

On DK Olukoya's Professorial Appointment and Matters Arising

In Nigeria, the minimal criteria for the appointment or promotion of an academic in any discipline or program is as specified by the National Universities Commission (NUC), which is the statutory body charged with such responsibility, under the Federal Ministry of Education. The NUC's prevailing terms for professorial appointment is often enlarged with details by each university via its own Appointment and Promotions Board. For example at the University of Lagos (UNILAG), amongst other requirements [1]:

- i. The minimum eligibility period for promotion or appointment from one rank to the next shall be three years.
- ii. A candidate being considered for confirmation or elevation must be current in his field of research via continual authorship of literary content and/or other creative works.
- iii. A candidate for the professorial position must
 - possess a PhD degree or Fellowship of the National Postgraduate Medical College or its equivalent
 - have experience in initiating and developing academic group projects
 - participated in academic conferences and have some administrative experience
 - have published not less than twenty two scholarly articles in recognized journals, with at least six via international publishers
 - made original contributions to knowledge and be the leading author in over thirty percent of the reported scholarly works

Based on recent developments reported in the Nigerian media, one wonders whether Private universities are allowed to set their academic appointment guidelines at variance with the provisions applicable in Public universities. Most federal universities adhere to known conditions with serious deviations hardly occurring. Recently, the NUC Executive Secretary constituted committees to check excesses in the tertiary educational system [2]. He noted the irregularities in the procedures adopted by some universities and related institutions for professorial appointment, as well as the trend that “*some academics were now desperate to be addressed as Professors. This, he said, has been rampant among lecturers in private universities.*”

Recently, news filtered in [3] that the Chancellor of Mountain Top University (MTU) has been appointed as a professor of biotechnology ‘by one of Nigeria's top universities.’ It emphasized the fact that his numerous publications were assessed. “*The statement added that Olukoya was severally offered the position in the 1990s by many universities, saying he chose to pursue his ministerial calling as directed by God.*” The report came as a surprise to most people though some became elated. If individual academics, and ASUU scrutinized the appointment of Dr. Isa Ali Ibrahim (Pantami - a serving cabinet Minister of the FG), by FUTO then it should be okay to do likewise in this instance. The reason being that though each appointee was hitherto an academic, both are respectively known in recent times for their distinct 'ministerial endeavors and spiritual presentations.' Unlike Pantami whose (post-graduation) published research output prior to heading a government Agency/Ministry, is scanty and mostly from doubtful outlets, Olukoya has quite an impressive repertoire as evident on Goggle Scholar [4]. Two things of concern in this case are:

1. **The currency of Olukoya's academic output.** That is, how productive is he really in teaching/research (in biotech field), and related service in recent years?
2. **The legality/propriety of MTU appointing its own Chancellor** (who by their rules/regulations takes precedence over others) **into a staff position that is under the oversight of an HOD, Dean & the VC.**

Olukoya was prolific in the stated research area till 2007. Thereafter, he has a paper dated 2011, another in 2014, then 2016 and two in 2021. Though he has a private biotechnology foundation, and has donated labs

to institutions such as UNILAG, (which is well appreciated) yet, promoting research is not same as doing it by oneself.

The released statement through its wording and celebratory tone suggests that Dr. Daniel Olukoya was appointed as a regular professor, not as an adjunct professor or as a professor of practice. The full professorial position is not akin to a chieftaincy title in society to be offered, and rejected/accepted as the statement also insinuated. **If Olukoya earlier declined such ‘offers’ to pursue ministerial calling, is he now set to redirect his focus and return full-time to his original profession?** Is he ready to regularly attend the Mountain Top University Senate meetings, teach/examine courses and hold student consultation hours, conduct research at, and supervise students on campus, etc.? Would he fully do so given his 'pastoral commitments as General Overseer (GO) of MFM' and could he really do so as 'Chancellor of MTU'? If as an expert, he has been serving as *occasional Guest Lecturer* in few biological science courses handled by regular staff, he could have continued same without necessarily being appointed as a full professor. His scholarly worth, and especially his past works are established; it seems he was somehow persuaded to sort of ‘get crowned with the new title.’ This may detract rather than add anything to him in the grand scheme of things... unless God has [supposedly] changed His mind about the matter.

Assuming it is conceded that he has numerous papers, and participated in the work that led to the published studies of 2021; would ‘first or second generation universities in Nigeria’ appoint someone with 2 papers within last 6 years as a professor? By extant regulations, a Nigerian university would ordinarily NOT appoint even an academic with a Nobel Prize as a regular professor if such doesn’t have both quantum and currency of publications! They have reservations if not suspicions, towards a candidate with ‘either sparse or crowded output’ in a fixed time interval, especially recent period to an evaluation.

Honorary and/or earned doctorate degrees no longer suffice for many prominent Nigerians, who are not practicing academics. Some years ago, another university reportedly contemplated conferring its Chancellor, a GO who was never an academic, with professorship but reason prevailed, and the idea was jettisoned. Questionable professorial appointments will resurface more rapidly in public and private institutions unless the NUC firmly upholds its supervisory mandate, and calls to order university Senates and related agencies Governing Councils. The precedents are piling up from UNN with Ndidi Okereke Onyiuke, to FUTO with Isa Ali Ibrahim (Pantami), etc.

Nigeria should ensure only those who are qualified, deserving and are willing to function in professorial capacity are conferred the esteemed appointment. Recall that the Appeal Court in 2021 [5] upheld the withdrawal of Orji Uzor Kalu’s Bachelors’ degree, which he obtained as a student whilst he was simultaneously the Visitor to the Abia State University. Hopefully, Olukoya’s associates and mentees would allow the proper entity to respond with needed clarifications rather than for all to react typically with “*touch not my anointed...*” While I respect the person of Dr. Olukoya, it is the duty of intellectuals to interrogate issues. Even God said, “*Come, let us reason together...*”

- [O. S. Asaolu](#) writes from UNILAG on Dec 10, 2022

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1. University of Lagos; The Regulations Governing the Conditions of Service of Senior Staff, 2016
 2. NUC website accessed Dec 10, 2022; ES Inaugurates Two Committees to Check Excesses in NUS (<https://www.nuc.edu.ng/es-inaugurates-two-committees-to-check-excesses-in-nus/>)
 3. Punch Newspaper online version accessed Dec 8, 2022; MFM General Overseer becomes prof (<https://punchng.com/mfm-general-overseer-becomes-prof/>)
 4. Olukoya’s Profile (<https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=KRHxJIsAAAAJ&hl=en&oi=ao>)
 5. The WILL Nov 30, 2021 accessed Dec 10, 2022; Appeal Court Upholds Withdrawal Of Kalu’s Degree (<https://thewillnigeria.com/news/appeal-court-upholds-withdrawal-of-kalus-degree/>)