

2025 in Review

The sector was characterised by strikes organised by different teachers' union over demand for salary enhancement regardless of their specialisation, among others.

BY JANE NAFULA

The year 2025 started with parents eagerly waiting for the results of Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE), only to be shocked by the decline in the number of candidates who were able to score the treasured Aggregate 4.

Kampala's top schools were hit the hardest, prompting parents to exert a lot of pressure on school administrators, as they demanded to know the cause of this unusual performance.

However, whereas the ministry of Education and Sports had no concrete explanation, some analysts speculated that this was the anticipated downturn, following the increment prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic, when some pupils were made to sit for PLE, although they had not yet reached P7.

There were unanswered questions among some schools and parents in Kampala and Wakiso, who accused Uganda National Examinations Board (Uneb) of under-marking their learners. Some even threatened to sue the examination body. As it usually happens, Uneb withheld results of some schools due to suspected malpractice, increasing tension among the affected parents and schools.

The year was also characterised by strikes led by different teachers' unions that demanded better pay for all teachers regardless of their specialisation.

On June 6, 2025, more than 10,000 teachers, under their umbrella organisation, the Uganda Professional Humanities Teachers' Union (UPHTU), called for a strike, protesting against what they termed as unequal and unfair salary terms in comparison to their science counterparts.

"We won't return to class until our concerns are resolved. We want all teachers with similar qualifications to have equal salary scales, regardless of subject area," the national chairperson of UPHTU demanded.

The union pushed for salary of Shs6.5 million for head teachers, Shs4.5 million for deputy head teachers, Shs4 million for graduate teachers, and Shs2.2 million for diploma holders.

This particular strike attracted the attention of both members of the public and government when some of the affected teachers threatened to boycott supervision and submission of continuous assessment marks to Uneb.

However, President Museveni invited the leaders of the striking teachers for a meeting at State House Entebbe, during which a number of recommendations were made to ensure teachers call off the strike and resume teaching.

In response to the concerns of their teachers, the President pledged that their salaries would be enhanced by 25 percent during the 2026/2027 financial year for four consecutive years, after which they would be placed on the same level as their science counterparts.

President Museveni also pledged that Pay as You Earn tax would be reduced from the current 30 percent to 10 percent with effect from the 2025/2026 Financial Year, and that Shs20 billion



Teachers and other education stakeholders interact during their meeting with President Museveni over pay disparities at State House Entebbe on June 30, 2025. Education minister and First Lady Janet Museveni also attended the meeting. PHOTO/COURTESY

Ups and downs of the education sector



First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports Janet Museveni releases 2024 PLE results at the State Lodge, Nakasero on January 23. PHOTO/FILE

would be allocated to the teachers' savings and credit cooperative organisation (Sacco) in addition to providing free education to the children of teachers and availing accommodation.

The teachers called off the strike and started teaching.

Before the dust raised by UPHTU's strike could settle, a nationwide strike by teachers under the Uganda Nation-

al Teachers' Union (Unatu) commenced on September 15, the day learners reported back to school.

More than 100,000 Unatu members across the country laid down their tools demanding a 300 percent salary increment like their science counterparts, paralysing teaching and learning, especially in public primary schools.

Currently, an Arts teacher with a de-

ABOUT 2024 PLE RESULTS

A total of 786,981 candidates sat for Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) in 2024. Uneb Executive Director Daniel Odongo reported a drop in distinctions across all subjects, attributing it to difficulties with questions requiring higher-level thinking skills.

gree qualification earns a gross pay of Shs1,078,162 monthly and takes home a net pay of Shs841,931, while his/her science counterpart gets Shs4 million and takes home a net pay of Shs2,858,000.

An Arts teacher with a diploma qualification gets a gross pay of Shs784,214 and a net pay of Shs639,108, while their science counterparts earn Shs2.2 million and a net pay of Shs1,616,000. Comparatively, primary school teachers earn between Shs450,000 and Shs600,000.

At the peak of the strike, a section of educationalists expressed sympathy with Senior Four candidates, whose third-term lessons were disrupted, warning that the situation could get out of hand if the government fails to adhere to the principle of equity in pay, as it affects salary enhancement for teachers.

Dr David Kabugo, the acting director of the Centre for Teaching and Learning Support at Makerere University, said the strike had a grave impact on candidates and the entire education sector.

"Some people could argue that by the time the teachers went on strike, schools had covered the syllabus, but learning is beyond content coverage. Learning is a whole social environment of the school. Learning is also about the teacher's support and the social support. The absence of teachers has affect-

ed them psychologically, which is likely to affect their performance," Mr Kabugo stated.

This was partly felt during the start of the Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) exams in October 2025, when several Arts teachers refused to supervise, causing uncertainty in examination centres. The government later deployed teachers from private schools to give a hand. The teachers later suspended their strike, and the Unatu leadership held several meetings with the Speaker of Parliament, Ms Anita Among over their demands.

Light at the end of the tunnel

The Education Ministry received a major boost, with the government agreeing to increase its budgetary allocations from Shs4.2 trillion in the 2020/2025 financial year to Shs5.04 trillion in the 2025/2026 national budget. This is intended to continue the policy on expanding learning access through improved quality of infrastructure at all levels.

Finance Minister Matia Kasaija explained that the government was committed to transforming education in Uganda through increased funding and strategic interventions, including expanded free education, teacher training, school construction, and digital reforms.

Elsewhere in the education sector, the Uganda Business and Technical Examinations Board (UBTEB) and the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT) were merged to create the Uganda Vocational and Technical Assessment Board (UVTAB), in what was seen as a move to strengthen the technical and vocational education system in Uganda.

In addition, the Uganda Allied Health Examinations Board and the Uganda Nurses and Midwifery Examinations Board were merged to form the Uganda Health Professions Assessment Board (UHPAB).

This after Parliament passed the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Bill, 2024, which dissolved the Uganda Business, Technical and Examinations Board (UBTEB), the Uganda Allied Health Examinations Board, and the Uganda Nurses and Midwifery Examinations Board in a move to merge key regulatory bodies.