

BY JOHN MASABA

BUDGET: SH568B EARMARKED FOR ARTS TEACHERS' PAY INCREMENT

The Government has moved to actualise its long-standing commitment to improve teachers' remuneration by allocating an additional sh568.65b to enhance salaries for primary school teachers, as well as arts teachers in secondary schools and Business, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (BTJET) institutions.

The new allocation, embedded in the education sector budget for the upcoming financial year, marks a key step in addressing concerns over teacher welfare and boosting motivation within the public education system.

Finance minister Henry Musasizi, while presenting the national budget on Thursday at Kololo Independence Grounds, noted that the adjustment forms part of a broader effort to improve service delivery in education while rewarding critical frontline workers.

"Mr Speaker, beginning FY2026/2027, an additional sh568.65b has been allocated to enhance salaries for primary school teachers and arts teachers in secondary schools, as well as those in BTJET institutions," Musasizi announced.

This increment is expected to ease long-standing pressure from teachers' unions, who have repeatedly called for improved pay to match the rising cost of living and growing workload demands across public schools.

The latest funding injection coincides with an overall 13.8% increase in the education sector budget, which has risen from sh5.85 trillion to sh6.66 trillion. This marks back-to-back growth for the sector, following a 5.2% increase in the previous financial year.

Officials said the enhanced salary structure aims to improve teacher retention, enforce accountability and support better learning outcomes as the Government pushes forward with curriculum reforms, STEM education and technical skills training. This development also aligns with ongoing investments in school infrastructure, including the expansion of seed secondary schools and Universal Primary and Secondary Education (UPE/USE) programmes.

NEW PAY STRUCTURE

The phased pay plan will benefit a total of 156,407



A teacher addressing pupils of St Peter's Primary School Nsambya. Government has moved to actualise its long-standing commitment to enhance salaries for primary school teachers, arts teachers in secondary schools and those in Business, Technical and Vocational Education and Training institutions

educators nationwide.

This includes 132,278 primary school teachers and administrators, alongside 24,129 secondary school and technical institute staff teaching arts-related subjects.

Following the implementation of the new structure, the lowest-earning primary school teacher, known as an education assistant, will see their starting salary rise to sh700,000, up from sh449,000. Meanwhile, a mid-level classroom teacher or senior education assistant will now earn sh727,000 up from sh602,000.

Primary school administrators will also see significant adjustments. A headteacher at a government primary school will now earn sh1.50m a month, up from sh980,000, while a deputy headteacher will see their salary enhanced from sh773,000 to sh1.3m.

At the secondary school and institutional level, a headteacher with an arts degree, as well as a principal of a certificate-awarding institute with a similar background, will have their monthly pay enhanced from sh2.30m to sh3.50m.

Their deputy headteachers and deputy principals holding arts degrees will now earn sh2.10m, up from sh1.70m. Furthermore, a graduate classroom arts teacher will earn



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sh1.50m, up from sh960,000, while a diploma holder teaching humanities will see their salary rise from sh700,000 to sh1.30m.

Driven largely by these enhancements, the total government wage bill is expected to rise to over shh9 trillion in the next financial year, up from sh8.5 trillion this year.

TEACHERS, EXPERT REACT

When contacted, teachers expressed widespread relief. Lucy Fairline, a primary school teacher in Kyenjojo district with over 20 years of service on the government payroll, welcomed the news.

"Praise God. I am very happy because I have been struggling on only sh400,000," Fairline, a mother of four, said.

"I have a child in Senior Six and three others in secondary school. They are all depending on me for school fees. It was



THE ENHANCED SALARY STRUCTURE AIMS TO IMPROVE TEACHER RETENTION AND SUPPORT BETTER LEARNING OUTCOMES.

so little that I was constantly trapped in loans. This increase is a very good starting point," she added.

According to Dr George William Semivule, a renowned educationist and retired secondary school headteacher, the decision will directly improve motivation, retention and the overall quality of education delivery in the country.

While he cautioned that sustained investment is required to bridge the remaining gap between arts and science teachers, he praised the psychological impact of the move.

"The very fact that the Government has made this move brings hope. Motivation is

not only about percentages, it is about recognition and stability in the system," Semivule said, drawing comparisons to developed nations.

"Look at countries like Germany. Teachers there are well paid and respected. You cannot find a teacher driving an Uber there because they are properly prioritised," he added.

David Wangusi, an arts deputy headteacher who retired in 2024, welcomed government's salary enhancement for arts teachers, describing it as a long-overdue intervention that would ease financial pressures, although he said it still falls short of meeting teachers' needs.

"The increment is appreciated and it is long overdue. It will help teachers somehow survive because we have always been talking about a living wage," Wangusi said.

He noted that many teachers have long lived "from hand to mouth", leaving little room for savings or investment, while the high cost of educating their own children remains a major burden.

"It came too late for me because I retired in 2024, but for those still in service, it can help them pay school fees. Even then, it is not enough," Wangusi said.

Drawing from his own

experience, he said teachers often struggle to afford quality education for their children despite helping other people's children to excel.

"You attend to other people's children and they are excelling, yet your own child may be studying in a lower-grade school because you cannot afford the fees," he said.

He argued that government should consider additional support for teachers, including mechanisms to reduce the cost of educating their children.

"If they are to make teachers stable in schools, they should look at a reasonable amount of pay and consider ways of easing the education burden on their families," Wangusi said.

Efforts to reach Uganda National Teachers Union (UNATU) about the development were still futile by press time. However, the union's former general secretary, James Tweheyo, noted that the gesture proves that patience and constructive engagement with government pay off.

The latest pay rise will not be extended to science teachers, who received a significant salary increase in the 2022/2023 financial year. That adjustment followed years of deliberate government policy shifts prioritising science education and technology as key drivers of national industrialisation.

Following a presidential directive to prioritise scientists across the civil service, the Ministry of Public Service implemented a 300% salary increase for science-related cadres. This means that compared with arts teachers, who have now received an estimated 25% increase, science teachers continue to earn significantly higher salaries.

A science headteacher in a secondary school and a science principal in a certificate-awarding technical institute earn about sh6.5m, up from sh2.3m and sh2.8m respectively.

In addition, a deputy headteacher (science) and a deputy principal (science) earn about sh4.5 million per month, up from approximately sh1.7m.