country at various levels of the educational sector.

Student Development

Teacher licensing could improve student outcomes by several different paths. They could improve outcome directly, by improving teaching or indirectly by providing information about teachers that is related to achievement (Boyd, Goldhaber and et al 2007). The real variables of interest in licensing teachers pertain to teachers' knowledge and skills. These include knowledge of the subject content to be taught and knowledge of how to teach that content to a wide range of students, as well as the ability to manage a classroom, design and implement instruction, and collaborate with students, parents, and other professionals to achieve the expected development of the child.

Though licensing will not directly guarantee student outcome, but if proper standards are set and followed, its trickledown effect will be the development of teachers which will in turn rub-off the students they inspire and mentor. Since student development is not only measured in grades, it would be profitable to have teachers that inspire growth in children in and outside the classroom.

The impact intended for licensing teachers will reflect in improved student outcome when the evaluation system is able to check and correct; teaching and learning approach based on a curriculum; instructional methods and strategies; classroom management; measurement and evaluation of student learning; and the teaching of reading. When measures of the licensing system are based on the aforementioned indicators, it would result in certified teachers who will produce an all-round student equipped for the world.

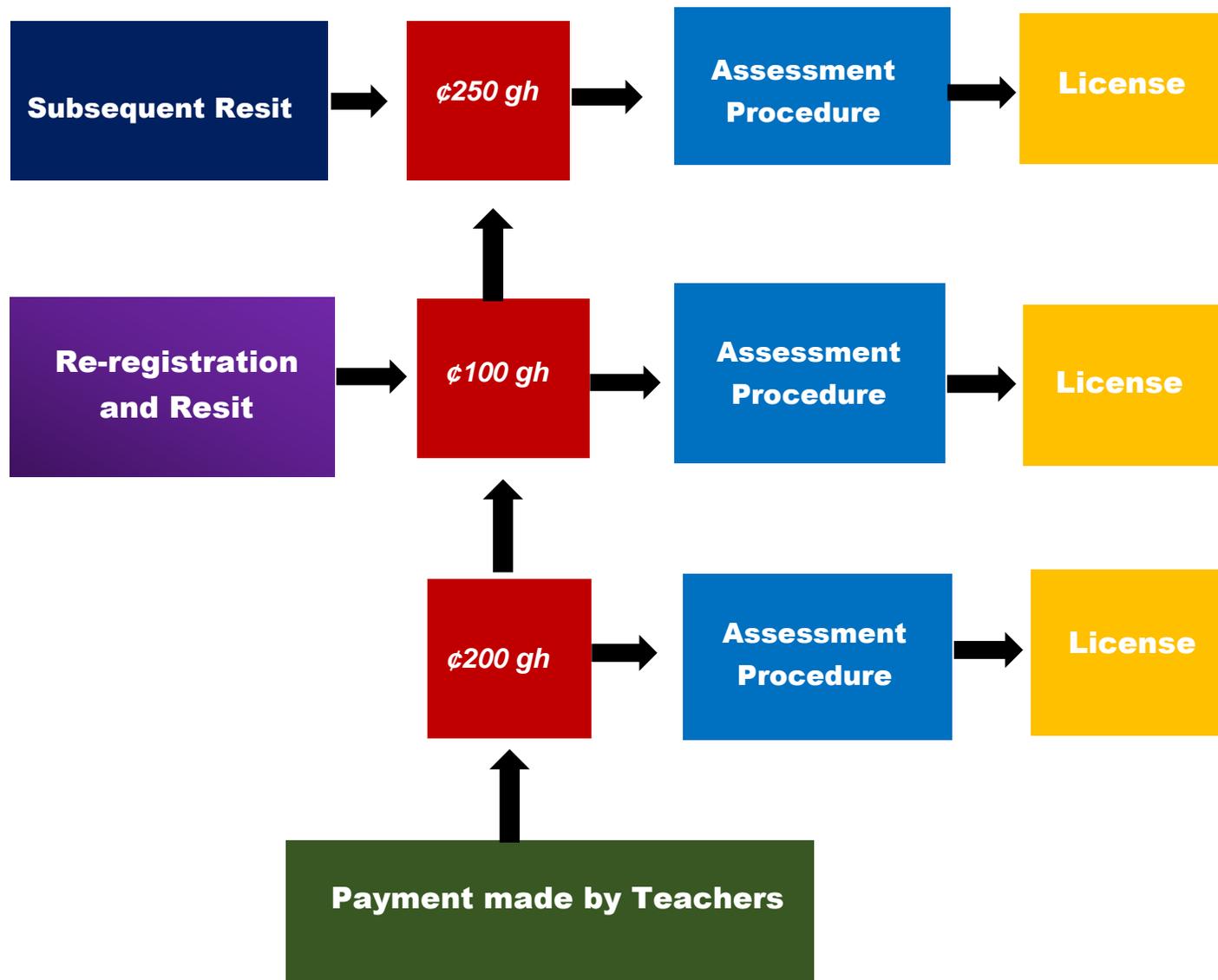
Aligned Incentives

Many view the problem (of quality teaching) mainly as a result of inadequate teacher preparation and call for the “professionalization” of teacher education by upgrading it to a mechanism of licensure, certification, and promotion aligned with standard of the education authority. (Darling-Hammond, 1998.1999,2000; Darling-Hammond, Berry, and Thoreson, 2000; Darling-Hammond, Chung, and Frelow,2002; National commission on Teaching and Americas Future, 1996 as cited by Ruth Zuzovsky, 2003).

Licensing of teachers is one of the policies needed to create the labor market conditions required to hire and retain an adequate supply of good teachers. These include competitive salaries, reasonable working conditions, and supportive administration, as well as training subsidies,

recruitment incentives, and hiring reforms in both private and public schools. Licensing will come at a cost to both the nation and the individual teacher (candidate) who might be earning a meager salary. However, it is believed that teachers who are able to negotiate through the licensing system will have greater opportunities in demanding reasonable increment in salary and other incentives, just as other licensed professions do. Lately in Ghana, there have been defection of teachers from -mother associations- the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) and the National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT) which are deemed as infamous in voicing out teachers challenges and demands, hence, the formation of other associations such as the Coalition of Concerned Teachers (CCF), Innovative Teachers and the All Teachers Alliance Ghana (ATAG) believed to champion the course of improving teaching conditions and being the voice of unheard teachers. However, these numerous associations keep failing teachers because all teachers have not been able to come together on common grounds to negotiate better working conditions. It is believed that when licensing is initiated and made compulsory for all teachers, it will create an avenue where teachers can unite to improve teaching in education.

RECOMMENDED PAYMENT SCHEME FOR TEACHER LICENSING



ILAPI's payment scheme for teacher licensing in Ghana

Creation of Trust

Licensing would not only improve professionalization of teaching but would also create trust. The NTC must construct an education and licensing systems that assure the public and policymakers that those who successfully negotiate the system are fit to teach and are up to standard ethically, morally and professionally. The public, employing entities and parents would not have to survey and authenticate the ability of a teacher but can easily rely on a licensed teacher to successfully transfer knowledge and groom the children. Licensure and certification should be well established to enhance public trust in teachers and the education system.

In addition, licensing will boost the confidence society has in the teaching profession, just as we have confidence in doctors, lawyers and other professionals to ethically live up to their code of conduct. This will give teachers the opportunity to rub shoulders with other professionals during negotiations and retain the respect of all in society.

Security and Sanity

Licensing will be a way of ensuring that teachers remain ethically inclined to their code of conduct, since licenses can be revoked in case of misconducts. Revocation of license will otherwise render the teacher jobless, this can be likened to a case of suspension of license as a penalty for certain misconducts. Renewal of license will also serve as a means of tracking the conducts of a teacher. When the licensing authority is able to collaborate with the promotion council in reviewing teachers conduct; disciplinary actions can easily be carried out based on records from the licensing authority that may prove good or bad conduct. Hence, the education sector will be rid of teachers who dishonor the teaching profession.

Teacher will be able to secure their job in any unexpected turn of event in the education sector; they will be able to escape redundancy when the authorities want to strengthen standards of education because, Ghanaian primary and junior high schools are filled with a high proportion of untrained teachers. Licensing will provide credibility that assures teachers of being maintained, promoted and entitled to benefits as a professional teacher.

Teacher licensing will help combat the current payroll fraud that burdens the Ghanaian economy. It is observed that if the licensing system is directly linked to records of graduates from both the colleges and university of education (public and private) prior to applying for the license; it will

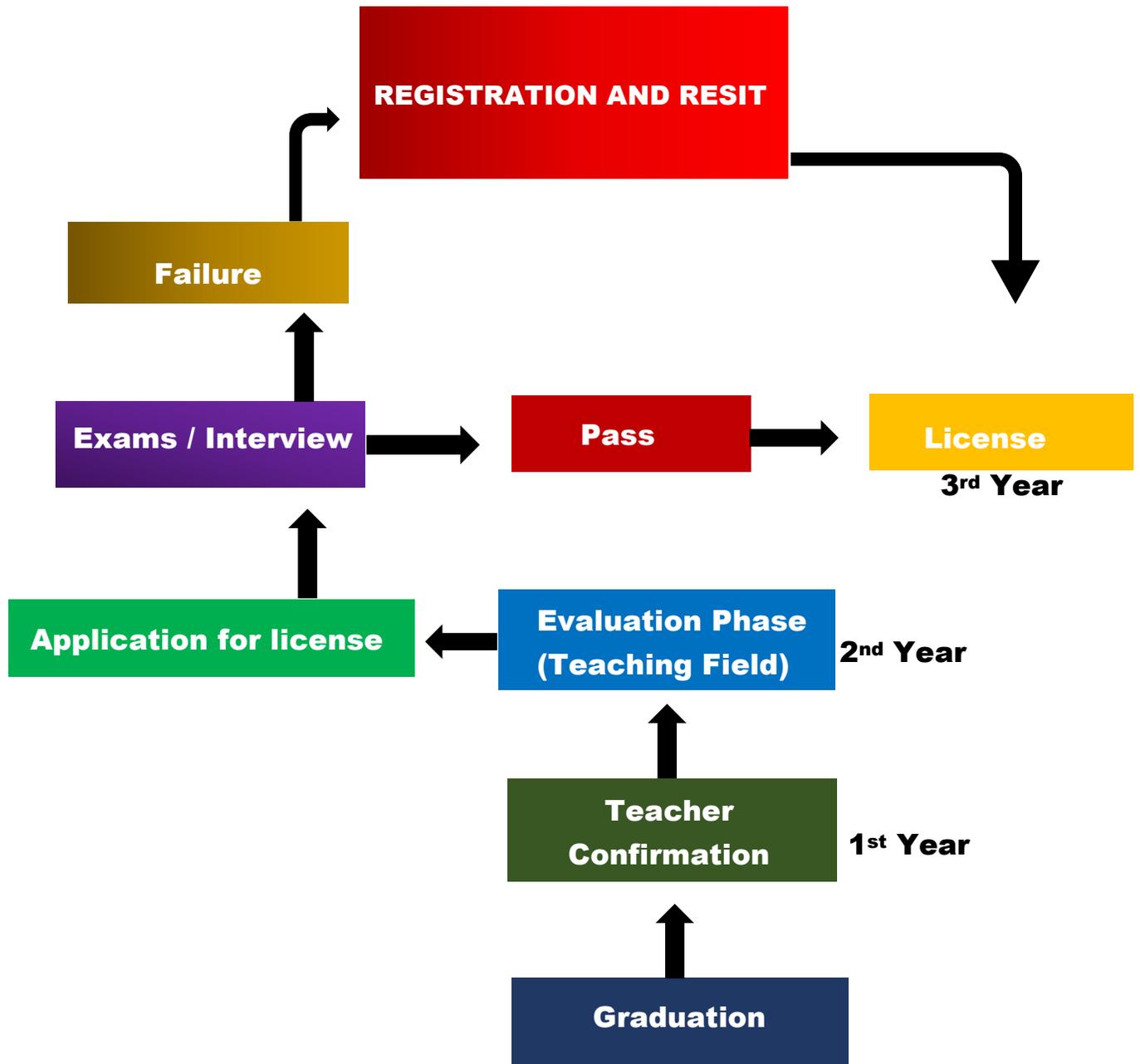
make room for records that can correlate to the government payroll once the license is granted to the individual. Gradually, the education sector will be able to delete all “ghost names” from the payroll so that salaries go to only deserving teachers.

Recommendation

Graduates from the colleges of education are confirmed as professional teachers after a year of teaching in a public school, while the graduates from the university of education go ahead to work in their respective schools or organizations that they are posted to by the National Service Scheme. It is however recommended that prior to candidates applying for the license, they should have an additional year of teaching experience in either a private or public school where there will exist a monitoring/evaluation officer assigned in each district to evaluate the performance of the teacher based on the his/her knowledge of the subject content to be taught and knowledge of how to teach that content to a wide range of students, the ability to manage a classroom and evaluate the students. The assigned monitoring/evaluation officer will then provide an evidence based score sheet that will be accessed by the licensing authority through the National Teaching Council as one of the requirements for licensure.

Though Ghana has a policy for the implementation of teacher licensing, there hasn't been any summative performance evaluation system for teachers over the years to lay a good foundation for the initiation of the teacher licensure. Therefore, teacher licensure will then provide such evaluation system that can be effectively utilized for the issuance and renewal of license as well as promotion of teachers.

PROCEDURAL CHART FOR TEACHER LICENSING



ILAPI'S PROPOSAL

The system of licensing will ideally evaluate a teacher's knowledge and skills based on an examination or test. Writing a test should not be the only form of evaluation, because it may not be adequate for the separation of a good teacher from a bad one. Aside employing the use of evaluation score sheet, it is also recommended that an interview be conducted periodically at the district level by the licensing authority; this will help assess the teacher's pedagogical knowledge and the teacher's ability to practically note variables that affect their student's development. Interview should be scheduled during vacation periods in order not to disrupt on-going school activities.

Teacher licensure should be decentralized to the regional, district or zonal level where the licensing authority can be closer to the teachers and teachers will be assigned to apply for their license through the closest unit based on the candidate's location. Such a structure will do away with the frequent complains associated with filling and submitting forms. Also as Ghana is digitalizing, it would be prudent to initiate this policy with an online portal that allows candidate to apply for the license and write an online test, as they pass to the next stage, they are then interviewed and issued the license after a stipulated time.

The initiation of teacher licensure may come at a time when the Ghana Education Service is not at its best, but it is believed that licensure will bring about the much sort professionalization of teaching in the education sector. Licensing would not be the only solution to teacher ineffectiveness, it would be necessary to first of all look at enforcing existing education reforms and ethics of the profession. This then draws attention to the bureaucracy and corruption that shrouds the education sector, ranging from the registration of teachers to the payment of teacher salaries. For the successful implementation of teacher licensing, it is expedient for the education sector to formulate step by step procedures that will navigate a candidate through the licensing process successfully without middlemen who will make room for corrupt practices.

When implemented properly; devoid of corruption, the licensing of teachers will generate revenue into the coffers of government as well as the Ghana Education Service, which can then be used for developmental activities within the educational sector. Teachers will be paying approximately GhC200 or less for the examination and the license, this will enable NTC fully implement their function of issuing the license without cost restrained. Licensure will come at a

cost, both to government and to the candidates, but if managed properly it will profit government in terms of easing expenditure in the education sector.

Conclusion

Teachers show the greatest productivity when they know much is expected of them and are accorded the respect due them as the frontiers to the development of children. Teachers are essential to the development of children it is therefore important to improve the quality of the teacher workforce, and as the education sector is widely expanding to provide free education for all in Ghana; it has become necessary to have teacher licensure.

The initiation of the teacher licensure will come with its own challenges but if implemented successfully without discrimination and with proper stakeholder consultation it will yield more positive results than negative. Difference in teacher effectiveness will not be completely done away with unless the teaching environment is also improved; provision of good infrastructure, teaching materials and incentives. The bold step of ushering Ghana into an era of teacher licensing will go a long way to make the profession more attractive and effective.

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