



INTERVIEW WITH DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR DR. O. A. OMOTESHO, UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, NIGERIA (ENGLISH VERSION)

ENTREVISTA COM O VICE-REITOR DR. O. A. OMOTESHO, UNIVERSIDADE DE ILORIN, NIGÉRIA (VERSÃO EM INGLÊS)

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The complete version of the interview is available at: <https://youtu.be/yMm919grTvU?si=gPq-diNIBulEuKfC>

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Recebido em 25 de Agosto de 2024 – A versão 1.0 da tradução foi concluída em Junho de 2025.

ABSTRACT

Background: The University of Ilorin, founded in 1975 in Nigeria, has evolved from 3 to 16 faculties, becoming the country's most sought-after institution for the past two decades. **Aims:** To document the institutional evolution, identify the most demanded programs, assess scientific output, examine internationalization strategies, and understand strategic development objectives. **Methods:** Structured interview with Vice-Chancellor Dr. Olubumi Abayomi Omotesho, following a standardized protocol covering historical, academic, scientific, and strategic aspects of the institution, under Creative Commons license format. **Results:** The university expanded to 16 faculties in 49 years. The most demanded programs are Medicine and Nursing, followed by Pharmacy, Law, Engineering, and Accounting. Areas with the highest scientific output: Medicine, Biological/Agricultural Sciences, and Engineering. It offers 340 postgraduate programs with approximately 7,523 students. There is a dedicated infrastructure for internationalization, with plans for international accommodations. Discussion: The predominance of healthcare courses reflects global employability trends. Research aligned with Sustainable Development Goals demonstrates a contemporary vision. The institutional goal (number one in Nigeria, top 10 in Africa, top 500 globally) shows a measurable strategic approach. Commitment to internationalization aligns with global education trends. **Conclusions:** The institution exemplifies an evolving African university focused on academic excellence, scientific relevance, and internationalization. The prioritization of student-centered development, clear positioning goals, and international collaboration initiatives establish solid foundations for its contribution to regional and global knowledge.

Keywords: *University of Ilorin; Nigerian Higher Education; Academic Internationalization; Institutional Development; African Scientific Production.*

RESUMO

Introdução: A Universidade de Ilorin, fundada em 1975 na Nigéria, evoluiu de 3 para 16 faculdades, tornando-se a instituição mais procurada do país nas últimas duas décadas. **Objetivos:** Documentar a evolução institucional, identificar programas mais procurados, avaliar produção científica, examinar estratégias de internacionalização e compreender objetivos estratégicos de desenvolvimento. **Métodos:** Entrevista estruturada com o Vice-Reitor Dr. Olubumi Abayomi Omotesho, seguindo protocolo padronizado abrangendo aspectos históricos, acadêmicos, científicos e estratégicos da instituição, sob formato de licença Creative Commons. **Resultados:** A universidade expandiu para 16 faculdades em 49 anos. Os programas mais demandados são Medicina e Enfermagem, seguidos por Farmácia, Direito, Engenharia e Contabilidade. Áreas com maior produção científica: Medicina, Ciências Biológicas/Agrícolas e Engenharia. São oferecidos 340 programas de pós-

graduação com aproximadamente 7.523 estudantes. Há infraestrutura dedicada à internacionalização, com planos para alojamentos internacionais. **Discussão:** A predominância de cursos da área de saúde reflete tendências globais de empregabilidade. A pesquisa alinhada aos Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável demonstra visão contemporânea. A meta institucional (número um na Nigéria, top 10 na África, top 500 global) evidencia abordagem estratégica mensurável. O compromisso com internacionalização alinha-se às tendências de educação global. **Conclusões:** A instituição exemplifica uma universidade africana em evolução, com foco em excelência acadêmica, relevância científica e internacionalização. A priorização do desenvolvimento centrado no estudante, metas claras de posicionamento e iniciativas de colaboração internacional estabelecem bases sólidas para sua contribuição ao conhecimento regional e global.

Palavras-chave: *Universidade de Ilorin; Ensino Superior Nigeriano; Internacionalização Acadêmica; Desenvolvimento Institucional; Produção Científica Africana.*

1. INTRODUCTION

It is with great satisfaction that we present this interview conducted with Dr. Olubumi Abayomi Omotesho, Vice-Chancellor of the prestigious University of Ilorin, Nigeria. This unique opportunity allows us not only to better understand this important African academic institution, but also to celebrate its 50 years of existence and contribution to the educational development of Nigeria and West Africa. We sincerely thank the university administration, especially Dr. Olubumi Atolani, for his fundamental role in making this transcontinental dialogue possible, which strengthens international academic relations and promotes knowledge exchange.



Image: 50th anniversary celebration of the University of Ilorin – NG.

Interviewer: Today, we have the honor of receiving Dr. Olubumi Abayomi Omotesho, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ilorin. I would also

like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Olubumi Atolani, who organized this meeting for us. Thank you.



Image: Dr. Olubumi Abayomi Omotesho

Now, I'm going to present some rules and disclosures that will allow all of our partners to have the same time to make a presentation. Rule number one: our interview will last about 30 minutes or less, correct?

Dr. Omotesho: Correct.

Interviewer: Rule number two: our interview will be distributed under a Creative Commons license so it can be shared across various platforms.

Dr. Omotesho: Correct.

Interviewer: Number three, all our questions are the same for all our partners. And number four, I am a professor, not a professional reporter, so this is a big limitation.

Dr. Omotesho: Correct.

Interviewer: So, Professor Omotesho, my first question is: what is the oldest course offered by the University of Ilorin, and when was it founded?

Dr. Omotesho: Thank you very much. The University of Ilorin was founded in August 1975, almost today, exactly 49 years ago. The university started with three faculties, so all the courses in those three faculties started more or less at the same time. We had the Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Sciences, and Faculty of Education. Those were the founding faculties. The university started 49 years ago.



Image: University of Ilorin Logo.

Interviewer: That's very good.

Dr. Omotesho: Let me add that we have grown from those three faculties to 16 faculties.

Interviewer: 16 faculties today?

Dr. Omotesho: 16 faculties today, yes.

Interviewer: That's impressive. Professor, which course is currently most sought after by students?

Dr. Omotesho: Interestingly, our admission process is happening now, and the most popular course that has the highest number of applicants is Medicine, the medical program, and also Nursing, which is also a medical program. I believe the attraction is the fact that it's a professional course and alumni from the faculty, in almost all continents, have high mobility, and their certificate is well accepted in other areas, making it very attractive for people who want to enter the University of Ilorin. I would also like to mention that consistently, over the past more than a decade, approaching two decades, Ilorin is the most preferred university in Nigeria in terms of number of applicants who want to enter the university. We consistently lead.

Besides medicine, we also have great demand for the MBBS program, which makes up the medical program, and nursing, which is related to medicine. We also have many applicants in Pharmacy, Law, Engineering, and Accounting. These are also highly sought-after programs.

Interviewer: But number one is Medicine, and number two is Nursing, correct?

Dr. Omotesho: Perfect.

Interviewer: So, third question. Which research areas have the highest number of scientific publications at the institution, and in which courses do they excel?

Dr. Omotesho: For this question, I consulted the Scopus database of publications, and the largest scientific publications related to the University of Ilorin are in Medicine, Biological and Agricultural Sciences, and Engineering. These have the highest number of scientific publications in the Scopus database.

Interviewer: That's very good. So, next question. Remember, I'm not a professional reporter. We have some limitations.

Dr. Omotesho: Yes. I need to add some information.

Interviewer: Yes, please.

Dr. Omotesho: Our Vice-Chancellor had a program when he took office almost two years ago with the goal of making the University of Ilorin number one in Nigeria.

Interviewer: Correct.

Dr. Omotesho: And within the top ten in Africa and top 500 in the world.

Interviewer: That's very impressive.

Dr. Omotesho: Many initiatives have been implemented to achieve this goal. We are encouraging clusters, research clusters aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and we are encouraging researchers. There is a great effort in terms of fundraising from around the world to help fulfill this objective.

Interviewer: Perfect. Thank you. Now, question number four. How many graduate courses, such as master's and doctorate, does the University of Ilorin currently offer? And what are the areas of knowledge?

Dr. Omotesho: The University of Ilorin currently has 340 graduate programs distributed across the 16 faculties. This year, we normally recruit our doctoral students twice a year. We just finished one round of applications. We had a total of approximately 2,136 applicants for graduate programs, both master's and doctorate. The total number of graduate students we have on campus currently is approximately 7,523 in various programs.

The most popular is the MPH, the Master's in Public Health. The Public Health program is the most sought-after graduate program. We also have the Master's in Educational Management, which is highly requested. Next, we have the Master's in Computer Science and the Master's in Law. Perhaps because the Chancellor is a lawyer, this is also a very popular program (laughter).

Interviewer: (laughter) No preferences on this matter. (laughter)

Dr. Omotesho: Regarding the Doctorate, the most popular is the Educational Technology program. We also have a Doctorate in Development Studies, which is very popular. The third most sought after is educational management. In the medical area, professionals are more focused on their professional specialties, not so much on master's or doctorate. Advanced academic training is just beginning to be incorporated into medicine. They remain more focused on their professional career.

Interviewer: Yes, I understand. It makes sense. It's an excellent and demanding career. Now, professor, moving to my next question. When international students want to study at the University of Ilorin, what is the process from submission of students' applications to proposal until their arrival at the university? How does it work?

Dr. Omotesho: We have a Center for International Education that coordinates activities with the external environment. The center works very closely with the Graduate School. We have a Graduate School called the School of Postgraduate Studies. Interested students register on the university portal. These applications are processed by the Center for International Education. They normally interact with students and coordinate activities in terms of connection with the Graduate School and later with the departments.

Sometimes, some of the students may have identified potential supervisors they want to work with. Thus, a connection is established between the proposed supervisor and the prospective student. The Center for International Education, which we call CIE, plays a vital role in this connection. Most of our processes are automated. Actually, we are working now to improve our website and portal. I'm sure that before the end of this month, everything will be working properly. Practically all our activities are carried out digitally.

Interviewer: Perfect. So professor, my next question. How are the facilities and infrastructure designed to accommodate international students? Does the university offer housing or student residence for students? If so, what are these options like? How to apply?

Dr. Omotesho: As I mentioned, the University of Ilorin has consistently been Nigeria's most sought-after university. Last week, we received an award. We have an existing international accommodation. The Vice-Chancellor suggested, and the projects are already ready, that we start construction of what we call international student residences. Using the resources we received recently, the projects have been finalized, and construction will begin soon.

Our goal is for it to be an international standard of accommodation. And not exclusively for international students. We also want students to be able to interact with some of our local

students. We are planning a ratio of approximately 80 to 90 percent international students with about 10 percent local students, to avoid isolation. Implementation has already begun. Currently, we have a residence, but it doesn't offer enough space. This is one of the reasons for building the new accommodation.

The agency that organizes university admission for undergraduate programs in Nigeria is called the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board. We decided, in recognition of the award received, to name this residence the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board International Accommodation.

Interviewer: That's excellent. I would like to ask more questions, but I'll stick to the list to conduct a balanced interview, correct?

Dr. Omotesho: Correct.

Interviewer: If there's an opportunity, we'll conduct more interviews in the future.

Dr. Omotesho: Certainly.

Interviewer: Now, question number seven. The University of Ilorin is participating for the second time in the Southern Science Conference, which follows a unique organizational model involving multiple universities. What benefits does the university expect to provide to its students by engaging in this international event?

Dr. Omotesho: We are excited because when our students participate in this event, exposure opportunities expand considerably. Meeting people from diverse backgrounds represents a fundamental aspect of education. We hope they can keep up with the latest trends and connect with colleagues from around the world. The internet has transformed the world into a global community. However, going out and actually interacting with these people will certainly enhance their exposure and provide different perspectives from what they are accustomed to, particularly for those with limited international exposure previously.

We hope they can develop higher-quality research in terms of scope and discover opportunities they hadn't considered previously. We also believe they will be able to collaborate more effectively with people in areas where there

are better infrastructures, contributing to their comprehensive training as students of excellence.

Interviewer: Perfect. Thank you very much.

Now, this is a very important question. Considering the challenges presented by our different time zones, what suggestions would you give to the event organizers to maximize participation from University of Ilorin students?

Dr. Omotesho: The time zone difference represents a significant challenge, but it's something for which there aren't many solutions. I believe interest is the determining factor. I've had occasions when I needed to wake up during the night to participate in virtual meetings. Interest is the fundamental element. One can always adjust schedules to check what would be the most suitable time for discussions, as we did when scheduling this conversation with Dr. Atolani. Considering my schedule, for example, I would have preferred a later time in Nigeria. Therefore, I don't consider time zones to be an insurmountable obstacle.

Interviewer: Very good.

Dr. Omotesho: Yes, because it's a circumstance over which we have no control.

Interviewer: Exactly, something we cannot change.

Dr. Omotesho: We can always adapt our schedules to enable productive interactions.

Interviewer: Thank you very much, Professor. And now we come to the last question. By participating in an international event at no cost to students, the university demonstrates its commitment to providing valuable opportunities. How do you evaluate the importance of student participation in international events for their academic and professional development?

Dr. Omotesho: Our students are extremely important to us. We always emphasize that without students, there would be no professors, vice-chancellors, deputy vice-chancellors, or any staff. All our activities are student-centered. We take immense pride in our students, a feeling they also share. Recently, I participated in the inauguration ceremony of the new student representatives, elected a few weeks ago.

One of the most important initiatives we aspire to, as I mentioned, is the Vice-Chancellor's goal, called "one 10 500" [reference to the goals of becoming number one in Nigeria, among the top ten in Africa, and among the top 500 in the world]. We want to provide our students with the greatest possible exposure to best practices in all aspects of their educational training. We recognize that this is crucial in today's globalized world. The greater the exposure provided to students, the greater their capacity for international mobility. Therefore, we seek to expand their horizons. The memoranda of understanding, interactions, and all our initiatives aim to enhance our students' training and the quality of our work.

Interviewer: You are constantly seeking the best for your students. We are looking forward to this exchange with diverse students from around the world. And we know that this will fundamentally contribute to the improvement of our students.

Dr. Omotesho: This is an excellent perspective.

Interviewer: Thank you very much, Professor. We conclude our interview. On behalf of my conference colleagues, I would like to express my sincere thanks for your time.

Dr. Omotesho: Thank you very much. It was a pleasure talking with you. I also thank our colleague, Professor Atolani.

Interviewer: Come greet him. He was just waiting to greet you.

Dr. Omotesho: He's here.

Interviewer: Hello, Professor. How are you?

Dr. Atolani: Thank you. Thank you very much.

Interviewer: Thank you for the opportunity to talk with all of you. I hope to see you again.

Dr. Omotesho: Certainly. In the next edition (2026), we hope to be the best presenters. In the last edition we came in second place.

Interviewer: You were already excellent in the previous edition. The best presentation is on the way.

Interviewer: I hope to see many students from Ilorin at the conference. We'll all meet in November.

Professor Atolani: Yes. Thank you. Thank you very much. Have an excellent day.

Interviewer: Likewise. Thank you.

This interview was part of the interinstitutional scientific dissemination partnership project of the SSSON – 2024 conference, continuing for the future 2026 edition in RJ.



Image: SSSON 2024 Logo.

DECLARATIONS

1. Limitations: The interview is limited to its content.

2. Funding source: The host funded this interview.

3. Conflicts of interest: The host has worked for the journal for many years and this may have influenced the interview.

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