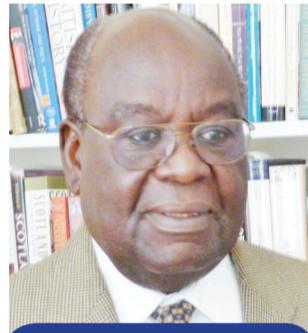


# Will salary raise improve

The decision by the Government to increase the salary of university staff has left many asking whether this will translate in to quality education.

The recent announcement that professors and other academic staff in public universities will have their salaries increased is heartening. In developing countries, public universities set the pace for both public and private university behaviour and we hope that the move will have a ripple effect in all Uganda's higher education system. This development is very good for higher education in Uganda.



Prof. Abdu K. Kasozi

If implemented now, the pay would put Ugandan public salary levels in the 15th position on the global public salary level rankings, according to a study done by staff associated with the Centre for International Higher Education, Boston College.

However, when it comes to fame, prestige and salary levels, US private universities like Harvard, Stanford, Yale and others in the Ivy League, perform better than public ones. I know a number of professors in these institutions who get, on average, \$15,000 a month. These private institutions can pay as much as they wish in order to attract brilliant staff because they are not encumbered by government rules, regulations and "standing orders".

However, a number of questions, problems and issues still remain. I shall attempt to discuss seven of them.

First, although the figure of sh15m (about \$5,400) looks globally competitive and is large in the context of Uganda's income per

capita, basic salaries do not always determine the final "take home" amount by an individual staff member. Nor does it tell us the true purchasing power of a given currency in a given market.

Salaries being fixed payments cannot be taken at face value. We must not only look at basic salaries to determine real incomes. They may not perform the desired aim of attracting and retaining brilliant personnel to the public university sub-sector. A number of other factors operate to determine the remuneration. These include the tax regime of a given country. Some countries like Saudi Arabia do not tax salaries and taxes in North America are lower than in Europe. In Africa taxes could be as high as 30% of one's gross salary.

In addition to other statutory payments, the take-home could be as low as 40% of the basic salary. Moreover, there is the impact of inflation, which often eats much deeper into



The failure by Africa to provide better salaries has resulted into massive brain drain from the continent.

## Salary increases without funding research means universities cannot contribute to the national innovation system

basic salaries than what meets the eye.

It is also true that academics receive different benefits such as bonuses, various allowances, research grants, various insurances and retirement packages depending on the countries they are working in. If a country is mean on funding other areas where professors earn extra money, it could lose its brilliant people to those countries that do so.

Secondly, and as a result of the first factor, we cannot be sure whether the new salary levels will give Ugandan academics the 'middle class,' lifestyles many of them aim at getting at. Academics, like all educated people, love to have guaranteed annual incomes ranging from \$3,600 to \$100,000 in order to live in decent houses have a motor vehicle, be assured of health care, properly educate their children and socialise within their circles. Any salary increases must take this point into account.

Thirdly, it is not yet certain whether the new salary structure will increase the competitive edge of our public

universities in attracting brilliant workers from the local and global academic market or the general market for that matter. If universities are staffed with brilliant well-paid workers, it is likely that the country could build a good innovation system. It is gratifying to note that Uganda is realising that in this global age, no country can compete without a quality university, and implicitly innovation system.

In order to have such a system, we need academics and researchers who are paid as much as their equally qualified counterparts in the general labour market.

Fourthly, will the new salaries slow the cancer of brain drain? One of the reasons African universities are understaffed is because of brain loss to the local non-university and the global markets. The failure by Africa to provide salaries that guarantee middle-class lifestyles to our academics and other professionals has resulted in massive brain drain from the continent. A study

conducted eight years ago by Francisco Seddoh, showed that some 300,000-500,000 African professionals left

Africa each year, some 40,000 African PhD holders lived outside the continent and some 10,000 Nigerian academics and ICT experts worked in the US.

At that time, there were more Sierra Leonean doctors living in the Chicago area than Sierra Leone and some 600 Ghanaian doctors were working in New York City (about 20% of Ghana's needs!).

It was also reported that some 10-20 doctors left East Africa each month, a number of them proceeding to South Africa. The professionals who left were academics, doctors, nurses, researchers, ICT experts and general scientists.

The financial implications of the brain drain were enormous. The cost of training the existing professions constituted, in some cases, 3 to 5% of GDP (training a doctor costs \$70,000, paramedical \$12,000, a PhD academic \$45,000, and engineer \$30,000). The flight of capital was further exacerbated by the hiring of over 100,000 foreign expatriates recruited to fill the gaps left by exiled locals at a cost of about four billion dollars each year!

More so, higher education in Uganda, as delivered in our universities, is not the best in quality. Various tracer studies and

### Global salary scales for universities

	COUNTRY	SALARY (TOP) \$ PER MONTH
1	Canada	9,485
2	South Africa	9,330
3	Italy	9,118
4	Saudi Arabia	8,524
5	United Kingdom	8,369
6	Malaysia	7,864
7	Australia	7,499
8	India	7,433
9	United States	7,358
10	Netherlands	7,123
11	Germany	6,383
12	Israel	6,377
13	Nigeria	6,229
14	Norway	5,847
15	UGANDA	5,400
16	France	4,775
17	Japan	4,604
18	Brazil	4,550
19	Argentina	4,385
20	Colombia	4,058
21	Czech Republic	3,967
22	Turkey	3,898
23	Mexico	2,730
24	Latvia	2,654
25	Kazakhstan	2,304
26	Ethiopia	1,580
27	China	1,107
28	Russia	910
29	Armenia	665

SOURCE: Data collected by country experts from multiple sources and compiled for this study

reports by the National council for Higher Education (NCHE) and the Inter-University Council for East Africa tell us so. Staff is overworked, focus

**40,000**

The number of African PhD holders living outside the continent



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