

**THE STATE OF ADULT LEARNING
AND EDUCATION IN MALAWI:**
Capacity Building and the Role of
Higher Education Institutions-
Public Lecture

Limbani Nsapato . CUNIMA. 25th March 2021

Outline

- We are ale
- Why invest in ale
- Status of ale in Malawi: developments and issues
- The rôle of higher education in ale
- Constraints
- Rôle of government
- The challenge of CUNIMA: Change the game
- Recommendations for policy and practice

first, we are ale



we are ale

unites organisations
to make adult
learning and education
seen, understood and
valued globally



Civil society organisations have kicked off a global 5 year-campaign to advance and promote the concept and practice of adult learning and education (ale). For the first time, civil society organizations committed to ale have come together to adopt a shared global definition of adult learning and education. Practitioners, learners and civil society representatives from five continents are speaking with one voice proclaiming – **we are ale!**

Why invest resources in ALE

- Education, in general, and literacy, in particular, harbours many positive contributions towards economic and sustainable development, a view propounded by human capital theorists:
 - In 2015 Wils reported that **each additional year of education is associated with an 18 % higher GDP per capita**. He added that among young adults on average, for each additional year of education poverty rates were 9 per cent lower, revealing that poverty rates declined with each level of education.
 - correlation studies show that societies that have a literacy rate of below 60% would have difficulties in achieving sustainable development. According to data posted on World Bank website the average literacy rate for low income countries is 63%, while it is 77% for lower middle-income countries and 86% for middle income countries. In Sub-Sahara Africa where most of the low-income countries are found, the average literacy rate is 66%.
 - In **Malawi, Matita and Chirwa demonstrated in 2009 that one additional year** of schooling increased lifetime earnings by 10% on average, by 9.7% among male workers and 11.4% among female workers. Education contributes 3% to the GDP which is estimated at K6.7 trillion according to the 2020 annual economic report by Ministry of Finance.
 - In 2017 education sector plan review unveiled that the highest rates of HIV and AIDS prevalence were for those with no education (12.3%) and those with more than secondary education (10.2%). For those with primary or secondary levels, the prevalence rates were 8.4% and 8.2%, respectively. Hence higher levels of literacy are needed to cope with the corona virus epidemic, which infected 5600 out of nearly 50,000 tested Malawians and claimed the lives of at least 175 within the first 5 months since the first case was reported in April.
 - In **2020, the world has been confronted by a health crisis courtesy of corona** virus which led to closure of schools and other learning institutions in March in the country. People who are literate and educated are healthier, and so, more resilient to infections or diseases such as COVID 19.

Status of ale in Malawi

- **Policy:** Approval of National Adult Literacy and Education Policy in February 2020. The goal of the policy is to reduce illiteracy and enhance skills development and education amongst adults and targeted youths for effective participation in socio economic development. The policy has four priority areas, which are: coordination and collaboration; access, relevance and quality; visibility and awareness; and resource mobilization. The policy will thus give government and stakeholders the much-needed direction to accelerate achievement of literacy goals in relation to the four priority areas (GOM, 2000).
- **Literacy status:** Over the past ten years literacy rate has improved by 4 percentage points. Results of the 2018 Population and Household Census showed that the country's literacy rate increased from 64% in 2008 to 68.6% in 2018. In 2018 there were 15 million Malawians aged 5 years and above, and out of whom 10 million were literate including 5.2 million males and 5.1 million females. Over the ten years the number of literate people has increased by 3.2 million from 6.8 million in 2008 (3.6 million males and 3.2 million females). (NSO, 2019)
- **Access to ale services:** there is continuous provision of adult education by public and private providers across the country. Between 2010 and 2017, there were over 10,000 adult literacy training centres across the country with an average of 25 learners per class run by government that [offered] training in Chichewa. There [were] also 1,633 centres that [were] teaching English. In addition to government-run centres, adult literacy services [were] also being implemented by civil society and faith-based organizations. Every year, more than 100,000 learners [were] declared literate from the adult literacy centres after going through a literacy assessment which [was] administered after 10 months of intensive learning (Kamlongera, 2019). Recently, with exception of 2019/20, at least 140,000 learners have been enrolled in literacy classes annually.

Enrolment in Adult Literacy Classes 2016-2020 (Ministry of Gender, 2021)

Year	Provider						Grand Total
	State			Non-state			
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
2016/17	21,675	122,820	144,495	704	5,159	5,863	150,358
2017/18	39,303	124,458	163,761	1,329	5,313	6,642	170,403
2018/19	32,367	102,495	134,862	552	6,342	6,894	141,756
2019/20	3,124	11,167	14,291	226	3,126	3,352	17,643

Human Resources for ale programmes

- The number of personnel, working as facilitators (instructors) on adult literacy in public funded institutions hardly changed between 2000 (8000 – 3200 male and 4800 female) and 2014 (7640 – 2980 male and 4650 female). For non-state funded institutions the numbers were 18 females and 14 males in 2000 and 15 and 17 in 2014.
- By 2018 the total number of instructors nationwide was 8000. Such numbers were distributed proportional to the number of centres in each district in Malawi. The ratio of instructors to learners was one (1) to thirty (30).
- However, ale programmes reflect a shortage of staff at all levels including at district and central level. The number of cluster supervisor was 799 in 2018 (Kamlongera, 2019)

Financing for ale programmes

- Most programmes have been funded by government through the ministry of Gender, with few donors coming in such as UNDP, ICEIDA, ADB, and DVV. Funding has been less than 1% of the education sector budget.
- For instance, between 2003/4 and 2007/8 government allocation to adult literacy in relation to MoEST was: MK50,000,0000 (0.48 percent) in 2003/4; MK21,048,752 (0.16 percent) in 2004/5; MK28,472,000 (0.18 percent) in 2005/6; MK82,318,876 (0.46 percent) in 2006/7 and MK42,414,889 (0.15 percent) in 2007/8.
- Between 2012 and 2016 government funding ranged from K120 million in 2012/13 financial year to K80 million in 2016/17 financial year (Kamlongera, 2019). In the past five years funding declined from K309 million in 2017/18 to around K104 million in 2020/21 averaging just 0.16% of the education sector budget (MOG, MOF, 2021).

Budget allocations for ale 2016-2021 (MoG, MOF, 2021)

Approved Budgets 2016-2021	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
	MK'000	MK'000	MK'000	MK'000	MK'000
MOEST	146,183,332	74,774,370	86,388,831	76,855,209	99,635,628
Gender	3,161,290				25,447,200
MoCECCD		4,582,510	3,966,040	19,960,060	
Total Education Budget	149,344,622	79,356,880	90,354,871	96,815,269	125,082,829
Adult Literacy	80,000	309,940	187,900	77,810	104,580
CBE	110,000	76,000	1,089,740	166,670	88,560
% for adult literacy	0.05	0.39	0.21	0.08	0.08
% for CBE	0.07	0.10	1.21	0.17	0.07

Issues of ale in Malawi

- **Increasing illiterate population**

- Even though the literacy rate has improved over the past ten years, the number of illiterate Malawians has increased by 0.9 million from 3.8 million in 2008 to 4.7 million in 2018 (NSO, 2019). Interestingly, the number of illiterate males has increased by 0.6 million; while the number of illiterate females has decreased by the same amount, which could show that the literacy programmes are benefitting more the females than the males. In fact, literacy programmes are being shunned by males who make up of 17% of total enrolment as compared to 83% for females, which is a 66% gap.

- **Lower literacy rate in Malawi compared to other countries in SADC:**

- While the literacy rate of 68.6% in Malawi is higher than the Sub Saharan Africa average of 66%, it is the fourth lowest in the SADC region, higher than Comoros (59%), Mozambique (61%) and Angola (66%). Countries with literacy rate above Malawi include Seychelles (96%), Namibia (92%), Zimbabwe (89%), Eswatini (88%), Cape Verde (87%), Zambia (87%), Botswana (87%), Tanzania (78%), Lesotho (77%), South Africa (77%), Madagascar (77%) and DRC (77%). (UNESCO GEMR, 2019).

Serious disparities in access : gender, disability etc

- In terms of **gender, literacy** access disfavours females. The number of illiterate females (2.6 million) is higher than for males (2.1 million), and by consequence, literacy rate for females (66%) is lower than for males (72%), showing a 6% gap.
 - In formal education, whereas 2.4 million children are out of school, at primary where the total number of out of school children is 1,016,202, boys (516,619) outnumber girls (499,583) while at secondary where the total number of out of school children is 1,372,806, boys (698,754) also outnumber girls (674,052), meaning there is need for effort to ensure boys get in school. However, for the in-school population, the gender parity index is around 1.02 at primary and 0.94 at secondary, while females make up 36% of higher education enrolment.
- This suggests that enrolment is skewed against females in higher levels of education.
- Furthermore, in **relation to inclusion**, persons with disabilities are generally excluded from adult literacy programmes and the entire education system. While persons with disabilities constitute 10.4% of the population in Malawi only 3.3% are enrolled in primary schools, 2.4% in secondary schools and 0.2% in tertiary learning institutions.

Geographical divide in adult literacy

- In terms of location, rural populations in Malawi are more disadvantaged than urban populations.
 - Literacy data shows that rural districts have literacy rates below the national average of 68.6%. Districts with lowest literacy rates include Mangochi (53%), Nsanje (56%), Machinga and Dedza (57%), and Chikwawa (58%).
 - On the other hand, urban districts have higher literacy rate averaging 90% and these include Mzuzu city (91%), Blantyre city (91%), Zomba city (90%) and Lilongwe city (87%).
 - At regional level, Northern region whose literacy rate is 79% has a 12% advantage compared to central region (67%) and Southern region (67%). (NSO, 2019)

Weak capacity to deliver ale targets

- Weak capacity – centres and staffing to meet policy targets:
- The national adult literacy and education policy promises to enrol at least 1.5 million learners in the literacy classes after five years, translating into an annual intake of at least 300,000.
- However, with only 10,000 literacy centres and 8000 literacy instructors the country can only enrol up to 150,000 annually, which is 50% of annual target. The policy proposes 15,000 classes to be operational every year for five years and capacity to graduate 20 learners per class.

Enrolment capacity missing target (MOG, 2021)

Year	Annual Planned Target	Enrolment	No of Learners declared Literate	Pass Rate (%)
2016-17	300,000	150,358	97,523	65
2017-18	300,000	170,403	124,788	73
2018-19	300,000	141,756	101,769	72
2019-20	300,000	17,643	14,124	80

Staffing gaps at various levels

Indicators	2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21	
	Est.	Filled	Est.	Filled	Est.	Filled	Est.	Filled	Est.	Filled
Staff at NACLAE	15	7	15	7	15	7	15	9	15	9
DCDO	29	29	29	29	29	29	29	29	29	29
CDA	580	348	580	348	580	348	580	348	580	348
English Instructors	1,633	1,345	1,633	1,345	1,633	1,345	1,633	1,345	1,633	1,345
Chichewa Instructors	8,000	7,600	8,000	7,600	8,000	7,600	8,000	7,600	8,000	7,600

Underfunding of ale programmes

- Public investment in literacy programmes is very weak with the annual budget for literacy programmes ranging from K50 million to K80 million over the period 2003/4 to 2016/2017 and showing declining trends from K309 million in 2017/18 to around K104 million in 2020/21 averaging less than 1% of the education sector budget .
- CONFINTEA 6 challenged governments to allocate at least 6% of the GDP to education and 3% of education budget to adult literacy programs. In Malawi the targets have been missed with around 4% of GDP being allocated to education over the past two financial years and an average of 0.16% being provided to literacy even as basic education receives over 50% of the education budget.
- Very few donors and NGOs are interested in financing and implementing literacy programmes which makes the sub-sector suffer from perennial underfunding.

Weak Coordination of ale programmes

- Literacy programmes are largely understaffed and underfinanced at national and district levels which makes it difficult for the coordinating Ministry (Ministry of Gender) to have adequate personnel to coordinate the programmes at different levels.
- In addition, literacy programmes cut across several ministries including Ministries of Agriculture, labour, education etc, but there is little cooperation and political will at higher level of these ministries which makes it difficult to adequately implement policies and strategies.

Digital divide affecting ale programmes

- COVID 19 pandemic has shown higher demand to go digital and embrace open distance and eLearning within the education system. However, this is a big challenge to Malawi due to limited access to equipment and affordable internet data services.
- Recent data shows that as of 2018, of the total households in Malawi (3,984,981), 51.7 % had a mobile phone, 33.6 % had a radio, 11.8 % had a television and 16.4 % had access to the internet. This makes it difficult to transfer literacy content via digital platforms which require mobile connectivity. Moreover, Malawi is one of the countries with high cost of internet data making it hard for most Malawians especially those in rural areas to access internet services (NSO, 2019).
- Consequently, when schools were closed from March to August 2020 due to COVID 19 threat, youth and adult literacy sector could not migrate to virtual learning because that could have effectively left out the majority of Malawians.

WHAT CAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS DO?

- Various authors suggest the high demand for higher education institutions (colleges and universities) in all programmes especially within the context of SDG #4: “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all” (UN, 2015).
 - Target 4.6. By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.

UNESCO (2015) ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION within Education Agenda 2030

“The research community has an important contribution to make in education development in general and policy dialogue in particular. It can develop policy-relevant research, including action research, to facilitate the achievement of the targets, and make knowledge on education available in a usable form for policymakers; develop local and national sustainable capacity for qualitative and quantitative research; help chart progress, propose options or solutions, and identify best practices that are innovative, scalable, and transferable.”(UNESCO, 2015).

PRINCIPAL ROLES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

In 1997, the Agenda for the Future adopted by the 5th International Conference on Adult Education called for institutions of formal education, from primary to tertiary level, to open their doors to adult learners, both women and men, adapting their programmes and learning conditions to meet their needs. It was stated that they should do this by these principal means:

- 1. Developing coherent mechanisms to recognize the outcomes of learning undertaken in different contexts and to ensure that credit is transferable within and between institutions, sectors and states;
- 2. Establishing joint university/community research and training partnerships;
- 3. Bringing the services of universities to outside groups;
- 4. Conducting interdisciplinary research on adult learning and education with the participation of adult learners themselves;
- 5. Creating opportunities for adult learning in flexible, open and creative ways, taking into account the specificities of women's and men's lives; 6. Providing systematic continuing education for adult educators (UIE, 1997).

Mumbai Statement on Lifelong Learning, Active Citizenship and the Reform of Higher Education (1998)

We commit ourselves to: Opening schools, colleges and universities to adult learners:

- a) by requiring institutions of formal education from primary level onwards to be prepared to open their doors to adult learners, both women and men, adapting their programmes and learning conditions to meet their needs;
- b) by developing coherent mechanisms to recognize the outcomes of learning undertaken in different contexts, and to ensure that credit is transferable within and between institutions, sectors and states;
- c) by establishing joint university/community research and training partnerships, and by bringing the services of universities to outside groups;
- d) by carrying out interdisciplinary research in all aspects of adult education and learning with the participation of adult learners themselves;
- e) by creating opportunities for adult learning in flexible, open and creative ways, taking into account the specificities of women's and men's lives;
- f) by providing systematic continuing education for adult educators;
- g) by calling upon the World Conference on Higher Education (Paris, 1998) to promote the transformation of post-secondary institutions into lifelong learning institutions, and to define the role of universities accordingly;

DUAL ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES

M. Gabriel, R. MacDonald, R. Doiron (2008):

Research Leadership

- Barriers and motivations for Adult Learning
- Effective and varied program offerings
- Effective and varied delivery models
- Workplace and employee needs

Leadership in Learning

- Credit/non-credit options
- Formal/informal learning opportunities
- Online/blended/face-to-face learning opportunities
- Outreach/collaboration/community connections

Principles Of Effective HEI Support Of Adult Learning

A comprehensive strategy built around a set of policies and procedures which will:

- Strengthen Outreach
- Support life/career planning
- Address financial issues
- Recognize academic learning and life/work experience
- Develop multiple teaching/learning models
- Strengthen student support systems
- Use technology for information sharing and effective teaching/learning
- Strengthen partnerships/collaborations

Constraints to faced by institutions in Africa

- The state and development of adult learning and education in Sub-Saharan Africa/ Regional synthesis report, 2009 noted the following:
 - The need for **funds to contract** these roles.
 - **Social Status:** people with adult education qualifications may not have equal status to other educators such as schoolteachers and be eligible for full-time employment. Governments still tend to employ schoolteachers and social science graduates in adult education posts rather than adult education professionals.
 - **Coordination:** Many adult education training efforts are uncoordinated and there is no unified curriculum: Associations of adult educators, though they exist in some countries, do not seem to be strong enough to exert serious influence on professionalisation.

Case 1: INDIA- University of Mumbai

Department of Adult and Continuing Education and Extension of the University of Mumbai played these roles (Narang, Renuka, 1997):

- Improving the quality of learning through its training and the development of courses on adult and continuing and Extension.
- Fostering learning of democracy, social ice, respect for different cultures and human values through its Annual Festivals.
- Facilitating the empowerment of women through its range of extension projects and the establishment of a Women's Cell.
- Further strengthening adult learning contribution for the world of work through its work-experience projects.
- Ensuring learning about health environment Population issues through its Population Education Clubs.
- Fulfilling the need for continuing education through short term courses.
- Taking steps to further develop the Course in Project Management into a Certificate Course in the discipline.
- Promoting Adult Learning at the regional level through execution of its role and functions and helping other universities to break new ground.

Case 2: NAMIBIA: UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA (UNAM)

Department of Adult and Nonformal Education, also called DANFE has played various roles in promoting adult education since 1997 as noted by Sabo A. Indabawa (2000).

- **Teaching** – expanding its certificate programmes from diploma to doctoral levels (Diploma in Adult Education and community development, B.Ed (Adult Education), M.Ed (Adult Education), PhD (Adult Education))
- Research- Research and research seminars in adult education: “Impact Study Project on Improving Nonformal Basic Education Programmes in Namibia”.
- **Community service:**
 - Within the University, the Department ensures that adult education has a voice in several committees and structures. Outside UNAM, the Department also serves many interest groups and institutions through advice and consultancy
 - The Department took a lead in developing a National Plan of Action for Adult Learning which was produced after the national conference on adult learning held in September 1998
 - The Department participated actively in the national conference on education held in August 1999 which discussed the draft report of the Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training.
 - In addition, the Department is a member of the Namibia Association for Literacy and Adult Education (NALAE) and the Distance Education Association for Southern Africa (DEASA).
 - Individual members of the staff also hold memberships in professional associations and have been undertaking consultancies in the country, the SADC region and other parts of the world.
- **Outreach: Several nonformal** education programmes to serve the wider professional needs of the community
 - Skills and vocational trainers’ refresher course, meant to serve the staff of the Vocational Training Centres in Namibia
 - National (annual) Literacy and Development Seminar, for policy makers and other practitioners in literacy, adult education and training
 - Annual National Human Resource Development Conference, targeted at government and private sector human resource staff
 - Annual Literacy Promoters’ (instructors’) workshop, intended to help in capacity building for the National Literacy Programme in Namibia (NLPN), which commenced in 1992 with the aim of attaining an 80% adult literacy rate in the country.
 - Annual Literacy Primer Writers’ workshop to enhance local capacity in materials development for basic and post-literacy programmes in Namibia

Rôle of Government

- Government can support higher education institutions through:
 - Enabling legal and policy framework
 - Funding – for program expansion, research, partnerships- more donors and domestic resources for ALE
 - Political will and support for public private partnerships
 - More opportunities for networking and learning internally and externally (South-South and North - South)

The Challenge for CUNIMA: Change the Game, by:

- Raise awareness on the motivation for investing in adult learning and education
- Advocacy for increased donor , private sector and government investment in ALE
- Mobilise other Universities to introduce Adult Education programmes at diploma, degree levels (Bachelors, Masters, Doctorate---why not)
- Be a rôle model (Bright Star/pacesetter/initiator) in access, quality, inclusion, equity for ale at higher education level.
- Strengthen capacities in the joint creation of knowledge, research, teaching and learning with diverse communities of women and men of all ages.

Changing the game - some reflections

If you think you can, you are right and
if you think you cannot, you are right
still! (Obama, 2008: Yes we can!)

Let's transform our fine words into
fine deeds.

We are the agents of change we
desire tomorrow

Recommendations for policy and practice (1)

- **Programme expansion** to increase access and improve equity and inclusion in all programmes- More centres and more staff
- **Government needs to provide adequate funding** to the coordinating Ministry to ensure funds are readily available to establish more literacy centres, train, recruit and motivate literacy instructors, procure adequate teaching and learning materials and make literacy instruction more disability - friendly.
- **Development of a robust fundraising and resource mobilisation strategy** in order to attract more donors and partners and ensure strong lobby and advocacy for allocation of more resources to the programmes.
- **Strengthen coordination:** There is also a great need to establish or revive a strong inter-ministerial committee that should oversee literacy and education programmes and facilitate coordination, networking and learning around literacy programmes.

Recommendations for policy and practice (2)

- **Curriculum developments:** content of literacy programmes should be made more attractive to men in particular, by introducing livelihoods and business projects that provide more income-generating opportunities for participants.
- **Digital strategy:** government should strengthen its partnership with private sector and research institutions to improve access to ICT services and develop and expand open and distance eLearning opportunities for youth and adult education learners.
- **Awareness and advocacy:** to improve social status of ale and increased investment in ale
- **Support towards higher education** institutions such as CUNIMA- policy, financing, networking, research and innovation

Simui *et al* (2013): Education 4 All without Adults by 2030



Education 4 All without Adults by 2030

