



Science, Innovation could spur economy

By Taonga Sabola,

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Economic and academic experts on Wednesday agreed that embracing science, innovation and technology could be critical in uplifting impoverished Malawi into the league of developed countries.

The experts made the observation during the third Eminent Speaker Series organized by the MwAPATA Institute in collaboration with the National Planning Commission (NPC) and Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) under the theme, 'Role of Science and Technology

in Economic Transformation: How can Malawi's Academic and Research Institutions Contribute?'

The session featured United States International University (USIU)- Africa Vice Chancellor, Professor Paul Zeleza, Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST) Vice Chancellor, Professor Address Malata, MwAPATA Chairperson, Professor Richard Mkandawire and NPC Director General, Dr. Thomas Munthali, among others.



MALATA- Universities should now stop looking at just production of graduates

The experts also agreed the need for government to commit enough resources towards research and development so that institutions of higher learning could generate evidence-based research which could help propel the country's development.

Mkandawire said Malawi will not develop by parachuting knowledge from outside.

He said it is critical that the country develops its own institutions that will be the drivers of transformation.

"I think days are gone when technologies were dropped from outside the country and continent. Days are gone when expertise were only drawn from outside and think on behalf of the country or Africa."

"We have a big reservoir of experts who can drive our own transformation, Mkandawire adding that, the country needs to start tapping on Malawians in the diaspora to contribute to the country's transformation agenda.

On her part, Malata said universities are critical in promoting research technology and innovation, in addition to producing graduates.

"Moving forward, universities should now stop looking at just production of graduates but looking at items that can make the country different. For example, now with COVID-19, what innovations can universities come up with, instead of importing, we use our own universities to come up with solutions." Malata said.

She observed that universities need to be well resourced and share the findings to improve the lives of Malawians. "If you don't have resources for capital development or even innovation, you can hardly see any progress," Malata said.

Commenting on the matter, Munthali said universities started very well in as far as research and innovation are concerned because they were well funded. He said in the past, there was some research funding that could help them research on a number of areas, apart from teaching.

"It is a plea to government, as well that they should set aside resources for our research institutions as well as academic sector because if they are able to do research that would help the country grow, then the agenda of wealth creation and self-reliance that we are

talking about, will really be defined by Malawians unlike having donors deciding what we should research on as a country.” Munthali said.