



## A Comparative Study of Teachers' Ranking Components in Iran's Education Upstream Documents and International Documents

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 25 February 2023 Revised: 29 August 2023 Accepted: 05 September 2023 Online: 13 December 2024	The aim of current research is to compare the Iran's educational upstream documents and international documents in order to identify the components of teachers ranking and explanation of its effective mechanism in the formulating stage of teacher ranking system in Iran. In this comparative study, documentary method with Bereday approach has been used for collection and analysis of data respectively. Research findings revealed that the similarities of documents have been in three components of "goals", "policies" and "strategies". In addition, their differences have been in four components of "principles and values", "career path structure", "scope of action" as well as "prediction of possible challenges"; which "prediction of possible challenges" have not been seen in the upstream documents of Iran's educational system. In order to enhance effectiveness of Iran's teacher ranking mechanism, it is suggested that the goals, policies and strategies of this system should be clearly and precisely determined with regard to the real needs of the society and its common cultural values - through consensus and creating common understanding and values. Also, considering the professional nature of the duties of school administrators, defining a different career path structure from teachers gives legitimacy to this issue. In addition, in order to predict the expected consequences and results related to the goals, it seems necessary to generalize the scope of inclusion and review the definition of school and teacher in the upstream documents of the Iranian educational system.
KEYWORDS	
Career Promotion System International Documents Teachers' Ranking Upstream Documents	

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## **1. Introduction**

The basis of any economic and social advancement is human resources development. In the educational systems, teachers are the most important human resources form the core of education process. In fact, "the quality of an education system depends on the quality of its teachers" (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2014b: 233). Policies that target the teaching profession - including policies related to increasing the motivation and teachers' professional development - have always been among the transformative policies of the countries' educational system. In fact, motivated and effective teachers are considered as a competitive advantage that improves the outputs of the educational system and brings economic growth and development and improvement of human development indicators of countries (OECD,2022). The ranking of teachers is an important educational policy in Iran and a strong strategy to improve education - through the promotion of teachers' capabilities and competencies - which is included in the fundamental documents of the Iranian education system and has been emphasized at upstream documents such as "Fundamental Reform Document of Education" (FRDE), the "Comprehensive Scientific Map of the Country" and the "Sixth Economic, Social and Cultural Development Law".

The results of previous studies exhibit, despite upstream documents have accentuated the importance of teacher rankings, but, the implemented plans and programs have not been able to create a significant difference in the outputs and consequences as well as the current situation of teachers so far (Bonyadi and Bayat, 2021; Qoroneh, 2019; Farah Bakhsh & Rasouli, 2018; Falahati, 2016; Bahiraei, 2008; Ebadi, 2005). At the same time, some researchers have entitled 'fundamentals and value principles' are the most effective factors in the designing and implementing policies; furthermore, they have stated these policies are based on the influence of Islamic values and beliefs (Farokhnia, Rasouli & Salimi, 2022; Foruzande Dehkordi, 2011; Qolipour et al., 2011). Other researchers have found explicit, relevant and measurable targeting to be influence on policies' succession and effectiveness; as well as they believe the biggest problem is the lack of attention to specific arrangements - in the designing stage -, the lack of transparency from the beginning of the compilation - 'decision point' -, and compatibility of outcomes with the primary goals of the policy (OECD, 2008; Turnbull, 2006; Sabatier, 1986; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984; Van Meter and Van Horn, 1975). Some other researchers have considered factors such as beliefs, engaging key stakeholders, capacity building and coherence of formulated policies are effective factors in the implementation of policies related to teacher rankings (Head & Alford, 2015; Yelland & Pont, 2014; Tiernan, 2007). Therefore, the lack of succession and effectiveness of the teacher ranking system

can be found in the 'decision point' or its starting point in upstream document which originates from the values and norms of society.

Although many researches mention the following as challenges of the teacher ranking system in Iran: Lack of theoretical consensus & practical clarity among policymakers, executives & key players (teachers and school principals); Lack of differentiation between performance evaluation & competence evaluation; Failure to follow the competency-based approach; Contradiction with justice-centeredness, lack of professional assessment and evaluation system; administrative bureaucracy in implementation; Weakness in environmental analysis and explaining the current situation and drawing the desired situation (Bonyadi and Bayat, 2021; Bakhtiari & Dehghani, 2022); but they have not paid attention to this issue from the perspective of upstream documents - as a "decision point" and the primary starting point for determining the criteria for ranking teachers in the compilation stage - which can have a great impact on the effectiveness and successful implementation of this system. Therefore, in this research, an attempt has been made to extract and explain the components of teacher ranking - and its effectiveness mechanism in the compilation stage - through content analysis of upstream documents of the Iran education system and comparing it with international documents. In this direction, the comparative approach will help to identify practical and experimental challenges and bottlenecks in addition to theoretical issues and provide practical solutions according to Iran's cultural, economic, political and social context. The present study has been carried out in order to realize the research goal of identifying the similar and different components of teacher ranking in the secondary documents of the Iranian educational system and international documents and reports and to explain the mechanism of its effectiveness - in the stage of the formation of the teacher ranking system in Iran.

## **2. Research Method**

The research method is comparative based on John Stuart Mill's method of agreement & difference. Documentary data collection method - based on Bereday's approach - and thematic content analysis were used. Documents such as "Fundamental Reform Document of Education" (FRDE), 'Comprehensive Scientific Map of Iran (CSMI)', 'Sixth Five-Year Economic, Cultural and Social Development Plan', and 'Teacher Ranking System law', was used as primary sources for teacher ranking upstream documents in Iran. Documents such as 'Working and Learning Together (Rethinking Humane Resource Policies For schools)', and 'Education at a Glance (OECD Indicators)' from Organization for Economic Co-operation & Development(OECD) Homepage, 'Teacher Policy Development Guide' from United Nations Educational, Scientific and

Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Homepage and the 'Handbook of good human resource practices in the teaching profession' from the International Labor Organization(ILO) Homepage have been selected as the primary sources of international laws about teachers ranking system. As the data related to the research were textual, literal, rich and detailed; and to identify themes, researchers have used the techniques of careful observation of the text (such as repetitions and changes, hidden typology and similarities and differences) and text processing techniques (such as listing words and keywords in the text). The percentage of agreement between coders (researchers) - in order to determine reliability and validity of data- was equal to 87%.

### **3. Findings**

Findings of research were obtained from the collection of data based on four stages of Bereday's approach. First, along with a brief explanation about the upstream documents of the education and training system, the ranking position of teachers has been described in the documents, laws and reports of the Islamic Republic of Iran and in international documents. In the second stage, the role of social factors that have provided the necessary context and space for preparing and approving the studied documents have been examined and interpreted. The third stage is dedicated to the comparison of the results obtained from the first and second stages. In the final stage, an attempt has been made to compare and adapt the characteristics of teachers' rankings in the above documents, rules and reports, to find their similarities and differences.

#### *A) Description*

##### *1. Ranking of teachers in the upstream documents of "Fundamental Reform Document of Education" (FRDE),*

"Fundamental Reform Document of Education" (FRDE), As the most important educational development program of the Islamic Republic of Iran includes the following sub-systems: educational guidance & management sub-systems, curriculum, teacher training & human resources provision, provision & allocation of financial resources and provision of space, equipment & technologies - as a formal and general education sub-system of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The sub-system of teacher training & provision of human resources has determined the goals, conditions and strategies for recruiting, training, maintaining, promoting and evaluating teachers and other human resources - from the headquarters level to the school level. This document is

organized in eight chapters. Chapters 1 to 4 of this document are dedicated to perspectives, values statement, mission statement and vision, respectively. Chapters 5 and 6 are dedicated to goals and macro strategies. Expanding educational justice, establishing an efficient human management system, increasing efficiency in the education and training system, and gaining the first educational position in the region and the Islamic world are among the major goals of the educational system, and major strategies have been introduced under them.

The seventh chapter under the title "operational goals & solutions" is the most detailed and comprehensive chapter of FRDE. In this chapter, various general solutions and its executive and operational details are stated. Among the goals and solutions related to the ranking of teachers are: "Establishment of an effective & efficient system of human resources management based on the Islamic standard system" (Main Goal 4:25) which is related to the sub-system of training & providing human resources - and ranking of teachers as one of its sub-systems. "Improving the social dignity & professional status of human resources with an emphasis on the exemplary role & position of the teacher" (Operational Goal: 10:45), "Establishing a model of compensation for services & ensuring the well-being of human resources worthy of the dignity of educators with attention to the need for them to become full-time" (Operational Goal 12:45); "Establishing a system for measuring general, specialized & professional qualifications, determining the criteria for evaluating & upgrading the scientific and educational rank (ranking system) of teachers and strengthening the motivation for professional advancement in them based on the Islamic standard system" (Approach 10:45-2) , optimizing the payment system based on merits and based on a competitive approach" (Solution 1:48-12), "Creating legal mechanisms to increase the motivation of teachers and trainers by organizing services & welfare facilities and solving their material and living problems" (Solution 3:12:49). In the final chapter, policymaking, monitoring and evaluation of the fundamental transformation process at the macro level and how to plan and executive system at the micro level are discussed.

CSMI is most important document of Islamic Republic of Iran about scientific development in which an effort has been made to explain the vision of science & technology in the horizon of 2025 by taking inspiration from the above documents and taking advantage of their fundamental values and paying attention to the strategic goals of the Islamic Republic of Iran system. In the introduction of this document, it is stated that: "The CSMI, by definition, is a comprehensive and coordinated, dynamic and forward-looking set, including foundations, goals, policies & strategies, structures & requirements for the strategic development of science & technology based on Islamic values. In order to achieve the goals of the country's twenty-year vision, in this document, an

attempt has been made to rely on the country's value and native foundations, past experiences, and scientific theories, examples, and experiences" (Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, 2010). This document contains five chapters: the first chapter, the fundamental values and the theoretical model of the comprehensive scientific map; the second chapter, the optimal state of science and technology; third chapter, the priorities of science and technology; The fourth chapter, national strategies and actions for the development of science and technology; and fifth chapter, the institutional framework of science, technology and innovation. In the fourth chapter of this document, national strategies and actions are mentioned under the goals and macro strategies. Among the items related to the ranking of teachers in this document are: "Elevating dignity and professional competence and scientific & social authority of teachers, professors, researchers & technologists" (National Action 4); "Strengthening spiritual motivations & credit and material encouragement to attract the elites of society towards the professions of teaching, research and technology" (National Action 5) and "solving the social and living problems of teachers & researchers in order to provide the necessary platform for scientific activities (National Action 6).

The "Sixth Five-Year Economic, Cultural and Social Development Plan" document as the highest authority document was prepared for the period of 2016-2021, but it is still able to be implemented until the seventh plan is approved. In one of the parts of this program, which is dedicated to general education, higher education and science & technology, the government of Iran has been obliged to take measures such as "preparing a teacher ranking system and establishing a payment system based on expertise in order to bring about transformation in the education system to the competencies and competitive performance based on the teacher ranking system and human resource engineering" (Part 2, Article 63).

"Teacher Ranking System Law": This law was prepared based on CSMI and FRDE (Article 1) for the following purposes: "Increasing quality of education process, raising dignity & social status of teachers, establishing payments system based on expertise & competencies, increasing competitive performance of teachers, human resource engineering, continuous and systematic development of general, specialized, professional & educational competencies and quality of teachers' performance, strengthening motivation & job satisfaction and promoting commitment & strengthening professional identity of teachers. In this law, "Teachers' ranking" is an independent and special system for teachers of the Ministry of Education, which includes a set of principles, rules and processes in order to achieve goals based on Islamic values (Article 2, Clause 5). Also, "Teachers are placed in the educational ranks of teacher-trainer, instructor-teacher, assistant

professor-teacher, associate professor-teacher and professor-teacher based on their general qualifications, specialized qualifications, professional qualifications and experience" (Article 3).

In Iran, the structure of the career path of teachers based on the "Teacher Ranking System Law" is horizontal and flat, which means that the duties and responsibilities of teachers do not increase during the career path, but according to Article 6 of this law, their salary are determined based on "extraordinary ranking". Obtaining higher ranks requires at least 5 years of service experience in each of the ranks, and the suspension period for teachers working in primary school, exceptional schools, deprived, border and nomadic areas and school for elites' pupils has been reduced (Article 5, Notes 1 & 2). At the same time as incentive mechanisms - financial and non-financial - to increase the motivation of teachers in their career promotion, a punishment mechanism is also foreseen: "Teachers who have obtained the necessary points to be promoted to one of the ranks of this law, once every three years are evaluated. If in the re-evaluation, they do not get the necessary points to maintain their rank, they will be demoted to lower ranks according to the obtained points. Demotion twice will result in leaving the training and cultural ranks" (Article 8).

## *2. Ranking of teachers in international documents*

The policy of improving and promoting the quality of human resources - such as school teachers and administrators - is one of the issues that have been the focus of international organizations such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and International Labor Organization (ILO). Based on the experiences of the OECD member countries has classified human resource development policies in the education sector into five main groups: Policies related to the preparation & professional development of teachers; Policies related to career path structure & incentives; policies that affect the demand for teachers; policies that govern the labor market; and processes that affect the way teachers work (OECD, 2011; OECD, 2018:4). It should be noted that teacher rankings policies are related to all the aforementioned policies.

The OECD "Working and Learning Together Report" examine human resource policies. This comparative report has brought together findings related to the review of policies to improve the effectiveness of resources used in schools. In four chapters, this report has provided governments with ideas regarding the effective design of human resources policies and the realization of educational policy goals. The introductory chapter of this report highlights the importance of

human resource policies and discusses why schools should focus on it. The second chapter, entitled "Raising the attractiveness of a career in schools", focused on how the entry requirements, career path structures, service compensation, working conditions and environment, attract, retain and motivate school employees - especially teachers and school administrators. Other chapters of this report focus on the interaction of teachers and school administrators to students and the school and how professional learning systems support the growth and development of the school and staff (OECD, 2019:15).

Designing and revising human resource policies and programs is one of the concerns of the policymakers of OECD in the education sector, which requires an examination of the current and optimal situation to identify needs. "Education at a Glance" is also a rich, comparable and up-to-date collection of indicators of human and financial resources invested in education, as well as how education systems work and return on investment in education, along with information on policy and data interpretation, while the indicators are organized in a framework that distinguishes between actors and groups of the educational systems (OECD, 2022: 13). This document is divided into four chapters i.e., outputs of educational institutions and its impact on learning; access to education, participation & development; financial resources invested in education; and teachers, learning environment & organization of schools. "Teacher Policy Development Guide", prepared with the aim of supporting teachers in the "International Working Group of Teachers for Education 2030"; and has been made available to UNESCO member countries and other participants as a tool to facilitate sustainable development and review teacher policies (UNESCO, 2019). In fact, this document is an operational guide for the development of policies related to teachers in five key sections; which provides guidelines to education officials, planners and policy makers at the national level. The goals, scope and target community are determined in the first chapter. The second chapter explains necessity of teacher policy formation as one of the priorities of national development. Third chapter deals with the important aspects of the teacher's policy and solidarity between them - as a part of comprehensive and integrated policies related to teachers, which is rooted in historical, political, cultural, economic issues, and the context of a certain country and educational system. The desired dimensions include recruitment, retention, training, placement, career paths, teachers' working and employment conditions, teachers' salaries and rewards, teacher standards, teachers' accountability and school administration. The fourth chapter has explained steps of policy making process during the development of teacher policy; and fifth chapter dedicated to describing the steps and issues that should be considered when implementing the national policy of teachers.

"Handbook of good human resources program in teaching profession", was prepared under the general guidance of the education department of the International Labor Organization - one of the specialized institutions of the United Nations - which consists of eight sections about effective methods & programs of teaching profession and international standards and recommendations. The sections of this book are respectively dedicated to recruitment, career development, professional roles & duties, work environment, salaries-incentives, social security and social discourse in teacher training. "Successful Teachers, Successful Students" presented as a platform by the World Bank to attract and support the most vital profession in society. This document has five basic principles to make the teaching profession attractive, improve staffing policies, preparing teachers for school and support teachers in school - along with recommendations for low-income countries and countries facing conflicts in resource allocation.

### *B) Interpretation*

At this stage, the role of social factors that have provided necessary background and space for preparing and approving selected documents has been briefly stated.

#### *1. Upstream Documents of Iran educational system*

The occurrence of the Islamic revolution in the late 1970s was the source of extensive changes in various dimensions of Iran society. One of the fields that were affected since the beginning of the victory of the revolution was general education system. In fact, the revolutionaries believed that the educational system is strongly "westernized" and in conflict with Iranian culture and Islamic education (Manasehri, 2017). Three decades after the occurrence of the Islamic revolution and despite the reform activities and efforts made to improve the components and elements of the educational system in Iran, this system could not perform as expected due to the lack of emphasis on the philosophy of Islamic education. Also, the need to coordinate with the rapid social changes and take advantage of the successful global educational experiences made the fundamental change in the educational system more prominent. Therefore, the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution put the fundamental transformation in the education system on the agenda by using the power of a wide group of academic experts. The result of this effort was the preparation and approval of Fundamental Reform Document of Education (FRDE), in line with the realization of

the twenty-year vision document of the Islamic Republic (Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, 2011a: 12).

The FRDE was compiled while the subject of teacher ranking was discussed in laws and executive directives from 2004 - including in laws such as "Teachers' Career Promotion Path" and "Civil Service Management Law" -, regardless of the importance and nature of the teaching job and the teacher's credit - as the basis of sustainable development -; it was considered similar to other government employees. This situation required the teacher ranking system to be compiled separately from the general regulations. Therefore, this issue was emphasized in the FRDE and the strategies of the CSMI. According to these documents, "Professional ranking system for teachers and recruitment & provision of human resources for education" was prepared and proposed in 2012. However, with the change of the state at the time, this resolution was practically removed from the agenda and the next cabinet did not pay attention to it. Also, the approval of the Council of Ministers under the title "Teacher Classification Plan" was implemented in 2014 which in fact, it was the "Civil Service Management Law" based on which the basic salary of teachers was increased from 15 to 50 percent in terms of their rank. The approvals and reforms of teacher rankings from 2014 to 2021, regardless of the tasks listed in the "FRDE", "CSMI" and "Sixth Development Plan Law" were carried out with the increase of basic salaries like other government employees. The long process of reforms and the lack of attention to upstream documents caused the increase of teachers' dissatisfaction and decreased their motivation and professional performance. Anyway, after a long debate, the "Teacher Ranking System Law" was finally approved in 2021 in order to fulfill the goals of the FRDE and CSMI to establish a professional ranking system for teachers, measure professional qualifications, and establish a payment system. However, the implementation of this law still faces major challenges and problems.

## *2. International documents*

More than half a century ago, most countries faced different challenges such as poverty, hunger, unemployment, lack of education, war, gender inequalities, lack of natural resources and environmental pollution. To address many of these challenges, global participation was needed in addition to national action. Therefore, during a joint global action and in order to reduce poverty and increase prosperity, international organizations - as a consultative arm - were noticed by nations and governments. The United Nations (UN), OECD and the World Bank are among these organizations. Since the 1960s, UNESCO has tried to mitigate common global challenges through the commitment of member country to make fundamental decisions, taking into account the

national, religious and local requirements of each country (UNESCO, 2014a). In the latest action of this organization, the UNESCO 2030 document and its 17 goals have been put on the agenda. This document was prepared and compiled based on the joint meetings of the leaders of the member states and the will of their majority. In this regard, the member countries are required to compile their national document in various fields and submit it to relevant organizations and institutions for approval. Education is one of the 17 main goals in the United Nations Sustainable Development Program; according to which all member states should provide equal educational opportunities - quality and lifelong public education - to all their citizens - regardless of gender, ethnicity or age. The World Education Forum under the leadership of UNESCO has determined common educational priorities within the framework of sustainable development goals for the next 15 years. The participants have insisted on the fourth goal of sustainable development, which is to "ensure quality, inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". To achieve this goal, the members unanimously emphasized the importance of the role of teachers and teaching for effective learning at all levels of education. For this reason, they committed to ensure the training of efficient, motivated and professionally qualified teachers and the efficient and effective support of resources while empowering and recruiting sufficient human resources. Providing such an educational force based on sustainable educational systems is not possible without development of evidence-based policies and accountability and regulation with the full participation of all stakeholders.

Therefore, the "Teacher Policy Development Guide" was prepared and adjusted with the aim of supporting the target community - that is, teachers - in the goals of sustainable development in the international working group of teachers for education 2030. This manual has been made available to member countries and participants as a tool to facilitate sustainable development and review of teacher training and employment policies (UNESCO, 2019). "The Guide to Human Resource Programs in the Teaching Profession" has also provided countries with international standards and recommendations related to the dimensions of the teaching profession.

As effective human resource policies, in addition to strengthening, recognizing and retaining employees in schools, can optimize the education budget with the needs of school through informed choices about the career path & salary structure of employees, working conditions and professional learning opportunities (OECD, 2019:19); and in order to inform countries about how to choose the main policies - and to analyze the national and local context for their effectiveness - the Economic Cooperation and Development Organization (OECD ) has compiled authoritative documents and texts in the field of human resources policies in schools. Among these documents, we can refer to

the "Education at a Glance" and "Working and Learning Together" reports. World Bank - as a unique group consisting of five institutions- also has been set ending extreme poverty and promoting common prosperity as its mission. Through the "Successful Teachers, Successful Students" platform, this organization has provided countries with key perspectives and principles of how to have effective teachers with a supportive approach to teachers.

### *C) Juxtaposition*

At this stage, the data related to the content analysis of the documents in the previous stages of research are presented in more detail. It should be noted that in this research, only the sections related to teachers' rankings in the upstream documents were examined. The principles and values in the "FRDE " are the basic dos and don'ts that all the components of the general formal education system of Iran must be in harmony with and all policy makers and government agents must adhere to them. These values are based on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and the Ahl al-Bayt (PBUH), the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the guidelines of the Great Leader of the Islamic Revolution - Imam Khomeini (RA) and the Supreme Leader -, the Twenty-year Vision Document, CSMI and the general policies of the transformation of the educational system have been prepared and compiled, and it is compatible with the theoretical foundations of the FRDE and documents the topics contained in them (Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, 2011b: 15). The principles and values of teacher rankings are taken from the "Statement of Values" contained in the FRDE. In fact, they indicate the fixed criteria that are the main basis for decisions and actions in all stages of the formulation and implementation of teacher rankings. The analysis of the content of the upstream documents of teacher ranking in Iran showed that the principles and values of teacher ranking are as below: Law-oriented and justice-oriented; expertise-oriented and meritocracy; responsibility-orientation and accountability; strengthening the spirit of research; preserving dignity; human dignity; collaborative organizational culture; continuous professional growth & development; compliance with professional standards; promoting security and independence and job satisfaction. These dos and don'ts in international documents are inspired by the philosophy of humanism, which emphasizes the value and agency of humans individually or collectively (Farokhinia et al., 2022). The principles and values governing these documents include: Increasing the attractiveness of teaching profession through improving compensation policies and career path structure; providing pre-service training to increase effectiveness of teachers' performance in the classroom and beyond; meritocracy promotion; continuous support in the form of providing quality professional development services and strong

school leadership in order to continuously improve and increase the motivation of teachers; and using smart technology to increase the ability of teachers (World Bank, 2021)

Some theorists, such as Ball (2015), consider politics as a discourse and emphasize the role of power in the process of policy development. Therefore, educational policies and consequently teachers' policies in countries depend on the dominant discourse in society. However, international documents have taken a comprehensive look at teacher policies. From the perspective of the international documents, policies related to teachers cover the processes of "recruitment, placement, compensation, evaluation, promotion and retention of teachers" (Jackson, Rockoff and Staiger, 2014). Among the policies and principles of teacher evaluation and ranking emphasized in international documents are: Improvement, preparation, promotion & placement of teachers for primary education, especially in disadvantaged districts and emphasizing the presence of female teachers; continuous professional training & development and support for all teachers, school administrators and staff; providing salaries & material incentive packages that attract and retain candidates for the teaching profession compared to other jobs; creating a safe, healthy and stimulating teaching-learning environment to increase the effectiveness of teachers; emphasis on teachers' job satisfaction and its impact on students' motivation and progress; and focusing on attracting, training and supporting efficient teachers instead of teachers with job burnout or their dismissal; and finally, strengthening the management information systems of teachers (OECD, 2011; Asia Society, 2014:8; UNESCO, 2019:12). Also, among the policies governing the ranking of teachers in the upstream documents of the educational system of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the following can be mentioned: Emphasis on the suspension and demotion and exit from jobs of the teacher classification plan (punishment); Reducing the service period in each rank for elite teachers and teachers working in primary, exceptional, disadvantaged, border and nomadic schools (non-financial incentive); extraordinary increase in rank for higher ranks (financial incentive); Increasing the effective share of general competencies in the establishment of extraordinary ranking and ranking; Reducing concentration and delegating authority to provincial audit committees as evaluation bodies; Determining the credit limit based on the annual budget law; and development and exploitation of information & communication technology systems.

The analysis of data related to the goals of teacher ranking in the upstream documents of the Islamic Republic of Iran showed that the main goals of this system are: Establishing an effective & efficient system of human resources management based on the Islamic standard system and improving the effectiveness and increasing the efficiency of the general formal education system (Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, 2011a: 25). The operational goals are: Developing

capabilities and improving the professional qualifications & quality of teachers' performance; compilation, review and determination of indicators & standards for measuring the qualifications and ranking of teachers; determining the level of professional qualifications & teachers' ranks; improving their social status and authority of teachers; increasing the motivation & job satisfaction and improving the professional commitment of teachers; development of targeted material and spiritual support for teachers. The ultimate goal of education policies in international documents are inclusive and equitable quality and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all. In international documents, the goals of teacher ranking system are: Attracting, maintaining and maintaining talented human resources as teachers; professional development of effective teachers; adapting teachers to students in the most favorable way; professional support for teachers through central resources; job-based professional learning to create opportunities; and mixing planning & staff management with existing resources and emerging needs (OECD, 2022; UNESCO, 2019).

In the upstream documents of education system of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the strategies of the teacher ranking system - which are actually the same as the design of the programs to achieve the goals - include: Institutionalizing an integrated view of the ranking process as one of the sub-components of the education and training system with an excellence approach ; Strengthening education and training of border regions by emphasizing the empowerment of teachers and students of these regions and focusing on the quality of educational opportunities in harmony with the Islamic standard system; Expanding and deepening the culture of research & evaluation, and creativity & innovation, theorizing & documenting indigenous scientific-educational experiences; Continuous development of religious, educational, scientific & professional competences and abilities of educators. The strategies of the teacher ranking system in international documents are based on the strategy of sustainable improvement in schools; and includes the following: strengthening continuous professional development through the implementation of introductory courses & career training, taking into account the needs of teachers at different career stages; retaining experienced teachers by offering a wider range of salaries and benefits; adapting progress in the career path according to professional standards - suitability of job and employee -; and implementation of career path structure in combination with performance evaluation.

Teacher ranking structure is considered as a set or hierarchy of defined job positions along with related duties and responsibilities and rules governing individual advancements in these positions. While traditional structures are often described as "flat" and as providing few career opportunities for advancement (OECD, 2005; Bacharach, Conley and Shedd, 1986; Lortie, 1975); which can be defined vertically or horizontally or multiple pathways (OECD, 2019:117-119). In the

vertical career path structure, teachers' career ranks are promoted and according to those expectations and responsibilities, there is an increasing trend, while in the horizontal career path structure, teachers are promoted much higher based on performance evaluation and competency assessment. Usually, this promotion is not accompanied by an increase in responsibility and expectations, but in some countries, it is accompanied by an increase in salaries and benefits for teachers. However, these multiple ranking and promotion paths are composed of a combination of two types of vertical and horizontal structures. For the effectiveness of the career path structure, three factors are important: Legitimacy, accessibility and feasibility (World Bank, 2021:16). In the upstream documents of the Iran education system, only one ranking structure has been compiled for all teachers and school administrators, which is horizontal. According to the points obtained from the performance evaluation, the teachers are placed in one of the five ranks and their salaries are increased without increasing their duties and responsibilities during this process.

Reforming the ranking structure can present a host of implementation challenges when it comes to securing adequate resources and building political consensus on the new system. In addition, since most job structures are related to rewards, long-term funding is critical to ensure their sustainability (OECD, 2019:21-22). While salary and benefits are rightly considered a key policy lever to make career paths more attractive, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to designing the criteria for an effective salary. Instead, policymakers' decisions depend on their own country's specific challenges. Some countries are looking to solve local labor market challenges, while failure to attract graduates may increase starting salaries and mid-service teacher attrition rates. In the same way, the components of economic development such as the level of private sector salaries or the unemployment rate can influence higher basic salaries for teachers (OECD, 2019:132).

The scope of teacher ranking in the upstream documents of the Islamic Republic of Iran includes all those included in the teacher job classification scheme - teachers, art students, school education instructors, educational unit consultants, health care workers (health trainers) and school principals and assistants. These people (as a teacher or coach), according to the FRDE, are responsible for the important mission of educating students in the general formal education system. In addition, according to the ranking system law, the employees of the administrative departments of education - who are hired to serve as teachers - are also subject to the ranking system. The scope of teacher ranking system in international documents is wider and defined based on international standards. According to the 1966 proposal of the UNESCO organization, "all the people who are responsible for the education of children or young people in schools or other places of learning i.e., preschool, primary school, middle and higher secondary schools, and technical and

vocational courses" are considered as a teacher and subject to the rules of ranking system" (UNESCO, 2019: 13). In addition, teachers in public and private institutions (including non-governmental organizations) and principals and vice-principals of schools - as leaders of schools that are on levels 0, 2 and 3 based on the international education classification standard - are also included in this system (UIS, 2012: 79,83).

Table 1. Juxtaposition of teacher ranking components in Iran upstream documents & reports and international documents

Components	Iran's upstream documents and laws	International documents and reports
Principles and values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preserving dignity, human dignity and the high position of a teacher based on Islamic ideology and national and religious thoughts.</li> </ul>	Emphasizing the value and agency of humans individually or collectively based on philosophy of humanism
Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of financial and non-financial incentives</li> <li>• Allocation of financial and non-financial incentives for experienced teachers, working in low-income areas, primary schools and students with special needs.</li> <li>• Demotion and dismissal if the conditions are not met (punishment)</li> <li>• Allocating a greater share to having general competencies</li> <li>• Strengthening teacher management information systems</li> <li>• Policies for providing and allocating financial resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of financial &amp; non-financial incentives</li> <li>• Allocation of financial and non-financial incentives for experienced teachers, working in low-income areas, primary schools and students with special needs, with an emphasis on female teachers.</li> <li>• Creating a supportive environment and job security</li> <li>• Focus on recruiting, hiring, professional development, and retention of effective teachers</li> <li>• Strengthening teacher management information systems</li> <li>• Policies for providing and allocating financial resources</li> </ul>
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main goal: Improving the quality of education</li> <li>• Operational goals: developing capabilities and improving the professional qualifications and performance quality of teachers; Compilation, review and determination of indicators and standards for measuring the qualifications and ranking of teachers; Determining the level of teachers' professional competencies; improving their social status and authority of teachers; increasing the motivation and job satisfaction and improving the professional commitment of teachers; Development of targeted material and spiritual support for teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main goal: improving the quality of education</li> <li>• Operational goals: attracting, retaining and maintaining talented human resources as teachers; professional development of effective teachers; adapting teachers to students in the most favorable way; Professional support for teachers through central government resources; job-based professional learning to create opportunities; and integrating staff planning and management with existing resources and emerging needs</li> </ul>
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutionalizing an integrated view of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing continuous</li> </ul>

	<p>the ranking process as one of the sub-components of the education system with an improvement approach.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening the education and training of border areas by emphasizing the empowerment of teachers and students of these areas and focusing on the quality of educational opportunities in accordance with the Islamic standard system.</li> <li>• Expanding and deepening the culture of research and evaluation, creativity and innovation, theorizing and documenting indigenous scientific-educational experiences.</li> <li>• Continuous development of religious, educational, scientific and professional competences and capabilities of educators</li> </ul>	<p>professional development through the adaptation of introductory courses and career training, taking into account the needs of teachers at different career stages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retain experienced teachers by offering a wider range of salaries and benefits</li> <li>• Adapting progress in the career path according to professional standards (suitability of job / employee)</li> <li>• Implementation of career path structure in combination with performance evaluation</li> </ul>
Career path structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Horizontal, without increasing duties and responsibilities along the career path</li> <li>• Same for teachers and school administrators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Horizontal, vertical, increasing duties and responsibilities along the career path</li> <li>• Different for teachers and school administrators</li> </ul>
Anticipate possible challenges	Not seen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation challenges and reforming the career path structure</li> <li>• Challenges of designing service compensation system</li> <li>• Challenges of recruiting efficient human resources</li> <li>• Communication challenges between career path stages and salaries</li> </ul>
Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subjects of the teacher job classification scheme, including teachers, managers working in public schools and administrative staff who are hired to serve as teachers and are responsible for education in primary, middle and higher secondary school and technical &amp; vocational secondary school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers, managers and all people who are responsible for the education of children and teenagers in schools and places of learning in preschool, primary, middle and higher secondary school and technical &amp; vocational secondary school</li> <li>• Teachers working in public and private institutions (such as non-governmental organizations) levels 0, 2 and 3 of the international education classification standards</li> </ul>

#### D) Comparison

At this stage, in line with objectives of the research, the data obtained from previous stages of the research have been compared with each other to provide a framework for determining

similarities and differences. Table (1) shows seven components related to teachers' rankings. The similarity between Iran's upstream documents and international documents has been seen in the components of "policy", "goals" and "strategy". Incentive and support policies for teachers working in low-income areas, primary schools and schools for children with special needs; policies of providing & allocating financial resources and the policies of developing & strengthening information systems have been similar in both groups of selected documents. In international documents, there are priorities for female teachers, as well as the encouragement of teachers to improve their career path through financial & non-financial incentives; while in Iran's documents, the gender of teachers is not considered, and in addition to incentive policies, punishment - dismissal or demotion of teachers - is also emphasized. The second similarity between the two groups refers to the "goals" of the ranking system. The main goal of the ranking and teacher promotion system in both groups is to improve the quality of education, while in order to achieve these goals; different operational goals have been set in Iran documents and international documents.

Table 2. Similarities and differences of selected documents based on John Stuart Mill's approach

<b>Components</b>	<b>Iran's upstream documents and laws</b>	<b>International documents and reports</b>
Principles and values	*	✓
Politics	✓	✓
Goals	✓	✓
Strategies	✓	✓
Career path structure	*	✓
Anticipate possible challenges	*	✓
Scope	*	✓

In addition, since there were both similarities and differences in "policies" and "goals"; Therefore, these aspects are also visible in the "strategy" component. Although, the selected documents in both groups are in agreement over the implementation of the career path structure in combination with teacher performance evaluation; but teachers' promotion in the career path commensurate with professional standards - job- employee fit- has only been emphasized in international documents. Also, the findings reveal that in the four components of "principles & values", "career path structure", "anticipation of possible challenges" and "scope of action", there are fundamental differences between the views of the authors of Iranian and international documents. For example, in the "Principles & Values" component, it is mentioned to preserve

dignity, human dignity and the high status of teachers in the documents of the Islamic Republic of Iran - based on Islamic ideology and national and religious teachings; while in international documents, the principles & values are influenced by the philosophy of humanism. Also, for the "scope of action" component, there is no limit for the employment status of teachers in international documents, and it includes all teachers and administrators of public and private schools; but the scope of inclusion in Iran's documents only includes teachers and administrators of public schools. Among other differences, we can mention the "career path structure" component. Despite the fact that the job structure for teachers and school principals is often defined separately - and with different standards - in international documents; this structure is the same for all teachers and principals of Iran's schools. Another fundamental difference between the selected documents is in the component of "anticipation of possible challenges", which has been seriously considered by the authors of international documents, while it has been neglected by the Iranian authors of documents.

#### **4. Conclusion**

As mentioned earlier, the aim of the current research has been a comparative study among international documents and Iran's educational system upstream documents in order to identify the components of teachers' ranking system and its effectiveness mechanism in Iran. Based on the research findings, the similarities in the documents of the two selected areas are in the components of "policies", "goals" and "strategies". On the other hand, it seems that the similarity in the mentioned components is arisen from defined educational intentions in international documents, which are stated comprehensively as well as highly ideally; Meanwhile, their selection is not based on the history and past of a particular country, but based on 'what is common' and has been selected or recommended by others (Kafman & Herman, translated by Mashaikh and Bazargan, 2012). On the other hand, the difference obtained in the mentioned components is based on the precise differentiation between the results (goals) and the design of the programs and the selection of the appropriate means and path for their realization. As the needs (the difference between what is and what should be) are different from one country to another - depending on the resources, capacities and capabilities; therefore, in choosing and formulating goals, policies and strategies, it is necessary to pay attention to the real needs and current and desirable situation for each country. In the process of identifying needs, without a doubt, attracting the participation and consensus of all stakeholders and creating common understanding and values can help significantly to improve the ranking system. This issue means paying attention to special measures in the teacher ranking policy

formation, which it is already mentioned by Turnbull, 2006; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984 and Van Meter & Horn, 1975. The findings of this research are in line with the above studies.

Also, based on the findings of this research, fundamental differences can be seen in the four components of "principles and values", "career path structure", "anticipation of possible challenges" and "scope of action" between the authentic documents and reports of the two selected groups. The "principles & values" component is one of the most important differences between the documents, which is exemplified in concepts such as measurement criteria and the approach to achieving goals. The finding of this part of the research is similar with findings of Farokhinia et al., 2022; Foruzande Dehkordi, 2011; and Qolipour et al, 2011. In previous studies, "principles & values" - or in other words, "fundamentals and values" - have been mentioned as one of the effective factors in the formulation and effective implementation of programs, and in Iran they are influenced by Islamic values and beliefs and a mixture of ideological readings of its religion. "Career path structure" component is another difference between the two groups of documents. In Iran's documents, the ranking structure and promotion process for teachers and school administrators are considered the same regardless of their duties and responsibilities. The existence of the same and single job structure can be rooted in the definition of teacher and trainer from the perspective of the document of the FRDE - as the main basis for decision-making in Iran's education. According to this document, "teacher" and "trainer" (synonyms are also used) refer to a person who is responsible for the important mission of educating students in the general formal education system (Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, 2011a; Teacher Ranking System Law, 2021). The existence of difference in the "scope of action" can also originate from the scope of this definition, which is limited to the "general formal education system" and does not include contract teachers and managers working in non-government schools.

"Prediction of possible challenges" is also a component that the authors of documents in Iran have not paid attention to. Anticipating possible challenges before the implementation of programs can be effective in building hardware, software and skill capacity for the implementation of the ranking system. This capacity building includes the empowerment of employees, organization and society, which accelerates the process of implementing the guidelines (hardware); the attitude of teachers, administrators and planners and policy makers to the nature and philosophy of ranking has changed; common value and understanding is formed through a dominant discourse (software); and to improve the cognitive, human and technical skills of teachers and school administrators (skills). Building capacity and creating coherence through the dominant discourse is one of the effective factors in the implementation of the policy that Head & Alford, 2015 and

Tiernan, 2007 have pointed out. Therefore, the findings of this part of the research are consistent with the findings of these researchers.

According to what has been said, in order to make the teachers' ranking mechanism effectiveness in Iran, it is suggested that the goals, policies and strategies of the educational system upstream documents in the field of teachers' ranking should be transparent and accurate. This transparency and accuracy should be defined as well as explained according to the demands of target society, purposes, common cultural values through the opinion consensus and establishment of cooperative value and perception. In this regard, the use of teachers' opinions and their participation will not only increase the changes and reforms' acceptance, but also will increase the teachers' rankings effectiveness through the identification of desired and existing situation. In addition, definition of different career path structures for teachers and school managers will be legitimate through diversity of their duties, responsibilities as well as professional nature. Also, in order to emerge the expected consequences and results related to the objectives, the necessity of expanding the scope of inclusion and revising the definition of school and teacher can be seen to all teachers, managers and all people who are responsible for teaching in schools and places of learning in general education courses. Meanwhile, predicting possible challenges in documents can be effective through the hard-wired, soft-wired and skilled capacity building.

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