

# Status of Doctoral Education in Malawi

By

Precious Gawanani, PhD. and Nelson Nkhoma, PhD.

Paper presented at the

Research Workshop on Doctoral Education in Commonwealth Africa, in Negri Sembilan, Malaysia, 31<sup>st</sup> July to 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2016



**LUANAR**  
Lilongwe University of Agriculture & Natural Resources

knowledge innovation excellence

Open and Distance Learning

Accessible Relevant Agriculture Higher Education

LUANAR, P.O. Box 219, Lilongwe, Malawi    Tel: (265) 01 277 222/260    Fax: (265) 01 277 364    www.luanar.mw    [odl@bunda.luanar.mw](mailto:odl@bunda.luanar.mw)

# Country Profile

- Malawi has 17 Million People
- South East of Africa
- Only 86 out of 100,000 inhabitants access higher education compared to 557 out of 100,000 in the region
- Only 1% of eligible students are enrolled in tertiary institutions
- At Graduate level and doctoral level the situation is much worse



**LUANAR**  
Lilongwe University of Agriculture & Natural Resources

knowledge innovation excellence

Open and Distance Learning

Accessible Relevant Agriculture Higher Education

LUANAR, P.O. Box 219, Lilongwe, Malawi    Tel: (265) 01 277 222/260    Fax: (265) 01 277 364    www.luanar.mw

[odl@bunda.luanar.mw](mailto:odl@bunda.luanar.mw)

# Institutions offering Doctoral Ed

- University of Malawi (KCN, POLY, CHANCO, Col of Medicine), oldest university in Malawi, established in 1964.



Open and Distance Learning

Accessible Relevant Agriculture Higher Education

[odl@bunda.luanar.mw](mailto:odl@bunda.luanar.mw)

# Universities offering Doctoral Education in Malawi

- Established in 1997, was not until 2004 when it started offering PhDs
- Mzuzu University (PhDs in Theology, Sanitation, Mathematics)



**LUANAR**  
Lilongwe University of Agriculture & Natural Resources

knowledge innovation excellence

Accessible Relevant Agriculture Higher Education

and Distance Learning

LUANAR, P.O. Box 219, Lilongwe, Malawi    Tel: (265) 01 277 222/260    Fax: (265) 01 277 364    www.luanar.mw    [odl@bunda.luanar.mw](mailto:odl@bunda.luanar.mw)

# Institutions offering PhDs

- Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR), was established in 2012—was formerly a constituent college of UNIMA
- PhDs in Agriculture related pi



Open and Distance Learning

Accessible Relevant Agriculture Higher Education

[odl@bunda.luanar.mw](mailto:odl@bunda.luanar.mw)

# Other Institutions

- Malawi Institute of Management (MIM)
- Offers doctoral degrees in conjunction with external institutions like University of Bolton of the UK.
- Exploits University (The only privately owned university accredited by NCHE to offer doctoral education)



The banner for LUANAR (Lilongwe University of Agriculture & Natural Resources) features a green header with the university's logo and name. Below this is a photograph of a large, modern university building. To the right of the building, three people in white lab coats and hats are shown holding large watermelons. The banner includes the slogan 'knowledge innovation excellence' and provides contact details: LUANAR, P.O. Box 219, Lilongwe, Malawi; Tel: (265) 01 277 222/260; Fax: (265) 01 277 364; and www.luanar.mw. On the right side, a blue section contains the text 'Open and Distance Learning' and 'Accessible Relevant Agriculture Higher Education', with the email address [odl@bunda.luanar.mw](mailto:odl@bunda.luanar.mw) at the bottom.

LUANAR  
Lilongwe University of Agriculture & Natural Resources

knowledge innovation excellence

LUANAR, P.O. Box 219, Lilongwe, Malawi  
Tel: (265) 01 277 222/260  
Fax: (265) 01 277 364  
www.luanar.mw

Open and Distance Learning

Accessible Relevant Agriculture Higher Education

[odl@bunda.luanar.mw](mailto:odl@bunda.luanar.mw)

# Why Examine Status of Doctoral Education in Malawi

- Ageing academic staff members
- Few young people are choosing an academic career
- There is a strong trend towards undergraduate education
- Training doctoral graduates outside Malawi has proven unsustainable
- Very few PhD programs in the country and most of them new



**LUANAR**  
Lilongwe University of Agriculture & Natural Resources

knowledge innovation excellence

Open and Distance Learning

Accessible Relevant Agriculture Higher Education

LUANAR, P.O. Box 219, Lilongwe, Malawi    Tel: (265) 01 277 222/260    Fax: (265) 01 277 364    www.luanar.mw    [odl@bunda.luanar.mw](mailto:odl@bunda.luanar.mw)

# Quality Assurance

- National Council for Higher Education (NCHE)—est. 2011 , accredits institutions to offer higher education: currently one private university is accredited to offer doctoral education in Malawi-this is Exploits University.



Open and Distance Learning

Accessible Relevant Agriculture Higher Education

[odl@bunda.luanar.mw](mailto:odl@bunda.luanar.mw)



# Quality Assurance in Doctoral Education

- Institutional Mechanism (Guidelines for each program e.g. entry requirements, maintaining academic standing)
- External Examiners
- Strict entry Requirements



Open and Distance Learning

Accessible Relevant Agriculture Higher Education

[odl@bunda.luanar.mw](mailto:odl@bunda.luanar.mw)

# Universities' Strategic Plans

- University of Malawi, Mzuzu University and Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources all have strategic plans that highlight development of higher education. Trying to widen access.
- Highlight doctoral education as key to the country's development



Open and Distance Learning

Accessible Relevant Agriculture Higher Education

[odl@bunda.luanar.mw](mailto:odl@bunda.luanar.mw)

# Challenges affecting Doctoral Education in Malawi

- Inadequate responsiveness to national, social and economic needs
- Weak links to industry
- Lack of academic freedom



**LUANAR**  
Lilongwe University of Agriculture & Natural Resources

knowledge innovation excellence

LUANAR, P.O. Box 219, Lilongwe, Malawi    Tel: (265) 01 277 222/260    Fax: (265) 01 277 364    www.luanar.mw

Open and Distance Learning

Accessible Relevant Agriculture Higher Education

[odl@bunda.luanar.mw](mailto:odl@bunda.luanar.mw)

# Challenges affecting Doctoral Education in Malawi

- Shortage of funding (for students and institutions)
- Low institutional capacity; human and materials resources
- Lack of diversity and duplication of programs
- Poor quality of supervision; faculty too occupied with consultancy to meet ends meet



Open and Distance Learning

Accessible Relevant Agriculture Higher Education

[odl@bunda.luanar.mw](mailto:odl@bunda.luanar.mw)

# Lack of Political Will for Doctoral Education

- Key documents that guide education in Malawi; The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS), the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) both are silent on the importance of doctoral education to the country.



**LUANAR**  
Lilongwe University of Agriculture & Natural Resources

knowledge innovation excellence

Open and Distance Learning

Accessible Relevant Agriculture Higher Education

LUANAR, P.O. Box 219, Lilongwe, Malawi    Tel: (265) 01 277 222/260    Fax: (265) 01 277 364    www.luanar.mw

[odl@bunda.luanar.mw](mailto:odl@bunda.luanar.mw)

# Why Does the Government Show Little Interest in Doctoral Education

- Few doctoral programs in public universities
- Belief that higher education is more of a private good than public and as such the higher you go with higher education the less public good it provides.



**LUANAR**  
Lilongwe University of Agriculture & Natural Resources

knowledge innovation excellence

Open and Distance Learning

Accessible Relevant Agriculture Higher Education

LUANAR, P.O. Box 219, Lilongwe, Malawi    Tel: (265) 01 277 222/260    Fax: (265) 01 277 364    www.luanar.mw    [odl@bunda.luanar.mw](mailto:odl@bunda.luanar.mw)

# Country's priorities vs Doctoral Ed

- Overall it is not an overstatement to argue that if doctoral education is prioritized, students and staff in these programs can offer research, knowledge production, and the human capacity that can contribute to the five concerns of NESP improving access, equity, quality, relevance, governance and management of the education sector.



**LUANAR**  
Lilongwe University of Agriculture & Natural Resources

knowledge innovation excellence

Open and Distance Learning

Accessible Relevant Agriculture Higher Education

LUANAR, P.O. Box 219, Lilongwe, Malawi    Tel: (265) 01 277 222/260    Fax: (265) 01 277 364    www.luanar.mw    [odl@bunda.luanar.mw](mailto:odl@bunda.luanar.mw)

# Policy Recommendations

- Lobby for doctoral education to be prioritized in policy documents which guide the direction of higher education in the country.
- Institutional strategic plans should be explicit on doctoral education
- Explore alternative funding avenues
- Provide incentives to faculty supervising doctoral candidates



Open and Distance Learning

Accessible Relevant Agriculture Higher Education

[odl@bunda.luanar.mw](mailto:odl@bunda.luanar.mw)



# References

- **References**

- Bunting I., Cleote N & Van Schalkwyk, F. (2014). An empirical overview of eight flagship universities in Africa: 2001-2011. A report of the Higher Education Research and Advocacy Network in Africa (HERENA). Cape Town: Center for Higher Education Transformation (CHET)
- Bunting I., Sheppard C., Cloete N. & Belding, L. (2010). Performance indicators in South Africa Higher Education 2000- 2008: Summary report. Cape Town: Center for Higher Education Transformation (CHET).
- Butler-Adam, J. The Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA). Available at <http://www.sarua.org/files/publications/SARUA%20leadership%20Dialogue%20Series/SARUA%20Story%20final.pdf>
- Cloete N. (2014). The South African higher education system: Performance and policy. *Studies in Higher Education* 39(8); 1355-1368.
- Huisman J. & Naido, R. (2009). The professional doctorate: From Anglo-Saxon to European challenges. *Higher Education Management and Policy* 18(2): 1 – 13.
- Kadyakapita M. (2013). A critical realist exploration of the emergence, development, management and sustainability of a Christian private institution of higher education in Malawi (PhD Thesis, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa).
- Kasanda, M. (2014). Chaos in Malawi's private university education. *The Daily Times*. Available on line at <http://timesmediamw.com/chaos-in-private-malawis-varsity-education/>
- Kotecha, P. (2012). Higher Education Data: A Profile of Higher Education in Southern Africa National Perspectives (Volume 2). Wits: Saura.
- Kotecha, P., Steyn, A. G. W., & Vermeulen, P. J. (2012). The status quo of doctoral education in the SADC region. *SARUA Leadership Dialogue Series: Doctoral Education Renewing the Academy*, 4(1), 16-24.
- Langa P. (2010). Disciplines and engagement in African universities: A study of the distribution of scientific capital and academic networking in the social sciences. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Cape Town.
- Louw J & Muller J. (2014) A Literature review on models of the PhD. Cape Town: CHET. Available at <http://chet.org.za/files/Louw%20and%20Muller%202014%20Literature%20Review%20on%20Models%20of%20the%20PhD.pdf>
- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. (2008). The national education sector plan (NESP) [2008-2017]. Lilongwe: Author.
- Mlenga, J.D. (2015, March). Spontaneous introduction of Christian Private Universities in Malawi and the quality of education provided. In Research and Knowledge Management Office (RAKMO): *Retrospect and Prospect of Private Higher Education Provision*. Paper presented at the Proceedings of the 12th International Conference on Private Higher Education in Africa (Ethiopia) United Nations Conference Centre, Addis Ababa (pp.88-106) St. Mary's University (SMU's) printing press.
- Mlenga, M. (2015, March). The dilemma of increasing tuition fee in the face of declining enrollment rates at private higher education institutions in Malawi. In Research and Knowledge Management Office (RAKMO): *Retrospect and Prospect of Private Higher Education Provision*. Paper presented at the Proceedings of the 12th International Conference on Private Higher Education in Africa (Ethiopia) United Nations Conference Centre, Addis Ababa (pp.33-49) St. Mary's University (SMU's) printing press.
- National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) (2014). *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Malawi's Higher Education Institutions*. Available at: <http://www.nche.ac.mw/>
- Park C (2005) *Open and Distance Learning in Malawi*. Lilongwe: LUANAR
- Park C (2007) *Open and Distance Learning in Malawi*. Lilongwe: LUANAR
- Stackhouse, J. (2007) *Open and Distance Learning in Malawi*. Lilongwe: LUANAR

**LUANAR**  
Lilongwe University of Agriculture & Natural Resources

knowledge innovation excellence

Open and Distance Learning

Accessible Relevant Agriculture Higher Education

LUANAR, P.O. Box 219, Lilongwe, Malawi    Tel: (265) 01 277 222/260    Fax: (265) 01 277 364    www.luanar.ac.mw    [odl@bunda.luanar.mw](mailto:odl@bunda.luanar.mw)

# Thank You! Zikomo!!



**LUANAR**  
Lilongwe University of Agriculture & Natural Resources

*knowledge innovation excellence*

LUANAR, P.O. Box 219, Lilongwe, Malawi      Tel: (265) 01 277 222/260      Fax: (265) 01 277 364      [www.luanar.ac.mw](http://www.luanar.ac.mw)