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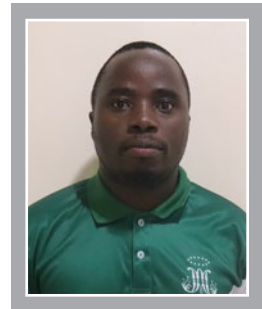
## Presence as my educational style: my Malawi experience

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“Living in inner harmony, in unbroken contact with oneself, sustained by a solid spirituality, allows the leader to be a serene and reassuring presence among others”.

(Marist Voices, chap.2 - Br. Ernesto Sánchez)

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**I** work as an educator in one of the schools in Malawi where approximately 400 young people attend. There are also students from around the school who are part of our extended apostolate and contribute financially to the school.

The aim of our school is to serve young people who are from the surrounding area where it is located. Despite that, there are some other boys and girls who come from other districts of the country, who wish to get a quality education from our school and parents expect more from the brothers and the teachers.

My experience with these young boys and girls is unique in the sense that, each one of them comes from a different background and they must expect a lot from us.

In line with my leadership role, I take presence as my educational style, which should help me in my area of mission to better connect with the ideas and concerns of young people and promote close and respectful relationships. My presence should always encourage and motivate the young people that I administer, and this presence should show acceptance, respect, and appreciation. My experience has taught me that when I spend time with young people, they become open to me, and they share their joys and difficulties and their hope in so doing some really become better than before. Presence I take it as a tool as a leader among young people that would be of more life-giving to the society.

On the other hand, I listen to young people attentively, focused, listening receptively, persuading and articulating, and communicating ideas effectively. I try to listen to them and effectively engage

in helping them and all can become effective if they are empowered. I engage these boys and girls in different activities like debates, clubs, and dramas among others, as a way of listening for it is when these young boys and girls are given room to talk about what they are going through in their area of interest and surely, they become more open and I get to know more details and find a way of helping these young people.

In the school where I am working, there are some students who are involved in drug and substance abuse which is a challenge in my area of apostolate. These kinds of boys may cause some problems in school. This becomes a challenge when these boys are not interested in learning and they try to convince their friends to do the same. There are some who lack parental care, some going through depression, and some lack school fees just to mention but few. All they need is to be compassionate to them as servant leadership would ask to do.

In the school where I am teaching, I encounter complex situations and I make sure that I do not rely on pre-existing assumptions or have an outdated perspective and have that kind of habitual way of acting towards students. Most of the time my reactions to complex situations and challenges are judgmental, and not attentive, which is not good for a leader instead, I should react in a mature way with a stance of inquiry. Being attentive, understanding, curious, willing to listen, non-judgmental and being open to new solutions, and patient helps me to be an effective leader.

There are other activities that boys and girls are involved. One of the activities is the program that is called “Youth Empowerment”. This program involves students who come together and have debates, tailoring, and talking among others in order to make them busy rather than being involved in





other malpractice that might lead them into miserable lives. As a servant leader, I wish to have more such kind of activities for our boys like getting in touch with other Marist Schools in different parts world and how they live the dream of St. Marcellin and exchange ideas on how they overcome some challenges they face as young people.

All in all, there are challenges in the mission, but there are also many positive things that I cherish as a brother among young people. There are many achievements as a school that we are proud of, and people always unveil themselves to produce the best for society that's holistic education. As Marists of Champagnat let's keep fire burning in the mission.



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If you would like to share your ideas, reflections, or experiences about servant and prophetic leadership with the Commission as a result of these reflections, write to [fms.cimm@fms.it](mailto:fms.cimm@fms.it)

