

PROPOSAL FOR SALARY REVIEW

**PRESENTED TO THE COMMITTEE ON THE FRAMEWORK FOR
ENGAGEMENT – CONDITIONS OF SERVICE**

By

**UNIVERSITY OF SIERRA LEONE, NJALA UNIVERSITY AND
ERNEST BAI KOROMA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE &
TECHNOLOGY (EBKUST)**

26th January, 2021

1.0 Preamble

A significant consideration that seems to have evaded us as a nation is an appreciation of the role of universities in shaping the future of our country. The calibre of manpower in the public service impacts significantly on the design and implementation of robust government policies in every sector. Globally, the growth and productivity of the industrial sector hinges on the quality and relevance of the training given to our home-grown scientists, engineers and social scientists, etc. Lecturers within the university system in Sierra Leone have not failed to deliver on this duty of training to equip the workforce for the effective operation of the state. If lecturers are providing the services that they are employed to do, then they must be appropriately remunerated.

Section 28 (1) of the Universities Act 2005 makes provision for Staff Associations within the University system in Sierra Leone and further mandates the said Associations to negotiate their terms and conditions of service.

The last time salaries were negotiated was in May 2011. The increment then was phased out and the last tranche was not paid till 2018. We could not have started a new negotiation when the last one had not been completed, hence the presentation of our proposal only in 2019. Our salaries have been eaten up by the ever-rising exchange rates between the Leone and the US Dollar. At the moment this is the exact picture of our monthly basic salary: Professor - Le18,975,526 (\$1,866.64), Associate Professor - Le15,104,347 (\$1,485.83), Senior Lecturer - Le11,787,542 (\$1,159.55), Lecturer 1- Le 9,083,212 (\$893.53), Technician Le5,978,529 (\$588.11), Lecturer 2 - Le5,042,469 (\$496.03) Senior Supporting Staff Le3,186,665 (\$313.48) NOTE : *Exchange Rate as at 25th Nov. 2020 Le10,165.59 to \$1*

Contingent on the foregoing, Academic Staff Associations of public universities in Sierra Leone since 2019 have put forward, though separately, proposals for salary review that call for the following:

The payment of our agreed 100% Salary Adjustment to reflect in our take home (net) salary after all tax deductions, effective January 2021'.

This review that ASAs asked for, was meant to defray the astronomical surge in the Dollar exchange which affects every span of economic activity. It was meant to cushion the gradual, crippling inflation rate we are constrained to endure year after year. Despite all these, suffice you to know that our review has remained unaffected by four subsequent Government reviews. Our salary has remained stagnant despite the demand on us to undertake online teaching which adversely affected our minimal salaries. We have not received any salary adjustment in the face of Government support to hotel and tourism and other sectors. Alongside the 100% salary adjustment, we are also proposing the following:

1. The full payment of staff salary instead of the fragmentation arrangement instituted by the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education.
2. Salaries and allowances of academic staff must be renegotiated and improved every three years.
3. The inclusion of 17 COMAHS staff into the government payroll.
4. Speedy payment of ex-gratia to retired lecturers.
5. Payment of increment to lecturers confirmed and promoted since 2019.
6. Payment of backlog to newly appointed staff.
7. Equipping the universities with teaching and e-learning facilities to ensure quality education. The university must be equipped with laboratories to ensure that students have hands-on experience.
8. Urgent rehabilitation and expansion of campuses (infrastructure and basic amenities including staff quarters, staff offices, lecture rooms etc. A rehabilitation plan should be put in place to be done quarterly.
9. Staff development- the enabling environment must be provided for staff to receive further trainings especially those that will lead to the attainment of terminal degrees.
10. Adoption of the new harmonised conditions of service for USL, Njala University and EBKUST.

2.0 Regional and National Comparison:

- i. Governments in East Africa, Southern Africa and West Africa, especially Ghana and Nigeria have made bold moves to reverse the brain drain by empowering their universities and creating conditions of service for the academics that are competitive with those of the private sector. Within the West African sub-region and to cite Nigerian and Ghanaian Universities, Professors earn a minimum take-home salary of US\$5,000 per month. The result is that these countries can boast of a wide scope of programmes in their universities simply because they have nationals who have the required academic credentials to teach them. This may also justify why lecturers in those universities are not reliant on soliciting individual consultancies, but make maximum inputs into their teaching and research work. While most of the staff in those universities had their initial tertiary education at Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone, university academic staff in Sierra Leone deserve similar or even better remunerations for their services.
- ii. The miserable teaching and research opportunities, abject salaries and other CoS for teaching staff, etc., in the universities have forced academic staff to spend most of their time as hustlers in search of individual consultancies in order to make ends meet. Such

useful time would otherwise be spent on reading, thinking, devising new methods of solving problems, training the nation's children for future leadership, etc.

- iii. The public universities in Sierra Leone, no doubt serve as human factories of all sorts, nourishing and nurturing the minds of young men and women for future development roles. Upon graduation from university, most of these men and women are absorbed into other government establishments like NASSIT, NRA, and local NGOs (to name but few) where they earn far in excess of what their university professors are paid. The psychological implications of these salary differentials are very obvious, which have the potential to undermine the dedication of academic staff to produce quality graduates for the world market.

3.0 The Need to Sustain and Develop the University:

- i. It is no gainsay that the public universities in Sierra Leone suffer from acute brain drain. Obviously, most Sierra Leoneans who go to study overseas hardly return after their studies and most academic staff often leave the university for better national-paid jobs like NRA, NASSIT, etc., and also international jobs because of the miserable salaries and other CoS they receive from our public universities.
- ii. The history of brain drain is very well known. Sadly though, no government, over the last three decades has considered it as a major contributor to the much trumpeted 'decline in the standard of education' in our country. It started in the early eighties coinciding with the start of the decline in Sierra Leone's economic performance and a style of governance that removed that 'special' status which universities the world over must have if they are to fulfil their sacred mandate to the nation. Many of the Professors who left the universities did so mainly because of salary and other conditions of service, and in search of working conditions overseas that ensured their professional growth as well as remunerations that guaranteed a reasonably comfortable life after retirement. The sad trend that has developed over the last two decades is that young staff members who receive scholarships through the university or Government to acquire higher degrees outside, understandably fail to come back home on completion of their programmes; or if they come back, they seek employment elsewhere. No doubt, staff on the ground would like similar conditions elsewhere, but have sacrificed themselves to train the nation's children, and therefore deserve better salary conditions.
- iii. Analysis of staffing positions at University of Sierra Leone alone reveal that as a result of brain drain, not more than 50% of the established positions are actively filled. This, has no doubt subjected the remaining staff to unfairly lecturing overload modules with such low pay, which has also resulted in forcing a substantial number of them to lecturing modules which are not their areas of expertise. The situation is not any different at Njala University.

- iv. Sierra Leone has at home, competent academics in their own right capable of strengthening the staff component of public universities. There are many more in the diaspora with expertise in almost every field in science, engineering and the humanities and would not hesitate to come back to serve but at a price. We believe that this price is never too much for the benefits the country stands to gain in sustaining the universities even in the short term.
- v. The overwork load has also impacted the younger academic staff in the sense that they have little or no time for research and therefore cannot have upward mobility. ASAs very strongly believe that if the 100% salary review is implemented, this will induce staff to stay in the public universities and even attract national and international staff from overseas.
- vi. Gradually, with the long-serving academic staff gone, the stability of the staffing structure, painstakingly built over the years crumbles. Public universities have now taken on the ugly image of transit camps where academics hang out, awaiting their turn for greener pastures because of the poor and unattractive salaries and other CoS. **A colleague – lecturer (who is a supporter of the ruling party) was once asked, if he had gotten an appointment since his party is in power, or if he was still lecturing.**

4.0 Staff Welfare Improvement:

- i. Some staff are resident in college quarters and have to vacate these premises after retirement. Staff cannot use their low salaries to acquire land and start building their own homes where they can live a quiet and respectful retirement period, particularly where there is no housing scheme for staff. No government would like to see its academics stay homeless after retirement. This unfortunately is a condescending picture for our future generations that might force them away from the university system.
- ii. The miracle of the Athens of West Africa had its roots in the universal character of its academic and senior administrative staff, comprising lecturers from the best universities in the world and Sierra Leoneans recognised for their scholarship outside our shores. The latter had no reason to seek greener pastures elsewhere because the pasture here was just as green, both in terms of working conditions (a well-stocked library and functional laboratories) and a pay package that was at par with those in any university in the United Kingdom, strengthened by a healthy retirement package. Those Sierra Leonean academics and administrators who belonged to that golden age were proud owners of their own homes by the time they retired then at age sixty, all acquired because of their undivided service to the university.
- iii. No doubt the prices of commodities in the market are increasing at alarming geometric rates with no corresponding increase in salaries. The case of rice is classical wherein most

academic staff now spend most of their times chasing authorities for consultancies only to make ends meet.

- iv. As a result of the inadequate or non-housing facilities for academic staff, most of them are resident in town, and cannot afford to buy vehicles. In the morning and afternoon, these lecturers queue and compete with their students at car parks for transportation. For most of the time, these staff get to campus late to deliver their lectures. If academic staffs are paid reasonable salaries, they can afford to possess their own vehicles and be free from the humiliation in queuing and competing with their students for transportation.
- v. The government through its New Direction has made positive in-roads in some institutions like the SLBC, RSLAF, ACC, etc., but sadly, the universities have not received an iota of consideration, despite their crucial role in nation building.
- vi. The adequate remuneration being sought can help give voice to public university authorities and government to adequately monitor and maintain discipline within public universities, thus promoting the output and viability of the Universities for national development.

5.0 Suggestions for other Incentives

1. A certain percentage of the income from other sources like the Toll Gate fees (for example) could be set aside to top up the payment of lecturers' salary. In Ghana a percentage of tax on fuel is set aside for that purpose.
2. All research projects coming into ministries can be sent to the Universities. This could help to boost their revenues that could be used to enhance lecturers' emoluments.
3. By way of incentive, lecturers bringing vehicles into the country, after two years, can be exempted from paying tax.
4. Lecturers should be given access to state lands
5. For effective implementation, the above could be enacted.

Signed:



26/01/21

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