Japan as Malawians see it

Stories of the 1st cohort of the Japanese Teacher Training Scholarship

What is the Japanese Teacher Training Scholarship?

This is a Scholarship offered by the Japanese Government to Malawian secondary school teachers who wish to conduct research on school education at Japanese universities. Upon successful completion of the 1.5 year teacher training course (6 months for the Japanese language courses), scholarship recipients are awarded a certificate. They must then return to Malawi immediately and resume their teaching work, and put into practice what he/she has learned from the training.

Who is eligible ?

You must be a graduate of universities or teacher training schools and have worked as a teacher at secondary school/ teacher training school (secondary school level) excluding universities, for more than five years as of April 1 in the application year. You must be under the age of 35. This is the third year of offering this scholarship to Malawi. The 1st cohort had 7 teachers, 2nd cohort 8 teachers and 3rd cohort is under process. Follow us on www.facebook.com/EmbJapan.Malawi to get the latest information.

Aaron William Chimkono from Luwinga Secondary School in Mzuzu:
Hokkaido University of Education (Major: Microcomputer Systems)





Snowy but enriching experience

I lived in Hokkaido, the northernmost prefecture. It was a very amazing and enjoyable place to live, but adapting to the heavy snow and ice was somehow hard. Eventually, I learnt how to keep warm and survive in winter, and also learnt how to ski as seen in the photo.

As a teacher, I had never programmed a microchip due to inadequate knowledge and materials in Malawi. However, through heavy practice of electronics and computer programming in my studies, now I can program a microchip as well as design and print circuit boards. In Malawi, I hope to establish a regional network forum for ICT Educators to help improve the knowledge and skills of computer studies teachers who haven't gone through any ICT training.

Zelipha Banda from Katoto Secondary School in Mzuzu:
Hyogo University of Teacher Education (Major: Biology Education)





There was never a dull moment in Kobe

I stayed in Kobe for the Japanese language courses for the first six months, then I moved to Kato city for my Biology education. Comparing the two cities, I loved Kobe city better because the transportation is so convenient with access to three major train stations. There was never a dull moment in Kobe: I enjoyed karaoke, climbing Mt. Rokko, and just walking around the city.

On the other hand, Kato city is very quiet and rather a countryside setting. However, I had more opportunities to interact with Japanese families and learn more about their lifestyle. We cooked Japanese dishes like Okonomiyaki (Japanese pizza) and Gyoza (Japanese dumplings) together.

Chisomo Favor Kaphaizi from Kalibu Academy International School in Blantyre:
University of Miyazaki (Major: Mathematics Education)



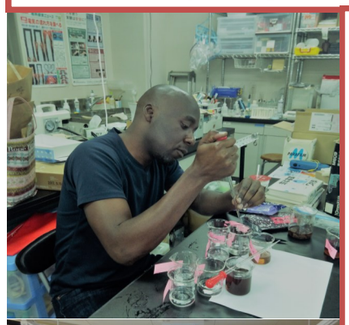


Fell in love with Japan right away

Initially, I thought Japanese people are reserved and would not interact with foreigners. However, my perception changed as soon as I arrived at the airport. A representative from my university warmly welcomed me and helped me with my luggage. I like the honesty, kindness and sincerity of the Japanese people despite the language barrier. I remember one time I did not realize that I had lost my wallet with money in it, until I got an email from my university that somebody had delivered my missing wallet to the police.

My final trip to Kyoto, the historical capital city, was memorable. I enjoyed seeing old temples and shrines. Many people like to wear kimono (traditional attire) there and I experienced wearing it in Kagoshima at a special Japanese cultural class as seen in the picture.

Vincent Mwagomba from Chinkhuti CDSS in Lilongwe:
Tokyo Gakugei University (Major: Science Education)





Using locally available materials for better science education

I was conducting my research at a laboratory and I had seminars where we were presenting different research papers and had discussions. Through my studies, I developed science teaching materials from simple and locally available resources. Using beans and egg plants as pH indicators is an example. In that way, even students from schools without proper science laboratory equipment can have a chance to study and practice science.

I was privileged to visit a number of junior high schools and interact with students. We played games, had meals, and hiked together. I also had an opportunity to tell them more about Malawi. It was really a great experience sharing my country's culture and tradition to students who knew very little or nothing about Africa, let alone Malawi.

Cliff Arnold Chinyama from Nguludi Secondary School in Chiradzulu:
Naruto University of Education (Major: Mathematics Education)



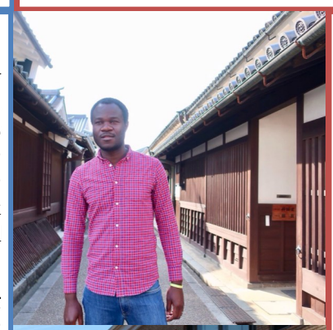


Amazed by productivity and patriotism

Japanese are patriotic and they work really hard to advance the national development. They keep the streets very clean, follow rules and use high quality materials in their projects. They value time and being late is a taboo. I trained myself to always arrive at work or school 10 minutes before the scheduled time.

I did a comparative study of math teaching materials used in Japanese and Malawian junior high schools. I then developed model lessons on how to use Geogebra software. The new Malawian math syllabus includes computers and graphing calculators, but doesn't explain how to use them. I hope my lesson plans will act as eye openers to fellow teachers so they can incorporate technology in math education. I also continued to study Japanese and successfully passed the Japanese Language Proficiency Test in the level N4 !

Yamikani Mkwapatira from Chitedze CDSS in Lilongwe:
Osaka Kyoiku University (Major: English Education)





Classes in Japan are much more engaging

I had many opportunities to observe classes in different high schools. I noticed interaction among students themselves and with their teachers is much more active, comparing with Malawi. Classes are designed to be fun and not intimidating to students. I will implement such elements in my classroom to make the classroom environment more engaging.

I visited castles in Osaka and Himeji to learn more about the Japanese history. Each castle has a unique and fascinating history of how a ruler of the time decided to build it to protect its people and land from opponents. I also experienced the Kobe Luminarie, a very famous illumination festival. It was very beautiful with all the streets and buildings lighted up and decorated. It is always a major attraction that had over 3 million people in 2016.