



## **School of Education**

### **EDTECH@UNIMA2025: CALL FOR PRESENTATION AND EXHIBITION PROPOSALS**

**Theme: *Leveraging Mobile Technology for Quality and Inclusive Learning in Malawi***

#### **Abstract**

The EdTech@UNIMA2025 conference and exhibition aims to tackle the pressing challenges highlighted in the 2024 Education Sector Performance Report. These challenges, outlined in alignment with the National Education Sector Investment Plan (NESIP 2020-2030) and Malawi Vision 2063 (MW2063), include declining Net Enrollment Ratios in primary education, high repetition rates, low transition rates from primary to secondary school, and significant secondary school dropout rates. Mobile technology offers a promising solution, with 44.6% household mobile phone ownership and 56.6% individual ownership reported in MACRA's 2023 National ICT Survey. While internet access remains limited (18% for individuals), the widespread coverage of mobile networks provides a strong foundation for digital learning. This year's event will bring together educators, policymakers, and technology experts to explore how mobile technology can bridge the digital divide and enhance access, quality, and relevance across all education sub-sectors, contributing to NESIP (202-2030) goals and advancing Malawi's broader development agenda.

## **Overview of EdTech@UNIMA**

EdTech@UNIMA is an annual conference and exhibition organized by the School of Education at the University of Malawi as part of its outreach and community service initiatives. Launched in 2023, the conference provides a platform for stakeholders to explore innovative educational technology (EdTech) solutions to address Malawi's pressing education challenges across all sectors. These include Early Childhood Education (ECE), Primary, Secondary, Higher Education, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TEVET), Teacher Education, and Lifelong Learning. Specifically, EdTech@UNIMA seeks to:

- Facilitate the exploration and adoption of EdTech solutions to improve access, quality, and equity in Malawi's education system.
- Provide a collaborative space for educators, policymakers, researchers, and technology innovators to share knowledge, experiences, and best practices.
- Foster networking and partnerships to support sustainable EdTech initiatives in Malawi.

As a community service initiative, the conference is funded through contributions from external stakeholders, a nominal registration fee to ensure accessibility, and support from the University.

## **Background and Rationale for EdTech@UNIMA2025**

The 2024 Education Sector Performance Report highlights progress, challenges, and achievements in the education sector in line with the National Education Sector Investment Plan (NESIP 2020-2030) and Malawi Vision 2063 (MW2063). For example, while gross enrollment rates for primary education exceed 100% for both genders, the Net Enrollment Ratio shows slight declines, reflecting difficulties in retaining children within the appropriate age group for primary education. High repetition rates across classes further underscore the need for targeted support for struggling learners. In secondary education, dropout rates remain a significant challenge, with recommendations for constructing additional schools and establishing open secondary schools to increase access.

Meanwhile, research has demonstrated that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can improve access to and the quality of education. The UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2009) defines ICT as a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to transmit, store, create, share or exchange information. However, Malawi faces significant challenges in fully harnessing the

potential of ICT, including inadequate infrastructure, limited teacher capacity, and a weak policy framework. For instance, the Ministry of Education's 2024 statistics reveal that only 2% of primary schools offer ICT lessons, and just 3% are connected to the internet. These figures underscore the need for targeted investments to bridge the digital divide, particularly in underserved areas. Mobile technology, in particular, offers pathways to provide learning resources, interactive activities, and real-time communication, especially in contexts with limited infrastructure. The current expansion of mobile technology presents an opportunity to enhance access to quality and relevant education in Malawi. According to the 2023 National ICT Survey by the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA), mobile phone ownership at the household level is 44.6%, and individual ownership is 56.6%. Furthermore, while internet accessibility remains low—18.4% at the household level and 18% among individuals—the coverage of mobile cellular networks provides a strong foundation for digital learning.

The EdTech@UNIMA2025 conference and exhibition aim to bring together stakeholders from the education, technology, and policy-making sectors to explore how mobile technology can be harnessed to address quality, relevance, and access challenges in Malawi's education sector. Exhibitions and paper presentations are expected to respond to how mobile technology can contribute to the outcomes of the NESIP (2020-2030). Broadly, the NESIP seeks to increase access to and improve the quality of learning in all education sub-sectors. In line with this broader goal, papers and exhibitions should respond to specific challenges in any education sub-sector, from Early Childhood Development to Higher Education, as well as informal and non-formal learning. For example, proposals can focus on how mobile technology can address the issue of retention and targeted support in primary education; provide innovative solutions to reduce repetition rates; or increase access to secondary education through initiatives like open secondary schools.

### **Conference and Exhibition Sub-Themes**

1. Innovative mobile solutions for classroom learning
2. Bridging the digital divide in education.
3. Mobile technology for retention and support in education
4. Expanding access to secondary education
5. Partnerships for digital education transformation
  - o Collaboration between government, private sector, and NGOs to enhance mobile technology integration in education.
6. Equipping teachers and students with the skills needed to effectively use mobile technology for education.
7. Policy frameworks for mobile technology in education
8. Mobile technology for lifelong and informal learning

- o Reaching out-of-school youth and adult learners through mobile platforms.
9. Monitoring and evaluating the impact of mobile Learning

## **Guidelines for Exhibitions and Paper Presentations**

### **Exhibitions**

Exhibitors are invited to showcase solutions, tools, and programmes leveraging mobile technology for enhancing education in Malawi. The following are the guidelines:

1. Exhibits should align with the conference theme, sub-themes, and the educational challenges highlighted above.
2. Categories may include but are not limited to:
  - o Apps designed for teaching, learning, and administrative purposes.
  - o Tools or content that support interactive, mobile-based learning.
  - o Hardware solutions for improving access and connectivity in education.
3. Exhibitors should prepare a visually appealing and interactive display.
4. Submit a **one-page detailed proposal**, including the exhibit's objectives, target audience, and expected outcomes.

### **Paper presentations**

Scholars, practitioners, and policymakers are invited to submit papers using the following guidelines:

1. **Relevance and scope**
  - o Papers should address one or more sub-themes and propose practical solutions or highlight best practices.
  - o They should respond to specific challenges such as retention, repetition rates, or dropout rates in education.
2. **Format**
  - o Abstract: Maximum 300 words, clearly outlining the objective, methodology, findings, and relevance to the theme.
  - o Full Paper: Maximum 4,000 words, following APA 7<sup>th</sup> Edition Referencing Style.
3. **Presentation format**
  - o Oral presentations (face to face or online) should not exceed 15 minutes, followed by a 5-minute Q&A session.
  - o Presenters may use slides, videos, or other media to enhance their delivery.

**Note:** Quality papers will be considered for publication in the Malawi Journal of Education and Development.

### **Evaluation Criteria of Papers and Exhibitions**

1. Contribution to knowledge or innovative solutions.
2. Applicability of findings or solutions in the Malawian context.
3. Clear articulation of ideas and alignment with the conference theme.

### **Submission of Paper and Exhibition Proposals**

- Papers must be submitted in MS Word format using Times New Roman, 12-point font, double-spaced.
- Include author/presenter details: Name(s), institutional affiliation(s), and contact information.
- Send the proposal as an email attachment to [edtech@unima.ac.mw](mailto:edtech@unima.ac.mw), copy [cmsangazi@mie.edu.mw](mailto:cmsangazi@mie.edu.mw) and [nphiri@unima.ac.mw](mailto:nphiri@unima.ac.mw)

### **Registration**

To ensure accessibility while covering essential costs (meals and venue), the following fee structure will be applied:

- Students (presenters or exhibitions): **Free** (proof of student status required).
- Professionals (Individual Participants): **MWK 25,000.**
- Organizations (Up to 3 representatives): **MWK 60,000.**

**Note:** Participants will be responsible for their transport and accommodation costs.

### **Important Dates**

- Submission deadline for papers and exhibition proposals: **30th March 2025**
- Notification of acceptance: **25<sup>th</sup> April 2025**
- Conference dates: **12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> May 2025**

For additional information, including sponsorship and partnership opportunities, registration details, access to Ministry of Education reports for reference, and submission procedures, please contact the Conference Secretariat at [edtech@unima.ac.mw](mailto:edtech@unima.ac.mw), with a copy to [nphiri@unima.ac.mw](mailto:nphiri@unima.ac.mw) and [cmsangazi@mie.edu.mw](mailto:cmsangazi@mie.edu.mw).