



Network of Excellence  
on Land Governance in Africa

# NELGA Good Practices

## Land Governance in West Africa Summer School

The **Network of Excellence on Land Governance in Africa (NELGA)** is a partnership of leading African universities and research institutions with proven leadership in education, training and research on land governance. Currently NELGA has more than **70 partner institutions** in over 40 countries and is organized in 6 regional and 1 technical nodes supported by a Secretariat.

# Background

NELGA connects and supports research collaboration between land governance researchers across Africa. NELGA also enjoys partnerships with renowned educational support institutions like the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and takes part in discussions within the African Union (AU) Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment programmes and the African Land Policy Centre (ALPC) in support of land research.



Among its objectives, NELGA's purpose supports the development of high-quality and demand-driven research in line with requests of the

AU Member States for decision-making. It supports the continent by building the capacity of young people on land issues to take up land roles and contribute to Africa's land discussion for economic prosperity. This is in line with Agenda 2063 and the SDGs.

To address this, NELGA provides scholarships to young and aspiring land graduates to pursue postgraduate degrees at the Master and PhD levels. It is essential to work with young people entering the land governance employment spaces and grow into decision-making positions that can influence equitable access to land and support the young Africa population which is in majority in shaping their future. NELGA trains young land experts on land research and feeds these research results into the policy sphere.

To achieve this, a wide range of measures to support junior researchers are in place and bring the topic of youth and land governance to the fore: training, forums and conferences, publications, financial support, etc. Those different activities support the creation of a strong generation of young land governance researchers and professionals equipped with the knowledge and tools necessary to understand and tackle emerging issues related to land and youth, influence decision-making and political processes and lead a paradigm shift.

One of the ways is through **summer schools** to support young researchers with skills not captured in typical academic curricula and knowledge on strategies to promote these aspiring and emerging researchers.





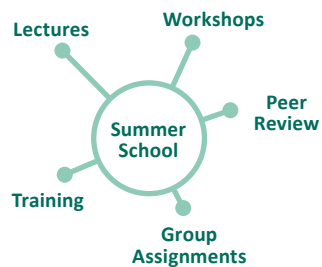
# The Summer School



Currently piloted at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), NELGA's West Africa Node in Ghana, NELGA has organised these summer schools since 2019. The summer schools' targets NELGA scholarship holders and post graduate alumni to meet experts in land governance, learn and share ideas, and to network among land experts who can be instrumental to their career and interventions in land policy spaces.

At the onset, the summer school built the capacity of its participants on different tools for quality data collection and analysis. However, it has evolved since then to incorporate contemporary land governance issues, specifically in West Africa, personal branding, networking and mentorship and entrepreneurship that are essential for preparing scholarship holders for the job market. Speaking of networking, for instance, scholarship holders of the NELGA programme have had fewer opportunities to meet each other and interact with experts in a scientific and academic setting over the years. Therefore, the summer school was organised as a central activity of the DAAD In-country / In-region scholarship programme at KNUST to bridge the gap between scholars and experts. It was intended to be a platform to present and discuss theory, research design, methodological approaches, and specific tools in social sciences while also sharpening the graduate students' communication and presentation skills.

The one-week annual summer school's goal prepares competent graduate students to perform high-quality academic research with a focus on regional and local land governance strategies. This would be done by providing a flexible, interdisciplinary programme and orientation that suits their research needs. The summer school is a mixture of lectures, workshops, training, peer review, group assignments among others.



# Implementation

The DAAD scholarship holders at KNUST were the main target group of the summer school. The DAAD scholarship holders are early-stage researchers contributing to the advancement of knowledge within the NELGA programme.

The summer school organisation is built on a proven partnership between four NELGA institutions. Therefore, the programme's key implementers and partners were KNUST, German Development Cooperation (GIZ), ALPC, and DAAD. Experts and supervisors present at the summer school included Prof. Kwasi Kwarfo Adarkwa, the former Vice-Chancellor (VC) of KNUST, Prof. John Tiah Bugri, the Provost for the College of Art and Built Environment (CABE), Prof. Sylvana Rudith King, the Coordinator for the NELGA project in Ghana, Prof. Divine Ahadzie, Head for the Centre for Settlement Studies (CSS), Dr. Patrick Opoku and Mr. Sosthenes Katwale GIZ Technical Advisors, Dr. Henry Mensah, Research Scientist at CSS and Dr. Clifford Amoako, Head for postgraduate studies at Department of Planning, KNUST. Others included Dr. Dorcas Peggy Somuah, Dr. Joseph Kidido, Dr. Titus Kwofie, Dr. Owusu Ansah, who are all experts in the field.



# Results and lessons learnt



The programme evaluation achieved several concrete results (see Table 1). Most participants strongly agreed that they gained **new knowledge for their career development**. The notable outcomes of the workshop are the introduction of MSc and PhD candidates to the art of writing successful research theses and publishing articles, discussions on different theoretical and epistemological approaches with supervisors and external experts, and a joint commitment to set up the NELGA research development workshop as an annual event for DAAD-scholarship holders at KNUST.

One of the most common and popular ways of measuring people's satisfaction with a programme is through a self-report method using Likert or ordinal scales (Zhang et al., 2007; McLeod et al., 2011). An assessment of the summer school was carried out using the Likert scale, and the results revealed many positive achievements provided in Table 1 below. The Likert scale used in the summer school assessment adopted statements followed by a series of numbers that people can decide and choose to show how much they agree or disagree with the results. In all, the summer school was evaluated as very successful. Many strongly agreed that due to the workshop, they gained knowledge of the current research state in areas relevant to their specific field of study. Participants believed they were competent enough to practically apply the newly acquired knowledge in their research studies and career development.

Furthermore, the workshop promoted students' research abilities in social sciences and deepened their knowledge regarding disciplinary and interdisciplinary research studies. It provided a holistic understanding of different scientific theories and good research practices and was influential in getting issues on land governance research on the table while creating space for students and their supervisors to interact in a conducive atmosphere.



TABLE 1: ASSESSMENT RESULTS OF THE SUMMER SCHOOL

Please indicate your level of agreement to the following statement of results	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	Agree 4	Strongly agree 5	No answer	Missing
Through the training course I gained knowledge on the current state of research in areas relevant to my own field of study.			1	7	9	1	
Through to the training course I gained methodological expertise.			1	4	13		
Through the training course I became acquainted with standards of academic working and writing.				8	10		
Through the training I learned how to make better use of digital resources for referencing.		1	1	7	9		
Through to the training I expanded my knowledge in concepts and conceptualisation.			2	4	12		
Through the training course I learned new things in good scientific practices and misconduct.				7	11		
Through the training course I expanded my knowledge in research paradigms and hypothesis.				8	9	1	
Through the training course I learned new things in science communication.				10	7		
Through the training course I learned new things conducting research in land studies.			1	9	8		
Through the training course I expanded my knowledge in scientific and social enquiries.			1	8	9		
Through the training course I learned new things in logic of research design and sampling.			2	9	7		
Through the training course I expanded my knowledge in instruments for data collection.			1	10	7		
Through the training course I benefited from the experiences of the people in my peer group.			1	10	6	1	
Through the training course I learned new things in research philosophy and theories.			1	4	13		
After having participated in the training course I am competent in practically applying the newly gained knowledge in my research studies and career development.				6	11	1	



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# Good Practice

The success of the summer school is clearly connected to the inspirational programme package developed by the organisers and partners. The use of group discussions and the involvement of academic supervisors and land experts allowed the postgraduate students to benefit from comprehensive expert opinions and peer reviews of current and potential thesis work. It also promoted the transfer of knowledge from experts to junior researchers and the building of networks for career development. In addition, using an interdisciplinary and integrated approach was beneficial as students learned different perceptions of the different disciplines. Within the last few years, there has been an upsurge in interest in interdisciplinary research work. The summer school has contributed immensely to these developments.

## The summer school:

- ✔ **Promotes students' research abilities in the social sciences and deepens their knowledge regarding disciplinary and interdisciplinary research studies in land governance.**
- ✔ **Guides students in preparing good dissertations, contributing to the efficient and timely realisation of their thesis.**
- ✔ **Provides a competent and holistic understanding of scientific theories and good research practices.**
- ✔ **Opens opportunities for students to gain experience in preparing publications and policy briefs to effectively communicate their research findings to a wider scientific community, policy-makers, and practitioners.**

# Recommendation

The summer school provided MSc / PhD candidates with the opportunity to present their dissertation progress (on research design, methods, and results); discuss different theoretical and epistemological approaches with supervisors, external experts, and researchers; introduce MSc / PhD candidates to the art of writing successful research thesis and publishing articles (science communication), and fostering collaboration among the NELGA Scholars and its partner. It is essential that the summer school continues to involve internal and external experts to raise awareness among young researchers of the importance of recognising and enhancing the skills they develop and acquire through research to improve their employment prospects both in academia and in the broader labor market.

The summer school is an important element of career development. The courses and workshops offered the skills required to select the appropriate methodology for performing research safely and ethically and apply critical data gathering and analysis techniques. It also helped to discuss actions into policy-making careers in public and private spaces for land governance.



# Conclusion

The summer school is a strategic tool to fulfil various aspects of its NELGA programme, particularly policy-relevant research to serve West Africa. According to KNUST, the summer school fits perfectly into KNUST's institutional strategy of fostering internationalisation and providing a showcase for sustainability in research and teaching, particularly in its interdisciplinary research priority area of land governance. This capacity development measure brought closer, the students and academia, which ensured the quality of research, and amplified constructive feedback and the practical knowledge exchange through a participatory and integrated approach.



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## NELGA

The **Network of Excellence on Land Governance in Africa (NELGA)** is a partnership of leading African universities and research institutions with proven leadership in education, training and research on land governance. It strengthens capacities and knowledge exchange at more than **70 partner institutions** across Africa.

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