THE STRUGGLE FOR BETTER TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE FOR PUBLIC UNIVERSITY LECTURERS IN KENYA, 2013-2014.
Prof John H. Nderitu
University of Nairobi
Trouble at varsities ahead of staff strike
Tension has gripped public universities ahead of the lecturers a strike slated for November 10. The UASU has called the strike to force the government to give them a salary increase. The non-academic staff, under the Kenya union of domestic Hotels, Education institutions, Hospitals and allied workers (Kudheiha), has also issued a strike notice over the salary issue. Theirs will commence on November 17, a week after the Uasu one. The unions have written to the Education and Labour ministries, and public universities over the planned strikes. Uasu officials in each university have been holding meetings with their members as they prepare what analysts call a litmus-test for the 10 month old Narc Government which, upon assuming office, promised to improve lecturers’ salaries.

Endorsement
The union’s National Delegates Conference meeting at the university of Nairobi is expected to endorse the strike notice issued by the officials. The last time the union called a strike was in 1994. Though it did not achieve the intended goals, learning was paralysed for over six months. A number of lecturers were arrested, some sacked, while others quit their jobs to seek greener pastures in southern Africa, the United States, Australia and Europe. The universities lost valuable time and their academic calendars are yet to recover, lagging behind by close to two years in some Universities. This explains why successful KCSE candidates stay out for almost two years before joining public universities. Unless something happens between now and next week, the strike will definitely take place, with devastating effects.

Education Minister, George Saitoti set up a task force to study and make recommendations on the salaries. But it has been rejected by Uasu. The union officials led by the secretary-general, Charles Namachanja and Chairman John Nderitu, argued that labour laws have no provision for a registered union to sit in a task force to review salaries.

They said they could only accept a permanent remuneration committee with clear terms of reference whose recommendations would be legally binding. Uasu also said: “It is yet another gimmick by the government to be seen to be doing something yet it has no immediate plan to review the salaries of the lecturers.”

University of Nairobi Uasu chapter chairman, Dr Samuel Nyandemo regrets that since the union made its proposals in March, no official response has been given. In July, officials met Saitoti but he told them to negotiate with individual university councils. The strike will deal a serious blow on the planned student exchange programme between East African Universities. The Inter-University Council of East Africa is planning the programme for at least 40 students among public universities beginning 2004/2005 academic year. The presence of the now popular Module II programs at public universities will complicate matters further. Students in these programmes pay the
market value of the courses unlike their government-sponsored counterparts. The monies collected have enabled the universities to complete stalled projects, stock their libraries, purchase computers and other critical learning materials and facilities. Uasus has said its members will not teach the Module II programmes during the strike and the students could sue the institution for breach of contract if learning doesn’t take place.

The strike could act as a double edged sword. Private universities are bracing for a possible brain drain to public institutions, should the government meet Uasus’s salary demands.

The union is critical of what it calls “offending disparities within and between grades, in total disregard of academic and professional qualifications. With a mean salary of Sh 20,392 for a lecturer with a PhD, and Sh 35,415 for a full professor, the remuneration of academic and professional staff, when compared to other public officers in Kenya, leaves a lot to be desired. For instance in 1980, the University of Nairobi vice chancellor was place in the same job group as the chief Justice and the head of the Civil Service, while lecturers’ salaries were slightly higher than in civil service.

In taking into consideration inflation, economists argue that currently a professor’s salary is less than what a lecturer earned in 1976. To make ends meet, lecturers are compelled to supplement their meager salaries by engaging in non-academic activities at the expense of scholarly pursuits. Uasu national deputy treasurer, Mr. Josiah Aduda argues that human resource practices demand that qualifications be the first criteria in job evaluation or pricing for public employees. “This will ensure that employees with similar qualifications and job responsibilities will be equitably remunerated. Adjustments to this should be based on factors as performance, demand for specific expertise, risks associated with work environment and the workload,” says Aduda.

Namachanja argues that in recognizing qualifications and the spirit of fair competition, inter-grade income gaps should be wide enough to uphold equity. He says the governor of central bank, vice-chancellors of public universities, the head of the civil service, the chief of general staff, and the chief justice among other senior government positions should be remunerated equitably.

The people
NEWS
November 2, 2003

The stage is now set for a major shutdown between the government and lecturers at public universities after they resolved to down their tools staring Monday, November 10. The varsity’s dons’ unions the UASU, said yesterday the intended strike will take off unless the government reconsiders its stand on the contentious salary hike.

“We have reached a point of no return since we have been pushed to the wall and come the day, we shall paralyze all academic programmes in public universities,” the union’s secretary-general Charles Namachanja vowed. The industrial action will adversely affect operations at Kenyatta National Hospital as 80 percent of university lecturers offering clinical services are to join the strike in their capacity as lecturers.

The decision was reached at during a special delegates conference held at UON Taifa hall yesterday. It was attended by all of the union’s chapters and representatives form two private universities. At the same time, the lecturers accused vice-chancellors of
public universities of indifference to their impending strike and called for their immediate resignation.

“Those people are not serious and are working behind our backs, they should resign immediately. “Br Kitile Naitole of Egerton University said. Namachanja particularly took issue with Egerton University’s Prof. Ezra Maritim and his Moi University counterpart Prof David Some for failing to reinstate some lecturers who were wrongly dismissed during the disgraced Kanu regime.

UASU tore into the recent formation of a task force by the government to look into the terms and conditions of service, terming it as a gimmick aimed at derailing their quest for better remunerations. We are not for this task force and we are not represented in it. Many commissions have been formed on the same and their findings have not been released,” said UASU chairman Dr. John Nderitu. They also denied knowledge of dialogue between the lecturers and the government on the terms and conditions of services. On Friday, assistant minister for education Dr. Kilemi Mwiria said the ministry was negotiating with UASU with a view to having their terms and conditions reviewed.

The university academic staff are demanding for a 500 percent salary increase in addition to improvement of other terms and conditions of service. Currently a tutorial fellow earns Sh. 14,00 a month, a lecturer Shs 17,000 and an associate professor Shs 25,000. A full professor gets Shs 31,000.

In their proposal to the ministry of education, the dons say a tutorial fellow should earn Shs 159,000, Shs 230,000 for a lecturer and Shs 330,000 for an associate lecturer. A full professor, in the proposal should carry home between Shs 550,000 and 985,000.

University lecturers staged their first strike ever in 1994 pressing for the registration of UASU. The strike led to paralyzing of learning in public universities for six months and saw the sacking of a number of lecturers as the others fled for refuge in Southern Africa, United States of America, among other countries.

Nation
OPINION
November 2, 2003

Once again, the stage appears set for another potentially ugly confrontation between the lecturers at the public universities, on one hand, and the institutions and the government, on the other. This is the most logical interference from the lecturers’ announcement that they will go on strike on November 10 to press for an increment of their salaries and allowances.

For a strike to be called, it means that attempts at dialogue between the two parties have failed. In other words, the lecturers, under the aegis of the UASU, are resorting to strong-arm tactics to get the universities to increase their remuneration.

It is obvious that if the lecturers make good their threat to stay out of the lecture halls, serious consequences will follow. The students, on realizing that no teaching is going on, will most definitely join in the fray. And this, as has happened in past, could lead to an outbreak of violence and the closure of the institutions. This is hardly the kind of situation we would like to see at our universities. It is for this reason that we are calling for common sense to prevail and for the lecturers and the university administrators to engage in reasonable consultations. Many will recall that an attempt the lecturers to register their trade unions under the Kanu regime failed miserably. Not even a
long-running strike at the public universities then could persuade the intransigent rulers of the time to budge. The consequences of the fallout are still being felt today. It was, needless to say, disastrous for the lecturers, some of whom were sacked, and academic programmes severely disrupted.

The registration of Uasu early in the Narc administration was no doubt intended to end to the lecturers a message of good will from the new leaders. The government was acknowledging the lecturers’ right of association and the right to organize their labout and campaign for better terms.

Intransigent rulers

There is, indeed a case for a review of the lecturers’ emoluments to bring them in line with what their counterparts elsewhere in the world earn. After all, our lecturers have proved that they are in the same league with some of the best in the world. Some are spending their sabbatical teaching at some of the best universities, while others have left the country and ended up in top-notch institutions.

However, even a casual glimpse at the figures the lecturers’ union is proposing, reveals that they are not being entirely forthright and fair to themselves and to the institutions for which they work. The union is demanding Sh 159,000 a month for an assistant lecturer, and Sh 600,000 for a professor. Currently, an assistant lecturer earns Sh 14,000 and a professor Sh 31,000, they claim.

Of course, the lecturers have a point. The salaries they earn are far below what they deserve. After all, one of the very first things the Narc Government did was to astronomically raise MPs’ pay. And the justification was that with better pay, the leader would be less tempted to engage in corrupt deals. Whether or not we agree with this stand is neither here nor there. What is important is the message that the government values hard work and rewards it. And no sector of our society should be left out.

Therefore, the lecturers, who do a good job in moulding the characters of young people and training the quality manpower this country needs, deserves to be heard on their pay demand. However, the manner in which they have chosen to go about it is wrong. They have given too short a notice to the universities to come up with money—they obviously do not have-in order to pay higher salaries.

The trouble with threats and strikes is that they inflame passions and make it impossible for sober negotiations to be carried out. Since the government has shown a willingness to negotiate with the lecturers, the strike must be averted.

Nation
NEWS
November 2, 2003
Varsity dons plan strike over salaries

Lecturers at public universities plan to go on strike on November 10 to press for an increase in salaries and allowances. The lecturers were speaking at the UASU special Delagates Conference at the UON yesterday.

The lecturers demand Sh 159,000 for an assistant lecturer and Sh 600,000 for a professor. Currently and assistant lecturer earns Sh14,000 and a professor Sh 31,000. The lecturers said this was the pay for a domestic worker of a judge.
The Union’s secretary, Dr Charles Namachanja, said the strike would go on until the government addressed their grievances. Other grievances include failure by some universities to reinstate lecturers sacked for political reasons and poor working conditions. The lecturers accuse the government of failing to take disciplinary action against the Maseno University vice-chancellor, Prof Frederick Onyango, over alleged mismanagement. Dr Namachanja said the union issued notice of strike on October 1.

In a letter by Education permanent secretary Prof. Karega Mutahi dated October 31, the government asks for time to look into the issues. Prof. Mutahi says the government had formed a task force to look into the matter.

“The government is also establishing a Board of Inspections of Public Universities to assess the current situation and make recommendations on the way forward,” says the PS. The lecturers rejected the task force saying there had been several others whose recommendations were yet to be implemented giving examples of the Omolo Okero Commission, The Mwakio commission and the Kipkulei report.

Dr Namachanja said the government should implement proposals the union submitted to the ministry in March.

An assistant Minister for Education, Dr. Kilemi Mwiria, wrote to the union on October 28, inviting Uasu members for a meeting either on October 29 or 30. The meeting did not take place.

Dr Mwiria, a former lecturer, has twice told the parliament that negotiations were going on to avert the strike. Dr Namachanja said the union’s efforts to meet Education Minister Prof. George Saitoti had failed since March. “The minister is too busy and he has no time for us. We resolve that we go on strike until we are given the money.”

Uasu Chairman John Nderitu said lecturers were the least paid professionals in the country.
Even as the minister insisted that the government was committed to continuing with dialogue on the matter, UASU officials were asking why he never involved the informal negotiations. The minister noted that poor remuneration had caused heavy brain drain and expressed hopes that reviewing their terms and condition of service would help reverse the situation. “The government accepts that there is justification to review the terms and conditions of service of the universities staff. It is for that reason that the government decided to appoint a task force,” the minister said.

He, however, could not disclose the names of task force members nor its terms of reference. The minister said the government had also allowed public universities representation in the recently created permanent remuneration review board.

Saitoti said the government use the findings of the task force as a yard stick to review the terms and conditions of service of academic staff in the country’s public universities. The Uasu chairman, Dr. John Nderitu, regretted that Saitoti had not been able to formally invite UASU for negotiations since it made its proposals in March.

East African Standard
NEWS
November 9, 2003
Lecturers strike is illegal, says Govt.

Students were deserting their halls of residence at the six public universities yesterday as the government declared tomorrow’s strike by the lecturers illegal. The Minister for Labour advised the lecturers to follow the legal machinery to make their demands for higher pay.

At the same time education minister Prof. George Saitoti pleaded with lecturers to give the government more time to meet their demands. Meanwhile, a research firm commissioned to study how the salaries of Kenya’s public university lecturers compare to those in other countries has submitted its proposals. The KIPPPRA, which was commissioned by the government, has recommended a package aimed at persuading the Universities Academic Staff Union to call off tomorrow’s strike.

According to Kippra, the highest paid professor should draw a monthly salary of Sh 400,000, associate professors Sh300,000, senior lecturers Sh240,000, lecturers Sh160,000 and assistant lecturers Sh80,000.

Sources said following release of the report, a high-level crisis meeting was held in which included ministers David Mwiraria, Kiraitu Murungi, Chris Murungaru and George Saitoti.

Also at the meeting were permanent secretaries Dave Mwangi (DPM), Head of Civil Service Francis Muthaura and University of Nairobi Vice-Chancellor Prof. Crispus Kiamiab.

Saitoti yesterday admitted the high-level meeting took place but did not give details. Uasu officials spent most of Friday evening at the University of Nairobi’s Senior Common Room expecting a call from state House to meet President Kibaki. They had been asked to keep their mobile phones on since they could be called at any time to meet the Head of state, who is said to be concerned about the effects of the strike.

It is however understood that the senior government officials failed to agree on the figures and implementation dates, and the meeting between union officials and the president was put off. Mwiraria is said to have insisted that Treasury could not afford the
new package at the moment.

Another meeting of top government officials is planned for tomorrow starting 9 am at Harambee House. If the proposals are adopted by the government, education Minister George Saitoti is expected to announce the new figures tomorrow afternoon.

The Nation
NEWS
November 10, 2003
D-day as varsities face salary strike

Lecturers dismiss minister’s pledge on February

A flurry of last minute talk was under way yesterday to prevent a strike by lecturers in six state owned universities scheduled to start today. The senate of Nairobi, Maseno, Moi, Jomo Kenyatta, Egerton and Kenyatta universities met at the weekend to draw up a strategy against the work stoppage as warnings went out to lecturers that they risked losing their promised pay increase if they downed their tools.

Fears of violence and destruction of property on campuses was met with a firm pledge by police that they would protect the public and lecturers opposed to the strike. Education assistant minister Beth Mugo repeated a promise of salary increase in February but warned the plan would be shelved if today’s disruption of campus teaching goes ahead.

“If they go on strike, the negotiations will collapse because the way we deal with them will have changed. It will be a different ball game,” Mrs Mugo told reporters in Nairobi. She said any discussions held after the strike begins would be different because the lecturers would then be involved in industrial action.

Mrs. Mugo who was accompanied by permanent secretary Karega Mutahi, asked the lecturers to call off the strike as the government was committed to introducing a new salary structure in February. A lecturer earns Sh 23,640 a month, while a full professors salary in Sh 39,920. UASU has proposed that the lowest paid lecturer – a tutorial fellow – should earn Sh 266,438 in salaries and allowances and a full professor Sh 987,020.

Prof. Mutahi had reportedly written to the leaders of UASI asking them to cancel the boycott so that teaching continues this morning in all universities. Mrs. Mugo said: “Between November 3 and November 7, we have held two consultative meetings with UASU leadership and reiterated the government’s commitment to the salary review process.”

The strike would “have very negative impact on the issues under discussion and the economy as a whole,” she added. But UASU leaders maintained the strike would start this morning as planned. Chairman John Nderitu said the government had made no firm offer to pre-empt the strike “which will last as long as there are no salary figures cited.”

Speaking at Nairobi University, Mr. Nderitu said the government had lied that it had set up a task force to review lecturers’ salaries while it had only assigned a think-tank, KIPPRA and excluded lecturers. Education minister George Saitoti – who is out of the country – has setup a KIPPRA task force to work out new salary figures for lecturers based on wages in universities in Uganda and Tanzania.
The nation learnt that the senates of most of the State universities met yesterday to discuss the strike. If the strike takes place in the campuses of all six institutions as in 1993, then the universities will have no option but to close. The action has already been declared illegal by Labour minister Chirau Mwakwere on grounds that it is contrary to the Trade Disputes Act. He claimed the lecturers had not exhausted arbitration channels or given the required seven-day notice to the government “as per all cases of essential services sectors, like teaching.”

UASU wants the government to state the proposed new salaries figures if it is to avert the crisis. Six Kanu and one Narc MP yesterday expressed support for the strike. They were Kanu’s Mutula Kilonzo (nominated), Nick Salat (Bomet), Guracha Galgalo (Moyale North), Moses Cheboi (Kuresoi), David Koros (Eldoret South), Joseph Nkaiserry (Kajiado Central) and Narc’s Peter Owidi (Kaisipul Kabondo).

Some of them accused the government of being biased, insensitive and selective in what it paid its workers. Speaking at Maset secondary school in Bomet District, Kanu leaders asked how Kenyans could participate fully in the country’s economic recovery if the government impoverished some of its people. They said it was illogical for the government to claim it had no money to pay state workers yet it planned to build a Sh 3 Billion party headquarters in Nairobi.

He was referring to Narc’s plan to build a twin tower party office block with financial assistance from the Chinese Communist Party – an arrangement made by the party and not the government. Elsewhere, Trade and Industry minister Mukhisa Kituyi appealed to the lecturers to call off the strike and continue with negotiations.

“Substance could be added to dialogue and not through a strike,” he said at a home-coming party for Dr. Bonny Khalwale held at Malinya primary schools in Ikolomani division, Kakamega district. Nominated MP Julia Okiambo told lecturers said the strike would disrupt hospitals and universities.

A former lecturer at the university of Nairobi, Br. Ojiambo said she would try to bring together former lecturers who are now MPs to help negotiate an end to the strike. Police last night appealed to lecturers to continue with negotiations and not down their tools. Spokesmen Kingori Mwani said police were prepared to protect life and property during the strike.

“Those lecturers who may not wish to participate in the strike should not feel intimidated,” he said in a statement.

The People
NEWS
November 10, 2003
Crisis as 3,200 lecturers strike from today.

A deep crisis stalks the country’s universities as more that 3,000 lecturers from the country’s six public universities go on strike from today to press for better pay. Yesterday, UASU secretary-general Charles Namachanja maintained that nothing would stop lecturers form striking as the government announced that the planned strike is illegal. Namachanja, who spoke to The people Daily on telephone maintained that the lecturers were determined to go ahead with the strike despite pleas from the government that they call it off.
About 3,200 lecturers from the country’s six public universities – Nairobi, Kenyatta, Moi, Egerton, Jomo Kenyatta and Maseno – will be affected. Currently, a lecturer earns Shs 23,640 a month, while a full professor’s salary is Shs 39,920. UASU has proposed that the lowest paid lecturer – a tutorial fellow – earn Shs 266,438 in salaries and allowances. It also proposes that a full professor take home Shs 987,020 per month.

On Saturday, labour minister Chirau Ali Mwakwere warned the lecturers against proceeding with the strike, and instead advised that the concerned parties exhaust the arbitration channels. Mwakwere maintained that the lecturers had not given the requisite one-week notice to the government as par “all cases of essential services sector, like teaching”. In a statement, Mwakwere asked the lecturers, who have already given a 21 day notice for the strike, to formally present a trade dispute to his office.

“To date, the report has not been made as stipulated, hence implying that the dispute settlement machinery provided for in law has not been adhered to,” he warned. Earlier, education minister Prof. George Saitoti called on the lecturers to exercise patience and give the government until next February when it plans to effect their salary hikes. Prof. George Saitoti told a press conference the government was committed to improving the remuneration of the lecturers by next February.

He said the government needed time to study the findings of a task force, comprising researchers from KIPPRA before announcing the new figures. Saitoti warned that the ultimate figures would tally with salaries paid to lecturers in Eastern and Southern African countries to curb brain drain. And yesterday, the government warned that should the lecturers proceed with the strike, the government would not fulfill its commitment. At the same time, education assistant Minister Beth Mugo appealed to lecturers to exercise patience and give the government time to work out a schedule of bettering their pay.

She called for dialogue between UASU and the government, saying the latter would not be intimidated by threats from the lecturers. But a defiant Namachanja warned that nothing would stop the lecturers from pressing for the rights. The UASU secretary general warned that the lecturer’s strike would also affect institutions such as Kenyatta National Hospital, the country’s largest referral hospital, and Chiromo mortuary would be adversely affected by the strike.

Last night, the lecturers were locked in a closed door meeting to work out the modalities of the strike. We could not establish the deliberations of the meeting but sources revealed that the lecturers were finalizing the modalities of the strike. By the time of going to press, the closed door meeting was still in progress.

Namachanja warned that the lecturers were determined to ensure that the government yields to their demands, and warned that no amount of intimidation will cow them. He maintained that the lecturers will only call off the strike if the government implements their demands.

The Nation
NEWS
November 11, 2003
State Varsities Shut – Lecturers strike over pay – vow to stay out until February when salary increases.
All six state universities were closed yesterday as lecturers went on strike for higher salaries. Their union officials immediately condemned the closures as illegal and said they showed the government was panicking. They threatened to go to court to challenge the shutdown, saying it did not follow the normal procedures and was in bad faith.

But the government later threw its weight behind the closures saying it was not tenable to keep the universities open without teaching staff present. University senates – the decision making bodies – were hurriedly convened to endorse what the Nation learnt was a government decision to close the campuses.

This appeared to be confirmed in a government statement by assistant minister Kilemi Mwiria: “The government has no option but to support the management of the universities, which have resolved that without normal teaching, it is not possible to keep students on campuses.”

Dr. Kilemi, who is in charge of higher education, however urged officials of the UASU to open channels for talks to resolve the impasse and ensure universities reopened immediately. The minister, Prof. George Saitoti is in New Delhi, India for a Unesco meeting at which he was scheduled to give a five-minute talk on planning and reforms on basic education.

The lecturers are asking for increases ranging from Sh 159,00 a month for the lowest paid to Sh 895,000 for professors.
Currently, a tutorial fellow earns Sh 15,000, a lecturer Sh 17,000 while a full professor gets Sh 31,000. On top of this they receive housing allowances that range from Sh 15,000 to Sh 40,000. The first university to close yesterday was University of Nairobi. It announced its shutdown at 1 pm and required students to leave the campuses by 4 pm.

Egerton, Maseno, Kenyatta and Moi – whose main campus was closed recently – followed suit moments later. Also closed was the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology at Juja, Nairobi.

The closure came just hours after the universities’ staff union, UASU, began a nationwide strike aimed at forcing the government to increase the salaries of 3,000 plus lecturers. The union said the strike would continue until February when the government had promised to give them a pay rise.

University of Nairobi Vice Chancellor Crispus Kiamba, announcing the closure, said: “This has happened despite the firm promise by the government to announce new terms of service by February 2004.”

There, lecturers who are doctors at Kenyatta National Hospital and Chiromo mortuary, also withdrew their services, affecting lectures, but not the mortuary services as mourners collected the bodies of relatives and friends that had been prepared by mortuary workers. At Kenyatta Hospital, some post-graduate students left work to join the strike, although services in most departments were not disrupted. About 150 post-graduate students work in casualty, dental and orthopaedic surgery, radiology, pharmacy, pathology and gynaecology. Lecturers refused to supervise supplementary examinations that started yesterday.

On the main campus, Uasu chairman Samuel Nyandemo took issue with assistant minister Beth Mugo’s weekend comments that the government would not shelve the planned pay rise next February if they did not withdraw the strike. “If she thinks she will change the game, she had better know that lecturers can play in every game and in any number,” he said. Nairobi provincial police chief Jonathan Koskei said they had beefed up security around Nairobi and Kenyatta universities to counter any violence. “We will not allow any demonstration on the streets because the government has declared the strike is illegal,” he said.

At Kenyatta University, the closure came after a day of protests, during which lecturers boycotted teaching and gathered at the graduation square. Students supported them saying poor pay had been the cause of low morale among academic staff. The union’s chairman, Dr. Jackton Ogeno, accused Education minister George Saitoti of engaging in “noisy algebraic expressions” instead of explaining ways in which pay rises could be implemented.

More than 220 lecturers at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) took part in the strike, gathering outside the administration block where union officials led by secretary general Charles Namachanja addressed them. Mr. Namachanja accused the government of down-playing the salary dispute, which he termed as a national crisis.

The university senate was in the meantime holding an urgent meeting under the chairmanship of vice chancellor, Prof. Nick Wanjohi, who urged continuing dialogue. Police monitored both universities from a helicopter. However there was no violence.

Lecturers at Moi University met at main campus, 36 kilometers from Eldoret town, which was closed for about two weeks ago following students unrest. They held
talks for about three hours before marching to the administration block and announced
they had joined the strike.

The lecturers also launched their strike at the two other campuses – Chepkolel and
KPA and at the Faculty of Health Sciences at Moi Teaching and Referral hospital.
Operations at the hospital were not affected because students work there only under
doctor’s directions.

Learning at Egerton University stopped as about 400 lecturers began their strike.
The university has 550 lecturers in the Njoro, Laikipia and Kisii campus. The 4,000
students at Njoro main campus said they supported the lecturers and warned the
administration against closing the place. The lecturers said it was wrong for the
government to continue paying them low salaries while it awarded hefty salaries to
“illiterate councilors and members of parliament.”

Student Alfred Boro, who is enrolled in the business management degree course,
said lecturers should be well paid, adding: “I am expressing solidarity with the lecturers. I
condemn strongly the utterances made by assistant minister Beth Mugo against the
Lecturers.”

At Maseno, students received news of closure with dismay, saying they were not
party to the strike and urged the government to resolve the dispute, adding that it put their
courses into disarray. Some of the 2500 students also complained that the notices to quit
campus were posted at 2.45 pm ordering them to leave at 3 pm. “Anxiety was in the air,
and we didn’t want to take chances,” said the deputy vice chancellor in charge of
academic affairs, Prof. John Odwar Agak.

Only last week the university paid its lecturers a bonus amounting to half their
salary for three months. The lecturers said they had joined in the strike as a show of
solidarity with their colleagues in other public universities.

Public transport operators on the Busia-Kisumu Highway cashed in on the crisis
by doubling fares to Kisumu from Sh 50.

The Nation
OPINION
November 11, 2003

Dons deserve much better

When a system remunerates doctors, architects, engineers and other top civil
servants at a certain level but pays those who produce these cadres at precipitately low
levels, something is seriously the matter. It is extremely scandalous that MPs – who
should be the first to see the need to rationalize things – take home Sh 500,000 a month
whereas university professors of long standing have to make do with an average of Sh
30,000 a month.

While the legislators bad fat perks, many of those who have to burn the midnight
oil in order to enlighten this country earn less than the chauffeurs of or mere councilors,
people often illiterate and unaware of their real work. The government has always treated
the teaching profession – from primary to the tertiary – with disrespect and dishonesty.
True, much of that is to be blamed on the Kanu regime.
But the truce between the new government and the KNUT remains tenuous. Similar promises were what the government made last week to the UASU when the members threatened to strike, and which they have since effected leading to closure of all public universities. It is good that it appointed a task force to give proposals on the lecturers’ pay. But the question remains. Uasu presented its demands to the Ministry of Education in March? Why did the government wait for a crisis to react on it?

If it recognizes that dialogue is essential to it, why is the committee so one-sided? Without Uasu’s representation, won’t its findings and recommendations be open to all sorts of misunderstanding? And where is the minister? Before he left for an international conference, Prof. Saitoti knew very well that a crisis of national proportions was brewing. The conference could be more pressing. It fortifies Uasu’s charge that the government does not think its demands are a priority problem. Yet let us hope that something will come out of the government’s response. Our academic staff have borne this brunt for a long time. For the sake of our children in their care, we should give dialogue a chance, but for sure, our academics cannot be taken for a ride for much longer.

The Nation,
Letter to the Editor,
November 11, 2003

Govt. must avert lecturers’ strike
The time has come for the government to recognize and reward the nation’s best brains. It should take measures to curb the lecturers’ strike. In most cases, when two bulls fight, it is the grass that suffers. We, as innocent students, will not condone any government decision if it jeopardizes our academic programme.

Recently a minister announced salary increases for councilors, but the move backfired when it was realized that these people do very little work. This money should be given to lecturers.
The Nation
National News – Varsity Strike
November 11, 2003
Students sent home as strike starts
The government yesterday moved to arrest the university strike – by appointing a reconciliation committee to workout a return-to-work formula for the striking lecturers. And it appealed to the lecturers’ union officials to call off the strike and let their members resume duty “for the good of the country”.

The committee, appointed by Labour minister Ali Mwakwere, comprises representatives of the Kenya Federation of Employers, Central Organisation of Trade Unions, the lecturers’ union and the labour ministry. It will be chaired by Nairobi Lawyer Geoffrey Orao Obura. The team has been asked to immediately start looking exhaustively into the terms and conditions of service of lecturers in the public universities.

All six public universities were closed on Monday indefinitely after lecturers made good their threat to go on strike to demand a pay increase. They want the government to pay them up to 2,800 per cent more.

Yesterday, the minister said the government was aware of the lecturers’ plight, but blamed the crisis on the Kanu regime. “When NARC took over the government, the economy had collapsed…the government was bankrupt. But we are working on the lecturers’ salaries,” he said.

He spoke as the UASU blamed the minister of Education for the crisis, saying he had failed to act on the pleas for a salary increase. Secretary-general Charles Namachanja and chairman John Nderitu also maintained that the strike was not politically motivated but was an economic one.

At a press conference yesterday, the lecturers said they were convinced the government had the political will to improve their lot but accused Education minister George Saitoti of sabotaging its efforts. Prof Olewe Nyunya of the university of Nairobi said Saitoti had not cared to act on the demands issued by Uasu in March.
“Why did he wait until the last week of a 21 day strike notice issued by Uasu? If he planned to form a task force to review the salaries, why didn’t he do it on time?” posed Nyunya. Yesterday admitting that lecturers’ salaries were “extremely low”, the minister said the government was working on better remuneration, even before the lecturers started agitating for improved terms.

But he said the government did not have money to immediately pay the lecturers. If it did so, the effects would be devastating, he said. “I appeal to the lecturers to give us time…this cannot be achieved just overnight but we should work out a scheme that is commensurate of work,” Mwakwere said.

Other members of the committee are Mr. Jason Namsake, who will represent the Kenya Federation of Employers, Mr. Isaya Kubai for Cotu, two joint secretaries from the Ministry of Labour, P.M. Wamoto and P.N. Macharia, and UASU.

Mwakwere said he had not given the committee a deadline to hand in recommendations because the lecturers were already on strike. He also pointed out that the lecturers went on strike without exhausting all the laid down rules, adding that this was why he had declared the strike illegal. “They gave the ministry a 21 day notice to go on strike but they failed to give a further seven-day notice. If they did give me the seven days, the situation might have been different. The government might have found a solution and universities would not have closed down,” he said.

The minister was speaking after holding discussions with a European union delegation in his office in Nairobi.
Striking university lecturers want the government to state how much it is ready to offer them. The UASU made the demand at the first meeting with a reconciliatory committee appointed on Tuesday to broker a return-to-work deal.

About 20 Uasu officials, led by secretary-general Charles Namachanja and chairman John Nderitu, attended the meeting at the labour ministry offices “as long as the figures are the main subject”.

“We want to engage in serious dialogue. We are tired of empty rhetoric. We want to negotiate with figures on the table – not words,” said Namachanja. Negotiations are expected today in Labour assistant minister Peter Odoyo’s office. The team, chaired by Mr. Geoffrey Orao Obura, was appointed by Labour Minnister Ali Mwakwere a day after the lecturers began their strike on Monday. All six public universities have been closed, throwing into disarray examination and graduation plans.

Yesterday, vice chancellors of the six universities – Prof. Everret Standa (KU), Prof. Crsipus Kiamba(Nairobi), Prof. Nick Wanjohi(JKUAT), Prof. Ezra Maritim(Egerton), Prof. David Some(Moi) and Prof. Frederick Onyango(Maseno) – turned up after the Uasu group had already left.

Briefing journalists before meeting Uasu officials, Obura expressed hope that reason would prevail and a solution would be found to the crisis soon. He said yesterday’s meetings with the VCs and Uasu representatives were meant to give his team details of the dispute.

The Uasu lawyer, Dr. Ben Sihanya, said the strike was legal as lecturers had
observed all rules of labour disputes. Odoyo said Obura had experience in labour disputes and advised the parties to trust one another during the negotiations.

The lecturers are demanding up to 2000 per cent salary increase.

The union gave its recommendations in March but the Ministry of Education did not heed its plea to organize discussions.

Salaries

The union gave a strike notice on October 17, immediately after Education Minister George Saitoti announced the formation of a task force to review university staff salaries. Saitoti later said the KIPPPRA had been commissioned to carry out a comparative study of salaries paid to lecturers in other countries.

The minister maintained that the findings of the study would form the basis for negotiations with Uasu before the government could announce a new package in February. The secretary-general, University of Nairobi Chapter, Mr. George Omondi, said the appointment of a reconciliatory ream by the Labour ministry contradicted what the Ministry of Education was doing.

He said the government should explain what it intended to do with the Kippgra Study. Dr. Peter Githira, the chairman of JKUAT Usau Chapter, expressed dismay that vice-chancellors were being involved in the talks, yet they were themselves interested parties.

Uasu is demanding the the lowest paid academic be paid Sh. 160,000, up from the current Sh. 14,000 and the highest(professors) earns Sh. 900,000 per month, up fromSh. 32,000.

By Ken Ramani

The Nation

LETTER TO THE EDITOR
November 13, 2003

Maybe lecturers should give the govt. time to seek funds

We all agree that university lecturers have for a long time been neglected by the previous governments. This has adversely affected the quality of academic output and led to mass exodus of our sharpest brains.

However, it is not only academics who have borne the brunt of the previous regime’s ineptitude. Almost all sectors of society – for example, farmers, nurses and civil servants – have suffered. The current economic survey shows that 60 per cent of Kenyans are living on less than a dollar a day and thousands of educated young Kenyans who are willing to work are unemployed. Life has been hard and tough for almost all of us, apart from the few who corruptly amassed wealth in the past.

Though Narc came to power on a platform of socio-economic and political change, we should all understand that it inherited an economy under receivership. For instance, out of this years Sh. 400 billion budget, a colossal Sh. 330 Billion is going to servicing external debt. Can the remaining Sh. 70 billion meet the nation’s recurrent expenditure?

The budget is obviously in deficit. Is it from this Sh 70 billion that we are to get Sh 13 billion to pay lecturers? This is 19 per cent of the funds in the Treasury for running
all the sectors for one year. If the lecturers’ demands are granted, it will mean all the other sectors will have to close down. This is completely unrealistic.

As much as I sympathise with our lecturers, my considered perception is that this is not the most economically hard-hit lot. If the government is to be fair and give priority to the pressing national issues, raising lecturers’ salaries would be miles away.

What about managing the cherished free primary education? Over 2000 primary school teachers must be employed urgently to cope with the large number of children who would have otherwise been denied basic education.

My question to the government is this: Will you focus on a poor child who desperately requires basic primary education or on a lecturer who want to drive a limousine like his counterpart in a Western country? Of course, the lecturers need a competitive package. But all other Kenyans in various public sectors require the same. What we all need to understand is that the new government is trying to resuscitate an almost moribund economy. We hope that, as the economy improves, the government will address all our problems as a matter of priority.

The worst mistake the government can make is to succumb to threats. If it does so, this unorthodox survival tactic will definitely spill over to all other public sectors. What, therefore, is the way forward? The government should not let our universities be paralysed by some lecturers who do not appreciate the current economic reality. The salaries they are demanding are what their colleagues earn in developed countries.

We have enough educated persons with masters degrees and PhDs who are jobless and willing to take what our lecturers are calling peanuts. In fact, if the striking remain adamant, they can all be replaced with a lot of ease by equally qualified and competent Kenyans in a matter of hours.

But that would be too drastic. What about the lecturers allowing the government time to seek the money to pay them a reasonable increment?

Peter M Mwangi

Nation
November 13, 2003
NEWS

MPs in crisis debate over varsities strike.

They speak out as lecturers set terms for talks

Parliament last night held an emergency debate on the lecturers’ strike as the lecturers themselves demanded concrete proposals for pay increases as a condition for negotiations to end the dispute. So far the government has said it is willing to pay more in principle but has not given any details of its planned package.

The strike that has closed all six state universities entered its fourth day this morning with still no sign of a settlement. The arbitration panel that met twice yesterday was told it was meaningless to hold further talks today without the government’s firm proposals as a starting point.

The panel held two meetings – one with the lecturers’ representatives and the other with vice chancellors of the six universities. But union officials insisted: “We will
not start the negotiations until a counter proposals is produced by the State”.

Demanding that parliament should suspend normal business to debate the dispute, Kitutu CHache MP Jimmy Angwenyi accused the government of ignoring the cream of its academis. The Ford People MP, a lecturer for 16 years said it took a lot of time, perseverance and resources to produce a university don.

He suggested that parliament’s education committee be mandated to start negotiations with the lectures’ union to break the stalemate. For more than 20 years, the salaries of dons had stagnated while the pay of other public workers had risen with inflation. The salaries of MPs, judges, magistrates and permanent secretaries had been increased several times over, he said.

He demanded to know why permanent secretaries were earning more than Sh 400,000 a month, while lecturers “earned a dog’s salary.” The lecturers were asking for increases ranging from Sh 159,000 a month for the lowest paid to Sh 895,000 for professors. Currently a tutorial fellow earned Sh 15,000 a month, a lecturer Sh 17,000 and a full professor Sh 31,000. In addition they received housing allowances ranging from Sh 15,000 to Sh 40,000.

“Does this government value education?” Mr. Angwenyi asked.

He accused the government of dishonesty since it had failed to put a proposal on the table for the lecturers’ union to consider. Seconding the request for an emergency debate, Mbita MP Otieno Kajwang’ said Narc should be different from Kanu and should not be afraid to negotiate with the dons.

While agreeing that some of the lecturers’ demands were unrealistic, Mr. Kajwang’ said the government should have put what it could afford on the table instead of offering an increase next February. Chepalungu MP John Keoch(Kanu) said it was embarrassing for lecturers to ask for their former students for lifts because they could not afford cars for themselves, while Mr. Marsden Madoka(Mwatate, Kanu) accused the Education ministry of arrogance, accusing minister Beth Mugo of threatening the lecturers that the pay talks would be shelved if they went on strike.

Mr. Mwandawirom Mghanga(Wundanyi, Ford People) said lecturers would earn better salaries and lead better lives, and Mrs. Nyiva Mwendwa(Kitui West, Narc) said drivers in some companies were paid better than lecturers. “We study hard in schools in order to be paid well and lead a high standard of living and one cannot sacrifice this for loyalty or being told to be a good citizen,” she said. Dr. Bonaya Godana, a former law lecturer, now deputy leader of the opposition said lecturers had been ignores because they were modest and patient.

The North Horr Kanu MP asked the government to produce a coherent and unified system of rewarding public servants according to their education and experience. In reply, Labour minister Ali Mwakwere said the lecturers should appreciate that the government registered their union following frustrations by the previous regime. Mr. Mwakwere said he himself was sacked as a member of the University of Nairobi Council because he spoke up for the welfare of the dons.

The minister said before going on strike, the UASU gave the necessary 21 days’ notice but failed to give the additional 7 days’ notices as required by the Trade Disputes Act before downing their tools. The government appointed committee, he said, last evening held a crisis meeting with education PS Karega Muahi to work out a return to work formula.
Mr. Mwakwere asked the lecturers to appreciate that the government inherited empty coffers and should be given a chance to come up with a package that was implementable. The debate was watched by union officials including its secretary general Dr. Charles Namachanja.

Earlier, they had demanded tangible proposals on salary increases as a condition for negotiations. Before the arbitration meetings at the Labour ministry offices, Nairobi, the union officials were given about 30 minutes to adopt a common stand before they held what panel chairman Mr. Geoffrey Orao-Obura called an exploratory meeting.

The second meeting – that of VCs – was attended by vice chancellors Crispus Kiamba(Nairobi), Everret Standa(Kenyatta), David Some(Moi), Nick Wanjohi(Jomo Kenyatta), Fredrick Onyango(Maseno) and Ezra Maritim(Egerton)

After meeting the panel, the union’s secretary general Dr. Namachanja said: “It appears the government does not have any salary proposal. We believe the panel can solve the problems but only if a government proposal is tabled before the meetings.”

He spoke out as consultants KIPPRA, contracted by the government to study lecturers denied it had made any recommendations to the government on the salaries. In doing so they contradicted a claim by the Catholic bishops made on Tuesday that they had already proposed Sh 80,000 a month f or the lowest paid lecturer, a rise from the current Sh 15,000.

Kipra’s executive director Hezron Nyangito commented: “We started carrying out the assignment two weeks ago and we are not ready with any recommendation yet. Any impression that we have made suggestions on figures to be paid to lecturers is not true.

Compiled by David Aduda, Muriithi Muriuki, Julius Bosire and Samuel Sirungi

Nation
November 14, 2003
NEWS
Bid to end lecturers’ strike fails.
Dons reject terms of government’s proposed return-to-work formula

An attempt by the government to initiate a return-to-work formula for lecturers to pave way for the reopening of the six public universities failed yesterday. A meeting called by the government appointed arbitration panel was cut short after UASU officials walked out following “technical issues raised by the panel”.

The government argues that the negotiations for salaries cannot start as yet because only the University of Nairobi chapter had signed a recognition agreement with its employer. The panel also argued that Uasu officials never gave the government an additional seven days after the expiry of the mandatory 21-day notice.

Resume work empty

But UASU saw in that a bid to buy time and make them go back to work empty handed. The union’s officials insisted they would only call off the strike, which entered its fifth day today, if their salaries – at the core of the boycott – were increased.

The meeting went on for 40 minutes before Uasu chairman John Nderitu interjected: “We are not going anywhere with this. We have to go and consult.”

They left and the secretary-general told the press that they would not hear of
anything unless the government gives figures for discussion. Mr. Geoffrey Orao-Obura, the chairman of the arbitration panel, however, sought to play down the matter insisting the talks were on course.

“We have been having meetings to collate views on either parties,” said Mr. Orao Obura. “We have met vice-chancellors and Education ministry permanent secretary(Karega Mutahi).”

He said another meeting with Uasu officials was likely next week. The impasse arose as labour assistant minister Peter Odoyo declared that serious salary negotiations would only begin after the lecturers called off the strike. “No negotiations will begin unless we have lecturers back to class and students(learning),” he told journalists soon after receiving a memorandum from University students who wanted to be included in the arbitration panel.

“In this case you are not negotiating a block of figures, including leave and housing allowances and this cannot take a day,” he said. Mr. Odoyo spoke after meeting student leaders drawn from all public universities.

The students said in a statement: “We reaffirm our support for better pay for this country’s intellectuals and urge the government to rise above pretensions and agree on a fair negotiation to sort out this country’s academic paralysis,”

The lecturers are asking for increases ranging from Sh 159,000 a month for the lowest paid to Sh. 895,000 for professors.

Currently, a tutorial fellow earns Sh. 15,000 a month, a lecturer Sh 17,000 and a full professor Sh 31,000. In addition, they receive housing allowances ranging from Sh 15,000 to Sh 40,000. The arbitration panel also met the VCs twice – at 10 am and later at 4 pm.

Concrete proposal lacking

The VCs who attended the meetings were Crispus Kiamba(Nairobi), Everret Standa(Kenyatta), David Some(Moi), Nick Wanjohi(Jomo Kenyatta), Fredrick Onyago(Maseno) and Ezra Maritim(Egerton).

On Wednesday, parliament held an emergency debate on the lecturers’ strike. Meanwhile, the Kenya National Union of Teachers questioned the government’s commitment to ending the strike if it did not want to make concrete proposals to the striking lecturers.

Knut secretary-general Francis Ng’ang’a said it was meaningless for the government to call Uasu leaders for arbitration and fail to table figures.

“You negotiate over figures not long speeches,” said Mr. Ng’ang’a. “The question of having a return-to-work formula being worked out before the dispute is resolved is not right.

By Samuel Siringi.

Standard
November 14, 2003
NEWS
Deadlock in varsity pay talks

The government yesterday insisted that striking lecturers must call off their boycott before salary negotiations can begin. And the standoff between the authorities and strikers intensified as a reconciliation committee created to broker a deal between Usau and the Ministry of Education claimed the protest was illegal.

Mr. Obura Orao, who is chairing the committee, told the UASU that they had not signed a recognition agreement with all the universities as required by law. We established that only the University of Nairobi chapter had signed such an agreement but Kenyatta, Egerton, Moi, Maseno and JKUAT had not.

Usau Secretary-general Charles Namachanja revealed that the respective chapters of the union had presented their requests to university councils which had not been acted on. Labour assistant minister Peter Odoyo said the priority at the moment is to have the lecturers call off the strike and return to work as negotiations go on.

“The main purpose of the reconciliation committee chaired by Orao is to find a return-to-work formula before negotiations on specifics of their demands begin,” said Odoyo when answering questions from journalists. The minister made the remarks shortly after meeting with student leaders from both public and private universities. But Namachanja insisted that it would be very difficult to convince lecturers to meet the Orao committee if the government is not ready to table its salary recommendations.

“We can’t negotiate on air. We want to see figures on the table to compare them with the ones we presented to the government in March,” insisted Namachanja.

The universities were closed on Monday after lecturers went on strike to demand higher salaries. The union is demanding that the least academic be paid Sh 160,000 per month up from Sh 14,000 and that professors be paid at least Sh 900,000, up from Sh 32,000.

The minister on Saturday declared the strike illegal and repeated the same argument on Wednesday in Parliament during a debate on the crisis in the public universities. He said although Usau had given the mandatory 21-day strike notice, the union did not give another seven-day notice as required under the labour laws.

The Obura committee was established on Tuesday by Labour Minister Chirau Ali Mwakwere.

The university students yesterday petitioned Odoyo to have them included in negotiations to end the strike but he regretted it was not possible since the matter was of industrial nature. The students threatened to disrupt future talks organized by the committee if church leaders such as Archbishop Nding’i Mwana a’ Mutava Musyimi are to be involved.

“The church leaders are highly partisan and the best they can do is to defend the government,” said a student leader. Odoyo told reporters that when negotiations begin, the Treasury, Ministry of Education and the Office of the president will be fully involved.

He said the amount of money involved is enormous and the issue could not be discussed without involving all relevant departments.

The Usau officials who later held a 40-minute meeting with the reconciliation committee said they will first consult before deciding when next to meet Orao. Orao confirmed that Education permanent secretary Prof. Karega Mutahi held talks with his committee in the morning.

As we went to press, the vice-chancellors of the six public universities were
meeting with the Orao team. They included professors Crispus Kiamba (Nairobi), Everret Standa (Kenyatta), David Some (Moi), Nick Wanjohi (JKUAT), Fredrick Onyago (Maseno) and Ezra Maritim (Egerton).

The reconciliation committee chairman said the VCs had held yet another meeting in the morning after which they went to consult before returning in the afternoon. “We are now deeply involved in shuttle diplomacy reminiscent of the Henry Kissinger days. We have to prepare the ground first before bringing the warring parties to a round table for direct negotiations,” said Orao. He could not, however, say exactly when the next meeting will be held.

Usau officials, who seemed dejected when walking out of the meeting with Orao, drove straight to the Chiromo Club at the university od Nairobi where they held consultations for the better part of the afternoon. Namachanja expressed hope that the next meeting will be held next week but insisted that Usau will only call off the strike after a pay hike deal had been signed.

A national Usau official who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the union may not attend future meetings with the Orao tem if the government is not represented.

By Ken Ramani.

Standard
November 15, 2003
Letter to the Editor

Dons Strike: Why it’s difficult for Usau to trust government

EIGHT months after the UASU presented its memorandum to Prof. George Saitoti he has the audacity to do the unnecessary. He has set up a task force which excludes Usau officials, to tell him what it thinks the lecturers want. Last week, the Minister for Labour, Chirau Ali Mwakwere, took it upon himself to give the lecturers the benefit of his good counsel that they should have given the government a seven-day notice before calling off the strike. Considering that Mwakwere was given a copy of Usau memorandum in March, his argument is spurious to say the least.

Then, as if from the same script, BethMugo, the assistant Minister for Basic Education, contemptuously reminded the lecturers that her ministry within a budget. To Mugo, there is a clear bottom lin: The status quo as regards salaries for academic satdd must be maintained in the current levels. Such a position skips over the surface of serious issues. Besides, lecturers are hardly likely to welcome a lecture from a Member of Parliament who has demonstrated callous unconcern for their plight.

Of course economic realism has to be primary. But the issue at hand is not just about money. The nature of the lecturers’ grievances extends far beyond the normal salary woe questions.

They have to do with some very concrete things: tight budgets, selfishness and unaccountability of rulers, mounting equealities and the aftermath of unplanned expansion of universities’ students intaje without corresponding resources to help cope with the numbers.

The Kanu regime for one detested the educated people. Subsequently, it increasingly betrayed its trust not least in failing to address itself to the issues to do with
academia. Then as of now, the regime became manipulative and downright deceitful. It would lie without batting an eyelid. Prof. Saitoti was part and parcel of that regime. Can’t he then not see why it is so difficult for Uasu to trust him.

The lecturers saw MPs award themselves salary increases in record speed without the need for a task force. The comparative arithmetic of those increases tells its own story. We have also seen corruption raise men to new heights of grandeur and power and demean the dignity of others. The government’s failure to come up with something tangible therefore sours suspicion and mistrust. To the lecturers, the failure amounts to official wheel-spinning which is no substitute for an informed realistic response to the situation facing the country.

The hour is late indeed to issue threats. To Beth Mugo, doing so reveals her blindness as to what she must see and do in order to understand the problem and find its solution. Her assessment of the situation is clearly at variance with the true feeling of the lecturers. The domino theory demands rationalizing in order to harmonise salaries and allowances across the board. That should include salaries and allowances of our honourable parliamentarians. For the lecturers there remains fewer alternatives to resolving the impasse.

Dr. Ndichu Gitau,
Senior Lecturer,
Kenyatta University.

EVEN in the most developed countries of the world, the professors do not make the kind of money that the striking Kenyan professors are asking. The highest paid professors in America makes about $7500 Dollars per month, and the Kenyan professors are asking Sh 90,000.

I urge the lecturers to be real and help the government to revive the economy.

Ed Edwards
USA.
Lecturers from the six public universities are now demanding the dissolutions of as reconciliation committee formed on Tuesday to find a solution to their strike. UASU national chairman, Dr. John Nderitu, yesterday demanded that the committee being headed by Mr. Obura Orao be disbanded since it was a waste of taxpayers’ money end time.

Speaking to the east East African Standard, Nderitu alleged the committee was created with the sole purpose of duping Uasu into calling off the strike that started on Monday. The lecturers are asking for salary increments ranging from Sh 159,000 a month for the lowest paid to Sh 895,000 for professors.

Currently a tutorial fellow earns Sh 15,000 a month, a lecturer Sh 17,000 and a full professor Sh 31,000. At the same time, Education Minister Prof. George Saitoti blamed lecturers for going on strike even after the government had promised it would announce an improved salary package by February.

“IAssure you the package will be second to none in the region. Our university lecturers deserve a better package considering the role they play in national development,” Saitopti told journalists.

He made the remarks after delivering a speech at a stakeholders’ forum on safety in schools at a Nairobi Hotel. The minister said there was goodwill across the board adding that a quick solution to the university crisis would be found soon. Archbishop Benjamin Nzimbi praised Saitoti saying he had done well in his job as Education Minister. He also urged him to deal firmly with the dons.

“Let lecturers call off the strike to pave way for re-opening of the universities as negotiations go on. February is only two months to go,” said Nzimbi. Nderitu wondered why the government was taking lecturers round in circles instead of meeting them at a round table to find a solution to the stalemate.

Uasu secretary-general Charles Namachanja called for the establishment of a permanent university remuneration committee where both the government and Uasu could be equitably represented is proper negotiations would begin.

“It is after agreeing on the actual salary figures and schedule that Uasu will call off the strike. Otherwise the government has given lecturers a free holiday because of its reluctance to negotiate with us,” said Namachanja.

The reconciliation committee on Thursday implored Uasu to call off the strike saying the union had not observed certain legal technicalities before calling the strike. Uasu lawyer, Dr. Ben Sihanya, dismissed claims by Labour Minister Chirau Mwakwere that the strike was illegal since Uasu had not signed recognition agreements with all the six public universities.

He said the Orao committee should carry out its reconciliation mandate in good faith instead of emphasizing on weak technicalities.

By Ken Ramani.

Sunday Standard,
November 16, 2003
COMMENT
The university of Nairobi yesterday postponed indefinitely this year’s graduation ceremony scheduled for November 24, as the lecturers strike entered its sixth day. A statement by Vice-chancellor Crispus Kiamba said the postponement was occasioned by the “unforeseen developments and circumstances beyond the control of the university”.

Lecturers at the six public universities have been on strike since Monday, demanding better terms of service, including a salary increment. The group supposed to graduate at the University of Nairobi comprises those who qualified 2002/2003 academic year in degree and diploma courses.

Prof. Kiamba said: “The 2003 graduation ceremony which had earlier been scheduled to take place on Monday November 24, 2003 has now been postponed until further notice. Any inconveniences are highly regretted.”

Graduation at Egerton University expected on Friday did not take place but sources said the administration suspended it following a protest by students’ union over a group whose marks had not been tabulated. The marks of the Agricultural education students had not been computed, implying that they would only graduate a year later if the graduation took place on Friday.

The university has tentatively given December 5 as the graduation day, while monitoring the lecturers’ strike. A government appointed panel is holding talks with UASU. But the talks were put in doubt when Education minister Prof. George Saitoti remained firm on the February date for the lecturers’ salary increment. Prof. Saitoti said on Friday that the government would only be able to pay the striking lecturers in February next year. But union officials want to negotiate on the payment that the should expect in February.

Although both parties agree on the need to call off the strike and embark on the reopening of the universities, a peep into the negotiations shows the strike could last longer due to the mistrust and apparent lack of seriousness among the negotiating parties. It emerged that the reason why the government and the lecturers failed to avert the strike that led to the closure of all the universities was the lack of mutual trust between the two parties.

On Friday, Uasu officials asked the government to disband the conciliation panel, accusing it of being in favour of the government. The Sunday Nation learnt that even before the strike began, and despite the fact that the lecturers wanted to dialogue with the government, Uasu officials had long felt their efforts had failed to attract the much needed attention from the government.

Secretary-general Charles Namachanja argued that although the union sent their proposals to the government eight months ago, it was not until late last month that Prof. Saitoti and Uasu officials came to talk about the salaries. Even then, the two parties could not delve into any proposals despite there being two documents presented by Uasu and the Vice-chancellors.

Uasu has proposed that the lowest paid lecturer – a tutorial fellow – earn Sh 266,438 in salaries and allowances and a full professor Sh 987,020. Currently a tutorial
fellow earns Sh 15,000 a month, a lecturer Sh 17,000 and a full professor Sh 31,000. In addition they receive housing allowances ranging from Sh 15,000 to Sh 40,000.

Information made to the Sunday Nation indicated that Tanzania’s private universities pay an assistant lecturer between Sh 28,080 and 36,660 while professors earn Sh 78,000. In Uganda’s public universities, teaching assistants get about Sh 11,550 while a professor gets Sh 41,574.

Makerere University lecturers are paid between Sh 22,800 and Sh 114,00. Besides they get housing and medical allowances.

A private Kenyan university pays full professors between Sh 154,000 and Sh 180,000. The lowest paid lecturers at the institution get between Sh 90,000 and Sh 105,000.

By Julius Bosire and Samuel Siringi.

Nation
November 19, 2003
NEWS
No let-up in lecturers’ strike.
Saitoti fails to convince dons to resume work.

Efforts by Education minister George Saitoti to persuade the striking lecturers to resume work flopped again last evening as the strikers insisted on concrete pay rise proposals. Pro. Saitoti only restated his earlier pledge that the government would offer them an attractive pay but could not say exactly how much.

UASU officials later said that although they were giving the government time to put forward a proposal, their members were getting impatient because the discussions were taking too long.

“By the look of things, the strike may continue for long because the government is not giving any tangible promise;” said one of the officials.

Although the minister was scheduled to meet the union at midday, the talks did not materialize. Instead, the minister went to consult with Treasury and Directorate of personnel management after which he called the officials for a meeting in the evening, which did not last long.

National security minister Chris Murungaru urged the lecturers to resume classes, saying the government was committed to review their terms by February. The lecturers should give the 10 month old Narc government the few months it had requested to table a new salary package, the minister said.

“It is only fair for the lecturers to give the government until February to finalise its work. We will look upon their calling off the strike as a patriotic gesture,” Dr. Murungaru said, adding that the state head demonstrated its commitment to improving work conditions for staff in public universities by registering the Uasu, which the previous regime had failed to recognize.

By Mark Agutu

Nation
Mr. Njaga’s analysis was critical but factual in many ways. I am a lecturer at one of the public universities. Currently, I am on study leave, but I am also involved in several international collaborative research activities. I have been lucky to attend international workshops and conferences organized by academic organizations. What Mr. Njaga talked about, especially on the decadence at our public universities and dwindling research publications, was an issue raised by Prof. Issa Shivji of Dar-es-Salaam University of Nordic African Institute, Uppsala, Sweden in August.

The limited number of research publications is due to several factors, one of them being overwork. Think of a situation where a lecturer is expected to teach over 1000 students and to publish at the same time. The semester system, where students go at all times of the year, and the parallel programmes running in the evening have all taken a great toll. It is a really crazy undertaking.

There are only six of us in our department. But we are supposed to teach over 1,000 students. And then the pay, after deductions, amounts to less than Sh 20,000 each.

However, I am proud of a number of departments in our public universities. The institute of African Studies and the Medical School of the university of Nairobi, for instance, have contributed research articles to several reviewed journals.

Kenyan academicians, especially the older group and those in the diaspora, are only comparable to South Africans and Nigerians. I was really glad to hear Prof. Peter Anyang’-Nyong’o’s articles being quoted in Seoul by nono-Kenyans!.

Maybe universities could peg publication of an article derived from a masters or PhD thesis as a precondition to promotion. Where I am studying, you cannot get a PhD without publishing three articles in referred journals. In one of the workshops I attended, a presenter indicated that most African countries need to overhaul their obsolete education systems to catch up with the rest of the world.

He gave the example of Ugandan and Kenyan universities, where three quarters of the students were either enrolled in arts-based courses or in computer classes that are already obsolete.

However, despite the difficulties our students go through, they are still very competitive when compared with others in different parts of the world. This means that not all is lost. We can still make our universities work.

PAUL OBURU
Maseno University

We do agree strike is the most effective weapon to make constitutional governments listen to legitimate grievances. We all have our little failings. The best course of action is to prevent differences from developing into mountains. Imagine a university lecturer moonlighting at the artisan certificate level while churning out quarter-baked and unemployable graduates.

What the government should do is find out why this kind of thing happens and then rectify it.
The article attributed to Justus Mungata, appearing in the Kenya Times on Wednesday, November 12-2—3 cannot go unchallenged. Mungata’s views are not based on any clear evidence. They are biased and are bad both in taste and faith. His assertion that the dons troop to the Senior Common Room at 10 every morning implies that no teaching takes place in the universities after 10.

This is how simplistic the argument is. It is common sense that those lecturers who have no classes at this time of the day would, as a matter of course, want to take a cup of tea. The best place for this is the Senior Common Room where they can engage their colleagues in intellectual discourse over a cup of tea. He seems to take it for granted that this is a place for drinking only.

Mungata’s second position that our academic members of staff do not engage in research and therefore are not invited to academic conferences smacks of prejudice and high-level ignorance on his part. We need not belabour the poor working conditions of the universities’ infrastructure. However, it is painful for people who have opted to wash dished in America to pour vitriol on the good work done by our eminent professors. If Mungata cared to read, he would have not made that remark. The sitting of international research institutions is a testimony to the acumen of our scholars who work in collaborations with others.

The following will suffice: ICIPE, ICRAF, ILRI, IPS, AFRALTI, IVI ad RCMRM. A lot of research work goes on in these institutions and new knowledge generated. All of them have linkages with the universities. Yet there are also other research works done by the various departments of the universities on their own which he appears to ignore.

Over the years the universities’ graduate students with Masters and PhD degrees with international ratings. It should be noted that training at postgraduate level is by research and has therefore contributes immensely to wealth of knowledge of our universities.

Our dons have continued to publish despite the difficult conditions and one needs to surf the internet to get our contributions to knowledge. They have also contributed to international journals not only in the social sciences but also in technical and scientific areas. The proceedings of academic conferences have chapters contributed by our own scholars, a testimony of their attendance.

It is, therefore, in bad faith to make such claims when some of our lecturers have been offered appointments in international companies and organizations on the basis of their innovations and research findings.

To brand our academic staff silly because they make reference to other scholars’ works is frivolous and lacks in integrity. The hallmark of scholarship is ability to know what has been done by others and acknowledge accordingly. Mungata should know that our professors are also quoted worldwide just as they quote other distinguished scholarly
Mungata’s challenge to the dons to produce evidence based on research that better pay improves performance clearly exposes his intellectual ineptitude. I wonder what he reads in the US but I expect someone who comments on staff performance to read Maslow’s Theory of motivation. This work was based on scientific research and influenced later research in this area. It vindicated the lecturer’s demands.

Some people still do not understand the Module II programmes in the universities. Mungata is one of them. The universities have never admitted students with half the qualifications in order to make more money.

The admission criteria have been as tight as before and only students who have the requisite admission requirements get to the lecture theatres. It is bad to cast aspersions on our endeavour to make university education accessible to as many qualified Kenyans as possible. Again if he cared to read, the information regarding these programmes is available in the internet.

Lastly, the assertion that Prof. Saitoti and Dr. Mwiria left teaching at the universities because they are well published is a contradiction. Both scholars were bred and nurtured in the nest of our public universities. They are well published because that is how and what we train them to do. They also teach well. They are a representative of the vibrant intellectual prowess abundant in the universities and which the government should continue to tap for national development.

We should, therefore, support our academicians in their quest to have better working conditions. All the people should take particular interest what and how it is taught at the universities.

John Obongo,
Senior Lecturer, UoN.
Now Govt freezes lecturers’ salaries

Striking university lecturers will not get their November salaries, the government has ordered. The vice-chancellors of public universities have been told to withhold the lecturers’ salaries and allowances for the time they have been on strike.

“No employees shall be paid any salaries or allowances unless he/she is providing services according to the terms and conditions of employment,” a circular sent on Thursday to all VCs by education permanent secretary Karega Mutahi, said.

“All those not providing services in accordance with those terms and conditions shall have all their emoluments withheld from the date of such non-delivery of services.”

The salary withholding is seen as a move by the government to press the lecturers who have downed their tools to push for a salary increase, into calling off the three-week old strike. Yesterday, angry lecturers threatened to sue the government. Mr, Musalia Edebe, the Uasu national organizing secretary, said that the lecturers’ representatives would meet on Tuesday to chart a countermove.

Moi University lecturers described the salary withdrawal as “harsh and punitive.” Some of the lecturers who talked to the Sunday Standard in Eldoret claimed that the government was trying to blackmail them into calling off the strike. Prof. Mutahi reiterated that the strike was illegitimate. “You will remember that the strike has been declared illegal by the Ministry of Labour and Human Resource management,” he said in the circular dated November 20, 2003, and urged the VCs to inform Uasu officials of the action.

Edebe said that withholding of salaries would not cow them. His views were also echoed by Uasu national deputy secretary-general, Mr. Muga Kolale, who said that by withholding salaries, the government had confirmed that it had nothing to offer.

Speaking in Nakuru, Kolale told striking lecturers to hold on to the strike “since the government cannot do without us.”

“We will be in court on Monday to sue the government for the illegal action,” Kolale said.

By Stephen Makabila and Steve Mkawale

Strike fury as lecturers’ November pay blocked.

Striking lecturers reacted angrily yesterday to a government decision to stop their November salaries. They said the directive to the vice chancellors of the six state universities to withhold salaries for the days lecturers had been on strike was “a mockery of the intellectualism.”

UASU secretary general Charles Namachanja said the decision only highlighted the government’s contempt for lecturers. “This is an act of selfishness. It is sad that a government which has agreed the lecturers are poorly remunerated will go ahead and even freeze the peanuts it pays us,” he told Nation yesterday after a meeting of top Uasu
officials in Nairobi.

Education permanent secretary Karega Mutahi last week wrote to vice chancellors instructing them not to pay the lecturers, whose strike for better pay and working conditions enters its third week today.

He asked university councils to start negotiations with their Uasu chapters in what is viewed as a move to weaken the lecturers’ collective strength. But yesterday Mr. Namachanja said: “We have been thinking the government was serious about negotiations. Why will it stop the salaries when its officials claim to be holding talks with us?”

He went on: “The withholding of our salaries will not end our determination to fight for better terms for our members. In any case, it will strengthen our resolve to continue boycotting with our strike.”

Mr. Namachanja said Education minister George Saitoti had stressed the need for dialogue to resolve the dispute. Lecturers downed tools on November 10 to press for higher salaries and better terms of service.

They want their pay raised to a minimum of Sh 159,000 for the lowest paid to Sh 890,000 for professors. Currently, a tutorial fellow earns a basic salary of Sh 15,000 and a house allowance of Sh 17,000 while a professor’s starting salary is Sh 31,000 with a Sh 40,000 housing allowances.

Mr. Namachanja asked the minister to urgently convene a negotiation meeting which could end the strike and allow universities to reopen. The Nation learnt that a senate meeting at Kenyatta University last week took a firm stand against the ministry’s directive and advised the university against implementing it.

Members of the university’s highest decision-making body saw in the deirective a danger of fanning the flames of campus revolt. The senators made it clear that they were all Uasu members and threatened to resign if the university implemented the directive.

“We told the VC to tell the government that implementing the directive would be disastrous. It would mean that all lecturers holding administrative jobs [deans, chairmen and directors of institutes] would step down and let the VCs run the universities alone,” said one senator.

**Swiftly condemned circulars**

Uasu officials had heard about the circular and swiftly condemned it, saying it illustrated the government’s determination to frustrate lecturers. Uasu’s Nairobi chairman Samuel Nyandemo said the directive was “ill conceived and exposed the government’s desperation in handling the dispute.”

He said: “If Kanu, in its heyday, did not stop lecturers’ pay during the nine month strike of 1993, how can a government that rode to power on a popular vote contemplate using primitive methods to break the strike?”

The Uasu officials said lecturers would go back to class if the government told them when and by how much salaries would be raised.

“It should be clearly understood that we aren’t against the government’s proposal that we wait until February. But what we need to know is whether that is when the pay increase will start and at what rate,” said Dr. Nyandemo.

Maseno university lecturers described the move as “Shocking and unfair”, saying the government was not committed to resolving amicably. The government says it can
only give a pay rise from February and has since contracted a consultancy firm, KIPPRAs to study the lecturers’ earnings and recommend improvements.

Usau chairman John Nderitu claimed the orders to withhold the lecturers’ salaries came from forces outside the Education Ministry. He said the strike officials had met Prof. Saitoti on Tuesday, where he promised they would discuss KIPPRAs salary proposals by November 30.

The proposals would then be discussed by government ministries in the first week of December, he said.

“All we were waiting for were those figures and we are still waiting for them. The new orders seem to be coming from a body that is interested in collapsing the talks,” he told reporters at Chiromo campus, Nairobi.

“There seems to be pressure from elsewhere. Even the order to close the universities did not come from the universities themselves.”

Closed the universities

Mr. Namachanja said the government had closed the universities and could not, therefore, penalize lecturers for not teaching.

“Even if the lecturers wanted to teach, will they do so in empty lecture rooms?” he asked. National treasurer Josiah Aduda said the union expected the government to use all tricks to break the strike.

“Salary or no salary, the strike goes on. We were prepared even before we launched the strike that all these actions would be forced on us,” he said.

By Samuel Siringi and David Aduda

Nation
November 26, 2003
Wednesday Family Magazine
A life of struggle for intellectuals

The majority of lecturers cannot afford decent housing and medical care.

Grains of sand on the cemented corridor momentarily threaten to throw me off track. Could this be the place we are looking for? The cream and green-coloured commercial block, located off Lang’ata Road, on the shoulder of Wilson airport, is still under construction, although the ground and mezzanine floors are already occupied.

But those fleeting doubts are dispelled by a blue plaque that reads ‘Own and Associate: Education and Training Consultants’. An arrow shoots upwards – guiding us through the corridors to a curtained, black steel door that opens with a creak and the dingdong of artifacts hanging on the inside.

Standard
November 27, 2003
NEWS
Dons may get pay

PUBLIC universities are agonizing over whether to obey a government order to
stop striking lecturers’ pay. Members of the University council of Nairobi, Kenyatta, Egerton and Mori are divided on whether to obey a directive from Educations Permanent Secretary Prof. Karega Mutahi, not to pay the strikers from November 1.

Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) Vice-chancellor, Prof. Nick Wanjohi, said his university’s council would meet tomorrow to discuss the issue. The council of Western University College (Weuco) is also expected to meet tomorrow for the same reason.

However, it could not be immediately established whether the Maseno University Council had met or what its decision was. Sources at the Kenyatta University Council Vice-Chairman, Mr. Wykliff Mukuru, Unsuccessfully tried to convince other members to obey the directive.

Members argued that lecturers are not employed by the Ministry of Education and is should therefore give the council a free hand to deal with its academic employees. They also said if the directive is implemented, it would complicate talks between the ministry and officials of the Universities Academic Staff Union (UASU) that hit a deadlock three weeks ago.

Mukuru is said to have been jeered by a section of members when he reminded them that “he who pays the piper dictates the tune” in reference to the fact that the government pays the university a subsidy.

The chairman of the KU council, Dr. Onesmo Ole Moyoi, was conspicuously absent from the meeting. Attempts to reach him were futile. The Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Everret Standa, said consultations were still going on, adding that no decision was reached at the council meeting on Tuesday.

At the university of Nairobi, council members criticized Mutahi for what some felt was high-handedness in dealing with the crisis. They asked the council chairman, Prof. David Wasawo to inform the PS that the dispute was between the ministry and Uasu and at no time was the council involved.

“It is ridiculous for the PS to throw the issue back to the council which he has ignored since the beginning of the crisis,” said a council member, who requested anonymity.

Nation
November 28, 2003
NEWS
Give lecturers pay rise, State urged

The government has been urged to give lecturers a pay rise to resolve the crisis in public universities. Speakers at the education conference were unanimous that the lecturers deserved a pay increase, arguing that it was a national shame to have them earning peanuts, when other public servants were enjoying good salaries.

They said the closure of the universities was wasteful and unnecessary and called for comprehensive reforms in the management of the institutions, including giving the autonomy to maje decisions on the use of funds.

Leading the call were MPs Kihara Mwangi (Kigumo) and Christine
Mango(Butula), who criticized the government for failing to address the salary dispute, saying it was unfair to pay primary school teachers more than lecturers.

“We cannot continue talking of reforming the education system when university lecturers, who are at the core of manpower development, are languishing in poverty due to poor pay.” Said Mr. Mwangi. “We are asking the government to go flat out to look for resources to pay the lecturers a decent salary.”

He added: “The problem may have accumulated over the years, but that is not an excuse to have our universities closed over a pay dispute.”

Prof. Mango, a former lecturer at Maseno University, called for a comprehensive review of salaries for university staff to ensure they got value for their qualifications. She urged the government to provide universities with funds for research to enable them improve their quality of teaching.

The chairperson of Moi university council, Dr. Eddah Gachukia, was categorical that the university crisis should be addressed urgently, saying the continued closure were affecting academic programmes and would result in admissions backlog.

“We cannot afford to close the universities when they should be churning out graduates to serve the country. My appeal is that both parties should agree to resolve the crisis in the interest of our children,” she said.

The pay dispute dominated most of the plenary discussions and the consensus was that the government had not handled the crisis well.

It was noted that the crisis was a reflection of poor planning and lack of clear policies on education investment. The rapid expansion of university education in the past two decades was done without consultation and foresight, leading to high enrolment, increased workload for lecturers, staff shortages and inadequate teaching and learning materials.

The vice chancellor of Nazarene University, Prof. Lead Marangu, urged the government to provide incentives to private investors in education such as offering tax rebates and establishing infrastructure. The conference was told the university examination system should be revised so that emphasis was on continuous assessments and practicals instead of terminal examinations.

Currently, continuous assessments account for only 30 per cent of the grades and the final exams 70. Practicals or industrial attachments do not count for much in the student’s overall grade.

President Kibaki will today give a keynote address at the conference, being held at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre, and whose theme is “Meeting challenges of education and training in the 21st century.”

It is expected to come up with a new framework for education and training.

By David Aduda

Nation
November 28, 2003
NEWS
Lecturers disown letter to state
We are not about to call off strike as claimed, say union officials.
University lecturers yesterday disowned a letter purportedly written to the Education ministry which said the strike was about to be called off. At the same time, the dons through top UASU officials, condemned the move by Maseno University Vice-Chancellor to go ahead with preparations for a graduation ceremony while the strike was still on.

The said a forged letter claimed to have originated from Uasus had been forwarded to the government calling for certain conditions to be fulfilled if they were to go back to class. They added that they were dismayed by the Maseno University Senate’s move to usurp the powers of the Board of Examiners “in unlawful preparations for the award of degrees and diplomas.”

Lecturers downed their tools on November 10 to press for higher salaries and better terms of service. They want their pay raised to a minimum of Sh 159,000 for the lowest paid to Sh 890,000 for professors. Currently, a tutorial fellow earns a basic salary of Sh 15,000 and a house allowance of Sh 17,000 while a professor’s starting salary is Sh 31,000 with a Sh 40,000 housing allowance.

A statement read by Usau secretary general, Mr. Charles Namachanja said: “We categorically condemn and reject the ownership, authorship and origination of a letter forged and forwarded to the government purporting that Uasu will call off the strike if certain minimum conditions are met, Uasu condemns such viciousness with the contempt it deserved.”

PEOPLE
November 28, 2003
NEWS
Striking lecturers protest planned graduation

The striking university lecturers yesterday came out to strongly oppose plans by Maseno University to conduct this years graduation ceremony. The dons accuse the Maseno University administration of mal-administering examination results by usurping the powers of the institution’s board of examiners during the course of strike.

They termed the move as illegal, saying only the board could validate examination results. And the university Academic Staff Union the dons umbrella union, is now warning that would-be graduands against participating in the intended ceremony, saying doing so will greatly impact on both their professional and personal integrity.

“Uasu is concerned that the diplomas and degrees not examined by the university’s board of examiners will not only betray the student’s professional respectability but will also deprive them of social and personal integrity,” the dons union said in a statement.

“Uasu insists that the students have a right to earn properly and professionally conducted degrees and diplomas without interference, dilution or abuse from any quarters,” the statement read by secretary-general Charles Namchanja continued. It contained resolutions at a meeting on Wednesday of the union’s national office which was attended by all the 26 officials drawn from the various chapters.

The dons wondered why Maseno University is keen on going ahead with the conferment of degrees and award of diplomas amid the strike, even after the University of Nairobi postponed a similar event.

At the same time, the striking dons disowned contents of a letter purported to be
originating from their union to the effect that they are ready to call off the strike if the government meets certain minimal demands. They include a demand that education Minister George Saitoti states the minimum figures that the government is ready to pay them and that the ministry keeps them posted on the progress of an inter-ministerial committee that has allegedly been formed to deal with the lecturers’ strike.

The letter further demands that Saitoti accepts in writing his acceptance if the said conditions.

But addressing the press yesterday at the Chiromo club at the University of Nairobi, the union said it does not know the origin of the letter. Uasu chairman John Nderitu declared that the strike, which has since seen all the six public universities shut down will only be called off if the government presents an acceptable proposal regarding their pay hike demands.

NATION
November 29, 2003
NEWS
Try dialogue, Kibaki tells varsity strikers.

President Mwai Kibaki yesterday called for discussions between the government and lecturers to end the university strike. In his first public remarks on the dispute, the President stressed that his government believed in dialogue and consultations, which was only possible without confrontation.

He said: “Where there is disagreement on the way forward on matters at hand, let us engage in dialogue. A total of 3000 lecturers from the six state universities have been on strike since November 10 to press for higher salaries and better terms of service.

“I have always insisted that dialogue and consultation is the hallmark of my government. Such dialogue cannot however, flourish in an atmosphere of confrontation.” He said.

Striking lecturers want their pay raised to a minimum of Sh 159,000 for the lowest paid to Sh 890,000 for professors. Currently a tutorial fellow earns a basic salary of Sh 15,000 and a house allowance of Sh 17,000 while a professor’s starting salary is Sh 31,000 with a Sh 40,000 housing allowance.

Yesterday President Kibaki speaking when he opened the ongoing National Conference on Education and Training said the government would consistently invest in education. In an indirect criticism of 8-4-4 which has been faulted for being too burdensome, the President said Kenya needed a system that allowed children to grow up naturally.

At inception, 8-4-4 candidates used to sit nine subjects at the primary level and 10 at secondary. This created a burden to teachers and children forcing schools to conduct lessons in the evenings, weekends and holidays.

Although the numbers have since been reduced to five and seven respectively through various reviews, the contents are still heavy and extra tuition still continues. Conversely, little time is available for games.

The conference he said was in line with the government’s promise to involve all people in policy consultation. Earlier, a scholar, Prof. Daniel Sifuna, had called on the government to overhaul the 8-4-4 education system and replace it with the 1-7-4-2-3 system recommended by the Koech report.
The Koech system provided for an all round education.

By Nation Team

The People
November 29, 2003
NEWS
Pursue dialogue, Kibaki tells dons

President Mwai Kibaki yesterday called for dialogue in solving the salary stalemate between the government and the university lecturers. The head of state regretted the dons have resorted to confrontation by opting to down their tools and called for dialogue to solve the issue that has paralysed the county’s high education system.

Kibaki’s call comes in the wake of the university academic staff union’s assertion that the strike was on till the government responds to their pay hike demands.

The head of state was speaking while he officially opened the first ever national conference on education at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre (KICC), Nairobi which ends today. And at the same time, the head of state challenged the delegates at the conference to deliberate on ways of making the current education system accommodative to all changes emerging in education sector.

He pointed out that Kenya needed to develop an education system that can produce high quality human capital needed for the 21st century. President Kibaki however pointed out that the challenges required that the country trains people who can fit both well in both the local and international labour market.

The head of state called on the participants in the conference to review the history of education and training in the country and come up with answers to questions such as the gap between skills training systems and the world of employment. Commenting further on the strike, which entered its third week, the president noted that dialogue and consultation were the hallmark of his government.

Said the president: “I have always insisted that it is my intention to have dialogue and consultation as the hallmark of my government such dialogue cannot, however, flourish in an atmosphere of confrontation.”

Education minister Prof. George Saitoti said all the deliberations made at the end of the three day conference will determine the outlook of the education system. Meanwhile, the UASU has threatened to pull out of the university senates which they say were siding with the government to frustrate their efforts of agitating for salary hike, reports Thomas Mwanga.

The officials made the revelations during a meeting held at the Kenyatta University’s graduation square. The meeting was meant to discuss progress of the strike and tackle a section among the lecturers who have betrayed their course. UASU chairman John Nderitu, criticized the ‘traitors’ warning them to change their ways.

The lecturers dismissed the holding back of their November salaries as cheap and irrational negotiation tactics borrowed from the Kanu era.

Nation
December 1, 2003
NEWS
Lecturers give their terms to end strike

Striking university lecturers may consider returning to work if the government tables a concrete pay offer. Top university Academic Staff Union officials said yesterday they were eager to enter into meaningful negotiations with the government to end the stalemate that began on November 10.

“We wish to reiterate our commitment to dialogue, consult and enter into meaningful negotiations so as to reach an amicable solution,” Uasu secretary-general Charles Namachanja told the press at Chiromo campus, university of Nairobi. He was accompanied by the chairman John Nderitu, Sammy Kubasu(Kenyatta University chapter vice chairman) and Peter Githira(Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology chapter chairman).

“It is possible to reconsider our position on the strike if we reach meaningful negotiation. It’s not the issue of government paying us money in February but what it will pay us that time. The issue is figures only,” they said. The lecturers thanked President Kibaki for “his position that the government dialogue with Uasu” and hoped that the ministry of Education would provide “an enabling environment for us to start the process immediately.”

Last week, while opening the National Conference on Education and Training, the president called for dialogue to end the strike. Commenting on the matter for the first time, President Kibaki stressed that dialogue was part of the government’s way of doing things, adding that dialogue would not thrive in an atmosphere of confrontation.

He said: “where there is disagreement on the way forward on matters at hand, let us engage in dialogue.”

The economy

Yesterday, the lecturers said though they had been holding informal talks with a government team in the past week, they now want formal negotiations with Education Minister Prof. George Saitoti. A letter to the minister requesting such a meeting would be taken to his office this morning. They urged the government to “address our issue seriously” as the closure of all six State universities had impacted negatively on the economy.

“It (strike) had been a blow to us. We have a ready team to negotiate with the government. Let’s see what they will be ready to offer.”

The universities have withheld the striking lecturers’ salaries since the strike began. In November, they were paid for only nine days they were not on strike. They lamented: “It is unfortunate that some powerful forces within the government have made it appear confrontational by stopping the little salaries university lecturers earn. This demonstrates further the determination to arm-twist us into going back to work without any meaningful solution to the impasse.

Their tools

The lecturers were committed to helping the government in the reconstruction and transformation of the economy. “We believe we can effectively participate in this reconstruction process if we are properly compensated for our worth.” The 3,000 lecturers from Nairobi, Moi, Kenyatta, Egerton and Maseno universities and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, downed their tools on November 10.
to press for higher salaries and better terms of service.

They want their pay raised to a minimum of Sh 159,000 for the lowest paid to Sh 890,000 for professors. Currently, a tutorial fellow earns a basic salary of Sh 15,000 and a house allowance of Sh 17,000 while a professor’s starting salary is Sh 31,000 with a Sh 40,000 housing allowance.

More time
The government had insisted that it would only consider revising their salaries next February but gave no figures. Assistant Education Minister Kilemi Mwiria told Parliament early last month that the cabinet had discussed the lecturers’ issue and that the government needed more time to give them a whole package.

He said the government would take the package to parliament for discussion and admitted that the lecturers’ pay needed to be increased.

By Stephen Mburu

Nation
December 2, 2003
NEWS
Dons given negotiation terms
We won’t talk before they call off strike, insists Education Minister

The government yesterday ruled out the possibility of negotiating a pay rise with the striking university lecturers unless they returned to work. Education minister George Saitoti also said dialogue was only possible in a situation of trust and respect.

“It must be appreciated that the strike has already been declared illegal and, therefore it needs to be called off to pave the way for dialogue,” said Prof. Saitoti. “It is expected that the academic staff union will call off the strike. Any further delays in resuming work can only aggravate the already ugly situation,” he added.

But in a swift rejoinder, the university Academic Staff Union (UASU) rejected the idea, saying that the lecturers would only go back to class after knowing what the government would pay them.

“Our members are clear in their minds that they can only go back to class once they have been told how much they will be paid. The question of when is not a problem but how much,” said the secretary-general, Dr. Charles Namchanja. He added that the lecturers could not go back to class when the universities had been closed by the government.

“Even if we wanted to teach, do we go to empty classes?” he asked.

But Prof. Saitoti who addressed a news conference in Jogoo House Office in Nairobi, reiterated that the government was committed to increasing the lecturers’ pay, saying the new figures would be announced in February.

The government, he added, was waiting for the final report from a consultancy firm KIPRA which had been contracted to do a survey of the salary trends in eastern and southern African universities to determine what the lecturers would get.

“Once the report is out, the government commits itself to ensuring that workers in our public universities are paid salaries that are not less than those paid by other East African countries,” said the minister.
The minimum basic salary paid in Tanzania is Sh 37,000 while a professor gets Sh 70,000. Tanzania has the highest salaries for university lecturers in East Africa.

By Nation reporter.

People
December 2, 2003
NEWS
Saitoti snubs dons

In what appeared to be a hardline stand on the ongoing university lecturers’ strike, the government has stated that it will not hold any formal negotiations with the striking dons until they call off their month-long strike.

In a hurriedly convened press conference at Jogoo House yesterday, education minister George Siatoti maintained that the strike was illegal and that it will be breach of law for him to hold any formal negotiations with the lecturers.

“In the light of this, it is expected that the University Academic Staff Union will call off the strike and any further delays in resuming can only aggravate the already ugly situation,” the minister stressed.

Formal negotiations, he said would only be opened when the strike is called off and learning resumes in the closed public universities. UASU last month called off the talks with a committee appointed by the government to broker a return-to-work formula dismissing it as irrelevant.

“But I am ready for only informal talks with the striking dons,” the minister stressed. He was evasive when the press insisted on knowing his stand in case the striking dons fail to call off the strike.

“What month are we now? February is not long for any logic person,” Saitoti retorted as he quickly rounded off the conference.

The stand by the government comes barely a day after UASU secretary general Charles Namchanja wrote to Saitoti expressing the union’s willingness for hold dialogue as requested by president Mwai Kibaki.

On Friday, while officially opening the national conference on education and training at KICC, president Kibaki told the dons to open dialogue with the government with a view to ending the strike. The university academic staff wants their pay raised to a minimum of Sh 159,000 and a maximum of Sh 890,000 for the lowest and the highest paid respectively. Yesterday the minister maintained it will not give a definite figure on how much to be paid to the striking dons.

“Stating the actual figures is pre-mature for the government, but we are saying it will not be worse off than those of East Africa universities,” the minister pointed out. The government he said, was committed to paying the dons’ salaries not below those paid by universities in other East Africa countries, adding that the new package would be announced next February.

He disclosed that he had received a preliminary report from Kenya Institute of Policy and Research (KIPRA), adding that a final report was expected by the end of this week before a new package is released. “The government will have to scrutinise the findings of KIPRA and give its recommendations before a new package is released,” he said.
Strikers in Plea to Kibaki

Striking lecturers yesterday urged President Kibaki to initiate dialogue over pay increase. And in a move that signaled their preparedness to stay longer on the boycott, the lecturers union launched a fundraising campaign to finance members’ survival.

The campaign follows the government’s decision to slash their November pay, a move that will receive net salaries ranging from Sh 7,000 to Sh 18,000. More than 200 members in the Uasu, Kenyatta university Chapter called for the sacking of Education minister Prof. George Saitoti, accusing him of failing to obey the president’s order to start dialogue with the lecturers.

Meeting at Kenyatta university, they said Prof. George Saitoti had failed to call their officials to a meeting and had instead preffered to issue statements through the Press. Yesterday, Uasu National Chairman, John Nderitu said lecturers would not call off the strike on account of facilitating dialogue. They would, however, do so after a pay offer had been made and agreed on.

Dr. Nderitu asked churches, university graduates and donor agencies to make donations to Uasu members. The union plans to announce an account to which such donations would be made. The officials also declared they would not deal with the ministry of Labour on any negotiation as the ministry had declared the strike illegal.

Secretary-general Charles Namachanja also rejected plans to offer them salaries similar to those of the universities in Tanzania and Uganda, arguing local lecturers were seeking better jobs in southern Africa, Europe and America.

Egerton University lecturers said they were faced with economic hardships following the decision to stop their salaries. The lecturers met at the university’s graduation square yesterday.

By Samuel Siringi

Dons now seek Kibaki’s intervention

The government was yesterday accused of unnecessarily lengthening the lecturers’ strike by refusing to enter into formal negotiations. Consequently, the UASU now wants President Mwai Kibaki to intervene in the negotiations to end the month long strike in public universities.

The striking dons maintained that the strike is legal having exhausted all avenues under the Trade Disputes Act that eventually led to industrial action.

“Saitoti should not even raise the issue of legality because it is the government that is responsible for the current stalemate and even a lawful strike cannot move them
into action,” claimed UASU secretary general Charles Namachanja.

This call comes in the wake of education minister Prof. George Saitoti’s stand that he will not hold any formal dialogue with the striking university lecturers until they call off their strike.

“We are still open to dialogue with the government with a view to entering into negotiations but only when we have concrete facts to give our members,” said Namchanja, while accusing the government of shutting the universities on the first day of the strike.

Namchanja, who spoke to the People daily after attending Kenyatta University’s UASU chapter meeting, said Saitoti must disclose the figures proposed by the Kenya Institute of Public Policy Research (Kippra).

“The government should provide a conducive environment and we will pick up our tools and get back to class because we love our students and want them back,” he said. He said it was needless to hold the preliminary findings. Namchanja said that instead, the minister ought to set a deadline for the implementation of the new pay pact.

“Our members are still resolved to continue with the strike as long as the government does not seem willing to negotiate and until we have enough fact to convince them to get back to work,” said Namachanja.

At the same time, the University lecturers said their new pay package must reflect what is paid out to their colleagues internationally and not regionally. The said the East African region was not a place they would consider greener pastures because the pay is not commensurate with the work they do.

“Those who seek our services are institutions in Southern Africa, Europe and America and not the University of Dar-es-Salaam or Makerere University.

Adamant in their demands for international salaries, Namachanja and his colleague said lecturers in East Africa were also fleeing their institutions in search of better pay in Europe, North America and Southern Africa who view their services as valuable.

He said the freezing of their salaries was tantamount to intimidation, an act of aggression and blackmail, which portrays the government’s insincerity to resolve the crisis that it created.

“We have asked the government to move out of its original position but it has remained obdurate though we are very flexible and want them to table figures,” he said, adding that all they need are the figures and concrete assurance they will receive the proposed figures.

The ball, he argued, is now in their court and they should move first to resolve it because they started it, “Figures are what we want and after we get them we will go back to class even tomorrow as we wait for the implementation in February,” said Namachanja.

On Monday, Saitoti maintained that the strike was illegal and it will be a breach of law for him to hold any formal discussions with the striking don. Separately an official of the union who sought anonymity confided in us that they would write to President Kibaki to intervene and help open talks with them and the government with a view to ending the strike.

“If Saitoti is not willing to have a meeting with us, then we can resort to intervention form the Head of State,” officials said.
Last week, while officially opening the national conference on education and training at Kenyatta International Conference Centre (KICC), president Mwai Kibaki called for dialogue between the government and the striking dons to end the strike.

By Joshua Shitikho

Nation
December 4, 2003
NEWS
Fresh talks on Lecturers’ pay

Fresh discussions on a back to work formula between striking university lecturers and the government began yesterday. The university of Nairobi council met with enior Education ministry officials hours after the Uasu Nairobi Chapter met the council and indicated willingness to resume work if the government made acceptable salary proposals.

Ignore directive

The Uasu chapter chairman, Dr. Charles Nyandemo, said they asked the council to push for “tentative figures” which would then be followed up with discussions based on the increments being sought.

“We agreed with the council that we are ready to start discussions on getting back to class If we are told what the government will pay in February,” he said on the telephone. At Egerton some lecturers held talks with the institution’s council as their Uasu chapter ruled out any meetings yesterday over the dispute.

Secretary general Muga Kolale said the union would only meet the council on Friday after adequate consultations. But some of the strikers ignored his directive and attended the meeting chaired by the council’s vice-chairman, Dr. Ephantus Mugiri.

Separately, Mr. Dilly Ng’ong’a, Maseno’s Uasu secretary general claimed the government was working out how to lure them back to work by negotiating with individual union chapters. Meanwhile, some Maseno lecturers called for an end to the strike and questioned the sincerity of Uasu national officials.

Serious constraints

The group that asked not to be named, said it was foolhardy for the officials to launch a fundraising campaign for their upkeep. Said their leader, “It doesn’t make sense to turn to other Kenyans to assist lecturers get more money while they don’t have much themselves.”

Last month’s freeze of their salaries by the government had caused them serious constraints and they could not afford to go on with the strike. But the union chapter’s organizing secretary, Ms Edwina Kawaka, sought to dispel fears that the institution’s lecturers would call off the strike, saying they were firmly behind their colleagues in other universities.

She said: “Our strike is on until the government meets our demands. We are not relenting whatsoever.”

B Samuel Siringi and Simon Siele
Nation
December 10, 2003
Varsities prepare for January

Some of the six state universities have started preparing for the reopening in January even as the lecturers’ strike continues. Negotiations for the reopening were going on at the University of Nairobi, Jomo Kenyatta, Maseno and Western University College yesterday.

The plan is to recall students by January 4 to forestall further disruption of academic programmes, caused by the strike, now in the second month. Yesterday, Maseno University heads of departments were separately meeting lecturers to seek a return-to-work formula. Already, the institution has advertised some courses set to begin in January, meaning it had concluded all matters of reopening dates.

The University of Nairobi council met the Uasu Chapter officials and agreed on what sources described as “minimum conditions for a return-to-work formula negotiations”. The Nation could not establish the Uasu officials’ conditions although it emerged the council presented their proposals to top Education ministry officials.

At the Kakamega based Western University college, the council plans to recall students on January 4, assuming the lecturers – majority of whom are on probation will be willing to teach.

The campus – a constituent college of Moi University – recruited lecturers early this year after President Kibaki appointed a new council. They will be on the probation for two years.

Yesterday, Uasu secretary general, Charles Namachanja termed the planned reopening at the college “intimidation.” He said of the college lecturers: “The lecturers have not been on serious strike anyway. They have often been threatened with the sack as they are yet to be confirmed. Labour laws forbid staff on probation from withdrawing their labour.

Sources said the Weuco council had also resolved to give its lecturers a 100 per cent November pay. Lecturers of other state universities were paid for nine days they worked before they went on strike.

Jomo Kenyatta University council was also negotiating with Uasu chapter officials. Lecturers downed tools on November 10 demanding pay rise.

By Samuel Siringi and Richard Chesos

Standard
December 14, 2003
NEWS
Split threatens dons’ strike

Disagreement among chapter officials of the Uasu threatens the lecturers strike which is now in its second month. Some Uasu officials from the universities of Nairobi, Maseno and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology are pushing for a national executive committee meeting to be held on Tuesday to decide the fate of the strike.

The meeting was originally planned for Wednesday, but most officials felt it was important to meet first to seal the emerging cracks in the union. The renegade officials have threatened that if the rest of the members insist on carrying on with the strike, they
will meet on Wednesday with the education minister, Prof. George Saitoti after which they will announce the end of the strike in their respective chapters.

Sources say the government is working round the clock to have an announcement made since it would render the Uasu national office irrelevant as far as managing lecturers’ industrial matters was concerned.

It has emerged that most Uasu officials at Kenyatta, Moi and Egerton universities are opposed to the idea of ending the strike, which began on November 10, until the government meets their salary demands.

Some of the officials speaking on condition of anonymity, said the union should give the government the benefit of doubt and wait for a higher salary package to be announced in February as promised by Saitoti.

One of those holding an uncompromising stance is Dr. Sammy Kubasu, the Kenyatta University Uasu Chapter vice-chairman who says those ouching for the end of the strike are not being honest. “We have not achieved the objectives of the strike. If we end it now, Saitoti is likely to give us even less then 10 per cent salary increment since it would take us time to regroup and call for another strike,” Kubasu says.

The Uasu Secretary general Charles Namachanja, played down the split saying it was normal to hold different views on the same issue. He argues that as far as he was concerned, there was no split amongst national officials. This view was supported by the national deputy treasurer Josiah Adua and the University of Nairobi chapter secretary general, Mr. George Omondi.

Namachanja ruled out the possibility of accepting wholesome any offer by the government, adding that Uasu had not been engaged in formal negotiations. “We must be involved in formal negotiations before a new package is announced. Uasu was registrerd to negotiate on behalf of lecturers,” said Namachanja.

University of Nairobi lecturers will meet tomorrow afternoon when they are expected to debate the fate of the strike. The resolution from tomorrows meeting at the University of Nairobi will be presented to the national executive meeting alongside others from other universities.

The Kenya Institute of Public Policy Research Analysis (Kippra) was commissioned on October 17 to carry out a comparative study on lecturers’ salaries in other countries to form the basis for meeting Uasu demands. But Saitoti has stood his ground insisting that Uasu should call off the strike before any meaningful negotiations could begin. Vice-Chancellors, council chairmen of public universities and the Education Permanent Secretary, Prof. Karega Mutahi, on Thursday held a consultative meeting to review the options to end the strike.

Sources at the meeting said Mutahi repeated his earlier directive that the university councils should apply to the letter the terms of employment they offered the striking lecturers. Although the source explained that there would be no retribution, when interpreted, the directive means that striking lecturers would be sacked if they don’t resume reaching duties when the universities are reopened.

Mutahi is also said to have given instructions that vice-chancellors should engage Uasu chapter officials in return-to-work negotiations as soon as possible.

While the university managers were meeting at Jogoo House, Uasu national officials were addressing lecturers at JKUAT where they said the strike would go on until it achieves its objectives.
Uasu national chairman, Dr. Joh Nderitu, challenged Prof. George Saitoti to bring the Kippra report to the negotiating table. “We don’t understand why Saitoti is not ready to make public the Kippra report for us to begin formal negotiations,” said Nderitu.

Kippra handed its findings to Saitoti last week but the minister declined to make it public. Kippra’s director, Dr. Hezron Nyangito said the report provides two scenarios which the government could choose from to meet Uasu demands. According to insiders, the local scenario suggests that a junior academic (tutorial fellow) be paid a monthly salary of between Sh 117,000 and 120,000, lecturer Sh 190,000 to 302,000, senior lecturer Sh 277,000 to Sh 426,000, associate professor Sh 388,000 to Sh 485,000 and a professor between Sh 441,000 and Sh 584,000.

The regional(Africa) scenario proposes that a tutorial fellow be paid between Sh 122,000 and Sh 151,000, a lecturer Sh 193,000 to Sh 279,000, a senior lecturer Sh 282,000 to Sh 348,000, associate professor Sh 407,000 to Sh 476,000 and a professor between Sh 473,000 and Sh 565,000.

By Ken Ramani

Standard
December 16, 2003
NEWS
Lecturers adopt new strategy in pay strike

Striking University of Nairobi lecturers yesterday resolved to sign forms stating their willingness to resume duty as soon as their salary demands are met. The university council was yesterday expected to issue the forms to the academic staff requiring them to state whether or not they were willing to resume their duties.

The scholars said that by signing the forms, they would have beat the university council at its own game since the action would have no legal implications, anyway. Speaker after speaker said the university was wasting its time as happened at Maseno, Egerton, Jomo Kenyatta and Moi universities where some lecturers have signed similar forms but have not called off the strike.

Speaking at a well attended meeting organized by the local chapter of Uasu, the national chairman Dr. John Nderitu, warned that the strike would continue until the union demands were met in Toto.

A suggestion by chapter chairman Dr. Samuel Nyandemo, that the union seek an exit strategy attracted heated debate with some lecturers saying the strike should go on indefinitely. “We all agreed to call the strike. But should we sit down and keep quiet? Why don’t we seek a way out of it? Suppose the government stays put as it has done for the past one month?” posed Nyandemo.

Most lecturers condemned their colleagues who are pushing for an end to the strike, saying the action would plunge them into further economic misery. “If we call off the strike, nobody will ever take us seriously again. We called it for a cause and we are not wavering until we achieve our objectives,” said Nderitu.

The unionist claimed that the government was sponsoring certain union officials pushing for an end to the strike. There was consensus that the strike should go on until the lecturers are given an “acceptable” salary increase.
JKUAT set to re-open Jan 5

JOMO Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) will re-open on January 5 after almost two months of a crippling lecturers’ strike. But learning in the 18 centres offering JKUAT degrees and diploma courses will resume on January 19. All groups of regular and alternative degree programmes students will report on the same dates.

The decision was made yesterday at a senate meeting chaired by the Vice-chancellor, Prof. Nick Wanjohi. The senate also fixed the university’s graduation for May 19 next year. The university has over the years held its annual graduation ceremony in March. Uasu National Chairman John Nderitu welcomed the decision but warned that lecturers will continue with their strike until the government meets their salary demands.

―Uasu never closed the university. It is good that the university management has seen the sense of re-opening the institution,‖ said Nderitu in a telephone interview.

The bitter irony on lecturers’ pay

What I hate most about the lecturers’ strike in the public universities is that it ever happened in the first place. As the days go by, it’s a terrible waste of resources. Regrettably, students who were just about to sit their examinations now can’t tell when this will ever happen. And those who were looking forward to donning their graduation gowns will now be eagerly waiting to see what happens early next year.

What’s quite disheartening about all this procrastination on the part of the university administrators and the Ministry of Education is that they have conceded time and again that the lecturers are terribly underpaid and deserve a raise.

At the beginning of the strike over a month ago, many were stunned when one of the more famous dons, a professor of engineering, displayed his terribly slim payslip. The lecturers have continued to do a rather decent job of training the high-level manpower the country needs, but the value of their own labour is a trifle. A graduate engineer in the private sector, for instance, can, only after a year, be able to pay the basic monthly salaries of up to five of his former teachers. Illogical as it sounds, it’s the reality.

But the irony of ironies today is that those at the helm in the ministry are themselves university lecturers. Prof. George Saitoti, the education minister, perhaps doesn’t wish to be reminded of his VW Beetle days, which Leader of the official opposition derisively referred to some time ago. But prof. Saitoti, who is today chauffeur driven in a dark blue top-of-the-range Mercedes Benz, was in fact, better off than many
of today’s dons. At least he could afford to drive a car. The lecturers earning between Sh 15,000 and Sh 30,000 a month can hardly afford even a decent bicycle.

Assistant Minister Kilemi Mwiria is another respected academic. He is not only a former Kenyatta University lecturer but he was one of the Key lights in the Universities Academic staff Union, which the Kanu regime had flatly refused to register. He then worked closely with some of the officials spearheading the current demand for better remuneration for the lecturers. I’m not convinced that these two learned men have driven their best shot to the efforts to end the lecturers’ strike. Contrast this with the Nairobi City Council workers’ strike of a few months ago. After they confronted Vice-President Awori at his Jogoo House Offices in Nairobi, he promised that they would be paid their salary arrears amounting to hundreds of millions of shillings within a few days. And true to his word, the money was found and the striking workers sorted out.

Why is the Prof. Saitoti team, dragging its feet on such a clear issue? The minister has insisted that he wants the lecturers’ salaries harmonised with those of their colleagues in this region and that no changes can be made until February. Why February? What’s so magical about this month? He hasn’t cared to explain. Shouldn’t the ministry have made a counter offer by now, as proof of willingness to implement new salary scales for the university teachers? Those of us who care about higher education would like to see speedy negotiations.

Granted, both sides have conducted themselves with decency and decorum. There have been no arrest, no physical intimidation and no eviction of lecturers from their houses during the duration of the strike. The lecturers’ union wants the salaries raised to between Sh 100,000 and Sh 900,000. They have been criticized for demanding a 2000 per cent increment. But how can they negotiate in the absence of an offer on the other side? I personally hate to see the continued uncalled-for closure of the universities, having belonged to the lot that was involved in the 1982 coup attempt. It’s this singular occurrence that led to the distortion of the university calendar, which now means that high school students remain idle for a year, waiting to join university.

Even as we urge the universities to try and generate their own revenue, let’s never forget that this is not and will never be the core business of the institutions of higher learning. But perhaps the time has come to encourage wealthy Kenyans and organizations to bet more involved in funding universities. We’ve seen Kenyans donate generously to churches; which is not bad. But how about extending this to universities? Are we going to see rich Kenyans bequeath some of their wealth to universities for research and bursaries? But the more immediate issue now is how to amicably end the impasse. The lecturers’ cry for better pay is a rational and justified demand.

Khakudu Agunda

Nation
December 25, 2003
NEWS
Universities reopen on Jan 5
Maseno and Egerton say most of the lecturers are prepared to work.

Two more universities will re-open on January 5. Maeno and Egerton said more
than three quarters of striking lecturers had signed back-to-work declaration forms. Maseno University deputy vice chancellor (academic affairs) John Agak said 98 per cent of the lecturers had returned the forms.

**Senate meeting**

But only First and Second year students will be allowed into the university to complete their first semester. Also recalled by a media advertisement yesterday were all postgraduate students. Prof. Agak said a special senate meeting on December 17 resolved to reopen the university’s immediately.

The decision was also arrived at after consultation with the academic staff and the lecturers were scheduled to start on January 17. At Egerton, the senate decided yesterday on the opening date which was, however, opposed by the local university Academic Staff Union officials. They argued that signing the forms did not mean that the lecturers had called off the strike.

The chapter chairman, Dr. Kimani wa Njoroge, said the university administration should not ask students to report to the institution before the lecturers’ grievances were addressed. Instead, he said the university should have allowed the union to negotiate with the government.

Lecturers interviewed confirmed they had submitted their forms before the midday deadline but pointed out that they would not resume duty on January 5.

Last Friday, the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology announced the institution would reopen on January 5. It also bases the decision on the fact that 60 per cent of the lecturers had signed the back to work declaration forms.

**Highest number**

The university of Nairobi lecturers had been given a deadline of December 23 to return similar forms to pave the way for the decision to reopen. The university has the highest number of lecturers among the six State universities.

Yesterday, some student leaders at the university asked Vice-Chancellor Crispus Kiamba to recall students by January 6. Led by students’ union chairman Tedd Munovi, the leaders asked the government to assess the demands by the Uasu to allow the resumption of studies in all the universities.

By Samuel Siringi and Watoro Kamau

Nation
December 29, 2003
OPINION
Perils of recalling students

Last week’s decision by three state universities – Egerton, Jomo Kenyatta and Maseno – to recall students on January 5 is an illustration of how determine the institutions are to rescue programmes thrown into disarray by the lecturers’ strike. Indeed, this is what most Kenyans hope for, because the more than 50,000 students are likely to stay longer at university to complete their courses due to a pay dispute they know little about.
Yet, although this is the right way to go, there is great danger of recalling students before the issue that occasioned the boycott, pay rise demands by lecturers, is resolved. First, there is the question of what will happen if the students report to their campuses

Standard
December 27, 2003
Varsities agree to remit dons’ withheld salaries

Striking public university lecturers are un for a pleasant shcok of the year. They would be paid all their withheld November and December salaries beginning today. Highly-placed sources yesterday indicated that had it not been for the Christmaas holiday, the lecturers in fact could by now be spending their salaries that were stopped when they staged their strike on November 10.

The university of Nairobi, Kenyata, JKTUAT, Maseno, Moi, Egerton and Western Univeristy College, have processed the salaries on the basis of the signed return-to-work forms. Also based on the forms that the striking academic staff signed, Maseno, JKTUAT and Egerton universities have already decided to reopen on January 5.

Kenyatta University Vice Chancellor, Prof. Everret Standa appealed to Uasu to show gratitude and call off the strike. “Now the ball is in the court of Uasu. The lecturers should now call off their strike and spare students of further suffering. Their action is not benefiting anyone – it is ruining our universities,” said Standa in a telephone interview.
He expressed concern that if Uasu insists on keeping its members on strike, the action may jeopardize the announcement of a new salary package in February as promise by Education minister, Prof. George Saitoti.

University of Nairobi Uasu Secretary general Mr. George Omondi welcomed the move on salaries saying “the stoppage of the salaries shouldn’t have happened in the first place. Our strike was justified and legal. It was therefore and abuse of our human rights for the government for the government to have made the mistake.”

He appealed to the government to urgently honour in toto the rest of the conditions Uasu gave on Monday which, if met would see the union call off the strike. The issue of the withheld salaries was one of the conditions Uasu issued on Monday and said it should be addressed urgently before they consider calling off their seven-week-old strike. Uasu also determined the establishment of an inter-ministerial tripartite committee to begin salary review negotiations.

Even with the good news of the salary payments, Uasu national chairman Dr. John Nderitu maintained the strike is on until the rest of the conditions are met. The lecturers went on strike on November 10 to demand better terms and conditions of service. Considering that councils are the employers Education permanent secretary, Prof. Karega Mutahi, made an unprecedented move when he wrote a circular directing the stoppage of salaries for striking academic staff.

However, the lecturers were unmoved and threats of possible sackings have not made them call off their strike.

By Ken Ramani

Standard
December 29, 2003
NEWS
Dons adamant on strike

Uasu is adamant that with or without the reopening of some of the public universities it members will be on strike. National chairman, Dr. John Nderitu, said yesterday the union is still awaiting a reply from Education Minister, Prof. George Saitoti, on the demands it wants met before calling off the strike. One of the demands involves the setting up of a tripartite committee comprising representatives of Uasu and Ministries of Education and Treasury which will be involved in pay negotiations.

“As far as we are concerned, lecturers won’t teach even if students report back on January 5 as has been announced by maseno and Egerton,” said Nderitu.

Standard
December 29, 2003
OPINION
Why striking lecturers should return to work

Kenyatta university’s vice-chancellor, Prof. Everret Standa argues that lecturers at public universities should give the government the benefit of doubt and call off their strike. He was interviewed by Ken Ramani.

Question: Who is to blame for the on-going strike?
Answer: The issue of who should or should not take the blame is not important at this point. What is important is that an urgent solution to the crisis is needed to spare the students and parents further agony. The strike is too costly to the economy and must be called off immediately.

How has the strike affected the six public universities?
Kenyatta university’s popular evening and school-based programmes have suffered a major jolt that would take many years to recover. Teachers who attend residential lectures and sit examinations during holidays did not do so this December due to the strike.

The university has in the process lost millions of shillings in revenue. On the other hand, Nairobi, Moi, JKUAT, Egerton and Maseno universities too have lost millions of shillings from their module II programmes.

There are also foreign students who were forced to travel back to their countries after the lecturers staged an indefinite strike. Lecturers themselves have lost millions of shillings they were earning from the programmes on top of their normal salaries and allowances.

Why do you feel the Universities Academic Staff Union (Uasu) should call off the strike?
Education Minister George Saitoti has said a new package would be announced in February. The government has acknowledged academics are underpaid and is doing something about it. It is therefore a show if unnecessary defiance for Uasu to hold on to the strike.

Why do you think Saitoti will make good his pledge?
Let us separate Saitoti the man from the Ministry of Education. He is a messenger of the government of which he articulates its position on important matters such as the lecturers’ salaries. We should all appreciate that it is the first time the Narc government has made such a pledge and should be given the time to make the necessary arrangements.

You believe the government is bothered by the plight of lecturers?
Yes. Unlike the former Kanu regime which refused to register Uasu, Narc registered it within three months in office. The union is now the lecturers’ mouthpiece on matters of common interest. Narc has also promised that from February, the local academics would receive salaries not less than what our counterparts in Tanzania and Uganda earn. The government has already implemented its pre-election pledge on free primary education. What else do we want to hear or see to be convinced Narc is bothered by our scandalous salary package?

What are the long-term implications of the strike?
Honestly the lecturers are about to squander the goodwill they are enjoying in government corridors. They should realize that they can’t arm twist the government into doing things within their own set deadlines. Considering that it is taxpayers’ money involved, sobriety need to be exercised by lecturers in their pursuit of better terms of service.

What is the magic in this February date?
The public is well aware of the world bank and International Monetary Fund conditionalities on the government’s wage bill which they are demanding should be kept within certain margins if the economy has to be back on its feet. High level consultations
are going on between the government and donors on the salary issues. Lecturers should not forget other cadres of the civil servants have also been promised higher salaries which are yet to be implemented.

It was unfortunate that when Usau was making its recommendations to the government, donors were also making their own conditions for aid resumption. The government was really in a precarious position. I am sure a solution would soon be found to the controversy.

Is the government doing enough to improve the general conditions of civil servants?

The civil service remuneration and Harmonisation committee has been set up. Universities would be represented in all its sittings. An inter-university councils committee has also been set up to negotiate with Usau in their capacity as employers. This is an achievement since Usau would make its input in whatever decision that touches on its members.

But how can the councils negotiate with Usau yet they have not recognized its chapters?

The councils will soon recognise the union chapters and accord them the necessary legal framework to participate in critical deliberations. The unions should recognize the councils as employer and return its members to their work stations as negotiations get underway.

Usau should also respect labour laws. You can’t negotiate with an employer while you keep off your work station. We should learn to negotiate instead as opposed to going on strike whenever faced with a contentious matter.

Is it in order to reopen the universities before Usau calls off the strike?

Usau should not be the one to dictate when to open or close the universities. Lecturers signed individual contracts with councils – the employers which they have to honour. We hope that by the time the universities re-open, a solution could have been found to the crisis. The withheld salaries and allowances of striking lecturers could be paid immediately normalcy returns to our campuses.

Nation
December 30, 2003
NEWS
Striking dons paid their dues
Payment was one of the lecturers’ conditions for returning to work

Striking university lecturers have been paid all their withheld salaries. This was one of the conditions the dons gave the government before they could call off the strike. However, they have vowed not to return to class unless 17 conditions are fulfilled. The lecturers started receiving their salaries on December 21. The payments had been stopped when they went on strike on November 10.

Union officials said although one of the conditions had not been met, they were waiting for total compliance. University Academic Staff Union chairman John Nderitu and secretary Charles Namachanja said unless the government met their demands, they would not call off their strike.

Three universities have already recalled students beginning Monday next week. The Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Maseno and Egerton said
more than three quarters of the striker had signed back-to-work declaration forms. Maseno University deputy vice-chancellor (academic affairs) John Agak said 98 per cent of the lecturers had returned the forms.

The University of Nairobi lecturers had been given a deadline of December 23 to return similar forms, to pave the way for the reopening. The university has the highest number of lecturers among the six state universities.

Yesterday, Dr. Nderitu said: “Our members will be on strike up to that time solutions to our problems are found.”

He said students had supported the action and wanted to be taught by “lecturerd who were well fed and clothed.”

Mr. Namachanja said they gave their conditions to Labour assistant minister Peter Oduyo on December 17 but the government had not responded. The officials were speaking at the Chiromo club yesterday.

The conditions include that the negotiations of the proposed salary and terms and conditions of service begin on January 5 and end on January 19, 2004.

- That the salary package and other items and conditions of service be implemented with effect from February 1, 2004 and be backdated to July 1, 2003.
- Uasu, Ministries of Education, Labour and Finance be the only ones involved in the salary talks and that the union have a 50 per cent representation.
- The proposed negotiations shall be based on the Kennya Institute for Public Policy Research (KIPPPRA) report and the Uasu document.
- The lecturers also demanded to be given the KIPPPRA report a week before the start of the negotiations.

The dons do not want the proposed salary package and other terms of conditions to be staggered. Salary proposals worked out by KIPPPRA have been given to Education Minister George Saitoti. They are yet to be made public.

By David Mugonyi

People
December 30, 2003
NEWS
Strike still on, insist Uasu

The Universities Academic Staff Union (UASU) has scoffed at the announcement by public universities that they will reopen on Monday next week. The Uasu national chairman Dr. John Nderitu, maintained that the strike was still on despite declaration by Nairobi, Egerton, Maseno and JUAT universities that lecturers would resume work on Monday when students return to the campuses.

Nderitu said that Uasu was still waiting for the ministry of labour to work out a return to work formula so that lecturers can resume duty. Addressing the press in Nairobi, the chairman wondered whether the universities’ administration and non-teaching staff would be able to take care of the students once they return.
Academic Staff in all public universities went on strike almost two months ago demanding a salary increment.

The lecturers have since agreed to sign back-to-work declaration forms but have been adamant that the strike was still on, saying that the forms have no legal basis.

Nation
December 30, 2003
Letter to the editor
Respect scholarship ad resolve strike by lecturers

It is a fact that public university lecturers are grossly underpaid despite their contribution to the country’s development. If Africa’s poorest counties can afford to pay their lecturers better, why not us? This is something that calls for urgent attention from the government. It is painful that despite our government being headed by an intellectual and the Ministry of Education being headed by a former lecturer, the suffering of our lecturers has continued to be given a deaf ear.

The economy has been performing poorly, not just because of mismanagement, but due to a number of other factors. The brain drain that has hit us had had a negative impact on our economy. It will be remembered that the international Monetary Fund had seconded some technocrats to help jump-start the economy during the former regime. Was this not an act of recognition of scholarship? Why the double standards when we have similar brains in our national universities seeking better pay?

Remuneration should be pegged on an individual’s hard work. Good education is a key to good life and an indication of status in society. If the government cannot recognize this, then how do we expect to have a society devoid of corruption?

The distribution of wealth has been most unbalanced. Most of it is in the hands of those who are not well-read, but who knew enough to plunder and loot. If our economy depends on subsistence agriculture, then how do we expect our researchers to live in abject poverty?

One critic of the strike indicated that lecturers do not carry out research nor publish academic papers in referred journals. Academic research and publishing are quite involving and it all boils down to funding. With the pathetic salaries earned by our scholars, one should not expect any meaningful academic engagement by the country’s top brains. Those who work in other sectors but have Masters and PhDs might fear the heat of academia, and so this should not be used to deny lecturers what is rightfully theirs.

The question of lecturers’ workload should not be an issue because this reflects negatively on the way universities recruit academic staff. Besides the huge salaries they deserve, lecturers should be provided with enough funds to carry out research and participate in various international academic seminars.

Improving our education system calls for recognition of graduates’ participation towards development. When our parliamentarians earn handsomely for just debating all year round on issues which do not impact directly on us, it is quite ironical that lecturers should be so poor. Should they abandon university and become politicians or lick the boots of politicians to get lucrative appointments?

Universities should also have promotion policies and a way to reward performance among their staff. It is pathetic that some people work for over 10 years
without any promotion.

ANTHONY O. ODUOL
Maseno University

Nation
December 31, 2003
NEWS
200 lecturers say they won’t resume work

At least 200 Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology lecturers have vowed not to resume work on January 5. They argue that the Universities Academic Staff Union has not called off the strike and urged the union’s officials in JKUAT, Nairobi and Maseno to resign over what they termed betrayal of the national office by backing calls to re-open the universities.

Led by a union official Mutuura Mberia, the lecturers gave JKUAT chapter officials up to January 5 to resign or to be thrown out by members. He accused the officials of acting as stooges of vice-chancellors and Ministry of Education officials and working to destabilize the union.

“The chapter office bearers are sell outs to both members and the national officials and they should quit honourably and pave the way for more credible leaders,” the lecturers said in Thika Town. If the union officials did not resign, members would call for a special general meeting to elect near leaders, said a statement read by Mr. Mberia.

By NATION correspondent

People
January 2, 2004
News
Inter Varsity consortium formed

An Inter Public councils consultative Forum has been formed to deal with issues that are common among public universities in Kenya. In a press statement, the forum’s chairperson, Dr. Eddah Gachukia said the forum’s membership comprises of chairmen of public universities, permanent secretaries in the ministries of Education Science and Technology, finance, office of the president, labour and chief executive federation of Kenya employers.

She said the competition of the forum is of great importance since it would bring together all significant persons in universities’ management to discuss the problems and challenges that public universities face.

“The composition if the inter public university councils consultative forum is significant because this is the first tie that eminent chairmen of public university councils, the respective vice-chancellors and key relevant ministries have come together to chart a common approach to the problems and challenges that cut across all public universities in the country,” she said.

Dr. Gachukia, who is also the Moi University Council chairman said the first task of the forum would be facilitating dialogue and negotiations between the university
academic staff union (UASU) with all stakeholders with a view to arriving at a collective bargaining agreement.

By Martin Kamande

People
January 3, 2004
News
Saitoti lauds varsity councils

The government has commended the Public University Council for forming an Inter-Public Universities consultative Forum. Education ministeer Prof. George Saitoti termed the formation of the forum as “a very proactive initiative that would greatly enhance the University Councils’ problem solving capacity.”

“The creation of the consultative forum is a very proactive initiative as it greatly enhances the capacity of the councils to come up with concrete solutions to the common problems facing the universities from time to time,” Saitoti said.

In a statement, Saitoti added that the government supports the initiative and that the forum should expect maximum cooperation from the government, through the ministry of education science and technology.

The Inter public university councils consultative forum was formed on Tuesday with Moi University council chairma, Dr. Eddah Gachukia as the first head.

By Mathew Soo

Standard
January 4, 2004
NEWS
Lecturers reject pay talks team

University lecturers have rejected a forum constituted early this week to address their strike in favour of a tripartite committee They dismissed the Inter-University Councils Consultative Forum (IUCCF) and vowed to push on with their strike. The forum was established on Tuesday to negotiate a deal with striking public university lecturers.

Universities Academic Staff Union’s executive committee members, led by secretary general Charles Namchanja, said IUCCF had no legal basis to negotiate a pay dispute that has already been reported to the ministry of Labour. The union officials who met at Chiromo club in Nairobi, however welcomed the announcement that university councils would from next week recognize Uasu chapters.

Meanwhile, inspection of private schools will be reintroduced this year, the government announced yesterday.

Education minister, Prof. George Saitoti said the exercise which was abandoned several years ago, would resume to ensure that the quality of education was not compromised and ministry’s directives were adhered to. Saitoti said since the introduction of free primary education last year, inspection of schools had been intensified.
He further announced that 1,052 zonal inspectors of schools county-wide would be given vehicles to enhance their inspection activities. Saitoti was addressing the media in his Jogoo House Office.

By Ken Ramani

Nation
January 5, 2004
NEWS
Confusion as varsities reopen

Confusion looms at three public universities as they reopen today before the lecturers strike is formally called off. Lecturers at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Maseno and Egerton have vowed not to resume teaching when students report after two month’s closure.

They said yesterday that the decision to recall students was based on the wrong assumption that they had signed back-to-work declaration forms. “Let them reopen, but we will not open our mouths to teach the students,” said UASU national charman, Mr John Nderitu. The union vowed not to give in to government arm-twisting until their demands were met.

The three universities decided to recall students because mot lecturers had signed the return-to-work forms “indicating that they will teach when the institutions reopen.”

All the six state universities were closed on November 10 after lecturers went on strike to demand better terms of service. Their pay demands ranges from Sh 159,000 and 890,000 per month. Currently a tutorial fellow earns Sh 15,000, a lecturer Sh 17,000 an associate professor Sh 26,000 and a full professor Sh 31,000.

The union officials told reporters at the weekend that their members were united and would not relent on the demands. “Its illegal and unconstitutional to coerce and intimidate lecturers back into the classroom”, said their legal adviser, Mr. Ben Sihanya.

Uasu secretary general Charles Namachanja said they gave the back-to-work conditions to Labour assistant minister Peter Odoyo on December 17, but there was no response.

Among the conditions were for the negotiations to begin today. They asked the government to find ways to resolve the dispute. Although they welcomed the formation of an inter-university consultative forum chaired by educationist Eddah Gachukia, they said they should have been consulted.

At Maseno, some lecturers have agreed to return to work today, but on condition that they are paid their November salaries. They received their December salaries, but were denied those of November.

Kenyatta and Moi plan to reopen on January 10 and 19, while Nairobi lecturers were given a deadline of December 23 to return to work.

By Tony Kago and Samuel Siringi

People
January 7, 2004
NEWS
Table new package, Uasu tells government
Hopes for resumption of teaching at all public universities fizzled out yesterday when the government maintained that it would not table figures on salary increment as demanded by the striking lecturers before resuming work. The UASU members consequently vowed that they would not enter into negotiation with the government until it releases figures on how they will pay their salary hike demands.

While addressing a press conference yesterday after meeting the recently formed inter-public university council consultative meeting at Jogoo House, education minister Prof. George Saitoti said that the government would release the figures by February this year.

The government, he observed, was still analyzing the proposals on pay hike demands as recommended by KIPPRA – a private consultative firm contracted by the government last year to look into terms and conditions of the lecturers. But Uasu’s secretary general Charles Namachanja maintained yesterday that releasing of figures on their pay hike was one of the condition given to the government before the striking lecturers resume work.

The government’s stand now throws the recently formed inter-public university council consultative into disarray as the striking dons insist that they will not dialogue with the committee on return to work formula till the government tables figures on how they will be paid.

Last week the government set up a forum chaired by renowned educationist Eddah Gachukia to address the university lecturers’ strike which is entering its third month.

The forum brings together chairmen of all public university councils, vice chancellors, permanent secretaries for education, office of the president, finance and ministry of labour.

By Kimutai Ngeno and Michele Katami

Nation
January 8, 2004
NEWS
Lecturers turn down Saitoti plea

A government appeal to striking lecturers to resume duty was yesterday defied for the third day running since three universities reopened. They would not heed education minister George Saitoti’s call as pay negotiations went on. At Moi which is yet to reopen, top managers walked out of a meeting called to fix the reopening date.

Vice-chancellor David Some led council chairperson Dr. Eddah Gachukia and his deputies Samuel Gudu and Margaret Kamar in the protest after lecturers hijacked the meeting called by the “senior management.”

Trouble started shortly after 9 am when Prof. Some and the managers sat on the guesthouse podium as the lecturers continued discussing their plight. The more than 600 lecturers boycotting lunch the university had prepared, saying it was meant to “bribe” them.

More than 50 senate member openly supported the strike saying they too, had low pay.
Learning resumed

Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology vice chancellor Nick Wanjohi said learning had commenced at the institution, but would not let the journalists in. He said doing so would be a security risk. Prof. Wanjohi addressed a news conference at the Grand Regency Hotel, Nairobi, and said most students were preparing for their examinations to be held later this month.

But Uasu spokesman Mutura Mberia dismissed the VCs remarks and said lecturers were yet to resume duty.

At Maseno, 29 lecturers were yet to get their December salaries despite a directive from Prof. Saitoti that all universities pay them by December 24. Tempers were high as the 29 dons alleged victimization, intimidation and bias by vice-chancellor Frederick Onyango.

Reported by Samuel Siringi

People
January 8, 2004
NEWS
Striking lecturers throw out their university council boss

Striking lecturers at Moi University yesterday caused drama after they forced university council’s chairperson out of a meeting, maintaining that they were not ready to discuss with her team salary increase, which is the cause for the strike, and a return-to-work formula.

Gachukia, accompanied by university vice-chancellor David Some and other council members, hurriedly left the venue of the meeting at Moi university guest house in Eldoret and proceeded to hold a council meeting at Moi Referral and Teaching Hospital.

It emerged that the council had called a meeting with the lecturers at the venue to discuss the strike, but on arrival they found a meeting of the local chapter of UASU going on, as has been the case since the strike started.

The council members occupied seats at the high table, but unbothered by their presence, the union members continued with their meeting, chaired by Chapter chairman Musalia Edebe, who only informed the meeting that they had visitors woes mission he did not know.

“We shall hear what they want to tell us later hoping that it is not about the strike,” said Edebe. At this juncture Prof. Some sought to know what meeting he was going to which Edebe said was one of the union’s Wednesday meetings. Said Some: “Then we have no business here since I thought we had called our meeting to meet the lecturers.” Gachukia then stood up and without uttering a word walked out leading other council members to a meeting at the nearby hospital.

Meals that had been prepared for the nearly 600 lecturers went to waste as the lecturers refused to eat. They spoke bitterly of the frustration from the time the strike started but maintained they will not give in until their conditions are met.

After the lecturers’ meeting, more than 60 Moi University Senate members present held a consultative meeting at the same venue. Reading out resolutions Prof. Kembu Sure said they urged the institutions management to immediately release withheld salaries unconditionally.
They also resolved that the university would not be reopened on January 19 unless the strike is over by then.

“We are firm and we remain open for any dialogue which may lead to the betterment of all of us. Attempts to intimidate us into giving up will not yield anything,” said Sure.

By Mathews Ndanyi and Gerald Wanyama

People
January 9, 2004
NEWS
New demands from striking lecturers to the government over salary hike…as three varsities are threatened with closure

Hopes of learning resuming in all public universities this month seems to be dwindling even further as the striking lecturers press for the government to table figures on how their pay hike demand will be implemented. Uasu Secretary general Charles Namachanja stressed on Tuesday that there is no room for dialogue till the government tables figures on how they will be paid. The striking dons are demanding a salary between a minimum of Shs 159,000 and a maximum of Shs 890,000.

Namachanja maintained that releasing the figures on their pay hike was one of the conditions given to the government before the striking lecturers resume their work. This condition comes strong against the background that the formation of the inter-public university council consultative forum by the government last week would initiate a dialogue with the striking dons to end the strike which is entering its third month.

Last week, the government set up a forum chaired by renowned educationist Dr. Eddah Gachukia to address the university lecturers’ strike. The forum brings together chairmen of all public universities’ councils, vice chancellors, permanent secretaries for education, office of the president, finance and ministry of labour.

Education minister, Prof. George Saitoti, was hopeful on the consultative forum and appealed to UASU to dialogue and negotiate with the established broad-based forum, the move he said would bring to an end the industrial dispute caused by the striking dons.

“The formation of this committee is coming at a time when we have had an industrial dispute and it also creates an opportunity for all stakeholders to learn from each other and establish better working relations in the future,” said the minister at a press conference.

He added that the government fully supports and has confidence that the forum will handle the matters stipulated in the universities. “I have full confidence in the university council to handle stipulated matters,” said Saitoti.

But in what appears to aggravate the situation, the government on the other hand is adamant that tabling the figures will be done at later date, an indication that the forum formed to end the strike may not at all initiate talks with the striking dons.

While addressing the press after meeting the inter-public university council this week, Prof. Saitoti maintained that the government will table the figures on how much the striking lecturers will be paid, in February. According to the education minister, the government was at the moment analyzing the proposal on pay hike as recommended by the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research (KIPPRA) – a private consultative firm
contracted by the government late last year to look into the terms and conditions of service for lecturers.

The government, he observed, was still analyzing the proposals on pay hike demands as recommended by KIPPRA before arriving at a figure, which was sustainable. And yesterday, it emerged that the three public universities; JKUAT, Egerton and Maseno which opened on Monday may close as there were no learning. An official with UASU confided in us that lecturers were not executing any academic transactions and expressed his fears that the situation may turn worse for the students.

In Egerton University, tension is reported to be high, as students demand compensation for time lost. And according to UASU chairman John Nderitu learning will not take place in all the three universities until their demands are met. As things stand now, individual university councils have powers to run and manage the affairs of their respective varsities. According to Saitoti, the individual council is empowered to appoint any academic or administrative staff as stipulated by the university statutes.

By Kimutai Ngeno.
A day long meeting to resolve the two month-lecturers’ strike ended in a stalemate yesterday. The informal meeting between inter-public university council consultative Forum chaired by Dr. Eddah Gachukia, and the lecturers representatives failed to agree on the recognition of the Universities Academic Staff Union. The meeting at Kenyatta University was called to resolve the crisis which has paralysed learning in the six public universities since November 10.

It was attended by vice-chancellors Prof. Crispus Kiamba(Nairobi), Prof. Nick Wanja (Jomo Kenyatta), Prof. Frederick Onyango(Maseno), Prof. Everret Standa(Kenyatta) and Prof. Ezra Maritim(Egerton).

The union was represented by its national officials led by chairman Dr. Jon Nderitu and Secretary General Charles Namachanja. The Federation of Kenya Employers was represented by executive director Tom Owuor. Dr. Nderitu said the national officials would meet chapter officials this morning to agree on a common stand. Lecturers were yesterday locked in a day-long meeting to tackle the strike which enters its third month tomorrow.
Yesterday’s forum was expected to find a way to negotiate the lecturers demands for increased salaries, which is at the core of the dispute.

Increase Salaries
They want the government to increase their salaries to between Sh 159,000 and Sh 890,000. Currently, a tutorial fellow earns Sh 15,000 a month and a lecturer earns Sh 17,000. An associate professor is paid Sh 26,000 while a full professor earns Sh 31,000. Member of the forum were the first to hold a meeting before they called in Uasu officials fore the marathon one. They had only a brief break for lunch at 4 pm before resuming the talks.

But as the meeting went on Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology students were demanding compensation from the administration for expenses incurred since they reported back on Monday.

At the same time, their leaders said no learning had taken place as a result of the strike and accused vice-chancellor Nick Wanjohi of misleading the public.

Prof. Wanjohi on Wednesday said learning had resumed at the Juja based institution. But yesterday, the students said they wanted the university to pay them Sh 3,000 each as compensation for fare and other expenses. The local Uasu chapter also dismissed reports that the lecturers had resumed duty. The officials led by secretary general Teresa Akenga said no lecturer had gone to class as reported by the administration.

At Maseno, lecturers were divided over the resumption of duty. Some were teaching as others said they would only resume work after the strike was called off. The university has released the end of semester timetable with the examinations expected to start on January 28 for the first and second year students session.

By Nation Reporter

Standard
January 10, 2004
NEWS
Students go home as dons strike rages

A Number of Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology students have vacated the campus after staying for five days without lectures. And those who remained have appealed to their lecturers to resume work so that they can complete the semester course work. A contingent of anti-riot police officers from Juja police station had in the morning repulsed some students who had attempted to march to the Nairobi/Thika highway. Sources said there were no injuries reported during the clash.

Before marching to the highway, the students had engaged university staff in an exchange of words at the finance department offices after failing to be reimbursed Sh. 3,000 for their up-keep. An official said the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Administration, Finance and Planning, Prof. Stephen Agong, had not authorized the officers to pay the students.

The students blamed the vice-chancellor, Prof. Nick Wanjohi, for allegedly lying to the public that lecturers had resumed teaching. The university reopened on Monday
and lecturers have insisted they won’t teach until their pay demands are met. Agong said on phone the management has not made a decision on the reimbursement of money to students.

Agong, Wanjoyi and other top administrators were yesterday meeting at Egerton University for a Joint Admissions Board event. At Egerton, lecturers re-affirmed their commitment to the strike. They said talks with a government committee had collapsed. During a meeting at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, they were told by their representatives the talks with inter-public university council consultative committee were fruitless.

The dons resolved to continue with the strike until the government accepts to increase their pay. Meanwhile, the university has started subsiding food to students who have been at the campus since Monday.

Food prices have been cut by half and the university has released Sh. 2.5 million to the 3,500 students for reimbursement of fares.

Standard correspondent

Nation
Opinion
January 11, 2004
Seek end to lecturers’ strike

For a whole two months, there has been no learning at the six public universities as the lecturers have stuck to their gune, refusing to return to class until they get a pay rise. As the lecturers’ strike continues, the major losers are obviously the students since programmes at the institution have been paralysed. Though there has been some excitement over recent announcements by the universities concerning re-opening dates, this appears like an exercise in futility. There is little evidence of any learning having resumed at the universities which recalled students in the past week.

At the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology at juja, for instance, the students staged a demonstration on Friday, saying there had been no learning since they returned to the campus. And police had to be called in to quell the unrest.

It serves absolutely zero purpose to recall students when there are no signs that the programmes shelved on November 10, when the strike began, are about to resume. Having thousands of idle and aggrieved young people roaming around on the campus is certainly a recipe for confrontation and violence.

What the authorities must concentrate on is an effort to amicably end the strike. We believe that both the lecturers’ union on the one hand and the universities and the Ministry of Education, on the other, are keen to see the resumption of normal programmes.

The lecturers have made their point, which is that they are terribly underpaid and deserve a pay rise. On their part, the university administrators are not disputing this and are only appealing that the lecturers return to class as their new remuneration is worked on. In fact, Education minister Prof. George Saitoti, besides stating that he is studying the
recommendation of a report on the lecturers pay, has stated categorically that the earliest the increments can be effected is next month.

What is disappointing therefore, is the failure of the two groups, which are generally agreed on what needs to be done, to get down to discussing the nitty gritty. Whereas the lecturers have come up with a proposal, including figures the other side appears reluctant to even disclose it offer. It’s difficult to see how negotiations can begin in the absence of such a counter offer.

This is why we welcome the intervention of the joint university council Forum chaired by educationist Dr. Eddah Gachukia. The forum should move with haste to hammer out a deal to enable the universities reopen as soon as possible. The continued closure of the institutions is a waste of resources we can ill-afford.

Standard
January 12, 2004
NEWS
Pay talks hit dead end

Striking dons could be sacked this week

Striking University lecturers could be sacked this week and those willing to work will be asked to re-apply afresh for their jobs by January 19. The move follows yesterday’s collapse of the talks between UASU and the inter-public university council consultative Forum. The talks were attended by UASU national officials, vice chancellors of the six public universities, deputy vice-chancellors, council chairmen, registrars, the Federation of Kenya Employers, Treasury and Ministry of Labour officials.

IUCCF chair, Dr. Eddah Gachukia announced that time for negotiations with Uasu had come to “a sad end” adding that the councils today announce the next course of action. She regretted that Uasu officials had acted in bad faith by declining to call off the strike before IUCCF could sign a recognition agreement as agreed last Thursday.

After the talks collapsed, Gachukia and her team moved to the UoN VCs boardroom for a closed door meeting between the university administrators. A source at the meeting said among the actions to be taken will be to sack all striking lecturers and ask them to reapply and stop their January salaries.

Uasu blamed FKE executive director, Mr. Tom Owuor and Egerton university council chairman, Dr. Andrew Kiptoon for “intimidating them” into calling off the strike. However, at a press briefing later, Owuor and Kiptoon denied the allegations and defended their utterances saying: “We only expressed our disgust that Uasu officials were taking us on a ride.”

Gachukia disclosed that the Forum secretary, Prof. Everret Standa will today announce the next move of action on the matter. Gachukia regretted that Uasu had not expressed an iota of faith in the university councils yet they are their employers. She blamed the union officials for failing to call off the strike before formal negotiations on their salary demands could begin.

Uasu secretary-general Mr. Charles Namamchanja called on Education Minister, Prof. George Saitoti to release the Kenya Institute of Public Policy Research Analysis salary recommendations before further negotiations could be held.
Efforts to end dons’ strike fail

Negotiations to end the two month lecturers strike reached a deadlock yesterday. The Universities Academic Staff Union refused to call off the strike demanding that the government lays on the table whatever it had in order to facilitate “meaningful negotiations.”

The lecturers went on strike on November 10 demanding better pay, which the Education minister, Prof. George Saitoti said would be reviewed next month. The joint universities council met at Kenyatta University on Thursday and drafted a return-to-work formula, which Uasu officials said would be signed after consultation with their branches.

The unsigned agreement released to the press yesterday by a committee led by Dr. Eddah Gachukia outlined seven points, which included calling off the strike. But lecturers refused to go back to work, demanding that point number six which stated, “That the negotiations on outstanding issues, including those raised by the union will commence on January 19, 2004”.

According to the Dr. Gachukia team, which comprises all the six vice-chancellors, the union should have called off the strike to pave way for negotiations.

The Federation of Kenya Employers Executive Director Mr. Tom Owuor said at a press conference held at the boardroom of the University of Nairobi Vice-chancellor Prof. Crispus Kiamba: “The prolongation of the strike will be an enormous cost to our country. We are disappointed.

Said Dr. Gachukia: “Doors have been shut on the forum( Joint Universities Councils Forum). It is a very sad day for us Kenyans; we thought we were achieving something.”

Stay away continues

On Saturday Uasu chapters met at their various campuses to consider the government’s request that they return to work. Uasu National chairman Dr. John Nderitu, said: “We expected that the strike would end by January 19, but since the government has failed to table something, we have agreed to continue with our stay-away.

Their refusal to return to work saw Kenyatta University Students being sent home on Saturday as they reported back to read.

At the Moi University, lecturers are expected to hand in signed return-to-work forms by noon today. The more than 800 lecturers yielded to pressure to sign forms at a stormy meeting last Friday.

Once they sign the forms, the lecturers will have committed their willingness to resume duty by noon today. However, the lecturers asked their Uasu chapter secretary general, Dr. Maurice Ogeta, to write to the University administration protesting the inclusion of “some unfavourable clauses” in the forms.

The lecturers agreed to sign the forms only two days after the university’s top managers dramatically walked out of a meeting last Wednesday. But lecturers who were
at the Friday meeting, vowed to stand firm and oppose any moves to reopen the university before their pay dispute was resolved.

During the meeting, the lecturers complained that they were given short time to respond to the forms they received through faculty deans and departmental head as they were written on January 6 and we are expected to return by January 12”.

They also took issue with a clause that indicated that the university administration closed the institution on November 11 because UASU called a strike saying they were not part to the closure.

Protest letter

Dr. Ogeta was asked to write the protest letter and “clearly indicate signing the forms does not necessarily mean we have accepted all the condition in it.”

Maseno University UASU chairman Dr. Simala Inyani, complained that the VC, Prof. Frederick Onyango was autocratic and asked for backing from his Moi colleagues to “savage” them.

Mr. Edebe and Mr. Ogeta were categorical that their members would not teach until they received a pay package “commensurate with our labour.”

The lecturers took issue with the university administration’s claim that the government had made commitment to increase their salaries next month saying it was “pure lies”. Speaker after speaker at the meeting called on Uasu to stop negotiating with the inter-public university council consultative forum over their salaries saying the forum had no mandate by law to do so.

Confusion reigned at Egerton University’s Kisii campus yesterday, with some students vowing to stay put until the lecturers strike ends. Those who reported to the campus last week said they were waiting for an official communication from their vice-chancellor, Prof Ezra Maritim before deciding their next course of action.

The students urged President Kibaki to intervene and end the stalemate. Many of the students left campus at the weekend to await fresh reporting dates.

Report by Julius Bosire, Richard

Nation
January 13, 2004
NEWS
University closed after riots

Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology was yesterday closed indefinitely following students riots. Angry students complained that they had not been taught since they reopened last week and demanded compensation from the university administration for the expenses they had incurred.

Riot police dispersed the students when they ignored the closure notice and turned violent. In a terse closure notice signed by the Vice chancellor Prof. Nick Wanjohi, all the 3,000 students were ordered to vacate the university premises by 9.30 am.

Meanwhile, Education minister George Saitoti said only dialogue would lead to a meaningful agreement between the striking lecturers and the government. Prof. Saitoti said in a statement: “I am requesting the parties to give dialogue another chance to chart the way forward, as the implication of not reaching an agreement will be far-reaching and
must be avoided.

Prof. Saitoti had earlier met with the Joint Universities Council Forum, chaired by Dr. Eddah Gachukia.

Immediately after the meeting with the minister, the Forum invited UASU to a meeting today at the University of Nairobi. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 2.30 pm. Uasu chairman John Nderitu said he was happy that the government was committed to dialogue to end the two month strike.

The JkUat student leaders said the closure was unprocedural. Earlier, the students lit a huge bonfire at the entrance to the administration block using chairs from the offices and demanded Prof. Wanjohi’s removal. They later raided the kitchen and looted food, utensils and other items as workers watched helplessly.

Police engaged the students in running battles which spilled over to the neighbouring villages of Gachocho and Mucatha.

At Kenyatta University, lecturers yesterday declared they would seek alternative jobs elsewhere if the government refused to improve their terms of service. In a meeting held at the university’s graduation square, the more than 500 lecturers vowed never to resume work until the government tabled figures on their improved remuneration.

At Egerton, most students who reported back at the Njoro campus last week, yesterday voluntarily left for their homes after the lecturers refused to end their strike.

By Oliver Musembi and Julius Bosire

Standard
January 13, 2004
Students riot over closure

University students went on the rampage yesterday and destroyed property after the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology was closed. The closure followed the collapse of negotiations on lecturers’ pay. The students set on fire furniture from the office of the Chancellor, Prof. Ali Mazrui.

The riot was triggered by a circular signed by Prof. Nick Wanjohi, informing all the students that the university had been closed indefinitely and ordering them to leave the campus by noon. The decision followed Sunday’s collapse of talks between striking lecturers and the inter-public university council consultative forum.

The lecturers’ strike started in November last year, and resulted in the closure of all public universities.

Yesterday, Education minister George Saitoti appealed to the lecturers’ union and the Forum to return to the negotiating table and “give dialogue a second chance”.

In a statement, Prof. Saitoti said it was regrettable that despite all council efforts, the lecturers had refused to call off the strike. “As Kenyans know, the current strike...hurts the interest of the nation especially those of the families with students whose learning has been disrupted.”

At JKUAT, the students demanded to be paid Sh 7,000 each – money they claim to have spent since Monday last week, when they reported back after a two-month hiatus...
following the November 10 closure of all public universities. Anti-riot police officers watched as the students burnt Prof. Mazrui’s office furniture, estimated to worth over Sh 120,000.

Mazrui is the only chancellor who has publicly tol the government to pay lecturers well to stem the brain drain. The students said their colleagues in other universities had been refunded their expenses. At Kenyatta University, UASU officials vowed to carry on with the strike, now in the third month. Chapter chairman Jackton Ogweno claimed that the Gachukia-led consultative forum was out to ruin UASU and had no genuine agenda.

“We thought the forum was meant to sort out other pertinent issues afflicting the universities. We have since realized that its agenda was to trick us to call off the strike and go back home to lecture theatres empty-handed. That is why we refused to sign a return-to-work formula on Sunday,” said Ogweno.

Shadow Education minister Prof. Ruth Oniang’o criticized the vice-chancellors of Maseno, JKUAT and Egerton for re-opening the institutions before a solution to the lecturers was found.

“The VCs should take full responsibility for the situation. Why did they decide to use students as baits to end the lecturers strike?” posed Oniang’o. She warned that should the government make a mistake of unilaterally sacking lecturers – like the Kanu regime did in 1994 – higher education would suffer irreparably.

At Egerton University, students left for their home after the salary talks flopped. The over 3,500 students – at the Njoro Campus since Monday last week but have never been taught – packed their belongings and streamed out of campus form 8 am.

The students had been given Sh 500 each by the administration as fare reimbursement, and their meals were also being subsidized for the week they stayed there. Yesterday morning, the students left without any communication from the administration and their union leaders were left behind to consult.

The acting chairman of the students’ union of Egerton University, Mr. Asher Otiende, said they were disappointed by the collapse of the talks. Otiende called on the Kenya National Union of Students to call a grand rally in Nairobi where they would demand the sacking of Education Minister George Saitoti, whom he accused of mishandling the strike.

At Maseno University, where partial learning was going on, the senate was holding a crisis meeting yesterday.

Nation
January 14, 2004
NEWS
Varsity dons call off the strike

_Uasu reaches agreement with government after six hours of talks_

University lecturers last night called off their strike, two months and three days after it started. Six-and-a-half hours after negotiations between the Usu leader and the Joint Universities Council Forum led by Dr. Eddah Gachukia finally drummed out an agreement. The lecturers decided to return to work after the government promised that it would table new salary scaled for them next Monday.

The universities also agreed to recognize Usu which was by last night working
out a collective bargaining agreement which was expected to be presented to the government later today. The agreement sets out the terms and conditions for the lecturers. The lecturers were also assured that they would receive all their two-months back pay which had been withheld since they went on strike.

Each university was also asked to organize and inform their students when they should report back to campus. Students at the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture were on Monday dispersed by riot police when they protested against the university closure. The students who returned to campus a week ago were demanding Sh 500 each as compensation for having been recalled from home and yet they were not being taught.

Teaching in some of the campuses in the country’s six public universities was disrupted while others had not recalled their students. The University of Nairobi had suspended opening indefinitely. The lecturers in public universities went on strike on November 10 to press for higher salaries.

Currently, a lecturer earns a maximum of Sh 23, 640 while a full professor earns a maximum of Sh 39, 920.

Usasu has proposed that the lowest paid lecturer – a tutorial fellow – earn Sh 266,438 in salaries and allowances and a full professor Sh 987,020. The last time a strike by the lecturers was held was in 1994 when they were pressuring the government into registering Uasu.

The meeting was attended by vice-chancellors Prof. Crispus Kiamba (Nairobi), Prof. Nick Wanjohi (Jomo Kenyatta), Prof. Frederick Onyango (Maseno), Prof. Everret Standa (Kenyatta), Prof. David Some (Moi) and Prof. Ezra Maritim (Egerton).

The union was represented by its national officials led by chairman Dr. John Nderitu and secretary general Dr. Charles Namachanja. The Federation of Kenya Employers was represented by executive director Tom Owuor.

The People
January 14, 2004
NEWS
Striking dons now call off the strike

The two month long strike in public universities was yesterday called off and individual universities can now reschedule the date of resumption of classes. Calling off the strike, the UASU said that the move was in good faith to allow students to resume learning. In a day long meeting between the inter-public university council consultative forum with UASU at University of Nairobi, it was resolved that all return-to-work conditions be ratified for immediate implementation.

“What I will announce will be unpalatable to some but I must go into history for saying so, we are calling off the strike,” Dr. Kimani Njoroge UASU’s vice-national chairman announced amidst applause from the meeting which included representative of the students from all public universities.

The calling off of the strike followed a lot of consultation with the union insisting that other members must be consulted before reaching at the decision. Earlier on the union’s secretary general Charles Namachanja maintained that the strike will be called off on Saturday after consulting the National Delegate Conference (NDC).

Educationist Dr. Eddah Gachukia implored the union to make the decision of calling off the strike without necessarily consulting with other union members. While
succumbing to pressure to call off the strike, Namachanja said that the dons will now negotiate with the forum from Monday next week on implementation of the recommendations agreed between the striking lecturers and the forum.

The lecturers downed their tools on 10th November demanding salary hike from between a minimum of Shs 159,000 and Shs 890,000 per month. Both the ons and the forum recommended that the pay hike increase should not be less than that of East Africa Community region and that the figures should be availed immediately.

The government had contracted the Kenya Institute of Public Policy Research (KIPPRA) to look into terms and services for all university lecturers by comparing them with those from the region. The lecturers demanded that their colleagues who had sacked during the strike be reinstated and that those who had their salaries held be paid immediately.

Universities; Egerton and JKUAT were opened last week amidst tension as there was no sign of learning following the don’s strike.

By Kimutai Ngeno and Luciane Limo

Standard
January 14, 2004
OPINION
Strike is over, now address pay of dons

It was with relief that most greeted the news that the Universities Academic Staff Union (UASU) had last night called off the strike by their members. Before then observers were unanimous that it was unwise of the country’s university administrations to recall students to the institutions when the lecturers were still on strike. The result was unrest and demonstration and the worst of the must be the one which took place at the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) on Monday.

The decision to recall the students was foolish because the campuses closed because without lecturers there would be no learning and idle students would resort to violent behaviour. Then talks between the university administrations and the Ministry of Education on the one hand and Uasu on the other had deadlocked.

Uasu would not call off the strike over poor pay until and unless the government put a certain percentage increase on the table. The government through the Ministry of Education would not do this even as it acknowledged lecturers and professors are poorly paid. The government long declared the Uasu led strike illegal and insisted that it would not change tack until and unless Uasu called off the strike.

But why, we ask, were the lecturers and professors to wait until next month to be told what increment the government would offer them? What bones would have been broken if the news had been broken earlier?

Education chiefs must take the blame for the November to January strike by lecturers; University administrations must be held responsible for the mayhem on campuses and those JKUAT students who burnt Chancellor Ali Mazrui’s furniture must be punished.

Now that the strike is over, government must give lecturers and professors the pay increase they richly deserve.
Lecturers split over strike deal

A split emerged yesterday among public university’s lecturers over Tuesday’s decision to call off their two month strike. Some officials of the UASU protested at the timing of National vice-chairman Kimani Njoroge’s announcement of the end of the boycott. He did not consult the National delegates conference. The Moi, Kenyatta and Nairobi universities chapters argued that the union’s national officials did not consult the NDC, which was scheduled to meet on Saturday.

Fellow officials also accused Dr. Njoroge of making the announcement before everyone was in agreement.

Move irregular

National chairman John Nderitu conceded that the move was irregular but added: “Unfortunately, it is one of us who shot us in the foot. I regret it but we should turn this tragedy into a success by trusting and negotiating well with the government.”

National secretary general Charles Namachanja had told the Inter-public
University Council Consultative Forum headed by educationist Eddah Gachukia that the union would call off the strike, but only after the NDC. “We have accepted in principle to call off the strike,” he said, to the disapproval of the forum. “But we cannot do so as the decision has to be endorsed by the NDC, which meets on Saturday.”

Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology Vice Chancellor Nick Wanjohi said the Uasu stand amounted to “shiftin goal posts” and that the union would have rescinded its decision at the NDC meeting. It was then that Dr. Njoroge stood up and announced the end of the strike, promising that the officials would take full responsibility for the action. Mr. Namachanja and National Chairman John Nderitu then endorsed the decision.

But some chapters said yesterday that Dr. Njoroge did not follow procedures in calling off the strike. National Organising Secretary Musalia Edebe said Dr. Njoroge did not have the authority to call off the strike and only the NDC could make the decision. Mr. Edebe, who is also the chairman of the Moi University chapter accused Dr. Njoroge of succumbing to pressure from Prof. Wanjohi and Dr. Gachukia.

He added: “We will subject his (Dr. Njoroge’s ) decision to call of the strike to the conference and demand that he resigns. He has embarrassed us and we demand that he resigns. This is lack of trust and use of crude methods by some people, whom we can no longer trust.”

Mr. Edebe said any decision on the strike should have been announced only after the government tabled its proposed salaries – by the time of the Saturday meeting. Since the government had talked “some people” into calling off the strike, he said members were demanding that the figures be announced before Saturday.

The return-to-work formula, hammered out during a meeting lasting more than six hours, included a commitment by the forum that new salary scaled would be tabled on Monday. It also included that the universities would recognize Uasu and hold collective bargaining agreements for academic staff.

The lecturers were also assured that they would receive back payments of two months that had been withheld since they went on strike. The lecturers in public universities went on strike on November 10 to press for higher salaries.

Currently, a lecturer earns a maximum of Sh 23, 640 while a full professor earns a maximum of Sh 39,920. At the University of Nairobi, lecturers challenged Mr. Namachanja and Dr. Nderitu to declare that that the strike was still on since procedure had not been followed in calling off.

Kenyatta University Uasu chapter secretary, Mr. Richard Wafula said: “As it is now, we have lost. We had everything going our way but we have not exploited the opportunity. We can only identify with other branches to avoid dividing the union. But it it were possible, our chapter would have pressed on with the strike.”
Some 1,575 employees of public universities, among them lecturers, risk losing their jobs following failure to declare their wealth. The commission for higher education – the body overseeing the operation of public university – yesterday announced that the affected staff members would be struck off the payroll after failing to submit their wealth declarations forms.

The deadline for the submission of the forms expired last December 27. Sounding the threat yesterday, CHE deputy secretary Wilson Kipngeno said only those members of staff who failed to comply because they are out of the country or on study leave would be pardoned. These will be given time to complete their declaration forms once they return upon completion of their study leave. The declaration of wealth and liabilities by public servants is provided for in the Public Officer Ethics Act.

The new threat comes just a day after lecturers form local public universities called off their two-month strike to the pave way for negotiation with the government regarding better pay.

Prof. Kipngeno read the statement on behalf of commission secretary Justin Irina. “Those who have failed to make their declarations, except those persons who are out of the country on study leave, have failed to comply with the public officer Ethics Act and will be struck off the payroll,” warned Irina in the statement.

Kipngeno declared that the move to strike off the payroll public university staff members who have failed to submit their wealth declaration forms, is mainly intended to punish the 3,200 university lecturers who have been on strike since early last November.

He maintained that the commission was only abiding by the law – requiring public servants to fill and submit the forms. It was not clear how many of the striking 3,200 lecturers would be affected by the move.

“There is no connection between the step we have taken and the calling off the strike by the university lecturers,” Kipng’eno observed.
Lecturers’ strike: The options available

Dr. Kimani Njoroge’s misplaced outburst in which he called off the lecturers strike is as controversial as the government’s management of the strike. They display how power and political expediency may trump the law, circumspection, amicable dispute resolution and justice.

A brief run-up to that pronouncement is apposite. The UASU met Dr. Eddah Gachukia’s Inter-Public University Councils Consultative Forum informally on January 4, 8 and 11.

The sticking points included the legality of the forum to handle some matters in dispute, when and how to call off the strike, as well as the raison d’etre of the strike – that the government must disclose figures and provide a definite framework for negotiations.

And then university councils would release withheld salaries, accord UASU chapters formal recognition and stop victimization and intimidation. Before meeting the Forum on January 11, UASU’s National Executive Council had met at Chiromo campus and passed the foregoing resolutions.

Indeed, most UASU chapters had been categorical and had even resolved how to deal with intimidation including sacking, which some Forum members had threatened of implied.

Strong resolution

As the meetings with the Forum progressed, UASU tabled a counter proposal to the Forum. A Forum member suggested that the two parties appoint three persons to collate the two documents for signature on another day. UASU asked for a break to consult on the issues.

The meeting resumed with UASU’s strong resolution that the above conditions be met and that the strike would be called off after the union monitored the implementation of these conditions, and after UASUs special delegates conference – scheduled for tomorrow – had considered the conditions. Usu chairman John Nderitu was emphatic that he was the custodian of the union’s constitution as did secretary general Charles Namachanja and organizing secretary Musalia Edebe.

Then Dr. Njoroge (UASU vice chairman) came from the blues and declared he was taking “personal responsibility”, amid shock, confusion, anxiety and later cheers from the forum. We (UASU side) sought to clarify the legal position. Hecklers and the structure of the meeting would not have it.

Six arguments under gird the legality of the forum’s take on the issues and Dr. Njoroge’s action. First the union’s vice-chairman cannot by himself commit UASU in such matters. Nor can any other member or official. Strike action and dissolution of a union are most critical decisions and must be constitutional, legal and procedural.

Second, although some UASU officials signed the pact, they cannot commit
UASU under its constitution because the resolution at Chiromo and at the January 11 meeting had not been reversed.

Third, it is in the same vein of constitutional and organizational procedures and structures that the council’s chairmen and vice-chancellors underscored their “limitations”. Thus they only pleaded to recognise UASU “in principle”, but indicated they would sign the agreement on recognitions and negotiation procedures once they had consulted the council.

Fourth, UASU had reported a trade dispute to the Ministry of Labour under the Trade Disputes Act. This has neither been satisfactorily resolved nor withdrawn as far as the members are concerned.

Fifth, as late as the January 11 meeting, the Forum could still only promise that a committee of deputy Vice-chancellors would later communicate to UASU the Forum’s legality in negotiating the issues.

Sixth, the law regarding the disclosure of figures is very clear. The primary reason for registering a trade union is so that it can negotiate the terms and conditions of service with the employer’s intransigence, the union can go on strike as a legal and legitimate method of securing a just wage.

The Ministry of Education cannot plead government procedures (especially bureaucracy or secrecy) to shirk its responsibility. Once the government is a market player (as employer) by choice, the “commercial exception” applies to require it to behave as any other private sector or NGO employer under the Trade Disputes Act, the Industrial Relations Charter (which it has signed) and other labour laws. Hence it must disclose material information to employees or their unions as a matter of law, not merely good will.

Cross-sectoral wage equity

The law on resolving labour disputes requires co-operation, trust, mutual respect and good faith. There involve disclosing the figures in good time, indicating what other public employees earn, and why per capita parity (across Africa) and intellectual qualification, experience and performance should not govern cross-sectoral wage equity in Kenya.

UASU’s members have the option to stick it out until their basic conditions are met, to call off the strike and “hope” that the government and councils are sincere.

Regarding the government’s sincerity, the history of the dispute may be a guide. That explains why the strike arose and has lasted more than two months. Significantly, popular and students’ support and the dons’ solidarity have been humbling.

Teaching, research and related intellectual services are not like digging trenches; the striking lecturers state of mind when resuming work is critical.

Dr. Sihanya

People – January 16, 2004
Finding a lasting solution to discontent in state varsities

This week a two month long strike by the university dons was called off and each university is now at liberty to resume studies. UASU formed in early 1990s, but denied registration by the previous government, resorted to strike last year, November after
realizing that poor remuneration of their members had led to services at the institutions of higher learning.

They argued that an increased salary package would make them more committed to their duties. One UASU official while justifying the strike, had termed it as a “resultant of the government’s failure to respond to the extremely harsh difficulties they were facing” while a local graduate student had observed that the strike by the academic staff of public universities demonstrated the utter neglect and the failure of our society to appreciate the vital role the poor scholars play in the society.

On the other hand, other people described the lecturers call as “too much, too soon”.

When KIPPRA, a consultant firm was commissioned by the ministry of education to assess what other dons were earning in other countries, UASU felt betrayed because it was not included as a member of the team. The strike has had far reaching negative effects on all the stake holders that include the universities, the government, parents and students. By the time the strike was called off, students had lost a lot of their academic time for all the period they have been at home and the losses are huge, as a good number would not graduate as planned.

Other universities such as Egerton in addition to paying for its idle non-teaching staff had to spend a lot of money for the upkeep of students. Kenyatta University had to reimburse its students the fare they had spent to college. JKUAT students on the contrary were dispersed by anti-riot police after holding a protest.

In an interview with the local media during the initial stages of the strike, assistant minister for Education science and technology, Dr. Kilemi Mwiria had suggested that in order to avert university crisis in the future, public universities should be made autonomous to be able to raise funds and pay competitive salaries to their lecturers as they would charge their own tuition fees on the cost unit basis and hire them(lecturers) on the market rates.

The minister was agreeing that socialism, welfarism and the “know all and do all” attitude of the government are no longer valued in the modern society where people value quality service delivery.

When Adam Smith, author of the Moral Sentiments, turns to education, he commends the practice where the salaries of university dons come partly from the fees of their students. This, according to this old master, gives the lecturers a sense of dependency on the students and induces them to put forth their best efforts. But where the lecturer has a fixed salary met by the state, he has no inducement, hence the slackness and lack of moral responsibility by the university dons towards their duty.

Smith, a renowned classical professor of laissez faire, stirred controversy when he quit teaching in the middle of the semester and decided to refund his students their fees for the remaining period.

The students protested the move was declaring that the instructions and the pleasure he had received was much more than the money they had paid for. On his part, Smith insisted that his conscience demanded that the fees be returned and went ahead to thrust the money into the protesting young men’s pocket.

That exemplary responsibility could still be applied now in the public universities so as to allow lecturers who teach highly marketable courses to obtain remunerations in accordance to the work they do and give them incentive to do more. The government,
after appointing chancellors, should go ahead and cease appointing vice chancellors but instead let the academic staff and students hire their own chief executive (VC). Such a system would ensure a sense of responsibility and democracy in these institutions that have never known peace and calm.

Politicisation of university education is both expensive to the taxpayers and the learners and it is never adjustable until there is a public outcry.

By Kipkirui Ktelwa

Standard
January 17, 2004
NEWS
Salary talks to go on as UASU cracks widen

Monday’s salary negotiations that for a moment seemed to hang in the balance due to today’s UASU national delegates conference (NDC) at Kenyatta University will now be held as scheduled. The union’s top brass has changed its mind and will instead today hold the national executive committee meeting at the Chiromo Club Nairobi.

The change of the venue and suspension of the NDC is significant and is seen as a clever move by embattled national officials to avoid a possible backlash from delegates. By the time of going to press, it was not clear why the venue was switched from Kenyatta University to the Chiromo club.

Reject

The special NDC was to either ratify or reject the decision taken on Tuesday night by the national officials to call off the public university lecturers’ strike. Uasu legal advisor, Dr. Ben Sihanya says the union’s constitution was grossly breached when by the way the strike was called off. He says the Uasu team that attended the Tuesday meeting at which the strike was called off had unanimously agreed to end the strike subject to fulfillment of certain conditions.

“Technically, the strike is on. The trade dispute Uasu reported to the Ministry of Labour under the Trade Disputes Act section 4 has neither been resolved (according to members) nor withdrawn,” says Sihanya.

If the NDC were to be held as planned earlier, it could have taken a lot of hard bargaining and convincing to save some officials from being kicked out of office over the sections that led to the end of the two-month log strike.

Delegates were until yesterday threatening to take unspecified disciplinary action against certain national and chapter officials who supported the end of the strike, contrary to the Uasu constitution.

Dr. John Nderitu (national Chairman) and Charles Namachanja (secretary general) are under pressure to convince the members that they did not agree on called off the strike, yet they signed a return-to-work agreement with the university councils. The two are on record as saying the strike has not officially ended and that it is the NDC that will decide to ratify the move or reject it. On Wednesday Namachanja said the strike had not ended since it was unprocedurally called off and he denied sending out circulars to that effect, in accordance with Uasu constitution.

University of Nairobi and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and
Technology chapter chairmen Dr. Samuel Nyandemo and Dr. Peter Githira respectively are also under pressure to quit for having supported the decision to call off the strike. Dr. Njoroge Kimani the national vice-chairman who made the announcement that left his colleagues stunned is also in trouble.

Egerton University lecturers on Wednesday said they will suspend Kimani over his actions which had embarrassed his chapter, where he is also the chairman. But on Thursday, he defended his decision to make the announcement saying “I was the only one available bold enough to call off the strike. We had all agreed that the every condition we had set had been fulfilled.”

Nyandemo dismissed those accusing him of having betrayed their cause as people who do not appreciate what the union has achieved for them for the nine months it has been in existence. He said it was impossible for him to resign yet most Uasu members “were very happy” that the strike was called off and at last an opportunity had been opened for formal salary negotiations.

Closed

“WE went on strike to demand for a salary increase. It was not in our best interest for the universities to remain closed. What is wrong with calling off the strike then proceed with negotiations” quipped Nyandemo. We should now focus or energies at the formal salary negotiations next week. The members should judge our performance at the talks and what we would have achieved for them at the end of it all. The rest is history,” said Nyandemo.

Uasu and the Inter-Public University Councils Consultative Forum (IPUCCF) are set to begin formal salary negotiations on Monday at the University of Nairobi. The signing of the recognition agreement with the university’s council was a big achievement for Uasu as it enabled it to engage in collective bargaining with the employers.

However, questions are now being asked what happens if the salary negotiations break down. Nderitu hoped that the government will honour its pledge and help IPUCCF to table a salary offer as soon as talks resume. He warned that Uasu will be justified to immediately call another strike should the forum drag its feet. With the end of the strike, the pressure that had pile on Saitoti has been transferred to the university councils.

Gachukia was on Tuesday put on the spot when Moi University, where she is the council chairperson, was accused of not having paid most of its lecturers their November/December salaries.

Talk was rife yesterday that the government will give the Gachukia led forum a definite salary figure on Monday to present to Uasu on Tuesday, the second day of the negotiations.

Sources said the salary figures have already been debated at the cabinet level and approved but were yet to be presented to Parliament to be factored in the supplementary estimates.

The Ministry of Education soured, who requested anonymity, said the permanent Public Remuneration Board will meet with the Gachukia team on Monday morning to brief them on the government offer.

Nation
January 19, 2004
600 pc pay rise: What experts want for dons

But varsities would have to lay off 3,500 support staff

Lecturers in the six public universities will get huge pay rises if recommendations by the Kenya Institute of Public Policy Analysis are accepted. But they will lose out on the lucrative payment for parallel degree courses and duty-free car imports. The Kippra report recommends up to 600 per cent salary rise for the lecturers raising the income for the lowest rank – tutorial fellow – from a consolidated minimum of Sh 34,015 at present to a minimum of Sh 122,135. Full professors, now earning a minimum of Sh 71,060, would earn a minimum consolidated amount of Sh 473,382.

But even as the lecturers benefit, the pay rise will come at a cost; 3,500 non teaching staff will have to be sent home to enable the university fund the increased rates. Education Minister George Saitoti has held the report close to his chest since December 5, even though the lecturers had demanded its release before they could return to work. The lecturers called off their two-month strike last Tuesday partly due to the government’s verbal promises that they would be paid salaries slightly above those paid to their colleagues in the region.

The new rates are derived from pay packages in private universities and those in Southern Africa, which have been preying on the Kenyan education system. The researchers also drew on data from parastatals such as the Kenya Revenue Authority and Kippra itself, which pay up to three times more than the public universities for staff with the same qualifications.
As the salary talks between the UASU and the government begin today at the University of Nairobi, the Nation can reveal the report’s content. The report titled “Review of terms and conditions of service for academic staff in public universities in Kenya: Policy options for forestalling brain drain”, recommends the scrapping of the lecturers duty free car loan scheme and also the allowances they receive for teaching the parallel degree courses to fund the proposed salaries.

The proposals will see a 600 per cent increase for the lowest rank, but this is only half of what the lecturers had demanded. The report recommends that the upper limit of a tutorial fellow’s consolidated be Sh 143,263. A full professor will get a maximum salary and house of Sh 539,002.

It is unclear whether these proposals will be tabled during today’s negotiations. As of Saturday, Uasu secretary general Charles Namchanja was also not clear how far above the East African regional rates the government was willing to offer. “If the government is serious, let it come up with a counter proposal on Monday based on the Kippra report, he told Journalists.

Today’s meeting comes less than a week after the lecturers called off a two-month long strike, which ended in disarray after some lecturers protested that they had not been consulted and that only the National Delegates Conference had the authority to declare it over.

Regional pay scale
National officials of the union declared the strike over after a day long meeting with the Inter Universities Council Consultative Forum, headed by Dr. Eddah Gachukia – herself once a university lecturer and now chairman of the Moi University Council.

The report also gives an adjusted option of the regionally competitive pay scales based on the country’s ability to pay, which would see the least paid lecturer earn a minimum of Sh 90,275 and a minimum of Sh 261,663 for a full professor. But these handsome salaries – expected to push the annual wage bill for the lecturers alone to between Sh 10.5 billion and Sh 12.4 billion – will see the lecturers dispense with some of their coveted privileges.

The car scheme, which would be chopped, enables permanent and pensionable staffers to import cars duty free at a cost of Sh 1.3 billion annually to the government. Those with contracts of at least three years are also allowed to ship in cars once every four years.

Consolidated account
And they would have to forgo their cash payments form the parallel degree programmes so that the money pooled is used to pay their increased salaries. Currently, lecturers receive up to Sh 5,000 per lecture in marketable courses such as law – and this is not considered part of their monthly pay.

Kippra, which is a government think tank, recommends that fees collected from the courses be put in a consolidated account that would be used to finance the academic staff wage bill. Prof. Saitoti asked the institution to make proposals after it became clear the lecturers were headed for a strike, which kicked off on November 10.

Although lecturers selected their 12 negotiators for today’s talks on Saturday, the government has yet to table its proposals to counter those submitted by Uasu last March.
Uasu wanted a 1,200 per cent increment, which would see a full professor take home Sh 895,000. According to the report, the government would pay allowances according to the location of universities – meaning lecturers at the University of Nairobi would be paid more house allowances than those of Maseno, where the cost of housing is considered cheaper.

Although the cost of the retrenchment of the 3,500 non-teaching staff would be expensive in the short run, the report says it would ultimately be cost-effective. The lecturers would also have their pension scheme reviewed to be contributory. Universities would also be asked to peg their salaries on performance.

“Universities should be encouraged to introduce a system where tenure is given only to the most productive and outstanding scholars,” says the report.

By Samuel Siringi

Nation
January 20, 2004
NEWS
Deadlock in dons’ pay talks

The bilateral talks over the lecturers pay were yesterday postponed to tomorrow after the government failed to table its proposals. Tabling the proposals is one of the conditions that led to the calling off of the strike last Tuesday.

Yesterday, a 13 member negotiating team of the Universities Academic Staff Union (UASU) asked the government to table its salary offer to counter theirs, submitted in March last year. But the government group, led by educationist Eddah Gachukia, whose inter-university council consultative forum brokered the return-to-work formula appeared to shift goal post when it asked Uasu to submit its proposals afresh.

The government would then table its offer. The Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE) executive director, Mr. Tom Owuor, told Uasu to submit its proposals, which the government would study and offer a counter proposals.

Education minister George Saitoti has insisted the lecturers will salaries higher than those offered by the other universities in the region by next month. Mr. Owuor was responding to issues raised by the Uasu chairperson for the pay talks, Dr. Mary Omosa, who had asked to be told the duration of the talks and whether the government would table its proposals as earlier agreed upon.

Dr. Omosa, speaking at the University of Nairobi, also sought to know FKE’s role. Uasu lawyer Ben Sihanya also put the team on the spot when he asked them to produce a counter proposal before the talks would begin. The team should also show that its recommendations would be acceptable to the government.

Mr. Owuor said he represented FKE, the umbrella employers’ body and that lecturers were employed by university councils and the government was just a money supplier. The recognition agreements, which had been signed by some of the six state universities, meant that their pay deal would be registered in the industrial courts. The government team was expected to table the proposals of the Kenya Institute of Public Policy and Analysis (KIPPPRA) report, whose contents were exclusively published by the Nation.

The report recommends a pay rise of up to 600 per cent. The two parties agreed to
meet again tomorrow when Uasu team will submit its proposals afresh.

By Samuel Siringi

Nation
January 20, 2004
OPINION
Strike: We demand results.

Going by the agreement signed in public view last Tuesday, Kenyans can easily conclude that the stand off between the government and the striking university lecturers is over. Yet there have been voices of discontent from some lecturers that protocol was not followed. True, but neither did the lectures follow all the legal formalities required before the strike started.

For instance, they never gave the government seven additional days after the 21 day notice had elapsed as required by labour laws. Nor is Uasu recognized by the universities as a registered trade union.

Now, the lecturers must put such issues aside and focus on how much the government will agree to pay them from February as promised. But even as the pay talks begin, the government has yet to put its offer on the table – not even after the Nation published the contents of the much awaited Kenya Intitute of Public Policy Analysis and Research(KIPPRA) report yesterday.

We regard the proposals as realistic as Kippra was appointed by the government and is, indeed, its think-tank. But the question remains: Why has it taken the government nearly two months to release the report?

To us, the proposals are worth considering. They offer several implementation options which should cause little economic strain. That the lecturers would lose their duty-free import car scheme and direct cash from parallel programmes clearly shows the report was well considered. Which is why we insist that the parties go to the negotiating table with a give-and-take attitude. The time for hard-line posturing is long over. Kenyans want results.

Nation
January 21, 2004
NEWS
Pay plan for dons may be tabled today

The government is expected to table its salary proposals for lecturers today. It failed to release them when the salary talks began on Monday, saying it would only do so after studying the Universities Academic Staff Union’s proposals. The Nation learnt yesterday that some of the 13 government negotiators were pushing for the tabling of the figures to speed up the talks and allow studies at the six public universities to resume.

Although the lecturers called off their two-month strike a week ago, there have been fears they may not resume teaching and that it would be a waste of time to recall students before a new pay structure is agreed on. The executive director of the Federation of Kenya Employers, Mr. Tom Owuor, has told Uasu to submit its suggestions before the government afresh so it could offer a counter proposal.

Uasu officials and some members of the inter-public councils consultative forum,
which brokered the return-to-work deal, feel this would delay the implementation of new salaries which Education Minister George Saitoti insists will be effected next month. It is also understood Uasu is uncomfortable with Mr. Owuor’s presence at the talks, fearing he would support the government on the matter.

Uasu’s chairperson for the talks, Dr. Mary Omosa, on Monday demanded to be told FKE’s role and asked for a government counterproposal before the talks could begin. Mr. Owuor explained that FKE was the umbrella employers’ and that lecturers were employed by the university councils, while the government paid their salaries. It is not clear whether the government will table the report by Kippra whose contents were exclusively published by the Nation on Monday, and which recommend a 600 per cent pay rise for the lecturers.

The report, which Uasu secretary general Charles Namchanja welcomed as a good negotiating pedestal, proposed raising the income for the lowest cadre – tutorial fellows – from a consolidated minimum of Sh 34,015 to a minimum of Sh 122,135. Full professors now earning a minimum amount of Sh71,060, would earn a minimum consolidated amount of Sh 473,382. Prof. Saitoti has kept the report secret since December 5, despite demands by lecturers to release it.

The lecturers called off the strike on Tuesday last week partly because the government promised to pay them more than their colleagues in neighbouring countries.

By Samuel Siringi.

January 21, 2004

Analysis

Implication of Kippra’s report on the varsities

Should the Kenya Institute of Public Policy and Research Analysis(Kippra) salary proposals for public university lecturers be adopted, the move will sound a death knell for the 16 private universities. The parallel degree programmes offered in the universities will also be greatly affected because lecturers may not be willing to teach after working hours without extra pay.

Recommended

Kippra has recommended that the lowest paid academic (tutorial fellow) be paid Sh 122,000 and the highest (full professor) be paid a monthly salary amounting to Sh 473,382 up form the current Sh 34,000 and Sh 76,000 respectively. The research consultancy firm, which is the think-tank department of the government of Kenya, has also recommended that the money lecturers are paid from the parallel degree programmes should be used to top up what Treasury gives State Universities for the lecturers’ salaries.

These are the figures Universities Academic Staff Union(Uasu) has been demanding be tabled to be looked at alongside the one which the Union presented to the government in March. Vice-chancellors of three private universities(names withheld) have started lobbying Education Minister George Saitoti against tripling the salaries of public university lecturers.

Last week, the three vice-chancellors met Saitotu in his office. The grapevine has it that they pleaded with Saitoti against the proposed pay hike saying it will wreck their
institutions. They told Saitoti to recognize the important role they play in complementing the government’s efforts to providing higher education opportunities. According to the vice-chancellors, if the kind of salary figures Uasu are demanding were to be paid, the private institutions will suffer a massive brain drain. The only option will be to triple the fees students pay to be in a position to pay their teaching staff better than their counterparts in State Universities.

That will definitely stem brain drain to public universities that have not been attractive (remuneration wise) to most academic staff. For instance, the United States International University – Africa (USIU) arguably offers the best terms to lecturers. The lowest paid lecturers there (equivalent) of assistant/tutorial fellow) draws a consolidated monthly salary of Sh 70,000, an assistant professor (equivalent of a senior lecturers in State University parlance) is paid Sh 90,000, an ordinary professor is paid Sh 120,000 and a full professor draws Sh 140,000. The Usiu academic staff also enjoy a range of other allowances that their counterparts in public universities don’t. For instance they are entitled to an annual Sh 500,000 medical cover, Sh 40,000 for out-patient medical cover for five members of their family, free tuition for their children and spouses, a research allowances and free air ticket for those invited to present academic papers at international conferences.

Investigations have established that most of the 16 private institutions have about 20 per cent of their teaching staff as permanent employees or on contract terms. The rest are paid on hourly basis which makes them forfeit benefits such as leave, maternity, paternity, night-out, responsibility among other allowances that are enjoyed by permanent staff. The victims are the underpaid lecturers in public universities who moonlight in private institutions to make ends meet. The habit has been blamed for the falling standards to public university education as lecturers have little or no time at all to conduct research.

This also explains the many years the lecturers pursuing PhD programmes take before graduating. The PhD candidates and their supervisors have other income-generating activities leaving them little time to complete assignments or mark submitted chapters of these. If the private universities triple their fees, the students population will automatically drop hence throwing them into more trouble.

Kippra recommends in its report that the lecturers should forfeit the allowances they are paid from the parallel degree programmes. If this proposal is adopted during the salary negotiations between Uasu and the Inter Public University Souncils Consultative Forum (IPCCF), I doubt any lecturers will be willing to go that extra mile. Uasu secretary general Charles Namachanja has ruled out that possibility saying lecturers will not accept any move to make them work outside their terms of service to justify the increased allowances.

“These kippra guys may have no reckoned that other parastatals which pay their staff highly do not subject them to extra duties to raise more revenue to be used for their salaries,” Namachanja argues. It would mean that the university councils will have to revise the terms and conditions of service and ask the teaching staff to sign them afresh.

Average
Currently some lecturers teaching courses such as commerce, business administration, MBA and medicine make upwards of Sh 50,000 per month as allowances.
They are paid an average of Sh 2,000 for a two hour lecture usually conducted between 5.30 and 8.30 pm (weekdays) and between 9.00 and 5 pm on Saturday s. In some faculties, lecturers are paid 35 per cent of the fees students pay per unit of study. Fears have been expressed that the parallel degree money is making some lecturers burn out as they have little time to relax, read and conduct research. Most of their time is spent on teaching and marking hundreds of examinations scripts and term papers written by both regular and parallel degree students.

It is against this background that observers have begun questioning the quality of the degree holders being churned out of our public institutions. Although the parallel degree programmes have been hailed for turning around the financial situation in public universities, their side effects on the quality of education has not been adequately addressed.

By Ken Ramani.

Standard
January 22, 2004
NEWS
Dons pay figures yet to be tabled.

The future of the salary negotiations for university lecturers yesterday looked uncertain after the government side for the second time in a row failed to table figures. The government was expected to give the Inter public University Councils Consultative Forum (IPUCCF) figures to present to the Universities Academic Staff Union (Uasu) as agreed in the Monday meeting.

Counter accusations were traded between the representatives of the two groups and the situation, at about 6 pm, almost got out of hand after Egerton University Vice Chancellor, Prof. Ezra Maritim left the meeting. “I have to rush to Nakuru. The cows have to be milked before sunset,” he said last evening.

The Forum was said to have accused Uasu of not formally calling off the strike thus making it difficult for the government to make a salary offer to form the basis for the negotiations. Uasu representatives accused the Forum of breaching the return-to-work agreement the two sign last week when the strike was called off. Kenyatta University Vice chancellor, Prof. Everret Standa and Uasu national deputy secretary general, Mr. Muga Krilale, said the two parties had agreed that salary figures will be tabled next Wednesday, when the talks will resume at the same venue.

Standa clarifies that the agreement from the salary negotiations will constitute what Education Minister, Prof. George Saitoti, will announce in February. Uasu officials warned that if during the next meeting figures are not tabled, they would summon the union’s national delegates conference which will endorse the decision to continue with the strike.

By Ken Ramani

Nation
January 22, 2004
Dons’ salary proposals put off again

The government yesterday put off the tabling of lecturers’ salary proposals until next Wednesday. It was the second time its team negotiating with the Universities Academic Staff Union failed to table the much anticipated figures. The two joint secretaries at the negotiating teams – Dr. Muga Kolale, secretary general of Egerton University’s Usu Chapter, and Prof Everret Standa, Kenyatta University Vice Chancellor – however, said substantial progress had been made in the talks.

Tabled figures

“We plan to have the figures tabled next Wednesday to facilitate a clear timetable for the negotiations,” said Dr. Kolale. But sources at the meeting held at the University of Nairobi said the government was reluctant to table its figures because there had not been a clear sign that the strike, called off last week, was indeed over.

Some of the government team members had asked the Usu team to ensure that lecturers resume at the six state Universities before further negotiations could go on. But the lecturers expressed fears that this could be a ploy to ensure normalcy at the institutions before the government cancelled the negotiations. It would then announce a blanket figure which the lecturers would be forced to “take or leave”.

It has emerged that some of the government’s 13 negotiators were pushing for the tabling of the figures to speed up the talks and allow studies at the public universities to resume.

Waste of time

Fears have persisted that lecturers might not resume teaching and that it would be a waste of time to recall students before a new pay structure was agreed on. It was not clear whether the government would table the report by the Kenya Institute of Public Policy and Analysis next Wednesday.

The report proposed raising the income for the lowest cadre – tutorial fellows – form a consolidated minimum of Sh 34,015 to a minimum of Sh 122,135. Full professors, now earning a minimum of Sh 71,060, would earn a minimum consolidated amount of Sh 473,382.

The report recommends that the upper limit of a tutorial fellow’s consolidated salary be Sh 143,263. A full professor will get a maximum salary and house allowance of SH 539,002.

By Samuel Siringi

University shut over riot fears

Egerton University was yesterday closed following student unrest in both the main and Laikipia campuses. The student had spent a restive week after lecturers continued to stay away from class. A circular dated January 21 which announced the closure of the university was circulated to students yesterday morning.
Whereas students in the main campus at Njoro left without creating any ugly scenes, their counterparts at Laikipia Campus broke into a cash office. Riot police, however, interviewed and drove them away. The students have been idle following the lecturers strike that has persisted even after the work boycott was called off by the Universities Academic Staff Union (Uasu).

Nation
January 23, 2004
NEWS
Students are sent home again

Egerton University was closed indefinitely following threats by students to disrupt an international conference on the Njoro Campus. A notice announcing the closure was distributed to students at 5 am. It told them to leave the campus by 8am. On receiving it, the students stormed the dining hall and broke utensils in protest. The campus is hosting a two-day conference on distant learning attended by more than 100 scholars from 25 countries.

The forum, which opened yesterday, aims to establish partnerships with local and international institutions to develop, sustain and enhance appropriate and effective distance learning systems. Expected at the two-day conference were vice-chancellors, rectors and principals of African Universities as well as scholars and managers of distance education of international organizations worldwide.

On Wednesday, the students protested against teaching, even after they called off their two month strike. Egerton had recalled the students on January 5 after Universities Academic Staff Union officials announced they had called off the strike. Teaching resumed on Monday but the Uasu chapter held a meeting the following day and ordered its members to stop teaching.

Angered by this move, the students held a sit-in demanding to be taught or they would sue the university for failing to resolve the lecturers’ problem. Yesterday, police, led by Nakuru boss Joel Lang’at camped at the University as the students moved out of the campus. Mr. Lang’at confirmed that the decision to close had been reached after it was learnt that the students would disrupt the conference.

The academic registrar, Prof. Nephat Kathuri, signed the closure notice. On Wednesday he was confronted by irate students demanding that he tell them whether they were not being taught. The notice said: “The university management regrets to announce that due to failure by the lecturers to resume classes, despite the fact that a return-to-work formula was signed on January 13… the university will be closed until further notice. “While this is a painful decision, the university would like it known that it reopened on January 5 on the assurance that the lecturers were ready to resume duty.”

By Simon Siele

Nation
January 23, 2004
NEWS
Varsity dons can do without uasu

The secretary general of the Universities Academic Staff Union (UASU) Dr.
Charles Namachanja was quoted as saying that lecturers who agree to end the strike will be side-lined by his union. I am of the lecturers who have opted to go back to class. What exactly does Uasu do for us dons besides taking our hard-earned Sh 200 a month? What have their meetings yielded for us in the past.

Can Uasu claim to be doing anything for us now that we are on strike? If anything, those of us doing research have had our programmes disrupted by this strike. Dr. Namachanja and Dr. Nderitu should read the writing on the wall and call off the strike. As the Minister of Education said Uasu will be the loser if by February the government awards the new salaries without its input.

As things are now, dons should realize that they can do without Uasu and save their Sh 200. Should we continue being members once it fails to negotiate the anticipated salary increment?

Samson M. Kwanza
Maseno University

Nation
January 25, 2004
OPINION
Implications of don’s pay increase.

As I have repeatedly said, everyone in government has been in agreement regarding the need to increase the salaries of our university lecturers. Depending on the level of increase agreed on by UASU and government, the state’s annual allocation to public universities will rise substantially. This increase in salaries will have a number of ramifications for public universities.

Efficient and accountable

First, universities will be expected to be more efficient and accountable managers of public resources by promoting cost-effective use of available human and physical resources. University staff will thus be expected to put more hours in teaching and research including post-graduate supervision. It is a shame that the average time it took an MA or MSc student to complete his/her studies is four to six years and even longer for a PhD degree. Yet those students who win such scholarships are those at the top of their respective classes.

Universities will also have to do with fewer support staff and to use available physical facilities more intensively through, say, full engagement of libraries, laboratories and lecture theatres, rental of idle facilities such as hostels during holidays and grounds for agriculture and livestock farming. Cost effective use can further be enhanced through economic use of water, electricity, telephones, institutional vehicles and stationery. Improved efficiency in the use of institutional resources is more likely to be realized if universities are subjected to rigorous auditing procedures.

Universities will also need to pay more attention to the quality of the education which they offer. In the first place, universities have to be seen as the most publish advocates of the principle of meritocracy with regard to the recruitment and promotion of both the academic and support staff, allocation of fellowship grants and opportunities to
participate in seminars and international conferences. Needless to stress, with the improvement of salary packages, competition for university jobs will be enhanced by the return of many lecturers outside the country or in the private sector.

Given the fact that a good number of the current crop of our public university administrators are beneficiaries of a system which had little regard for merit considerations, it would be too radical to suggest a review of their qualifications for the jobs which they are holding with a view to retaining only those who deserve their positions. This has been the done before as in the case of the review of practicing doctors’ qualifications in the mid seventies when more than 50 doctors lost their jobs. And we are of course, all familiar with the recent purge of the judiciary. Quality can further be enhanced by a system where academics are not employed on permanent terms until they prove themselves just as professors in most universities of the developed world would only be guaranteed permanent job status on the basis of their work performance. In the long run, a more enabling working environment should accompany improved remunerations. Some of the critical ingredients of such an environment include: Adequate and comfortable office space; appropriate infrastructure including telephone lines, computers and Internet facilities; attractive housing and car loan facilities; attractive teaching facilities including lecture theatres, laboratories and libraries; opportunities for conference attendance; and research grants, among others. Of course some of these benefits need not be free of charge.

Because there are large monetary implications for the reforms being proposed, in addition to the efficiency and cost effective use of institutional resources, universities need to strengthen partnership programmes. Universities have also to intensify their income generating activities through: Expansion of self-sponsored programmes while paying attention to their implications for quality education; luring the support of the private sector through students and staff internship programmes, research support, student sponsorships and teaching support, introduction of a private sector training levy; involving alumni in fund raising programmes; and reaching out to individual benefactors of university education.

The unavoidable conclusion of this essay is that universities must reform, as they become greater beneficiaries of government resources. This reform is unlikely to be led by the current crop of university administrators. Not many can be counted on to reform themselves especially where privileges and status may have to be sacrificed.

Dr. Kilemi Mwiria: Is an assistant minister for Education, Science and Technology and MP for Tigania West.

People
January 25, 2004
NEWS
Dons to get between 100 and 300pc pay rise

Over 3,200 public universities academic staff are in for a rude shock over their salary hike demands as the government has recommended between 100 and 300 per cent increment contrary to their expectations, The People on Sunday has established. An the government may not even table the same figure to the dons on Wednesday as it promised in what a source termed “courting for a showdown and outright disapproval” form the
lecturers.

Education minister, Professor George Saitoti, a source confided in us, had arrived at the figures two weeks ago and has been withholding them but is ready to announce officially from February 2. “The dons have no other option apart from wither taking or leaving the new package to be reflected in the don’s payslips towards the end of next month,” said the source.

Currently, the lowest paid lecturers earns a maximum of Sh 23,640 with the highest paid professor earning a minimum of Sh 39,920 monthly. Going by the new figures the lowest paid dons will have their salaries increased to between Shs 47,280 and Sh 70,920 whereas a full professor will go home with a minimum of between Shs 79,840 and Shs 119,760 per month.

“University dons have to contend with this since the government has no money to meet what they are demanding,” our source explained. The figures, we found out, were economically sustainable according to the government and could not push the annual pay bill for the public university academic staff to “unbearable levels”.

Earlier, the government had promised to offer a competitive package to lectures and that the increment would be the best in the region. Wednesday’s meeting to be held at the University of Nairobi will dwell largely on the need to formalize learning in public universities since the strike was called off two weeks ago. During the meeting, confirmed the source, the Inter Public University Council consultative Forum will again give an excuse that the government was still analyzing the Kenya Institute of Public Policy Research Analysis (KIPPPRA) and comparing and harmonizing it with the lecturers’ proposals before giving its figures.

The dons in their proposal presented to the government are asking for a 900 percent increase with the lowest paid lecturers earning Shs 159,000 and the highest going home with Shs 890,000 per month. It means the figures recommended by the government will be far below their expectations and that of Kippra which recommends an increase of 600 percent.

The Kippra Report recommends Shs 122,135 for the lowest paid lecturer (tutorial fellow) and Shs 539,000 for the highest paid lecturers (full professor). “The pay hike has been pegged on the economic strength of the country since the salary should be sustainable as much as possible,” said the source.

Meanwhile, University Academic Staff Union (UASU) has said that the government must present a counter proposal on salary hike demands on Wednesday as a basis for negotiation. In a telephone conversation with The People on Sunday, the union’s chairman, Dr. John Nderitu said that the meeting between the government and the dons on tabling of figures was a process involving talks with a view to reaching at a consensus.

It was ironical, he said, for the government to impose a figure on the lecturers saying there was need to approach the issue with understanding among the concerned parties. The chairman at the same time said that the union had called off the strike, saying tabling of figures should not be pegged on resumption of learning in public universities.

Since the calling off of the strike a week ago, normal learning in public universities has not resumed with the government challenging the union to “practically” call off the strike.

By Kumutai Ng’eno.
Dons deride 43 per cent pay rise

Lecturers will get at least 43 per cent pay rise if the long awaited government proposals tabled yesterday are adopted. The lowest paid – a tutorial fellow – would have their salary increased from Sh 14,015 to Sh 20,156 according to the proposals termed by the Universities Academic Staff Union (Uasu) as an “insult”. And the highest paid lecturer, a full professor would have the salary increased from Sh 31,060 to Sh 65,000 – representing about 100 per cent increase. The salary of a lecturer would be increased from Sh 17,185 to Sh 27,050, a senior lecturer Sh 21,440-30,544 and that of an associate professor Sh 26,855-55,265.

But the Uasu which declined to release the figures obtained by the independent sources later said they were appallingly low. Joint secretary to the talks Muga Kolale told journalists at the University of Nairobi that the proposals were contained in a one-page document “which bore no institutional letterhead on it”. The only identity was the signature of the negotiating teams’ chairman, University of Nairobi deputy Vice chancellor George Magoha.

“These proposals are bound to make our negotiations difficult. We consider them insulting and a betrayal of the trust we have put in the negotiations,” he said. He went on: “The only merit in the whole document is that it forms a basis for future negotiations. It has prevented the government from unilaterally announcing a pay rise for the lecturers (without their input),” he said.

Dr. Kolale declined to release the proposals arguing they were too low to be released to the public. Releasing them would also have amounted to abuse of the confidentiality of the talks. “All I can say is that we are starting from where we should not start. The figures are far from those paid in the East African region universities which the government has promised to surpass,” Dr. Kolale, also national assistant secretary, said. Although the Uasu had agreed with the government that negotiations resume next Thursday, Dr. Kolale said they will ask for a meeting earlier than that. Earlier, Prof. Magoha promised that the lecturer would get pay increases that were good and commensurate with their work. He said the negotiations were still in good time as February, the month the government has promised to increase the dons’ salaries was still not over.

By Nation Reporter

Gachukia pay offer annoys lecturers

The government yesterday tabled figures to kick off salary negotiations with university lecturers but the only offer was immediately rejected by the scholars. The figures are much lower than what the Universities Academic Staff Union is demanding. Last evening the union dismissed the figures as “an insult to the intelligence of Kenyan
Scholars”, and asked for a “reasonable offer” when negotiations start next week.

The Union’s deputy secretary general, Mr. Muga Kolale said, “It will be very
difficult for us to convince the lecturers to resume duty on the figures.”

Current Levels

The Inter-Public University Councils Consultative Forum proposes that a tutorial fellow be paid Sh 20,156.28, lecturer Sh 27,055.97, senior lecturer Sh 30,544.60, associate professor Sh 55,265.39 and a full professor Sh 66,800.28. The forum recommends that allowances such as for housing health telephone and responsibility remain at the current levels.

Currently a tutorial fellow earns Sh 14,015.50, lecturers Sh 17,185 senior lecturer Sh 21,440 associate professor Sh 26,855 and a full professor Sh 31,060. The union is demanding that the lowest package be Sh 151,000 (tutorial fellow) and the highest Sh 890,000 (full professor).

The government’s offer is not even a quarter of what has been recommended by Kippra. The institute proposes that a tutorial fellow be paid sh 120,000 and a full professor Sh 450,000.

Nation
February 6, 2004
NEWS
Major reform plan for varsities
Senior positions to be advertised internationally, says minister

Positions for vice-chancellors and lecturer will be advertised internationally in
new changes to be effected by end of the year. Courses will be increased and revised,
university management will be detached from politics and relations between lecturers and
students improved through introduction of more democratic decision making systems,
assistant education minister Kilemi Mwiria said yesterday. He spoke at Jogoo House,
Nairobi, when he met the Slovak Republic’s education minister Martin Fronc. He said:
“The vice-chancellors’s posts will be advertised internationally to attract the best. All the
institutions organs should be perceived as representatives, accommodative and reflective
of merit.”

Dr. Mwiria who is in charge of post primary education said it was necessary for
the institutions to improve their terms and conditions of service for lecturers to attract the
best. Associations for lecturers and students would be strengthened to ensure prompt
resolutions of conflicts, he added. Mr. Fronc, said his country would offer scholarships
to Kenyans.

Meanwhile, the lecturers union wants the government to start fresh negotiations
on what it terms as a botched salary deal. The UASU said if the government failed to act,
it would decide on the options to take after consulting members. The union accused the
government of dishonesty by breaching an earlier agreed on return-to-work formula by
proposing unrealistic salary figures.
“The so-called increment is not only scandalous and contemptuous, but inciting to the academic fraternmity,” said Dr. Charles Namachanja, the Uasu secretary general. The development puts in doubt the re-opening of the universities next week. Dr. namachanja argued that figures tabled by the government on Wednesday proposing a 43 per cent pay rise were unacceptable. The rejection of pay rise came as it emerged that Jomo Kenyatta Universityof Agriculture and technology had declined to pay its lecturers their January salaries on grounds that they had not worked for it.

The University of Nairobi is due to reopen on Sunday – three months after lecturers went on strike to pressure the government to increase their pay. Its lecturers held a meeting last evening and vowed not to teach on Monday “unless acceptable proposals are tabled.”

Moi, Egerton, Kenyata and Jomo Kenyatta have not announced their re-opening dates, fearing the strike may not be over yet. Yesterday, the union said it would not accept the figures as a basis for negotiations, saying they were too low.

On Wednesday, the Inter Public Council Consultative Forum chaired by Dr. Eddah Gachukia released proposals to raise the salaries by at least 43 per cent. The lowest paid – a tutorial fellow – would earn Sh 20,156 up form Sh 14,015 while the highest paid lecturer, a full professor would get Sh 65,000 up from Sh 31,060 – about 100 per cent increase.

By Nation Team

People
February 8, 2004
NEWS
Saitoti left out in dons’ pay hike

Education permanent secretary Prof. Karega Mutahi solely prepared the counter proposal figures on salary pay hike to university dons without consulting his minister, we have reliably learnt. The figures which were handed over to the dons last week were vehemently rejected with lecturers terming them an insult and purely aimed at further inciting them. It is on this basis that the Inter Public Universities Council Consultative Foru., chaired by Dr. Eddah Gachukia will meet education minister Prof. George Saitoti tomorrow to get a “genuine” counter proposal.

Mutahi we, learnt had to make sure he beat the lecturers’ deadline given to the government to table figures before they could resume learning. The figures were handed to the dons last week by University of Nairobi, deputy Vice Chancellor Prof. George Magoha and immediately elicited sharp reactions from the lecturers.

According to UASU officials, the figures were contained in a quarter page paper bearing neither the ministry’s letterhead nor the name and the signature of Saitoti. It bore the signature of the forum’s chairperson, Dr. Gachukia. Understandably, Saitoti was out of the country on official duties when the figures were finally tabled after perennial postponements.

Yesterday the forum, which met with Uasu officials at Merika Hotel in Nakuru, said it will meet with Saitoti tomorrow where new figures are expected to be tabled. On Thursday, the lecturers issued a one-day ultimatum to the government to table new figures to pave way for negotiations.
Lecturers have demanded a new figure reflective of recommendations by the Kippra which was appointed last year to look into terms and conditions of service of public university lecturers. The Kippra report, which has not been made public, recommends a 600 percent pay hike with the least paid tutorial fellow earning a consolidated minimum amount of Shs 122,135, an assistant lecturer could get Shs 143,688, and a lecturer could go home with Shs 193,975.

According to the Kippra recommendations, a senior lecturer will earn Shs 282,055 whereas an associate professor is to be content with Shs 407,199 and a full professor Shs 473,382 per month. Mutahi’s counter proposal had recommended a 48 percent increase with tutorial fellow contending with Shs 20,156(up from Shs 14,015) whereas a lecturer will go home with Shs 27,050(up from Shs 17,185).

A senior lecturer will earn Shs 30,544 (up from Shs 21,440) whereas an associate professor will bag Shs 55,265 (up from Shs 26,855). A full professor has been awarded Shs 65,000.

Usau’s national Chairman Dr. John Nderitu yesterday said that lecturer were expecting new but palatable figures from Saitoti before the negotiations commence on Thursday this week. Negotiations, he said should move fast with a view to putting in place conducive atmosphere of learning in public universities, which are set to reopen soon.

Egerton university council chairman Prof. Andrew Kiptoon chaired yesterday’s meeting which UASU national executive committee attended. Meanwhile, an ultimatum has been given for the fresh negotiations between university dons and the government to be concluded by February 21, this year. Inside sources informed to the People onm Sunday that unlike in the past, the state was the one that initiated the latest meeting at Merica Hotel in Nakuru.

“We were summoned at very short notice to some for this meeting,” disclosed sources who affirmed that all public universities were represented. The initial meeting scheduled for last Thursday night however aborted after delegates arrived late in Nakuru town causing the forum to be adjourned to early yesterday.

Dr. Gachukia, together with UASU secretary general Dr. Charles Namachanja however skipped the occasion. Shortly after the consultations were concluded at around 1.00 pm a statement that was jointly signed by representatives of both sides was read to the press. The joint forum secretary Muga K’Olale signed for the lecturers while Prof. Everet Standa signed on behalf of the state.

The statement said, inter alia, that both sides had agreed that the proposals released by the Forum earlier this week “would be revised to pave way for meaningful negotiations”. It said the joint negotiations would “resume in earnest” next Thursday and end by Sunday, February 21, 2004.

“Both the form and Usau’s National Executive Committee(NEC) further appeals to the lecturers of all public universities to carry on with their normal duties to ensure that normalcy is maintained. This will create an enabling environment for meaningful negotiations,” it stated.

The groups agreed that in the meantime there would be constant consultations among all the parties involved through the joint negotiating committee that will be based on mutual trust and free from intimidation.
Public universities have withheld lecturers’ monthly contributions to the Universities Academic Staff Union. The more than Sh 600,000 deducted from the January salaries will be remitted to the union only with labour minister Ali Mwakwere’s approval. Uasu officials told the Nation yesterday that the Federation of Kenya Employers wrote to them last week to say that it was a trade union requirement that they apply for approval from the minister.

The Moi university Uasu chapter chairman Mr. Musalia Edebe and his Maseno counterpart Dr. Simala Inyani said that although the deductions were reflected on the payrolls, the money was not in the union’s bank account. Uasu officials of Nairobi, Kenyatta, Moi, Egerton, Maseno and Jomo Kenyatta would be expected to have made the application by the end of the week.

Each of the more than 3,000 lecturers contributes Sh 200 monthly to cater for the union’s expenses, including the official’s travels, stationery and telephone. Mr. Edebe and Dr. Inyani said they hoped all the universities’ management would release the money once the approval was made.

They said vice-chancellors David Some of Moi and his Maseno opposite number, Prof. Frederick Onyango had said they would speed the process after approval. But other lecturers saw a plot to paralyse the union’s operations. “I see this as the beginning of a grand scheme to finish Uasu,” a Moi lecturer said.

“Why should the management deduct the money on payroll and later say it is illegal to remit it to the union?” These are delaying tactics to wreck our union, which we shall resist.”

The Uasu secretary-general, Dr. Charles Namachanja, could not be reached for comment. But lecturers contacted from various universities said their January dues had not reached the union coffers. The contributions are crucial to the Uasu officials particularly now that they are negotiating with the government over pay.

The lecturers went on strike on November 10 to demand better terms of service, but they called it off recently to pave way for negotiations with a government team headed by educationist Eddah Gachukia. The Gachukia committee released salary proposals last week, awarding the dons a 43 percent increase which they rejected.

The lecturers asked the government to release “workable figures” and threatened unspecified action if they were not offered “reasonable” salaries.
The university of Nairobi reopened yesterday after three months of closure with lecturers giving the government up to Friday to table new figures or they boycott teaching. Lecturers interviewed by the People Daily said that learning will go on uninterrupted as they await official figures from the government on how their pay hike demand will be implemented. As this happens, a source confided with us that education minister Prof. George Saitoti yesterday met with the Inter Public University Councils Consultative Forum(IPUCCF) in a bid to end the impasse on figures.

The outcome of the meeting at Joggo House was not immediately established with further information filtering out that those who took part in the meeting went to Harambee House, office of the head of public service and secretary to the cabinet ambassador Francis Muthaura for further consultations. University dons have disowned last week figures in which they were awarded 48 percent increase. They termed the figure as an insult and aimed to incite them further.

Most of the students who had reported back at the main campus remained in an upbeat mood as they cleared with the administration in readiness of learning set to resume today. All was the same at the Chiromo, Upper and Lowere kabete campuses as students trooped back. A majority of students, however could not report in time owing to transport crisis experienced in upcountry.

Learning at all the six public universities had been paralysed after lecturers went on strike pressurizing for higher pay forcing students to sent home indefinitely. Students lamented that the strike had inconvenienced their study programmes, saying that they hoped to resume classes and recover the time lost during the pay dispute as soon as possible.

The Students of University of Nairobi Organisation(SONU) leader Thomas Mbewa said that a majority of the students had already reported and were busy settling as they wait to return to classes.

By Kimutai Ng’eno and Hudson Gumbihi

Nation
February 11, 2004
NEWS
Dons urged to resume duty

University of Nairobi lecturers have been urged to resume teaching. The institution was reopened on Sunday. Vice chancellor Crispus Kiamba said in a memo pinned on notice boards that lecturers should start teaching as they await the outcome of the pay talks expected to begin tomorrow. Learning got off to a slow start yesterday because many students, perhaps in fear that lecturers would not attend classes, have not reported. Student leaders also called for resumption of studies to make up for the three months lost during the strike.

Secretary general Makokha Wanjala and Chairman Tedd Munovi, however asked the government to be serious with the pay talks to raise the lecturers morale. The forum of state university councils has withdrawn proposals presented last week and promised to table new ones when the talks resume. The forum on Wednesday released proposals to raise the salaries by at least 43 percent. The lowest paid – tutorial fellows – would have their salary increased from Sh 14,015 to Sh 20,156.
Dons: It’s the govt’s move

Learning at the University of Nairobi resumed yesterday as lecturers returned to class after a three month strike. But as we report in another section of the Nation, its been a slow start as many lecturers have not reported back, partly because the government has not offered them a concrete deal. Three months is a long time in which to negotiate and the onus now lies with the government to expedite the process and put an offer on the table. After all, February is the month the deal was supposed to have matured.

It is difficult to quantify the loss suffered by lecturer, students are the helpless victims caught in the cross-fire between the government and UASU. To start with, students will have to contend with extended study periods, as term-time is structured tocover specific months. This may mean losing a whole academic year.

Considering that those pursuing parallel degree courses may be onm sabbatical, some may have to resume work before completing their studies successfully – not to mention the extra cost. Moreover, student prescence on campus, without any learning going on, could foment trouble at a time when their nerves are frayed.

The flip-side to this is that they could find the campus so boring some may return home and lose more time. We do not doubt the government’s commitment to resolve the crisis, but it is taking longer than it should. If the government does not have the money that Uasu is asking for, then it should come clean and say what it is willing to offer.

Uasu has rejected the 43 percent pay increment, but many lecturers are willing to go back to work. This is an olive branch extended to the government by patriots, and it should not approach the negotiations table with its fists clenched. It’s time to draw a line and carry on with serious study.

Lecurers pay talks postponed

Salary talks between the university lecturers’ union and the government have been put off. Kenyatta University vice-chancellor Prof. Everet Standa, who is also the joint secretary to the negotiating team, said the talks had been pushed to next Sunday to allow further consultations between the university councils and UASU. Some lecturers at the University of Nairobi, however said the postponement was a clear indication that the government was not committed to improving their “financial plight”.

During a meeting in Nakuru last Saturday, the Inter public universities consultative forum and the union agreed to resume the pay talks today. The forum agreed to table a new salary offer to form the basis of negotiations with Uasu. The union had rejected an earlier offer of about 43 percent increase and threatened to take unspecified action should the government come up with an “unreasonable offer”.

Meanwhile, near normalcy has returned on most of the University of Nairobi’s
seven campuses. Both undergraduate and post-graduate students attended lectures as others reported back after a three-month absence following the lecturer’s strike.

Standard Correspondent

Nation
February 13, 2004
NEWS
Lecturers censure varsity chiefs

Lecturers have threatened to pull out of the pay talks with university chiefs accusing them of breaching a back-to-work pact. They protested at a decision by the Inter-Universities Council Consultative Forum to postpone fresh salary talks scheduled to start yesterday. Top officials of the UASU indicated they would seek negotiations directly with the government if the forum, chaired by educationist Eddah Gachukia, does not call the talks immediately.

Secretary general Charles Namachanja said the forum unilaterally postponed yesterday’s meeting to Sunday. In doing so, Mr. Namachanja told journalists, the forum had gone against resolutions of a meeting held by both parties last Saturday stating that the talks would start yesterday.

Salary Proposals

The meeting, which agreed to shelve earlier salary proposals by the forum, resolved to conclude the talks by February 21. But yesterday, Mr. Namachanja, who was accompanied by the national organizing secretary, Mr. Musalia Edebe, said the union would only accept negotiations based on the Kenya Institute of Public Policy Analysis and Research (Kippra) proposals.

Kippra has recommended that lecturers be paid between Sh 122,000 and Sh 545,000. The lecturers want ranges of between Sh 159,000 and Sh 895,000. The forum was forced to shelve its proposals made last week in which it had recommended to raise the salaries by at least 43 per cent within ranges of between Sh 20,156 to Sh 65,000.

Yesterday, Mr. Namachanja said: “Uasu will not entertain the time-wasting games the forum has resorted to. We urge the government to give the lecturers’ plight the seriousness it deserves.”

He added: “If the forum is not serious and committed to enter into meaningful negotiations, Uasu will have no other option but to negotiate with the government directly.”

By Nation Reporter

Standard
February 16, 2004
NEWS
Dons reject new salary offer.

A fresh crisis involving public university lecturers has erupted after the government failed yesterday to table an “acceptable” salary offer. The union – without much justification – rejected a 44 per cent salary increase suggested by the Inter-Public
University Councils Consultative Forum (IPUCCF).

The forum proposed that a professor be paid a monthly salary of Sh 66,000, associate professor Sh 62,000, a senior lecturer Sh 49,000, lecturer Sh 33,000 and a tutorial fellow Sh 22,000 per month. A University of Nairobi deputy vice-chancellor Prof. George Magoha who chaired the negotiations with Uasu at Kenyatta University, defended the figures saying “that is what the economy can afford as of now”.

Sources said Magoha blamed the former Kanu regime for emptying public coffers, hence the inability of the current government to pay better salaries. Two weeks ago the forum, in a quarter page document proposed that a tutorial fellow be paid Sh 20,156.28 cents, lecturer Sh 27,056.97 cents, senior lecturer Sh 30,544.60 cents, associate professor Sh 55,265.39 cents and a full professor Sh 66,800.28 cents.

The forum also recommended that the other allowances such as housing, medical, telephone, responsibility, among others, remain the same.

Currently a tutorial fellow earns Sh 14,015.50 cents, lecturer Sh 17,185, senior lecturer Sh 21,440, associate professor Sh 26,855 and a full professor Sh 31,060.

Uasu is demanding that the least paid academician should receive Sh 151,000 and the highest (full professor) be paid a monthly consolidated salary of Sh 890,000. When contacted on telephone Uasu chairman Dr. John Nderitu described the offer as a “big joke” and asked Education Minister Prof. George Saitoti, to make the announcement he promised lecturer last year.

“We are past the middle of February and still waiting for Saitoti to announce a new salary package that is no less than what other East African countries pay lecturers,” said Nderitu.

The union said if no serious salary would be made by Saturday, it would summon its national delegates conference and chart the way forward. “We are tired of this mouse and cat game. The forum has broken all the return-to-work conditions we agreed to adhere to after we called off our strike. It should take responsibility of whatever happens after Saturday,” said Nderitu.

The two groups at the talks agreed to meet on Thursday to resume the negotiations.

By Ken Ramani

Nation
February 16, 2004
NEWS
Fresh salary proposal for varsity dons

The government yesterday proposed revised salaries for lecturers. They reflected a small adjustment to those earlier submitted to the lecturers. In the proposals, the Inter Universities Council Consultative Forum proposes a 44 percent increment for the least paid lecturer that will see the salaries range from between Sh 22,000 to Sh 66,000. The lowest paid – a tutorial fellow – would have their salary increased from Sh 14,015 to Sh 22,000.

The earlier ones proposed an increment for the tutorial fellow to Sh 20,156. And the highest paid lecturer, a full professor, would have the salary increased form Sh 31,000 to Sh 66,000 – representing about 100 per cent increase.
The salary of a lecturer would be increased from Sh17,185 to Sh 33,005, a senior lecturer from Sh 21,440 to Sh 44,000 and that of associate professor from Sh 26,855 to 62,000. Uasu was unhappy with the proposals at the meeting held at Kenyatta University yesterday, but agreed to meet on Thursday for further discussions.

The union last week threatened to pull out of the pay alks with university chiefs, accusing them of breaching a back-to-work pact. They protested at a decision by the Inter-Universities Council Consultative Forum to postpone fresh salary talks scheduled to start last Wednesday.

Uasu officials indicated they would seek negotiations directly with the government if the forum did not call the talks immediately. The lecturer want the negotiations to be based on the Kenya Institute of Public Policy Analysis and Research proposals.

By Nation Reporter

Nation
February 18, 2004
NEWS
Saitoti remains firm on dons’ pay pledge

The much awaited university lecturers’ pay will be announced next week. Education minister George Saitoti said yesterday the promise to give the lecturers asalary increase in February would not be changed.

“The government has decided it is going to do so and I have no intention to violate out pledge,” he said. But he declined to give the details.

He would also not comment on the deadlock in the ongoing negotiations between the lecturer and the university councils, arguing it would amount to interfering with the negotiations.

Negotiating teams of the Universities Academic Staff Union(UASU) and the Inter Universities Council Consultative Forum meet tomorrow for the resumption of talks. Uasu had for the second time rejected the proposals of the government last Sunday, which recommended that their salaries be increased by 44 per cent.

Yesterday, Prof. Saitoti who was launching a partnership between Barclays bank and Junior Achievement Kenya at a Nairobi Hotel, asked the private sector to help public education institutions offer disease learning. He promised that the government would soon disburse the next tranche of funds to the 17,800 primary schools for free schooling.

The money will be determined by the number of learners enrolled in each school.

By Nation Reporter

Standard
February 21, 2004
NEWS
Lecturers threaten to strike

Another strike by public university lecturers looms after the government stopped further salary negotiations. In a take-it-leave or leave-it letter to the Universities Academic Staff Union(UASU) Education permanent secretary Prof. Karega Mutahi said
the offer was final and as such did not expect any debate about it. Uasu national officials convened an emergency meeting last night and decided to summon the national delegates conference on March 6, which will decide the way forward.

Secretary general Charles Namachanja accused Education Minister George Saitoti of lying to the lecturers. He said the minister had promised them salaries not less than what their counterparts in other East African Countries earn. Saitoti was also accused of wasting public resources by appointing Kenya Institute of Public policy Research Analysis (Kippra) whose report was not considered when the salary offer was made.

The chairperson of the Inter Public University Councils Consultative Forum, Dr. Eddah Gachukia, did not attend yesterday’s meeting with Uasu. The dons salaries have been increased by between 100 and 120 percent.

A full professor will now earn Sh 67,336 per month up from Sh 33,632, associate professors will now get Sh 63,342 up from Sh 28,510 while senior lecturers will get Sh 49,362 up from Sh 21,440.

Lecturers will now get Sh 42,450 up from Sh 17,185, while tutorial fellows will now receive Sh 36,510 up from Sh 14,015.50. The salaries will be effective in July, not February as lecturers had expected.

Standard Correspondent
Nation
February 22, 2004
NEWS
Uasu, ministry talks on salaries collapse

Talks between the government and University lecturers over the contentious pay package have collapsed after the dons rejected new proposals for a third time. Following the collapse of the negotiations, the University Academic Staff Union officials demanded to talk directly to education ministry officials, dismissing as illegal the forum appointed to spearhead the negotiations.

The officials accused Permanent secretary Karega Muahi of calling off the talks. “The PS had arbitrarily and unilaterally stopped the negotiations by a letter he addressed to chairperson Eddah Gachukia,” Uasu secretary general Charles Namachanja said. He accused Prof. Mutahi and Education minister George Saitoti of frustrating negotiation efforts. Last week, the government proposed to increase to Sh 20,156 a tutorial fellow’s salary. The highest paid lecturer, a full professor, would earn a salary of Sh 66,000 up from Sh 31,060.

Uasu said they had many options and the government should be ready for any eventuality. The lecturers wan the negotiations to be based on the Kenya Institute of Public Policy Analysis and Research proposals. Kippra has recommended that lecturer be paid between Sh 122,000 and Sh 545,000. The lecturers want a range of between Sh 159,000 and Shs 895,000.

By Sunday Nation Reporer

People
February 22, 2004
NEWS
Dons to get 100 percent salary hike

The government has revised its salary increment proposal for university dons from 44 to 100 percent. Further, education permanent secretary Professor Karega Mutahi has, in a letter to the Inter Public University Council Consultative Forum stopped any further negotiations on salary hikes demands with the dons. But the dons have vehemently rejected the figure and consequently challenged education minister Prof. George Saitoti to table another proposal based on Kenya Institute of Public Policy Analysis and Research report as a basis of negotiations.

If the new figures are adopted, the lowest paid tutorial fellow will earn a monthly pay of Shs 36,510 up from Sh 16,598, a lecturer will carry home Shs 42,450 up from Shs 19,489.

A senior lecturer, who gets Shs 23,642 is to earn Shs 49,362, associate professors will earn Sh 62,346 from Shs 28,510 while professors will earn Shs 67,336 up from Shs 33,632 per month.

But addressing the press yesterday at Chiromo Campus, the University Academic Staff Union condemned the manner in which the new figures were tabled. The Inter Public University council consultative forum chaired by Dr. Eddah Gachukia tabled the figures on Friday at the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT).

The union’s secretary general Charles Namachanja claimed that education permanent secretary Professor Karega Mutahi had chosen to arbitrarily decide on the figure and consequently stopped any negotiations on the same.

“Uasu still awaits a genuine proposal to its demands as a matter of urgency. Under no circumstances shall the union and the dons be party to unwarranted abuses including the scandalous figure,” Namachanja said.

The union claimed that the stopping of negotiations meant that lecturers had two options-to accept the new proposal or leave it altogether. Namachanja said the move would lead to unprecedented brain drain in the country, a situation, he lamented, would lead to deterioration of academic standards and repression in public universities.

Last week, the government adjusted the figures from 43 percent to 44 percent, which would see the lowest paid tutorial fellow earning Shs 14,000 and the highest paid Shs 66,000. But the dons demanded that the Kippra report, which recommends a 600 percent pay hike to university lecturers be adopted. This would see the dons being paid a monthly salary of between Shs 112,000 and Shs 545,000.

In their proposals, the dons had demanded a pay hike with the lowest paid tutorial fellow earning Sh 159,000 and a full professor getting Shs 895,000 monthly. The Kippra report has not been made public though education minister Prof. George Saitoti had earlier pointed out that he would release the figure on the pay hike demands to public university academic staff this month based on the recommendations of the report.

UASU yesterday warned that it would not be held responsible for any form of anarchy arising from what it termed as “irresponsible and indecisive” conduct of both the minister and his PS.

It has summoned its National Delegates Conference early next month to deliberate on the way forward.

By Kimutai Ng’eno and Ken Opande
Dons blame PS Mutahi

Public university lecturers have protested a move by the government to close the doors for fresh salary negotiations. Universities Academic Staff Union (UASU) blamed the Education Permanent Secretary Mr. Karega Mutahi, for arbitrarily ending the talks with university councils. Secretary general Charles Namachanja said the union’s national executive committee would meet next Saturday to chart the way forward for the national delegates conference on March 6.

He said the arrogance exhibited by Mutahi had complicated the salary dispute. He accused Mutahi of dictatorial tendencies in the way he has handled the lecturers’ pay dispute.

Lecturers turn down new pay plan

Public university lecturers yesterday rejected what appeared to be a final government salary offer. And they threatened a new class boycott as they called a national delegates conference next week to decide on the next move. Lecturers at individual universities have been asked by the national union officials to find ways to force the government to meet their demands before the March 6 talks.

Top officials of the Universities Academic Staff union yesterday termed the government offer on Monday “intellectual abuse”. Secretary general Charles Namachanja accused the Inter Public University Council Consultative Forum of misinforming the public that it had offered regionally competitive salaries.

Public relations exercises

“We cannot continue engaging in public relations exercises. Member of the Forum should know they are fomenting problems and thy will be held responsible ,” he told a news conference at the University of Nairobi. He said the forum had picked the salaries of Jomo Kenyatta and Kenyatta Universities, which pay the highest house allowances of up to Sh 43,000 to consolidate it with the adjusted salaries to make them look higher.

On Monday, forum chairperson Eddah Gachukia announced that the lecturers had been given a pay offer of between Sh 60,550 and Sh 116,376.
Varsity stalemate ridiculous

The university lecturer’s pay dispute is becoming a circus. The players appear to be playing their cards under the table in a game of wits. Yet the suffers are the students. They have lost three months and, although back on campuses, they are not getting value for their money as teaching has not resumed in earnest. In the latest episode, the University Academic Staff Union (UASU) has rejected a government offer to push their salaries to a minimum of Sh 36,000 for the lowest paid and a maximum of Sh 116,000 for the highest. So they have called a meeting next week to decide on their next course of action – read: a strike.

For its part, the government has refused to deal with the lecturers directly, opting to create the Inter Public University Council Consultative forum to negotiate with the lecturers. The university statutes do not provide for such an organization. Nor does the Trade and Disputes Act. Put simply, the government has adopted the wrong path to addressing this issue.

While we appreciate that the government’s latest offer is a considerable improvement on everything it has offered before, the attitude with which it is being given is wrong. Take it or leave it, it seems to be saying. That is an overly condescending attitude. Moreover, the figures do not match those offered by other East African Universities as promised.

But the lecturers have also adopted too stubborn and non-compromising an approach, insisting that they must get an increase ranging between 600 and 1,000 per cent or nothing. That is not the way to go – negotiation is about giving and taking.

In such a situation, the two parties cannot ever be expected to resolve the dispute. It is upon Education Minister George Saitoti to come out and resolve the dispute by announcing a reasonable and realistic pay rise.

Nation
February 26, 2004
NEWS
Uasu worried about future

The government was yesterday accused of scheming to kill the Universities Academic Staff Union to scuttle member’s agitation for salary increments. Organising secretary Musali Edebe, who is also chairman of the Moi University Chapter, claimed the vice-chancellors of the six public universities were being used in the scheme.

Mr. Edebe accused some private universities of aiding the government to kill the union to pre-empt their own lecturers from demanding higher pay. During a meeting at the university’s guest house in Eldoret, lecturers said the clearest sign of the government’s ill will was its failure to remit their monthly contributions to UASU.

The meeting was called after the government last Monday offered lecturers a pay increase of between 116 and 160 percent. The lecturers have declined the offer which had bettered a previous one of 44 per cent.

The union has called a national delegates meeting for next week and threatened a new lecturers boycott if the offer is not improved. Mr. Edebe said that through the university administrators, the government had withheld lecturers’ contributions to UASU amounting to Sh 1.2 million for December and January.

Sources told the Nation the administrators could not remit the money without
Labour minister Ali Mwakwere’s approval. “We are seeing this as a move to terminate our union to force us to go back to class without anything tangible for us but we are going to fight on,” he said.

Deduction not made

Mr. Edebe said that although last December’s deduction were reflected on their payrolls, the money was not in the union’s account and that the January deductions were not made. Universities were supposed to have remitted Sh 600,000 in December to the union. Each of the more than 3,000 lecturers contributes Sh 200 monthly to defray the union’s expenses.

Mr. Edebe said 12 lecturers had already left for Rwanda, Tanzania and Japan in search of jobs.

He declined to name them saying the government could turn down their resignation from the university.

By Peter Ng’etich

Nation
March 3, 2004
NEWS
Lecturers fear cancellation of Uasu weekend meeting

The government is planning to scuttle a special national delegates conference of the lecturers’ union, officials have claimed. The authorities, they alleged yesterday, were apprehensive that the universities Academic Staff Union’s meeting slated for Saturday at Moi University might issue a fresh strike notice. The meeting was organized after the Education Minister, Prof. George Saitoti failed to honour his pledge to give the government’s position on the stalemate on salaries. “Prof. Saitoti had promised to issue a statement concerning our salaries, putting into consideration the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis report in February, but we waited in vain,” Mr. Musalia Edebe the Uasu organizing secretary and the union’s Moi University chapter chairman, said.

Mr. Edebe and Mr. Maurice Ogeta the chapter’s secretary, claimed that a meeting scheduled for tomorrow at Egerton University that had been called by the chairperson of the Inter-Public University’s council consultative forum, Dr. Eddah Gachukia would be postponed to Sunday to force the union to cancel its Saturday meeting.

“Sources have told us that the delay is calculated to disorganize us and make us cancel the Saturday meeting, where national officials and those from the six public universities are supposed to resolve the way forward,” Mr. Ogeta said.

Mr. Edebe said it was “strange” that the government through the consultative forum, was calling a meeting with Uasu while the PS for education, Prof. Karega Mutahi, had put an end to negotiations with the union.

By Nation Team
Dons in fresh strike threat

Public university lecturers are planning to issue another strike notice today, barely two months after calling off their earlier one. The new move is to protest against what the lecturers say is Education Minister George Saitoti’s dishonesty in handling their pay increase demands. Prof. Saitoti had on several occasions publicly promised that he would announce the best salary package for the lecturers in February.

In the past one week, the seven chapters of the Universities Academic Staff Union (UASU) have been holding meetings to deliberate on the agenda for a national conference to be held at Moi University Eldoret.

At a stormy meeting held yesterday at the University of Nairobi, the Uasu members said another strike will be the “best strategy” in their struggle with the Ministry of Education. Reports from Moi, Kenyatta, Egerton and Maseno universities indicated that the chapters had resolved that the national officials present a fresh strike notice to Saitoti on Monday.

Lecturers’ pay talks put off till Thursday

The salary negotiation between university lecturers and the government have been postponed to next Thursday. Mr. Muga L\Kolale, an assistant secretary general of the Universities Academic Staff Union (Uasu) confirmed that the negotiations would continue in Nairobi. He was part of the team that met with members of the Inter Public Universities Councils Consultative Forum at Njoro Campus, Egerton University, on Thursday.

Mr. Kolale and Prof Everret Standa Kenyatta University’s vice-chancellors are joint secretaries to the negotiating committee. Mr. Kolale was confident that the government would offer better proposals given that the union had already tabled its own. The seven hour negotiations, which started at about 6 pm on Thursday, centered on allowances. According to Uasu secretary general Charles Namachanja, tomorrow’s special national delegates conference will go on as planned.

Mr. Namachanja yesterday said he expected the government to give a better offer. He said that allowances were not uniform in public universities and needed to be discussed. He cited Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology whose lecturers enjoyed better allowances than their counterparts in other public universities.

Uasu chairman John Nderitu said they wanted all new salaries and allowances backdated to July 2003. He said MPs had assured them that they would pass the new pay in the supplementary budget. The Uasu officials addressed a news conference in Nakuru after their council meeting.

National treasurer Moses Muchina and an official from Egerton chapter Fred Juma attended the conference.
Government acts to avert dons’ strike

The government yesterday moved to avert a planned university strike by announcing a modest increase of their house allowances. The new allowances will range between Sh 35,000 for tutorial fellows and Sh 65,000 for full professors. This is pegged on the rates paid at the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology. At the other universities the range is between Sh 20,000 and Sh 45,000.

However, Education minister George Saitoti said yesterday, the basic salary remains at the rates suggested by the Inter-Public University Councils Consultative forum in February. Under the figures, the lowest paid (tutorial fellows) are to get a basic salary of Sh 35,510 and the highest (professors) Sh 67,336.

The consolidated figures went up to Sh 60,550 for the tutorial fellows and Sh 116,000 for the professors.

In the latest move, the consolidated figure for a tutorial fellow will be Sh 70,510 and Sh 122,336 for professors.

But Prof. Saitoti added that the mode of implementiong the new package will be discussed and agreed upon the treasury, his ministry and the forum. “After the allowances have been harmonized. The new package will be substantially higher than the one offered by the government in February and we expect the lecturer to accept it.”

He added: “The mode and duration of implementing the new package will also depend on Treasury’s ability to pay”.

He was emphatic that the government did not have the money to increase the lecturers’ salaries beyond the suggested levels. But the suggested increase means that lecturers at JKUAT will receive no rise. At the core of the dispute is the demand by the lecturers of a hefty pay rise ranging between Sh 265,000 and Sh 895,000. The highest offer so far proposed by the government was a package ranging between Sh 60,550 and Sh 116,000.

But in a swift rejoinder, the Universities Academic Staff Union (UASU) termed the announcement a betrayal and vowed to fight for a “just and decent salary”.

The secretary-general, Mr. Charles Namachanja, accused the minister of dishonesty, adding his announcement demonstrated the government was not interested in Improving university education. He said the new move would harden the union’s resolve to carry out its strike threat, already slated for April.

“We take great exception to the minister’s statement and wish to remind him that his integrity is at stake,” said Mr. Namachanja. “He is reneging on a pledge he publicly made several times in the past that he will push for a better pay for lecturers.”

He questioned the rationale of having the government commission a consultancy firm – KIPPRA – to present proposals on new salaries and then fail to act on them.

Speaking in Nyeri, Prof. Saitoti said the house allowances would be raised to the rates at JKUAT.

Meanwhile, the Students Organisation of the University of Nairobi has urged the government to resolve the pay dispute. The vice-chairman, Mr. Fwamba Fwamba, said:
“Another strike will be a terrible blow to the students and should be avoided at all costs.”

By Mumbi Murage

Nation
March 11, 2004
OPINION
Dons: It’s a very poor show

All along the government had promised to give a decent pay rise to public universities lecturers, who had been grossly under-paid. On several occasions in the past, Education Minister Prof. George Saitoti spoke about February when the government would announce a new pay package. Now the minister is saying the government does not have the money and the best it can do is to give the lecturers a modest increase in housing allowances, averaging Sh 15,000. This is on top of what was offered in February by the Gachukia team.

Several questions come to mind. One, why did professor Saitoti commission a consultancy firm – The Kenya Institute of Public Policy Research and Analysis(KIPPRA) – to conduct a study in the region and give a suggestion on the best and affordable remuneration for lecturers if he was not keen on giving a reasonable pay award?

Two, was the ministry just buying time when it kept saying it would announce a new pay package in February?

Although it is clear that the government cannot give the salary increase demanded by lecturers – that ranged from Sh 265,438 to Sh 895,000 – it won’t convince anybody that it cannot raise the pay to between Sh 100,000 and Sh 200,000.

The offshoots of poor pay are too clear – loss of the best brains to other countries or professions, moonlighting that leaves staff with little time to attend to their students and apathy.

Whatever it take the government must find ways of increasing the lecturers’ pay to reasonable levels.

People
March 13, 2004
NEWS
Dons threaten to quit pay negotiations

_They accuse the government of playing games_

University lecturers have threatened to quit the pay rise negotiations if the government fails to table a rationalized package proposal next Wednesday. In stinging criticism yesterday, the lecturers’ representative body University Academic Staff Union accused minister George Saitoti of dishonesty and demanded communication from him before or on Wednesday when the lecturers beat the government at the negotiating forum.

Union officials accused the government of engaging them in a public relations exercise and said Wednesday’s meeting would be final. “We are tired of these endless talks which are not bearing any fruits, these talks may forever be meaningless and it’s time the government stopped playing games with us,” charged union secretary-general Charles Namachanja.
“The meeting on Wednesday will be very decisive, if the minister has been keeping anything under the table, this is the day for him to bring it out for us to see and decide whether we shall accept it or not, we should be able to seal the deal then” he said. He was in the company of union national chairman John Nderitu and organizing secretary Musalia Edebe.

The secretary general said the body’s national executive council members met yesterday to deliberate on the matter and agreed to discontinue the talks if Wednesday’s negotiations do not bear fruit. The lecturers are planning a major meeting on Thursday to decide the next course of action. Decisions will be based on the outcome of the Wednesday negotiations, explained the officials.

The union dismissed an explanation by Saitoti that the government was too broke to increase the salaries of the 3,200 lecturers terming it insincere. “We know very well that there is a lot of money in circulation, the problem if the government is getting its priorities wrong,” said Namachanja.

He took exception with the revelations could spend Shs 2.4 billion on the national referendum in the ongoing constitutional reform process saying the forum was unjustified since already so much had been spent on the Bomas constitutional talks. The official told the government that paying lecturers well would not be a waste but would go a long way to boost the country's development. “we have the expertise to produce quality manpower crucial for the development of this nation,” he said. And the national chairman John Nderitu said any salary package that will be agreed on should be backdated to July last year since this was an issue falling within this financial year.

He said the minister’s proposals for a revised house allowances was not in good faith since lecturers had asked for a revised entire pay package with the basic salary being the major issue.

By Caroline Wafula

People
April 4, 2004
UASU concedes to new pay package

The Universities Academic Staff Union yesterday formally agreed to accept the new pay package tabled despite the inherent consistencies. UASU secretary general Charles Namachanja said although the proposal tabled by the Public University Councils Consultative Forum, fell below their expectations they would go ahead and sign it in order to avoid impending deadlock.

“We will accept the salary offer but it must be subjected to further negotiations,” he said.

Speaking during a special delegates’ meeting held at the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology(JKUAT) Namachanja said the union clause four and five in the collective bargaining agreement should be expunged. “Clauses four and five are very contentious and we want them to be removed from the agreement,” he said.

Other delegates also took issue with clause four and five contained within the agreement which close room for further negotiations regarding allowances for the next two years and postdates the dates of implementation to July 1 this year respectively. Joint
secretary Muga Kolale said the union has rejected the inclusion of the two contentious clauses because the clauses are repressive and subjective.

Delegates from Maseno, Moi, Kenyatta and Jomo Kenyatta chapter expressed fear that the government was not acting in good faith by including the two clauses.

Namachanja maintained that the salary increase should be backdated to July 1, last year saying the union will not “settle for anything less.”

However, the union vowed to look for loopholes within the collective bargaining agreement through which they will force the government to go back to the bargaining table concerning the allowances.

“The proposal tabled by the government touches on the basic salary only but the government is trying to close the door by introducing clause four, we will therefore explore all avenues to ensure the government gives us an ear,” the national chairman John Nderitu said.

At the same time the union has castigated the government terming it “insensitive to the plight of university dons”.

“The government has acted in bad faith because it has not been honest with us,” Nderitu said. He accused the forum of taking sides in the negotiations and favouring the government.

The collective bargaining agreement, he said was not based on mutual trust because the unions views were consciously excluded.

“The agreement does not contain the views of the UASU and the government is actually forcing us to accept it without any conditions, he lamented.

The special delegates meeting was meant to give a final nod to the salary package tabled by the government on Thursday. In the offer the dons salaries were raised by between 116.8 and 160 percent.

The salaries whose implementation will begin in July this year, are set to raise the salary of the highest paid lecturers – a professor to Sh 149,543 while the tutorial fellow who is the lowest paid lecturer is set to receive Sh 120,710.

The union is expected to accept the offer during a meeting with the forum on Monday this week.

By Rebecca Mutiso

Nation
April 7, 2004
NEWS

Dons accept new pay package

Lecturers have finally accepted the salary package the government proposed last week. They will tomorrow sign the memorandum of agreement they rejected last week, after the Inter Public University Councils Conclusive Forum agreed to review one of its two contentious clauses on Monday.

The review will enable the parties to negotiate other allowances within the two-year period the agreement will be in force. The union declined to sign the agreement. This was because of a clause which states that, besides the salary and those allowances in the new offer, other terms and conditions of service would remain unchanged. The latest move means universities will now run their programmes smoothly. There were fears that
the lecturers might call another strike if they were not happy with the package.

Academic programmes at the six state universities were thrown into disarray last November following the lecturers’ boycott aimed at pressurizing the government to raise their pay.

The strike was called off in January but the institutions were not re-opened as scheduled because administrators were not sure if the lecturers would teach. The new offer was tabled by the forum last Wednesday and will see the highest paid lecturer – a professor – earn a consolidated salary of Sh 149,543. The lowest paid lecturer – a tutorial fellow – is set to earn a minimum of Sh 73,046 and a maximum of Sh 88,658. The minimum salary for a professor is now Sh 120,710 in the package, which raises the salaries by between 116.8 percent and 160 percent.

At the Monday meeting the university team and that of the UASU agreed that the negotiations on allowances would still go on after tomorrow’s signing ceremony at the University of Nairobi.

Yesterday, UASU secretary general Charles Namachanja said the National executive council had mandated individual university chapters to identify the allowances they wanted negotiated.

They will liaise with the NationalUasu office to discuss the perks to be effected within the period.

“Already we have identified more than 30 allowances which we are to table for negotiation,” he said. The move to open the allowances for negotiations was agreed to after it emerged that they had never been tabled for discussion.

Mr. Namachanja said committees would be formed for each Uasu chapter to lead negotiations, jointly with the forum and the Uasu national office bearers.

The new pay will be effected in July, contrary to the lecturers demands that it be backdated to the same month last year.

By Samuel Siringi

Standard
April 9, 2004
NEWS
Dons’ pay rise is sealed

University dons’ union and the Inter Public University Councils Consultative Forum have finally signed a salary deal for the lecturer. The two groups yesterday signed a collective bargaining agreement at the University of Nairobi witnessed by Federation of Kenya Employers chief executive Tom Owuor and IPUCCF chairperson, Dr. Eddah Gachukia.

It followed three months of acrimonious talks between representatives of the Universities Academic Staff Union and the government following a strike by the dons. Vice-chancellors of all the six public universities, deputy vice-chancellors and Uasu’s national and chapter officials signed the document.

The principle of Western University College of Science and Technology, Prof. Barasa Wangila also signed the document on behalf of his institution.

The new salary and housing allowance raise of between 116 to 160 percent becomes effective at beginning of July. UASU convenor at the negotiations, Dr. Mary
Omosa said the process had been like a training course for the union which she said had made several concessions that may have annoyed its members.

IPUCCF joint secretary Prof. Everret Standa challenged academic staff to get down to business and give back to society in terms of research and teaching. Uasu secretary general Charles Namachanja, called on the government to allow public universities to exercise their autonomy if they are expected to realize their mission.

Patriotism

“Lecturers have expressed their patriotism by accepting the low figures. We regret that although the government wasted a lot of taxpayers money in commissioning Kippra, the forum did not use the document in meeting our demands,” said Namachanja. Uasu chairman, Dr. John Nderitu appealed to the government to force Maseno University administration to readmit 18 students who were expelled last year.

Deputy secretary general Mr. Muga Kolale said restructuring of public universities should include change of attitude by administrators. He said the salary and allowance scheme of academic staff should be de-linked from that of the non-academic staff adding: “It is unethical to lump them together yet their level of qualifications are quite different.”

The CBA will be in force for two years.

Standard Reporter

Nation
April 9, 2004
NEWS
Dons decry misuse of funds

_Uasu calls for probe and reforms in public universities’ management_

Lecturers yesterday launched a new campaign for reforms in the public universities’ administration. Through the Universities Academic Staff Union they also called for investigations into claims of misappropriation of funds. Speaking at the signing of their new salary package yesterday, Uas chairman John Nderitu said the government’s efficiency monitoring unit would unearth misuse of funds, especially those generated from the parallel degree programmes.

Dr. Nderitu also asked Maseno and Jomo Kenyatta Universities to readmit 24 students expelled in the past year for alleged indiscipline. The students, he said, had been punished following the recent nationwide lecturers’ strike and the pressure mounted for the unsuccessful removal of Maseno vice-chancellor Frederick Onyango.

He warned: “There will be many battles before we win the war.”

A service commission

Secretary general Charles Namachanja said Uasu would fight for the establishment of a Universities Service Commission to hire and promote staff and negotiate with the union on their terms and conditions of service. He said the current book storage in the universities should be made modern and computerized libraries with adequate access to the Internet. “We expect that our respective councils will facilitate the provision of computers, which should be placed on each desk of a university don,” he
Mr. Namachanja called for autonomy in the management of public universities by de-linking the management from the ministry of Education. Competent and professional managers would then be identified to run them, he said.

“The government should not continue to appoint managers to run our institutions because they will be serving the interests of their political masters,” he said.

The chairman of the government’s negotiating committee, Prof. G. Magoha said the new salaries were satisfactory and ruled out any more negotiations within two years. The lecturers agreed to sign the salary memorandum of agreement they had rejected after the Inter Public University Councils Consultative Forum reviewed one of two contentious clauses on Monday.

Smooth programmes

Yesterday’s move means the universities will run their programmes smoothly as there were fears that the lecturers would call another strike if they were not happy with the package. Right now, the academic programmes are in disarray following the strike.

By Samuel Siringi

New pay for dons won’t stem drain

Will the recent salary and harmonization of housing allowance for the public university lecturers stem the brain drain from the country? Universities Academic Staff Union(Uasu) secretary general Charles Namachanja doesn’t believe so.

“What we have been offered is way below our expectations. We wanted to be paid salaries that could attract the best brains from any part of the world,” says Namachanja. Uasu National Chairman, Dr. John Nderitu, with tongue in cheek says “the government has in fact given us pocket money. These figures will not reverse the current brain drain”.

Beginning July, a full professor will earn Sh 67,336 up from Sh 33,632, associate professor Sh 62,342 up from Sh 28,510, senior lecturer Sh 49,362 up from Sh 21,440, lecturer Sh 42,540 up from Sh 17,185 while tutorial fellows will now earn Sh 36,510 up from the current Sh 14,015.50

Uasu was demanding that a tutorial fellow/assistant lecturer be paid a monthly consolidated salary and allowances amounting to Sh 232,558, lecturer Sh 411,979, senior lecturer Sh 588,064, associate professor Sh 699,036 and full professor Sh 895,481.

“Our intention was to attract and retain qualified dons to compete effectively in the promotion of quality education,” says Musalia Edebe, Uasu’s organizing secretary.

The union argues that the purchasing power for lecturer has been declining for the last 28 years. In 1975, for instance a lecturer was earning US$429(Sh 3,000) at an exchange rate of Sh 7 to 1 US dollar. This figure is more than US$398 (Sh 31,060) a full professor is currently earning.

The comparison between academis in Kenyan Public Universities and their counterparts in southern Africa indicate that those in South Africa earn five times more than them. While a Kenyan University tutorial fellow earns US$ 2,403 per annum, his counterpart in Botswana earns US$ 8,439. On the other hand a Kenyan professor earning US$ 5,325 per annum is highly superseded by his peer in Botswana with US$34,014.
The comparison between university dons and their peers in the private sector also indicate that those in the private sector have continued to enjoy excellent terms of service and remuneration.

In the context of these comparisons, Uasu demanded a complete overhaul on the present terms and conditions of service in Kenyan public universities. The deputy secretary-general, Mr. Muga Kolale argues that public universities have for a long time now been mismanaged mainly because of political interference. He says if meaningful changes have to be instituted, some of the current university administrators have to be replaced and those to be retained should change their attitude. Namachanja says Uasu will demand the review of the Universities Acts and Statutes and de-politicisation and democratization of the universities to separate them from constant political interference.

The union will also push for the creation of a universities service commission (similar to the teachers service commission) to be in charge of recruitment, promotion and appraisal of academic staff in all universities.

Nderitu says by having the universities service commission “we shall be sure of meritocracy in appointments and promotions unlike the case now in some institutions where promotion is considered a reward for supporting a vice-chancellor”

Uasu is also pushing for the lecturers to be allocated annual funds to support their research, publications, travel and presentation of papers at both international and regional conferences like it used to happen at the University of Nairobi in the 1980s and earlier 90s.

At this oldest public university, lecturers used to be given a minimum of Sh100,000 on presentation of a research project. The university could then support the entire project on establishing the usefulness of its findings.

Prof. Frederick Okatcha of Kenyatta University says unless the government demonstrates its seriousness through improved salaries and allowances, there is no way scholars in exile will return. “It is unlikely that they will resign from their lucrative jobs (by local standards) and return to Kenya to live like paupers in the name of patriotism,” says Okatcha.

The psychology professor argues that the idea of paying university lecturer more allowances than salaries is illogical and should be reviewed immediately.

By Ken Ramani