

EDITORIAL

Go beyond 25% pay rise for Arts teachers

The announcement that the government plans to award a 25 percent salary increment to Arts teachers in government-aided secondary schools, effective July in the Financial Year 2026/2027, has understandably been met with cautious optimism. On the surface, this appears to be a well-intentioned effort to address a long-standing grievance within the education sector. But a closer examination reveals that the increase, while welcome, is a stopgap rather than a solution to deep-rooted inequities.

For years, Arts and Humanities teachers have laboured under a glaring pay disparity compared to their counterparts in the sciences. While science teachers saw their salaries significantly boosted in 2022, with degree-holders earning upwards of Shs4m, Arts teachers have remained stuck at much lower scales, around Shs1.3m for graduate teachers. Recent commitments by the government are an attempt to bridge this gap, but even with a 25 percent bump, Arts teachers will still earn far less than their science colleagues.

The issue:

Salary
disparity.

Our view:

In the end, this 25 percent pay rise should be seen not as an endpoint but as a call to deeper commitment to ensure that all teachers, regardless of discipline, receive fair compensation.

This inequality has not only been a matter of earnings but also of morale and dignity. Several rounds of industrial action by Arts teachers over the past year, including strikes that disrupted the academic calendar, highlight how deeply this issue has affected the profession and the broader education ecosystem. The government's pledge last June was key to persuading many to return to classrooms and resume marking national exams.

Still, a 25 percent increment, while politically expedient, falls short of confronting the structural factors that have undervalued Arts teaching for too long. Teachers do far more than deliver subject content. They shape young Ugandans' critical thinking, cultural awareness and ethical grounding. To pay them at scales so markedly lower than Science teachers sends a message that Arts education is somehow of lesser value, a message that is both unfair and counterproductive as Uganda seeks to produce well-rounded citizens capable of navigating complex social and global challenges.

Beyond percentage points, what is required is a comprehensive, phased strategy that moves towards parity in remuneration and recognition.

Government officials, including the State minister for Sports, have reaffirmed commitment to fulfilling the pledge. But words must be translated into sustained policy support, adequate budget allocation and transparent timelines. Incrementalism is acceptable only if it leads to genuine equality. Too many Arts teachers have borne the brunt of a system that prioritises some subjects over others despite their shared mission of educating Uganda's youth.

In the end, this 25 percent pay rise should be seen not as an endpoint but as a call to deeper commitment to ensure that all teachers, regardless of discipline, receive fair compensation, respect and opportunities that reflect their indispensable role in national development.

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