

## **MANEB SUCCESSFULLY ADMINISTERS 2021 EXAMINATIONS**

2021 has been full of activities with tight schedules but very rewarding for MANEB. This year alone MANEB has processed and successfully administered five leakage free examinations. The year started with the re-administration of the 2020 MSCE examinations in January followed by administration of Primary Teacher Certificate Examinations (PTCE) in August. From 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> September Primary School Leaving Certificate of Education (PSCLE) examinations were administered. The third examinations were the Junior Certificate of Education (JCE) examinations which have been re-introduced after a break of four years following their abolishment in 2016. The re-introduced examinations were administered from 28<sup>th</sup> September to 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021. Closely following were MSCE examinations which commenced from 26<sup>th</sup> October to 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2021

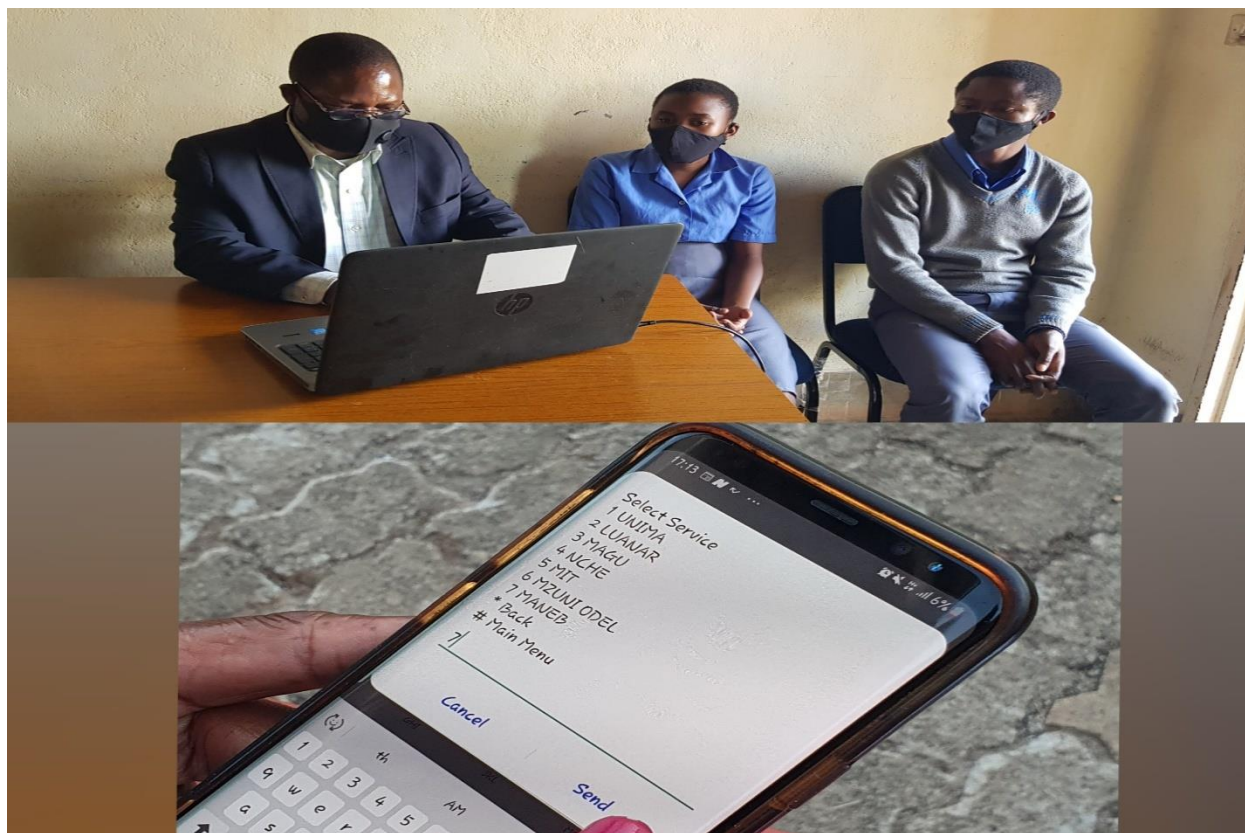
### **Registration of candidates**

Preparations for the re-introduced Junior Certificate of Education (JCE) examination started in 2020 with distribution of sample papers to MANEB approved examination centers. The sample papers were intended to familiarize students and schools with the format of the papers as they prepared for the examination.

Registration of candidates for PSLCE, JCE and MSCE examination candidates run concurrently from 22<sup>nd</sup> February to 16<sup>th</sup> April 2021. The registration process in all education districts, except Zomba Urban and Rural, involved capturing of students' details on excel templates that MANEB had provided to schools through their respective District Education Managers' (DEMs) offices.

While the rest of the districts were capturing candidates details on excel templates the Zomba district schools piloted online registration and e-payment of examination fees. MANEB embarked on the e-system trials to prepare for migration from manual registration of candidates in an effort to address challenges experienced over the years due to the manual system. The challenges include wrong capturing of candidates' details and misappropriation of examination fees by school administrators. The e-system pilot was generally a

success and plans are underway to scale up this innovation by including a few more districts in subsequent years.



*Online registration in Zomba and payment of examination through National Bank Mo626*

Total number of candidates who registered for the 2021 PSLCE examinations was 281,329, a drop from 302,985 of 2020. For JCE, 135,619 candidates registered. Candidature for the 2021 MSCE examinations was 128, 993 against 154,147 of 2020.

### **Awareness campaigns**

To enhance transparency and accountability in the administration of examinations MANEB undertook several initiatives such as conducting awareness campaigns and holding meetings with different categories of stakeholders. Prior to the administration of the examinations, MANEB in-house drama group toured several districts in the country sensitizing candidates and teachers on their expected roles during the administration of examinations. One of the strong messages conveyed through the drama performances was that it is everyone's responsibility to safeguard national examinations.



*MANEB dramatists during one of their performances at Nyungwe Primary school*

The awareness campaigns continued throughout the examinations period through radio programs and jingles which centred on several issues among them roles of examination administrators, candidate code of conduct, reporting examination malpractices and use of the toll free line.

### **Meetings with stakeholders**

In view of the pivotal role which stakeholders play in administration of examinations, MANEB organized a series of meetings with some of its stakeholders.

In March 2021 Education Division Managers(EDMs), Directors of Education Youth and Sports (DEYS) District Education Managers(DEMs) , were for the first time, brought together, under



one roof to review administration of 2020 examinations and strategize for 2021 examinations. Issues that were discussed included remuneration for science practical teachers and identification of examination administrators.



*MANEB Executive Director, Professor Dorothy Nampota, making a point at a meeting with EDMs, DEYs and DEMs*

Cognizance of the paramount importance of examinations security in ensuring credible examinations, for the first time in the history of MANEB, its management team met with Malawi Defence Force (MDF) and Malawi Police Service (MPS) at a joint meeting in June 2021.



*Participants listening to a presentation during security agencies joint meeting with MANEB officials*

In August a cross section of stakeholders among them District Directors of Education, Youth and Sports, Education Division Managers, City Assemblies, Private Schools, Teachers Unions met with MANEB officials to share notes on preparations for administration of the 2021 examinations. All stakeholders meetings were fruitful and MANEB was assured full support.



*Stakeholders posing for a group photo with MANEB officials during stakeholders' meeting*

On 7<sup>th</sup> September 2021, MANEB conducted a press conference which was presided over by the Minister of Education, Honourable Agnes NyaLonje who was flanked by the Deputy Minister of Education, Honourable Madalitso Kambauwa Wirima, MANEB Board Chairperson, Professor Al Mtenje, and senior officials from Ministry of Education Headquarters. The main objective of the presser was to inform the public, through members of the press on how prepared MANEB was to administer the 2021 PSLCE, JCE and MSCE examinations. This was one of the most well attended press conference. It drew together 27 reporters from both print and electronic media houses.

### **Provisions for special needs candidates**

One of the core values of MANEB is equitability and fairness. MANEB, therefore, makes a deliberate effort to provide fair assessment conditions to all candidates to enable them demonstrate their level of attainment. In this regard for every examination, special arrangements are made for Special Education Needs (SEN) candidates and such was the case for all 2021 examinations. The arrangements included provision of braille or large print examination papers, assigning of special invigilators to blind and hearing impaired candidates and provision of additional time to some categories of the candidates depending on their disability.

### **Examinations Security**

MANEB remains resolute to uphold the integrity of national examinations by enhancing examinations security. During the entire processing and administration of the examinations, security was provided by both MPS and MDF who each carried out mutually agreed roles. MDF officers were entrusted with security for examinations storage facilities while MPS officers were assigned to provide security in examination centres. Major role of security personnel in examination centres was to assure security for examination papers, candidates and examination administrators.

## **Orientation for examination administrators**

To enhance professionalism and uphold the integrity of examinations, this year MANEB took a different approach in the orientation of examination administrators. Orientation of the administrators was solely done by MANEB, a departure from the previous practice where MANEB mostly relied on the District Education Offices to do the orientation using the cascade model.

The PSLCE administrators had their own separate orientations unlike in the past where they were combined with administrators for other levels of examinations. Examination administrators were also given contract agreement forms which they were required to sign and submit to MANEB.

## **Three tier monitoring system for examinations administration**

A three tier monitoring system starting at the district level to national level was established for more effective and efficient monitoring of the examinations administration. All matters at the district level were handled by District Education Managers in liaison with MANEB District coordinators. District Coordinators were reporting to Regional Coordinators who would channel the matters to the National Coordinator, MANEB Executive Director. The system helped improve coordination and communication with and among administrators.

Ministry of Education officials and the Honourable Agnes NyaLonje, the Minister of Education and her deputy Honourable Madalitso Kambauwa Wirima also demonstrated their unwavering support to MANEB through their participation in the monitoring exercise. Both Ministers expressed satisfaction with the manner in which the examinations were being administered, the support given to special needs candidates and examination centres' adherence to all Covid-19 preventive measures.





*Photo credit – Ministry of Education: Candidates writing PSLCE examinations*



*Photo credit- Ministry of Education :Minister of Education, Honourable Agnes NyaLonje monitoring administration of MSCE examinations*



## **CHALLENGES**

### **a. Fake examination papers on social media**

Prior to the administration of the MSCE examinations the social media was awash with fake examination papers, sending fears across the nation that the 2021 MSCE examinations had leaked. MANEB issued a press release on 23<sup>rd</sup> October assuring the public that the examinations had not leaked and warning the public and the candidates to desist from buying and circulating the fake papers

### **b. Examination malpractices**

Some candidates were arrested for examination malpractices during JCE and MSCE examinations administration.

At Dzaleka CDSS in Dowa, 3 JCE candidates were caught with reference materials during examinations. At Pact Private Secondary school in Blantyre, one JCE candidate from Limbe CDSS was also found with a reference material. Further, at Elangeni Private Secondary school in Mzimba South, a JCE candidate was arrested after he removed four pages from a Social studies paper and sneaked into a bush to be helped with answers by his two form 4 accomplices. In Mzimba North, at Euthini Secondary school, a JCE candidate was arrested for being found with a cell phone, which had some notes, in an examination room.

During administration of MSCE Geography paper 1 examinations one Open Distance Learning (ODL) candidate at Cobbe Barracks CDSS in Zomba was caught with a smart phone. The candidate beat the system by hiding the phone in his under wear such that invigilators could not detect it as he was being searched before entering the examination room.

### **c. Disruption of examinations by natural disaster**

Stormy rains blew roofs off facilities that Ching'ombe CDSS and Chadza 1 CDSS were using for administration of MSCE examinations. The unfortunate incident occurred during the administration of MSCE English Paper 1 on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021. The English scripts for the entire population of candidates at the two schools were completely soaked

in the rains and three candidates sustained minor injuries. The candidates were treated as outpatients at Nathonje Health Centre.

In response to the calamity MANEB quickly issued a press release on 2<sup>nd</sup> November assuring the public and the candidates that a deferred English paper 1 examination would be administered to all 171 affected candidates. The deferred examination was administered on 11<sup>th</sup> November.

#### **d.Tear gas incident**

On 8<sup>th</sup> August 14 MSCE candidates at Chinamwali Secondary school failed to write Chichewa paper 2. The candidates were either rushed to hospital or they ran away from the examination centre after being affected by the tear gas which had been fired at Chinamwali market to quell riots following mass protests organized by Minibus Owners Association of Malawi (MOAM).

### **CONCLUSION**

The smooth and successful administration of the 2021 high stakes examinations is attributed to several factors among them timely provision of the necessary resources by government, unwavering support from the Ministry of Education and all stakeholders and innovations that were introduced to enhance examination administration systems.

MANEB is grateful to all stakeholders, its staff and all examination administrators, including the men and women in uniform, for working tirelessly to protect and uphold the integrity of the 2021 national examinations.

***MANEB preserving the integrity of national examinations!***