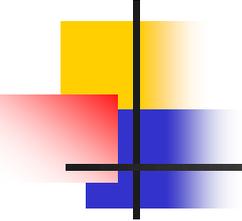


# Research in Higher Education and Quality Assurance

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Presentation at the National Conference on  
Quality Assurance for Higher education  
Institutions in Malawi

***Boniface Dulani,***  
***Political & Admin Studies Dept. Chanco***  
Sunbird Nkopola Lodge  
9 August 2017

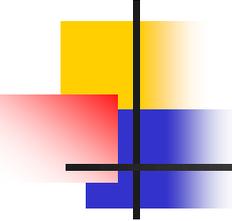


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**“Clearly no university is worth its name unless it is involved in research.”**

Prof. George Saitoti, then Kenyan Minister of Education, Science and Technology, speaking on a Parliamentary motion on **equity, quality and relevance of tertiary education** in Kenya

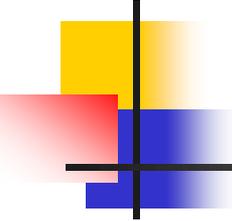
- Hansard, 19 October 2005, pp. 3812



# Contextualizing research and quality assurance in higher education

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- Research is becoming a core element of the mission of quality higher education, both at the global and national level.
  - The extent to which higher education institutions are engaged in research activities has a key role in determining the status and the quality of these institutions and the contribution which they make to economic and social development.



# Current trends in research in HE

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- Most 'world class' universities are seeking to distinguish themselves by raising research to the same level as teaching
- It is difficult to publicly highlight good or even great teaching, but is easier to do with research
- Competition among elite universities has placed research on high pedestal
- Support, promotion and evaluation of research is receiving increasing weight in university policies and rankings

# Recognition of Research in University rankings

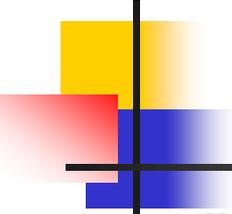
## **Times HE World University rankings**

- Teaching (learning environment) – 30%
- Research (volume, income and reputation)- 30%
- Citation (research influence) - 30%
- International outlook (staff, students and research)- 7.5%
- Industry outcome (knowledge transfer)- 2.5%

## **QS World University Rankings**

- Academic reputation (expert ratings based on teaching and research quality) – 40%
- Academic citations (research outputs) – 20%
- Faculty-student ration- 10%
- Employer reputation- 10%
- International faculty ratio /international student ration- 10%

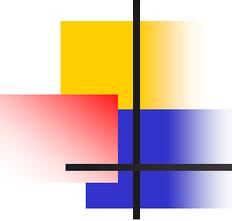
*\* Times ranking excludes all universities "if their research output is fewer than 200 articles per year over the preceding five years)*



# Recognition of importance of research in HE institutions in Malawi

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- *“After several decades of developmental emphasis being placed in primary and secondary education, there is growing recognition that tertiary education offers a critical and essential route to economic growth, international competitiveness and accompanying development. **This in turn requires a renewed emphasis on research.**”*
  - UNIMA strategic Plan, 2012-2017
- *“**Research is the backbone of national development.** Competitiveness and prosperity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be based on technological knowledge and innovation. The role of research and innovations in economic development cannot therefore, be overlooked. The University will therefore focus on research, consultancy and outreach... ”*
  - LUANAR Strategic Plan, 2012-2017, pp5



# Positioning research in Malawi HE institutions, cont'd

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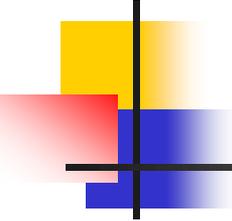
*"Teaching and research are complementary activities. **Research contributes to the quality of teaching in the University and vice versa.** It also results in the creation of new knowledge which has to be disseminated to the public for the purpose of improving societal well-being and spearhead development,"*

- MZUNI, Directorate of Research and Publications

*"To be a world class centre of science and technology education, **research** and entrepreneurship,"* MUST Vision

*"We are committed to high standards of research, writing, thinking and application as a means of preparing students to engage with a global community,"*

- MAGU Core Values



# Why should HE institutions prioritize research?

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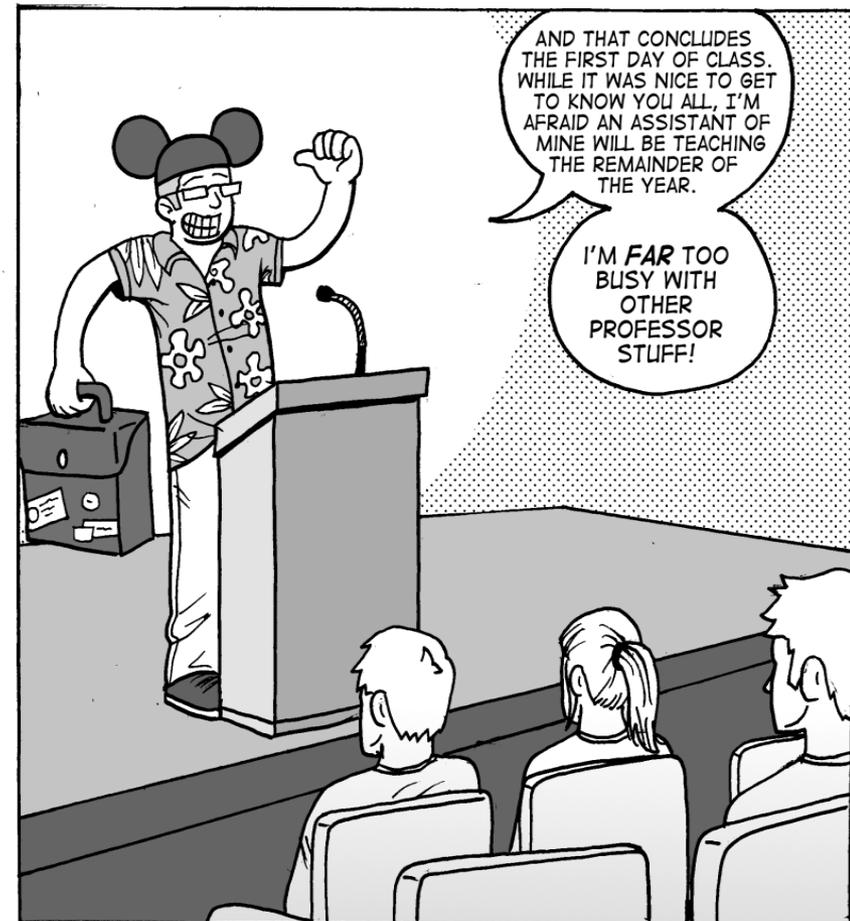
- Maintain cutting-edge curriculum and create stimulating learning environment
- Sustain academic and professional reputation in knowledge-based economy
- Align academic activities with development needs of country/region
- Retain and improve position in an increasingly competitive field of Higher Education
- Attract and retain high quality faculty and students

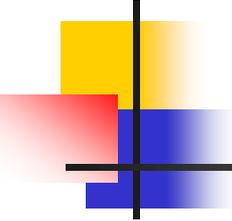
# Challenges of Research in HE in Malawi (and beyond)

- Workload tensions- teaching, research, consulting and administrative responsibilities

*"Professors work long days, on weekends, on and off campus, and largely alone. Responsible for a growing number of administrative tasks, they also do research more on their own time than during the traditional work week. The biggest chunk of their time is spent on teaching..."*

Boise State University Study on Faculty workload





# The challenges of HE research

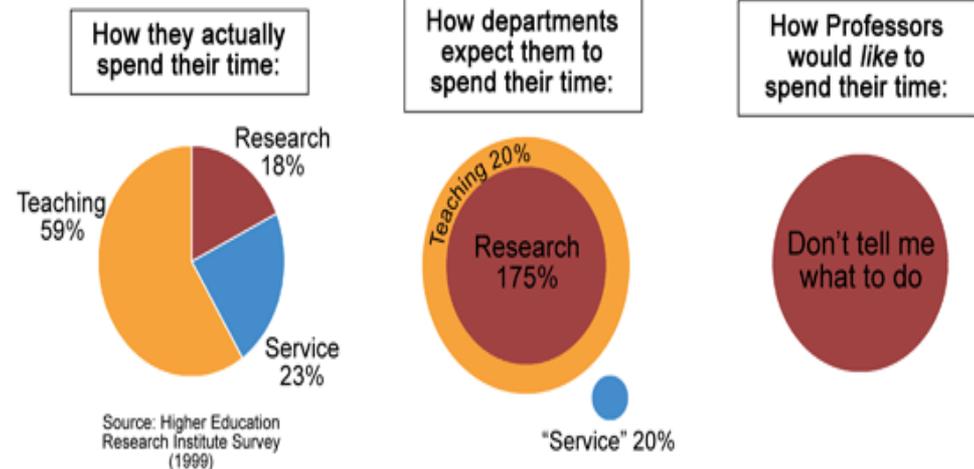
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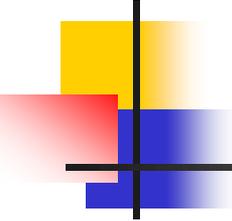
- Failure to operationalize research policies
- Insufficient funding for homegrown research
- Research work mostly done at personal level and time
- Outdated research equipment
- Lack of incentives to promote research culture - we can survive in the system without research
- Political threats
- Brain drain
- Research centers that are essentially consultancy bureaux.

# Research Support

- Allocate more time aside from teaching and services
- Targeted research grants
- Promotional opportunities based on research
- Reward departments/ Universities based on their research outputs
- Sabbatical leave/ Post-graduate opportunities
- Recruit more staff

## HOW PROFESSORS SPEND THEIR TIME

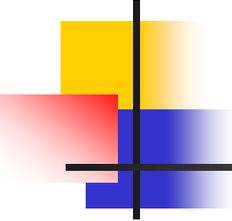




# Research Support cont'd

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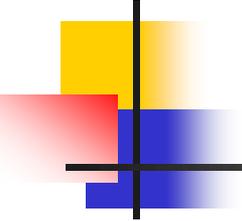
- In physical sciences, research support should include well equipped laboratories and graduate students
- Make available research tools at the institutional level (including library and ICT resources including data analysis tools)
- Allocate funds and time for research
- Facilitate collaborative research, both locally and internationally, including compensating time for research proposal development
- Facilitate research partnerships with the private sector



# Concluding thoughts

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- If university research has the chance to make any significant contributions to society, our educational systems will have to rethink the role, structure, financing, and evaluation of research.
- Else, the high-minded rhetoric is already on its way to become wasteful expenditure of scarce resources with highly questionable benefits



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Thank you for your attention