

CITATION

on



PROFESSOR NKEM OKOH

BA (Nigeria), MA (Sheffield), MSc (Aston in Birmingham), PhD (London)
Department of English Studies, Faculty of Humanities

Professor Nkem Okoh was born on January 21, 1948 at Bida, in the present Niger State. His parents, Mr Onwuegbusiuno Nicholas Okoh and Achanu Alice Okoh (nee Konyeshi), hail from Idumuje Uno in Aniocha North LGA of Delta State. He had his early education at St Patrick's Primary School, Bida, Pilgrim Baptist Primary School, Issele-Azagba and Oligbo Baptist Primary School, Issele-Uku. On completing his primary school education, Professor Okoh proceeded to Pilgrim Baptist Grammar School, Ewohimi, Esan East LGA and later complemented this with a Teachers' Grade 2 certificate, obtained from Pilgrim Baptist Teacher Training College, Issele-Uku in 1970. In 1972, he was admitted to study English at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. He graduated from UNN with a Bachelor of Arts degree (Second Class Upper) in 1975. In 1976 he was admitted to the University of Sheffield, England, where he obtained a Master of Arts degree in Modern African Literature in 1977. Between 1980 and 1984, he studied at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), where he bagged his doctoral degree in African oral literature. In 1991 he earned

a Master of Science degree from the University of Aston in Birmingham, UK, in TESP (Teaching of English for Specific Purposes).

Professor Nkem Okoh considers teaching as the only vocation meant for him. He started his teaching career at the tertiary level during his National Youth Service assignment at Bayero University College, Kano from 1975 through 1976 where he lectured in English at the Preliminary Division. In August 1976 he joined the University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, as a Graduate Assistant and a pioneer member of the School of Humanities, indeed as a pioneer member of staff of the new University College, affiliated to the University of Lagos. He rose through the ranks to become a Professor in 2007 in the Department of English Studies. At the Department, he has taught a wide range of courses such as Introduction to Literature, Communication Skills in English, World *Englishes*, African Literature, African Oral Literature, Business Communication, Structure of English, Advanced English Composition, Grammar and Composition, Academic Writing, English in Nigeria and Research Methods.

A particular inspiring thought that has guided Professor Nkem Okoh as a scholar maintains as follows: "A society that cannot read should, at least, watch. A society that is devoid of both is headed in the Carthaginian direction." In this is located his principal research interests, which lie in written discourse (especially research writing and academic writing), World *Englishes*, EAP grammar, oral literature, English in Nigeria, and sociolinguistics. Since 1984 Professor Okoh has supervised over 200 Undergraduate Long essays, over 40 Masters' theses in the following areas: Oral Literature, Modern African Literature, World *Englishes*, Language Contact, the Teaching of English as a Second language, Sociolinguistics, and ESP/EAP. Between 1999 and now, he has successfully supervised 3 PhDs in Oral Literature and at present, he is supervising 6 Masters theses, 3 PhD dissertations; as well as co-supervising 1 PhD in ESL and 1 PhD in Language and Communication. He remains a committed classroom teacher and researcher.

Professor Okoh attended several specialist EAP teaching sessions – workshops and seminars – in different Nigerian Universities between 1989 and 1993, under the Communication Skills in English (COMSKIP) Project organized by ODA/British Council, National Universities Commission and the University of Reading, United Kingdom. Through his career at the University of Port Harcourt, Professor Okoh has authored seven books and co-edited one book with Professor Onyemaechi Udumukwu. Professor Okoh has published well over 55 articles in international and local journals and chapters in books. He is equally regular at academic conferences, both overseas and in Nigeria.

Professor Nkem Okoh, over the years and in the course of his service, has earned the following recognitions and awards:

Federal Government Scholarship (for Undergraduate Studies, 1973-1975); British Council Scholar (1990-1991); Award of Excellence from Student Union Government, August 1999; Merit Award from NASELL (1998, 2004, 2009); Delta Students' Postgraduate Association, University of Port Harcourt; Congratulatory Letter (as PG Hall Warden) from Vice-Chancellor (1990); Congratulatory Letter (as Assistant Hall Warden) from Dean, Student Affairs (1994); Merit Award from NASELL (2010)

University Positions Held:

Mr Vice-Chancellor, Profesor Okoh has served in numerous committees in the University of Port Harcourt. Please permit me to list some of these.

Acting Head of Department, English Studies (1997-1999); Examination Officer, English Studies Department, 1989-1990; Assistant Hall Warden, New Undergraduate Hall (1990); Hall Warden, Postgraduate Halls, (1992-1994); Member, Graduate Studies

Committee, English Studies Department (from 1990 till present); Chairman, Departmental Graduate Studies Committee (from 2007 till 2010); Chairman, Organizing Committee for the proposed International Conference on Language, Literature and the Arts in the Niger Delta; Member, General Studies Board (from 1993-2007); Member of Senate as Acting Head of Department, EST (1997-1999); Member, Faculty of Humanities Appointments and Promotion Committee (1998-1999, 2007 till present); Head of Department, English Studies (November 2008 till February 2011); Member of University Senate (2007 till present); Member, English Studies Departmental Appointments & Promotion Committee (1998-1999, 2007 till present); Chairman, Departmental Graduate Studies Committee (from June 2011); IELTS Examiner 2011-2012

Positions as external examiner/Assessor

Professor Okoh has held several positions as External Examiner or Assessor positions as the following: Department of English and Literary Studies, Imo State University, Owerri, 1999-2001; External Examiner, Bori Polytechnic, 1999; External Assessor (Principal Lecturers), Abia State Polytechnic, 2007; External Assessor (Principal/Chief Lecturers), Abia State Polytechnic, 2009;. External Examiner, Department of English and Literary Studies, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, 2010.

Editorial Positions:

Professor Okoh has held the following editorial positions:

Associate Editor, GES 100.0 (*Communication Skills in English Section General Studies Textbook* (1994); Co-editor, *General Studies Department Brochure*, University of Port Harcourt, 2000; Co-editor, *Communication Skills in English Textbook*, 2009; Associate Editor, *Working Papers: Journal of English Studies*. Journal of the English Studies Department, University of Port Harcourt; Associate Editor, *Kiabara: Journal of Humanities*; Journal of the Faculty of Arts,

University of Port Harcourt; Member, Editorial Board, *Abraka Journal of Education*; Consulting Editor, *BETFA: Journal of the Ogbomoso Circle*; Assessor/Course Material Editor, National Open University; Member, Editorial Board, *Xpression: Journal of the English Language Teachers Association of Nigeria* (2006 till present).

Membership of Academic Bodies

Professor Okoh is a member of the following professional academic bodies:

National Association of Lecturers of English for Academic Purposes (NALEAP); English Language Teachers' Association of Nigeria (ELTAN); Literary Society of Nigeria (LSN); Nigeria English Studies Association (NESA); Modern Language Association of Nigeria (MLAN); National Association of Teachers and Researchers in English as a Second Language (NATRESL); International Association for World Englishes (IAWE); International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL); International Society of Oral Literature in Africa (ISOLA); International Council of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS).

Community Service outside the University

IPUN Town Union (Patron); *Otu Mmuta* Cultural Association, Nigeria (National Secretary, 2002 till present); *Izu Anioma*, Port Harcourt Chapter (Secretary, 2004-2011); Baptist Student Fellowship (Patron), Baptist Men's Fellowship, Faith Baptist Church, Port Harcourt President (two terms; 1992/1995), Postgraduate Christian Fellowship, University of Port Harcourt (Patron); Global Mission (Nigerian Baptist Convention) Board, Etche Home Mission; Rivers Baptist Conference Education Board (Member, 2020 till present); Faith Baptist Church, Port Harcourt, Certificate of Appreciation (Best Sunday School Teacher, (1989).

Religious Life

Professor Okoh is a committed Christian. Not only is he an ordained Deacon of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, he believes that what has been uppermost is God's mercies on him, rather than so-called achievements. As a believer, Professor Okoh talks about his numerous testimonies regarding the efficacy, immutability, even contemporary relevance of God's word. He considers the Bible to be the greatest of all books, "and one that provides *all* the answers, whether we are dealing with Medicine, Engineering, Aeronautics, Biology, governance, or human relationships" (Blurb, *Faith and Jokes*; forthcoming)

Hobbies and Social Life

Professor Okoh is a keen sports enthusiast who has also engaged in a number of sports. In the hurdles event at the 1969 Midwestern Nigeria Amateur Athletic Association Championships, he returned a time of 16.3 seconds, which was then a State record. He played "some good football" at both PBGS, Ewohimi, and PBTTC, Issele-Uku. His football coach, Mr John Ojidoh of the then NFA, wanted him to sign for Bendel Insurance in 1970, but the young player had since set his eyes on first becoming a university graduate. In his three years at UNN, Professor Okoh played in three NUGA games. His hobbies include extensive reading, reading for pleasure, gardening and extremely *heavy doses* of football watching.

Professor Okoh has a catholic taste in music – from pop, Indian flutes and Celtic pipes, to Beethoven and Mozart, Gospel, and highlife. His is a prolific music collector and can hardly have enough of any kind of music or of such artistes as the Beatles, Simon & Garfunkel, Sam Cooke, Ofege, The Everly Brothers, Musical Youth, Bob Miga and the Strangers, Frankie Edwards, Rex Lawson, Saint Augustine, Erasmus Jenewari and Shola Allyson Obaniyi, to name just a few. He is also a compulsive singer of hymns, and considers the *Baptist Hymnal* the most exciting and enduring hymnbook.

Family Life:

Professor Nkem Okoh is married to the very *wife of his youth*, the ever youthful Mrs Esther Ndidi Okoh (nee Enyi). The marriage is blessed with four wonderful girls and a *beautiful* boy (the best adjective for a male in the midst of women!). He is a firm believer in the power of the family, as well as in God's own special purpose for the family itself.

Mr Vice-Chancellor Sir, I have great pleasure in presenting to you the 97th Inaugural lecturer, Professor Nkem Okoh.