

E-CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

The Role of University Scholarships in Poverty Reduction in Malawi

14th February to 14th March, 2005

Organized By Buncoalumni

(Bunda College Alumni Yahoo Group)

<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/Buncoalumni/>

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March, 2005

MSG1: Message from the Coordinators WEEK One of the conference

WELCOME REMARKS

On behalf of moderators of Buncoalumni – The Bunda College Alumni Yahoo Group, all Bunda College and University of Malawi Alumni, resource persons, all conference participants and indeed on our own behalf, we would like to welcome you to this second e-conference on: **The Role of University Scholarships in Poverty Reduction in Malawi**. First and foremost, we would like to thank you all for entrusting us with the challenge of organising and coordinating this e-conference.

We are very pleased to welcome Dr E. Kaunda, Vice Principal of Bunda College of Agriculture, University of Malawi. Knowing the enormous responsibilities demanded by his office and the time constraints associated with it, we do really appreciate that he could spare his precious time not only to open this e-conference but also to participate in its deliberations. We also feel greatly honoured to have contributions from a cross-section of distinguished professionals, among whom we specially welcome Dr Victoria Mendizabal of Project Dynamo, Spain and Prof Felix Mnthali of University of Botswana, both of whom have graciously offered to make presentations on the topic under discussion. It is our sincere hope that these presentations will help to illuminate critical points for discussion and enlighten us on the best way forward.

Our coming together to electronically discuss the Role of University Scholarships in Poverty Reduction in Malawi is a noble idea worth commending. We are, through this innovative approach not only encouraging fruitful debate on issues that affect our

country, Malawi but also providing a way through which all Malawians, including those currently residing in various countries across the globe can share their experiences, thoughts and ideas related to how best to integrate the academia and university students in the practical aspects of poverty alleviation programmes. In short we are bridging the “digital divide”. Knowing that this is only the second, but also probably the most widely participated e-conference organised by Malawians after the first e-conference which discussed the role of agricultural museum in Malawi, makes us not only proud but also to look forward, in anticipation, to learning a lot from this challenging experience.

This e-conference, whose theme is: **“University Scholarships for Poverty Reduction in Malawi”** aims to achieve three main objectives. First and foremost, the e-conference intends to review and exchange experiences on the development of poverty reduction strategies in Malawi. Secondly, it seeks to identify obstacles and challenges faced by different stake holders in designing and implementing poverty reduction strategies in Malawi, and thirdly, it plans to examine the potential benefits of University scholarships in the promotion of socio-economic development and poverty reduction in Malawi. Additionally and without any doubt, this e-conference endeavours to offer an opportunity for sharing of experiences and harnessing the potential benefits of information communication technology in contributing to the poverty reduction efforts of our country Malawi in particular and Africa in general.

Proceedings of this e-conference will be submitted to the Malawi’s Ministry of Education, Universities in Malawi, higher learning institutions and other stakeholders including donor agencies. As such, we need to come up with practicable, actionable

and realistic recommendations on the role of University Scholarships in Poverty Reduction in Malawi.

We would like to encourage all participants, to take note of the following proposed guidelines as they proceed to make their contributions. We would however, like to urge you to take this discussion proposal as a guideline and to feel free to suggest any other pertinent issues related to the topic even though they might seem to fall outside this proposal.

The e-conference is premised on a proposal that all undergraduate students in the Malawi's Universities and some colleges should be taught how to write a development research proposal that has a clear and measurable impact on poverty reduction as part of their academic requirement. This should be introduced in the first year of their programmes. At the end of the second year, students should submit their proposal to their respective faculties/departments through research support group comprised of academic supervisors.

Viable proposals, which are innovative and show the potential to contribute to the promotion of socio-economic development and poverty reduction in Malawi should be screened based on set criteria at national level. At this level, through a National Poverty Reduction Research Scholarship Fund (NPRRSF), a number of successful project proposals should be selected and funded. The selection and funding process should be carried out by a NPRRSF committee, composed of selected professionals and practitioners in various sectors in Malawi. The project proposals should have the justification, objectives, target group, budget, period and monitoring indicators. It is

expected that through this scheme more Malawians can start their own businesses and increase employment or gain the required experience before graduation.

We wish you fruitful deliberations and encourage you to feel free to contribute your ideas to this e-conference. It is our sincere hope that through your participation in this e-conference you will have played your part in contributing to poverty reduction efforts in Malawi and will have defined a clear role of “University Scholarship for Poverty Reduction”.

A reminder to all participants the mailing address is bundaalumni@yahoo.co.uk

We thank you and look forward to your contributions.

Coordinators

**Message 2: An Opening Speech by Dr Emmanuel Kaunda,
Vice Principal
Bunda College of Agriculture.**

“The processes of modernization have been driven by scientific and technological change have irrevocably altered the conditions of life on our planet. It has also produced some gross and growing imbalances which threaten the future of our civilization. The concentration of economic growth in industrialized countries and population growth in developing countries has deepened the rich-poor dichotomy. It is not the viable or sustainable model for the future. Survival needs of the poor cannot be subordinated to the unconditioned appetites of the rich. Rather they must become mutually reinforcing as a key element of sustainability.”

<http://www.ecouncil.ac.cr/about/speech/strong/forest.htm> (paragraph 26)

Let me welcome you all, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen to this E-conference on “The Role of University Scholarships in Poverty Reduction in Malawi”. The conference as I got from the announcement wishes to:

- review and exchange experiences on the development of poverty reduction strategies by University students' organizations in Malawi;
- identify obstacles and challenges faced by different University students' organizations in designing and implementing poverty reduction strategies in Malawi, and
- examine the potential benefits of University scholarships in the promotion of socio-economic development and poverty reduction in Malawi

I must say the topic could not have come at any better time than this. For example, in your discussion proposal you have pointed out that “it is expected that through this scheme, more Malawians can start their own business and increase employment ...” Indeed, this is the direction the University of Malawi is taking. The University is fully aware of the unemployment problem of our graduates. The problem was also pointed out to the State President and Chancellor of University of Malawi at Zomba State House on 6 th February 2005 at a luncheon that the President hosted for the first graduating students of 2004. Interestingly, in their speech the students requested if they could access the MK1 billion-loan fund that the President launched recently for start-up capital. I cannot, therefore, overemphasise the fact that the issue to be discussed in this conference is pertinent and worth discussing.

Let me also point out that support to University students or graduates for them to implement poverty reduction strategies can take different forms. For some countries such as Egypt, graduates were provided with start-up capital (soft loans) in form of good houses and agricultural inputs in rural areas just to make sure that they undertook state-of-art agricultural production in villages. This is partly the reason why Egypt, a desert country boasts of huge volumes of exports in agricultural products.

The EARTH University in Costa Rica also presents another yet interesting case study in supporting University graduates for economic development. Four pillars guide EARTH in recruiting students: social commitment, environmental awareness, an entrepreneurial mentality, and the development of human values. And I quote:

“EARTH's educational philosophy combines a rigorous curriculum of business administration and agricultural science infused with a dedicated entrepreneurial spirit. These ideals are encouraged and nurtured throughout every phase of a student's four years at EARTH. The school's dedicated faculty of researchers and business professors are training young leaders to develop environmentally sustainable products and processes that add real commercial value to businesses, communities and regional economies. After graduating from EARTH, *men and women from throughout the humid tropics return to their home countries with the knowledge, skills and ideals that enable them to succeed in the private sector in ways that also help alleviate poverty and reduce environmental damage.* EARTH University is directly involved in business development through the Center for Entrepreneurial Formation (CFE), which is located on EARTH's campus. EARTH recently formed a private intermediary called Initiatives Agro-Tropicales, S.A. (IATSA), which facilitates financing for EARTH graduates with business proposals approved by the CFE.....

.....EARTH University trains young leaders in the agricultural sciences and natural resources in order to contribute to sustainable development in the humid tropics throughout Latin America and around the world. EARTH's current study body consists of students from 18 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, two countries in Africa (Uganda and Mozambique), Canada, Indonesia and Japan. Each year, EARTH recruits approximately 100 students based on their commitment to serve others, ethical and human values, leadership potential and desire to address critical environmental and social issues in their home countries. Of EARTH's 915 graduates to date, 96 percent have remained in Latin America, 77 percent have returned to their home countries, two-thirds are working in rural areas and 20 percent have started their own businesses. In these communities where poverty and environmental degradation are most prevalent, EARTH graduates have significant impact. http://www.ewire-news.com/display.cfm/Wire_ID/2073 - *paragraph 7.*

As I stated earlier, the University of Malawi is slowly moving towards producing job “creator” and not just job “seekers”. Accordingly, a BSc degree in Agribusiness Management is offered in the newly approved Faculty of Development Studies at Bunda College. The demand for this program is enormous. Nevertheless, a clear framework for Universities’ clubs and societies for them to play an important part in economic development of our country is urgently needed. If well guided and mentored, these societies’ have the propensity to uplift the lives of many Malawians. Take for example Club No 9 (Bunda Agronomy Club) in the attached document, the zeal and commitment of the students is without parallel.

Another thing that you may wish to note is that these clubs & societies do not just suffer from financial hick-ups (see the overview of the clubs in the attached document) but also social commitment and undeveloped human values. The questions that can be asked are: **why do these students join clubs and societies? Is it for their (students') poverty alleviation....? At the same time, how do we motivate the students so that the students can perform to their potential?... all these are questions that you may wish to discuss.**

...anyway, it is not my intention to make a protracted speech, but rather to stimulate more debate and strategic thinking into this issue that affects us all... Finally, let me thank you for according me the opportunity to open this conference. I wish you fruitful deliberations and I am optimistic that the conference will come up with a tangible, practical way forward, for the good of our students and our nation. I now declare the E-conference on **“The Role of University Scholarships in Poverty Reduction in Malawi”** officially open.

Emmanuel Kaunda, PhD.
Bunda College,
Malawi-
12 Feb. 2005.

Message 3: An overview of Clubs and Societies at Bunda College
Compiled by Kenford Lweya
Bunda College of Agriculture

1. BUNDA ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION (BECA)

BACKGROUND

- ◆ Formed in 1997 by Bunda College Students
- ◆ It is a non profit- making organization
- ◆ Has a membership of above 60 with very good gender sensitivity

OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Developing capacity of students and communities in sustainable use of natural resources.
- ◆ Preparing students to be better planners and managers in various sectors.

ACHIEVEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Through workshops
- ◆ Dissemination of information to different communities
- ◆ Environmental conservation sensitization campaign
- ◆ Requesting funding from government and NGO's

ACHIVEMENTS OF THE CLUB

- ◆ In 1999 BECA carried out on environmental awareness sensitization campaign in May.
- ◆ In year 2000 there was an environmental awareness workshop at Bunda College.
- ◆ In October year 2000 there was a fundraising big walk.
- ◆ In March 2001 there was BECA environmental open day to Bunda College students, Mitundu Secondary School and Bunda Primary School.
- ◆ Between April and September 2001 selected members were attached to Environmental Affairs Department.
- ◆ In March 2002 there was waste paper collection in the Bunda College Campus.
- ◆ October 2002 there was a fundraising big walk.

- ◆ November 2004 BECA displayed to farmers at ARET some of the commonly used chemicals/substances having negative impact on to the environment. i.e. Ozone layer.
- ◆ Increased number of its members

PLANNED ACTIVITIES IN YEAR 2005

- ◆ A forestation programmes

Sensitization of secondary school students on an environmental conservation and sustainability.

Environmental awareness campaign to communities surrounding the Bunda College.

2. BAAP- AIDS AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

- ◆ This is one of the local clubs formed in early 90's
- ◆ Mainly it looks at students' welfare that is pertaining to HIV/AIDS prevention and related diseases.

MISSION STATEMENT

- ◆ Encourage the youth to think about values and consequences of their decisions to let them able to feel positive about their choices.
- ◆ At the same time it promotes norms, attitudes and hobby for behavioral change, involvement and communiqué strategies that reduces its risk of HIV infestation and unwanted pregnancies to the girl child.

HOW TO ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Through peer communication
- ◆ Through training of peer educators. Currently there are more than 40 trained peer educators under UNICEF Programme. The peer educators under UNICEF Programme. The peer educators at the campus are about 30 of which were selected in descending order with descending

class (The year one have most educators while the year 4 have least peer educators).

- ◆ Distribution of PSI (populations service international) products like condoms to the people.

ACTIVITIES

- ◆ Conduct seminars
- ◆ Video shows
- ◆ Social weekends
- ◆ Awareness campaigns
- ◆ Develop posters campaigning AIDS/messages
- ◆ The generation which is in year 4 now has seen two big projects: These are:

(1) In 2001-there was project of behavior change and intervention phase I.

(2) In 2004- peer educator workshop that grilled students on issues related to sexuality which if not well understood can make someone contract HIV/AIDS. UNICEF funded this.

CHALLENGES

- ◆ No assistance from administration, as such the ceasing of funding from NORAD three years ago, has resulted to drop in the performance of the club to appoint of about dying now.
- ◆ Reluctance of students to join the club as a result of lack of required services. e.g. video initially used was stolen hence there, the video assisted in the dissemination of the sensitive messages to the clients like the PSI massages. The messages got from these video shows assisted students who are shy to have access to the condoms.
- ◆ Lack of funds from various organization and well wishers.

3. SYRD - STUDENTS FOR RURAL YOUTH IN DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ Founded in April 1993 by Bunda College students.
- ◆ It is now profit organization with membership from students' community.
- ◆ Currently it has 60 members all are students of the Bunda from all the classes.

SYRD OBJECTIVE

- ◆ To empower the disadvantaged rural youth and women in areas of nutrition, food security, HIV/AIDS, economics and cultural well being.

MODES OF ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVE

- ◆ Carries out rural orientation and problem centered activities at grass root level.
- ◆ For these to be implemented funding comes from rural development, NGO's like Action AID Malawi, American Embassy, UNICEF, EU and National Aids Commission.

ACTIVITIES SO FAR CARRIED OUT SINCE THE INCEPTION

In 1994 there was summer vacations, SRYD members worked with the youths and women of Ntchisi Rural Areas on vegetable production and rabbitry. UNICEF funded the project.

July-September 1995 SYRD members with sponsorship from UNICEF trained the youths in Mchinji on rabbitry, apiculture and were involved in alcohol and drug abuse awareness.

April-May, 1996 SYRD members worked with the youth and women of chief Chiseka in Lilongwe on cassava seed multiplication with the objective ensuring food security and subsistence in the area. The project was sponsored by the European Union.

September-December 1997- members of SYRD trained the people of Chitipi in rabbit production. The project was sponsored by GTZ, Bunda Animal Science.

1998-Summer vacation SYRD members trained the women of Kapataka village; TA Chiseka in Lilongwe on rabbitary-American Embassy and Action Aid Malawi sponsored the Project in the First and the second phase of the project respectively.

In 2002, SRYD was training farmers of T/A Mdua of Mkundi in Mchinji district in Soybean production, processing and utilization. A project was implemented with sponsorship from Action Aid Malawi.

Currently (2005) SRYD is carrying out an HIV/AIDS awareness campaign project in primary Schools in Chileka Primary School Educational Zone, which is composed of seventeen primary school. A project is implemented with funding from NAC through Umbrella body of Save the Children Federation (US)

So far the proposal was sent to Donors (World Bank) to sponsor phase II of the project, which will include the communities of the Chiseka zone.

4. SHRP- SOCIETY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AWARENESS AND PROMOTION

Started in February 2002 and was launched on 4th October 2003 by *Emeliana Tembo* (Executive Secretary for Malawi Human Rights) with funding from NORAD.

OBJECTIVE

To create an awareness and promotion of human rights for a vibrant democracy that is conducive to both political and socio-economic development whilst nurturing religious and cultural values.

MODES OF ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES (ACTIVITIES)

Between February and October 2003- Developed structures for the society and development of the constitution. Proposals were written in the same year to NORAD for the funding of the launch.

In February 2004- there was a workshop on human rights and conflict resolution by National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE). The funds were sourced from NORAD.

In April 2004 there were another workshop violence acts, human rights and conflict management conducted by Center for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (CHRR) with the funding from NORAD.

November 2004, there was a workshop on the role of students on Human Rights and Democracy by Human Rights Commission of Malawi with funding from NORAD.

So far two proposals have been written on:

(a) Leadership, good governance and conflict management

(b) Asurvey (study) for all the constituent college to assess the perception of the University students and Democracy.

CHALLENGES

There is no permanent source of funds

Members' commitment to club activities is very poor. The member focus much on the output without considering what they can do for the club to produce good output.

5. (BEA) -BUNDA ECONOMISTS ASSOCIATION

BACKGROUND

The Honorable Dr. Cassim Chilumpha who was by then the MP launched BEA on 19th August 2000. It is composed of students who are specializing in Agricultural Economics. However, currently it has almost 50 members who have affiliated to the association. It works jointly with the University of Malawi Economics Association (UMEA) and Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN).

UMEA was launched in May 2003 when Bunda Economics Association and Chancellor College Economics Society saw the need to strengthen their capacity to make contributions to the national economy and also to add weight to the conditions agreed to work together under UMEA.

OBJECTIVE

The underlying objective of BEA is to empower economic students to enable them grow into fully developed, highly equipped persons with excellent capacity and capability to be able to manipulate to real economic situations of Malawi's development transition.

WAYS OF ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES

This overall objective is achieved through:

- ◆ Attending workshops organized by itself or its partners.
- ◆ Educational visits
- ◆ Public lectures

However, some of the activities that have been happening since the inception of BEA include:

- ◆ A consultative workshop on “Malawi Debt Crisis” that was conducted in November 2000.
- ◆ Education visit to the Reserve Bank on 23rd January 2001.
- ◆ Attended the 2002/2003 parliamentary budget session on 21st June 2002.
- ◆ Attended the Gender and Economic Development Workshop that took place at APRU conference hall on 24-25th October 2003.
- ◆ Attended the ECAMA Annual Economic Conference held on 3rd April 2004 at MIM.
- ◆ Attended the budget workshop for the UMEA on 2nd October 2003 at Kalikuti Hotel.
- ◆ Attended the Malawi Social Forum Workshop in November 2004 at NRC.
- ◆ An education visit to Southern Bottlers in December 2004.

CHALLENGES:

- ◆ Nonetheless, the Association is being currently faced with financial problems due to a number of factors. As of now it has got no money in its account. Bunda Economists Association Account with Stanbic” City Centre branch. Mainly this has been attributed because of failure of the association to secure funds from proposals that it wrote to NORAD, NDI (National Democratic Institute) and NAC (National AIDS Commission). NORAD is on its evaluation phase whereas NDI has phased out. Therefore, the only source of funds is the affiliation fee which is not sufficient.

6. ESAB - ENGINEERING STUDENTS ASSOCIATION OF BUNDA (ESAB)

This is the Association at Bunda College of Agriculture of the University Malawi’s with membership based to students opting for Agriculture Engineering and Irrigation Engineering. It was founded for Bunda graduates to use their knowledge and skills to help in promoting agricultural production as regards to engineering technical know how.

OBJECTIVES

- ◆ The association aims at empowering Bunda Engineers to enable them grow into fully developed, highly equipped expertise with excellent capacity to be able to tackle agricultural problems as regards to engineering
- ◆ To create awareness among partners both agro and non agro based organizations about the existence of graduate engineers from Bunda College so that they are able to integrate with engineers from other disciplines when addressing engineering problems at National and International level.
- ◆ To maintain and promote the status of Agricultural Engineers as a profession within the sphere of Bunda College and countrywide.
- ◆ To promote and safeguard the rights and interests of engineering students at Bunda College in all matters affecting their profession, it also ensures that engineering students are safeguarded against issues that can jeopardise the ethics of their profession.

- ◆ To collaborate with Bunda College alumni and other interested members in addressing problems affecting the agricultural development in the country, which need engineering solutions.

HOW OBJECTIVES ARE ACHIEVED

Through publications and prevalence of articles written by members or non-members at National and International level.

Educational visits to Agro- based factories, constructor's farms and estates etc countrywide.

The secretariat of the association assists the department to apply for vocational employment with various organizations for members of the association. The participants of such attachment/employment shall be expected to write a work report to the association as well as department for the purpose of reference and experience sharing.

Hold conferences and meetings for presentations of papers and seminars and other academic deficiency that the student may face.

ACTIVITIES SO FAR DONE AND CHALLENGES

The club fails to launch due to lack of support financially from the Department (Engineering) despite being promised.

The club has for many times fail to be registered with Malawi Board of Engineers (MBE) and attend their meeting as a result of the perennial problem of finances.

Some selfish people do use the logo for ESAB for their own benefit without prior consent from the club.

Since inception, ESAB has never staged any of "public talk" or paper presentation, education visit or source any funds as its constitution demands.

7. BANFAD -BUNDA ASSOCIATION OF NUTRITION AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT.

It stated some years ago but it gained momentum in 2002. It has been inactive all these years due to lack of funding.

OBJECTIVES

To give the rural community adequate information on good nutrition practices.

To give rural people a better understanding of the family

To help association members gain real-life knowledge on community nutrition and the family through interactions with the community.

ACTIVITIES

Since assuming office last year (2004) there has been plans of wishing to register the club but that hasn't been possible due to lack of the funds. Future plans are to accomplish the planned activities.

CHALLENGES

Lack of good leadership had lead to dormancy of the club. Also change of patron has affected the future plans.

Cooperation amongst members is lacking at the moment

Lack of funding.

8. ROTARY -BUNDA COLLEGE ROTARY CLUB

Opened its doors in 2004 in March with the initiative of Rotarian *Mish Milanzi*.

OBJECTIVES

To encourage and foster the ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise.

Development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service

- (1) High ethical standards in business and professions, the recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupation; and dignifying of each Rotarians occupations as an opportunity to serve the society.
- (2) The application of ideal of service in every Rotarians personal, business, and community life.
- (3) The advancement of international understanding, good will, and peace through Worlds of fellowships of business and professional persons united in the ideal of service.

ACTIVITIES

Club members attended a workshop at Lilongwe Vocational Training Centre on 2nd October on the “Youth and Development-the way forward”.

CHALLENGES

Leadership is poor to match the international standards of Rotarians. The club has future if it can be spiced by a good leardship that can write proposals for projects that can benefit the society.

9. BAC- BUNDA AGRONOMY CLUB (REFERENCE Club by the Principals Speech-Coordinator)

The clubs falls under the department of Crop Science hence members are drawn from Crop Science Department option of the Faculty of Agriculture.

Interested students from other options and faculties are also incorporated.

The club was formed in 2002 with the initiative from Crop Science students.

ACTIVITIES

In 2002, the club ventured with Monsanto where by 10 farmers of Mkwinda EPA were given Maize seeds and herbicides for field demonstration of the technologies.

The objectives of the exercise were

(1) To facilitate introduction of conservation tillage that later a farmer will be able to maintain soil fertility, reduce soil erosion, save labor and finally improve yields.

(2) To promote use of hybrids maize seeds and exposes to farmers a wide range of varieties for them to identify a variety of their choice. The information was supposed to assist the seed company to make informed decisions with regards to chosen varieties.

Between 2003-2004, the club secured 1.6 hectares of land from the Department where they plant it with maize.

The objective of doing so was to use the maize field for practicals by its members and for income generation for the club as crop sales.

In March 2004, the club members participated at the field day conducted by ARET and Kandiya farm in the same year; the club was in forefront during field day here at Bunda.

2004-2005. The club has grown maize, groundnuts and Soya beans at the crop Science farm for reason mentioned above.

FUTURE PLANS

To take part in field day to be organized by ARET in March 2005 at Kandiya farm.

If funded, the club shall carry out training activities within Lilongwe by targeting community based organizations dealing with people living with HIV/AIDS in the production and utilization crop products.

The club will organize field trips to places of interest for members to appreciate the real fieldwork.

The club will be inviting guest speakers to have presentation on topics of interest.

CHALLENGES

Members' commitment is not convincing, as they look for benefit only to get their inputs.

10. SDG: STUDENTS DEMOCRATIC GUARDS

The association endeavors to promote and encourage the involvement in and out of school youth participation in human rights activities for their own social political and economic development hence contributing to the immediate and long term growth of Malawi's socio-economic development and enhancing outreach capacity to affect the youth as a whole.

The challenge so far is lack of funds hence failing to carry out the activities.

ACHIVEMENTS

Have been able to conduct workshops where people from MH RC (Malawi Human Rights Commission), PAC (Public Affairs Committee) CHRR are invited on human right issues.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the organizations are:

To help the youths (both schooling and non0schooling) to identify their fundamental human rights, as to participate positively in the socio-economic and political affairs of their respective societies, without violating the rights of others.

To counsel and advise the youth in matters that affects their social, economic and political lives.

Sensitizing and bringing attention to relevant authorities that is government or community leaders on matters affecting the youth at large.

To be used as a channel or medium by any organization that government or non-governmental organization to dispatch information which is to the best interest of the youth.

TO act as a mouthpiece of the youth.

To give a clear meaning of democracy to the students both at tertiary and secondary institutional levels and all other non-schooling youth at large.

To empower the youth economically through provision of technical advise such as in agriculture to ensure their full participation in socio-economic development of the Nation.

11. POWERS OF SDG

For the performance of its functions, the organization through its executive barely shall, subject to the provision made here in, have power:

To employ professional, technical and administrative personnel as it may deem requisite and lay down conditions of service for such employees.

To pay any person in its employment such salary wages or other remuneration and grant him/her such leave as it may deem fit

To enter into any contract agreement

To invest or deal with any of the moneys not immediately required in such securities, in such manner as it may think fit and to vary or realize such investments.

To publicise, from time to time such professional or any other information as it deems necessary or expedient for the promotion of the objects of the organization.

To manage, ensure, let sell mortgages or otherwise deal with any property of organization it may deem necessary or expedient.

12. BUNDA ANTI CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN SOCIETY

Based at Bunda started in 1999 by the Chairman Ng'oma. There are 60 members of which 20 are active.

OBJECTIVES

To intensify corruption awareness campaign among students' local communities and the general public.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

To sensitize the public on the evils of the corruption

To assist students to set up strategies to combat corruption

To facilitate formation of local action groups

To disseminate information on corruption and anticorruption

To create awareness amongst students and the general public on the real evils of corruption.

PRESENT STATUS

It receives both technical and financial assistance from the anticorruption bureau (ACB). It has also been benefited financially by conducting various activities from the NORAD Programme Development office situated at Bunda.

ACHIEVEMENTS

5 February 2004 participated on national Anticorruption day at CIVO stadium. Presented sketches.

30 October has a talk from National Initiative Youth against corruption.

9 December participated on Natural Anticorruption day at New State House and then at Capital Hotel.

2 February 2005 received funds from ACB for sensitization in various secondary schools.

5 February were invited by the Head of state to attend the natural anticorruption day at Kamuzu Institute for Youth.

In February 2005, there will be TOT (Trainee of trainers at Bunda from 1:30pm.

24-25 February 2005 there will be a talk by Director of Public Presentation Mr. Ishmael Wadi and Director ACB Mr. G. Kaliwo.

The other activities will be visiting secondary schools.

We have developed a web page which can be accessed.

CHALLENGES

Funding has been a problem but ACB is giving some funds that may see us through this semester.

Most of students attend just activities but not the scheduled meetings.

13. AGEP ASSOCIATION FOR BUNDA PROMOTION

Newly appointed patron is Mr. D.D. Maliro

Started in 2000 to install equity between men and women. So far activities done

Social weekends

TOT (training of trainees) by NICE

Gender and economic development by NORAD and Femnae

In 2004 there was a workshop on gender based violence.

OBJECTIVES

To mobilize and involve men and women to campaign any form of violence against people of opposite sex in University college.

To equip University students with concepts knowledge and skills for gender sensitization and advocacy in order to transform their own attitude behavior and influence communities in Colleges.

To increase awareness and action to eliminate gender based violence at the institution and the amenities around Bunda.

MEMBERSHIP

Currently there are 25 members. The attitudes of members are just good.

ACHIEVEMENT.

So far men's attitudes towards women have improved. Those things which were taken for men only, they are now being accessed by women. e.g. The T.V viewing is now spiced by several women.

Number of women participating in sports has increased mainly volleyball, basketball, hockey, table and lawn tennis.

More members have transformed trouble makers against women who are at the moment women friendly. The members could target those trouble those people and liaise with them.

CHALLENGES

Want moral support from administration mainly on social welfare. Example is the electricity problem like geyser took a long time before being taken care of in Likangala hostel. The same problem took a little time in Msangu because the male students threatened to start taking bath from female hostels.

Most men do not accept to be led by women. It is a prayer of the association to see this change for the better.

Financial support from the administration.

Message 4: Message from Coordinator Guidelines of Session One

Objective 1: To review and exchange experiences on the development of poverty reduction strategies in Malawi

Conference Participants,

On behalf of the coordinators and the organizers of this conference, Bunda College Alumni online group, we would like to welcome you to our first session of the conference. In this session, which will take almost 5 working days, participants will review and exchange experiences the second e-conference, objective which is on the development of poverty reduction strategies in Malawi in general and specifically the role of University and College students. The following questions have been posted to guide the debate and create, promote, encourage a wider input from the participants.

On the development of poverty reduction strategies in Malawi:

- What programmes/strategies, do we think, have contributed to poverty reduction efforts in Malawi
- Which programmes/strategies can be identified as ideal for Malawi's economy?
- Who has been involved in developing poverty reduction strategies in the country?
- What have been the strengths and weaknesses of these programmes?

On University and College student's participation in the development of poverty reduction strategies in Malawi:

- Among the existing poverty reduction programmes/strategies in Malawi, can we identify or give examples of those that involved the participation of University and College students both in their development?
- Has University and College students' participation, if any, been effective in the development of poverty reduction programmes/strategies in Malawi?
- What could be done to encourage or enhance student participation in the development of poverty reduction programmes/strategies in Malawi? Any experiences from other countries?

These are just guiding questions meant to set the discussion focused and going. Participants are free and encouraged to contribute in any order and on any other issues, as long as they address the e-conference objective stated above. All your views will be noted and summarized to form part of the final report. **If you do not wish your**

name to be published in the report, you may indicate that we keep your contribution anonymous.

We wish you fruitful discussions.

Message 5: Author Unknown

The Conference Coordinators, The Vice Principal of Bunda College, Distinguished guests, members of the Bunda Alumni Group, ladies and gentlemen.

First and foremost, I would like to apologise for not fully identified myself to the conference, this is due to my current position in the government and the type of work I do. However, this should not perturb our attention. Let me take this opportunity to thank the organisers of this E-conference, probably one of the first to be undertaken by the Malawi community at a global scale. Be assured that all the discussions and proceedings from this important conference will reach the right people and an official feedback will be laid back to the forum. Am also pleased to note that the Vice Principal of Bunda College, Dr Kaunda has played a very vital role in participating and sharing ideas at a high level position.

Coming to the conference guidelines to cover first objective, I have my own opinion (s):

1. Poverty alleviation Programmes/Strategies- The government has an open door policy in such programmes or strategies. Any individual, organisation, groups can formulate their own programmes to reduce poverty in a specific area or sector. The only requirement is to follow government statutory rules. At government level, poverty alleviation programmes target both short term as well as long term goals. In most cases, long term. We look at the economy at a large scale rather than at a small and basic unit. Probably this is an area we have failed to implement most of the programmes. The government provide the main framework for other institutions to follow and also provide the relevant data and information in areas of need.

2. Government poverty reduction programmes have been donor driven, rather than domestic power. Most of the money and material used in such programmes come from outside our budgets as such the control is a problem. Programmes like MASAF, Vision 2020, and [Poverty Reduction Strategy Projects are all funded by the donor community as such they are implemented globally using global indicators despite local participation](#). It is at this level, the government fails to incorporate each and every important sector of our economy including academic projects from the students of the University of Malawi and Mzuzu.

3. Government programmes while designed for national economic growth have been targeting the rural poor considering the scale of social, economical and environmental problems. Programmes have been undertaken to increase household food availability, good roads, schools, health centres, communication etc. These have been confronted by other problems such as lack of personnel, poor management, monitoring and back up services. Such programmes can not sustain them selves.

4. Politics have also played a very great role in both promoting as well as destroying the good strategies. Politicians have failed to understand their role in poverty reduction programmes. They have overtaken government's efforts and diluted them into political ocean which is full of blood and death. The good example is the MASAF.

Without the strong and good leadership at MASAF, the programme could have been a flop. Politicians should not be allowed to intervene with such programmes which are well designed and require mature, educated and dedicated minds to implement. Campaign related programmes like TIP and loans should not be undertaken by government officials, but political parties. [Experts spend their time and resources implementing programmes which in most cases benefit party members rather than country citizens](#). This is where we need political parties that can assist government in running its poverty strategies. [Parties which can write their own proposal seek their own funds and use their own structures to implement a poverty alleviation programme](#). Today parties rely on government and learned citizen to gain their political will.

5. Stakeholders and all other players in poverty alleviation strategies have failed to understand the need to work as a team. [There's no strong link between the government and the NGO, private sector or the University of Malawi.](#) In most cases they meet once a year and during conferences. We need to have a secretariat that can oversee these issues. The role of Poverty Alleviation Ministry should be establishing this link which we can trust and take as a base for our strategies.

The link between University of Malawi or Mzuzu and government in identifying these areas requires a special attention. Indeed students from these institutions have undertaken several projects or intern for years, but very few of them have assisted in poverty alleviation, if at all they are stuck within the university campuses. It is with these few points I think this conference might assist to come up with better recommendations to the government as well as private sector.

The Coordinator, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me stop here this morning so that I may also learn from other participants. Thanks very much.

Message 6: Author Mathews Nyirenda

The Conference Coordinators, the VP of Bunda College, alumni, distinguished ladies, and gentlemen. I strongly feel that this e conference is tackling very pertinent issues that need to be taken seriously at all levels by all concerned. May I also make my five tambala worth contributions as follows.

Various programmes have been put in place by government in the past to reduce poverty in the country and notable among them is the MASAF programme. The programme has evolved over time and has gone on to have a number of projects that not only focused on infrastructure but also social support initiatives and that to me is commendable. The main problem with this initiative like someone already pointed out is that it is being used as a political advancement tool and this is dangerous because as soon as someone else who is anti-those who started the programme comes into power, that person may decide to do away with the programme or just change the name but still try to maintain the same projects or programmes. Another similarly politicized project is the TIP which may or may not have achieved much in addressing the food insecurity problems that are haunting our country. This thing has changed names and amounts of the packages but has it really made a big difference in the lives on

Malawians, depending on who you are, the answer may be yes or no. Some reports have suggested that it has made a difference but is there no other project that can make a bigger difference than the TIP which this year has been dogged by the problem of fertilizer shortages. Let us explore other ways and there is no harm in going back to the days of Kamuzu when our agriculture was ticking and trying to find out what made things work and try it. Of course there was no TIP then.

I have very scanty details about the MK1 billion scheme because I Strongly feel that there has been too much of 'political' advertising than informing the general public about what it is (public relations), how it is going to be administered, who is eligible etc and at this point it is difficult to say whether the initiative will make a difference or not. With lack of details there is great danger that the whole thing may be sabotaged or the loans may not benefit the intended people and then it will be a flop. There are serious lessons to be learnt from this on the part of the politicians (ruling, if any and opposition alike) and those intellectuals that are involved in the scheme.

We have seen projects or programmes that are donor demanded or copied from elsewhere that has worked and indeed some have failed miserably. [At times we implement programmes which we think are the right ones and not what the community feel are the right ones for them even though we claim to have done thorough consultations.](#) In certain cases wrong or no advice has been given in the choice and implementation of some projects and there has been too much dancing to the tune of the financier. WE are too polite to choose to disagree at times. Worse still, we are to blame as well for failing to run/implement projects and account for funds and it is a shame that we are topping the list of corrupt nations. In that way our projects can not work and ultimately it is the poor Malawian who suffers. [We need community driven and where applicable 'small is beautiful projects' and committed stakeholder and expert input and directed projects if our projects are to succeed.](#) At the same time we need functional structures at various tiers in the government set up and it is unfortunate that we have a civil service that is demotivated and hence the not up to standard services that we get from it. [There is need to identify synergy among programmes and establish strong links and encourage information sharing 'shareable' among all Stakeholders i.e. govt, NGos institutions etc.](#)

A lot of research has been carried out by the University but the sharing of this information has been a problem. [The information has not been well simplified enough so that when it is necessary for the common man in the village to know it, it can be provided to him/her.](#) No wonder when you go to some communities to conduct a

study they tell you that they are tired of answering the same questions over and over again. [At the same time, have the policy makers or decision makers taken the recommendations from the studies seriously and implemented them?](#) If the answer is no, why then? The University has tried in many ways to interact with and work with the other publics and this has to be commended and encouraged to even interact more within themselves.

The University needs to change the mindset of students which always Looks at employment after college. Rather they have to create employment for others but is the political, socioeconomic climate conducive to that? If it is not and it is difficult but still the mindset has to change. [What role have we as alumni of Bunda played in addressing the food insecurity situation in our country?](#) Are we proud of our achievements as a nation in this area? Have we done enough to contribute effectively to our nation in this area? If we are able to honestly answer some of these questions each one of us individually we can learn to be patriotic and do something for our country. Imagine if each one of us had the same vision as Dr.Chikhuntha, and Just imagine if each intellectual in his/her area of expertise had the same patriotic and development conscious spirit, how will Malawi fair. [The curriculum has to be practical to reality if we are to reduce poverty in this country. The mentality to pass exams and forget has to be erased in the students if they are to be creators of employment and these demands a scrutiny of the various curricular in the colleges.](#) Policies, programmes and other things that students need to be exposed to have to be known while they are in college. I have to be frank to say that I spent 5 years in college but I never knew if Malawi had a food security policy or not and if it had what it was all about and it is now that I am learning some of these things.

As academicians we also need to venture into politics as long as we Keep our integrity and not change colors. I feel we have given too much room to politicians and hence our existence seems not to be appreciated which does not surprise me if someone says tertiary education is a luxury. Let us venture into politics so that we make decisions that are politically and (economically) or technically sound. The bottom line is for us to be patriotic and have a common vision for our country and develop workable strategies in implementing our plans. As individuals we have done it and as a nation the same can be done.

May I pause ladies and gentlemen.

Ciao

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Message 7: Author Robert D. Schon

The Coordinator, ladies and gentlemen,

I have read and noted with interest the two postings on this conference. After spending almost 3 years in Malawi, I disagree with your propositions to involve undergraduate students in poverty alleviation projects in Malawi. I tend to differ.

Undergraduate students have more to learn as policy makers in their first University education. Most of these are quite young and don't even know what a project is and what poverty and its complexity involves. To give them the task of formulating academic projects for scholarship will divert their objective of theoretical subjects.

In Malawi the degree has only four years and the first two are more less covering basic concepts and issues in their various fields. To include project design and implementation at this stage might be a very fatal step in our education system. This will mean changing the whole syllabus may be. The costs might be high.

A viable project will require critical literature review, the thing which might not be part of the 1st and 2nd year students. The proposal will require a detailed budget, working schedule, Identification of stakeholders, monitoring and even evaluation. Who will undertake this entire task? Can an undergraduate have time for such a project?

Most of the poverty alleviation projects are undertaken in rural areas, away from University campuses, should the scholarship include travel and lodging expenses?

I think if we want to include scholarship for projects which can reduce poverty, then postgraduate student's are the right people to support. These have time and enough

experience. Currently most of our postgraduate students are supported by international agencies. We need to have our own local institution to support these students.

Probably this is the task that can be undertaken by religious groups or political parties to establish special scholarships for Malawians. These groups make a lot of noise politically but their contribution to higher education is very negligible.

Thanks very much. I will stop here.

Robert D. Schon
Ontario, Canada

Message 8: Author Unknown

E-conference on: The Role of University Scholarships in Poverty Reduction in Malawi

Most poverty reduction efforts aim at changing those characteristics of households which are judged to be important determinants of household poverty status a educational levels, agricultural productivity, type of employment, access to services, household size, and others.

The most effective and sustainable ways of reducing poverty in Malawi are shown to be higher levels of educational attainment, especially for girls and women and reallocation of household labor away from agriculture to manufacturing or sales and services, (Poverty Monitoring Systems, 2001). With this brief introduction let me go directly to answering the questions raised by the conference.

Conference questions:

Contributions should be restricted to the questions under discussion and the following questions should be answered during the discussion:

1. Is it important to introduce University and college research scholarship in Malawi? Whatever the reasons, please defend your response.

It is very important to introduce college research scholarship at University or college level in Malawi. If we want to change the household labour from agriculture to manufacturing, we need appropriate technologies which are going to be used in manufacturing industries.

2. If the response to question number 1 is negative, what are your views on the possible strategies to involve university and college students in national development?

3. If your response was yes to question number 1, who should run this scheme? Do we need to have a committee on this? Should this committee include other stakeholders outside the University? If yes do you have names of people in mind that you can suggest for this committee?

We need an independent body which can be looking at this scholarship scheme, and staff from different colleges, Universities, NGOs and government can be represented in this body.

4. When should the scholarship be introduced?

The scholarship should be introduced as early as the second year of a student at the institution. During the first year the students should be taught how to write development projects and in the second year of their study the student should be able to write a development project and send it for assessment.

5. What should be the amount of this scholarship?

The amount should depend on what the student would like to achieve, there should be no ceiling on the amount of development project.

6. For how long should a beneficiary use the scholarship?

The beneficiary should use the scholarship as long as he is involved in the project. This will depend on the duration of the project.

7. What are the key development areas that have to be targeted as a priority?
Manufacturing goods from the raw materials produced from Malawi natural resources should be a priority e.g. manufacturing of cloth from cotton.

8. What would be the possible sources of funds for this scheme?

Any donor who is interested with the development of Malawi country should be targeted for the scheme.

9. Who will monitor and evaluate the students, performance, and the scheme as a whole?

The independent body which has been put in place in question 3, should also monitor this scheme.

10. How can such a scheme be made more gender sensitive?

All Malawians should be free to participate in this scheme and ladies should be encouraged to apply for the scheme.

11. What are the criteria for awarding the scholarship?

Any scholarship is awarded by setting standards according to the target group and aim of scholarship. These standards are set in a questionnaire form and if an applicant is fitting the set grade then he or she should be awarded the scholarship.

12. What type of scholarships should be granted?

The scholarship should be able to pay for the tuition fee of student and at the same time the scholarship should be able to solve a poverty reduction related problem in Malawi.

13. What are the advantages and disadvantages of such a scheme?

This type of scholarship is best suited to students who are doing development related studies like rural development but may be difficult for students who are pursuing other subjects like law or public administration to come up with such a project.

**Message 9: MESSAGE FROM THE COORDINATORS SECOND SESSION
(WEEK TWO)**

Conference Participants,

As session coordinators for this week, we wish to sincerely thank those who have been taking part in the e-conference on University scholarships. We have noted, however, with profound concern the waning zeal that has characterized the contributions towards the e-conference of late. The Education Authorities are monitoring the deliberations with a keen eye and such developments are giving a negative impression on the seriousness with which participants wish to contribute. We hope that we will rise to the occasion and be the vibrant and patriotic participants that we are intended to be.

The just ended week of this e-conference, though scantily contributed to, have unearthed very important views which largely focused on reviewing and exchanging experiences on the development of various poverty reduction strategies in Malawi. We have seen how the design and implementation mechanism of the programmes have been key in determining their success and/or failures.

This week, we are sending a strong call to participants to identify how the obstacles and challenges faced by different stakeholders in designing and implementing poverty reduction strategies in Malawi can be dealt with. In this light, we send a thought provoking paper from Project Dynamo on the need for networking amongst various stakeholders in designing and implementing poverty reduction strategies. This networking involves bringing students in the limelight. Who needs to be involved in the design stage? How would they be involved and why? What about the implementation stage-who needs to be involved and why? How can university students be part of the solution? Should they be involved at the design or at the implementation stage? Should the research scholarships involve undergraduates, postgraduates or both groups of students?

We look forward to seeing a more lively debate this week knowing that thinking through solutions to the shaky poverty reduction efforts can be the most challenging stage in attaining the ultimate poverty reduction goal.

Session Coordinators.

**Message 10: PRESENTATION OF THE SECOND SESSION BY DR
VICTORIA MENDIZABAL**

The role of network projects in development
Victoria Mendizábal, Dynamón Project (Barcelona, Spain)



The first record in the etymology of the word *network* dates back to 1560 as a “net-like arrangement of threads or wires”. This connotation of the word was then extended to "any complex, interlocking system" in 1839 referring to transport by rivers, canals, and railways. However, it was not until the twentieth century that the sense of an "interconnected group of people" was first introduced in 1947 and further transferred as a verb to computers in 1972 and to persons in the 1980s.

Nevertheless, the idea of networking is probably as old as communication itself. Consider people living in the Stone Age, where drums may have been used to transmit messages between individuals. Suppose caveman A wants to invite caveman B for a game of hurling rocks at each other, but they live too far apart for B to hear A banging his drum. So what are A's options? He could 1)-walk over to B's place, 2)-get a bigger drum, or 3)-ask C, who lives halfway between them, to forward the message. The last is called networking.

Today networks are increasingly important, whether local, national or international. People talk about networks in development agencies, in research, in businesses and in many professional fields. For some people, networking seems just another jargon term. But many organisations now recognise networking as a valuable means to share information, further common objectives and make best use of limited resources.

But what exactly is a network? How do networks function? Why some networks are very successful, but others disappointing? Despite the growing number of development networks there is little accessible information about how different networks operate the ingredients for their success or the problems that they face. In this conference, I will try to summarize some of the most important features of this old human ability that has unexpectedly become almost a need when developing any initiative. Some examples will be provided in relation to development projects, and particularly in the task of engaging the general public in Science and Technology decision-making which is the case of Dynamón Project.

1. What is a social network?

Networking is a means through which organizations with common interests or goals learn from each other and support each other. It is a means for better use of resources and bringing about bigger impact. Networking can be defined as 'a process of establishing and maintaining communication and linkages amongst individuals and organizations, in a non-structured informal and on-going manner' (Capacity Building of Networks in South Asia Report of Workshop March 17-19 1998 New Delhi PP 13). Also Paul Starkey, a specialist in animal traction and rural transport that has acted as Technical Adviser to animal traction networks in Africa, defined network as the following:

A network is “any group of individuals or organizations who on a **voluntary** basis exchange **information** or undertake **joint activities** and who organize themselves in such a way that their **individual autonomy remains intact**”

(Networking for Development, 1998)

Although certainly related, it should be noted here that there is a difference between networking and network. While networking is a loose form of association where group of people /organizations come together for a certain common purpose, the network is a more structured form of association with its own identity defined by its members.

'Networking is integral in maintaining and running an effective network but does not necessarily have to have a concrete form and structure as a network does'. (Capacity Building of Networks in South Asia Report of Workshop March 17-19 1998 New Delhi PP 13). Networking is the main element in networks. It evolves over time and does not necessarily happen because organizations form a network. Ranges of formal and informal networks exist in the private sector (such as the chambers of commerce, various business associations, etc.) among NGOs and in the public sector.

Different levels of success have been achieved in establishing and running sustainable networks. The following SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) summarizes some of the pertinent lessons.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Bring diverse people and experiences together.</p> <p>Have the potential of pooling resources for greater Impact.</p> <p>Can bring about better coordination and efficiency.</p> <p>Good opportunity for policy dialogue.</p> <p>New ideas are generated in such forums.</p> <p>Help to increase understanding and clarify ambiguities.</p>	<p>May bring diverse people with no common vision.</p> <p>May be dominated by the more strong/elite.</p> <p>Could be used by vested interests, dominant institutions groups or individuals.</p> <p>May be too ambitious and without impact.</p> <p>May suffer from lack of resources.</p> <p>May become donor driven and collapse when donors lose interest.</p> <p>Members may become inactive.</p> <p>Network secretariat could become bureaucratic and centralized.</p> <p>Secretariat acting independent of members.</p> <p>Expectations of direct benefit may cause some to lose interest.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Can attract donors and members.</p> <p>Can easily link up with other networks.</p> <p>Visibility and collective strength.</p>	<p>Legal registration may prove difficult.</p> <p>Informal networks may not attract donors.</p> <p>End up creating another dysfunctional institution.</p>

2. Which are the main features of successful networks?

Based on lessons learned universally certain principles and practices seem to have contributed for successful networks. These principles and practices include the following:

1. Existence of Common Purpose and Clarity of Vision and Purpose

Networking should be based on a clear definition of common interest or purpose. This is fundamental to a sustainable networking. It is important to clarify the interests and expectations of each member and identify common grounds on which the networking could be based. This process should start from availing information and conducting series of discussions on the roles, capacities, problems and challenges of each organization.

Having a clear vision and objective for a network is an essential element for its sustainability. A network with diverse membership will have difficulty in developing a clear common vision and objectives. Lack of clarity in these will cause problems in effective coordination of the network at latter stages. Members of a network should be able to define their interest and decide what the outcome of the networking should be. Network should focus on core issues that interest all the members.

2. The Process of Establishing a Network

Network should evolve and should not be imposed. Increased awareness, communication and networking, development of common interests around issues and initiatives of joint work and collaboration for a significant period of time may finally lead to the establishment of a formal network. The process is usually gradual and starts informally within few organizations and grows over time. Therefore it should not be rushed.

Most networks usually starts with a handful of organizations that are able to develop common purpose and vision. As the network develops others who share the vision join. Starting a network with a small group of organizations has the advantage of working more closely and intensively with less difficulty in coordination. It is also easier to reach consensus and agree on initial purposes and functions which can and should be reviewed and changed as the network expands.

3. Offering Concrete Benefits to Members

A network will not be sustainable if it is not offering concrete benefits to its members. If members do not feel they are benefiting from being a member of a network their commitment will disappear. Therefore the work of the network should focus on what it can do for its members in facilitating their work, building their capacities, lobbying on their behalf or publicizing their work etc.

4. Leadership and governance

Good quality leadership is critical for successful networks. There should be critical

mass of members who are able to create dynamism in the network. Leadership should be participatory and transparent. Tasks and responsibilities have to be shared. Each member should feel responsible and important for the network's success. Each member should contribute to the network in different forms and also benefit from the contribution of others.

5. Accountability and Transparency

Network facilitation should be member driven, accountable to the members and transparent. Institutional membership brings with it power. It is possible that network could be dominated by strong institutions and become a major source of conflict in networks. This should be avoided by making sure that all members of the network participate and benefit equally from the network activities.

6. Conflict Management

Networks are bound to face conflicts among members. However it needs good leadership to manage it and uses it skilfully for allowing space for the members to articulate their needs, air their grievances and frustrations. Differences of opinions could be a source of learning and should not be discouraged. Networks with members of diverse capacity need to assist the weaker members to become articulate and negotiate and contribute equally.

7. Sharing of Common Resources

Networks create opportunity for members to contribute to the strengthening of the network by making their resources available. The network should be able to use regularly the resources of its members to achieve its goals instead of developing parallel capacities that compete with its members. A good network relies on the resources of its members.

3. How can a network be enlarged?

Chances are, you don't personally know any Australian policemen, Estonian archival inspectors or Norwegian army veterinarians. But you could probably get in touch with one of these distant individuals through a friend, or a friend of a friend, or a friend of your friend's friend. The notion that every person on the planet is separated from everyone else by a chain of about six people has been around for some time. This proverbial idea, known as "six degrees of separation", was first proposed in 1967 by sociologist Stanley Milgram. This researcher asked 96 randomly selected people around the country to send a piece of mail to a colleague, who would send the mail

along to another colleague, in an attempt to reach a designated "target" person in Boston. The messages that actually made it to their destination passed through an average of six people. But Milgram's experiment was fairly small and has since then been questioned by some sociologists. Thus, Peter Sheridan Dodds and his colleagues at Columbia University has recently conducted a modern version of this study on the Internet, recruiting over 60,000 participants from 166 different countries for the experiment and found that the average number of intermediaries was indeed, six.

Extend our circle of acquaintances, promote our relationships to strengthen our social networks, help a friend of a friend is something that we all do in our everyday life. Some of us do it better than others, some do it naturally and others because of conviction. A number of us make use of traditional means such as participating in community associations, or sitting around talking with friends; while others employ new technologies: chats, professional forums, blogs or create personal web sites. Based on this idea, many people and organizations are beginning to develop strategies to increase both personal and institutional links in order to enlarge their networks. Thus, the study of social networks and the positions that we hold within them have become a very useful tool to identify some problems related to information flow and to propose solutions to improve connectivity among the members of a group. In this way, if it is true that we are less than six degrees of separation from any individual in the globe, we would be able to get in touch with any person or association that is relevant to our goals by means of our contacts.

4. Some successful stories

In this section, I will try to summarize some interesting cases in which networking have contributed to improve a particular problem suffered by isolated communities.

4.1 Lessons from animal traction development in Africa

This is a very useful example in which Paul Starkey explores the value of networking by assessing the experiences of animal traction networks in Sub-Saharan Africa. With the inflow of donor funds that followed the well-publicized Sahelian droughts, many donor-assisted projects were established in Africa to introduce (or re-introduce) and/or research animal traction technologies. These projects tended to work in isolation. Several experienced serious problems, often through insufficient understanding of the technical, social and economic implications of using animal traction technology in a particular farming system. Networks seemed not only

extremely desirable but also feasible. The two international networks which evolved, one for East (Eastern and Southern Africa Network, ATNESA) and the other for West Africa (West Africa Animal Traction Network, WAATN), brought many benefits to their members: improved information exchange; reduced duplication of effort; awareness of other's concerns and activities; critical mass for policy change; improved ability to address complex problems; cooperation between diverse groups; and peer support.

(For more details see: <http://www.iied.org/docs/gatekeep/GK58.pdf>)

4.2 Social network projects in Latin America

(<http://www.fundared.org.ar/>)

The other example comes from Argentina, where the non-governmental organization FUNDARED (Foundation for the development and promotion of social networks) was created in 1989, with the aim of optimizing the use of resources in social networks. This NGO is a network of professionals, institutions and people of different national and international communities interested in developing and promoting social networks through different actions and activities:

- Offering courses and workshops to strengthen and develop specific personal and community skills.
- Increasing the relationship between different areas within an institution or organization.
- Promoting the articulation of institutions with similar goals or acting to help similar communities.
- Favoring the connections between different sectors involved in similar problems.
- Connecting local groups with other groups at the national and international levels.
- Spreading reference bibliography and data bases in strategic issues.

This organization is particularly concerned about the progressive deterioration of national economies, wealth concentration in worldwide monopolies and the growing difficulty of the governments in making decisions independently of the global market's interests. These facts are having repercussion in social and political aspects such as the increasing rates of unemployment, lack of educational opportunities, low quality or lack of public health assistance. Thus, the answers to these difficult situations that we need to face up as individuals and as a part of the civil society require novel and dynamic strategies, more efficient ways of creating supportive and responsible links among people that allow us to redefine our actions from the different

positions we have either at the institutions, communal organizations or companies. In order to grow as mature societies -they say- some sort of social traineeship is needed: isolated and disconnected we do not have the possibility to evaluate our achievements, to analyze the obstacles, to generate new alternatives and accomplish the reinforcement of a civil society based on integration and cooperation.

5. The case of Dynamón Project

(<http://www.catalitza.info/dynamon>)

The problem

During the last decades, the perception of the negative aspects of science and technology have become more and more apparent within civil societies, particularly in some more sensitive sectors such as environmental organizations, anti-globalization movements and pacifist groups that promote the objection to military research. Thus, the need of establishing a real system of dialog between science and society is becoming crucial. Although an increasing number of initiatives tending to promote this interaction between science and society are being proposed from different fields, there are still missing spaces in which this public debate about science and technology could effectively take place.

Dynamón Project comes up in 2003 with the mission of offering new spaces to promote debate and social engagement in science and technology issues. As members of this project, we constitute a multidisciplinary organization of scientific researchers, science communicators and educators who propose the development of new strategies to achieve public engagement and social participation in scientific decision-making from a Science, Technology and Society (STS) perspective.

STS movement comes into the global scene during the late 80's and early 90's from the field of education. One of their major claims was the idea that science and technology are two of the most potent forces for individual, societal, and global change in the contemporary era. Thus, understanding the natures, causes, and social consequences of scientific and technological developments, how science and technology function in different societies, and how social forces attempt to shape and control decisions that serve diverse, often conflicting interests, is crucial.

More than fifteen years later, it is clear that attaining the commitment of all the social actors involved in scientific-technological-derived problems is a mayor step to start a real public dialogue in the very controversial issues of our time. The resolution of

dilemmas, such as the use of genetic modified organisms versus the search for food safety or the unlimited development of human activities versus the need to preserve the environment, is a critical challenge for the ongoing century.

Our goals

Dynamón Project is an initiative that contemplates education, communication and research as means to improve citizen participation in the area of science and technology.

Due to the tremendous impact of science and technology in our daily lives, we believe that there is a need to create new spaces to debate about which should be the uses of scientific discoveries and we work to favour that science and technology are means to strengthen social justice, peace and sustainability as the main values of our societies.

How?

Through activities that combine the interaction between education, communication and research, we promote that the participants live integral experiences in which science and technology can be understood from a rational, emotional and practical point of view. In this sense, we consider education as an integral experience in which knowledge is constructed by asking questions rather than by learning answers. In our opinion, research should be a part of any learning process and should be considered as a transparent process in which everybody can participate. Finally, communicating science and technology is not imposing one's idea to the others, but a multidirectional process in which everybody has something to say and holds an opinion to be shared.

Dynamón in action

Although we are not a real network in the sense that we do not have a concrete form and structure as a network does, in Dynamón project we promote networking as a means to facilitate the achievement of our goals and to improve our possibilities of doing different things from diverse perspectives. Since increasing the interaction between Science and Society is a common purpose within many groups of people and organizations, we try to create links among each other in a loose form of association that could strengthen the actions of the others. Thus, we try to contact people and organizations with similar views regarding science communication, education and research.

Among the activities we are developing in order to achieve our goals are public dialogs, research about public perception of science and technology and new learning experiences adapted to the different publics.

We are now running four different initiatives that I would like to discuss briefly:

1. Science... a fact?

Once formal education is completed, social perceptions about science and technology by the general public become predominantly influenced by the mass media. Thus, as revealed by several studies, the main channels of access to scientific information are television, newspapers, radio and the internet, being the piece of news the most prevalent format in the written press.

Good practice standards in journalism indicate that any piece of news about an event should give an answer to the 5 W + 1H rule. This is: *what* happened, *who* did it, *when* and *where* it took place, and finally, *why* and *how* this episode occurred. Paradoxically, in most science and technology pieces of news journalists forget to answer *how* and *why* scientific events take place. Thus, science facts are perceived as universal truths that are not interpreted in their social context. As a consequence, the general public perceives science and technology only accessible for experts, which prevents social engagement in the process of science decision making.

In the framework of the Science, Technology and Society movement, this initiative proposes a method to put science into its social context through participative activities based on group dynamics, whose objective is to explore social perceptions about science and technology among the general public. By using this strategy, we pursue that participants identify their opinions and find a place to exchange, revise and debate their ideas about science and technology issues. In this way, the controversial aspects of scientific topics come out to promote debate. Starting from this point, we developed ways to establish a real public dialogue, to favour social engagement, and to strengthen the relationship between science and society.

Thus, based on the objectives of this initiative we act connecting people from diverse institutions, organizations or associations that could be potentially interested in the interaction between Science and Society. For instance, our link with the platform “*Per la pau: prou investigació militar*” (*For peace: stop military research*) supported by the Peace Foundation in Catalunya, lead us to organize activities at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) with science students or ecologist activists. Moreover,

those actions at the UAB contacted us with social centres in Barcelona were we also offered our activities. Latter on, those activities began to be funded by the city council and were extended, for instance, to actions in secondary schools.

2. The experiment

This initiative intends that the participants of *Science... a fact?* Become accomplices of how scientists work, in order to make science closer and more understandable to the general public. On the other hand, this project allows us to collect data on social perceptions about science so as to facilitate our comprehension of the main problems that cause difficulties when communicating science to the general public. In addition, this information is a very useful tool to design strategies to improve the relationship between Science and Society.

Inspired by Socratic majestic, we propose an initial question as a means to tackle any subject. Thus, during this first approach to the topic the participant face up to their previous ideas about the proposed question. Then we provoke them to further explore other views by the use of different stimuli coming from different resources such as films, music, drama and other arts. Finally, we invite the participants to choose one over many possible answers to the initial question that we provide them in order to form groups of discussion with the rest of the audience.

As an outcome of these activities and the further analysis of the data obtained, we elaborate information about which were the initial perceptions and ideas of the participants and how they were modified after the experience of the proposed activity.

For instance, in relation to the question “Science, What for?” we observed that all the participants have a personal vision of science and technology issues and can be encouraged to express, hold up and exchange their opinion under an atmosphere of open debate. Although the answers to the initial question have been diverse, it has been possible to establish a classification according to three categories that we considered the most relevant: the *gnoseologic* (science related with knowledge), the *pragmatic* (science related to its uses) and the *ethical* aspects of science. Thus, the answers that mentioned words or phrases such as “to increase knowledge” or “to better understand what surrounds us” were defined as *gnoseologic*; others such as “to improve the quality of our lives”, “to cure” or “to solve problems” were grouped as *pragmatic*; and finally, responses such as “Science for the benefit of a few?” were included under the ethical category. Whereas the great majority of the participants

(between 50-60%) mention the so-called pragmatic aspect in their answers, only a few of them (5-10%) refer to ethical aspects in relation to scientific practice. However, and not surprisingly, after showing a selection of movie fragments and advertisements related to different views about science (*contextualization* process), more than 65% of the audience chose the statements related to the *ethical* aspects of science and technology over the other statements that referred to either *gnoseologic* or *pragmatic* features of science.

Finally, the results of the different experiments are enriched by their presentation in different ambits of discussion such as conferences, meetings and forums related to science education, research and science communication. For instance, we have been invited to participate in the Social Forum for Education in Catalunya, taking place in Barcelona on February 26th and in the 9th Meeting of the Latin-American Science Popularization Network, taking place in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) on April. Moreover, these data are intended to be presented at different society meetings attended by so diverse publics and approaches such as historians, philosophers and sociologists of science at the IHPST (International History, Philosophy and science teaching group) meeting in the UK, science educators at European Science Education Research Association meeting in Barcelona and science communicators at the PSCT (International Network on Public Communication of Science and Technology) symposium in Beijing.

3. Take a look!

This project comes up to provide different ways of communicating science and technology issues in a written format. In most cases, science and technology matters are communicated by the media without taking into account their social context, and what is worse, they are generally presented from a dominant and not critical perspective. Accordingly, Dynamón Project has created *Take a look!*: a three-monthly electronic newsletter with a central topic that is tackled from different viewpoints and different levels of analysis.

The contents of this hypertext will take so different approaches such as humor, theoretical frameworks, practical implications and a critical

- 1- Can life be patented?
- 2- Could science end with the world's hunger?
- 3- Who should regulate the access to medicaments?
- 4- Could we one day prevent natural catastrophes?

To deal with each subject, we intend to contact different people and organizations that could contribute to cover some aspect of the chosen topic. For instance, in the first number of the newsletter we have obtained the involvement of comic makers, writers, journalists, lawyers, scientists and even philosophers interested in dealing with the different aspects of patenting plant active principles, genes, genomes and even species.

4. Dynamón Science and Art

Finally, this initiative proposes the search of a different connection between science and art. By exploring the historical relationship between these two apparently irreconcilable universes, we intend to incorporate the emotional richness of the arts in order to achieve one of the main goals of Dynamón Project: an holistic vision of science. In this way, by using artistic elements we can:

- Contribute to integrate science and technology as ingredients of our culture.
- Widen our comprehension of scientific concepts by integrating different learning experiences that involve our five senses and not only rationality.
- Favour the creative exploration in a multidisciplinary context in order to develop curiosity and team work oriented to problem-solving.

Our proposal intends to create links among the different arts and sciences through activities such as drama workshops, scientific narrative contests, seasons of science films, art exhibitions and even musical interpretations of a scientific phenomenon. In this regard, we are now organizing an event that will include the presentation of a film "THE DALÍ DIMENSION" that retraces Salvador Dalí's obsession for science, followed by a round table and a debate in the context of scientific meetings. THE DALÍ DIMENSION reveals a completely unknown aspect of one of the most important figures of the 20th Century, and gives new insight to interpret some of Dalí's masterpieces. Thus, the exhibition of this documentary film is an excellent opportunity to discuss the tremendous impact that science issues -from psychoanalysis to quantum mechanics, and from mathematics to genetics- may produce in our societies, as revealed by the work of this eccentric painter.

(See: <http://www.dalidimension.com/eng/index.html>)

Message 11: Author Rodney Lunduka

I feel that these scholarships could be a good idea to be introduced in the university. They would help in a lot of areas such as providing resources for the student and also hands on experience as the students are conducting the developmental research.

However I think with the type of students that we have now in the colleges it will be asking impossible things for them to write project proposals in second year. I have looked at proposals of students in third year and even the projects in fourth year.....the students may not be well matured to write proposals.

I think these proposals should be written by the staff (lecturers) most of whom now have undergone very good courses in proposal writing and have the skills I am sure. These could be bigger proposals which could attract larger funding for some years. When these proposals get the funding then the students could be asked to write simple proposals at their level (to make sure that they develop the proposal writing skills) and these proposals be evaluated by the lecturers within other than outside. Then the students go ahead to conduct the research based on what they have proposed. There proposals will have to be in line with the themes written by the lectures.

With that, a single project, with funding can incorporate several students' concentration on several issues.

Let me stop there for the time being

Later

Rodney

Rodney Lunduka

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Message 12: Author Rodney Lunduka

Organization and management of the scholarships

In my first contribution I strongly felt that the project proposals should not be written by student's coz they do not have any experience and the caliber of students we have now it will be mission impossible to train them in first year. They will need more than proposal writing skills.

On the management of the projects I think Bunda now has a well developed and agreed structure on conducting research. It will not be necessary to create another structure. This structure (which I developed with Kalimbira, Prof Phoya, Dr Likongwe and Prof Msuku) was discussed and approved by Bunda staff. I would have posted it here for every one to see but I don't know whether it is officially out. Here can only release it with permission from Bunda.

In this structure of managing research projects CARD (Center for Agricultural Research and Development) is given the mandate as implementing body with Programmes Office (headed by Prof James Banda) as a wing sourcing financial resources. APRU is supposed to report to the Dean of Postgraduate and Research. CARD can is supposed to work with all staff from all the departments on the college. If any staff has a project he can be the programme manager of that project under CARD and call it what ever the project is e.g. APRU is a unit under CARD responsible for research in economic policy. While APATU is responsible for training.

The other good thing about this structure is that it has what we called TAC (Technical Advisory Committee) which had membership from donors, government, NGOs and private sector. This was done to ensure that all stake holders are involved in the activities and research at Bunda.

Hence with such a comprehensive structure I don't see a need for another committee with government staff who are in most cases busy and may not be available always.

Let me stop there.

However I would have loved to have feed back to such comments.

Rodney

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Message 12: Message from Coordinator

To all Participants,

We have seen a slow participation last week after the opening of the conference. It is our aim that this conference should be as highly participated as possible.

The participants are expected to post their views by replying to bundaalumni@yahoo.co.uk email. If we have any problems with the technical issues of the conference let us know.

What is my duty as participants of this e-conference?

1. Criticize the issues being raised on this conference.
2. Comment on issues being raised on this conference.
3. Contribute your views on the topic of the conference.
4. Agree or disagree on the views posted on this conference.

Participants are free to comment on any message posted to this conference.

Let us be free and participate.

Coordinator,

Hastings Zidana
National Taiwan Ocean University
202, Keelung.
Taiwan.

Message 13: Author Davie Mkwambisi

The Conference participants,

I would like to comment on a recent posting by Mr. Rodney Lunduka, writing from Norway on the current issue. Mr. Lunduka indicated that the scholarships could be a good idea to be introduced in the university as they would help in a lot of areas such as providing resources for the student and also hands on experience as the students are conducting the developmental research. However Mr. Lunduka feels that the type of students that we have now in the colleges it will be asking impossible things for them to write project proposals in second year. Him as a lecturer at the University of Malawi has looked at proposals of students in third year and even the projects in fourth year and thinks that the students may not be well matured to write proposals.

I would like to find out from Mr. Lunduka, why is it that current undergraduate student are having problems with their research proposals? What type of supervisory assistance do they get from their research support group? How is the research proposal initiated?

Some of the questions above could be directly related to our syllabus (sp). The Malawi curricula encourage students to undergo classroom examinations as the main assessment criteria. In Western Universities, the exams are mainly essay type which gives students the experience to identify a research problem, cover literature review and be able to argue scientifically even in their early university years. Probably it is this type of assessment that can stimulate research proposal writing.

The other thing comes from individual will to come up with a research topic. Students are even failing to identify a research area. Currently Malawi has so many areas which require our scientific knowledge and understanding, but most of these (which can be potentially sponsored) are still virgin land waiting to be tapped. We have noted in dismay how people come all the way from USA, Canada to undertake a research in Malawi that could have been undertaken by a student at Chanco or Mzuni. For example problems of urbanisation, a new but big problem in Malawi might not receive critical attention within the students body. It is the lectures who are supposed to bring these ideas to the students.

[It might be ideal to take research and scientific research writing as one of the basic subjects from year one.](#)

Research proposal writing can be presented to undergraduate students as international seminars or workshops. The Universities can establish these skill imparting departments for extra curriculum activities.

But while undergraduate students might not have enough time for these poverty related projects, students should be identified in year 4 and selected for research scholarships. We have this programme running in our colleges, may we need to expand to other departments. The networking of research projects among the students might also be a viable option. For example if students wants to assess the impact of urbanisation on regional health systems, three students (one from Bunda, then Mzuni and Poly) can work together in formulating the proposal, data collection and differ in choice of specific objectives. Ladies and gentlemen, thanks let me seat down. I was here.
(Clapping hands and background voices)

Leeds University
School of Earth and Environment

Message 14: Author Davie Mkwambisi

Mr. Chairman Sir, let me also comment what Mr. Lunduka has just posted. This is great work and we're also aware of other good projects initiated at Bunda College, I had the opportunity to meet Prof. James Banda and the VP, they are making sure the college is spinning together with the rest of the world.

My question will be to know how can we utilize this CARD on a national level considering that the conference is tackling a national issue?

Thanks very much

Leeds University
School of Earth and Environment

Message 15: Author Henry Nyekanyeka

IT IS REALLY GOOD TO INTRODUCE SCHOLARSHIPS TO MALAWIAN STUENTS.IN MALAWI WE ONLY HAVE ONE SCHOLARSHP WHICH IS PROVIDED BY THE GOVERNMET OF MALAWI AND TO UNIVERSITY OF

MALAWI COLLEGES.THE SCHOLARSHIPS FALL ON THE CONDITION THAT ONE HAS TO SCORE WITH SIX CREDITS ON HIS/HER M.S.C.E.

UNIMA HAS GOT A FEW INTAKE OF APPROXIMATELY 900 STUDENTS EACH YEAR.THIS MEANS THAT A LOT OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE/HAVEN'T MET THE CRITERIA OF SCHOLASHIP FELL TO ATTEND THE MALAWI UNIVERSTIES.

IF WE SAY WE HAVE TO INTRODUCE A NEW SCHLARSHIP W MUST FIND A NEW WAY OF INTAKE,THUS WE MUST NOT FOLLW WHAT UNIMA IS DOING.MANY COLLEGES HAVE FOLLOWED UNIMA CRITERIA i.e MZUZU UNIVERSITY,COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES.THESE SCHOLASHIPS HAVE TO APPLY TO ALL COLLEGES IN MALAWI(EXCEPT UNIMA)AND OTHER SADC COUNTRIES.

Message 16: Author Mathews Nyirenda

Rodney,

I totally agree with you that the lecturers should be assisting the students by writing proposals for the students and if anything this has been happening (with or without) the knowledge of the students at times to the benefit of the lecturer and student as well. What boggles my mind however if what you are saying is entirely correct (that most students in all classes) are not able to write what I would call a convincing proposal, why nothing is done to sharpen or even hone those skills to write such proposals. Why should one leave college and if lucky undergo some training in proposal writing so as to be able to secure funding for any type of proposal. My suggestion is why the curriculum can't accommodate proposal writing as one area that has to be covered, how early or how late in the academic year that can be decided. Honestly there are some students (few I suppose), regardless of the year they are/were in who can write and who have written very convincing proposals that have attracted funding. Let the colleges try to 'hasten' maturity into these students by sharpening their knowledge and skills in proposal writing rather than wait for them to leave college and then learn how to do it because not all of them will have that chance and that means even the old bones will not 'mature' so as to be able to write proposals and you know what that means, no projects.

Ndambe ndayima Kaye.

Matthews Nyirenda
Programme Assistant (Reports)
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Lilongwe 3.
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Message 17: Author Rodney Lunduka

Mathews,

Currently there is only one course Research Methods (think) which deals with writing proposals and not all students from all departments take this course. It's also given in third year and that gives students less time to practice. But as David has proposed a change in curriculum would help.

Rodney

Rodney Lunduka
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Department of Economics and Resource Management,
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NORWAY.

Message 18: Author Rodney Lunduka

Mr. Chairman Sir,

Mr. Mkwambisi has asked about CARD. Well if all what was agreed about CARD is to be implemented CARD will be a National or even an international Research center. CARD incorporates stakeholders from NGO, private sector, government and donor community (development partners) these will help to bring in issues from outside Bunda and take policy recommendations from CARD. In cases of outreach which is another side that we (Bunda) has not done much these will help link CARD

to areas where outreach can be done e.g. an NGO working in Dedza can use Bunda students to disseminate information on some technology developed at Bunda.

Tiime mpompa kaye Sir,

Rodney

Rodney

Rodney Lunduka

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Message 19: Author Rodney Lunduka

Conference Participants,

Allow me Mr. Moderator to respond to some of the questions raised by Mr. David Mkwambisi.

David Mkwambisi <davie_mkwambisi@yahoo.co.uk> wrote:

I would like to find out from Mr. Lunduka,

- a) Why is it that current undergraduate student are having problems with their research proposals?
- b) What type of supervisory assistance do they get from their research support group?
- c) How is the research proposal initiated?

Mr. Mkwambisi and all participants,

- a) The current crop of students that we are having in the University of Malawi has an inherent problem in writing skills and let alone conceptualizing. [The introduction of multiple choice exams in secondary school has eroded away the creativity in writing and thinking \(I guess this might have been discussed already on this forum\).](#) I have several times discussed with some of the language lectures at Bunda and have

complained that a lot is desired in these students. However it does not mean that the students are help less and condemned. Most of them are trainable and do improve as they move up from first year. Hence with such poor background it's not easy to ask them to write proposals in second year for outside funding. [It is a good idea to train them in proposal writing even from first year.](#) As you have already said may be a revision of the syllabus to include that in early stage would help.

b) Supervision for the student's project currently done by the Lecturers in various departments. I have not yet seen any guiding principles on how supervision should be done. What I know is that students can propose project topics (which are rare) or lecturers will flash out topics from which the students pick. I had the privilege of overseeing student's projects in my department. I personally felt that the students will need a lot of guidance and I used to teach them proposal writing (from project concept to full proposal) and also report writing. (Mr. Mkwambisi you have helped us on this one). But this is done in third year. May be could be done in first or second year.

c) As I have indicated above few students initiate projects ideas. Most times they are given by staff members.

Other things that need to be done to encourage students to write and conceptualize is to develop the reading culture. I know some time back netters complained of long postingscould it be coz of a poor reading culture??) Reading will help the students to get new ideas. By the way Bunda now has access to more that a million on line journal report on line.....could even be better than most of the universities where we are. The question is, are we using this!!

Let me stop there Mr. Moderator Sir.

Rodney

Rodney Lunduka

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Message 20: Author Zuhur Yassin Ibrahim

Hello everyone

I have been sort of following the discussion, which I think is going on good. I am from the Horn of Africa, Somaliland in particular. I know you all must be thinking why I am in the discussion then, I am not a Malawian and I don't have any clue about what the Malawian people want right. I am here to see what Young people in Malawi want, to see/read the different points of views that people have in the world. Since this issue of scholarship affects many countries including Somaliland I wanted to see what kind of comments and resolutions you guys come up with and issue like that.

So keep the discussion on and alive and Best of luck to you all.

Bye

Zuhur

Message 21: Message from Coordinator

In response to Zuhur,

It's nice to have someone from the Somaliland, why can't you give us an example of what is happening in Somaliland after following the discussion.

There is an issue in this conference which is saying young students will not be able to tackle a development project proposal.

Is it the same in Somaliland?

At what level can you feel comfortable to introduce this technique to Somaliland students?

Hastings Zidana

Coordinator.

Message 22: Author Mathews Nyirenda

Rodney,

Thanks for the clarification and as Davie has suggested and indeed as I did suggest in one of my postings as well, there is need for a change of curriculum. I do not see the need why this course Research Methods should be taken by some students and not others as is the case and especially at an institution like Bunda. This definitely has to be a core course and [if these students are to meaningfully contribute to poverty reduction they have to have an idea of what poverty as defined in various contexts, Regions and countries is all about and how they as individuals in their chosen field of specialty can assist the country, region, or indeed the whole world in reducing poverty because I feel this does not ring a bell in some students.](#) This notion of pass the exam and forget is what is contributing to all this.

I also wanted to find out how flexible University colleges are in reviewing the curriculum for the different courses and what factors do they look at in changing the curriculum or if indeed they pay attention to the employer or its graduates or the ever-changing political, socioeconomic environment, globalization, regional integration etc. How flexible has Bunda been in particular in reviewing and indeed changing the curriculum or delivery of its academic programmes to be in tandem with such changes? How long has it taken to change the curriculum for example and what has been the interval between each change? I also agree with Davie that we do have students who are trainable and if they can gain the knowledge and skills to write proposals right from first year that could help. [Also this idea by another contributor of linking students from the various tertiary institutions within our universities in coming up with joint proposals with each student concentrating in a particular area is great.](#) Individualism among students from different colleges or indeed within the same seems to be the ethic of life these days and this is having a detrimental effect on development in general. Why cant tertiary institutions strengthen linkages and help the students come up with or promote synergic proposals that can contribute to the Development of this country. Not only should it be donors and the academic Community but government and NGOs should play a role.

Rodney, you talked about the reading culture being on the decline, you are right but not with me, I go through even the longest posting because I know in that way I learn more.

Good day.

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Message 23: Author Davie Mkwambisi

Session Coordinators, Ladies and gentlemen,

In response to guiding questions as posted by the session coordinators, these are my views and contributions:

I support the proposal of introducing the scholarships in the tertiary level of education. Universities and other colleges both government, religious and commercial should be part of this initiative in Malawi. This will be one of integrating academic activities at national level. Students should be given the opportunity to initially choose their area of interest in their second year of education and develop that area with assistance from their supervisors or peer groups. If students can not initiate their own proposals, the faculty or department should have a committee to discuss research areas to be undertaken in that specific academic year. This will be in line with government policies, changes in social, economic and environmental areas, pressure from donors and other important areas such as HIV/AIDS. These faculty research areas should be discussed at University (constituent level) then finally at National level (all Universities). It is at this stage that the think tank can identify topics. This can reduce the repetition of work currently being observed with the Universities. Students in their second year will start developing their research proposal by identifying objectives and justification of their projects. We will not expect a high class project at this level. This will be the base and backbone of a research society. Such projects will be completed in their fourth year without funding from any agency.

Only projects that have shown the capacity to divert labor from agriculture solve environmental problems, creation of employment, and reduction of disease incidences should be approved at faculty and university level for submission to a Scholarship body. Those students short listed for this submission should now be given proper research proposal writing during their break period (two months may be). This will generate internationally accepted proposals which can not only be sent to the national body but as well as to international agencies both in Malawi and abroad. These

students should be admitted for a Masters programme either in research, art, science or development. If possible they can even be admitted straight into a PhD level. The scheme can even support Malawians who are not in the University but have a viable research proposal

I propose that Press Trust which is a charity organization in Malawi should be approached for this scheme. They have money which has been used for donations in millions, that money can be effectively used for this project. Another institution that can be approached is MASAF. They have very good projects that are implemented without proper research and need assessment; this project can help both MASAF and the country. These two institutions, can devise ways of establishing a national scholarship agency. It might be ideal to involve various experts to run and scrutinize the proposals. We can also approach most of the donors currently working in Malawi and interested with education. British Council, USAID, GTZ, NORAD, even UNICEF can be interested to support this scheme. What about USAID scholarship for Rural Bee Keeping? UNICEF scholarship for Gender Programmes? Norad Award for technical Programmes. Approach TEVETA and expand their programme. These organizations will be more than happy since international scholarships are damn expensive.

The best starting point will be the VP of Bunda to introduce this issue at Bunda college HODs (Malume) meeting. From here let the issue be taken to University level, then a link with other Universities and Colleges.

The amount of scholarship can be subjected to period of research, number of stakeholders, area of research, site of research and expected output. Most institutions now are giving a minimum of \$10000.00 for a ten month research. IDRC in Canada allocate CDN\$20, 0000.00 for the same period. This can be our future debate.

I can list several advantages of this scheme, but may be I should stop here. Thanks very much ladies and Gentlemen. I was here

Message 24: Author Rodney Lunduka

Coordinators Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr. Mkwambisi has started the ball rolling with brilliant ideas setting up a model of the gigantic scholarship programme for Malawi.

Before I go on I would like to have some clarification on some issues mainly

a) The type of projects we are talking about here.

- 1) Are they developmental project like the ones being carried out by MASAF (roads, bridges, school blocks...etc),
- 2) Or do we want research project development of technologies
- 3) Or out of reach or kind of projects where technologies are disseminated and evaluated

b) When do we want the students to have these projects?

- 1) After they finish first degrees (to be used for MSC or PhD)
- 2) During the undergraduate

I hope Mr. Mkwambisi will be able to respond to these from the mother land.

To respond to what he had written I agree with most of the things that he has proposed. [However I think including all the colleges and universities in Malawi at one discussion table will demand a lot of resources and willingness which I think may not be there before people see the fruits of such a programme.](#) I think Bunda can start and if it works it can be extended to the other colleges and universities.

Mr. Coordinator let me stop here and wait for responses on the above questions. I hope to have reactions from members all over Bradford, Japan and all over UK.

Rodney

Message 25: Author Davie Mkwambisi

Ladies and gentlemen

Before I leave the conference room later this morning, let me stand to respond to Mr. Lunduka. First, I would like to thank Rodney for putting up such a spirit in motivating the rest of the conference participants. To come to your questions let me say that we should not go into the current MASAF type of programmes. These solve very short poverty levels. However, a research can be undertaken to assess or evaluate such projects for better policy change or implementation.

[I think we need to target research proposals that can build on new technologies and ideas for a strong research society.](#) This will give us chance to move away from

visiting Mkwinda and Chiseka all the time. It will even promote creation of new extension methods.

I totally agree with Rodney that we should start with Bunda initiating the programme. After all this is home. Wishing you all participants a lively and creative debate.

By the way Mr. Rodney, we will need a third year student from your department to work on a waste management project in Blantyre. This has been sponsored by British High Commission. First trip is on Wednesday to Blantyre. Give me contacts if possible before Sunday evening.

Leeds University
School of Earth and Environment

Message 26: Author Greenwell Matchaya

Conference questions:

1. Is it important to introduce University and college research scholarship in Malawi? Whatever the reasons, please defend your response.

It is very important to introduce college research scholarship at University or college level in Malawi. If we want to change the household labour from agriculture to manufacturing, we need appropriate technologies which are going to be used in manufacturing industries.

My take

Clearly, the answer to the question above is a big yes of course conditional on that we can afford to source funding for such ambitious plans for a sustained longer period of time.

I do not though agree totally with the extension of one statement above which seems to call for an anti agricultural type of development policy which I would call an import substitution industrial type of policy. The reasons are quite obvious stretching from the failure of such policies soon after independence and the interlinkages that theoretically exist between agriculture and other sectors e.g. the manufacturing and service sectors. Whether we introduce the research scholarships at tertiary level, we should bear in mind that a sustainable development policy should recognize that

agriculture and the other sectors are highly complementary and that at present agriculture mothers our economy. With respect to that, research should, while trying to dig new avenues of thought about possible ways of substituting agric, try to also crave to get new methods of making agric even more reliable.

2. If the response to question number 1 is negative, what are your views on the possible strategies to involve university and college students in national development?

3. If your response was yes to question number 1, who should run this scheme? Do we need to have a committee on this? Should this committee include other stakeholders outside the University? If yes do you have names of people in mind that you can suggest for this committee?

The question is do we need a scheme? You have already answered that one...as yes. I also say yes. We might think of having a National Research council, whose main goal will be to facilitate in national efforts to secure funding for research from within Malawi and even outside Malawi. This council may then have to have strong links to the high learning institutions of Malawi. We might think of research money as being fungible...that is having a capacity of being misallocated. The research council will set some rules and regulations on how they will expect research money to be used once disbursed to universities. At the university level, student whether undergraduate or postgraduates, will be expected to crack their brains to hatch topics of enquiry in their fields where they will be expected to produce proposals with the aid of their supervisors among others. These may then be submitted to the research council or any body at the university level before the research council ready for funding depending on standard and the implied importance of the expected research products.

We need an independent body which can be looking at this scholarship scheme, and staff from different colleges, Universities, NGO and government can be represented in this body.

That is quite true as this will add credibility to the research council which is crucial if funding is to be solicited from out side our reserves.

4. When should the scholarship be introduced?

The scholarship should be introduced as early as the second year of a student at the institution. During the first year the students should be taught how to write development projects and in the second year of their study the student should be able to write a development project and send it for assessment.

5. What should be the amount of this scholarship?

The amount should depend on what the student would like to achieve, there should be no ceiling on the amount of development project.

This will encourage moral hazard problems and issues of adverse selection will arise. There will be need for the council to have an upper ceiling on the amount of money a particular project would fetch. This will ensure that people work with time and the budget constraint in mind. This will also in part strengthen research potentials of students. They will know how to make much out of less. In real world people work with a budget that is finite so why train a research to think in a manner that assumed an infinite budget?

6. For how long should a beneficiary use the scholarship?

The beneficiary should use the scholarship as long as he is involved in the project. This will depend on the duration of the project.

Again, the above statement should be qualified by..For as long as it is jointly felt that the project should go on lest some students would not give up a project even if its marginal returns with respect to time are miserably dwindling. This can be done in a bid to simply get a source of living...but it is a clear misallocation of resources. That money would have gone elsewhere and gain a higher rate of interest.

7. What are the key development areas that have to be targeted as a priority?

Manufacturing goods from the raw materials produced from Malawi natural resources should be a priority e.g. manufacturing of cloth from cotton.

My Take

And strengthening our potential as producers (not exporters) of agro materials which we will basically need in manufacturing and some of them will be exported (in the early stages) to get forex which will be crucial for importing machinery for industrial development. Research should also be strengthened in the energy sector with a goal to discover rare earth and other high value materials. This is important as these have been known to have higher rates of returns! Obvious

8. What would be the possible sources of funds for this scheme?

Any donor who is interested with the development of Malawi country should be targeted for the scheme.

My take

As well as our national savings.

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Message 27: Author Hardwick Tchale

Greenwell,

Nice contributions. But I have one question for you. We already have a National Research Council? How do we reconcile its functions, which are obviously much broader, with the one you are proposing?

Nice weekend

Message 28: Author Michael Mmangisa

The Vice Principal of the most prestigious college (Bunda), the Coordinators and the whole alumni fraternity,

I would like to support the idea of introducing scholarships to support research among undergraduates in the universities and colleges in Malawi. This will promote creativity among the students themselves as well as hard working spirit. I will come to these points later on but I would like to put forward my fears at the onset.

For this innovation to work, there is need for a lot of support from the teaching staff. It has already been stated by other contributors that the concept development, proposal writing and even analysis of most of the projects being undertaken by students in the colleges leaves a lot to be desired. I would propose starting drilling these undergraduates at an early stage on these skills. This can be done by either introducing specific course(s) that can drill the students in these areas or attaching

them to staff members who should support them and assist them in developing the concept.

The other option would be to allocate grades to these projects as is done in MSc and PhD. Reading through some of the project reports one tends to wonder whether they were indeed marked or not. And this gives students a laissez-faire attitude. Some students do not understand even how they analyzed their own data and how to interpret it. So there is need even to involve external examiners sometimes so that the students should be challenged enough during their defense. These examiners might not need to come from universities outside Malawi but even subject matter specialists within the country.

Having put down my fears, I would like to state that once the projects proposals have been submitted, they have to be screened for what would be their contributions to development. I believe we really need to come up with concepts that aim at an innovation or poverty reduction. Some of the projects are purely academic and do not seem to assist in any way towards national development.

The other area that might need to be navigated is establishing links on the use of the project results. It will be a failure to expect the university to be involved in the implementation of these projects. It would be therefore necessary to attract attention of certain NGOs and government departments in concept formulation so that they should be in a position to utilize the research recommendations in initiating a project and develop it further. Therefore, it will be necessary to sell this concept to these partners at the onset.

The Vice Principal, Conference Coordinators, The Alumni fraternity, this is my first contribution to this second objective. I promise to continue in due course.

Michael Mmangisa
Universität Hannover
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Message 29: Author Greenwell Matchaya

Hi Tchale,

It is good to hear that we already have such a facility in the country. I really did not know it, does it function well?

Anyway, one possible way of proceeding is to have a body as I suggested but under a different name, and since the latter will have a less broader sphere, we cannot be accused of trying to reinvent a wheel. Besides such a body focused greatly on research in universities and colleges might even turn to be effective than the preexisting broader one. Could someone suggest a name for such a scheme? Or what do others say?

Good weekend

Greenwell

Leeds University Business School

Message 30: Author Rodney Lunduka

Greenwell,

I liked your ideas and agree with most of them. [But look a structure like the Research Council NRCM will be too big and difficult to start with. There will be a lot of bureaucratic issues to address which will even demand involvement of top government officials. I strongly feel starting small and growing is a good idea.](#)

[At Bunda we have Center for Agricultural Research and Development CARD. This was started in 1980s but has only become functional \(partly\) in the late 90s. However it is a very good player where such an idea of research scholarships would start. Currently CARD has link with what is called Programmes office at Bunda \(used to be called NORAD office\) whose mandate is to look for financial resources within and outside Malawi for research and development of Bunda. With such set up it could be possible to monitor it and then sale the idea to the university office and then other universities. This one will still remain and a branch of the main body such as what](#)

you are proposing (Research council). It will not be easy to have money transferred from national body straight to a Lecturer or student for a project.

So again I come proposing the restructured CARD and the Programmes Office as a starting point then move to the national level. With this we can even have trail projects within a year.

I rest

Rodney

Message 31: Author Greenwell Matchaya

Rodney,

Your contribution is educative too! Now if we are to factor in the APRU structure I would say it is an elegant consideration but surely we may have to think of ways of enhancing its performance. I almost left Bunda without appreciating the roles of APRU.

Good night and say hi to Ragnar Oygard and if possible Stein Holden

Greenwell

Message 31: Author Michael Mmangisa

Colleagues,

Just to indicate that the structure we are proposing is or should be quite different from the National Research Council NRCM. The council can act as a member or an advisor to this committee. However, these research projects, much as they will be expected to bring realistic results; they are a training ground for the students.

If a structure like CARD is to assume this responsibility then it should be able to accommodate specialists in other fields like nutrition, animal science just to mention a few.

Thank you once again for allowing me to contribute once more.

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Message 32: Author Rodney Lunduka

I think I should explain what CARD is. It is the Center of AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH and development. It is headed by a Director. Under it there are units. These units can be responsible for any kind of research related to agriculture. These could be nutrition, animal science, integrated pest management, etc. Currently there are only two units in operation. These are APRU (Agricultural Policy Research UNIT!!!) and APATU. (Agricultural Policy Analysis and Training UNIT!!!). It's just that staff from other departments including mine NRM have not taken advantage of this and formed units in which they could conduct their research.

[So I think a unit to deal with student's research or several units based on some kind of thematic areas could be used for the student's scholarships.](#)

Does this answer your fears Mike??

Nditelo

Rodney

Message 33: Author Dr Augustine Musopole

Coordinators and all participants,

I am Rev. Augustine Musopole, and I hold a PhD in theology. I am currently teaching at Chang Jung Christian University, in Taiwan. I was previously General Secretary of

the Malawi Council of Churches. I am deeply interested in the development of Malawi and hence in this conference.

Allow me to join in this interesting E-Conference discussion on University Scholarships in Poverty Reduction in Malawi. It is true that raising education levels is one way of mitigating against poverty, but higher education has a very critical role to play in the long run.

Before we talk about scholarships, it will be important to critically examine higher education in general. [Higher education in Malawi is stagnant at the undergraduate level which was a critical requirement of the 1970s. We needed that level of people in administration, teaching, and management.](#) However, for development purposes, we needed more people on post-graduate level. Unfortunately, post-graduate education was considered to be a luxury meant for a few. [My view is that post-graduate is very critical for development in terms of intellectual capacity, knowledge, and planning.](#) The University of Malawi and its constituent colleges have been too slow to move into this area and as a result they are holding development behind.

[What is needed for maximum impact is having a critical mass of graduates with higher degrees who can pursue research projects that can contribute to poverty reduction.](#) I am, therefore, in agreement with Schon that what is being proposed by this conference can only be accomplished at the post-graduate level and not undergraduate level. This is the level where students would have mastered the skills of proposal writing, identifying areas of need, and having an intellectual acumen to work at real problems. [Our secondary school education does not prepare the student adequately to overcome major intellectual weakness within two years of university exposure.](#) We are too much oriented towards factual examinations instead of intellectual skills development in our education at the secondary level. Such an orientation cannot assist in intellectual poverty reduction, and let alone economic poverty. We need a problem identification and problem solving approach to our education.

We need scholarships at the masters and doctoral levels that would have a marked impact on poverty reduction. A few PhDs would not do. Those with doctorates would have to work with those with masters in such projects while the undergraduate assists. [We need a critical mass of post-graduates in order to create an impact in the long run.](#) We need to create a research-oriented culture spearheaded by those who have post-graduate degrees that can spread to the rural population. [Therefore, scholarship](#)

aimed at undergraduate level would not bring about the desired results. The University of Malawi and its constituent colleges need to move fast in advancing post-graduate education for as many as possible if higher education is going to contribute to poverty reduction. All ministries need many more people who have post-graduate education. Our planners should not be people who are operating with undergraduate knowledge simply because they have risen up the ladder over time. It is also not enough to have token post-graduates, that is, just a few who cannot create an impact or while the rest are mediocre in their understanding and knowledge. Thanks for listening.

Message 34: SUMMARY REPORT OF THE SECOND WEEK

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE SECOND WEEK OF THE E-CONFERENCE ON THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS IN POVERTY REDUCTION EFFORTS IN MALAWI

The second week of the e-conference, unlike the first week, was well patronized with meaningful discussions albeit the technical problems in contributors mostly using the buncoalumni@yahoo.co.uk email instead of using the bundaalumni@yahoo.co.uk email which has been designated for the e-conference. The session coordinators and the Buncoalumni Coordinator did a commendable job in getting all the messages posted to the rightful forum.

The second week had the following objective:

to identify how the obstacles and challenges faced by different stakeholders in designing and implementing poverty reduction strategies in Malawi can be dealt with.

Specific questions asked were:

Who needs to be involved in the design stage? How would they be involved and why?

What about the implementation stage-who needs to be involved and why?

How can university students be part of the solution?

Should the students be involved at the design or at the implementation stage?

Should the research scholarships involve undergraduates, just Postgraduates or both groups of students?

Summary of Contributions

The following is the session coordinators' summary of the contributions made during the second week of the e-conference:

Summary to the question 'who needs to be involved?'

There is a general consensus that university research scholarships can contribute substantially towards Malawi's development and poverty reduction efforts, especially in the long-run, but different views emerge regarding the university degree level at which the scholarships have to be introduced.

Those holding the supportive view of introducing scholarships at the post-graduate level contend that postgraduate level is very critical for development in terms of intellectual capacity, knowledge, and planning. [They feel that Malawian Universities have been too slow to exploit the postgraduate research capacity and hence holding back development and poverty reduction efforts in Malawi.](#) They hence think that if the research projects are to have maximum impact, doctorates and post-graduates have to work in such projects and incorporate as much as possible undergraduate students as assistants so as to build their capacity.

Another related issue in the discussions was with regard to the scope of the project. [While most contributors were of the view that such a project has to include all institutions of higher learning in Malawi, some thought that it may have to start small,](#) with students from Bunda College, and depending on the performance of such a pilot undertaking, the scope may be scaled-up to include other colleges within the UNIMA as well as other Universities in Malawi.

Those supporting the introduction of the research scholarships at the undergraduate level argue that most students do not have the chance to do postgraduate research and so they still have to be equipped for their substantial contribution to poverty reduction efforts even with a first degree.

A consensus is emerging on the need to have a body (lower in scope than the National Research Council of Malawi NRCM) comprising representatives of the Universities and higher educational institutions, industry representatives, government officials and NGO's in Malawi. This body could be responsible for coordinating and vetting the relevance of the research projects towards poverty reduction efforts. But the universities themselves will have to provide the role of vetting the technical aspects of the research projects. What needs to be agreed upon is the exact structure of the body to coordinate such student research projects.

The research projects should be promoting both reliance on own national savings or own 'sweat' and reduce dependency on donors for support both in financing of the research projects as well as in the sustainability of the poverty reduction efforts; the projects should promote projects that move towards value adding especially on the country's abundant agricultural resources while also trying to explore other new avenues of development like mining and tourism

Contributions seem to indicate that students as beneficiaries are important and their views need to be taken on board in the design and implementation role in the research projects. This underscores the importance of this e-conference, which provides an opportunity for the views of all stakeholders, including students, to be discussed and used to prepare a position paper on the role that University Scholarships can contribute to the Poverty Alleviation Policy.

This discussion has also opened up ideas on the need for a critical assessment of the relevance of higher education systems in meeting the aspirations contained in Malawi's development agenda. In line with this, people have voiced concerns regarding the need for curricula reviews so that the current higher education systems are able to live up to societies' expectations. Our view as session coordinators is that this is a much broader issue although it ultimately has a lot to bear on the performance of the project we are discussing.

What we have summarized are only the major issues that transpired, but all other contributions have been appended below to ensure that each is given due n consideration in preparing the final position paper.

Dear All,

This is not a final document of the conference; comments can be made on this document as well.

Coordinators

Message 35: Message from the coordinators Third Week of the Conference

Dear All Participants,

Welcome to the third week of the e-conference, below is the third week presentation by Prof Felix Mnthali of the University of Bostwana.

Ladies and gentlemen, here is Prof Mnthali.

Coordinators,

Message 36: Presentation of Third Week of the Conference by Prof Felix Mnthali

The Role of University Scholarships in Poverty Reduction in Malawi

Mr. Chairman, Vice-Principal of Bunda College of Agriculture, Conference Organizers, Distinguished Participants,

I feel honored by your invitation to participate in this conference. This gathering in cyberspace is yet one more proof, if one was ever needed, that we Malawians are an enterprising and innovative people. We walk into the twenty-first century as if we had always been there. [The young among us are a particularly enterprising lot.](#) Given the opportunity they will take us as far as anyone will ever go. For example, we now take *Nyasanet* for granted. Few will admit that *Nyasanet* was one of the very earliest world-wide discussion forums in the world. It has brought us all within reading distance of each other and in so doing has

made it easier for us to exchange ideas. In this particular conference we owe our presence here to the alumni of Bunda College of Agriculture.

It was in 1970 that as Provost of the University of Malawi. I once visited Bunda College of Agriculture. My mission was to facilitate the formation of the University of Malawi Students Union. Even at that time we believed that students had a role to play in poverty reduction. Our discourse then might have taken a different hue from how things are referred to nowadays but the aim was similar to what we are trying to pursue in this gathering. The whole structure of the University of Malawi at the time was premised on the understanding that tertiary education was to play a role in poverty reduction. Ours was among the first universities in the world to offer in the same system degree and pre- and non-degree programmes. The economy of Malawi called for such a structure. As it so happens, graduates and diploma holders from that era have gone on to do wonders in the world, but that is another story.

Allow me to dwell on two or three of the conference guidelines. I will leave the rest of the guidelines to participants closer to ground zero in space and time. First, yes, it is important to introduce university and college research scholarships in Malawi. There is a down-to-earth practical angle to all this. Tertiary education would be well on its way to combining learning with production. This in itself would be a milestone in our educational development and it would necessitate the transformation of curricula at all levels of learning. What students intend to do later in their lives would begin during the gestation of their career goals. During my time at Chancellor College undergraduates in the University of Malawi undertook research either as assistants to staff or in partial fulfillment of the requirements of their degrees. Research as such would not be new to them. What would be new is the idea of writing project proposals that could result in

commercial viability. I am not saying that all education should from now on be focused on utilitarian and /or commercial goals. What is required is a new mindset on the part of all of us. Our own pre-historic (or is it antediluvian?) education was for service. That I believe must remain the basic aim of all serious education. We are members and creatures of society or we are nothing. But now a new corollary to this basic aim has acquired a new urgency. It is the urgency of sheer survival. Survival in the twenty-first century requires a long hard look at our educational system. Mere service is no longer enough. Our service must contribute to our economic survival. This is where the importance of the topic before us becomes crucial. To encourage all undergraduates to take our national future seriously we must dip them into the stuff of development.

All areas of learning can contribute to poverty eradication provided that they are seen and used as such. For example, my own discipline is language and literature, communication and the arts. An undergraduate who writes a proposal that results in language and literature, communication and the arts leading to a viable project that leads to a sustainable activity providing jobs would be well on his/her way to contributing towards poverty reduction in our country much in the way that our singers and actors have in their own way contributed to poverty reduction. There is need for all our students to begin to look for ways in which what they are doing now can be built into something of greater value to themselves and to society. There are schools out there in the world where young children are made to practice how to write books. One can imagine what such pupils are able to come up with later on in their adult lives. I believe that by now you will see that I have already covered the first two points on the guidelines I was given.

I believe every school or college would be the first stage of vetting all projects. Thereafter a national scholarship assessment board made up of representatives of

all colleges and universities plus major industries would be the judges of the scholarships to be awarded. That already assumes that we have a viable scholarship fund. The time has come to establish such a fund with contributions from Malawians inside and outside the country as well as businesses and companies in Malawi or deriving their income from Malawi. Donors are mentioned in the guidelines. They should come in only after we ourselves have created a meaningful and viable fund. Here again it is time for us to change our mindset from abject dependence on donors to a determined and purposeful reliance on our own sweat.

Three years ago I was distressed to pass by a famous school that now looked like an abandoned building but where pupils in uniforms walked up and down as they went about their classes. Surely the headmaster and his school could have taken a weekend to spruce up the place. Surely the school board could have mobilized teachers and parents to do something about that school. Derelict buildings, grasses that swallow passers-by with their length, dirty and unkempt surroundings usually denote dependence and waiting, waiting for someone out there to do things for us that we could well do for ourselves. The scholarships we are talking about here should help erase that mentality of waiting for someone else to do things for us. They should inculcate a sense of responsibility in our students. We should not again be mere spectators in this century as we were in the last. Let us teach the young ones to do things for themselves and the strategies proposed by the organizers will be our first step on that road.

One again, I thank you for the honor you have given me in inviting me to participate in this important discussion.

Felix Mnthali,

*Professor of English,
University of Botswana*

March 1, 2005

Message 37: Author Henry Njoloma

The Principle of Bunda College, the E-conference Anchors, Members, Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Times have not been on my side due to academic pressure and hence haven't had a chance to deliberate on the first part of the conference. However I have been following the discussion with a keen interest and now I want to make a contribution.

Having agreed to all the positive inputs and suggestions by contributors, I want to make some additions. [The country needs to change the education curriculum not of Bunda College only but the entire education system in Malawi.](#) Our education system is planned in such a way that final exams make an almost entire significant in assessing ones ability and capabilities. If you are sick or you slept on the wrong side of the bed that day then you are NOT WORTHY! The system throws you out as being a useless student who has wasted his time! Those who never ever were good in the entire study year but somehow 'woke up well' on the exam day are then considered BEST! and [this has been further diluted by the introduction of the multiple choice exams as has already been highlighted by Mr. Lunduka and others!](#) My argument in this is that we need an educational system with a curriculum which will strengthen all intellectual capacities and can instill independent mature reasoning capacity at all levels of education in Malawi. Be it at kindergartens, primary, secondary and tertiary institutions.

When this is done, then we can now talk of encouraging direct funding of undergraduate scholarships to undertake projects so as to reduce poverty. [I will concur with Dr. Musopole and others who have admitted that at University undergraduate level students cannot maturely administer a viable project even if they were capable of writing a convincing Proposal, more also crop of students who leave much to be desired in their performance.](#) In my opinion it takes more than money to be able to meaningfully succeed in implementing a Project.

It took me until I went back to Bunda College for a mature entry program to be able to realize what exactly the industry is looking for from the graduates of the University of Malawi. Even after this it took me at least a year to be drilled by a foreign supervisor in concise project identification, proposal development and project report writing. All these skills had to be learnt from an experienced fellow even if I was able to design and think like an engineer after college. And here I would make the same advocate. [After helping independent reasoning capacity we will know that our graduates can identify problems and conceptualize a project and defend it and implement in mature and scientific manner.](#) After this stage is achieved then we can all mobilize energies to request both private, government NGOs and external Governments to help fund these projects.

[With the present situation, I propose that we should continue to encourage the post graduate \(Masters and Doctorate's and those with long time working experience\) to continue conceptualize projects in form of research and development since this is where our capacity can yield meaningful results.](#) When these projects takes off, I encourage that deliberate efforts should be made to involve as many as possible of our undergraduates at all levels of problem identification, proposal development, and project execution, to assist our University lecturers in shaping the mental capacity of these students so that they too can quickly grasp the concept for the good of the nation.

[Training and exposure to real life situations is also most important in building careers.](#) I have known students from China and other parts of the developing world who are PhD students in their countries but have deliberately gone to the west and Japan to Undertake a one year Masters course, an additional to what they already have, just to beef up their ability to be 'all rounded doctors or experts'. We may not be able to send undergraduates to be exposed in other countries due to financial limitations but what we need is a well coordinated internship which is well factored into the curriculum.

When we had just completed our Diploma in 1994, Thomas Nkhata and I were sent to Chitedze Agric. Research Station for something that looked like an internship. Although Mr. Hendrix Kazembe, Mr. Kumkezu and Mr. Kumwenda (of the Farm Machinery unit) were available to give advice, they had their own limitation as to how much control they would have on our daily activities because our joining the Unit was neither Funded nor well coordinated and these nice gentlemen were also busy with their own projects which could hardly accommodate us financially. Meaning that there was a problem of planning between Bunda College – that which sent us

(whether it's Agricultural Engineering Department or the Dean's office) and the Unit of the Research Station. Our role at the Farm Machinery Unit as interns was not clearly defined as a result we spent most of our time with the tractor operator learning how to till the Chitedze Farm gardens and did very little on projects. I however applaud Dr. D.G. Simango (the then head of AE Dpt. at Bunda) and the three gentlemen from the Farm Unit who (took personal responsibility) to an extent of financing with their Personal money in times of need the major part of our internship. From this example all I'm requesting everyone to do is to assist in planning proper internships for our students - at all grades. Such programs should be budgeted for from the beginning of the year and the requirements of the interns should be well outlined so that meaningful output should be seen to benefit in building their mature approach to projects. If all departments of the organizations; be it government, NGOs private companies and external organizations can take 2 students each year for an internship and someone be assigned to drill them on how to conceptualize and manage projects while educational institutions too do their part in writing and mental intellectual skill development, we would be a flourishing country in few years time.

[Our secondary schools too should continue or reintroduce - if they were phased out- PROJECTS as they used to called at Form 3 in Geography.](#) Or better still include other subjects like Physical science, Agriculture, History, Cookery, Needlework, metalwork, etc as well! When I was in Form 3 at Chichiri Secondary school in 1989, all students took PROJECTS which saw us going to different companies to learn how a manufacturing process of some product was done. This was done during the Summer Holiday (as we used to call it) And we were required by Chichiri Secondary School to write a report. I went to Southern Bottlers in Kanengo - Lilongwe and it was my parents and guardian who encouraged and assisted in meeting transport costs for the entire exercise. We had no computers then but wrote reports manually and guardians played a major role in shaping the style of writing and the checking the grammatical structure of the report. In this program we were requested to identify problems and positives sides of the processing. I am sure this was very positive addition to the developing young mind and If this same activity can be coordinated well and proper planning done, we could achieve our national goals and Poverty would be reduced and students would gain knowledge.

By the way, many developed countries are doing the same and ITS WORKING FOR THEM. I am sure it can work for us too.

Thanks for reading and listening.

Henrie Manford Njoloma

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Message 38: Author Mathews Nyirenda

Greenwell,

I am not surprised that you did not know that the National Research Council of Malawi NRCM existed in Malawi. I do know that it exists but the problem is that its activities are unfortunately not known to many people and maybe because it is a government baby. [Because of that I do not think this NRC can competently handle the scholarships unless of course something is done to revamp it.](#) Still more one or two things can be learnt about their activities, their mandate and the types of research that they have been/are carrying out. Matewere is with these guys and he can shed more light on what they do. There may be a need (if an independent body is to administer the scholarship) to link up with NRC should it be within their mandate to know/coordinate what research activities are going on.

As a matter of interest to those guys who are doing research and indeed To all, do the various research institutions (in whatever disciplines) e.g. Govt, CSR, APRU, CARD, MITRD etc speak as often and as synergic so as to develop this country or they are competitors?

Ndayima Kaye.

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Message 39: Author Unknown

To all,

Question by Mathews?

As a matter of interest to those guys who are doing research and indeed to all, do the various research institutions (in whatever disciplines) e.g. Govt, CSR, APRU, CARD, MITRD etc speak as often and as synergic so as to develop this country or they are competitors?

Ndayima Kaye.

Matthews Nyirenda

Programme Assistant (Reports)

World Food Programme

MY Comment

I am a research worker employed by Government (Fisheries Dept). Our office do not work in competition with other research centers. What happens is the extension department comes with the problems which the farmers are facing in the villages. The research section develops research topics based on those problems and try to come out with answers to the problems.

The problem comes if there is a research project by the donors, most of the times the donors carry out research according to what they think is the problem. They have too much power with their money and in the end what they solve are not usually problems of the farmers but their own interest. These usually happen when the donors are giving us money and their staff at the same time to carry out the research project. A Malawian researcher in this case becomes listeners and not researchers as is supposed to be.

National Research Council, NRC exists and it sends forms to government research offices every year so that the offices update NRC on what they are doing. NRC also sends request to government offices so that they propose research work to be funded by NRC, though the amount is little, as you know biological research are expensive to run.

However I will not recommend NRCM to be in charge of the University research scholarships, but it can be an overseer and be updated as they do with government research centers. According to me the proposal of CARD as suggested by Rodney is making sense. But this is only applying to Bunda College, what about other colleges like MZUNI, KCN, MedCol, CHANCO, POLY, LIVINGSTONIA, EKWENDENI, MONTFORT etc. Who is going to be responsible to over look for the proposed scheme in these Colleges.

Let us not forget this is a National issue?

Thanks for your listening.

Message 40: Author Michael Mmangisa

"The problem comes if there is a research project by the donors, most of the times the donors carry out research according to what they think is the problem. They have too much power with their money and in the end what they solve are not usually problems of the farmers but their own interest. These usually happen when the donors are giving us money and their staff at the same time to carry out the research project. Malawian researchers in this case become listeners and not researchers as is supposed to be."

I am compelled to comment on the observation made by one of the presenters as presented above.

I would like to encourage all researchers as well as research institutions never to ALLOW donors carry out research based on what THEY think is the problem. The problem with this approach is that we end up with research that does not benefit our country. It is high time Malawians can tell donors that if we are to do this research then it should focus on the se issues as highlighted by our national development plans as well as our MPRSP.

To comment further it is high time Malawi will devise a way of sharing what is happening in any field including research. I get disturbed when at the end of the year you get forms from other agencies (both private and government) asking for information on what happened in another NGO or department in the course of the year. I find this way of monitoring very flawed. With the advent of technology I would suggest those bodies responsible for research to link up various department of interest so that we can share concepts via the net.

I believe the issue of sharing these results should be also one way that this body responsible for administering scholarships should be in a position to correct. Otherwise research will continue to be disjointed and end up boring communities or agencies with same questions instead of sharing data for just specific analyses.

Thank you once again for your attention.

=====

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Message 41: Presentation of National Research Council of Malawi (NRCM)
Author Alfred Maluwa

Dear All,

I have been following these interesting discussions on the e-conference. I am making my contribution because of this e-mail (**Email from coordinator to A. Maluwa to shed more light on NRCM to participants- Coordinator**) which specifically has requested me to respond and contribute.

My take

Indeed the National Research Council of Malawi (NRCM) exists and is very active, in Malawi. I have participated in several projects funded through the Research Council. I first knew it in the mid 90s, when it was known as the Department of Research and Environmental Affairs (DREA) and then changed to Ministry of Research and Environmental Affairs (MOREA). There was a World Bank project then which developed the Malawi Agricultural and Natural Resources Research Master plan. I have a copy back home in Malawi, in my office. Researchers from Agriculture and Natural Resources Departments/Ministries as well as those from Chancellor and Bunda Colleges of the UNIMA participated on this work as consultants or resource persons, while those in the extension and the then ADDs participated as stakeholders and or End Users of Technology. As a first step in the development of the National Research Master plan, individual Departments were given funds to develop their own research master plans, and a Fisheries and Aquaculture Research Master Plan was developed. Through the same project, a contract research program was initiated, whereby researchers were asked to submit proposals in the field of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the proposals went through rigorous screening by a committee, (which I was a member, representing Fisheries and Aquaculture), and then finally successful project proposals were funded. There were so many projects by scientists from the then Department of Agricultural Research (DAR), the 2 UNIMA colleges and research institutions from Fisheries, Forestry, Environmental Affairs, Meteorology etc that were funded. There was a strict monitoring of both financial and technical performance of each project through the secretariat and once every year, there used to be a National Symposium where the results were presented and discussed at national level in Lilongwe. Individual scientists could find it rough and tough if the materials and methods or the statistics were faulty in their reports. It was very educative. The technologies developed through this project were displayed at MIM where the then Vice President (Hon Justin Malewezi) was showcased the technologies. There was an award for the best research at the end of the World Bank project (5 years) which was won by Mrs. Judith Jere of then Chitedze Agricultural Research Station on her project on Guinea Fowl.

Research to move out of civil service

Towards the end of the project, a way forward was mapped out and we were informed that research was to move out of civil service if it was to make an impact or develop the country. It was proposed that one body was going to be created that would oversee all research in Malawi. (I have forgotten the name but its in the document)-(This is the issue being discussed on this e-conference fortunately).The issue of unsustainability of the donor funded research projects was addressed in that document, (the master plan) in which the issue of Malawian research agendas being developed, funded and carried out by Malawians as was the case with the contract research program was recommended. It was also recommended that funds generated by various research activities would be retained in the said coordinating body so that they (funds) can be used to fund further research. Major research activities were evaluated to find out if their revenue contribution to the National Research Fund would sustain the proposed coordinating body and it was concluded that indeed a stand alone National Research Institution could be sustained with the monies generated by various research activities. (Of course government was to inject some money, after the estimates are approved in Parliament annually).This was seen as a way forward to develop our beautiful country Malawi through research. I know after the project, nothing has happened, or if there is any action please correct me accordingly. The National Research Master plan document is there on the shelf collecting dust! With the passage of time, some recommendations therein may not hold, but its worthy looking at, as far as the question of who is going to coordinate research at National level is concerned.

I can be corrected again if I am wrong here, but the National Research Council was formed by taking the 'Research component' from the Ministry of 'Research' and Environmental Affairs, and then the 'Environmental Affairs' section became a Department in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs. Staff was asked whether to go to NRCM or to Environmental Affairs Department (EAD), and people made their choices.

NRCM

After this, some of the activities of the National Research Council of Malawi that I know because I have participated in them are:

1: The protection of Malawi biodiversity by developing guidelines on the exploitation and exportation of Malawi's natural resources abroad (Research permits to foreigners etc, because these came as scientists but were then smuggling Malawi's natural resources).

2: Coordinating international research projects, a good example is the International Foundation for Science (IFS), in fact then I learnt that Malawi as a member state was not benefiting much because we Malawian scientists/researchers were not applying for the funds. (Many Malawian scientists were not competing for these funds through submission of research proposals). Our fellow scientists in West Africa were implementing a lot of projects by IFS funding. India was the highest IFS funds recipient on the globe!

3: Right now, the NRCM is coordinating a research project that is evaluating the genetically modified cotton (GMO Bt cotton) in Salima (I have served as a committee member) on the GMO regulatory committee.

Point to Note:

I am using past tense and a lot of 'the then' because I have been on and off since 2002 when I registered for my studies here in Norway, so this is what I can recall from my memory. Can those in Malawi contact NRCM attention Mr. Manda, by phone or e-mail nrcm@sdpn.org.mw or administrator@sdpn.org.mw Oh! This reminds me that the SDNP is also an NRCM project in Malawi funded by UNDP.

Ndiyime Kaye Pompa. Zikomo a pampando ndi mapatisipanti anzanga.

Alfred Maluwa

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AKVAFORSK

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Norway.

Message 42: Author Dalisto Kingsley Kubalasa

Hello good people!!

Thanks a lot for the various insights into the Poverty Reduction issue both as a concept as well as a Dream being coaxed into becoming a reality. I agree with Prof in that there is more to Research Scholarships impacting on poverty reduction than meets the eye. It all bottles down to the context of these scholarships vs. what the general outcome intent.

We know so many researches have been made, so many papers written and published so many studies carried out yet the concept seems at elusive or even more than where we all were when we began. Where can we do it right this time around, if we are to meaningfully contribute to this turn around of events? [Is the issue about which body regulates what Research or what scholarships or there is something that is lacking? What should be the missing link that the forum should be redressing for this issue of Poverty Reduction to be history??](#)

Somebody somewhere summarized the bottom line of all the economic ailments as being the following:

- a) inefficient and insufficient economic policies to tackle unemployment, poverty, wealth inequality, and reducing inflation
- b) principle of effective participation not adhered to in the political system corruption
- c) unfulfilled electoral campaign promises

The question is if we were to be honest in our assessment would this be the bottom-line of all our woes? Would we be getting in the right frame of mind if we were to consider turning this summary upside down to start being serious in impacting the Poverty as sailing our grandmothers, grandfathers, cousin, sisters, etc in towns and in the villages? Where are we missing it?

Lastly I feel greatly inspired when Prof is saying that, "... we Malawians are an enterprising and innovative people. We walk into the twenty-first century as if we had always been there. The young among us are a particularly enterprising lot. Given the opportunity they will take us as far as anyone will ever go...." **As such it is my wish**

for us in this forum to give all the debate and/or discussion all the sincerity we can muster to live to such expectations as Prof. Munthali's. Let's realistically get a clear link out in the open between these University Scholarships and Poverty Reduction in the true sense, otherwise we are bound to continue adding to the rhetoric that has always been there since the 1970's.

THE RHETORIC

There is one paper for the Global Development Network which studies the growth performance of Malawi between 1960 and 1999. Malawi's economy grew rapidly at around 6 per cent per annum since 1960, and then experienced a considerable slow-down beginning in 1980. As a result, Malawi's growth experience can be split into two broad periods, the 1960-79 period (the pre-Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) era), and the 1980-99 period (the SAP era). The paper finds that during the 1960-79 period, rapid growth occurred in all sectors, in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and in GDP per worker and per capita, whereas during 1980-99, GDP per worker and per capita declined. The country owed rapid growth in the 1960-79 periods mainly to a marked expansion in capital per worker. Other factors which also facilitated rapid growth included an increase in foreign demand for its principle export crops (tobacco, tea and sugar), an improvement in the terms of trade, increase in domestic demand for industrial products as a result of higher disposable incomes, and favorable levels of foreign exchange. The slower rate of growth in the 1980-99 periods was due largely to a reduction in the amount of capital per worker, and the knock-on effects it had on the economy. As a result, there was a steep reduction in the rate of investment in the economy, increase in transportation and associated costs leading to deterioration in the conditions of internal roads, currency devaluation, and very high rates of inflation.

The paper also examines the political context in which economic policies were made in Malawi. The author explores the extent to which Kamuzu Banda's dictatorship affected the composition of the civil services, which in turn had an effect on the economic policies being created and implemented by the government. Whereas in the 1960-79 period, the civil service was considered to be one of the most efficient in the developing world, by the 1980's, the efficiency of the civil service had fallen into decline. The paper notes that this decline has played a part in weakening the institutional capacity of Malawi to manage its economic performance.

Let's just not feel good about it and continue living our lives wherever we are (abroad or within, pursuing further studies or basking in greener pastures) as if we don't care about our brothers and sisters, friends and relatives in the village and in town in extreme and dire poverty with no hope of being vindicated in sight because we 'the hope' are seemingly beginning to succumb and to feel hopeless. [Agriculture is the way to go if we want to talk of attaining any balance between the Social sector and the Productive sectors to revert to our old glory of having some semblance of positive Economic Growth to achieve the most striven for Poverty Reduction or Eradication whichever comes first.](#)

Those good people are my thoughts to this debate, but are very optimistic that these discussions will really lead to some fruition in all our attempts at garnering the maximum benefits for Malawi. WHAT DO OTHERS SAY?

I rest my case your Honor (s).

Regards

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Message 43: Author Rodney Lunduka

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thanks Dalitso for the encouragement to this forum. It's true it's us who have to do some thing.

Dali wrote.....

..." As such it is my wish for us in this forum to give all the debate and/or discussion all the sincerity we can muster to live to such expectations as Prof. Munthali's. Let's realistically get a clear link out in the open between these University Scholarships and Poverty Reduction in the true sense; otherwise we are bound to continue adding to the rhetoric that has always been there since the 1970's.

I have always asked the question who is responsible for clearing the mess in our country?? Is it the government? But who is the government. The president? The ministers?? Ps, who??

I have come to realize that it's us. Small and useless as we may look but it's our responsibility and I hope that we truly live to the expectation of Prof and be able to discuss such issues and make a difference.

Dali wrote.....

Let's just not feel good about it and continue living our lives wherever we are (abroad or within, pursuing further studies or basking in greener pastures) as if we don't care about our brothers and sisters, friends and relatives in the village and in town in extreme and dire poverty with no hope of being vindicated in sight because we 'the hope' are seemingly beginning to succumb and to feel hopeless.

Read read people!!!

Sorry I may have digressed a bit out of the scholarship conference but I think I needed to echo what Dalitso wrote. The truth is if we just sit in our respective places excusing our selves that we are busy, we are just letting the country deeper into mud. As my quite mesho once said. "Dziko lathu lafika popangitsa pinyolo!!!" We need to do some thing even just sharing dreams of how a poor bright kid can be given a chance to get a degree that he deserves!!

Later

Rodney

Rodney Lunduka

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Message 44: Message from the Coordinators Week Four of Conference

To all Participants,

Welcome to the fourth week and last week of the e-conference. A lot has been discussed on this e-conference and we have seen our way forward on how University scholarships can be handled in order to improve the economic status of the Malawian community.

In the last week of the e-conference our focus will be on the technicalities of running the projects. As we have seen and suggested in the past weeks that running the University scholarship projects will not only require the students ability to do the project, but several stake holders should be involved and suggestion were like: the **donor community, NGO's, government institutions** and the **University**.

All these stake holders have got their own structures and their own institutional policies and they have their own way of running day to day business. There has to be a mechanism which is going to integrate all these institutions to come together and work as one, sharing the same vision of poverty reduction through university scholarships. One of the mechanisms which can easily integrate these people is to work through **Networks**.

Our discussion on this last week will be on networks. The discussion will be based on the importance of networks when planning and implementation of the University scholarship projects. **Dr Victoria Mendizabal of Project Dynamo based in Spain** is going to give us a presentation on how to organize networks, how to run networks, advantages and disadvantages of networks.

If we have any questions or suggestions on how networks can improve the efficiency of university scholarship projects then feel free to share with other participants.

Wishing you all the best in this last week discussion.

Ladies and Gentlemen in a moment Dr Victoria.

Coordinators

Message 45: Repeated Message of Presentation by Dr Victoria Medizabal

Message 46: Author Dr Mizeck Changuda

A lot of interesting issues have been raised in the conference. This is encouraging and I salute all the contributors and commend the organisers. My contribution will tend to lean towards the area that is currently taking about 90% of my time, research.

Quite a large number of research projects have been carried out in all disciplines present at Bunda College. Very few if any results have been turned into viable commercial or on-going development endeavours. The question is why? Obviously not all research results can be turned in commercial endeavours but there is a good chunk of it that can take that trajectory. **So the question still remains: why?** One of the many reasons is research ideas being hatched by scientist and hoping that someone somewhere will utilize the results. **The famous one way traffic.** At times, of course, we assume we understand the problem on the ground and formulate our research questions around the assumed problem. In this case the scientist thinks and is convinced that the hypothesis he (he as in human) has developed to answer questions of national interest. Society looks at the scientist and thinks it's all an academic exercise. In this case the scientist is like winking in the dark: he knows what he is doing but nobody else does. **The society has problems but they are not making the right noises. It's like shouting under water, all the scientist sees are bubbles and thinks they are not relevant. Until the two engaged each other positively, the desired synergy will not be there.** It is time the two sides started taking to each other in one language. I can hear a voice somewhere saying, 'yes, but what about the field days, what about all those demonstrations and shows that we carry out to showcase what we are doing as scientists?' **Yes, that is true, but as long as the initial formulation of the research questions did not involve society, these field days will remain what they are, a show.** There is need for forums (not necessarily meeting and conferences) where farmers, farmer representatives, or members of society in general pose questions (and even suggest potential solutions) to scientists and challenge them to find solutions together. Yes we have involved stakeholders before, but to what degree? **Open-minded and**

honest engagement of scientists and society has elsewhere led to formation of consortia working on specific problems. Such consortia would naturally be multidisciplinary and work under a broad umbrella like CARD as was earlier discussed by Mr. Lunduka. Given a time frame of operation, good coordination, and focus on a specific problem several projects could run in the consortium with the implementation taking place concurrently as farmers are part of the consortium. This makes people/organisations of different disciplines work together while maintaining their autonomy and utilizing resources more effectively. The issue of resources takes me to my next point of discussion.

The Vice Principal mentioned, in his opening address, that the University of Malawi is moving towards producing job 'creators' and not just job 'seekers'. This is a move in the right direction. Right from undergraduate level students should be trained on innovative thinking. However, having innovative graduates is not an end in itself. There is strong need for government through the relevant structures to develop a competitive innovations fund. This would not only be a way of making sure that the innovative ideas are put in practise but also as a motivation to the whole system. Several graduate programmes exist at Bunda. These need to be strengthened and utilized in carrying out relevant research that contributes to high level scholarship that contributes to poverty reduction. A concerted change in the research milieu would induce the paradigm shift called for, for university scholarship to contribute effectively to poverty reduction in Malawi. Just a few months ago we all celebrated when we heard that Mr. Davie Mkwambisi's recycling idea attracted good funding from a donor. Has any local organization on ground zero expressed interest to collaborate with Mr. Mkwambisi and/or do the work on large scale? Or are we waiting for the day Mr. Mkwambisi will come back from the UK and knock at our doors?

Dr Mendizabal's paper raises several interesting issues; one of which is the definition of networking. The interesting thing there is that we do not necessarily have to be physically in one place in order to contribute substantially to a common goal. As scientists this is one aspect in which we have not fared very well. We have tended to develop and accept the phenomenon of 'wachokapo wafa', meaning that if you are not physically there, you are as good as dead. We have failed to tap in resources and knowledge stationed elsewhere within or without Malawi. Prof. Mnthalali mentioned one resource that has always been taken for granted, Nyasanet. I agree. But then how many times have we seen some critics heavily playing down, yet some brilliant proposals, as theoretical and out of touch with the reality on the ground. Not even

once have such critics indicated that, ‘...with your theoretical idea, let us team up so that I give in it a practical touch’. A lot of wonderful opportunities have been lost in this way. It is time we learnt from the football fraternity. In the game of football they make sure they follow the progress of each and every player plying their trade elsewhere. They network. As an example we have seen the government through the sports council spending so much to bring home the like of Kanyenda (playing in Russia), Chitsulo (Germany), Mtawali (South Africa), and many others, for their services in the national team. And they contribute effectively to the national duties without losing their positions in the clubs they play for. What is it about science that makes us not learn from others? Would research and university scholarship in general not benefit from ‘brain gain’ and not always complain about ‘brain drain’?

Mr Chairman, and all, thanks you for your time.

Mizeck Chagunda, PhD.

Message 47: Author Dalisto Kubalasa

Hi

Many many thanks to Dr Mendizabal. This has been quite an exceptionally breathtaking insight into **the issue of networks and their pros and cons**. I must admit this is quite handy for us in Malawi especially now as the concept of advancing the 'division of labor' underlying principle has come up tops and very if not more than **feasible**. I agree entirely that it needs not be overemphasized that University scholarship projects will not only require the students' ability to do the project, but several stakeholders will also have to be (carefully and meaningfully) involved, of course mindful of the clear TORs, roles and responsibilities they have to play in this all.

All these stake holders have got their own experiences, structures and their own institutional policies let alone their own way of running day to day business. Most important though should be the lessons being drawn out from their past engagements and efforts at the same, etc. The idea of that inward/outward looking analysis (SWOT) could be the starting point to identify and streamline the proper mechanism which is going to intergrate all these institutions to come together and work as one, sharing the same vision of poverty reduction through university scholarships or otherwise.

I'm particularly glad that the picture painted by the Doc is not all rosy cognizant of the Weaknesses and Threats with respect to the Networks along the way, but nevertheless it is possible to have very successful networks (so many examples are there in the world). Challenges are there all the time although what matters most, I agree, is how these challenges are handled with the unswerving resolve to move on with the ambition and drive to achieve what the network sets out to do, in spite of everything else.

Otherwise there is really a lot we have to grasp out of this of value adding to how we really ought to run our networks (beefing up the strengths, rectifying the weaker links and other weaknesses) while at the same time maximizing the opportunities for greater co-existence in so doing garnering maximum benefits for mother Malawi...

Cheers to the greater networking spirit and effective networks for 'true' Poverty Reduction in Malawi. I salute you all!

Dalitso Kingsley Kubalasa

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Message 48: Author Rodney Lunduka

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel compelled to comment on the message by Dr Changunda. I don't think I can add any thing really new but just to emphasize on the need for networking. Dr Mendezabal also has given several positive things about networking. As much as I understand that our country has so much problems that most times we talk and people that matter do the contrary, networks can help us still to come up with such ideas that

can make these people change and implement some of the ideas. [If we give up then who will do it. It's either us or none.](#) I really hope that this forum can live up to that by sharing ideas and never stop suggesting things that can be done.

On the other hand, may be the people that matters do not understand what we tell them. Have you ever imagine how Minister so and so or Ps who has been in service for 15 years and 75 % of the time he has been signing cheques, approving leave grants and is supposed to attend to Party meetings being conducted by the President some times attending funnels, respond to a 50 paged technical report on reasons for Malawi's poor agricultural output?? I think he will put it aside for later. Do we as researcher write in very simple language in very few sentences on what we have researched on and our findings?? We need some simple stuff for these busy people who some times may not understand our language. Policy briefs would be one suggestion. If possible one page. May be as we propose for this institution for research scholarships we should also think of summarizing such reports to be user friendly.

How about our journalists who are good at politics. Mr. Mkwambisi wrote, I think on Nyasanet, on the way news papers are all full of politics. May be the journalist cannot understand us. They are able to understand politics because is easy and every one can see that Dr Chihana has pledged to work with Bingu!! And that Mr. Mvula has been arrested. Why don't they write about the effect of soil erosion on our economy or how a new breed of zebu can increase milk production!!??

I think what Dr Changunda said in dialogue between us and the users is very important.....and lets not lose hope....one day our voice will be heard.

Later

Message 49: Author Hardwick Tchale

Do we as researchers write in very simple language in very few sentences on what we have researched on and our findings?

Rodney,

[You raised a pertinent question here! Actually it is not just a matter of using simple language. Are our research findings sellable? Do we package them in such a way that they will be seen to provide answers to policy questions?](#) There are so many things that researchers need to do to create bridges across to the potential users of results, including policy makers. With my little experience in applied research, I observed that

researchers often miss or deliberately ignore two critical stages of the cycle: formulation of the research problem and dissemination of the findings. The reason is that most applied research is often commissioned and paid for by those that conceptualize the problem. So even if a researcher(s) does not fully understand or subscribe to the problem, they will still go ahead to implement a study, analyze and compile the results. In most cases after the presentation and submission of the reports, the researchers do not have any contractual obligation to follow up on the dissemination stage. This is why in the end you find that most research reports just end up gathering dust, and worse still the same issues keep on being researched on repeatedly.

It is therefore important that as we think about using academic scholarships to conduct policy relevant research that should inform and assist in the poverty reduction strategies, we need to pay attention to these critical elements in the research cycle. We should not conduct research for the sake of it. That means society at large or certain concerned segments of the society have to be fully involved in the process of formulating the problem as well as validating the research implementation process, the results and their subsequent dissemination. Researchers should not involve users only to lobby for the acceptability of their results, when the users have not been given a chance to critique the research problem. Researchers should have the contractual obligation to package the results in a way that helps policy makers and other concerned stakeholders decipher and make use of the information. For instance a busy PS would find a short (1-2 page) policy brief easier to read than a 100 page monograph/report. All these issues need to be built into our proposed idea if we are to avoid the "business as usual".

Message 50: Author Vusi Thembi

Greetings ladies and Gentlemen from all walks of life,

I have followed all the discussions on this conference with keen interest. Am sad to tell you that Malawians are still bent on parroting than action. A few individuals came up with practical issues that could be put in action, most institutionalized members of this forum resorted to usual academic talk. You can't talk about poverty elevation sitting on your behind scratching your pot bellied stomachs while sipping cheap wine. Poverty is real, kids are walking around hungry, adult wo/men are starving to death in real life on ground zero.

The first thing Malawi needs to do is total educational overhaul. It's a shame that Banda is graduating students who can't even operate a tractor. Shame that Bingu administration can appoint Chakwamba as minister of Agriculture. Then what type of education is Banda teaching these kids, Book worming? Does that help feed real people in life?

Then we have many of you advocating for scholarships to western colleges, what a shame. Do you know that 60% of those who go abroad for further studies don't come back to contribute to the local economy.

Worse yet, those offering scholarships are nothing but part and parcel of the wolves, modern imperialists who are out there to destroy Africa by snatching young energetic wo/men from their kids, separating them from their parents and siblings, tearing them away from the fabric that holds their economy, splitting you away from your traditions while introducing and institutionalizing you to their filthy western devious lifestyle.

The billions of dollars African governments spend on scholarships based on nepotism anyway, could have better been used on rehabilitating our local high learning institutions libraries, professors salaries etc. By the way did you know that in America the average for PhD candidate is 22 as opposed to Africa where you have to be in the late 20's or 30's?

Africans are busy wasting time on college education than basic tertiary and elementary educational system which instills the proper tools while the kid's brain is still a fresh sponge to soak up as much knowledge. No wonder American high school and college dropouts excel in real life. College Education means nothing in America. Billionaire Donald Trump in his Reality TV Show Apprentice and his upcoming book, preaches that University can be nothing but a clutch. I have in the Nyasanet achieves said that Western Universities are nothing but shelters for third world weaklings. 90% of Westerners attend full time Universities courses right after high school, the rest do it while being productive to their economy, be it by doing Mac Jobs or Topless dancing for a buck.

Let Malawi adopt an educational system where primaries teach kids how to kumanga nyumba za zidina, kupanga mbaula, kukumba mbewa etc. Don't undermine kumanga nyumba ndi kukumba mbewewa, okay let me cut you as lack on kukumba mbewa, let's replace that with kukolola msomba. Billions of people survive everyday from proteins professional fishermen risk their lives at sea harvesting hundreds of millions tons/kg

of sea food. Kumanga nyumba is another most important profession which should be considered as one of the most basic vital Traditional education in Africa considering we lack proper shelter both in rural and urban areas.

Problem is that the so called Malawian elites, yes I mean you are hell bent on stereotyping, they would rather send their kids to Wits University to pursue a BA than enrolling them at local vocational institutions to pursue skills like Sewing, Hair Braiding , Knitting, Brick layering etc...Guess what, when those little braggarts of yours try to make it in corporate world they fail miserably. Most of them end up prostitutes or working like odd jobs at a minimum wage while local high school dropout Americans own multi million dollar mansions and businesses.

There are more University degree holders in Nigeria than South Korea, yet South Korea's Economy is triplet that of Nigeria despite their abundant Oil Reserves. The educational curriculum set by the British Educational and Civil Code of 1804, is still operative in Malawi though long since revised in Britain itself.

To cut it short, basically third world countries like Malawi's bifurcated economy is also reflected in its schizophrenic education system. Malawians fleece Kwacha by flocking to Western universities to acquire a neo-colonial education which ill-prepares them for the actual needs of the local economy. I schooled one Matthews Mtumbuka on this matter who is studying MIMO a technology for Mobile TV and GPS, something that has nothing to do with Malawi immediate needs.

Many Malawians who end up going back home after their masters / PhD's are frustrated in his efforts to get a professional job on arrival at LIA. Malawi's, just like any other African economy is like a man with his feet in trash and his head in the clouds with nothing but chaos in between.

Let Malawi revamp the whole Educational system to one suitable for Malawian Society, this will help fill the economic and social vacuum left by the decay of our traditional society Kamuzu fought so hard to maintain in 30yrs and the unresponsiveness of the formal banking sector due 10yrs of Muluzi UDF unaccountable government and an unproductive economy.

SOMETHINGS GOT BE SAID, MIGHT AS WELL BE SAID BY ME.

Vusi Manhattan NY, USA.

Message 51: Author Vusi Thembi

Addendum to my previous posting based on this subject, of course withheld due to review policies.

Isn't it funny how our journalists waste all their time on politics?

What happen to educational journalists and professors in terms of Animals, Architecture and Design, Art, Auto, Business, Computer and Internet, Entertainment, Environment, Family values, Food and Healthy, History, Hobby and Recreation, Humor, Literature, Military, Movies , TV and Music, Photography, Religion, Science, Technology and Travel to mention a few.

American garages have been the mother of many invitations and innovations by some finest minds including Bill Gates, Marth Stewart, Google boys, P. Diddy etc.

Got run, peace 4 now. JH, NYC

Message 52: Author Dr Rev Augustine Musopole

Bravo Vusi, Mau! Mau! Mau! I can not agree with you more. For some time, some of us have been advocating a technologically based primary and secondary education in order to empower thousands of kids who never make it to university with creative skills for wealth creation. Why should the UK be the educational model for Malawi after forty years of independence, we are still educating people for clerical jobs that are non-existent.

Science work shops that have been suggested are a must. Adult education should not be limited to a few who volunteer to learn to read and write, but to include all to empower them with knowledge and technical know-how. Each grade should be an experimental station.

We need to "fall in love with the soil" and give it the care that we give to a loved one for it to give us the livelihood leading to food self-sufficiency. Bunda should challenge the students to work creatively with the soil. In some cases we just need a change of attitude to the soil and to the crops, and livestock. To help students commit

themselves with loving care in the improvement of these aspects of creation. Science and romance should work together.

Communication is of utmost importance in popularizing new knowledge, but that can only go a long way if adult education is a progressive trend. We need magazines that specialize in popularizing research findings, newspaper section on such matters, but we need to train journalists in the language of research in all professions for them to do a good job of reporting on such matters. Even though there are news paper section on religion for instance, many journalist are not trained in religious terminologies and theological language to do a good job of reporting adequately on such matters. We need journalists who can simplify scientific terminology to popular language for popular consumption. Should we train Bunda students in journalistic skills?

Networking is very critical as Victoria has indicated, however, commitment to networking has been often lacking and limited to meetings that a few initiate. In Africa here relational is a major value; networking should be a matter of life and death. We need to push each other to take networking seriously. Part of the problem is that we are all competing for the same donors and we tend to keep our progress a secret for our own advancement. Is this not the major reasons why even the "secretive ufiti" does not help any other person except the one doing it? (By the way I do not believe in its efficacy).

Scholarship of any type has to be tied to the society for which it is being done. We cannot work in isolation and expect to alleviate our poverty.

Akumando ndaima pomwepa

Augustine Musopole (Rev. Dr)

Message 53: Author Henrie Njoloma

Vusi,

Many applause to you for a very educating and eye opening contribution! However while I agree with the fact that we need an overhaul in our education system as also suggested with many others before we should not really lose sight in the significance of college education as you want us to believe that College education is unnecessary.

Total Education Overhaul would be disastrous to our unstable and fragile economy. I believe that we can still keep some of the things we are already doing in our current system BUT add and subtract ONLY those areas that are weak in contributing to growth in the system.

Some alumni from Bunda and other colleges are products of the current education system and they are doing a good job in transforming the system to production orientation and my view point is that what we need most is to stimulate the need for self reliance after we complete college. I stand to be corrected by those directly involved with teaching at Bunda (Dr. Kang'ombe, Jijo, Dr. Chagunda, and others) I am sure that the curriculum is drawn in such a way to enable the students to be 'all rounded' meaning that they are both 'bookworms' and can practically utilize the theory! You should not worry about a Bunda Student Not being able to operate a tractor... you might have not meant a tractor in its literal sense ... but let it be known to you that there are many alumni who can also 'handle spanners and use them very well'..., there are many who can design very palatable dishes from home economics and human nutrition department..., there are many who can operate a tractor very well..., there are many who can tell you how productive a particular soil is by just looking at it from Soil science... and the list is long.

The problem is really multi-facet problem and goes beyond restructuring education system. By the way where I live in Japan in Miyazaki City, over 95% of the young ones attend tertiary education. College Education contributes a larger chunk of that %age and Emphasis on college education is part and parcel of the emphasis is the building of this economy. Tertiary education is compulsory and free (ie from Grade 1 to 6 - elementary, Junior High school for 2 years and Senior High School for another 2 years). School goes by age. All children must enter Grade 1 at 6years and move up the ladder with their age! This is very good.

But their economy is so well integrated such that by end of High School, they are able to find some form of 'Arubaito' Japanese word for ganyu in Chichewa or piece work. Almost all get jobs by the time they complete tertiary education. Where I have not seen much emphasis is when they finish a first degree (the Bachelor's) Only a very small percentage would go into a Master Course and Doctor Course. . Otherwise I am Sure it would be very treacherous not to acknowledge the contribution of College education in these economies. In my own laboratory, there is no Japanese who will be continuing for an MSc course out of the 10 students - all of them say they are tired with school and want to go and work!!

What we need I think is to impart practical, hands-on educational system so that after college students should be confident enough with their theories and use them practically. I for one would be a Happy man if one day I wake up and see that all Bunda Graduates, All Polly Graduates, All Chancellor College Graduates, KCN and you name it are able to MAKE A PRODUCT OUT OF THE THEORY THEY GOT FROM University, Instead of sitting and and Talking and analyzing someone's efforts. There and then I will know that we have started doing something good.

And we also need a lot of political will to do much! Hence I wouldn't criticize Hon. Chakwamba's appointment as Minister of Agric. I am sure he is better than Hon. Mangulama!! As long as these guys in politics gives us opportunity to contribute to change, I am sure most of the Alumni from Bunda would do a GREAT job!

By the way Vusi are you studying in the US and contemplating to go back home (Malawi) or you are one of the culprits of Brain Drain?? I was just wondering. You seem to be a very practical man. Let's go back home and stop talking BUT do something practical!

Otherwise thanks for your input.

Henrie Njoloma.
University of Miyazaki,
Kyushu,
Japan.

Message 54: Author Dr Rev Augustine Musopole

Dear Akumpando,

Once again allow me to make another contribution following Njoloma's rejoinder and reaction to Vusi's radical proposals. I returned to Malawi after ten years in the USA. I was General Manager of Christian Literature Association in Malawi (CLAIM) for three years and General Secretary of the Malawi Council of Churches for five years. I was one of those people who refuse to become a statistic of the brain drain in the knowledge that I was being trained for my people at home.

During the five years I worked very closely with some ministries especially education and health since churches are responsible for 40% of the services in both sectors

through Christian Health Association of Malawi (CHAM) and Association of Christian Educators in Malawi (ACEM). There has been much talk of a review of the education system to bring it in line with development goals of poverty alleviation. From what I have seen nothing short of radical overhaul is going to do. Eastern models of education may be of some help, but they do have their own problems. I have been in Taiwan for nearly two years where 90% of kids passing the national high school examination find their way into University. Some of them are not fit for University academic culture, however the critical mass of University trained people are part of the workforce as is an important goal.

The suggestion that I applaud in Njolomas contribution is when he states that, **"What we need I think is to impart practical, hands-on educational system so that after college students should be confident enough with their theories and use them practically. I for one would be a Happy man if one day I wake up and see that all Bunda Graduates, All Polly Graduates, All Chancellor College Graduates, KCN and you name it are able to MAKE A PRODUCT OUT OF THE THEORY THEY GOT FROM University, Instead of sitting and and Talking and analyzing someone's efforts. There and then I will know that we have started doing something good."**

Many countries have National Academies of Science, Social Science, Humanities, Arts to promote knowledge, research, to acknowledge and award achievements, and the dissemination of information in the respective fields. Would such a body not be the most suitable one to manage the proposed scholarships? In addition to scholarships, there should be loans to enable the Bunda graduate to go straight into commercial farming where they can experiment on various problems. A five year grace period loan would go a long way to making sure they succeed in their business enterprise. I am pretty sure many would be able to pay back that loan even before the grace period is over. This leads me to the need to have a Farmer's Bank to complement the rural financing organizations.

Dzikomo akumpano

Musopole

Message 55: SUMMARY REPORT OF THE FOURTH WEEK

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF THE E-CONFERENCE ON THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS IN POVERTY REDUCTION EFFORTS IN MALAWI

The coordinators would like to thank all participants who have spared their time to make contributions to the week four of the conference. **You are all reminded that this is the last week of the conference** and the main issue of discussion was concentrated on the technicalities of running projects. As coordinators we thought of going back to the issue of Networks which was introduced by Dr Victoria Mendizabal of Project dynamo Spain in the second week of the conference.

Participation was good and participants have discussed technical issues of the projects apart from the guiding **Network** issue participants also tackled issues of **communication** and **education curriculum**.

Networks:

Participants agreed that Networks are so important if the projects are to be implemented efficiently. The definition of networks was clarified, advantages and disadvantages of networks was well presented. This gave an idea of how networks can be run e.g. **‘The interesting thing there is that we do not necessarily have to be physically in one place in order to contribute substantially to a common goal’** commented one participant in his presentation.

It was suggested that researchers should be working in a similar network as the footballers do e.g. they request national professionals from all over the world to tackle a specific game in our case research question.

Communication:

Participants agreed that something has to be done in terms of communication if the research findings will be turned out into development endeavour. It is felt that quite a large number of research projects have been carried out in all disciplines present at Bunda College. **However very few if any results have been turned into viable commercial or on-going development endeavours.** The reason being poor communication of the researchers and people who utilize the research findings, there is a lot of “One way traffic” the researchers conceptualising ideas and forcing them on community.

The participants proposed some techniques which can be used apart from the traditional open days and conferences like: **Consortium forums** where farmers, farmer representatives, or members of society in general pose questions (and even suggest potential solutions) to scientists and challenge them to find solutions together. There is need of high involvement of stake holders if we want the research work to produce results. Another idea which was raised by the participants is **Science Shops**: This is essentially local organisations, working within local conditions to serve local needs, in finding solutions to grassroots problems. In countries where the Science Shops are operating they claim that they are cost effective method in giving society access to research. The main aim of this concept is to extend research support to socially marginalised groups. A brochure was circulated which is explaining how Science Shops are organised and implemented.

Education curriculum changes:

This has been the usual song in all the past three weeks that apart from changing the mind set of the Malawian research community i.e. the way they carry out their duties. The education curriculum needs to be looked into as well. There is a feeling that the curriculum is doing its job in creating service men/women but its failing to produce innovative men/women who stand can own their own as **job creators not seekers**. At this point Malawi is at a crossroads looking for job creators and the education system should hear be able to answer this call.

The problem is not only being realised by University graduates but also it seems the multiple choice exams at the secondary level is not doing us any good as towards producing innovative students who are able to face the twenty first century challenges.

The issue of asking the Malawian Universities to do more on post graduate education also resurfaced with the claim that this will improve the efficiency of Malawi's human resource and hence economy.

It was suggested that Malawi should establish an innovative competition fund. This fund will not only encourage innovative people's minds but also will reward them.

The participants referred to different models which are being used in different countries like Japan, USA and Malawi Technical Colleges Syllabus as models which will help to produce innovative students.

Loan scheme

It is interesting to note that the issue of loan scheme, which was touched by the Vice Principal Dr E. Kaunda when opening this e-conference has been suggested by the participant during this week. The participant feel that Bunda College graduates can also be turned into practical oriented students if they are given seed money and be able to practice what they have learnt from college.

Many thanks to all contributors of the week,

Coordinators.

Message 56: Message from Coordinators Closing Speech

**CLOSING REMARKS OF THE E-CONFERENCE ON THE ROLE OF
UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS IN POVERTY REDUCTION EFFORTS IN
MALAWI**

The Vice-Principal, Bunda College of Agriculture, Dr. E. Kaunda

Dr. Victoria Mendizabal,

Prof. Felix Munthali,

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of moderators of Buncoalumni “The Bunda College Alumni Yahoo Group”, and indeed on our own behalf, we would like to sincerely thank the vice-principal of Bunda College, Dr. E. Kaunda for allowing to avail himself for the official opening of the conference. His speech was thought provoking and set pace for the highly needed seriousness which has characterised the views expressed along the whole period of this conference. We do not take for granted his taking sometime off amidst his tight

schedule to participate in this important electronic conference on **“The Role of University Scholarships in Poverty Reduction in Malawi”**

On an equally important note, allow us to send the Buncoalumnis hearty felt gratitude to Prof. Felix Munthali and Dr. Mendizabal for sending in dynamo packed papers that sent people on the constant edge of always wishing to contribute. We salute you because without you the conference’s grandeur would have been grossly compromised.

Having said that, one would ask the question why and how did this idea of the E-conference come about. One may wish to note at an early stage that Buncoalumni yahoo group is slowly establishing a name as “an action-oriented” group as characterised by its meaningful and practical development-conscious debates. Participants may also wish to know that this is the groups second e-conference with the first being on **“Setting up the University of Malawi Museum”**. The final paper of which is under consideration for implementation by the Bunda Alumni Association.

The idea of coming up with the current e-conference, however, was a realisation of the lack of coordination in the poverty reduction efforts between the various stakeholders in the Malawi economy. But more notably, it was pointed out by a few visionary Bunda alumni that the University student (at whatever level) has conspicuously been missing in the poverty reduction (development) efforts in Malawi particularly looking at the level of research being conducted by university students. This e-conference was hence hatched as a way of brainstorming on how best the University student could be brought into playing an active role in Malawi’s economic

development and research process. However, as one may easily guess, the problems of not-involving the University students would reveal that a whole lot of stakeholders are not actively involved in the formulation and implementation of development agendas in Malawi. This necessitated that, before bringing the student into the limelight, the conference should first take stock of poverty reduction efforts and assess how they may have failed because of not including various appropriate stakeholders.

Admittedly, when the idea of having an e-conference first crossed the minds of the Bunda alumni, no-one expected the response to be of the magnitude that we have witnessed in the previous three weeks. We all have shown, in our own ways, how we strongly feel for mother Malawi. It was also interesting to note that the majority of those who actively contributed to the conference are those who are pursuing further studies in the Diaspora. This casts a ray of hope that Malawians are zealous to return back to Malawi with the educational theories that can selectively be put into practice where they are needed most-Malawi.

We have seen constructive contributions being made from all angles of the world through our distinguished participants. Other than reviewing the shortfalls of the past poverty reduction efforts and research processes, participants have discussed on the question of how the university students can meaningfully be involved in development agendas of Malawi; At what level of university they can be involved; The need for having development and research networks; The mechanisms of how the efforts of students involvement in research and development can be coordinated; And many more of such pertinent questions.

In the next week, participants will be presented with the final summary report of the discussions that have transpired from this e-conference for their vetting before the report is sent to the target authorities for consideration and implementation.

Knowing that any plan is as good as it is implemented, Participants can be assured that coordinators of this forum will take a keen responsibility to follow up on the aftermath of the report recommendations and will notify participants to this conference where necessary of the ensuing activities.

Once again, we salute you all sincerely and hope that you will show up again in the subsequent series of Buncoalumni's e-conferences.

Lastly, we would like to thank you all for entrusting us with the challenge of organising and coordinating this e-conference. With these remarks, the coordinators now declare this e-conference officially closed.

May God bless you and bless mother Malawi.

E-conference Coordinators

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