

MPs block pay raise for science teachers

By Henry Sekanjako and Nicholas Wassajja

Parliament has rejected a proposal by the Government to increase salaries for only science teachers, saying the move will create disparities in salaries paid to teachers with the same qualifications.

The MPs said the proposed salary enhancement for science teachers is unconstitutional and discriminatory as per Article 40 (18) which requires Parliament to enact laws to ensure equal payment for work without discrimination.

In its ministerial policy statement for the financial year 2018/2019, the Ministry of Education and Sports proposed an increment of sh1.9m gross salary for science teachers with a degree, while the pay for arts teachers with the same qualifications remained at sh600,000.

For science teachers with diplomas, the Government proposed, an increment to sh800,000 while their arts counterparts remained at sh400,000.

While debating the report by the House's committee on education, the MPs backed the recommendation by the committee that the proposed increment be halted, to factor in the arts teachers.

"The proposed increment will bring about supervisory challenges since even the supervisors in the education sector, like the commissioners and directors at the education ministry, are paid a lower salary compared to the proposed salary for science teachers," Connie Nakayenze Galiwango, the chairperson of the education committee, said.

Justifying the equal payment for both the arts and science teachers, the MPs said the arts teachers had a bigger workload due to the number of students compared to science teachers.

Nakayenze said: "An arts teacher may have a class of about 100 students while the science one has only 15.

Arts teachers will also be demotivated and as a result underperform

Hence the bigger workload is on the arts teacher."

The MPs said arts teachers will also be grossly demotivated and, as a result, underperform or engage in strikes.

2,000 science teachers

The House, chaired by Speaker Rebecca Kadaga backed a proposal by the committee that the proposed funds allocated for enhancement of salaries for science teachers be used to recruit the 2,000 science teachers needed by the Government for schools.

Recently, during celebrations to mark International Labour Day in Ssembabule district, President Yoweri Museveni defended the proposed salary increment for science teachers, saying they were a priority to the Government, compared to the arts teachers.

The President noted that science teachers are hard to replace while their arts counterparts are not.

"If the history teacher goes away from the school, it may be easier to replace him. But if it is a science teacher, it is difficult to replace them. In terms of retention, we are more desperate to retain science teachers," the President said.

Meanwhile, the MPs also called for the harmonisation of the salary structure in all public universities and halt the creation of new universities until funds are found for the full payment of the university staff salaries.

"The finance ministry should provide for the sh105b shortfall in the salaries of the public universities to avert unrest at the universities," Nakayenza said.

THE NATION



The Airbus A330

Gov plan

By Apollo Mubir

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