

## Professor Kenneth Ogugua Iwugo

### ■ Biography

Place of birth: Nigeria

Date of arrival in the UK: mid 1960s

Professor Kenneth Ogugua Iwugo's mother, Diana Ekwunife Iwugo (née Obibueyi Chigbo) comes from an Igbo royal household in Obosi, Anambra State, Nigeria, and he is confident because his family have strong cultural traditions and a fortunate position. They used to visit their Igbo family home, Obosi in south-eastern Nigeria every Christmas to keep the family traditions, even though they lived in the capital city of Lagos.



Professor Iwugo in traditional dress  
Photo courtesy of Bristol Record Office

Kenneth did well at school, and as he went to a Christian Missionary Grammar School in Lagos, he had many English teachers. He was the school's first exemplary Junior Prefect and Headboy for two years.

Kenneth says that he has always respected knowledge. His father, Isaac Etuka Iwugo was an important figure in the community and a role model for his sons. He inspired him to take up activities such as the Science Society and Debating Society in both junior and senior schools. Kenneth was also school captain of the football team and house captain for athletics.

At nineteen years of age, Kenneth came to England and he went to Coalbridge High School in Shropshire, where he successfully completed his 'A' levels in one year. He did well in his studies, and went on to do two degrees at Huddersfield and Bristol Universities.

The Biafran War, a civil war between 1967 and 1970, meant that he had no contact with his family during this period, but he kept a cool head and continued with his studies. He did not see his family again until 1974 when he went on a short holiday to Nigeria while he was working in Zambia.

Professor Iwugo has written over 85 papers about his projects and research which students and other people in the UK and all over the world use for their studies. He did his PhD (an advanced degree) in two years in Environmental and Public Health Engineering at Birmingham University, but he also found time to play football, join the Students' Union and keep up with current affairs.

Kenneth chose engineering because he had a flair for the Sciences. Also, it was a tradition to have family mentors and his first cousin, Samuel Iwugo was one, and was already an engineer, as was his uncle.

He returned to Nigeria in 1978, after finishing his studies because he felt he had a duty to give something back to his parents. He went to work first at Lagos University, then the United Nations and after that the World Health Organisation (WHO). This gave him the opportunity to travel around African countries and he was able to spend time with his mother and father again. Unfortunately, his father died soon afterwards, but he was happy that at least he had seen him, and that his children had met their grandfather. Kenneth and his family eventually left Nigeria because he wanted a British education for his five children who have all now achieved degrees.

Kenneth is now the Honorary Chief Policy and Strategy Advisor for Integrated Water and Environmental Management (IWREM) for Nigeria and other African countries, and he therefore makes visits to his home country twice a year. He also does work voluntarily for the community and is on a number of committees like the BBC West Regional Advisory Council, and he was a Parent Governor at St. Mary Redcliffe and Temple School, Standards Board of England among others. He has often been the first Black person on these bodies and feels that his contributions have been valuable.



Professor Iwugo graduating  
Photo courtesy of Professor Kenneth Iwugo

For instance, he has been able to prevent the exclusion of African-Caribbean children from school or to speak up on behalf of their parents. He believes in equal rights and admires men and women who bring about change.

Kenneth's message is:

“ My heroes are Ghandi, John Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Fidel Castro, Linus Pauling, Aneurin Bevan, Clement Attlee, Nelson Mandela, Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Aminu Kano, Mother Theresa, Jesus Christ, and Harold McMillan because he accepted the 'wind of change' in Africa. These people have selflessness in common. They fight for the common good. ”

## Professor Kenneth Ogugua Iwugo

### ■ Teachers' Background Notes

Professor Iwugo, whose mother, Diana Ekwunife Iwugo (nee Obibueyi Chigbo) comes from an Igbo royal household in Obosi, Anambra State, Nigeria, says he has the confidence born of having strong cultural traditions and a fortunate position. Although living in the former Nigerian capital city of Lagos, his father, Isaac Etuka Iwugo ensured that the family visited their Igbo ancestral home, Obosi in south-eastern Nigeria every Christmas to maintain the family traditions and cultural identity.

He has been a committed Christian from childhood. He attended the Christian Missionary Grammar School in Bariga, Lagos. As it was a missionary school, he had many English teachers including Mr. Arnold for Maths, Mr. King for Chemistry and Mr. Butcher for Biology. There he was the school's first exemplary Junior Prefect and Headboy for two consecutive years.

He says that he has always respected knowledge. His father was a central figure in the community and a role model for his sons. He inspired Kenneth to take up activities such as the Science Society and Debating Society in both junior and senior schools. Kenneth was also school captain of the football team and house captain for athletics.

At nineteen years of age, Kenneth came to England as the school's Nuffield Foundation Exchange Programme student. He went to Coalbridge High School, Ironbridge, Shropshire where he successfully completed his 'A' levels. He did well in his studies, reading his first degree in Chemical Technology at Huddersfield University in Yorkshire and his Masters degree in Advanced Analytical Chemistry and Pollution Control at Bristol University from 1969 to 1970.

The Biafran War, a civil war between 1967 and 1970, meant that he had no contact with his family during this period, but he kept a cool head and continued with his studies. He did not see his family again until 1974 when he went on a short holiday to Nigeria while working in Zambia, Central Africa.

Kenneth's first publication was a survey he did in Zambia. After working in England for three years, he went back to Zambia and set up a laboratory and water research programme. He did enough work to publish three papers, and soon one was published in the Journal of the Institution of Public Engineers and later he was published internationally when working

for the World Bank. He has now published over eighty-five journal papers and technical review articles.

He did his PhD in Environmental and Public Health Engineering at Birmingham University in two years and he also found time to play football, join the Students' Union and keep up with current affairs.

He chose engineering because he came from a family of engineers and had a flair for Science. He was also influenced by the fact that his first cousin, Samuel Iwugo had studied the same subject at Bradford University, and it was a tradition to have family mentors. His maternal uncle, Chief Isaac Iweka was also the first Igbo engineer in Nigeria, and although his hometown, Obosi was small, it produced many prominent people such as Chief Emeka Anyaoku, who was Commonwealth Secretary, and Professor Hubert Kolindiye, the second Igbo Professor of Medicine who was an ophthalmologist and the first indigenous Vice-Chancellor of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (Nigeria's second University).

While doing his PhD, Kenneth met a Research Fellow called Richard Feachem who was interested in the developing countries. Richard Feachem took note of what Kenneth said about his experience in Zambia and his project which looked at new methods of addressing water supply and sanitation in developing nations.

He then returned to Nigeria because he felt he had a duty to give something back to his parents. He went to work first at Lagos University, then the United Nations and after that the World Health Organisation (WHO), which gave him the opportunity to travel around African countries.

He arrived back in Nigeria in September 1978, and saw his mother and father again. Unfortunately, his father died soon after, but he was happy that at least he had seen him, and that his children had met their grandfather. He was also Chair of the Parents' and Teachers' Association in Lagos, Nigeria during the 1980s, but he eventually left Nigeria because he wanted a British education for his five children who have all achieved a University education and degrees.

Kenneth is currently the Honorary Chief Policy and Strategy Advisor for Integrated Water Resources and Environmental Management (IWREM) for Nigeria some other African countries and he therefore makes twice-yearly visits to his home country. He has been an expert advisor on many panels such as World Health Organisation Regional Office for Africa, UNESCO-UNEP, EU Research Programmes and many others.

His voluntary services to the community include contributions to the BBC West Regional Advisory Council, Bristol City Council Standards Committee, Bristol Racial Equality Council and Parent Governor at St. Mary Redcliffe and Temple School, among others. He has often been the first Black person on these bodies and feels that his contributions have been valuable, for instance when he has been able to prevent the exclusion of African-Caribbean children from school or to speak up on behalf of their parents. He believes in equal rights and admires men and women who bring about change.

Kenneth's message is: **“My heroes are Ghandi, John Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Fidel Castro, Linus Pauling, Aneurin Bevan, Clement Attlee, Nelson Mandela, Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Aminu Kano, Mother Theresa, Jesus Christ, and Harold McMillan because he accepted the ‘wind of change’ in Africa. These people have selflessness in common. They fight for the common good.”**