

**COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE FOURTH SUMMER
INSTITUTE ORGANIZED BY THE IFE INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED
STUDIES(“OAU”), HELD VIRTUALLY ON ZOOM ON JULY 20th – AUGUST
1st, 2020**

INTRODUCTION

The Ife Institute of Advanced Studies (IIAS) held its fourth Summer Institute on 20th July – August 1st 2020. The theme of the Summer Institute Program was *“Exploring New Frontiers: Knowledge Creation, Collaboration.”* The Program was aimed at encouraging the participation of both senior and junior scholars in building a knowledge society focused on scholarship, teaching, research and service. The program was also aimed at fostering academic discussions around how to shape Nigeria’s and Africa’s future through scholarship and establishing a network of public intellectuals, academics, non-university intellectuals, Nigerian and African society thought-leaders, and civil servants. This year we were honored to host fellows and speakers who are spread out across the globe. We had participants from Nigeria, India, Canada, Ethiopia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, China, Ghana, Benin, Switzerland, Germany, United States, Kenya, Cameroon, Egypt, Liberia and Ireland. The fourth Summer Institute solidified the tradition of bringing research home to Africa, doing research for Africans and by Africans. The first three institutes were very successful and set a high standard for the Summer Institute moving forward. As a collaborative effort of African Scholars both resident in Africa and the diaspora and academic stakeholders across the globe, the IIAS through its multi-disciplinary approach sought to propel pre-doctoral and postdoctoral research to the next level by focusing on Africa’s most pressing issues, most crucially, the development of its intellectual and academic workforce. IIAS capitalized on its scientific network and key competences to intervene in building PhD capacity in Sub-Saharan Africa, the institute continues to make progress towards making opportunities available for young scholars to “go global” and become internationally competitive with their research and careers. An impressive number of senior scholars from Nigeria, other parts of Africa and globally renowned universities such as Oxford University, King’s College, Princeton, Harvard, University of Leiden, Wakeforest, Boston College and others, engaged a wide range of themes and issues designed to deepen the understanding of research and teaching mission in the academy as we explore new frontiers of knowledge creation, innovation and collaboration. As facilitators and participants, these scholars led discussions on various conceptual, methodological and theoretical topics central to their various fields of interest. The 2020 Summer Institute featured lectures, panels and discussions around the following themes: knowledge taxonomies, history and archival research, mentorship and networking, research methodology in Africa, the convergence between the science and the humanities, the research and writing process, Africa's responses to COVID19, academic writing, knowledge sharing and development cooperation between Africa and Asia, gender and the academy, and writing journal articles.

On the first day of the Institute, Prof. Adesina welcomed all participants from all over the world. The Vice Chancellor of OAU also welcomed all participants. He noted that the institute was established by the Visioneer, Professor Olupona in 2017 and that the Summer Programme was designed to be residential but COVID-19 had made this impossible. However, the virtual institute has made it more accessible and convenient for a lot more fellows. In his remarks, he noted that the goal of the institute is to foster innovative research that will advance theoretical, methodological concerns of our young scholars in the academy, particularly those in the humanities and social sciences. The summer school has in the last three editions attracted senior scholars from all over the world to lead and facilitate discussions that have helped in deepening knowledge and understanding research and writing. The VC appreciated the vision of Prof. Olupona and thanked him. Prof. Olupona in his opening address challenged the participants to think about the impact of COVID-19 on the future of the academy. He notes that the future of the academy is not as certain as we once imagined. From the traditional learning environment to the traditional classroom discussions, From the traditional way we accessed our professors and frequent interaction with others to the traditional ways we conducted our research and writing, the academy has radically altered. The past few months have forced us to ask ourselves questions like:- *What will the future look like? How will the academy change? How can we prepare our doctoral and postdoctoral candidates for an academy that will forever be changed by the pandemic? How can we build student capacity and ensure that they are globally competitive while remaining locally relevant? How will the academy overcome this crisis? Will our institutions heal? How will we overcome the challenges? What opportunities has the pandemic presented? How might we reimagine the future of the academy?* These are some of the questions he hoped to engage with during these two weeks. He noted that we seek to explore new frontiers of knowledge creation and push the boundaries of knowledge. He urged the participants to focus on Africa's most pressing issues, most crucially, the development of its intellectual and academic workforce. He also noted that the last three institutes have been very successful.

On his part, Mr. Innocent noted that since the structural adjustment programs of the 1990s, many have complained about the quality of doctoral programs but no one has done much. He congratulated Prof. Olupona for the excellent work. He noted that Ford Foundation greatly supports this initiative because it seeks to fill a major gap that exists insofar as empowering doctoral and postdoctoral researchers with the skills needed to make them better researchers who will address Africa's most needs. Mrs. Ibukun Awosika noted that the topic of the summer institute was very appropriate because in a post covid world we have to explore new frontiers. She reiterated that as Mr. Innocent Chukwuma had stated that Nigerians should stop complaining about everything and do something. All of us need to combine our talent to form a cluster of power to directly influence the processes and the solutions we seek. We need to explore new frontiers to solve the problems that we save. No one understands African problems better than we do. She stressed that we need to find African solutions to African problems. We need to rely on local content to make proper policies that are contextual and glocalized. The brightest minds from Harvard cannot necessarily find solutions to Nigerian problems. The essence of this project lies in addressing African problems through investing in doctoral and postdoctoral candidates. We hope that this investment will move beyond social sciences by building clusters of knowledge of power

and creating hybrid spaces where we can develop solutions that are practical and applicable to the local context.

Francis Egbokhare, in his keynote address titled, ***“Boundedness, Boundaries and the Illusion of Knowledge Taxonomies”*** argued that in addition to the issues raised by previous speakers, we need to focus on the context and boundedness. He noted that knowledge and reality are very dynamic. Therefore, interdisciplinarity is crucial to making sense of the interactions between knowledge and its application to reality. He noted that when we create boundaries in our minds, we create boundaries in our solutions. He noted that the old logic creates boundaries and the new logic that enables to work with others. We need to draw a link between the theoretical and methodological approaches and the adaptation to new situations. Look at the structures and how they relate to behavior and the purpose of the research. He argued that there is a disconnect between the vision of most universities and the vision on the ground and this is caused by the political differences and incongruencies which continue to go over the same failures. He argued that Humanistic management, principles of caring, openness, thinking globally and co-creating is key to the realization of the new logic.

Following the keynote address, the participants raised several questions regarding the future of the institute, capacity building, theoretical framework. All questions that set the foundation for the next two weeks. To close the first day, the fellows participated in a closed meeting where the members of the institute spent time getting to know the new fellows. The fellows were a record number of 200 participants. The highest number of participants the institute has had to date.

In the course of its deliberation, the Institute noted: -

1. THAT exploring new frontiers of knowledge creation, innovation and collaboration is critical in the post COVID-19 Africa.
2. THAT creating synergies between different disciplines and industries will ensure that we build a knowledge society that can be used to directly influence the processes that lead to the solutions to many problems we face in Africa.
3. THAT we must generate solutions to African problems using local knowledge, epistemologies and insights
4. THAT welcoming scholars from other fields like the physical and biological sciences, engineering and other STEM academic fields in the year 2020 will expand the transdisciplinary network of the Institute and enable us to explore strategies and innovative approaches that model best practices of scholarship in other parts of the world re-energizes and re-invigorates the University.
5. THAT innovative knowledge creation, collaboration and dissemination will create new ways to address the contemporary problems faced by Nigerians and other Africans.
6. THAT building clusters of integration between the diaspora knowledge and our local minds and creating high level networks would enable us to develop solutions that are

practical, applicable, and able to effectively solve problems for our people and solutions that are applicable

7. THAT sharpening and enhancing the capacity of scholars in the local context will enhance our African nations and empower young people to be better able to engage and build a new generation of scholars who are wealthy in the marketplace and ready to engage at a global level.
8. THAT interdisciplinarity is crucial to making sense of the interactions between knowledge and its application to reality.
9. THAT academic mentorship is the most phenomenal driver of academic globalization and networking.
10. THAT research in Africa must take into account African realities in their context and subvert knowledge hegemonies and hierarchies.
11. THAT academics in the arts and sciences must collaborate as the disciplines are linked by their promotion for human development, progress and prosperity.
12. THAT in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, digital learning should endeavor not to exclude students who are unable to procure the hardware needed to support remote instruction.
13. THAT encouraging multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary engagement can help strengthen the position of the Social Sciences and the Humanities debunking negative assumptions about them.
14. THAT sustained attention to thinking about how those in the Social Sciences and the Humanities do their work, sharpens the thinking of students and empowers new scholars to make innovative contributions to their respective fields.
15. THAT there is a need for African scholars to publish and disseminate their research widely.
16. THAT knowledge development, sharing and cooperation between China and Africa is critical in addressing current perceptions in the China-Africa relationship.
17. THAT networking and collaboration among scholars are critical to academic excellence and career success.
18. THAT theorizing on African epistemologies and applying lessons learnt will change the direction of policy by ensuring that policies are compatible with the social and political contexts in Nigeria, Africa and beyond.
19. THAT exposing young scholars to the craft and skill of academic writing and publishing will empower them to overcome the challenges facing scholars in Africa.
20. THAT exposure to global academic cultures on teaching, writing, publishing, mentoring and leadership is critical to the success of the young academic.
21. THAT interaction with colleagues and scholars from other institutions challenges scholars to think globally and to see their local struggle as part of a broader global issue.

In light of the observations made by participants the following recommendations were arrived at:

1. To hold an annual conference or a periodic training that will be handled by one or two senior scholars, who will now incorporate the younger scholars (fellows of the Institute) to do the planning. The conferences will focus on emerging issues arising from the summer institute.
2. To hold a periodic virtual lecture annually by any of the senior Scholars of the Institute.
3. To start a publication series. The 2017/2018 summer institutes will make up the first volume of the annals; and the 2019/2020 summer institute will make up the second volume of the annals.
4. To constitute an Editorial board to spearhead the publication series. The production should be limited to journals for the purpose of the academic rating system in Nigerian universities. The journal should also be Africa-based. Senior mentors will serve as editors to the journal.
5. To create consultancy services for the Institute in order to aid our involvement in national development better.
6. To send out periodic newsletters. The first newsletter will be sent out in a month or two.
7. Encourage continuous mentorship of the fellows beyond the Institute, particularly on how to publish in reputable journals, develop leadership skills, polish their grant and proposal writing skills and improve on their pedagogical approaches and teaching philosophies.
8. Urge senior faculty members to participate in the Summer Institute to reinvigorate their research and engage new innovations.
9. To start having our own permanent postdoctoral fellowships. About 1 or two annually who will be awarded a grant to be with us for a whole year.
10. To institute both online and physical segments of the Summer Institute in future programs.
11. Generate wider publicity for the Institute and launch satellite campuses of the Institute in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa.
12. Create avenues for the fellows to showcase their writing both locally and internationally.
13. To create synergy and partnerships between the Institute and governmental or non-governmental institutions in Nigeria.
14. Create thematic workshops designed to run contemporaneously within the scheduled activities of the Summer Institute.

CONCLUSION

The 2020 Summer Institute made major strides in solidifying its vision for training and equipping promising African scholars with skills, competencies and values that will place them at the cutting edge of scholarship and knowledge production. The Institute will continue to invest in a new generation of scholars, who will be globally visible and locally relevant. The Institute encourages African scholars to seize the opportunity to engage new methods and innovative research and challenge existing paradigms.

