

# School of Education Newsletter



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## Editor's Note

We welcome our readers to the last quarter Issue of the 2024 School of Education (SoE) Newsletter, where we bring you the updates and developments from SoE. This Issue highlights several significant milestones achieved in the last quarter, including building research partnerships, initiatives on continuous professional development, and enriching research dissemination visits by SoE researchers in international forums. There are many achievements that have been accomplished through these projects as shown in the project news.



*Paul Chiwaya*

While 2024 was a great year for SoE as reflected in the news carried in this Issue, it was not a year without its own sad and painful moments. In 2024, SoE lost Dr Bob Chulu, one of its eminent scholars in the field of Educational Testing and Measurement. In the same year, another dark cloud fell on SoE as we lost a young and promising scholar, Cobbener Sungani, who, until his untimely death, was a Tutor in Social Studies Education. Our hearts and prayers are forever with the families and friends our colleagues left behind.

As we start our journey through 2025, we extend our sincere thanks to the Executive Dean of the School of Education for his steadfast support in helping us deliver this last Issue of the year. We value your insights and invite you, our esteemed readers, to share your feedback as we strive to enhance the quality and relevance of our Newsletter.

Enjoy your reading.

Paul Chiwaya (M.Ed., MSc., MPA-ID)

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# Executive Dean's Desk

Dr Peter Ngwinjo Namphande | Executive Dean of School of Education



I would like to welcome our readers to this edition of the School of Education Newsletter, in which we provide updates and recent developments in the University of Malawi and the School of Education (SoE), in particular.

In this edition, we are happy to report on efforts towards building the capacity of our staff, as well as the role the university is playing in strengthening the capacity of others in the Education community. We are pleased to report that the School contributed to the capacity building of secondary school teachers through both face-to-face and online training on Open and Distance e-Learning (ODEL) course development and

facilitation training. Similarly, the School completed the second training for Educator Mentors which ran from September to December 2024.

On the interface between research and teaching, we take pride in the contributions of the School in making research relevant to the Malawian context through the exploration and use of innovative teaching approaches in large class and low-income contexts. In addition, the efforts to scale up the impact of educational innovations and bridge the gap between the local, national and global levels are also commendable. We equally value our collaboration with partner institutions such as Florida State University (FSU), Stellenbosch University, University

of Free State (UFS), the University of Zambia (UNZA), University College London, and UNESCO which allows us to exchange information, share experiences, and explore solutions to persistent challenges.

In this edition, we also share abstracts of papers that were presented during SoE staff seminars held in 2024, and extend our invitation to other researchers outside SoE to disseminate their research through this platform. We further invite researchers to submit their research articles to be considered for publication in the Malawi Journal of Education and Development (MJED).

We wish you a pleasant reading.

## SoE and FSU Explore Innovative Approaches to Large Class Pedagogy in Malawi



*Bubire Jere-Kitha (4th Left) with research team members*

Mrs. Bubire Jere-Kitha from the Department of Language Education in the School of Education (SoE) is leading a one-year research project titled, 'Large Class Pedagogy in Low-Income Contexts: Exploring Methods

with Teachers in Malawi'. The project is being implemented in collaboration with a team from Florida State University (FSU) with financial support from FSU's Council on Research & Creativity Seed Grant Program. This

research is timely as it is addressing the widespread challenge of managing large classes in developing countries, with Malawi being no exception.

The research project aims to identify effective instructional methods used in low-resource classrooms to inform future intervention strategies. Since its inception in September 2024, the team has gathered data from selected primary schools within Malawi and the data is being processed.

Mrs. Jere-Kitha plays a pivotal role in this project such as overseeing the training of transcribers and ensuring the quality of data transcription. She will also co-author research papers derived from the project's findings, and host a stakeholder dissemination event scheduled to take place at the University of Malawi in 2025.

# CERT Holds a Validation Workshop Following an Inclusive Education Study



*Dr Mutala (standing) presenting during the workshop*

The Centre for Education Research and Training (CERT) recently conducted a validation workshop to review findings from its study on inclusive education. The workshop aimed to gather stakeholder feedback, refine the study's outcomes, and develop actionable recommendations to enhance inclusivity in education systems. Participants included policymakers, educators, and representatives from relevant organisations.

The study was commissioned by UNICEF and the Ministry of Education to carry out a Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice (KAP) study on Inclusive Education in Malawi. CERT conducted the study from May to June, 2024.

This KAP study examined caregivers', teachers', head teachers', learners', parents/guardians' and other key stakeholders' knowledge, attitudes and practice on Inclusive Education. The main themes that guided the study were drawn from the following nine priority areas of the National Inclusive Education Policy:

- Priority 1: Early identification and assessment
- Priority 2: Enabling environment for inclusive education
- Priority 3: Capacity for inclusive education
- Priority 4: Community engagement and participation
- Priority 5: Management and governance
- Priority 6: Financing for inclusive education
- Priority 7: Data and monitoring
- Priority 8: Leadership and management and
- Priority 9: Emergency preparedness, reduction, response and recovery.

The study used a mixed methods approach, where both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to respond to the study's objectives. The study sites included Community-Based Child Care Centres (CBCCs), primary and secondary schools in 12 districts in Malawi namely; Mzimba, Kasungu, Salima, Dedza, Ntcheu, Mangochi, Machinga, Zomba, Blantyre, Thyolo, Mulanje and Chikwawa.

The findings and recommendations of the study were presented by Dr Elizabeth Kamchedzera, Mrs Lizzie Chiwaula, Dr Gerson Mutala Phiri and Dr Elizabeth Meke, at a validation workshop which took place at the Crossroads Hotel in Lilongwe on 26th September, 2024.

Ms Lucy Magagula, Deputy Director of Inclusive Education, officially opened the Workshop. UNICEF officials present at the Workshop were led by the Education Specialist, Mrs. Milandu Mwale.

Participants at the Validation Workshop were Ministry of Education officials, Directors of Education, Youth and Sports (DEYS), Special Needs Education (SNE) specialists drawn from district education offices, delegates from other institutions in Malawi as well as key stakeholders in Inclusive Education.

# Dr. Fraser Gobede Highlights the Link Between Trauma-Bonding and Mortality



*Dr Gobede at the conference*

Dr Fraser Gobede, an associate professor in the School of Education had a presentation titled: “Trauma-bonding and its implications on the mortality of productive Malawian women: The case of Eva (pseudonym)” during the Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (KUHeS) 3rd Research Dissemination Conference that was held from the 2nd to 4th October 2024 at Amaryllis Hotel in Blantyre. Dr. Gobede’s presentation was based on a case of a university student who was saved from committing suicide after falling victim to ‘trauma bonding’, by critically examining the adverse

physical and psychological effects of the malpractice.

The term “trauma bonding”—with roots from the work of Patrick Carnes in 1997—refers to a psychological manipulation technique in which an abuser gains control of his victim's cognition through a systematic pattern of abuse coupled with positive reinforcement. With the advent of mobile technology and the proliferation of social media platforms, the practice is much easier and more common than before, affecting targeted victims regardless of their socioeconomic

status. The case of Eva was used to illustrate the genesis of a trauma bond to an unsuspecting victim and showed how the cycles of abuse lead to suicidal ideations. The presentation contributed to a multidisciplinary dialogue towards possible formulation of guidelines for handling cases of psychological manipulation thereby protecting women and girls who form a large part of the population of Malawi.



# SoE Forges a Research Alliance with UFS and UNZA



*Dr Manthalu (2nd Right) with staff from UNZA and UFS*

The head of the Higher Education and Professional Development (HEPD) department in the School of Education (SoE), Dr Chikumbutso Manthalu, visited the University of Free State (UFS) in South Africa from 26th to 29th November 2024 to concretise a working partnership following a prior signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between UFS's Higher Education and Human Development Research group and UNIMA's HEPD Department. Together with the University of Zambia's (UNZA) Department of Educational

Administration and Policy Studies, the collaboration has established the Research Alliance for Higher Education in Africa (RAHEdA). The research alliance will focus on higher education knowledge sharing, staff and student exchange, expertise-sharing (postgraduate co-supervision and examination), and conducting joint research projects.

The research alliance plans to hold quarterly webinars, with presenters and chairs of the webinars rotating among the three universities. The first webinar will take place in April, 2025,

hosted by UFS.

The alliance also agreed to embark on an edited book project with a proposed title of Higher Education and Development in Africa: Perspectives on Policy and Practice, to be co-edited by Prof. Mikateko Mathebula (UFS), Dr Chikumbutso Manthalu (UNIMA) and Dr Kapambwe Mwelwa (UNZA). The call for chapters will be released in April 2025. The book is expected to be published by the end of 2026.

## Dr. Foster Gondwe Facilitates an ODeL Training for Secondary School Teachers



*Dr Foster Gondwe (2nd Left) with participants at the workshop*

Dr. Foster Gondwe of the Education Foundations Department designed and facilitated an Open and Distance e-Learning (ODEL) Course Development and Facilitation Training for secondary school teachers. The training began with a face-to-face workshop from 29th October to 1st November 2024 at Thope Lodge in Dowa, followed by online learning activities throughout the month of November. This training was organised by the Malawi College of Distance Education (MCDE) with support from the Commonwealth of Learning. The primary aim of the training was to equip teachers with the technical and pedagogical skills necessary for effective online course design and facilitation.

Opening the face-to-face workshop, Dr. Joshua Valeta, Director of Open and Distance e-Learning at the Ministry of Education, underscored the significance of technology, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), in improving access to education. He emphasised that AI has the potential to bridge gaps in education delivery, ensuring access to quality learning for students, even in the most remote areas of Malawi. Dr. Valeta also addressed the persistent challenge of low transition rates from primary to secondary education and highlighted the importance of technology-driven approaches like ODeL to expand access and improve student progression.

The workshop was attended by teachers from various education divisions across Malawi, including those from open secondary schools. These participants will now serve as master trainers, passing on their knowledge and skills to enhance ODeL delivery in their schools. The training was completed by the end of November 2024, and participants received certificates of completion.

This training served as a platform for strengthening the ongoing partnership between MCDE and the University of Malawi, as both institutions are collaborating to develop a postgraduate Diploma in ODeL to be rolled out soon.



## SoE to Host a Special Interest Group on Teaching with Technology

A Special Interest Group (SIG) focusing on innovative teaching with technology is set to be formed at the University of Malawi (UNIMA), with academic staff members from various departments expressing interest in joining. To date, 26 staff members have indicated their interest, and the group's meetings will begin in the upcoming academic semester. The formation of the group follows a recommendation by Dr. Foster Gondwe to the Committee on University Teaching and Learning (CUTL), which is chaired

by the Executive Dean of the School of Education.

Dr. Gondwe facilitated a session on technology-enhanced teaching and learning at a workshop for UNIMA academic members of staff held from the 4th to the 6th September 2024 in Mulanje. He emphasised the need for ongoing learning in technology-enhanced teaching practices, noting that a one-time workshop would not suffice in bringing about long-term changes in teaching and learning. Following this, participants were

invited to join the SIG, which aims to serve as a platform for sharing ideas, resources, and best practices to integrate technology into teaching. The group's objectives include fostering a community of practice, exploring and evaluating innovative digital tools, and supporting members in designing, implementing, and reflecting on technology-enhanced teaching methods. The SIG is open to all academic staff at UNIMA, regardless of their level of experience with technology.

## Dr Gobede Calls for a New Approach to Teacher Supervision

On 19th September 2024, the School of Education (SoE) hosted its monthly seminar that focused on debatable issues surrounding teacher supervision in the Malawian context. The seminar featured Dr Fraser Gobede, Associate Professor of Mathematics Education, who presented on the topic "Teaching as an Art of Managing Dilemmas: Rethinking Teacher Supervision in Malawi's Resource-Limited Classrooms."

While acknowledging the critical role that teacher supervision plays in the education system, Dr Gobede highlighted instances where teachers' competencies and professionalism are misjudged by supervisors when the teacher seems to deviate from the set guidelines that are usually informed by an ideal situation and a conception of a 'normal' lesson. This observation was also extended to researchers who often enter the classroom with a view of assessing the teacher's knowledge or making some form of judgment on the 'quality' of the lesson based on some frameworks. He instead proposed the reconceptualisation of teaching as the



*Dr Gobede*

management of dilemmas-complex and context-dependent decisions that teachers must make under significant time limits. Drawing on data from two rural classrooms in Malawi, he illustrated how educators adapt their approaches to meet the realities of their environments.

In his conclusion, he advocated for considering dilemmas in the preparation and development of teachers in Malawi. He called for a

conceptual shift from supervision that emphasises evaluating the teacher to supervision that promotes a shared understanding of teaching as professional practice. He emphasised that if pre-service teachers are exposed to dilemmas associated with teaching, they may be equipped with plausible strategies for handling classroom dilemmas. He also urged supervisors and researchers to move beyond rigid evaluation frameworks.

# The School of Education Trains a Second Cohort of Educator Mentors



*A Certificate of Completion awarded to the participants*

Mentorship is a critical aspect of the professional development of both pre-service and in-service teachers. However, Malawi's education system faces significant challenges due to the lack of well-established mentorship structures, especially for inexperienced

teachers. In many cases, mentorship is informal, and student-teachers on Teaching Practice, as well as novice educators, often face difficulties in key transitional skills, such as curriculum interpretation, lesson planning, developing and utilising teaching

resources, effective lesson delivery, addressing diverse student needs, lesson evaluation, and adherence to professional teaching ethics. These challenges hinder the development of novice educators, both technically and professionally.

To address these gaps, the School of Education (SoE), through the Teaching Practice Coordinator, Dr. Foster Gondwe, launched the Educator Mentor course, designed to enhance mentorship skills. SoE conducted the first training from 3rd September to 9th December 2023. The second cohort ran from 14th September to 14th December 2024, attracting 25 participants, including teachers, nurses, and development practitioners from across Malawi. The training was delivered in two phases: an online component focusing on the theory of mentorship, followed by a practicum in which participants mentored novice educators. The course covered various topics, including:

- Introduction to Mentorship;
- Becoming a Mentor;
- Models and Process of Mentoring;
- Mentoring Practicum; and
- Professional Development of Mentors.

Facilitators of the training included Dr. Foster Gondwe, Dr. Symon Chiziwa, Mr. Joseph Manyengo, Mr. Yohane Chakasika, and Mr. Patrick Kapito.

The trained mentors are expected to play a key role in establishing structured mentorship programs within their institutions and can serve as school-based teacher educators for teacher education institutions across the country.





# UDI Team Shares Preliminary Results on the Status of Foundational Learning in Malawi



*The UDI team with stakeholders*

On 1st October 2024, key stakeholders in Malawi's Foundational Learning (FL) sector gathered at Chikho Hotel, Mponela, for a workshop titled "Unlocking Data: Expanding Uses and Users of Data for Foundational Learning in Malawi." The event, organised by the Unlocking Data Initiative (UDI) team at the Centre for

Educational Research and Training (CERT), aimed to enhance the effective use of data to improve foundational learning outcomes across the country.

The workshop brought together policymakers, educators, researchers, and development partners to discuss innovative ways to leverage data for

evidence-based decision-making, policy development, and educational improvement. As part of the discussions, the UDI team presented preliminary results on the status of FL in Malawi. The presentation, among other things, revealed that most FL datasets are either inaccessible or restricted, there is weak collaboration among key stakeholders in FL, and there is limited research attention on the governance and management of FL.

The workshop underscored the importance of scaling up data users and uses by creating platforms and building a community of practice that connects individuals and organisations to share and use education data.

As the education sector continues to evolve, this collaborative effort marks a significant step towards improving foundational learning outcomes and achieving sustainable educational development in Malawi.

# Scaling-up Educational Innovations: Insights from the ROSIE Workshop

Dr. Esthery D. Kunkwenzu attended a workshop on the 'Research on Scaling the Impact of Innovations in Education (ROSIE)' initiative. ROSIE initiative is part of the activities of the GPE Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) project. The workshop took place in Nairobi, Kenya, from 10th to 12th December 2024. The workshop participants included ROSIE focal point persons from KIX projects worldwide. The event was funded by the Center for Universal Education (CUE) at the Brookings Institution, Washington D.C.

This three-day workshop brought together the ROSIE Learning Community to foster relationships, share knowledge, and exchange insights on scaling impact in education systems. Participants discussed key



*Participants at the workshop*

topics such as centering equity, stakeholder engagement, collaboration with governments, and recognising when to halt scaling efforts. The workshop also provided opportunities for participants to present lessons from their KIX work and receive valuable feedback and questions from peers.

Dr. Kunkwenzu serves as the ROSIE focal point person for the KIX project "Accountability for Gender Equality in Education (AGEE): Bridging the Local, National, and Global." This project is a collaboration among the University of Malawi, University College London, and UNESCO.

# School of Education Staff Showcase Educational Technologies

## School of Education

### PREPARING TEACHERS TO USE INTERACTIVE DIGITAL TOOLS FOR SCIENCE EDUCATION



#### What is PhET?

- ★ Physics Education Technology
- ★ Based at the University of Colorado Boulder
- ★ Developed by Nobel laureate Carl Wieman
- ★ Has over 100 simulations
- ★ Includes Physics, Chemistry, Earth Science, Biology and Maths
- ★ It's free

#### How do we use PhET in classrooms?

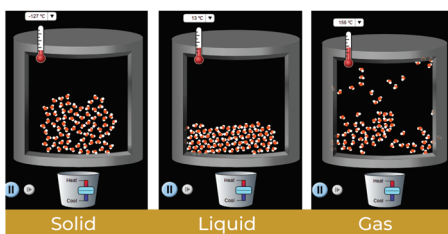
- ★ As laboratory activities when teaching a difficult concept/ abstract concept- to make science abstract concepts more accessible.
- ★ Use the simulations to animate a concept in class that might not easily seen.
- ★ Embed video clips into flipped classroom lessons- take images of PhET simulations.
- ★ To bridge learning gaps in under-resourced areas and expand understanding of the phenomenon by building students' understanding to better their understanding step-by-step.

#### What are some examples of interactive simulations?

1. **Animating the changes in states of Matter** from Solid-Liquid-Gas by focusing on movements of particles (atoms, molecules, ions) e.g. Water Substance (Demo)

##### Learning outcomes to be achieved by the simulation

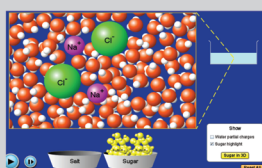
- ★ Describe the characteristics of three states of matter: solid, liquid, and gas.
- ★ Predict how varying the temperature or pressure changes the behavior of particles.
- ★ Compare particles in the three different phases.
- ★ Explain freezing and melting with molecular level detail.
- ★ Recognize that different substances have different properties, including melting, freezing, and boiling temperatures.



#### 2. Simulation of Sugar and Salt Solutions (Demo)

##### Learning outcomes

- ★ Draw what happens at the molecular level when compounds dissolve in water
- ★ Identify if a compound is a salt or sugar by macroscopic observations or microscopic representations.



Making abstract concepts, more accessible to both teachers and students

#### Connect with Excellence



A banner showing simulation by School of Education

At the 2024 Joint Sector Review meeting in Lilongwe from 5th to 6th November 2024, themed "Education for Impact," Dr. Foster Gondwe and Mr. Nicholas Phiri from the School of Education presented an exhibition titled "Empowering Teachers for Technology-Enhanced Science Education: Leveraging Interactive Digital Tools for Effective Teaching". The session showcased how Physics Education Technology (PhET) simulations can transform chemistry education by making complex, abstract concepts more accessible for both teachers and students. The presentation emphasised how interactive simulations allow chemistry educators to animate challenging concepts, support laboratory activities, and bridge gaps between theoretical understanding and practical application.

Attendees, including high-level officials from the Ministry of Education led by Hon. Madalitso Kambauwa Wirima, observed demonstrations of PhET simulations, gaining insight into how these tools promote hands-on, visual learning and ultimately enhance teaching and learning outcomes in chemistry education.



Nicholas Phiri



## Paul Chiwaya Shares Assessment Insights with the Department of Philosophy

Mr. Chiwaya, an academic member of staff in the School of Education, made a presentation on effective assessment on 14th October 2024, during a tutor training workshop organised by the Department of Philosophy in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences (SHSS). The training took place in the SHSS Boardroom at the University of Malawi. In his presentation, among other things, Chiwaya talked about principles of item development, assessment feedback, and ethics in assessment.

Other presentations made by other invited speakers during the workshop covered areas such as effective tutoring, effective tutorials, and mental health and effective stress management.



*Chiwaya presenting in one of the sessions*

## Dr. Foster Gondwe Participates in Emerging Scholars Initiative Workshop at SU



*Dr Foster Gondwe at the workshop*

Dr. Gondwe, alongside Dr. Maurice Monjerezi, the Head of Research at the University of Malawi, were invited to participate in a workshop organised as part of the Emerging Scholars Initiative (ESI) at Stellenbosch University (SU) in South Africa.

The workshop, which took place from 20th to 22nd November 2024, provided a valuable platform for discussing innovative strategies to enhance postgraduate supervision and studies, particularly PhD programmes in African universities.

The discussions covered best practices for mentoring PhD candidates, strategies for fostering vibrant research cultures, and addressing challenges unique to African higher education institutions.

This participation highlights UNIMA's ongoing commitment to improving higher education in Africa, promoting research excellence, and contributing to the growth of academic scholarship across the continent.

## UNIMA Step Team Attends 2nd National Literacy Symposium



*STEP team members at the symposium*

The Ministry of Education in collaboration with Strengthening Teacher Education and Practice (STEP) and NextGen organised the 2nd National Literacy Symposium which took place at St Joseph's TTC in Dedza from 8th to 9th October, 2024.

The theme of the symposium was 'Evidence-based Literacy Instruction'. During the symposium Teacher Educators (TEs) who had just completed their Foundational Literacy Course offered by the STEP project (Cohorts E-F) presented their Participatory Action Research (PAR) findings and received their certificates for successfully completing the Foundational Literacy Course.

Other stakeholders from pre-service and in-service programmes showcased their achievements resulting from the interventions by STEP Activity and NextGen. At the symposium, TEs who completed the Foundational Literacy Course in 2023 (Cohorts A-D) and continue to implement high-quality PAR also presented the strategies they are undertaking to keep improving literacy instruction and literacy outcomes for their student teachers and young learners. At the symposium, the best performing TEs and TTCs in implementing actions to improve literacy instruction were awarded.

Mr Patrick Kapito, UNIMA STEP Team Leader presided over the presentation of gifts to the best performing TEs and

TTCs. The other UNIMA STEP Team members who attended the symposium are Dr Mervis Kamanga, Bubire Jere-Kitha and Ass. Prof Allan Lipenga. These members also played a key role in supporting TEs to implement their PAR and come up with PAR reports and posters for presentation.

The STEP team was also recognised and awarded certificates for effectively facilitating in the Foundational Literacy Course for Cohorts E-F. Also in attendance were Associate Professor Chikumbutso Manthalu who represented the Executive Dean for the School of Education and Dr Anne Chiponda, Head of Language Education Department.



## SoE in Collaboration with MIE Present SLP Report



*Dr Symon Chiziwa presenting SLP report*

On 16th December 2024, the School of Education (SoE) at the University of Malawi and Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) presented a main-training project report on the School Leadership Programme (SLP) for which they have been providing technical support and expertise. In attendance at the conference which was held at Chikho Hotel in Dowa were senior officials from the Ministry of Education led by the Principal Secretary, Associate Professor Mangani Katundu.

The School Leadership Programme (SLP), an initiative under the Malawi Education Reform Programme (MERP), has made remarkable strides in enhancing primary education leadership across the country.

Implemented by the SoE-MIE consortium, in partnership with the Directorate of Teacher Education and Development (DTED) in the Ministry of Education with financial support from the World Bank, the programme has addressed critical challenges in school management while fostering inclusive and climate-resilient educational environments at primary school level.

The SLP was designed to cultivate a positive school culture, empower school leaders with knowledge of motivating teachers, improve school leaders' capacity to mobilise resources for their schools and improve school leaders' capacity to create, use and maintain school records. Over 10,200 participants (mainly primary school headteachers, female primary school

heads of sections) across Malawi have been trained in a series of 17 batches. This represents a remarkable achievement.

The key achievements of SLP highlighted by Dr Symon Chiziwa, the team leader for the SoE-MIE consortium, include developing strategic resource mobilisation skills among primary school headteachers, creating gender-sensitive and anti-bullying environments in primary schools and promoting effective leadership in resource-constrained primary school settings.

As the programme moves forward in its refresher-training phase, it remains a beacon of hope for transformative change in the education sector.

## STUDENTS ACTIVITIES

## UNIMA Education Society Visits DMI St. Jonhs the Baptist



UNIMA education students at DMI

On 19th October 2024, the UNIMA Education Society visited students studying education at DMI St. John the Baptist Mangochi Campus for networking. The tour to Mangochi was led by the Education Society's patron, Mr Yohane Chakasika. Upon their arrival at DMI, the entourage was welcomed by the Head of Department in the Faculty of Education, Mr Soko.

During the visit, students participated in a number of activities including holding a debate on the topic "Do assessment grades reflect students' abilities?". Speaking during the function, the patron of the UNIMA Education Society, Mr Chakasika, expressed his appreciation to the hosting university. He further highlighted the significance of students

studying education coming together to share their academic experiences, which is part of putting into practice what they learn in class.

On the other hand, Mr Soko, expressed his gratitude to the UNIMA Education Society for visiting their institution. He added that moments of interaction such as these are wonderful as they ensure that we get to know one another at this stage, before meeting again in the industry. Other speakers on the day included the President of the Education Society, Mr Bennet Zelezga, who emphasised the need to create strong social connections, and Mr Clement Muthali, a representative of education students at DMI, who also mentioned plans to visit UNIMA.

After the interaction at DMI, the Education Society students proceeded to Jazaca Cottage, where they held a welcoming function for the first-year education students. The group comprised 86 students studying various education programmes from first to fourth year.

## UNIMA Education Society Raises Funds to Support Students on Teaching Practice

The University of Malawi (UNIMA) Education Society organised a short course training to raise funds to help needy students who were on teaching practice. The two-day training held from 26th to 27th October 2024 was facilitated by research experts from UNIMA Center for Social Research. The training covered the topics on qualitative data analysis with an emphasis on how to use NVivo. The mode of delivery was blended (face-to-face and online).

According to the President of the Society, Mr. Bennet Zelezga, the training was part of the short-term initiatives devised to cushion welfare challenges faced by students on Teaching Practice. "The training was partly successful, and we raised MK510,000.00. Although, our target was to raise more than this amount. We also encountered a number of challenges one of which was competition with other organisations which offered similar kinds of training.

A limited time for advertisement also impacted our fundraising initiative."

There were 87 students who needed assistance in form of accommodation, food and others who needed both. But due to limited funds, the Society had to reduce the number of beneficiaries.

"We only helped 16 students in total, each programme was asked to identify two most deserving students", said Mr. Zelezga.



## RESEARCH SEMINARS IN THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

The School of Education (SoE) organises research seminars that provide a platform for scholars in education to share their research findings, policy insights, and critical reflections on key issues in education. These seminars foster meaningful debates and knowledge exchange, creating a vibrant space for advancing educational thought and practice.

The seminars are open to academicians within the University of Malawi and beyond. They are delivered in a blended format, combining face-to-face and online participation to ensure accessibility and flexibility.

As we step into 2025, we invite academicians, educators, policymakers, and postgraduate students interested in presenting their educational research, policy perspectives, and critical reflections on pressing educational matters to express their interest in participating.

To express your interest, please contact Mr. Patrick Kapito, the Seminar Coordinator, via email at [pkapito@unima.ac.mw](mailto:pkapito@unima.ac.mw)

### **Rethinking Deficit-Based Approaches to Digitizing Higher Education in Malawi**

**Dr Foster Gondwe**

University of Malawi, School of Education

#### **Abstract**

Digital technology integration into higher education in Malawi has tended to be framed in deficit narratives i.e., that faculty and students are 'not ready' for digital education technology because they 'lack', among others, the necessary technology competencies and tools. These deficit narratives are evident in the available, albeit fragmented, research literature and national education policies. However, in practice, such narratives can be problematic because of their tendency to push the blame to technology users (students and faculty), their potential to obscure what is available and possible, and ignoring structural limitations inherent in higher education institutions. Meanwhile, the ongoing initiatives to increase access to higher education through digital technology provide an opportunity to explore paradigm shifts in approaches to digitizing higher education in Malawi. In this presentation, Dr Foster Gondwe shares initial thoughts on alternative approaches to digitizing higher education in Malawi, starting from an explicit problematization of deficit narratives in planning and implementing digital education technology

### **Knowledge and Skills for Human Development in Malawi: A Historical Overview of Educational Policies**

**Dr Ken Ndala**

University of Malawi, School of Education

#### **Abstract**

Over the years, Malawi's performance in human development ranking has not been satisfactory, and this calls for examining the underlining causes. Malawi ranks poorly despite educational policies having been developed to provide guidance on what type of knowledge and skills are needed for the development of the country. Knowledge and skills, one of the core functions of education, enable students as well as societies to expand their freedoms, opening up more choices to chart their own development that can lead to the human development of their countries. The purpose of this review is therefore to examine the educational policies that have been developed since the 1960s in Malawi and assess how knowledge and skills for social and economic development have been prioritised. Legal instruments such as the Malawi Constitution, the Educational Act, the National Education Policy, Educational Plans, and the Curriculum that have been developed since the 1960s are reviewed to assess their coherence and consistency in pursuing knowledge and skill development. The review is aligned with global educational policies guiding knowledge and skill development since the 1960s. The review shows that, to an extent, Malawi keeps on embracing global policy priorities in developing its educational policies, but to a greater extent, the policies lean towards governance and management issues. The article argues for teacher education to focus more on student outcomes, thus behaviour change, after acquiring the knowledge and skills needed for Malawi to improve its human development rankings.

## **Towards Equity of Opportunity: Reimagining Fair Access to Public Universities in Malawi**

**Paul Chiwaya**  
University of Malawi

### **Abstract**

Higher education is widely recognized as crucial for both individuals and society as a whole. Despite the importance attached to higher education, the playing field for access to higher education in most countries is not fairly leveled. Consequently, most students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are unable to access higher education and avail themselves of its benefits. Specifically, in Malawi, access to public universities (PUs) is severely limited and starkly inequitable. Currently, PUs absorb only about 46.3 % of eligible candidates. Empirical studies reveal persistent inequalities across the dimensions of gender, socio-economic status, geographical location, disability status, and school type in access to PUs. Amidst these disparities, three policies have been implemented to regulate access to PUs: merit-based selection, equitable access policy-quota system, and gender-based affirmative action. However, there are questions about the effectiveness of these policies in creating an equitable pathway to PUs. Against this backdrop, this analytical paper scrutinizes each of these policies and examines their assumptions, merits, and drawbacks. The paper contends that to make access to PUs equitably accessible by differently-situated secondary school students in Malawi, academic merit which remains a key determinant of access to PUs needs to be reconceptualized. In this regard, the paper proposes, as an equitable policy option, contextualized admission (CA) in which academic merit is judged in relation to grades as well as structural inequalities and prior educational disadvantage experienced by pre-university students. It concludes by looking at the possibilities and constraints in operationalizing CA in Malawi.

## **Surviving Against all Odds: The Higher Education Pathway for Malawi's Community Day Secondary School Students**

**Paul Chiwaya**  
University of Malawi

### **Abstract**

Access to public universities (PUs) in Malawi has increased over the past decade, yet access inequalities persist, particularly for community day secondary school (CDSS) students. Despite comprising 76% of secondary school students, CDSS students account for only around 12% of PU enrollment, highlighting significant underrepresentation. While policy documents acknowledge their challenges, there is limited research on the lived experiences of CDSS students around their efforts to access PUs. This phenomenological study addresses this gap, examining the obstacles and coping mechanisms of 16 PU students from CDSS backgrounds. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews and analysed thematically. Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) and Capabilities Theory (CT) acted as the analytical frameworks for the study. Findings reveal that in their CDSS-PU transition the students experienced multilayered situational, institutional, and psychosocial barriers rooted in the peculiarities and realities of their disadvantaged social positions. These barriers, chiefly compounded by lack of primary social and economic capital, were not due to personal deficiencies or deficits. To overcome these barriers, the students relied on secondary social networks for financial assistance, career guidance, academic enrichment, and educational resources. Psychological capital—resilience, optimism, and self-belief—was also critical in helping them resist negative stereotypes, labelling, and low societal expectations. While the findings accentuate urgency in CDSS students, they fundamentally suggest that CDSS students should be recognized as an equity group in access policies. Interventions tailored to their unique challenges are also necessary to create a more inclusive and equitable public higher education system in Malawi.

## **Primary School Pupils on the Rampage. Young Citizen Activism or Manipulation?**

**Dr Peter Ngwinjo Namphande**  
University of Malawi

### **Abstract**

The democratization process in sub-Saharan Africa saw a rise in cases of student protests in secondary schools and universities. Of late primary school pupils in Malawi have been taking to the streets for various reasons. This paper report of a case study at a primary school where pupils protested following the reallocation of a 'good' teacher who was handling an examination class. The study set out to explore the underlying cause of the protests and examine whether the protest was a case of young citizen activism





or manipulation by a teacher who was resisting a transfer. The case study school was purposively sampled due to the pupils' riots. Purposive and snowball sampling were used to identify research participants. The results, presented using chronological structure and themes, show that the riots were an act of young citizen activism by pupils whose voice had been marginalized for so long. The study argues that the pupils' actions were a reaction to a combination of contextual factors ranging from partial decentralisation and continued centralization of power by authorities, indecisiveness in dealing with teachers' indiscipline, and locational factors that all conspired to create a state of paralysis at the school. The study recommends the creation of authentic spaces to hear pupils voice as part of learner-centred education and democratization.

## **Beyond the Books: The Transformative Role of Higher Education Institutions in National Curriculum Innovation**

**Wisdom Bhunu**

Malawi Institute of Education

### **Abstract**

The contributions of Higher Education Institutions to curriculum innovation, is a theme that has attracted growing attention in recent years. Higher Education Institutions are increasingly expected to play a critical role in curriculum innovation. This presentation seeks to ignite a discussion on how best Higher Education Institutions in Malawi should play the crucial role of driving curriculum innovation. The presentation begins by giving an overview of the curriculum development process and the role Higher Education Institutions have been playing in this process over the years. Recommendations on how collaboration between the Malawi Institute of Education and Higher Education Institutions should be strengthened to ensure the development and implementation of curricula that are aligned to the current educational needs and standards will be highlighted.

## **Teaching as an Art of Managing Dilemmas: Rethinking Teacher Supervision in Malawi's Resource-Limited Classrooms**

**Dr Fraser Gobede**

University of Malawi.

### **Abstract**

Teacher supervision by designated officers is a critical component of the education system. However, due to set guidelines that are usually informed by an ideal situation and a conception of a 'normal' lesson, teachers' competencies and professionalism are usually misjudged by supervisors when the teacher appears to deviate from the norm or 'set guidelines'. In the same manner, scholarly work on Malawian classroom practices seems to suggest that researchers often enter the classroom with a view of assessing the teacher's knowledge or making some form of judgment on the 'quality' of the lesson based on some frameworks. This seminar presentation advances an alternative conceptualisation of the work of teaching as set of complex tasks that teachers are faced with. As such, we better understand the work of teaching by identifying types of situations that might occur where teachers are faced with difficult choices—referred to as dilemmas. The emphasis on studying dilemmas is based on the understanding that most of the decisions made by the teacher during lesson enactment are based on the professional judgements that are often made with little or no time to think. As it happens in the court of law, plausible judgements are often based on a good knowledge of how similar cases were handled in the past, after a thorough examination of the context. Data collected from two rural classrooms in Malawi, where two teachers were introducing the concept of zero, will be used to illustrate some dilemmas faced by teachers and their implications. The consideration of dilemmas of teaching shifts the emphasis from evaluating the teacher to understanding and developing shared understanding of teaching as professional practice, thereby contributing to the preparation and development of teachers in the Malawi context.

## PUBLICATIONS



The following are publications by academic members of staff in the School of Education:

### Journal Articles

**Mwadzaangati, L.** (2024). Inexperienced teachers and knowledgeable others in lesson study: what lessons are drawn from the new practice?. *Discover Education*, 3(1), 288. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-024-00389-z>Discover.

Moyo, M.D., and **Namphande, P.N.**, (2024) Implementating learner-centred approaches for sustainable futures in the teaching of social studies in Malawian secondary schools. *Southern African Journal of Environmental Education*. 40(1), 1-17.

### Conference Papers

**Gobede, F.** (2024, October 2-4). "Trauma-bonding and its implications on the mortality of productive Malawian women: The case of Eva" [Paper presentation]. The 2024 KUHeS Research Dissemination Conference, Blantyre, Malawi.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

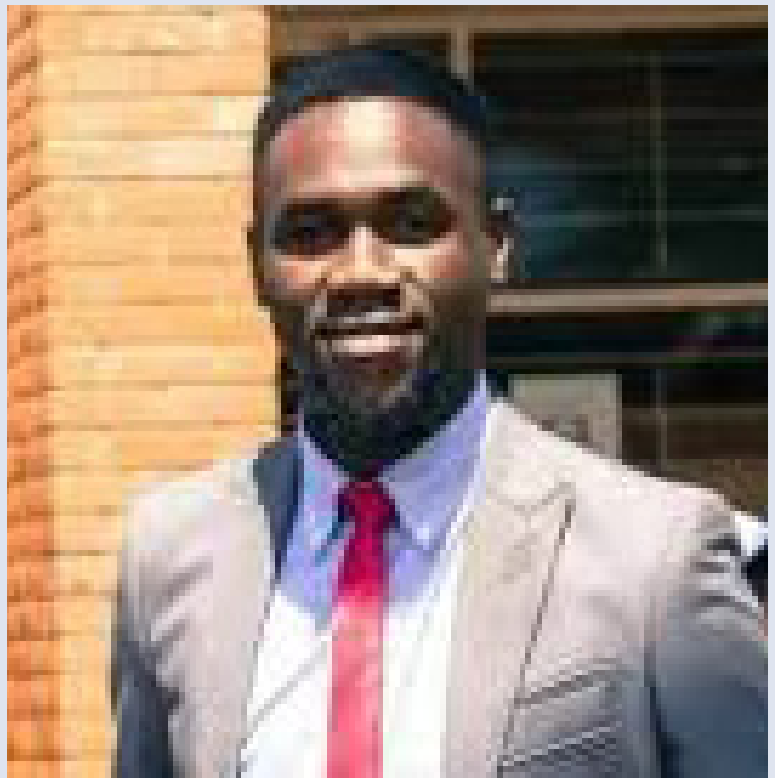


## In Loving Memory of Cobbener Sungani

On 16th November 2024, the School of Education suffered the profound loss of a young and promising scholar, Cobbener Sungani. As a dedicated tutor in Social Studies Education, he was a beacon of knowledge, enthusiasm, and inspiration to both his colleagues and students.

Until his untimely passing, he served as a tutor for SED 313 - Teaching Strategies in History 1, where his hard work and commitment left a lasting impact. His passion for education was evident in his tireless efforts to empower students and foster critical thinking, ensuring they were well-prepared for their futures.

His contributions and dedication to education will be deeply missed and his memory will continue to inspire us all to strive for excellence, just as he did. May his soul rest in eternal peace.



*The Late Cobbener Sungani*

## In Loving Memory of Dr. Bob Wajizigha Chulu

Dr. Bob Wajizigha Chulu, a pioneer in the field of educational assessment in Malawi, passed away on September 15, 2024. His passing leaves a void in the academic community and in the lives of those who had the privilege to know him as a mentor and friend.

An outstanding scholar in educational measurement, Dr. Chulu dedicated his life to advancing the quality of education in Malawi. After earning his advanced degrees—a Master of Education in 2003 and a Doctor of Education in 2006—he returned to Chancellor College (now University of Malawi), where his leadership and expertise helped transform the School of Education (SoE). Serving as Head of the Educational Foundations Department, Deputy Dean of Education, and later as Dean of Education, Dr. Chulu's influence was deeply felt across SoE and beyond.

Dr. Chulu's specialisation in psychometrics and his passion for teaching made him a cornerstone of educational assessment in Malawi. He enriched numerous institutions with his knowledge, teaching diverse courses on measurement and evaluation, research methods, statistics, monitoring and evaluation, and item response theory. His dedication to nurturing students and building capacity in the field of education assessment was unparalleled.

A prolific scholar, Dr. Chulu authored numerous papers that have left an indelible mark on educational research. His work explored critical issues such as the effects of high-stakes educational measurements, wastage rates in higher education,



*The Late Dr. Bob Wajizigha Chulu*

the impact of language on mathematics tests, college admission testing, and assessment practices in higher education. His scholarship not only shaped academic discourse but also informed policy and practice.

Dr. Chulu's legacy is one of unwavering commitment to the pursuit of knowledge and the betterment of education. He will be remembered as a visionary educator, a passionate researcher, and a leader who inspired excellence in all who had the honour of working with him.

As we celebrate his remarkable journey, we honour his enduring contributions to education and his unwavering dedication to the advancement of knowledge.

Rest in peace, Dr. Chulu. Your legacy will continue to inspire generations to come.

## Call for Papers: Malawi Journal of Education and Development (MJED)

The Malawi Journal of Education and Development (MJED) invites scholars, educators, policymakers, and graduate students to submit manuscripts for its forthcoming issues. Published by the University of Malawi's School of Education, MJED focuses on research at the intersection of education and sustainable development, addressing the social, economic, political, and cultural dimensions of education. While the journal prioritises the Malawian context, it welcomes contributions from across Africa and beyond, fostering global dialogue and knowledge sharing in the field.

MJED publishes a variety of articles, including rigorous research studies, graduate research, and practical insights such as policy briefs and case studies. Submissions are reviewed through a double-blind process to ensure high-quality publications. The journal accepts manuscripts throughout the year and publishes biannually in June and December. For submission details, contact the editorial team at [mjed@unima.ac.mw](mailto:mjed@unima.ac.mw).