

Cross Party Group on Malawi

Thursday 21st May 2015

13.00 – 14.30

Scottish Parliament

Committee Room 4

AGENDA

Co-Conveners: Liam McArthur MSP and Michael Russell MSP

1. Sarah Boyack MSP
2. Alex Fergusson MSP
3. Liam McArthur MSP
4. Michael Russell MSP
5. Janey Andrews (Strathclyde University)
6. Charlie Bevan (Scotland Malawi Partnership)
7. Helen Brown (Glasgow Caledonian University)
8. Ken Currie (CAPDM)
9. Moira Dunworth (Mamie Martin Fund)
10. Jackie Farr (Scotland Malawi Partnership)
11. Lore Gallastegi (The Open University in Scotland)
12. Bob Gilmour (Glasgow Caledonian University)
13. Pat Hiddleston (SMP member)
14. David Hope-Jones (Scotland Malawi Partnership)
15. Brian Kerr (The Soko Fund)
16. Emily Mnyayi (Scotland Malawi Partnership)
17. Vincent Mzembe (SMP Member)
18. Elspeth Pentland (SMP Member)
19. Colin Reilly (SMP Director)
20. Janet Roberts (Glasgow Caledonian University)
21. Jeremy Roebuck (The Grow Movement)
22. Ken Ross (Scotland Malawi Partnership)
23. Jane Salmonson (CBM UK)
24. Paula Smith (The University of Edinburgh)
25. David Stevenson (SMP Member)
26. Jeanette Stevenson (Royal College of Physicians Edinburgh)
27. Jack Thompson (SMP Director)
28. Ben Wilson (SMP Director)
29. Iain Woodhouse (The University of Edinburgh)
30. Alexander Woodhouse (Linlithgow Academy)
31. Paxton Zoie (Mzuzu University)

1. Welcoming remarks

Minutes were approved from the previous meeting, and apologies were noted from Colin Cameron, Elaine Smith MSP, Siobhan McMohan MSP, Richard Simpson MSP, Siobhan McMohan MSP, Peter West and Mario I Aguilar.

2. Briefing on response to Scottish Express article

David Hope-Jones from the SMP gave a brief response to the recent article published in the Scottish Express on the Malawi programme highlighting the strength of all-party support in the wake of this article. David thanked Michael Russell MSP (SNP), Liam McArthur (Scottish Lib Dems), Sarah Boyak (Scottish Labour), Alex Fergusson (Scottish Conservatives) and Patrick Harvie (Scottish Greens) for their active support.

3. Online and distance learning between Scotland and Malawi

The University of Edinburgh

Dr Paula Smith, Senior Lecturer and Online Education and Academic eFacilitator at the University of Edinburgh gave an introduction to their distance learning programme through their MSc in Surgical Sciences.

Malawi has the world's lowest physician to patient ratio, with one surgeon per 1 million people (Quershi et al., 2013) and doctors who pursue further training overseas may fail to return, further contributing to the shortage in healthcare workers. By delivering core academic content online, the University of Edinburgh can augment in-the-workplace training without the need to remove doctors from their own country. Crucially, this results in minimal disruptive impact on surgical service delivery in Malawi during the period of further study.

Fifteen Malawian surgical trainees have been admitted to the MSc programme since 2010/11. The MSc in Surgical Sciences adds value to the healthcare professional training needs in Malawi and the Masters dissertation projects contribute to medical research outputs. Surgical trainee graduates subsequently play an important role in teaching some of the basic sciences to students on the BSc General Surgery for Clinical Officers (non-medically qualified) in Malawi.

CAPDM Ltd

Ken Currie, Director of CAPDM shared their company's experience with distance learning. Ken called for all higher education content to be developed for distance learning from the outset and outlined the importance of having good repositories for online content.

Vincent Mzembe

Vincent Mzembe, representing the Association of Malawians in Scotland gave an overview of his research into distance learning in Malawi. He outlined some of the constraining factors, including the lack of available funds, challenges with the power supply, connectivity issues and a lack of capacity at the 12 national libraries. However, Vincent's research found that this is an important growth area in Malawian higher education, and an area in which further investment was merited.

University of Strathclyde

Dr Sue Ellis, Professor of Education, spoke about the Malawian PhD Students who are involved in a distance learning programme at Strathclyde University. Their experience proved the importance of strong communication channels for the successful management of such a programme and highlighted challenges using Skype for this purpose.

Mzuzu University

Paxton Zozie, Senior Lecturer from Mzuzu University gave an overview of their online distance learning programme. Mr Zozie is currently at Strathclyde as part of his PhD looking at *"integrating e-Learning technologies into conventional teaching and learning in the school and higher education system with scarce resources: a case study of Mzuzu University."*

Mzuzu University's academic focus is on 'development oriented' courses. The campus is in 'full use' throughout year with 3817 students enrolled in 2014/15 (2257 undergraduate (Face-to-Face), 1373 undergraduate (ODL) and 187 postgraduate (Face-to-Face)). The major challenges in the university are (i) Infrastructure; (ii) staff levels and training; (iii) operational funds and (iv) postgraduate research.

The university is increasingly having a strategic focus on Open and Distance Learning (ODL). In particular they are looking at establishing 4 satellite centres (funded by the World Bank), which will provide support services for ODL learners, including: Classrooms for teaching (including by video-conference), Practical classes in laboratory-based sciences, web-based and complementary learning materials, and access to supervisory support for self-study.

The benefits of this include ease of access for students, savings in costs and time and a resource for local education institutions/community.

Mzuzu University hopes to expand the numbers of ODL students to 2,800 (currently 1373) by the end of 2019.

Scotland Malawi Partnership

Charlie Bevan, Scotland Malawi Partnership, launched the 2015 Scotland-Malawi Higher and Further Education Directory.

5. Any other business and closing remarks

David Hope-Jones informed members of the group that the Beit Trust is keen to increase the number of its scholarships from Malawi hosted at Scottish universities. Scottish universities interested in hosting a Beit-funded scholarship should contact the Scotland Malawi Partnership for further details.

Date of next meeting: 2nd September 2015, 5.30 – 7pm in Committee Room 4