

Workshop Opening Address

by

Professor Asenso-Okyere, Vice – Chancellor

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, Legon

Madam Chairperson, The Secretary General of AAU, Deans, distinguished guests, workshop participants, ladies and gentlemen.

I am very pleased to be with you this morning for the opening ceremony of the 2nd Database of African Theses and Dissertations (DATAD) workshop, which is being organized by The Association of African Universities (AAU) in collaboration with the University of Ghana.

The University of Ghana is proud and very happy that the Balme Library has been chosen as one of the libraries to implement the pilot project of the DATAD. This comes at a time when a decision has been taken to digitize the library.

I am happy too that the workshop is a follow up to the first one held in Addis Ababa in June last year. This is a clear indication that those associated with the project have worked tirelessly to move it a step further.

Ladies and gentlemen, Universities and Institutions of higher learning in Africa generate a lot of research-based information. These research-based information come in the form of theses, dissertations, memoirs etc. Unfortunately, these research outputs have limited circulation even within the institutions in which they are produced. This is so because coordination, dissemination and publication of research results in Africa is hampered by lack of adequate structures. The lack of adequate structures for information dissemination remains a major problem in Africa in general and a cause for concern in higher education in particular. This is particularly disheartening when the need to expand graduate programs and to train people to take over from the aging faculty in most urgent in African Universities.

With the advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), African scholars and scholarly output face a threat of marginalization, especially in a globalized world, where “review of research literature” is increasingly being limited to “review of electronic literature”. Lack of access to information, and exclusion from the processes of “electronic” global knowledge is a threat that needs to be addressed strategically.

In recent years, most institutions of higher learning in Africa have made considerable investments in ICT information development. A strategic use of ICT and Local Area Networks (LANs) have great potentials to support local research development. The fact that documents are now generally prepared electronically makes it easier to build up local contact databases that are relatively independent of international linkages but can be shared locally and also accessed by others worldwide.

Ladies and gentlemen, to address the problem of production, management, access and dissemination of research information, from universities and institutions of higher learning in Africa, the AAU since 1996 has developed a concerted approach. This concerted effort gave birth to DATAD. The DATAD project was initiated by the findings of a feasibility study carried out in 1998/99. Implementation of the DATAD project started in 2000 and will take three years. This phase involves the following institutions: University of Zimbabwe, Addis Ababa University, Cheikh Anta Diop University, CODESRIA, University of Dar es Salaam, Eduardo Mondlane University, Ain Shams University, Yaounde 1 University, University of Ghana, Makerere and Kenyatta Universities.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am told that the specific aims of the project include the following:

- ?? Contribute towards the creation of an environment conducive for research and publication in African universities.
- ?? Create capacity in African universities for the collection, management and dissemination of theses and dissertations electronically.

- ?? Provide visibility and improve accessibility to the works of African scholars both within and outside the continent.
- ?? Provide support for AAU programmes which aim at capacity building in the area of research, promotion of cooperation among member universities and networking of institutions having access to a central source of information.

It gladdens my heart that at the end of this workshop, most of these objectives would be achieved. The workshop, which will last for two days, would involve senior university leaders, coordinators and other individuals involved in the implementation of the project from the eleven (11) institutions involved in the project. Reports would be received from the institutions and discussed. On the second day of the workshop, the online database from the pilot would be launched.

The success of the DATAD project can be seen in the fact that plans for the future are already being mapped out to include the following:

- ?? Admission of new institutions and maintenance of old members
- ?? Production of the DATAD database on CD-ROM
- ?? Electronic submission of Theses and Dissertations (ETDs)
- ?? Guide to copyright and intellectual property
- ?? Training on DATAD methodology
- ?? Maintenance and updating of the online database

On this note, it is my greatest pleasure to declare the 2nd DATAD workshop and online database launching officially opened. I wish you all the best.

Thank you.