

MAKERERE STRIKE

INCREASE PUBLIC VARSITIES' FUNDING

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In the UK, like in most European countries, salaries for higher education lecturers range from £30,500 (about sh119m) to £40,000 (about sh156m) annually. This means their monthly pay is between sh9.9m and sh15m. At a senior level, salaries range from £39,000 (about sh152m) to £48,000 (about sh187m), meaning their monthly pay is between sh12.6m and sh15.6m.

2011 TASK FORCE

The task force was formed in an agreement between the Prime Minister and Makerere, during the September 2011 strike by lecturers. It was tasked to review the current macro and micro-organisational structures of the university, conduct a job analysis, do a job evaluation of all the jobs in the institution, recommend the optimal establishment for each unit and advise on the required competencies for each unit.

It was also expected to develop and recommend strategies of improving current financing sources of the university.

Public universities in Uganda are witnessing a mass exodus of lecturers and professors, a trend that is believed to be fuelled by better pay abroad.

However, the Government says there should not be cause for alarm, since most of the senior lecturers have just crossed to private universities in Uganda, and that it is gradually increasing their pay.

Makerere, Kyambogo, Gulu and Mbarara University of Science and Technology are still experiencing the highest attrition of their lecturers. Busitema and Gulu, the other two public universities, are facing the same dilemma.

A recent Auditor General's report shows that about 55.5% of the slots for academic staff in universities are not filled, much as it is a set requirement.

The McGregor Report by the universities' visitation committee in 2007 showed that apart from academic qualifications, the provision of quality education is, to a larger extent, limited by scarcity of senior academic staff.

Of the 1,728 academic staff in public universities, there are only 53 (3%) professors and 80 (4.6%) associate professors. Kyambogo University by that time had no full teaching professors.

Mbarara had seven professors and Makerere University Business School four. Gulu had seven and some of the departments were being headed teaching assistants.

Mwalimu sought the views of former Makerere vice-chancellor, Prof. Venansius Baryamureeba, and other education experts on the best way forward. Below is Prof. Barya's opinion on the best way of solving salary storms at the country's leading public university

Normally, a public institution is defined as an institution, which is backed through public funds and controlled by the state and its financial records are public records. In Uganda, there are public institutions like Makerere University that are allowed to collect public funds from tuition fees and other fees, commonly known as Appropriation In Aid (ALA), and spend it at source without transferring it to the consolidated fund.

The composition of the public sector varies by country, but in most countries, the public sector includes such services as the police, military, public roads, public transport, primary, secondary, university and other tertiary institutions education and healthcare.

The organisation of the public sector (public ownership) can take several forms, but for the purpose of this article I will dwell on two categories.

One is the direct administration, funded through taxation. Under this system, the delivering organisation generally has no specific requirement to meet commercial success criteria and government determines production decisions.

The other is the publicly-owned corporations; which differ from direct administration in that they have greater commercial freedoms and are expected to operate according to commercial criteria. Production decisions in this approach are not generally taken by government (although goals may be set for them by government). Examples of these in Uganda include National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC), National Social Security Fund (NSSF), Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) and Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

Before the introduction of private programmes at Makerere University,



Prof. Baryamureeba

Makerere belonged to category A institutions – it was fully-funded from the consolidated fund. With the introduction of the private programmes, the private part of the university was supposed to be managed under category B, where the university would have greater commercial freedom and operate according to commercial criteria just like the private universities in the country.

However, most members of Makerere administration and staff, are still living in the past – the period before Makerere introduced the private programmes.

When I took over as vice-chancellor of Makerere in 2009, I fast-tracked the establishment of Constituent Colleges to ensure that some colleges at Makerere operate under category A (100% budgetary support from the consolidated fund) and the rest of the colleges operate under category B just like NWSC, NSSF, UCC and CAA. This was supposed to be followed through even after my departure.

In my opinion, the following colleges at Makerere should be fully-funded by the Government from the consolidated fund: College of Health Sciences, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology, College of Natural Sciences



PICTURES BY ESTHER NAMIRIMU

Students who had come to pick their admission letters from Makerere University are stranded

and College of Veterinary Medicine, Animal Resources and Bio Security. These are the colleges that have more than 90% of the government-sponsored students, hence reflecting government priorities.

All the other colleges, including College of Humanities and Social Sciences, College of Computing and Information Sciences, College of Business and Management Sciences, College of Education and External Studies and the School of Law should have greater commercial freedom and be funded from AIA. Greater commercial freedom entails also being allowed to set tuition fees.

The Government should not be scared by allowing these colleges to set fees as the market forces will regulate the fees. Besides, today it is normal for students to put their first choice for a private programme at another institution other than Makerere University. In these colleges, more than 90% of the students

are private. For instance, in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, less than 200 out of the over 6,000 students are government-sponsored students, yet more than 90% of the academic staff salaries in this college are paid for by the Government from the consolidated fund.

From the foregoing, Makerere is a special public institution and its financing and management should be looked at in that light. The Government has no say in the so many private programmes at Makerere, most of which are unviable with less than five students. More so, the Government does not have Government students on these unviable programmes and the programmes do not represent government interests and priorities. So, the Government cannot be compelled to provide 100% salary support to the commercial colleges at Makerere.

What the Government needs to do is to provide sufficient enabling infrastructure

to all units at the university. But units that want to engage in private programmes, where Government has no interest, should have their programmes run on a commercial model and sustain themselves, including meeting the staff salaries.

In this regard, there should be complete decentralisation of academic, administrative and financial affairs to each of these commercial colleges. They should be empowered to hire staff just like in the private sector, but following universities policies, unlike what we have been reading in the press where the centre is centralising recruitment of staff and the colleges, especially the commercial colleges, are no longer allowed to hire staff.

JUNIOR LECTURERS OVERPAID

In any country, the main employer of university graduates is the private sector. Salaries in the public sector are always

lower than those in the private sector. So, in Uganda we cannot set salaries in the public sector without looking at salaries in similar public sector institutions or (related) private sector institutions. Generally, bachelor's degree holders in banks, insurance companies, telecom companies, private universities and other private organisations in Uganda earn an average of sh1m, inclusive of taxes.

Master's degree holders in the above institutions, with exception of those in managerial positions, earn an average of sh1.5m, inclusive of taxes. When setting salaries, we need to ignore outliers like Kampala Capital City Authority. Currently, a teaching assistant (bachelor's degree holder) at Makerere earns at least sh1.7m and scientists earn even more. An Assistant Lecturer (a master's degree holder) earns at least sh1.9m and scientists earn much more. By simply looking at the prevailing market rates, a teaching assistant and an assistant lecturer at Makerere University are overpaid.



Colleges not teaching programmes sponsored by the Government, according to Prof. Baryamureeba, should have greater commercial freedom

Furthermore, less than 1% of the bachelor's and master's degree holders can engage in research and publish. So, there is no special skill they bring to the university in order for them to be looked at as a special case.

Graduates in other sectors of education earn much less than what is paid to their counterparts in public universities.

The lecturers are paid what they deserve at their level. The only categories of academic staff in public universities who are grossly underpaid are the senior lecturers, associate professors and professors. The lecturers who are PhD holders and have failed to raise three publications to get promoted to the rank

of senior lecturer are just 'dead wood' like the former academic registrar of Makerere University once referred to such staff. Therefore, it is as good as not having them. This is because a PhD holder must undertake research and supervise graduate students in addition to teaching.

Fortunately, the staff at the rank of senior lecturer in public universities are not many and their salaries can even be doubled. But also, the salary scales of academic staff need to be reviewed to ensure that there is a difference in terms of salary when it comes to the higher academic ranks of senior lecturer, associate professor and professor.

The other issue academic staff associations in public institutions need to include senior academic staff to redirect the agenda of these associations.

For us who have been part of Makerere, we feel that it is not in the best interest to have strikes at the beginning of a semester. This discourages parents from taking their children there. In the end, some academic programmes that are not popular suffer as prospective students join other universities that are peaceful.

So, every effort needs to be made to ensure that parents are communicated to in due time in regard to the opening of the university. The negotiations with the Government should be expedited and if there is no agreement, then the University Council should close the university and plan to re-open it in, say in October. They would then use that time to look into all the issues that keep propping up Makerere.

But everybody's wish is that Makerere opens as scheduled. We need to be mindful of the students' interests and not use them as instruments of negotiation.

Lastly, the problems of Makerere escalated from the early 1990s, when the private students' scheme started. Every vice-chancellor, deputy vice-chancellor or dean has an idea on these problems and possible solutions. If I can dare speak for others, we are all willing to provide information to any commission set up by the Government to sort out all the outstanding problems, which are mainly institutional, as no amount of money can sort out these problems.

The writer is a former vice-chancellor of Makerere University

What others say about increasing lecturers' pay



Dr. John Muyingo, higher education state minister
I am requesting Makerere lecturers to resume work and prepare for the opening of the new academic year. We will do our best to negotiate for an agreeable solution to this problem. We appreciate that they need a pay raise, but we also need to work within the Government's available resources.

Prof. John Asibo Opuda, director, NCHC

Professors and lecturers and in universities need more support in form of research funding. Research is relevant for other economic and sectorial developments. If we have to support human resource development in the country then we need to start with lecturers. The Government ought to know that lecturers need a reasonable salary for survival.

Ivan Makai, builder, Shian International

They should not increase their salaries. They are already earning a lot of money, compared to other people in formal employment. They should first settle the primary teachers and medical doctors; those two seriously need a salary increment.



Allan Ayoo, technician Thermocool

They deserve an increment, but it should not be more than 50%. Our economy is not big enough to sustain such huge salary demands. They should think about the future of this country before coming up with such unrealistic demands.

Peter Wasike, resident, Kireka

They earn a lot of money. The Government should instead increase the number of teachers and medical personnel before going for lecturers. They should be contented with what they are getting.



Fred Mugenyi, resident of Bweyogere

They should increase their salaries. Teaching people like doctors, lawyers and journalists is not easy. They do a lot of work and they deserve a salary increment. Besides, even Makerere University gets so much money from students.

Jackie Okello, stores assistant, Uganda Marines

They should be given more money to cater for the rising cost of living. Even the tuition fees that we pay for students is high. It can be used to increase on lecturers' salaries.



Andrew Opolot, student
To prevent this, let Government increase their salaries. Otherwise, the strike will eat into the time for teaching, causing more chaos.

Compiled by Owen Wagabaza

Who should be a lecturer?

The other challenge facing Makerere and other universities in Uganda, Prof. Baryamureeba says, is to clearly define who should be a lecturer. He says the famous Makerere University Mujaju Report recommendation that all lecturers must have a doctorate of philosophy (PhD) is still an excellent guide. An ad hoc committee chaired by the late Prof. Akiliki Mujaju recommended a grace period of two to five years within which the lecturers should have upgraded to a PhD. After the expiry of this grace period, lecturers without a PhD were supposed to be relieved of their duties.

Prof. Baryamureeba adds that, "The point I am trying to make is that world-over, with exception of a few disciplines like clinical sciences, business and law, bachelor's and master's degree holders cannot be recruited in a university as

teaching staff. They are only recruited as graduate fellows and given a stipend. More than 50% of Makerere's academic staff hold bachelor's and master's degrees and are appointed as teaching assistants and assistant lecturers.

"Teaching assistants and assistant lecturers cannot be called lecturers with all due respect. The fortunate thing is that a master's holder at Makerere cannot be confirmed in university service unless he has registered for a PhD. All the other bachelor's and master's holders are on two-year contracts that have their terms for renewal and termination."

He says one option for Makerere is to turn teaching assistants and assistant lecturers into graduate fellows and pay them a stipend instead of salary and allocate them a workload while they pursue either a master's or PhD programme.

'University councils need financial autonomy'

There are a number of areas where public universities do not have the freedom to manage their finances.

First, Section 62(3) forbids public universities to spend any money unless the expenditure has been approved by Parliament. Thus, although under Section 41c, the University Council has powers to "fix scales of fees and boarding charges," Makerere council's attempts to increase fees in 2004/5 were halted by the Government.

Further, while public universities spend a lot on each student, the Government does not ensure that universities receive from each student the real unit cost of training as per the studies of unit costs by the Auditor General and National Council for Higher Education (NCHC).

More so, government grants to public universities from

2000 to 2010 have averaged only 0.3% as a percent of GDP – which is the lowest in East Africa. The state should have given grants to each university based on an agreed formula and let the Auditor General track its use as it does all government money.

The Government should have eliminated all the controls on the use of these grants and made sure that misuse could lead to cutting grants to defaulting universities. This is how successful public universities are funded throughout the world.

Secondly, Section 59(5) of the Act does not give public universities the right to invest any of their funds without approval of the Minister. This section should also be eliminated and Council given full powers to invest its money like private universities do.

Thirdly, the Government treasury can ask public

universities to remit monies collected at source by the institutions using section 44(4) of the Public Finance and Accountability Regulations. This section should not apply to all education institutions and agencies.

Lastly, public service administrative behaviour that is not fit for universities still operate in Uganda's public universities. For example, the single spine salary structures, the age limit requirements and the "permanent and pensionable" terms of service do not belong to modern universities. Universities do not behave like other government departments or institutions. They are universal institutions and should not be extremely country specific, much as they have to respond to national needs.



The writer is a former director, NCHC

Prof. A. B. Kasozi