



Gallus Academy

Advisory Committee Call Notes

Web meeting held: Tuesday, January 20, 2026 / 4:00- 4:45pm CAT (Central Africa Time)

The following Advisory council members were in attendance:

- Mavis Chirikadzi, ICPD
- Dr Joy Isa, ISED
- Denzel Mhepo, ICPD
- Dr Ngoni Madungwe
- Shamah Mawoko, ICPD
- Scott May, ICPD
- Peter Sibanda, ELISA
- Elisabeth Valerio, ICPD

Welcoming remarks & introductions: **BOLD ITEMS WILL BE COVERED DURING THE CALL.**

For a more in-depth briefing contact Elisabeth Valerio at evalerio@icpdprograms.org

Denzel Mhepo welcomed the committee members to the Gallus Academy Advisory Committee meeting. He mentioned that the agenda was sent via email and reminded the committee members that they can locate the agenda, past meeting notes and supporting documents for the meeting on the website www.icpdprograms.org, select "Committees" from the top navigation links and then select the Gallus Advisory Committee button to access the committee page.

Purpose of the meeting

- Denzel opened the discussion by outlining the purpose of the Gallus Academy Advisory Committee, emphasising the urgency of advancing and transforming education across the African continent. He noted that his recent conversations with Dr. Isa centered on both the current challenges within African education systems and the significant opportunities for meaningful improvement.
- He positioned Gallus Academy as part of the solution. An institution that aims to contribute to systemic change, with the Advisory Committee playing a critical role in guiding this vision and ensuring alignment with its broader objectives.
- Denzel then reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the Advisory Committee, highlighting that these are intentionally high-level in nature. He explained that members were carefully selected based on their depth of experience and proven expertise within the education landscape, enabling them to provide strategic insight and informed guidance.
- Importantly, he clarified that the Committee is not expected to take on operational responsibilities. Instead, its primary function is advisory, ie contributing knowledge, perspective, and expertise in the formation of a strong "brain trust." This collective will help ensure that Gallus Academy remains focused, relevant, and effective as it works toward building and transforming a Pan-African education system.

Elisabeth Valerio thanked Denzel for leading the committee's discussion and remarked on a few additional members who were not able to join us today:

- Hon. Rose Dube who is a Magistrate in Zimbabwe, a role model for students and African children who are coming up to be able to see a woman who is accomplished.



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- Mr Knowledge Chikundi who is an accomplished academic and is working to promote STEM access for students across Africa particularly in Zimbabwe which is where one of the first Gallus academy projects will be initiated. He has joined us as a committee member.
- Chief Nekatambe who is the Local Village Chief and community representative from the local community who is unable to join us via google meet but we often meet with him in person to discuss Gallus Academy.
- Elisabeth went on to acknowledge Mr Victor Mpala who is from the local community. Elisabeth has personally worked with Victor for more than 15 years in Zimbabwe. She stated that he played a role in helping us secure and establish the site for Gallus Academy.

Why Gallus Academy exists:

- Denzel guided the discussion by grounding the vision of Gallus Academy in its origin story. He explained that the initiative was sparked by direct engagement with local communities, including conversations with a village chief and other community leaders. These discussions highlighted the severe challenges families face in accessing quality education. In many cases, children are required to travel distances of up to seven kilometers on foot to reach the nearest school, journeys that are not only physically demanding but also unsafe, particularly for children under the age of 13 or as young as 5 years of age. He emphasised that, beyond access, many existing schools fall significantly short of acceptable educational standards.

Building on this context, Denzel articulated the purpose of Gallus Academy as a response to both access and quality gaps. He described the Academy as a catalyst for change within Africa's education sector, an institution that will lead by example while also serving as an incubator for inspiration, curiosity, and a renewed culture of learning.

He further explained that the model will begin with a focus on rural communities in Zimbabwe, where the need is most acute, and will scale over time across the continent. The ambition is for Gallus Academy to evolve into a Pan-African institution that delivers an internationally recognised standard of education.

Denzel concluded this segment by reinforcing that this vision is precisely why the Advisory Committee has been convened. He noted that the collective experience and insight of its members will be critical in shaping, refining, and realizing the long-term vision of Gallus Academy.

What we work on (*deliverables, activities, projects, initiatives*)

Work Completed to Date

- Denzel explained that the most important step has been groundbreaking of the proposed site including approval from local city council for the site which is in the Magoli area, a rural village within the Hwange region.
- Denzel also mentioned how the Gallus Academy team is now working with the Ministry of Education to get approval for building the school.

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Other milestones achieved include

- Social media accounts set up for the school
- A [website](http://www.gallusacademy.com) has been established at www.gallusacademy.com
- Formation of the Gallus Academy Advisory Committee
- Groundbreaking at the Magoli Campus on 28 February 2025 in a ceremony that brought together multiple sector people including local stakeholders and local councillors.

2026 Plans

- Following Denzel's remarks, Elisabeth guided the next portion of the discussion by welcoming and formally acknowledging Victor Mpala for his longstanding contribution to the Gallus Academy initiative. She highlighted his pivotal role as a bridge between the project team and the local community, noting that for nearly eight years he has worked closely with community members and elders to advocate for the establishment of a school in the area.

She emphasized that his efforts were rooted in addressing a critical challenge: young children traveling long and often unsafe distances, unaccompanied, to access education. Elisabeth underscored that Victor's persistence and commitment were instrumental in building trust within the community and advancing the vision of a local school.

Elisabeth further noted that through his leadership and determination, the project successfully secured 10 hectares of land, with formal approval from both the community and the local council for the development of Gallus Academy. She acknowledged that this milestone would not have been possible without his dedication and sustained engagement.

She then outlined the planned development approach for Gallus Academy, explaining that the institution will initially launch with primary school education, with a phased expansion to include secondary education and potentially further levels over time.

In closing, Elisabeth highlighted the school's proximity to a tourism area, noting this as a strategic advantage. She pointed out the potential to engage visitors and travelers as supporters of the initiative, creating opportunities for broader community involvement and contribution to both the school and the surrounding area.

- Denzel went on to present the first phase of the project, which aims to enroll 420 students in total for grades 3, 4 and 5. 360 of these students will be paying tuition and 60 local students will be awarded scholarships.

The model provides for 35 students per class, 12 classrooms and 6 dormitories with 70 beds each for student. Separately, staff housing will also be provided. Construction is set to begin in 2026 with the aim for the school to open during the first term in January 2027.

Phase 2 of the school's development will encompass the rollout of grade 6 and 7 classes. Then Phase 3 and 4 we provide for secondary level scholars.

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How we work (*people, planning & process*)

Mission And Vision for Gallus Academy

Denzel mentioned that the mission and vision for Gallus Academy are outlined on the new website. The **mission** is to establish affordable, high quality schools and provide a learning environment that enables our students to become confident, compassionate and capable individuals who excel

Our **vision** is to expand access to quality education across Africa and to create a boundless future for our students.

Gallus academy will be partnering with ICPD for purposes of oversight and strategy.

Target Learners and Timelines

Denzel guided the discussion toward defining Gallus Academy's target learners and enrollment approach. He reiterated that the school will operate on a dual-access model: primarily serving fee-paying students from well-resourced families, while intentionally creating access for high-potential students who would otherwise be unable to afford quality education.

He emphasised that a key focus will be on students from rural communities who currently lack access to strong STEM-based education, as well as gifted and high-potential learners whose circumstances limit their opportunities. These students will be supported through a structured scholarship program designed to ensure that talent and potential are not constrained by financial barriers.

Denzel noted that this blended model is central to Gallus Academy's identity, combining excellence, inclusion, and sustainability, where fee-paying students help enable broader access and impact.

He concluded by indicating that detailed timelines for rollout, admissions and scholarship allocation will be developed and shared in the next phase of planning.

Curriculum Positioning: Standards, Identity & Legitimacy

Denzel guided the conversation into curriculum positioning, inviting Dr. Isa to share her perspective. Drawing on her doctoral specialisation in curriculum instruction and assessment, Dr. Isa emphasised that the foundation of Gallus Academy's educational model should prioritise three core areas: literacy, competency-based learning and digital competence. She noted that when students are strong in these domains, they develop the ability to self-direct their learning and adapt to a wide range of subjects and future opportunities.

She further highlighted the importance of integrating entrepreneurship into the curriculum, referencing experiences from West Africa (particularly Nigeria) where entrepreneurial skills are widely practiced within the informal sector. Dr. Isa suggested that formalising this type of training within the school environment would empower students, especially those from rural communities, to innovate, structure their ideas, and build sustainable small businesses. This, in turn, would support financial independence and strengthen family and community livelihoods.

In addition, she underscored the value of incorporating STEM education as a critical component of the curriculum. She noted that early exposure to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics



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would significantly expand students' pathways as they progress into secondary and tertiary education.

Overall, Dr. Isa positioned the curriculum as a tool not only for academic achievement, but for equipping students with practical, future-ready skills that enable independence, innovation, and long-term opportunity.

Forward agenda

- **Tues, 19 May 2026** - Gallus Academy Advisory Committee Meeting