



Abridged Biography | Prof Nana Poku



Professor Nana Poku is the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) with effect from 24th June 2019. He previously served as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the College of Law and Management Studies at UKZN, and as Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal from 1 October 2018. He was appointed Chair of the Frontline AIDS Board of Trustees from June 2021. He holds a PhD in International Political Economy and has a distinguished career in research on the political economy of health and HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa and substantial managerial experience in international organizations.

Professor Poku also brings with him a wealth of experience in Higher Education. He has served as Professor of African Politics at the University of Bradford in the United Kingdom and was subsequently appointed Dean for the School of Social and International Studies and later Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research. He returned to Africa to lead the African Union preparation for the Sustainable Development Goals; and within UKZN, served as the Executive Director of the Health Economics and AIDS Research Institute (HEARD).

He took up his post as Deputy Vice Chancellor of the College of Law and Management Studies at UKZN in 2017. Alongside his managerial and academic roles, Professor Poku has maintained his external development roles in Africa. In 2007, he was an expert witness to United States Congressional Committee on the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). During 2006-7, he was a member of the Expert Advisory Group to the EU Africa Governance Project; and from 2007 to 2010, he served as a Special Advisor to British Government on Africa. Since 2007, Professor Poku has been senior advisor on HIV and AIDS policies within Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers for the governments of Botswana, Ghana, Mozambique, Malawi, Namibia, Kenya and Zambia, and over the past two decades has worked in a senior capacity with the World Health Organisation, World Bank, United Nations Development Programme, UNAIDS, International Labour Organisation, European Union, African Union, African Development Bank, Southern African Development Community, and various national development agencies.

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal is passionate about research. His early research examined how Africa responded to the socio-political and economic challenges posed by the HIV and AIDS epidemic. The findings have been significant in shaping global policy and led to Professor Poku being appointed by then-UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to lead the Commission on HIV and AIDS and Governance in Africa. Professor Poku also directed a World Bank programme of operational research (the Treatment Acceleration Programme) to test the feasibility of

strengthening and scaling up on-going HIV and AIDS treatment initiatives in Africa. The outcome of the programme was significant in influencing the World Health Organisation's global policy framework on the provision of complex AIDS-related medication in resource-poor settings.

Professor Poku has a wide array of published work on globalisation and security, the HIV and AIDS epidemic in Africa, global health, governance, migration and human security. He has authored/edited/co-authored numerous books and is widely published in peer-reviewed, internationally recognised journals, including Lancet, British Medical Journal, International Affairs, Review of International Studies, International Relations, and Third World Quarterly.

Professor Poku was educated in the United Kingdom. He received his BA (Hons) in Politics and Economics from the University of Nottingham, his MA in International Political Economy was from Nottingham Trent University and subsequent MSc in Third World Economics and Development from Coventry University. He read for his PhD in International Political Economy at Nottingham Trent University.
