

**COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE SECOND SUMMER
INSTITUTE ORGANIZED BY THE IFE INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED
STUDIES(“OAU”), HELD ON JULY 23rd – AUGUST 3rd, 2018, AT OAU,
ILE-IFE, OSUN STATE, NIGERIA.**

INTRODUCTION

The Institute of Advanced Studies (IIAS), Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile Ife held its second Summer Institute on 23rd July – August 3rd 2018. The theme of the Summer Institute Program was “*The Knowledge Society and the Challenges of Doing Research in Africa: Theoretical Perspectives and Methodological Approaches.*” The Program exposed participants to the fundamentals of research and scholarship in the Humanities and the Social Sciences with emphasis on global best practices, rigor and the internationalization of knowledge. It also sought to encourage the participation of senior and junior scholars in interdisciplinary research in various areas of knowledge and providing them with access to a strong infrastructure to carry out research in their fields. Furthermore, the Program was fostered deliberations on how to shape the country’s future, and establishing a network of non-university intellectuals, Nigerian and African society thought-leaders and civil servants.

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, 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 facilitators and participants, these scholars led discussions on various conceptual, methodological and theoretical topics central to their various fields of interest. They explored the application of various tools of research in the fields of humanities and social sciences, networking techniques and professional ethics. Facilitators included Professors from departments of Religious Studies, Anthropology, Psychology, Sociology, Economics, History, Linguistics and Literary Studies, Philosophy, and Gender Studies.

The opening ceremony of the Summer Institute was well attended by important dignitaries from across the country including General Abdulrahman Dambazau – Hon. Minister of the Interior, Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Vice Chancellor, OAU – Ekitope Ogunbodede, Prof. and Mrs. Bickersteth, the Royal Father of the Day Aliyeluwa, HRM Oba Adedokun Abolarin, Aroyinkeye I, The Orangun of Oke-Ila, Osun State, President, Nigerian Academy of Letters, Prof. Olu Obafemi, FSONTA, FNAL, Chairman, Committee of the Deans – Prof. Niyi Aluko and the Provost of Postgraduate College – Prof. Alebiowu, faculty facilitators; and a group of twenty five pre-doctoral and doctoral fellows from several universities across Nigeria, Kenya, Greece, South Africa and the USA.

Bringing their expertise from several disciplinary backgrounds in the social sciences and the humanities, the facilitators through lectures and panel discussions on various themes, focused on advancing both theoretical and practical knowledge and issues underpinning their scholarship, research, mentoring, teaching, writing and publication skills. They also

conducted workshops and group discussions that either focused on [or] explored many topical issues significant for academic knowledge and the growth of pre-doc and post-doc fellows attending the Institute.

Among the topics covered were:- Cultural Studies and Performance Theory and Methods, Interpreting Oral and Textual Traditions, Publishing Research Works, Creating African Epistemologies, Historical and Archival Research Methods, Professional Ethics and Academic Virtues, Conducting Library Research, Ethnographic Field Research and Methodology, Tips on Grants and Proposal Writing, Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods, Manuscript Development, Humanizing Academics, Gender Sensitivity, Mentorship, Career Development, The Art of Teaching, Pedagogy and Method, The Impact of Globalization on Research Methods and Methodology in Africa, The Process of Selecting a Research Agenda, Developing a Teaching Philosophy and Methodology, The Art and Process of Academic Writing, among others. In addition, the facilitators explored such critical and broad cross-and trans-disciplinary themes as gender, democracy, religion, governance, leadership, politics, education, globalization and African development.

At the opening ceremony, General Abdulrahman Dambazau – Hon. Minister of the Interior, Federal Republic of Nigeria applauded the University for its support of the establishment of the Institute. He noted that the Summer Institute should encourage the participation of both senior and junior scholars by equipping them with tools for how to shape Nigeria's and Africa's future through scholarship. He highlighted some of the challenges facing research in Nigeria as: Africa's primary focus on oral tradition, the after-effects of Africa's colonial experience, slavery and slave trade among others. These experiences, he argued, impact how Africans see the value of research. He also noted that synergy between the public and private sectors would help bridge the gap between research and praxis. Furthermore, in order to attract research funding, scholars should focus on issues that face Africans basing them on facts and not only sentiment. He emphasized an added focus on socially contextual challenges such as unemployment, health, population and politics, environmental issues caused by desertification, land degradation in the face of population growth and advocated for the pursuit of sociocultural ideals like: democracy, accountability, human rights and the rule of law

The Vice Chancellor, Prof. Ogunbodede, remarked that the Institute's vision to nurture young academics aligns with the University's commitment to excellence in research and teaching. He pledged his full support to this noble initiative. In providing further clarification on the rationale for establishing the Institute, the Convener, Prof. Jacob Olupona, observed that it was very important for the participants to think beyond individual research and contribute to the collective pursuit of knowledge. The Institute's goal of mentoring and working with the fellows beyond these two weeks, will ensure that the Summer Institute outlives itself.

Prof. Wale Adebani in his keynote address, "*The Social Life of a Scholarly Publication: from Conception to Execution*," argued that scholars are agents of illumination and are an integral part of a centuries-old tradition that began during the Enlightenment. Essentially, this means that the production process is aimed at shedding light on

unanswered social dilemmas, knowledge generation and dissemination. Thus the social enterprise of the scholarly production is in fact a process of enlightenment. He therefore urged scholars to reflect on past findings through a process of decanonization and recanonization of existing research frameworks. In order to rebuild the continent, he encouraged Nigerian students to work even harder to produce globally competitive work and to commit themselves to leveraging opportunities available to them with the intent of elevating the global research profile of Nigeria and Africa.

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

1. THAT funding research in Africa is critical in addressing the challenges facing Africa today in the areas of governance, poverty, environmental degradation, democracy among others
2. THAT synergy between the public and private sectors can help bridge the gap between research and action.
3. THAT exposure to critical thinking is core to learning and excellent research in the University and that exploring strategies and innovative approaches that model best practices of scholarship in other parts of the world re-energizes and re-invigorates the University.
4. THAT entrepreneurship in Africa is key to overcoming many of Africa's current challenges.
5. THAT the practical demonstration of theoretical insights is key to the learning process.
6. THAT research projects must identify specific problem statements, good research questions, employ suitable research methods, apply a theoretical and conceptual framework that forms the bedrock for good research.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. THAT interaction between junior and senior scholars results in the emergence of a non-hierarchical learning culture that promotes partnership, collegiality, mutual respect and a mentoring spirit between senior and junior scholars and colleagues.
10. THAT reflecting on the challenges facing scholars in the academy creates opportunities and populates ideas that can innovate and reinvigorate the academy.
11. THAT networking and collaboration among scholars are critical to academic excellence and career success.
12. 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.

13. 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.
14. THAT exposure to global academic cultures on teaching, writing, publishing, mentoring and leadership is critical to the success of the young academic.
15. 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.

The participants envisioned that in future the Institute would:

1. Set aside two days of the Summer Institute for fellows to develop their abstracts, research proposals and papers which will ultimately be submitted at the end of the program for publication.
2. Provide a forum for the fellows to write a research article/paper that practically applies the knowledge they have learnt on research methods and theory.
3. Allow the facilitators to provide critical feedback on the fellows' research and writing projects
4. 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.
5. Urge senior faculty members to participate in the Summer Institute to reinvigorate their research and engage new innovations.
6. Provide a forum for the students to discuss the challenges they are facing in their individual research work and at their workplaces.
7. Generate wider publicity for the Institute and launch satellite campuses of the Institute in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa.
8. Create avenues for the fellows to showcase their writing both locally and internationally.
9. Enable the establishment of a network between the cohorts of fellows by providing networking opportunities for current and future participants, fellows and faculty advisers.
10. Create a comprehensive database of opportunities available for scholars including research funding, conference opportunities, publication opportunities, grant opportunities, job opportunities, consultancy opportunities and online research resources etc.
11. Foster the participation of scholars and facilitators from a wide range of disciplines
12. To create synergy and partnerships between the Institute and governmental or non-governmental institutions in Nigeria.
13. To provide a forum for intermediary follow up of fellows before the next Summer Institute
14. Build fellows' capacity by funding and enabling them to attend conferences thereby contributing to future cohorts of the Institute.

15. Cluster the sessions of the Institute to reflect fellow competence and levels of expertise. e.g. Beginner's, Intermediate and Advanced levels, to address specific needs.
16. Create thematic workshops designed to run contemporaneously within the scheduled activities of the Summer Institute.

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

1. To start a publication series that will specifically be an avenue to showcase the work of the Institute's fellows and provide an opportunity for such work to benefit from the reviews and comments of facilitators before publication. Fellows who have participated in a summer institute would be invited to submit paper proposals and abstracts in response to a Call that would be issued immediately at the end of that summer institute's activities. They will present their papers at a two-day pre-Institute's conference in the following summer.
2. This year's Call for Proposals will focus on the theme of 'Values and Spirituality in the Nigerian (or African) Workplace: A multidisciplinary (or Comparative) Approach'. In addition to Prof. Afe Adogame and Prof. Simeon Ilesanmi, the Institute will invite two other colleagues based in Nigeria as editors of the first Volume. However, the Institute of Advanced Studies itself will put together an editorial board representative of the diversity of disciplines and specialties among its core members. As envisioned, each volume is likely to comprise a different group of co-editors from both sides of the Atlantic.
3. To form a joint cohort of Fellows that combines the 2017 fellows with the 2018 fellows in order to ensure cohesiveness of the group and encourage continued collaboration beyond the institute. The 2017 and 2018 cohort of fellows will be invited to participate in the 2019 Summer Institute as mentors and coordinators.
4. Introduce a new item on the program next year – titled “Conversation with the Fellows.” Where fellows discuss their current research work and the challenges they are facing.
5. To update the website to provide information on the two cohorts of fellows as well as facilitators and to provide access to field research opportunities, doctoral and postdoctoral funding opportunities.
6. To create a portal where all presenters and fellows can make their books, articles and publications accessible to other fellows.
7. To develop a list of grant institutions and foundations with available grants for Nigerian students both locally and internationally.
8. Facilitators who serve on review boards of reputable journals to share selected samples of good proposals with the fellows of the institute.
9. Prof. Adogame to facilitate access to certain academic resources.
10. To develop a database of Facilitators partnering them to fellows according to their research area. Facilitators will also connect students with their external contacts who can help.

11. Next year, have facilitators create a bibliography to prepare students for the Institute – and a bound reader to be given to the fellows at the beginning of the Institute.
12. To nominate a “Fellow of the Year” award – drawn from reviewed articles written and submitted to the facilitators, who will serve as a review board.
13. Prof. Adogame promised that two accepted proposals from the Institute – guaranteed full funding for attendance to the World Christianity Conference, “Currents, Perspectives and Ethnographic Methodologies in World Christianity”, which will take place in Princeton on March 15 - 18, 2019.
14. To make materials from 2017 Institute available for the 2018 fellows and for future cohorts of the Institute.
15. To develop Institute annals, where the facilitators can publish fellows’ written works to be printed every subsequent year.
16. Suggest establishment a learning center to address issues of cultural competence, new methodologies and knowledge sharing. Which will bring experts in to talk about issues that face faculty members.

CONCLUSION

The 2018 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.