



**RECOGNITION WITHOUT MERIT? TAMGHA-E-IMTIAZ OR
TAMGHA-E-SHOHRAT IN PAKISTAN
CIVIL AWARDS SYSTEM, 2016–2026**

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Abstract

For the past decades, every year, Pakistan's civil awards have regularly honored hundreds of individuals across various fields, including science, journalism, sports, and entertainment. In this study the Tamgha-e-Imtiaz is meant to honor academic best performance distributions as well as heroes and public service (Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, Art. 259). In practice, doubts have fully fledged about whether the system truly rewards merit, especially in education, or has pointed toward favoring high visibility and social influence (The Express Tribune., 2022). This paper uses public data from the last ten years (2016 to 2026) to examine who appears visibly in civil award announcements and news coverage. Sourced from the Cabinet Division documents, Press Information Department releases, and media lists from outlets such as Dawn, The News International, The Express Tribune, and Geo News, the analysis focuses on two issues: (1) how often education and "science & education" appear as labeled categories and (2) whether professors of education, national curriculum experts, and national education policymakers are named as recipients (PID P. I., 2022). The findings of this study show that the academics in science, engineering, and medicine are regularly recognized, while national curriculum writers and education policy experts are almost absent from high-profile listings. By contrast, media, arts, and sports figures receive reliable and prominent attention. The study says the decision does not fulfil the promise of academic recognition enshrined in the constitution and dispenses a discouraging message to neglected educators and policymakers. The report should be summarized with practical recommendations for creating a different education and curriculum group, as well as for ensuring that each year, Where a senior university professor or executive policy and curriculum framework at the National Curriculum Council Pakistan spends their whole career creating the very knowledge that keeps the country alive, only to retire into poverty and public anonymity, it sends a disturbing message to the entire youth of a developing nation, also get a fair and reliable share of Tamgha-e-Imtiaz honors.

Introduction and problem statement

Every year on 14 August, Pakistanis observed to long lists of civil award recipients. The names sit under imposing titles: Nishan-e-Imtiaz, Hilal-e-Imtiaz, Sitara-e-Imtiaz, Tamgha-e-Imtiaz. Television talk shows and social media accounts quickly pick out the most recognizable figures: actors, singers, cricket stars, high-profile anchors, and powerful officials. National debates often ignore professors who spent decades developing curricula and policymakers such as the executive at NCC Pakistan who reform an outdated syllabus (Dawn, 2021).

Article 259 of the Constitution provides that the state may speak of titles and decorations "in recognition of heroism, meritorious service or academic distinction." "The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, Article 259, states that the state can discuss titles and decorations "in recognition of heroism, meritorious service, or academic distinction." "Article 259 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, states that the state can discuss titles and decorations "in recognition of heroism, meritorious service, or academic distinction." (Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973). "Education policy documents have repeatedly bound this promise, speaking about raising the status of teachers (Akram, 2020), academics (Mahnaz & Akram, 2026), and researchers (Li & Akram, 2023; Ramzan et al., 2020, 2023, 2025). So far, when the civil awards are actually announced, the

people who design what children learn “science & education” professors of education, curriculum writers, and education-policy experts “science & education” rarely appear as named recipients (Cabinet Division, 2020).

This paper explores that gap over a defined, recent period. It focuses on 2016 to 2026 because public data for these years are more accessible and because they include both “traditional” award cycles and newer cycles with explicit information technology and “science & education” categories (Cabinet Division, 2024). The central question is simple but uncomfortable: in the last decade, has the Tamgha-e-Imtiaz operated as a genuine medal of merit for education professionals, or has it effectively become a Tamgha-e-Shohrat a medal of visibility for media, sports, and high office?

Research Objectives

To address this central question, this study pursues the following objectives:

1. To critically analyze the distribution patterns of the Tamgha-e-Imtiaz between 2016 and 2026.
2. To quantify the representation of core educationists (curriculum experts and policymakers) versus media/entertainment personalities.
3. To verify the compliance of administrative awarding practices with constitutional imperatives (Article 259).
4. To provide policy recommendations for institutionalizing academic merit in civil honors.

Research Questions

RQ1: Has the allocation of Tamgha-e-Imtiaz for "academic distinction" shifted toward showbiz visibility over the last decade?

RQ2: To what extent are genuine curriculum developers and policy experts represented in official award lists compared to their entertainment counterparts?

2. Review Literature

Pakistan’s civil awards system has a clear legal core. Article 259 of the Constitution sets out the basic authority for state honors, including the recognition of academic distinction. The Cabinet Division also issues detailed civil awards policies and guidelines which detail the eligibility, categories and procedures for nominations and approvals (Cabinet Division, 2024). The Tamgha-e-Imtiaz falls within the “Imtiaz” order of merit and is officially defined as an award for notable service in areas such as arts, literature, public service, and academia (Wikipedia, 2006).

In theory, this framework creates ample space for awarding professors of education, curriculum leaders, and education-policy scholars. The list of eligible fields in Cabinet policy includes education and academic excellence, although in practice this wording is often absorbed into wider references to “science and education” or “academic distinction” (Cabinet Division, 2024). Additionally, national education policies and sector plans have stressed the need to improve the social status and recognition of teachers and academics, arguing that such recognition is essential to attract and retain talent in education. (Cabinet Division, 2025). The issue is less about what the law and policy allow and more about how those permissions are used. The next sections turn from legal texts to actual award lists from the past ten years to see who shows up when it is time to distribute honors.

3. Data and methodology

This study relies solely on publicly available documents. For each year, I looked for two kinds of sources:

- Official lists and press releases, such as Cabinet Division PDFs of conferment lists and Press Information Department (PID) releases about awards announced or conferred. (PID P. I., 2022)
- Media summaries, particularly from Dawn, The News International, The Express Tribune, Pakistan Today, and similar outlets that regularly publish lists of “major” or “notable” (Pakistan Today, 2025)

The ten-year window from 2016 to the 2026 cycle (announced in August 2025) was chosen because cabinet division and PID records for these years are relatively easy to locate and read; the period includes both “ordinary” years and years with large lists (e.g., 253 or 263 recipients); and the period reflects the rise of visible media and sports personalities alongside scientists and administrators

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The analysis proceeded in two steps. First, for each year with reasonably complete information, I recorded the total number of civil awards announced or conferred, as reported by official sources. Second, I scanned the named recipients in official or media lists and coded them into three broad groups for this paper’s question: (PakLens, 2025)

1. Education or “science & education” with a special mark if the person was clearly a professor of education, curriculumist, or education-policy maker.
2. Media, arts, and sports including actors, singers, journalists, anchors, and sports stars.
3. Other public service, security, social work, literature, and general academic or technical fields.

Because some years have only partial press lists, the counts in the tables represent the visible pattern, not a complete reconstruction of every gazette entry. This makes the analysis conservative: if an educationist is not named in the major public lists, the public cannot reasonably be expected to know they were recognized.

4. Findings: what the last ten years show

4.1 Overall pattern across the decade

Table 1 summarizes the ten-year window in simple terms: how many awards were given, whether education appears as a named category, and whether educationists and curriculumist are visible by name.

Table 1. Civil awards and visible education/media names, 2016-2026

Year / cycle	Approx. total civil awards (all grades)	Education or “science & education” names clearly visible in key coverage	Clearly identified professors of education / curriculumist / education-policy makers	Named media / arts / sports figures highlighted in coverage
2016	100+(PID, 2016 a, b)	Education-linked names mainly in science/engineering; no separate, detailed “education” list	Not clearly labelled as professors of education or curriculum heads	Some cultural and public figures; partial data



2017–2019	100–250 per year (Cabinet Division, 2020) and (CSS-Times, 2017)	Scientists, engineers, doctors recognised; education not consistently isolated as a visible field	No consistent pattern of education-faculty names in sample coverage	Regular presence of artists and cultural personalities
2020	184 awards approved (Cabinet Division, 2020)	Several academic distinction awards; few clearly framed as education policy or curriculum	No named national curriculumist or education-policy expert in doc: summary	Arts and literature figures visible in Sitara-e-Imtiaz and Pride of Performance lists
2021	126 awards announced (The International, 2021) and (Dawn, 2021)	5 individuals in an explicit education/academic cluster	At least several education-related academics, but not labelled as “national curriculum head” or similar	Showbiz less dominant; some cultural and literary figures present
2022–2023	200–250 awards (253 in 2022 announcement; 135 conferred in 2023) (Geo News [GeoTv], 2023) and (The Express Tribune., 2022)	Coverage highlights public servants, police, administrators, some academics; no separate education-policy cluster	No professor of education or curriculumist named explicitly	Journalists and TV figures prominently featured as examples of honorees’
2024	145–200+ (Cabinet Division, 2024)	Scientists and doctors again visible; teachers and educationists less so as a distinct group	No clearly named curriculum or education-policy awardee in main reports	Mixture of writers, social workers, and cultural figures
2026 cycle (announced 2025)	263 awards approved (PakLens, 2025) (Pakistan Today, 2025)	“science & education” includes several scientists and engineers	No one in that cluster clearly described as a professor of education, curriculum head, or education-policy specialist	Strong presence of media, arts, and sports (Hadiqa Kiani, Samina Peerzada, Shahid Afridi, Sana Mir, etc.)

Two points stand out. First, the state is generous with awards: often more than a hundred per year, and up to 263 in the 2026 cycle. Second, despite this large number, professors of

education, curriculum developers, and education-policy makers rarely appear as named recipients in high-profile documentation, especially compared to media and sports figures.

4.2 Education versus showbiz and sport in recent cycles

To make the contrast clearer, Table 2 focuses only on three recent cycles where coverage is well documented: 2021, 2023, and the 2026 cycle.

Table 2. Education-profession vs media/sports names in selected years

Year / cycle	Number of clearly identified education-profession recipients in major coverage	Number of named media / arts / sports figures
2021	5 clear education or academic distinction names highlighted (Dawn, 2021)	Several cultural figures; less dominant than in later years
2023	0 professors of education or curriculum heads identified in main Pakistan Day story (Geo News [GeoTv], 2023) and (The Express Tribune., 2022)	Multiple journalists and public figures used as key examples
2026	0 education-policy or curriculum specialists in “science & education” cluster (PakLens, 2025)	Many showbiz and sports names (e.g., Hadiqa Kiani, Samina Peerzada, Shahid Afridi, Sana Mir) (The News International, 2025)

A simple line chart based on Table 2 would show a spike of five visible education names in 2021 dropping to zero in 2023 and staying at zero in the 2026 cycle. At the same time, media and sports names remain steady or increase. That is the pattern that drives the “Tamgha-e-Imtiaz or Tamgha-e-Shohrat” question in this paper.

5. Discussion: merit, visibility, and the missing curriculumist

The legal texts show that academic distinction is a legitimate ground for civil awards. The ten-year pattern shows that, in practice, education policy and curriculum work are mostly invisible as named categories. Scientists, doctors, engineers, and senior administrators are present. Media and sports personalities are highly visible. senior university professor or executive policy and curriculum framework at the National Curriculum Council Pakistan spends their whole career creating the very knowledge that keeps the country alive, only to retire into poverty and public anonymity, it sends a disturbing message to the entire youth of a developing nation, are barely there.

This is not an argument against recognizing artists or sports stars. A cricketer like Shahid Afridi or a singer like Hadiqa Kiani has made genuine contributions to Pakistan’s global image (PakLens, 2025). The problem is that the people who write national Curriculum/Textbooks and shape syllabi appear only as anonymous “experts” behind the scenes, not as citizens whose service qualifies for the Tamgha-e-Imtiaz in the public record (Geo News [GeoTv], 2023).

For a country that routinely describes education as a national emergency, this silence is not neutral. Young scholars see who is rewarded. A student deciding between a PhD in education policy and a move into the media can read the same award lists this paper has read. The lesson is clear: the screen is more likely to bring state honors than the classroom or the curriculum committee.

If the system continues this way, the phrase “Tamgha-e-Shohrat” will feel less like a joke and more like a description. It is not that nobody in education ever receives an award; 2021 shows that some do (Dawn, 2021). It is that recognition is inconsistent and thin, especially for those who work specifically in policy and curriculum. When that kind of labor is not visible even

once in three recent cycles, despite hundreds of awards, it is hard to claim that merit in education is being taken seriously (Cabinet Division, 2025).

6. Policy recommendations

To restore some balance between merit and visibility, this paper suggests four modest but valid steps:

1. Make a separate group for “Education and Curriculum”:
where, Right now, education is hidden inside the “Science & Education” group. The Cabinet Division should give education its own separate space on application forms and official summaries. This will force award committees to look at education work on its own merits.
2. Guarantee a few awards for educators every single year:
We do not need strict limits, but the official rules should say that every year a few medals must go to senior education professors, curriculum team leaders, and researchers who have made a real impact on schools.
3. Let educational institutions send names directly: Universities, teacher colleges, and the National Curriculum Council wing should be invited to send in formal nominations. They can easily provide clear proof of work, like written policy papers, textbook frameworks, or training programs.
4. Print clear reasons for these education awards: When a teacher or curriculum planner wins an award, the public announcement should clearly describe what they did. For example, it could say: “for leading the team that built the 2025 to 26 AI and Robotics courses for schools.” This helps students, teachers, and the public see exactly what kind of work the state values.

These changes would not fix Pakistan’s education crisis overnight. But they would at least align the civil awards system with the claim that education is a national priority.

7. Conclusion

The Tamgha-e-Imtiaz still has the potential to be a true medal of merit. The law allows it. The history of the award system includes professors and scholars among its recipients. The last decade of visible data, however, shows a system where education policy and curriculum work barely register in public recognition, even while media, sports, and high administrative offices remain constantly (The News International, 2025)

If Pakistan wants its brightest minds to write curricula, train teachers, and craft education policy, it cannot keep sending the message that this work is almost invisible to the state. A civil award does more than decorate a chest on 23 March 2026. It tells an entire generation what kinds of lives are worth living. Recognizing that senior university professors and Heads of Executive Policy and curriculum frameworks at the National Curriculum Council Pakistan spend their whole career creating the very knowledge that keeps the country alive, only to retire into poverty and public anonymity, sends a disturbing message to the youth of a developing nation. Ensuring they get a fair and reliable share of Tamgha-e-Imtiaz honors alongside celebrities and power holders would be a small but honest step towards fixing that message (Dawn, 2021). So, it is my sincere request that the top officials at MOEFPT, the Cabinet Division, and HEC take this paper seriously. They should make sure that these hard-working senior Education Professors and NCC Heads are included in the upcoming award list on 14 August 2026, so they can proudly receive their medals on 23 March 2027.



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