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The History and Impact of Malawian Mission Schools on Sustainable Development

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Abstract

In Africa, it is almost impossible to talk about United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 and the African Union's Agenda 2063 without considering the impact made by mission schools. Mission schools are the foundation of education in most African nations and they need huge support from the government. Unfortunately, with the development of public schools, most mission schools have been abandoned and no longer receive any support from the government. Most mission schools are depleted, and their performance have declined. The article argues that unless the government works hand in hand with and supports the mission schools, the 2030 SDGs and Agenda 2063 will end up being a wishful dream. The African population is growing extremely quickly, making it hard for government schools to provide the needed education. This paper explores the history and impact of mission schools on sustainable development in Malawi and the role that the government has in supporting these schools.

This paper employs a qualitative research method, where personal interviews are conducted to collect data, plus a literature review. Its goal is to help the government realise that the issue of sustainable development cannot be achieved only by one entity, but that there is a need to work together with mission schools and the church at large. Government must become aware of the importance of supporting mission schools if sustainable development is to be achieved.

Introduction

Africa is a religious continent where most of its occupants belong to one of the many existing religions. Selhausen says, "one in every four Christians worldwide is an African, and the 2050 projections forecast further Christian growth."[1] A very small percentage of people do not belong to any religion. This is a true reflection of education system in Africa, but also in Malawi in particular, because as Berman says, "formal education was key in missionary conversion strategies, and thus education became firmly connected to Christian missions."[2] Berman and Frankema say that most of those who attended mission schools got converted and helped spread the gospel of Jesus Christ in their local languages.[3] No one can manage to talk about the education system in Malawi without talking about the mission schools.

It is almost impossible for Malawian students to go through their education without passing through mission schools' corridors. This has a very big impact when it comes to carrying out the 2030 SDGs and Agenda 2063. Neither of them can be achieved without the contribution of these mission schools since these are the torch bearers for decades insofar as education is concerned. Deryke says, "most African Christians are products of missionary theological traditions that came to us, incorporating a variety of development activities such as education, health, and agriculture."[4] It is for this apparent reason that Banda says, "one cannot doubt that churches in Malawi have played a significant role in promoting the education system in the country. This is as a result of their Christian belief that God created human beings with the ability to learn, teach, and know that God is active in and through education … The church has the distinctive mandate to educate, instruct, and bring forth faithful, courageous, wise disciples and reliable citizens."[5] This is what 2030 SDGs and Agenda 2063 are all about. Tembo is of the same view when she

[1] Selhausen, *Mission, Education and Conversion*, 2.
[2] Berman, "African Responses," 527-540.
[3] Berman, "African Responses," 527-540; Frankema, "Colonial Education," 153-177.
[4] Deryke, *Faith in Development*, 208.
[5] Banda, *Influence of Protestant Churches*, 5.

points out that indeed missionaries contributed towards the establishment of mission schools during colonialism.[6]

Hence Ajayi emphasises that "in the absence of major investments in African education by European colonial states, mission schools provided the bulk of education for most of the colonial era between 1880-1960."[7] According to De Haas ad Frankema, these mission schools "did not just provide education where the colonial state did not invest in it, but they primarily relieved colonial governments from financing public education."[8] In fact, Summers further says, "the British colonial administration, interested in keeping costs low in its African colonies, adopted an open-door policy, welcoming missions from all denominations to 'outsource' the supply of formal education to Christian missionary societies. Hence, this fostered competition among mission denominations."[9] It is for this reason that Barro and Lee confirm that "mission schools were responsible for the initial rise in mass education" and that these schools continue to have long-lasting impact on people's lives like that of ending poverty and hunger and letting them have full potential in dignity and equality.[10] The mission schools have also fostered peace and justice. This is what the 2030 SDGs are all about.

History of Mission Schools in Malawi

Roman Catholic Mission Schools

Msusa states that the "first Catholic missionaries, known as 'White Fathers' arrived in Malawi, Mangochi district in the territory of Chief Mponda in 1889. Bishop Du Pont was one of the white fathers' leaders."[11] Chief Mponda thought that these missionaries would protect him from being attacked by either the British or Portuguese, who were also in his territory. Upon discovering that these missionaries were not fighters, "Mponda imprisoned them for eighteen months. After being released, Bishop Du Pont went back home in France in 1901 due to sickness, and while there he persuaded his

[6] Tembo, "Mission Education," 21.
[7] Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria*, 134.
[8] De Haas and Frankema, "Gender, Ethnicity and Unequal Opportunity," 965-994.
[9] Summers, "Education and literacy," 322.
[10] Barro and Lee, "A new data set," 184-198.
[11] Msusa, *The Catholic Church in Malawi*, .

friend Pierre Bourget of the Montfort Fathers to start a mission in the Shire Highlands."[12] "On 25th July 1901, the Montfort missionaries arrived at Nzama, Ntcheu district; the first permanent Catholic Mission, where they were welcomed by the Ngoni chief, Njobvuyalema."[13]

In February, 1902, barely five months after their arrival, the Catholic missionaries opened their first school.[14] The Montfort missionaries also opened another school of carpentry at Mua, and as the church got rooted, more schools and trainings emerged. For instance, the Marist Brothers opened St Johns Teachers Training College and the following secondary schools: Zomba Catholic, Likuni boys and Mtendere Boys. The white sisters opened Bembeke Girls Teachers Training College and the following girls ' secondary schools: Likuni and Nkhamenya. McCracken says that in 1924, the White Fathers also founded a boarding school at Kachebere in Mchinji where students were taught to read, write, and sew.[15]

Education was one of the priorities for the missionaries. As Chu says, "Pope Benedict XVI spoke in 2008 at the Catholic University of America that education is central to the mission of the church to proclaim the good news and that every Catholic education institution is a place to encounter the living God. To the Roman Catholic church, education means openness to the splendor of truth and culture, embracing the sublimity of the human intellect in its search for meaning and wisdom, and appreciating the essence and destiny of all things."[16]

Chu acknowledges that "according to Roman Catholic, education sets people on the path of building relationships and connections with all people and all creation in the search for meaning and truth. It is capable of meeting the challenges of the present moment."[17] It is for this reason that Catholic universities are centres where cultures and faith intersect.

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[12] Msusa, *The Catholic Church in Malawi*, .
[13] Msusa, *The Catholic Church in Malawi*, .
[14] Msusa, *The Catholic Church in Malawi*, .
[15] McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi*, 115.
[16] Chu, "The Future of Catholic Education in Africa," 25.
[17] Chu, "The Future of Catholic Education in Africa," 30.

Universities Mission to Central Africa

"The Universities Mission to Central Africa was formed in 1858 as a direct appeal by Dr. David Livingstone to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge to send a mission to Central Africa."[18] The group was led by Bishop Charles Fredrick Mackenzi in 1860 and settled at Magomero. Juma affirms further that in 1904 the government urged these missionaries to give technical education a central place in their schools because before this people were indigent, ignorant, illiterate, superstitious, and considered uncivilised.[19] This led to the introduction of welfare schemes like the eradication of illiteracy, economic development, and social mobilisation, consciousness of health and hygiene. The missionaries also emphasised the development of character like honesty, love, truth, benevolence, and decency (morality and humanitarianism). Brough considers their contribution toward Malawi commendable rather than condemnable.[20]

Church of Central Africa Presbyterian: Blantyre Synod

The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Blantyre Synod started offering technical courses aimed at providing skills among Africans to create skilled workers in 1876. In 1878, a printing press started. The first students were John Macrae Chipuliko and Mungo Murray Chisuse. These became the first printers in Malawi and were assisted by Harry Kambwiri Matecheta and John Gray Kufa. Thereafter John Mcllwain joined the Blantyre mission in 1884 and began training young men as builders and carpenters.[21]

In 1905 the educational code of the General Missionary Conference approved what they called a "five-level graded school system" in which third grade embraced standards IV to VI, combining both academic and technical education with special emphasis on particular trades like carpentry, printing, bricklaying, tailoring, laundry, typewriting, teaching, agriculture, and medical training. Fourth grade, which was called "manual grade" was an advanced education. It was meant for the senior certificated teachers and medical

[18] Brough, "The Role of the UMCA," 13.
[19] Juma, The Contribution of the Church Missionary Society, 52, 62.
[20] Brough, "The Role of UMCA," 24.
[21] Brough, "The Role of the UMCA," 14.

assistants. During this period, Blantyre mission technical education was taught by both male and female teachers like Jonathan and Rose Majonanga.[22]

Apart from academic subjects, male students were also taking a technical subject with the intention of preparing them for a specific area. The girls were offered sewing, laundry, and home care as their technical subjects. In 1947 the Blantyre mission printed the following books: Nyanja-English Dictionary and English Grammar.[23] Mr. Henry Henderson, who was nicknamed *Ntebe* (Tall), helped the mission with money in constructing the Henry Henderson Institute for Africans to learn, which was officially opened in 1909.[24] In 1965, Blantyre Synod accepted a proposal to purchase three printing machines, which tremendously improved printing services and increased the printing trainees from four to ten per session.[25] In 1966, the press became a private company of the Blantyre and Livingstonia Synods, focusing on printing publications for churches in Malawi.[26]

Ross gives an example of how the children of the Magololo and the Yao enrolled in school after the establishment of Nthumbi Mission.[27] One of the beneficiaries was Ngoloweka, who wanted to quit school due to the constant conflict he had with the Magololo children who used to call him a son of *waka chikambi* (a type of unprocessed tobacco) in return he called them *Anyas akudya matesi, acule* (frog eaters). Ngoloweka considered dropping out of school because of their constant fighting. But he acknowledges how Dr. Hetherwick stopped him from quitting school.[28]

Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Church: Livingstonia Synod

The name Livingstonia has a fascinating historical background in the history of Christianity, politics, education, and development in general. It was the first place in Nyasaland to have hydroelectric power and piped water. Livingstonia, where the headquarters of the Free Church of Scotland was situated, was

[22] Brough, "The Role of the UMCA," 18.
[23] Brough, "The Role of the UMCA," 20
[24] Ross, *Christianity in Malawi*, 35.
[25] Ross, *Christianity in Malawi*, 35.
[26] Brough, "The Role of the UMCA," 22
[27] Ross, *Christianity in Malawi*, 28.
[28] Ross, *Christianity in Malawi*, 29.

named after Dr. David Livingstone, in memory of his missionary activities in southern and central Africa. He was a remarkable explorer, missionary, and medical doctor. Although the initial station was at Cape Maclear, the real fruits of the Free Church of Scotland missionaries began to appear in 1881 at Bandawe, before they finally established their mission in Khondowe, which is now called Livingstonia Mission. This was under the leadership of Dr. Robert Laws, one of the great mission strategists of the nineteenth century. Indeed, he was a man of no equal in his ambitions, convictions, dedication, dynamism, achievements, and public relations with the locals he came in contact with. He played an important role in the introduction of education and political life to the Malawians, and also initiated educational policies. Together with his colleagues, Dr. Robert Laws built a magnificent church, the stone house, and other infrastructures of the Overtoun Institute, which were unique in those days and are still standing today. The Overtoun Institute was opened in 1894. This school has a paramount reputation for many generations of Africans because of its exceptional curriculum empowerment.[29]

It was called Overtoun Institute because Overtoun was the first one to contribute 5,000 pounds to develop it. In 1895, the Institute began training teachers and was the first school to provide teacher education in Central and Southern Africa. Nyambose says it was Dr. Robert Laws' passion to let the people who would pass through the Overtoun Institute be a light to the world.[30] As such, they also offered the following courses: commerce, medical courses, arts, knitting, secretarial courses, theological courses, classics, carpentry, bricklaying, and agricultural courses. These varied courses were unique and incredibly rewarding for the African people, and the curriculum ensured holistic development and self-reliance. They also had a school for the blind and a printing press. The first printing was in 1897.

Before 1910, Overtoun Institute provided, on a small scale, secondary education to the brighter students only.[31] It was not until 1940 that the institution had a new curriculum aimed at providing academic development to all young Malawians.[32] They had new subjects like history, geography, general

[29] Nyambosie, "The establishment and contribution of the Overtoun Institute," 28.
[30] Nyambosie, "The establishment and contribution of the Overtoun Institute," 29.
[31] Banda, *A Brief History*, 89-90.
[32] Banda, *A Brief History*, 92-92.

science, English language, English literature, mathematics, Bible knowledge, Chichewa, Latin, and Chitumbuka in the northern region. This affected primary school subjects because they had to conform to the secondary school curriculum.[33] The shared spaces at the Institute helped to bring all students with different interests together to focus on the community problems.

The establishment of the Overtoun Institute brought in several developments such as education, agriculture, health, architecture, commerce, and evangelisation. The acquired skills helped many people to come up with sustainable development in their respective homes.

By 1914, Overtoun Institute catchment comprised of the following stations, schools, and teachers:

Station	**Schools**	**Teachers**
Livingstonia	40	66
Bandawe	122	149
Ekwendeni	86	169
Loudon	190	392
Karonga	72	82
Mwenzo (Zambia)	104	250
Tamanda (Zambia)	64	88

[33] Banda, *A Brief History*, 95.

Chitambo (Zambia)	51	107
Chinsale (Zambia)	41	80
Kasungu	123	235
Total	900	1618

This Institute was also a refugee place for those who were running away from the slave trade (colonialism) and their slave master.[34] In 1898, a group of 28 slaves comprised of men, women, and children were rescued from Mpemba. Mlolo, Mpasa, Kabanda, and Albert of Overtoun Institute brought the captured slaves to Dr. Laws by transporting them by canoe.[35]

The Institute also brought unity among the northern region ethnic groups (Tonga, Tumbuka, Ngoni and Ngonde), which were rivals. Through the Institute, all the academically successful northerners were brought together for training in various fields and skills. This gave a new outlook, a sense of shared experience, and a unity of vision where are instrumental for sustainable development. It is this unity that later led to the formation of the Native Northern Association.[36] The education obtained from the Institute led to the ordination of African ministers,[37] who maintained their good character and self-respect to the extent that their employers from different countries testified to Dr. Laws on how his students stood for Christ against evil conditions.

On 23 August 2003, Overtoun Institute became the University of Livingstonia and was authorised to open a college of education. Later, another campus was opened at Ekwendeni with a theological college and colleges of nursing,

[34] Nyambose, "The establishment and contribution of the Overtoun Institute," 30.
[35] Livingstone, *Laws of Livingstonia*, 187-188.
[36] McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi*, 265.
[37] Livingstone, *Laws of Livingstonia*, 196.

commerce, social science, and human rights. Today there is also at Kanin'gina that offers business studies, journalism, agriculture, and more.

Church of Central Africa Presbyterian: Nkhoma Synod

The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) of South Africa is the founding mother of Nkhoma Synod. According to Pauw, the synod's story began "on 28 November 1889 [when] Rev Andrew Murray and Rev Vlok arrived in Dowa, Malawi."[38] This date is taken as the foundation day of the Dutch Reformed Church in Malawi. Before that time, "the early Livingstonia Missionaries who came from Scotland (Presbyterian church) had established a mission post in 1875 at Cape Maclear, which they handed it over in 1894 to the Dutch Reformed Church whose bases were at Mvera, Livulezi and Malembo."[39] According to Pauw, "Murray's goal was to convert the people to Christ,[40] while the goal of Rev Scot of Blantyre was to civilise the native in a Christian way by influencing social, moral, and political life."[41]

About these different approaches, Pauw writes, "this reflected what the DRC would also regard as priorities: First emphasis was a spiritual and secondly was on village schools, whereby many young people, even older ones, were reached out by the teacher-evangelist. During the first five years, the mission opened five more schools."[42] "The first one started in 1890 at Mvera, where the best four male students were sent to Livingstonia Mission for further education."[43]

"At first, the school work grew slowly due to fear and suspicion that children might be captured and sold into slavery."[44] Weller and Linden argue that, "education was also affected by the masked *Nyau,* who stopped children from going to school, such that out of 186 schools in Chewa areas, 80 had lost pupils, and the schools near Likuni were actually closing due to poor attendance."[45]

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[38] Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi*, 65.
[39] Kalilombe, *Doing Theology at the Grassroots*, 76.
[40] Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi,* 60.
[41] Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi,* 60.
[42] Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi*, 63.
[43] Phiri, *Women, Presbyterian and Patriarchy*, 44.
[44] Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi*, 68.
[45] Weller and Linden, *Mainstream Christianity,* 104.

The number started growing when they discovered that their fears were baseless. The first boarding facilities to be built were of the boys who were twenty in total by November 1890.[46] According to Phiri, the girls' boarding school started in 1895 after the arrival of Miss Martha Murray, a sister of Andrew Murray.[47]

Besides education, Andrew Murray also began a small medical practice. Pauw records how "between May and August 1890 Murray treated 200 patients."[48] The mission work started expanding with the coming of more missionaries from South Africa. Phiri records the following new missionaries: Rev. Robert Blake came in 1892 and started Kongwe Station; Rev. William Murray came in 1894 and took over Livulezi Station from Livingstonia in 1895; Mr. A. van der Westhuizen, who laid the foundation of the mission's agricultural teaching; and Miss Martha Murray, the first lady missionary.[49]

"In 1897, a group of nineteen converts, thirteen men and six women, were baptised by Andrew Murray. Among the women was the youngest, Sarai Msumwa (15 years), who was later called Sarah Lingodzi Nabanda."[50] According to Phiri,[51] Sarah Nabanda was the first woman in the Nkhoma Synod to work at Nkhoma Hospital. As a sign of appreciation for her special contribution, a girl nurses home at Nkhoma Mission was named after her, which she officially opened it on 8th December 1961. The missionaries' work in this synod was what Pauw calls a "comprehensive approach" in that they were not only targeting the spiritual part of a person but also the physical part.[52]

This is how Pauw summarises the work of the missionaries:

The work of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission in Malawi had reached great heights. An intensive medical, educational, industrial and agricultural

[46] Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi*, 68.
[47] Phiri, *Women, Presbyterian and Patriarchy*, 44.
[48] Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi*, 69.
[49] Phiri, *Women, Presbyterian and Patriarchy*, 44
[50] Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi*, 60-70.
[51] Phiri, *Women, Presbyterian and Patriarchy*, 45.
[52] Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi*, 86.

programs were developing and the printing press was in full production with amongst others a magazine in Chichewa appearing regularly. In 1905 there were five mission stations, 152 village schools with 16,125 pupils and 683 teachers. The figure in 1914 rose to 669 schools with 43,292 pupils and 1,715 teachers. There was a total communicant membership of 5,071 with 8,370 catechumen people.[53]

Seventh Day Adventist Malawi

Malawi Adventist University (MAU) is an institution of higher education owned and operated by the Malawi Union Conference of Seventh Day Adventists (SDA) located in the Central Region of Malawi. "The education work started in 1902 when the General Conference purchased the Plainfield mission, which was renamed *Malamulo* in 1907, meaning 'Commandments' because the mission was associated with teaching people about the commandments of God."[54] According to SDA historian T. Katseketera, "education was one of the greatest needs of the people in Malawi. Hence, the church spread its influence through the territory by establishing mission schools and out schools (village schools), which first taught people how to read and write."[55]

A second mission school was opened at Lake View under the leadership of Pastor Roman Chimera in 1936. Thereafter, the number of mission schools and out schools increased. These were autonomous, operating independently from the government.

In 1947 Malamulo Nursing School, which offered health-related certificate programs, was opened.[56] Those who wanted to obtain a diploma and degree were referred to Solusi College in Zimbabwe, which was offering business, education, and agricultural degree programs. It was because of this, in 1995, the Malawi Union Mission session meeting at Malamulo Mission expressed the need to establish a college in Malawi to enable Adventist youth locally access Christian higher education. This dream was realised in 2000 when the Malawi Union Mission executive decided to run a four-year degree program under the name Malawi Adventist College. Courses were offered in business

[53] Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi*, 86
[54] Katseketera, *History of Seventh Day Adventist*, 1
[55] Katseketera, *History of Seventh Day Adventist*, 3.
[56] Katseketera, *History of Seventh Day Adventist*, 6.

administration (accounting and marketing), education, theology, and religious studies. The student hostel was built with money collected from the thirteenth Sabbath offering.[57] In 2008, Malawi Adventist College changed its name to Malawi Adventist University and began offering degree programs. Today MAU is one of the best-known private universities in Malawi, and most of its graduates have good prospects for employment upon graduation due to their integrity and competence.

As of 2020, MAU offered degrees in education, theology, religious studies, agriculture, agri-business management, medical laboratory science, and public health; diplomas in clinical medicine, biomedical sciences, and nursing; and a certificate in clinical medicine.[58] MAU also offers one post-graduate program: a Master of Science in Global Community Enterprise which prepares post-graduate students to work alongside indigenous people to implement sustainable enterprise and community-building projects. In collaboration with the Adventist University of Africa in Kenya, MAU also offers degree programs in accounting, human nutrition, and community development.

Churches of Christ

The Churches of Christ started schools from the onset of their mission at Gowa where they first turned the building that had formerly been used to grade tobacco as a classroom.[59] A 1932 report reports on a new school being built to replace the inadequate former tobacco grading building. The new school contained five rooms. Thiesten says that the"Churches of Christ considered schools with high priority and education was part of the mission philosophy."[60]

For this reason one of the main tasks of Georgeson upon his arrival in Malawi in 1931 was to train efficient teachers for their primary and senior schools. There were 59 children in primary school and 96 in the senior level. Thiesten continues to say that school-trained teachers could go for a higher-level certificate in English or a lower-level one in the vernacular. Students had both class and "hands-on" work. Those who completed the English certificate were particularly in high demand and were recruited as teachers. Students were

[57] Katseketera, *History of Seventh Day Adventist*, 9.
[58] Katseketera, *History of Seventh Day Adventist*, 11.
[59] Thiesten, *Churches of Christ*, 1.
[60] Thiesten, *Churches of Christ*, 2.

also prepared socially so that they would be expected to fit into mid-20th-century Malawian society.[61]

The Context in Which Mission Schools Operated in the Past

The Political Situation

Before independence Malawi was called Nyasaland and it was under the British protectorate. During this British colonial rule the political landscape was associated with indirect rule such that African political participation was very minimal. Political power was in the hands of the colonial governor and European settlers who worked with the local chiefs and traditional leaders. During this era, Africans were not allowed to vote and political associations were restricted or banned. After independence in 1964, Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda, a beneficiary of mission schools, became the first president and dominant political figure. The political environment was marked by fear, surveillance and suppression of free speech.[62]

The Role of Mission Schools

Pre-Independence

During the colonial rule mission schools were the primary source of education for Africans. The mission schools educated the early elite who led the independence movement against a restrictive colonial regime. Even though the missionaries pioneered the education, the curriculum was controlled by the British government, forcing the missionaries to remain loyal to the colonial administration.

Post-Independence

When Kamuzu Banda became the president, the government controlled education such that mission schools ceased to work autonomously. Instead, they came under strict state regulations; they operated under an authoritarian one-party state. Even the curriculum was adjusted to emphasise loyalty to the state and to the political party. Students were also expected to show respect to the president and the Malawi Congress Party. While mission schools

[61] Thiesten, 4.
[62] Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, 25.

continued to provide education, it was within a tightly controlled political environment.[63]

Church State Relationship

The relationship between the church, the mission schools, and the government was complex, ranging from initial support and mutual support to open tension and persecution as Banda's regime became more oppressive. Throughout both the colonial era and the Banda regime, political expression was strongly constrained. Initially several religious leaders supported Banda, seeing him as a unifying leader. However, things changed as his regime became more repressive.[64] Under his leadership, any form of political dissent from religious leaders or educators was dangerous.

Even so, the legacy of mission schools in Malawi is deeply intertwined with the country's political history because the mission schools were instrumental in creating the educated class that fought for independence, even though the schools had to navigate the challenges of the colonial government and later the authoritarian Banda regime.

The Current Situation of Mission Schools

All the denominations describe above have mission schools to this day. These schools have grown, not only in number, but also in terms of impact on society. Roman Catholic mission schools are among the best in Malawi in terms of academic performance. They consistently score higher than both their fellow mission schools and public schools. They are followed by Presbyterian (CCAP) schools and then Seventh Day Adventist schools. During personal interviews with the following general secretaries: Rev. Brian Kamwendo of CCAP Nkhoma Synod, Rev. Dr. William Tembo of CCAP Livingstonia Synod, Rev. Anderson Juma of CCAP Blantyre Synod, Fr. Samuel Malamulo of the Roman Catholic Church, and Dr. Rubani of the SDA, all agreed on that reason way Malawian parents prefer mission schools against public schools. They said its mainly because of character and discipline. Mission schools, beside academic

[63] Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, 112.
[64] Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, 206.

excellence, are also serious about moral behaviour. Hence, they produce students who are academically sound and morally good.

Currently, there is a very good relationship and mutual agreement between the mission schools and the Malawian government. For example, in some mission schools, the mission provides the infrastructure while the government provides teachers and books. These schools are called grant-aided. Both mission schools and public schools are supervised by the same government agency, the National Council for Higher Education.

The Significance and Impact of Mission Schools To Sustainable Development Goals

The 2030 SDGs and Agenda 2063 are hinged on improving human lives; protecting the environment; balancing economic and social life; ending poverty and hunger; helping people realise their full potential in dignity, health, and equality; fostering peace, justice, and freedom from fear and violence; enjoying a prosperous life; and developing partnership and solidarity. None of these SDGs can be achieved in Africa without the contribution of the mission schools because the success of these goals is rooted in the foundation of education, which is also one of the pillars of Agenda 2063. The champion of education in Africa is none other than the church, which is the custodian of the mission schools and thus very instrumental towards the achievement of the 2030 SDGs and Agenda and 2063.

Mission schools have satisfactorily built individuals into responsible citizens with good character and skills that are useful to society. Being educated is one thing; having an education with good character is another. Malawi as a nation does not just need educated people to achieve the 2030 SDGs and to attain the vision of Agenda 2063. It needs educated people who have good character, and the mission schools are best placed to do that.

Malawian mission schools create opportunities for the marginalised and reinforce advantages for the relatively privileged. For example, in 1895, the

Overtoun Institute created jobs for 1,200 labourers. The number increased to 3,500 by 1903.[65] It has increased tremendously to date.

The 2030 SDGS want to realise people's full potential in dignity, health, and equality. None of these can be realised if a person is still dependent on another person. It is not until one gains independence that full dignity, health, and equality can be realised. They are only attained only when you have your own means of earnings, either through working or through business. By creating opportunities for the marginalised and less privileged, mission schools contribute towards the achievement of the 2030 SDGs and Agenda 2063.

Ross claims that mission schools have helped to bring the sense of unity and true peace among those who were once great enemies.[66] As Livingstone explains, before mission schools, the regions of Malawi were divided along ethnic lines, but after the establishment of the mission schools, all of the students were brought together.[67] Mission schools in Malawi are interdenominational and intercultural. Thus friendships have developed regardless of the region or religion from which one comes. These friendships have even led to intermarriages, which have, in the long run, fostered unity and peace—aspects which are key to the realisation of 2030 SDGs.

Mission schools have also facilitated the introduction of political reforms and African social identities through their curriculum. In these schools, students were and are still learning courses like political science, liberal theology, psychology, philosophy, and English, which are eye-openers to those who were once considered illiterate. These courses politically motivate students, teachers, and the local community and also help them realise their God-given human rights. These courses equipped people with the knowledge and instruments necessary to fight for their rights against any attitudes that demean or oppress Malawians to the extent that they cannot realise their dreams.[68]

[65] Livingstone, *Laws of Livingstonia*, 198.
[66] Ross, *Christianity in Malawi*, 35.
[67] Livingstone, *Laws of Livingstonia*, 188.
[68] Kiruki, *Women's Liberation*, 7.

Mission schools are also offering nursing programs as well as post-graduate programs in science. These are highly motivating health care services. The attainment of healthy lives and well-being is one of the 2030 SDGs and a key component of Agenda 2063. Without good health care services, these goals cannot be achieved. Mission school education in nursing and their advanced degrees prepare students to work alongside others to achieve sustainable development in the health care sector.

The 2030 SDGs will also only be attained through the development of skills, something for which the mission schools are well-known. For example, since 1876 Blantyre mission schools have been offering integrated technical education intended to produce skilled workers for both the church and the community. The mission has produced many carpenters, bricklayers, printers, shoemakers, agriculturalists, and domestic workers. Development of these skills make people self-reliant.

The establishment of mission schools has also improved agriculture, which in turn has helped people have sustainable development in their respective homes. The 2030 SDGs and Agenda 2063 both talk about ending poverty and hunger. A primary reason why the mission schools teach about agriculture is to impart the knowledge and skills necessary to end hunger.

Mission schools are also highly recommended for graduating students with integrity and moral values. Livingstone says that "the good reputation of the boys and girls spread far such that even governments, planters, and merchants offered them jobs as soon as they finished their training."[69] There is a Chewa proverb which says, *Khalidwe liposa chuma*, which means "good character is more important than money". Mission school students gain good character and self-respect. The 2030 SDGs and Agenda 2063 are achievable only when their implementers are God-fearing and trustworthy, people with integrity and good morals. A nation whose citizens are involved in stealing, corruption, backbiting, laziness, and the like cannot achieve any of the 2030 SDGs. Therefore, the mission schools as incubators of character, remain the backbone and the enabler of 2030 SDGs and Agenda 2063.

[69] Livingstone, *Laws of Livingstonia*, 198.

The challenges confronted by the 2030 SDGs and Agenda 2063 can mainly be addressed by the mission schools. For example, the challenge of environmental degradation can be mitigated by following agricultural rules of land preservation, which the mission schools offer in one of its courses. The challenge of poverty and inequality is dealt with through inclusion of both girls and boys in the enrolment of students in these mission schools. There is a local saying, *ukaphunzitsa mwana wa nkazi waphunzitsa mudzi wonse*, means "when you teach a girl child, you have educated the whole clan". Population growth and resource depletion are other challenges which mission schools have the potential of dealing with it. Graduates from the mission schools are conversant in resource management. The schools offer courses in nursing that also address issues of family planning. For these reasons, the Malawian Government has no other option but to vehemently support the mission schools if it is indeed serious in attaining the 2030 SDGs and Agenda 2063.

Challenges and Limitations of Mission Schools

Just as challenges are everywhere, so even the mission schools have not been spared. Below are some of their challenges and limitations.

Unequal opportunity to education between boys and girls: Unequal access to education due to gender disparity results in unequal human capital between men and women. In most African Schools, which is also true of mission schools, there are still more boys than girls.[70] For example, in 1943 only 13% of the student population were girls.[71] Not only was access to education unequally shared between the sexes, but also the nature of the school curriculum was markedly different for boys and girls.[72] Boys, apart from literacy, arithmetic, and Bible study, also learned vocational skills such as carpentry and masonry which prepared them for wage employment. But for girls, "beside basic literacy and numeracy [the schools] also emphasised domestic skills with the goal of marriage and motherhood."[73] Consequently, women became practically excluded from employment in the labour market. As a result,

[70] Reichmuth, "Islamic Learning", 45-46.
[71] Musisi, "Colonial and Missionary Education."
[72] Musisi, "Colonial and Missionary Education," 188; Leach, "African Girls," 340.
[73] Musisi, "Colonial and Missionary Education," 190.

demand by parents for their daughters education diminished as it yielded no visible economic advantage.

Financial Problems: Most of the mission schools that were sponsored and run by missionaries are now experiencing financial problems. Most missionaries left and handed over the churches and schools to the local people, who are struggling to support the schools financially. Staff members are sometimes not paid their monthly salaries for several months or, if they are paid, only receive half-salaries. This directly or indirectly impacts the effectiveness of teaching and the performance of the students. For this reason, the government is encouraged to support these schools. Failure to do so will have a negative impact on the process of achieving sustainable development. Of late, the Malawian government has tried to assist some church schools, whereby the church provides the buildings while the government provides teachers, salaries, and textbooks. These schools are called grant-aided.

Inadequate staff members: Most of the mission schools do not have enough qualified staff members. This is mainly a result of insufficient funds for salaries. Having qualified teachers demands increased salaries. The inadequacy of more qualified teachers jeopardises the standards of education offered to students. Consequently, the nation may end up having unqualified graduates with very minimal impact on sustainable development.

Old Buildings: Most of the mission school buildings are very old. Some are as old as one hundred years. The buildings that were built and left by the early missionaries are still being used for classes and teacher houses today. This is a risk to both the students' and teachers' lives because they can collapse at any time. If these institutions are struggling to support their staff members financially, how much more are they struggling to maintain adequate infrastructure?

Insufficient textbooks: Most mission schools do not have enough or updated textbooks. Unfortunately, the Malawian government, which is supposed to provide these books, is also struggling to provide books to its own schools. If the government and grant-aided schools are struggling to have sufficient books, how much more will these self-supporting mission schools also

struggle? Unfortunately, even the few books that are mostly in these schools, their libraries are also outdated.

Conclusion

The study has established and discussed various aspects of mission schools. Their presence cannot go unnoticed among the contemporary generation. The study has covered the history and the impact of mission schools on sustainable development, the context in which mission schools operated, current situation of mission schools, challenges and limitations of mission schools. The first missionaries had a passion for helping the indigenous people acquire some knowledge and skills. This was well achieved, thus one cannot talk about the 2030 SDGs and Agenda 2063 without mentioning the impact of these schools. Their main outstanding achievements and contributions have been highlighted, including ending poverty and hunger, fostering peace and justice, providing a prosperous life, and blending academic information, skill development, and the cultivation of good character. Mission schools have also created opportunities for the marginalised to go to school and reinforced advantages for the relatively privileged. They have brought unity and peace among the students, facilitated the introduction of political reforms and African social identities through their curriculum, produced committed people in health care services, and improved agriculture which has, in turn, helped people come sustainable in their own homes.

Despite these remarkable achievements and contributions, the mission schools have also faced several challenges that have affected their performance. Issues like unequal opportunity to education between boys and girls, financial problems, inadequate staff members, old buildings, and insufficient textbooks. As such, the Malawian government is encouraged to support these institutions by providing qualified teachers, adequate salaries, and updated textbooks. Despite these challenges, the mission schools still have great potential to continue contributing towards the achievement of the 2030 SDGs and the realisation of Agenda 2063.

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