GLOBAL

LEADERSHIP & DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE

Shaping Leaders Driving Global Transformation

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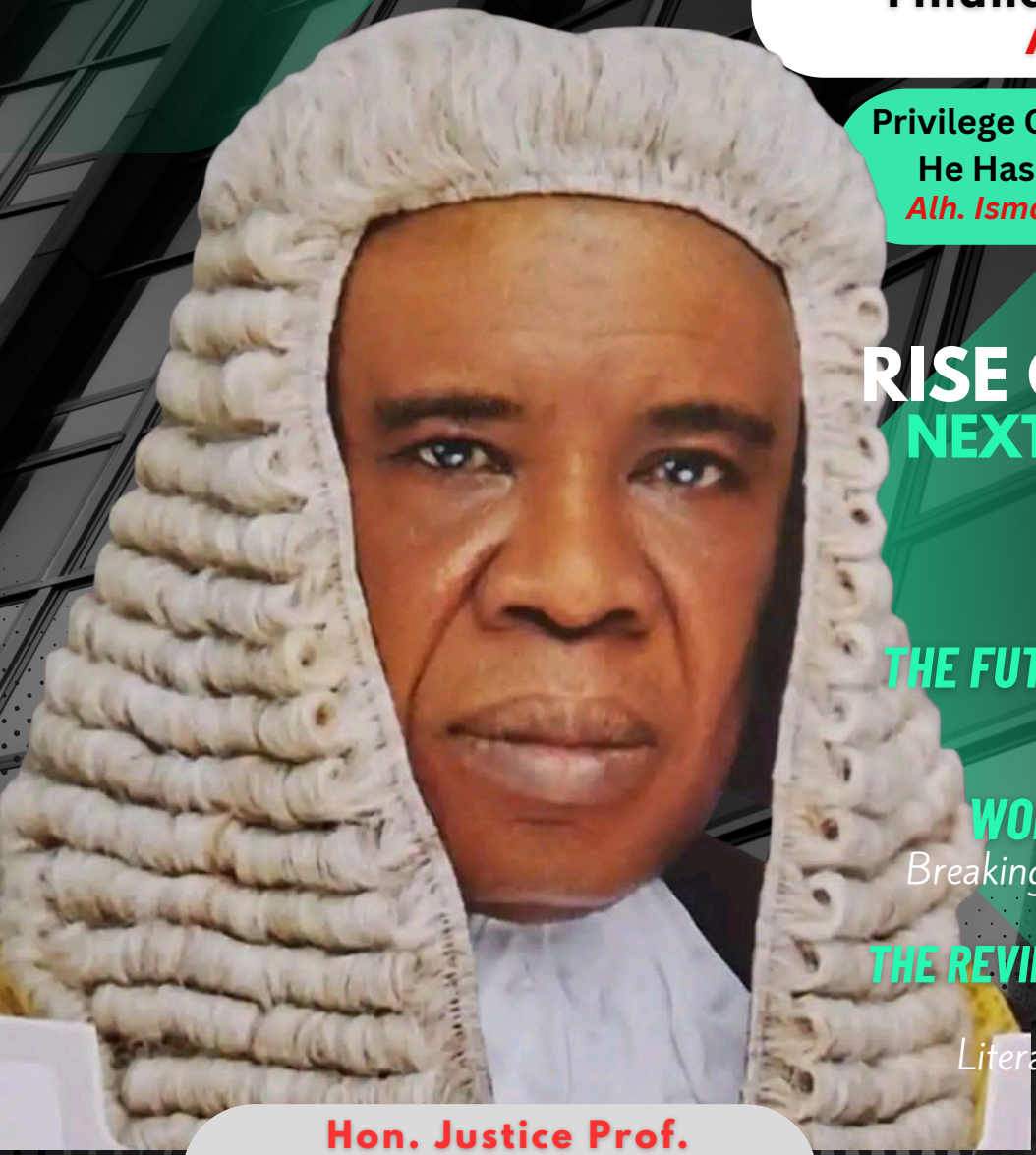
Samuel Oke Omolade, MBA
How Innovative Finance is Shaping Africa

Privilege Carries Obligation and He Has Never Forgotten It
Alh. Ismail Yusuf Ashafa, PhD



RISE OF AFRICA'S NEXT-GEN LEADERS

Inside:

THE FUTURE OF LEADERSHIP
In Africa and the World

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP:
Breaking Barriers, Driving Change

THE REVIEW OF JUSTICE INYANG EKWO'S LAW
Literature and Contributions to Law and Jurisprudence

Hon. Justice Prof.
Inyang Edem Ekwo
Inside Africa's Judicial Leadership

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The Pathway to National Prosperity

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EDITOR -IN-CHIEF'S

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the Global Leadership & Development Magazine a bold and visionary platform dedicated to shaping the future of leadership across Africa and the world.
At a time when nations, institutions, and organizations face unprecedented challenges and opportunities, the need for transformational leadership has never been greater. This magazine is born out of a commitment to inspire, inform, and empower leaders at all levels public, private, and civic.

"**Leadership** for a New Africa: Innovation, Integrity & Impact"
Launch Edition Theme
This theme reflects our belief that Africa stands at the threshold of a new era one that demands courageous thinking, ethical governance, and inclusive development. In this issue, we explore emerging leadership trends, highlight influential voices, and present insights that bridge theory and practice.
From governance and business to youth innovation and global diplomacy, this publication serves as a meeting point for ideas that drive real change. As an ILAD publication, we remain steadfastly committed to advancing leadership excellence through rigorous research, immersive training, and meaningful global collaboration.

We invite you to not only read, but to engage, contribute, and become part of a growing movement dedicated to building a better future through leadership.

Welcome to the journey.

Editor-in-Chief
Dr. Baba Ransome Adamu D.F Leadership
Director General
Institute of Leadership Assessment and Development ILAD

THE FUTURE OF LEADERSHIP

IN AFRICA AND THE WORLD

How a new generation of bold, ethical, and innovative leaders is redefining the boundaries of governance, enterprise, and civic life across the continent and beyond.

By the Editorial Board • Institute of Leadership Assessment and Development (ILAD)

A WORLD IN TRANSFORMATION

Leadership in the 21st century is undergoing a profound transformation. Across Africa and the global landscape, traditional models of authority rooted in hierarchy, control, and exclusion are giving way to more dynamic, inclusive, and innovation-driven approaches. This shift is not merely a matter of style or preference; it reflects a fundamental reimagining of what effective leadership must look like in an era of accelerating complexity.



Dr. Baba Ransome Adamu
Director General
Institute of Leadership Assessment
And Development

The drivers of this transformation are multiple and mutually reinforcing. Technological disruption is reshaping every sector of the economy. Climate change is reordering geopolitical priorities. Growing social movements are demanding greater accountability and equity from those who hold power. And an increasingly interconnected world is making clear that no leader, institution, or nation can thrive in isolation.

In this context, the question is no longer simply who leads, but how leadership is practised, for whomit is exercised, and to what end. The answers to these questions will define the character of the coming decades.

60%+

of Africa's population is under the age of 25 representing the world's most significant reservoir of emerging leadership talent.

AFRICA AT THE THRESHOLD



Christopher Gwabin Musa (OFR)

Hon. Minister of Defence

Africa, in particular, stands at a pivotal moment in its leadership story. With more than 60 per cent of its population under the age of 25, the continent represents not only the future of global workforce dynamics, but a powerful and largely untapped force for leadership renewal.

This demographic reality is not simply a statistic; it is a mandate for reimagining how institutions are built, how power is shared, and how governance serves the people.

The signs of this renewal are already visible. Young entrepreneurs are building technology ecosystems in Lagos, Nairobi, Kigali, and Accra that rival counterparts in Silicon Valley and Shenzhen. Reform minded public leaders are challenging entrenched systems and championing policies that prioritise transparency, efficiency, and citizen welfare. Digital innovators are leapfrogging traditional infrastructure to connect communities, deliver services, and amplify voices that were previously marginalised.

"Africa's opportunity lies not in catching up with global trends, but in redefining what leadership means for the world."

This is the new African leadership narrative one defined not by what the continent lacks, but by what it is actively building. It is a narrative of agency, ambition, and accountability. And it demands to be taken seriously on its own terms.

THE WEIGHT OF UNFINISHED WORK

Yet this transformation is not without its challenges. Governance gaps, economic volatility, and institutional weaknesses continue to test leadership capacity across many nations. Corruption, political instability, and limited access to quality education and healthcare remain stubborn barriers to progress. These are not abstract policy problems they are daily realities that erode public trust and constrain the ambitions of the very people who might otherwise lead change.

The leaders of tomorrow must therefore be equipped with more than ambition. They must combine vision with resilience, ethics with innovation, and local understanding with global awareness. They must be capable of holding the tension between the urgency of immediate need and the patience required to build durable institutions.

This is not a small ask. But history suggests that it is precisely in moments of challenge that the most consequential leadership emerges. The African leaders who will define this era are those who engage honestly with complexity rather than retreat from it.

THE SHIFTING GLOBAL LEADERSHIP PARADIGM

Globally, leadership is becoming less about command and control and more about collaboration and co-creation. The hierarchical model in which authority flow



The rise of artificial intelligence, big data, and interconnected economies is accelerating this shift. Leaders today must be capable of navigating immense complexity, making decisions under conditions of uncertainty, and fostering the kinds of cross sector partnerships that deliver sustainable development. They must be technologically literate without being technologically naive, and globally informed without losing sight of local realities.

Equally important is the growing recognition that leadership which excludes is leadership that underperforms. Gender equity, youth participation, and the inclusion of historically marginalised communities are no longer fringe considerations they are strategic imperatives. Organisations and governments that embed inclusion into their leadership cultures consistently outperform those that do not.



Dr. Niyi Adesanya
Chief Executive Officer
Fifth Gear Plus

THREE PILLARS OF THE NEW LEADERSHIP

In this new era, three qualities stand out as essential for leaders who aspire to make a lasting difference:

INNOVATION

The capacity to think creatively, embrace emerging technologies, and adapt decisively in the face of rapid change.

INTEGRITY

An unwavering commitment to transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct in all spheres of leadership.

IMPACT

A relentless focus on delivering measurable, meaningful results that improve lives and strengthen institutions.

These three qualities are not independent virtues but mutually reinforcing commitments. Without integrity, innovation risks becoming exploitation. Without impact, integrity risks becoming mere performance. And without innovation, impact becomes unsustainable. Leaders who embody all three create the conditions for genuine and lasting transformation.

BUILDING THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW

Institutions like the Institute of Leadership Assessment and Development (ILAD) are playing a critical role in preparing leaders for this evolving reality. Through rigorous research, immersive training programmes, and platforms that connect practitioners across sectors and borders, ILAD is contributing to the formation of a new generation of leaders equipped to meet the demands of their time.

This work is not confined to executive suites or academic seminars. The future of leadership is being shaped in classrooms where young people are learning to think critically and act ethically. It is emerging in community organisations where grassroots leaders are solving problems with scarce resources and extraordinary creativity. It is being tested in startups where founders are building enterprises that serve both profit and purpose.

It is, above all, being shaped by individuals who refuse to accept that things cannot be better and who have the courage, the skill, and the character to make them so.



"The future of leadership is inclusive, adaptive, and purpose-driven. It does not wait to be invited. It builds the room."



Dr. Bashir Idris
Registrar/Chief Executive Officer
Community Health Practioners
Registration Board of Nigeria

FINALLY: AFRICA LEADS

The global conversation about leadership needs Africa's voice not as a footnote or a case study in adversity, but as a source of insight, innovation, and inspiration.

The continent's diversity of experience, its hard won lessons in resilience, and the energy of its young population give it a unique vantage point from which to contribute to global leadership thought and practice.

This magazine exists to amplify that contribution. It is a platform for the thinkers, practitioners, reformers, and builders who are doing the difficult, necessary work of transforming leadership for a new era.

The future of leadership will not be handed down from on high. It will be built, contested, refined, and ultimately realised by those willing to take responsibility for it. Africa is ready. The world is watching. And this, emphatically, is only the beginning.

I.L.A.D

RC-1751017

Institute of Leadership Assessment and Development Nigeria

Women in Leadership:

Breaking Barriers and Driving Change

Why gender diversity in leadership is not just a matter of fairness but a strategic imperative for Africa's future told through the voices of women who broke through, organizations that got it right, and practical steps every leader can take today.

Special Feature • Institute of Leadership Assessment and Development (ILAD)

THE LEADERSHIP GAP WE CANNOT AFFORD



Prof. Helenm Andov
Deputy Vice Chancellor
Pro Chancellor/
Kaduna State University (KASU)

In every Nigerian market, every community meeting, every church committee, and every family crisis, it is often a woman who steps forward. She organizes. She negotiates. She holds things together. And yet, when the formal positions of power are distributed the ministerial appointments, the board seats, the executive offices, the party tickets women are consistently, and inexplicably, left out.

This is not merely an injustice. It is a strategic failure. Decades of research across multiple continents demonstrate, with remarkable consistency, that organisations and nations with greater gender diversity at the leadership level perform better: they are more innovative, more resilient, more profitable, and more responsive to the communities they serve. Every time Africa excludes capable women from leadership, it is not upholding tradition it is undermining its own potential.

This feature examines the state of women's leadership across Nigeria and Africa, the barriers that persist, the breakthroughs that inspire, and the practical steps that individuals, organisations, and institutions can take to accelerate the change that is long overdue.

24% of ministerial positions in Nigeria are currently held by women among the lowest rates in Sub-Saharan Africa.

3% of CEOs of Nigeria's top 100 companies are women, despite women comprising nearly half the workforce.

35%+ higher returns on equity are delivered by companies with strong female leadership representation, according to McKinsey Global Institute research.

UNDERSTANDING THE BARRIERS

Before we can dismantle the barriers that hold women back from leadership, we must name them clearly. They are structural, cultural, and psychological and they often operate simultaneously, which is what makes them so effective at keeping women out.

The first and most visible barrier is structural. Many of Nigeria's institutions political parties, corporations, government agencies, religious bodies were designed by men, for men. Their promotion criteria, their meeting schedules, their informal networking cultures, their definitions of what a "leader" looks and sounds like all of these reflect male norms that women must either conform to or be penalized for rejecting.

The second barrier is cultural. Across many Nigerian communities, the expectation that a woman's primary identity is domestic persists with remarkable tenacity. A woman who is ambitious is often framed as neglecting her family. A woman who is assertive is labelled aggressive. A woman who competes for a senior role may find herself undermined not only by men, but by other women who have internalised the same cultural scripts.

The third barrier is the confidence gap that these structural and cultural pressures produce. Research consistently shows that equally qualified women are less likely than men to apply for senior roles, put themselves forward for high-profile projects, or negotiate forcefully for the compensation and recognition they deserve. This is not a character flaw. It is the predictable psychological consequence of operating in environments that consistently signal: "you do not belong here."

"We were not born lacking confidence. We were taught to doubt ourselves. Unlearning that lesson is the first act of leadership."

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: WOMEN WHO LED THE WAY

"I entered the civil service at a time when a woman who spoke in meetings was considered disruptive. My first boss told me, quite directly, that I was 'too opinionated' for a junior officer. I took that as a compliment. I have spent my entire career being too opinionated and eventually, the results spoke louder than anyone's discomfort with my voice. But I want to be clear: I should not have had to fight this hard. The system needs to change so that the women coming after me do not spend half their energy just proving they deserve to be in the room."
Dr. Ngozi Okafor |Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja

"The moment that changed everything for me was when I realised that I had been leading for years without calling it that. I was the one who resolved conflicts in my department. I was the one who kept projects on track when they were falling apart. I was the one other staff came to when they needed guidance. But I had never claimed the title of leader, because nobody had ever told me that what I was doing counted. Women are already leading everywhere around us. What we need is for those contributions to be recognized, valued, and rewarded not taken for granted as 'just being helpful.'"

Mrs. Titi Bello-Fashola | Group Executive Director, Zenith Industrial Holdings, Lagos

"In northern Nigeria, the conversation about women's leadership must be rooted in our own context. It cannot be imported wholesale from elsewhere. There are women in purdah who are running businesses, managing households of fifteen people, mediating family disputes, and raising children who will go on to lead this country. That is leadership it just needs to be given the formal structures and resources that match its quality. My work is not about convincing men to allow women to lead. It is about building systems that make women's leadership visible and viable within our own communities."

Hajiya Ramatu Aliyu |Executive Director, Women's Economic Empowerment Initiative, Kaduna

"Medicine in Nigeria was never supposed to have women at the top. I was told this, not subtly, at many points in my career. What kept me going was a mentor a male professor who saw something in me and said so, repeatedly, until I believed it myself. That is the power of advocacy from unexpected quarters. I now make it a point to do the same for young women in my hospital. I look for them specifically. I sponsor them publicly. And I tell them the truth about the path ahead because the worst thing we can do is pretend it is easier than it is."

Dr. Adaeze Nwosu |Chief Medical Director, St. Benedict's Hospital Group, Enugu

CASE STUDIES: WHEN ORGANIZATION GET IT RIGHT



Dr. Mrs Temitope illori

Director General

National Agency for the Control of Aids in Nigeria

Changing the statistics on women's leadership requires more than individual courage. It requires deliberate organisational action. The following case studies show what happens when institutions commit to gender diversity with the same seriousness they apply to financial targets.

CASE STUDY 1

Access Bank Nigeria: The Gender Diversity Dividend

Access Bank Nigeria has been widely recognised for its intentional approach to gender diversity in leadership. The bank established a formal Women in Leadership programme that combines targeted recruitment, structured mentorship, leadership development training, and transparent promotion criteria. Over a five-year period, the proportion of women in senior management roles increased from 18 per cent to 34 per cent. More significantly, departments with the highest female leadership representation consistently outperformed their peers on customer satisfaction, staff retention, and innovation metrics.

The bank's Group CEO has publicly stated that gender diversity is not a corporate social responsibility initiative it is a business strategy. "We are not doing women a favour," he noted. "We are fixing a market inefficiency."

CASE STUDY 2

Women's Leadership in Anambra State Government

When a governor in Anambra State made a deliberate commitment to appoint women to at least 35 per cent of senior government positions, the expectation in many quarters was that this was a symbolic gesture. Four years later, the evidence told a different story. Three of the most consistently high-performing ministries in the state Education, Health, and Finance were all led by women. The Ministry of Education, under a female Commissioner, recorded the state's highest WAEC pass rates in a decade. The Ministry of Health expanded primary healthcare coverage to 47 additional wards. These outcomes did not happen because the women were female. They happened because they were competent leaders who had been given the opportunity to lead an opportunity that had previously been withheld.

CASE STUDY 3

She Leads Africa: Building the Pipeline from the Ground Up

She Leads Africa is a platform that identified a structural problem in the women's leadership conversation: most interventions focus on women who are already in leadership, while neglecting the pipeline that feeds into senior roles. By targeting ambitious young African women in their twenties and early thirties providing business training, mentorship networks, investor connections, and peer community She Leads Africa has supported thousands of women across the continent to build businesses and leadership careers on their own terms. Several alumni have gone on to raise significant investment capital, hold government appointments, and lead organisations across multiple sectors. The lesson is straightforward: building women's leadership requires long-term pipeline investment, not just crisis-level intervention at the top.

THE BUSINESS CASE IS SETTLED — NOW WHAT?

It is worth pausing to note that the argument for women's leadership is no longer primarily a moral one although it certainly is that. The evidence base is now so extensive that the business case has effectively been settled. Companies with gender-diverse boards and executive teams consistently outperform those without. Governments with higher female representation in parliament pass more legislation on health, education, and social welfare. Organizations led by women during crises as the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated vividly tend to respond with greater speed, empathy, and effectiveness.

The question is no longer whether women's leadership is valuable. The question is why, knowing this, so many Nigerian institutions continue to behave as if it is not. And the honest answer is that gender exclusion, like most forms of exclusion, is maintained not by logic but by habit, comfort, and the self-interest of those who benefit from the current arrangement.

"When women lead, communities do not just grow — they heal, they include, and they endure."

EIGHT PRACTICAL INSIGHTS FOR ADVANCING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Whether you are a woman navigating your own leadership journey, a male ally committed to driving change, or an organization seeking to close its gender gap, these practical insights offer a clear starting point.

1. **Claim your leadership identity early**

Many women wait until they feel 'completely ready' before stepping forward. Men rarely wait this long. If you are consistently solving problems, guiding others, and driving results, you are already leading. Name it. Own it. And stop waiting for someone else to give you permission.

2. **Find your sponsors, not just your mentors**

A mentor advises you. A sponsor advocates for you when you are not in the room. Research shows that the career advancement gap between men and women is largely explained by the sponsorship gap. Identify senior leaders male or female who believe in your ability and are willing to put their reputation behind yours.

3. **Build your network with the same rigour as your skills**

Women tend to invest heavily in developing their competence and underinvest in developing their relationships. In Nigeria, as in most of Africa, who you know genuinely shapes what you can access. Attending events, joining professional associations, and building relationships across sectors is not a distraction from your work it is part of your work.

4. **Negotiate — every time, without apology**

Research shows that women negotiate their salaries and conditions far less frequently than men, often because they fear being labelled difficult or ungrateful. The cost of this over a career is enormous. Know your market value. Ask for what you deserve. Frame negotiations around the value you bring, not the need you have.

5. **If you are a man, use your position deliberately**

Male allies are not a luxury they are a necessity. If you are a man in a position of leadership or influence, you have a specific role to play: amplify women's voices in meetings, name gender bias when you observe it, advocate for women in promotion discussions, and examine your own assumptions honestly. Allyship is not a feeling. It is a practice.

6. **Challenge bias in the language of leadership**

Pay attention to how your organization describes its ideal leader. If the language consistently invokes traits traditionally coded as masculine aggressive, dominant, decisive

while penalising traits coded as feminine collaborative, empathetic, relational you have identified a bias worth challenging. Leadership requires all of these qualities.

7. **Support other women, publicly and practically**

In environments where resources are scarce and competition is high, women sometimes fall into patterns of mutual undermining. This serves no one. Make a deliberate commitment to refer, recommend, mentor, and celebrate other women in your field. The success of other women does not diminish yours. It expands the space for all of you.

8. **Hold institutions accountable with data**

Organisations that are serious about gender diversity measure it. If your organisation has no data on the gender breakdown of its leadership pipeline, promotion rates, pay equity, or retention rates — that itself is the problem. Advocate for transparent reporting. What gets measured gets managed. What gets managed gets changed.

WHAT INSTITUTIONS MUST DO DIFFERENTLY

Individual action matters. But systemic change requires institutional commitment. The following are non-negotiable for any Nigerian organisation that is serious about closing its gender leadership gap.

First, representation targets must be set and reported publicly. Not quotas imposed from outside, but clear internal commitments with timelines and accountability mechanisms. Targets without accountability are wishes. Targets with accountability are plans.

Second, the culture of long hours and constant physical presence as the primary signal of commitment must be interrogated. This culture disproportionately disadvantages women who carry the majority of domestic and caregiving responsibilities. Flexible working arrangements, remote work options, and robust parental leave policies are not concessions to weakness they are investments in talent retention.

Third, promotion processes must be made transparent and criteria-based. Much of the gender gap in senior leadership is explained by informal promotion cultures in which sponsorship networks which tend to be male and homogeneous determine who advances. Formalizing criteria, establishing panels, and auditing outcomes by gender disrupts this pattern.

Fourth, zero tolerance for sexual harassment and gender-based workplace intimidation must be operationalised, not merely stated. This means clear reporting mechanisms, independent investigation processes, consistent consequences, and a cultural signal from the top that this behaviour is incompatible with belonging to the organisation.



Dr. Bimbo Alashe
Chairman/Chief Executive Officer
Leather World Ltd

AFRICA CANNOT LEAD WITHOUT ITS WOMEN

Africa is a continent of extraordinary ambition. Its young population, its resource endowments, its cultural richness, and its growing connectivity position it to play a defining role in the 21st century.

But none of this potential will be fully realised if half the population continues to be systematically excluded from the rooms where decisions are made.

The women whose voices appear in this article did not succeed because the system worked for them. They succeeded because they refused to let the system stop them.

That is not a model to celebrate uncritically, it is a problem to solve. We should not be building a continent on the backs of women who had to be exceptional just to be treated as ordinary.



Institute of Leadership Assessment and Development Nigeria



A REVIEW OF JUSTICE INYANG EKWO'S LAW LITERATURE AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO LAW AND JURISPRUDENCE

Introduction

Honourable Justice Prof. Inyang Edem Ekwo, in theory and practice, unarguably is one of the finest legal minds and jurists in the contemporary Nigerian judiciary, and without a doubt, within the Commonwealth's legal system. This argument stems from a general overview of his scholarly works in academic journals; his seminal and groundbreaking law literature, as well as his pronouncements on law and jurisprudence.

Ascribing to Justice Ekwo as a scholar jurist, one whose intellectual works, judicial service, and institutional involvement have contributed meaningfully to the development of law and jurisprudence, is just stating the facts. His career reflects a rare blend of academic scholarship, practical legal administration, and judicial craftsmanship. These are elements that have shaped his influence within the Nigerian legal system and beyond.

This Review, therefore, assesses his principal legal writings and their significance, as well as his broader contributions to jurisprudence and the administration of justice in Nigeria.

Overview of His Intellectual and Scholarly Background

Justice Ekwo's legal scholarship is grounded on a solid academic foundation, comprising advanced legal degrees and decades of experience with legal practice, corporate regulation, and judicial adjudication. His stint at the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) helped to enrich his understanding of corporate governance, non profit regulation, and institutional compliance. This experience, no doubt, helped to weave his thoughts into writing most of his literary and legal works.

His transition to the Federal High Court of Nigeria added a jurisprudential dimension to his intellectual output, positioning him not only as a judge but also as an educator, researcher, and author whose writings bridge theory and practice.

Review of His Major Legal Literatures

Justice Ekwo's contributions to Nigerian legal literature are seminal, broad and impactful, having always stemmed from rare and specialised areas often neglected, or indeed uncharted territories in mainstream legal scholarship.

Among his key legal works are:

1. Drug Laws Enforcement and Administration in Nigeria, 2018, Princeton Associates, Lagos, Nigeria.

2. Education Law and Administration in Nigeria, 2010, Odade Publishers, Lagos, Nigeria

3. Incorporated Trustees: Law and Practice in Nigeria, 2007, LexisNexis, South Africa.

4. Incorporated Trustees Law for Churches and Religious Associations, 2003, Brighter Law Publications Limited, Ibadan, Nigeria.

Drug Laws Enforcement and Administration in Nigeria: This text is one of the few comprehensive examinations of Nigeria's drug control legal framework. It addresses the statutory structure of drug regulation, the roles of enforcement agencies, procedural challenges, and the policy gaps that affect effective drug-law administration. The book is especially valuable because it synthesises criminal law, administrative law, and regulatory practice into a unified analysis, making it a significant reference for prosecutors, judges, law enforcement institutions, and academics studying narcotics law.

Education Law and Administration in Nigeria: This examines the legal framework governing educational institutions, management authorities, students' rights, disciplinary processes, and governmental oversight. The book contributes significantly to the growing field of education law, offering insights that guide administrators, policymakers and legal practitioners.

Incorporated Trustees: Law and Practice in Nigeria: Here, Justice Ekwo provides an authoritative exploration of the legal status, governance rules, and statutory requirements for incorporated trustees, entities widely used by religious bodies, NGOs, associations and charitable organisations. His analysis clarifies compliance duties under the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA), procedures for registration, powers and liabilities of trustees, and judicial interpretations governing non profit entities

Incorporated Trustees Law for Churches and Religious Associations: This was written before "Incorporated Trustees: Law and Practice in Nigeria." They both clarify compliance duties under the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA), procedures for registration, powers and liabilities of trustees, and judicial interpretations governing non-profit entities. However, "Incorporated Trustees Law for Churches and Religious Associations" fills a critical gap for churches and religious organisations whose operations are often misunderstood or improperly regulated.

Beyond these major publications, Justice Ekwo has written articles, papers and seminar materials (local and international) that engage with corporate administration, judicial ethics, legal reforms, and the structure of Nigeria's regulatory institutions.

Even his fictional works could be unmistakable as "law fictions" as they are suffused with legal ruminations and drama, in the mode of "Lamb Tales from Shakespeare." In fact, lawyers who desire proper grounding in instituting cases in courts and exercising the diligence to follow through with such cases should obtain his books of fiction for guidance.

These writings further demonstrate his commitment to developing underexplored areas of Nigerian law.

Influence beyond the legal academy:

a. Impact on civic institutions: Churches, Mosques, NGOs, schools, drug-control agencies, and civic associations rely on his works to guide decision-making and organisational structure. This broad public utility extends his influence far beyond the courtroom.

b. Contributions to Public Policy and Governance: His analyses often highlight gaps in existing laws and suggest involvement in the administration practice. Such insights are valuable to policymakers and reform advocates seeking to strengthen governance.

c. Promotion of Rule of Law: By emphasising due process, compliance, institutional integrity, and ethical leadership, Ekwo's works reinforce the foundations of a democratic society grounded in the rule of law.

Contribution to Law, Judicial Reasoning and Jurisprudence:

i. Development of specialised areas of law: Through his publications, Justice Ekwo has contributed to expanding the boundaries of Nigerian legal literature in areas such as non-profit law, drug enforcement law and administration, and education law and administration; these are fields with limited scholarship and high practical relevance.

ii. Influence on Legal Practice and Institutional Compliance: His works serve as reference materials for courts, government agencies, NGOs, churches, universities and legal practitioners seeking clarity on compliance, governance and statutory interpretation. This demonstrates his broader societal impact beyond the courtroom.

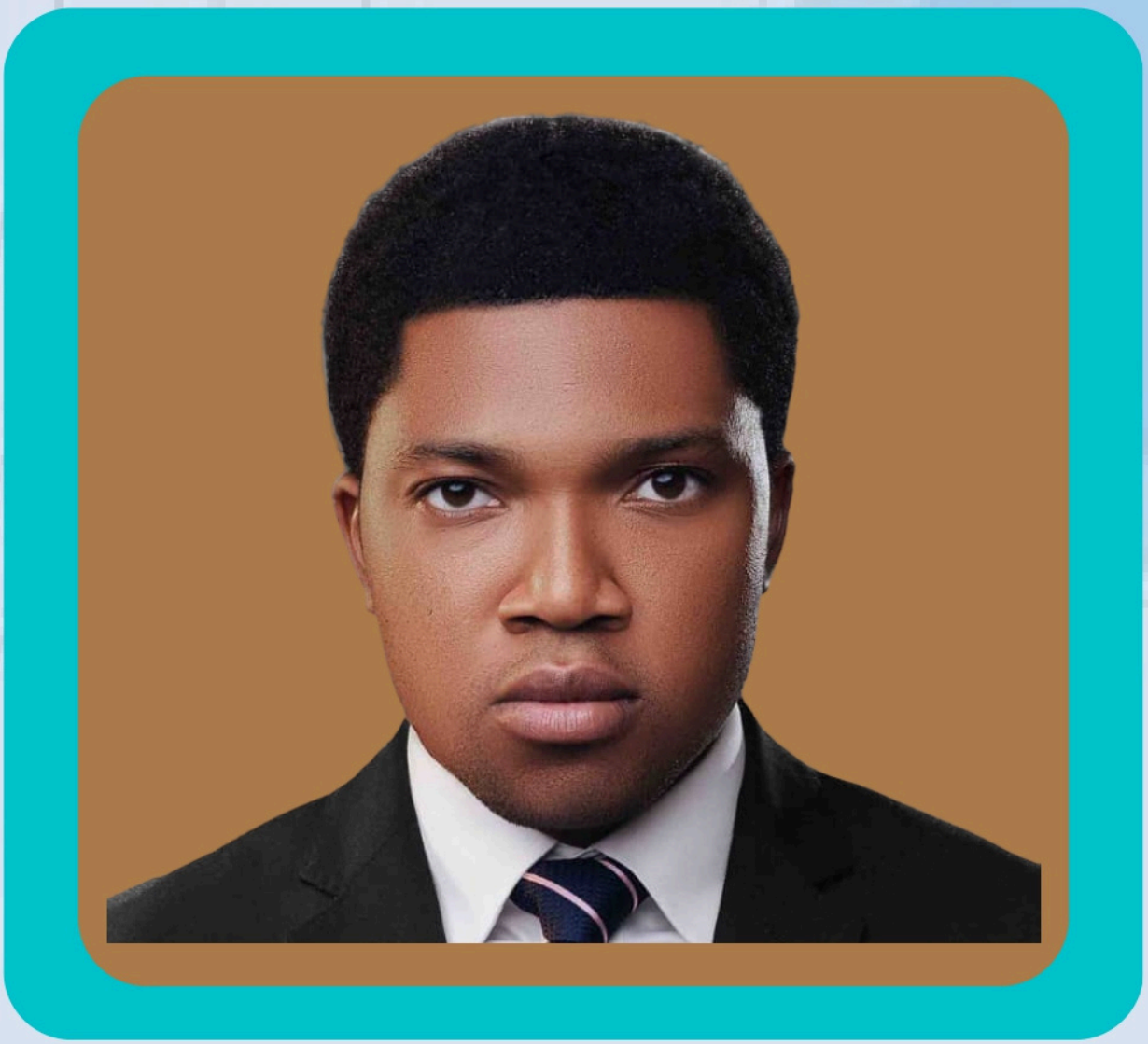
iii. Contributions to Judicial Interpretation and Jurisprudence: On the bench, he has delivered decisions that engage complex legal questions involving administrative law, corporate regulation, civil rights and public interest matters. His judgments often reflect the depth of his academic orientation and commitment to statutory clarity.

Overall Assessment and Legacy

Justice Inyang Ekwo's contribution to the judiciary demonstrates a commitment to strengthening the administration of law, enriching legal education, and expanding Nigeria's jurisprudential landscape. His legal writings remain important resources for practitioners and scholars, offering clarity in fields that lack sufficient scholarly attention.

Without any iota of doubt, or at the risk of contradiction, Justice Inyang Ekwo's law literature and judicial service place him among the scholarjurists whose works contribute meaningfully to the understanding, development, and application of law in Nigeria.

His influence is evident in academic circles, legal practice, institutional governance, and the broader jurisprudential evolution of the Nigerian legal system.



How Innovative Finance

Is Shaping Africa

The Story of Oke Omolade Samuel

Africa is undergoing a financial revolution, and it is being led not by legacy institutions but by a new generation of technology-first entrepreneurs who see the continent's unbanked millions not as a market gap to observe but as a mandate to act upon. Few embody this conviction more completely than Oke Omolade Samuel founder, financier, diplomat, and one of Africa's most consequential fintech architects.

1.4B+
People in Africa by 2030
57%
Adults unbanked across Africa
$40B+
African fintech investment by 2025
4
Continents where Omolade's ventures operate
5+
Companies founded or co-founded
2021
Year Internopay was founded in Vancouver

I. The African Fintech Revolution: Context and Stakes

Financial exclusion is not simply an inconvenience. It is a structural trap. When a woman in Kano cannot receive payment from an international buyer for the fabric she weaves, or when a young engineer in Enugu cannot access venture capital because he lacks a foreign bank account, the problem is not personal failure it is systemic. The absence of efficient, accessible financial infrastructure has been one of the most persistent brakes on African economic development, constraining the very entrepreneurial energy the continent needs most.

For decades, the response to this problem was largely institutional: multilateral loans, donor programmes, microfinance schemes. Each had its value. None was transformative. What changed the equation was the mobile phone and, more precisely, the realisation by a new generation of African technology entrepreneurs that the mobile stack could be repurposed into a financial stack. M-Pesa in Kenya showed the world what was possible. What followed was a continent-wide explosion of fintech innovation that has, in less than fifteen years, fundamentally rewritten the rules of African financial access.

Nigeria sits at the centre of this transformation. As Africa's largest economy, with a population approaching 230 million and a median age under twenty, Nigeria has the demographic scale to generate network effects that make financial technology platforms viable at speed. Lagos alone is home to one of the most dynamic startup ecosystems on the continent, producing companies Flutterwave, Paystack, PiggyVest, Cowrywise that have earned global capital and global recognition. But the story of Nigerian fintech innovation is not confined to Lagos.

It travels, through diaspora networks and global ambition, all the way to Vancouver, Rome, and Washington.

"The mobile phone didn't just connect Africa to the internet. It connected Africa to the global financial system and a generation of entrepreneurs seized that connection."

It is in this broader context of a continent renegotiating its place in the global financial architecture, using technology as its primary instrument that the story of Oke Omolade Samuel becomes not merely a personal narrative of achievement, but a case study in what African fintech leadership looks like at its most deliberate and most consequential.

II. The Formation of a Fintech Architect

Omolade Samuel's trajectory is instructive precisely because it does not follow a straight line. He began, not in finance or computer science, but in Sociology and Anthropology at Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife a disciplinary choice that, in retrospect, foreshadows everything that followed. Sociology is, at its core, the study of how systems and structures shape the lives of individuals.

For a man who would go on to build companies designed to reshape the structural conditions of African financial life, this was not an accidental starting point.

At OAU, Omolade served as President of the Department of Sociology his first encounter with institutional leadership, and his first experience of the gap between what an institution promises and what it delivers. That gap, the distance between the potential of a system and its actual performance, would become the central preoccupation of his professional life.

After graduating in 2015, he expanded his intellectual formation significantly. Information Systems at the University of Portsmouth gave him the technical vocabulary to match his social intuition. A professional programme in Financial Technology and Blockchain Innovations, completed in 2021, placed him at the precise intersection of finance and emerging technology. An MBA from Rome Business School followed by a Doctorate in Business Administration at the same institution, still in progress added the strategic management frameworks within which to deploy his technical knowledge. Most recently, executive studies in Artificial Intelligence at Harvard University have ensured that he remains at the frontier of the disciplines shaping the future of financial services.

Academic Formation at a Glance

Sociology and Anthropology, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife (Graduated 2015)
Information Systems, University of Portsmouth, UK
Financial Technology and Blockchain Innovations, Professional Certification (2021)
MBA Rome Business School, Italy
DBA (in progress) Rome Business School, Italy
Executive Studies, Artificial Intelligence Harvard University

What this formation produced was not a narrow specialist but something rarer: a generalist with strategic depth. Omolade understands the anthropology of exclusion why financial systems fail certain populations. He understands the technology of inclusion how digital platforms can reach those same populations. And he understands the business architecture required to make inclusion financially sustainable. This combination is precisely what the African fintech moment demands.

III. Internopay and the Cross-Border Payment Imperative

In 2021, Omolade founded Internopay Technologies Inc in Vancouver, Canada a financial technology company regulated by the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada (FINTRAC). The choice of jurisdiction was deliberate. FINTRAC regulation confers credibility and access: it signals to international banking partners, corporate clients, and regulators in multiple jurisdictions that Internopay operates to the highest compliance standards. For a platform whose core mission is cross-border payment facilitation, that regulatory credibility is not a bureaucratic formality it is a competitive asset.

Internopay has grown rapidly into one of the leading liquidity and cross-border payment platforms for businesses operating between Africa and global markets. Its model addresses one of the most persistent pain points in African commerce: the friction, cost, and uncertainty of moving money across borders. For African entrepreneurs selling to buyers in Europe or North America, or African businesses importing from manufacturers in Asia, every dollar lost to correspondent banking fees, unfavourable exchange spreads, or failed transactions is a dollar subtracted from competitiveness.

"Internopay does not just process transactions. It removes the structural barrier that separates African entrepreneurs from global markets."

By providing a seamless, compliant, and cost-efficient payment corridor, Internopay effectively lowers the barrier to entry for African participation in global trade. The platform empowers entrepreneurs who previously depended on informal money transfer operators, or who simply priced themselves out of international markets because the transaction costs were too high to make cross-border commerce viable.

The timing of Internopay's founding 2021 is significant. This was the year in which the COVID-19 pandemic's disruption of physical commerce was accelerating the migration of global trade to digital channels. Supply chains were under pressure, digital payment infrastructure was receiving unprecedented attention from investors and policymakers, and the vulnerability of African businesses to correspondent banking de-risking was becoming impossible to ignore. Omolade founded Internopay not in spite of this turbulence, but because of it reading the disruption as a structural opportunity to build something durable.

The Liquidity Architecture

One of Internopay's most distinctive features is its focus on liquidity management not merely payment processing. The distinction matters enormously in the African context. A payment platform that can route a transaction from Lagos to London is useful. A platform that can also provide the liquidity buffer that allows a Nigerian SME to manage the timing mismatch between when it pays its suppliers and when it receives payment from its customers is transformative. This is the architecture Internopay is building: not a payment pipe, but a financial operating system for African businesses engaging with global markets.

IV. The Gmart Alliance: Building an Integrated Ecosystem

Innovative finance does not operate in isolation. It is embedded in broader economic systems logistics, data, travel, capital allocation whose efficiency determines how much value the financial innovation can actually unlock. Omolade understood this from the beginning, which is why his entrepreneurial vision extended well beyond a single fintech product.

In August 2021, he established Gmart Alliance, a conglomerate whose subsidiaries span precisely the value chain that African businesses need to compete globally. The architecture of Gmart Alliance is worth examining in detail, because it reflects a coherent theory of what African economic development requires.

The Gmart Alliance Ecosystem

Travoofy

Corporate travel management reducing the cost and complexity of business travel for African companies and professionals

Peak Capitals

Finance and liquidity solutions providing working capital, investment facilitation, and liquidity management

Afrishipping

Logistics and shipping connecting African producers and traders to global supply chains

Bridge Data Analytics

Data intelligence and analytics turning African business data into strategic insight and competitive advantage

Interno LLC (USA)

Extending the group's financial services and market reach across North America (founded 2022)

The logic of this constellation is clear. Travoofy reduces the friction of the physical movement that underpins business relationships. Afrishipping addresses the logistics gap that prevents African producers from reaching global buyers competitively. Peak Capitals provides the financial fuel working capital, liquidity that allows businesses to take on contracts they would otherwise lack the balance sheet to service. Bridge Data Analytics gives all of this a data intelligence layer: the capacity to understand market dynamics, customer behaviour, and operational performance at a level of rigour that transforms tactical decisions into strategic ones.

Together, these companies constitute not a diversified investment portfolio but an integrated enabling platform for African business. Omolade is not building companies that serve different customers. He is building infrastructure for the same customer the African entrepreneur seeking to compete at global scale across the different dimensions of their operational challenge.

Why Ecosystem Thinking Matters in African Fintech

Single-point solutions apps that solve one problem in isolation are abundant in the African startup ecosystem. What is far rarer, and far more valuable, is the kind of ecosystem architecture Omolade has assembled at Gmart Alliance: companies that reinforce each other's value, share customer relationships, and collectively reduce the friction cost of doing business across borders.

This integrated approach mirrors the model of platform companies like Alibaba and Amazon, which recognised early that controlling multiple points of a transaction payments, logistics, data, marketplace creates a network effect that single-product companies cannot replicate. That Omolade is applying this logic to the African context with the specific constraints of informal credit markets, underdeveloped logistics infrastructure, and fragmented regulatory environments represents a genuinely sophisticated strategic contribution.

V. Diplomacy, Recognition, and the Power of Convening

Innovation does not happen only in code repositories and boardrooms. It happens in the rooms where policy is made, where standards are set, and where the rules of the global financial system are negotiated. Omolade's increasing prominence in diplomatic and intergovernmental spaces is not a distraction from his entrepreneurial mission it is an extension of it.

His appointment in 2024 as Special Emissary on International Finance by the International Society of Diplomats, Toronto, places him in a formal role at the interface between private-sector innovation and public-sector governance. In this capacity, he is not merely a business leader attending diplomatic forums he is a recognised interlocutor, whose voice carries the credibility of both the entrepreneur who has built real companies and the diplomat who understands the institutional context in which those companies must operate.

His representation of Nigeria at the Qatar Economic Forum in Doha and at the African Development Bank Annual Summit in Nairobi reflects the same integration of the commercial and the diplomatic. At the Qatar Economic Forum one of the world's most significant gatherings of global business and policy leaders his presence signals Nigeria's growing weight in global financial conversations, and provides a platform for articulating the case for African financial inclusion to an audience that controls significant capital allocation decisions. At the AfDB Summit, his participation connects his entrepreneurial work directly to the continental development agenda that provides its broadest justification.

His appointment to the Board of Directors of CYBERPEDIA Internet Governance Africa's leading cybersecurity organisation adds a further dimension: digital security. The expansion of African fintech creates enormous new attack surfaces for cybercriminals, and the integrity of the financial inclusion project depends on building digital trust at the same speed as digital access. Omolade's

Omolade's engagement with cybersecurity governance reflects an understanding that innovation without security is fragile.

"His receipt of the Clean Cyclers and Sustainability Award at the House of Lords, Westminster, signals that financial innovation and environmental stewardship are, in his vision, inseparable."

The recognition he received at the Global Sustainability Summit and Awards held at the House of Lords, Westminster, in March 2024, in partnership with the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation and the World Food Forum signals a further integration of the financial and the developmental. Sustainable finance is not a niche interest; it is the direction in which global capital allocation is moving. African leaders who can credibly speak the language of ESG and sustainability are better positioned to access the growing pools of impact-oriented capital that could accelerate the continent's development.

His designation as Distinguished Ambassador on United Nations World Peace Day with its emphasis on governance, youth empowerment, and global peace completes the picture of a leader who understands his work in the largest possible frame: not merely as business building, but as a contribution to the conditions that make peaceful, inclusive development possible.

VI. The Leadership Model: What Omolade's Story Teaches

It would be a mistake to read Oke Omolade Samuel's story simply as a biography of individual achievement. The more important reading is as a template a model for what African fintech leadership looks like when it is operating at full power, and what the institutions that develop African leaders should be cultivating.

1. **The Importance of Intellectual Breadth**

Omolade's formation from sociology through information systems to fintech, AI, and business administration is not a story of unfocused curiosity. It is a story of strategic intellectual investment. Each degree or certification he pursued addressed a specific gap in his capacity to execute his mission. African leadership development institutions need to produce more leaders like this: people who are not merely credentialled in a single discipline, but who have done the hard cognitive work of integrating multiple knowledge domains into a coherent leadership practice.

2. **The Value of Global Positioning**

Omolade is based in Canada. His companies operate in Canada, the United States, and across Africa. He studies at Harvard. He represents Nigeria at forums in Qatar and Kenya. This global positioning is not cosmopolitan showmanship it is strategic necessity. African entrepreneurs who want to build platforms that operate at global scale must be embedded in the regulatory environments, capital networks, and intellectual communities where those platforms are evaluated. Omolade's career is a case study in how African leaders can maintain deep roots in the African development mission while building the global credibility and connectivity that mission requires.

3. **Ecosystem Thinking over Single-Product Thinking**

The architecture of Gmart Alliance five complementary companies addressing adjacent dimensions of the same problem reflects a maturity of entrepreneurial thinking that is still too rare in African tech ecosystems, which tend to celebrate individual product innovations over systemic platform building. The lesson for aspiring fintech founders is not to replicate Omolade's specific portfolio, but to adopt his integrative logic: to ask, not just 'what problem does my product solve?' but 'what is the full architecture of enabling infrastructure that my target customer needs, and how do I build or connect to it?'

4. **The Inseparability of Business and Diplomacy**

In advanced economies, the boundary between business and policy is often policed as a matter of principle. In Africa, where markets are less mature and regulatory frameworks are still being built, the boundary is necessarily more porous and the leaders who understand both sides of it are the most effective. Omolade's engagement with diplomatic institutions, cybersecurity governance, and intergovernmental development forums is not a side project. It is integral to his capacity to build companies that will endure, because it gives him direct access to the policy conversations that shape the regulatory environment within which those companies operate.

VII. The Road Ahead: Africa's Fintech Horizon

The structural forces driving African fintech innovation are not going away. The continent's population will continue to grow. Its youth cohort the largest in the world in absolute numbers by mid-century will continue to demand financial tools that match their digital nativity and their global ambition. The correspondent banking system's progressive withdrawal from African markets driven by compliance risk concerns will continue to create demand for the kind of alternative infrastructure that companies like Internopay are building.

But the opportunity is not automatically realised. Africa's fintech revolution requires not just technology but institutional infrastructure: regulatory frameworks that enable innovation without enabling fraud; capital markets that can provide the patient capital that fintech platforms need to scale; talent pipelines that produce enough engineers, data scientists, and financial architects to staff the companies that need building.

Above all, it requires leaders people who combine the technical understanding to build robust digital financial systems with the

ethical compass to build them in ways that genuinely serve the populations they claim to include. The financialisation of Africa without the inclusion of Africans the extraction of data and transaction fees from populations who receive no genuine economic benefit is a real risk, and one that only conscious, values-driven leadership can consistently guard against.

Omolade Samuel's trajectory suggests that such leadership is possible, and that it can emerge from within Africa rooted in African academic institutions like OAU, shaped by African social realities, and oriented toward African development outcomes, even when the operational base is in Vancouver or the recognition comes from Westminster.

"Africa's fintech revolution is not waiting for permission from the global financial system. It is rewriting the terms on which it engages with it."



Conclusion: A Model for the Next Generation

The story of how innovative finance is shaping Africa is ultimately a story about people about the entrepreneurs who saw a structural problem and decided to solve it, who built companies in the spaces that legacy institutions had abandoned, who carried their countries into rooms where African voices had rarely been heard.

Oke Omolade Samuel is one of those people. His story is significant not because it is unique, but because it exemplifies a pattern that, if reproduced at scale across the continent, would transform African financial life. It is a pattern of rigorous intellectual formation, strategic ecosystem building, diplomatic engagement, and the kind of long-term orientation that resists the temptation of quick extraction in favour of durable institution-building.

For leadership educators, development institutions, and policymakers thinking about what Africa's next generation of leaders needs, his example is not an aspirational abstraction. It is a working model one that is generating real companies, processing real transactions, and creating real economic opportunity for African entrepreneurs who would otherwise remain on the wrong side of the global financial system.

The future of African finance is being written now. It is being written in lines of code and compliance frameworks, in boardrooms in Vancouver and summits in Doha, in the decisions of young Nigerians at universities like OAU who are asking the same questions Omolade asked a decade ago: What is broken here? What would it take to fix it? And what will I build?

A DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO INSOLVENCY AND BANKRUPTCY LAWS IN NIGERIA



Reviewed by Rowland Enwerem
Book: Insolvency and Bankruptcy Laws and Practice in Nigeria
Author: Hon. Justice Inyang Edem Ekwo
Publisher: Princeton & Associates (2026) | 1,112pp

Insolvency and bankruptcy laws have long occupied critical yet notoriously difficult spaces within Nigeria's legal and commercial frameworks. Sitting at the crossroads of commerce, finance, corporate governance, enterprise risk management, and individual and corporate restructuring, the field demands professional skills that extend well beyond law - and a clear-eyed appreciation of the economic realities the laws are designed to address. When corporations falter and financial systems are tested, clarity in the law becomes everything.

Justice Inyang Edem Ekwo's Insolvency and Bankruptcy Laws and Practice in Nigeria delivers that clarity with authority and depth. It is the most comprehensive legal compendium ever written on corporate insolvency and bankruptcy in Nigeria, and the most indispensable reference yet produced for legal minds, financial professionals, and regulatory authorities alike.

Anchored on exhaustive local and international research, the work surveys the full landscape of Nigerian insolvency laws - from the Companies and Allied Matters Act 2020 (CAMA 2020) and the Bankruptcy Act (LFN 2010), to the intersecting regulatory frameworks governing banking, securities, insurance, mortgage institutions, consumer protection, credit reporting, deposit insurance, and secured transactions in moveable assets.

This is not merely a statutory digest. The book unpacks the real-world tools of corporate rescue and restructuring - Company Voluntary Arrangements (CVA), administration, mergers and acquisitions, amalgamation, winding-up, liquidation, and dissolution - equipping readers to engage each process with precision and confidence.

Structured across 21 progressive chapters, the book covers both academic and practical terrains: insolvency and bankruptcy fundamentals; insolvency practitioners and their ethical framework; CVA and administration; the legal effects of administration; receivers and managers; the various modes of winding-up, including voluntary and court-supervised; dissolution; netting; mergers, acquisitions, takeovers and amalgamations; insolvency in banking and deposit insurance; banking and finance law intersections; asset management under the AMCON framework; debt recovery; credit transactions and reporting; bankruptcy law; alternative dispute resolution in insolvency; and the interface between insolvency, criminal sanctions, and taxation.

As a serving judicial officer of the Federal High Court of Nigeria and an accomplished scholar, Justice Ekwo brings a rare, dual authority to the subject - combining bench experience with rigorous academic discipline. The result is a work that moves fluently from foundational principles to the most labyrinthine questions of insolvency practice, drawing perspectives from across and beyond Commonwealth jurisdictions while remaining firmly grounded in the Nigerian context.

Standout contributions include the detailed treatment of administration and its legal consequences, the multi-chapter coverage of winding-up which addresses both procedural and substantive dimensions, and the sophisticated engagement with specialised topics such as netting, sector-specific insolvency regimes under the NDIC Act, the regulatory powers of the Central Bank of Nigeria, and the policy objectives of institutions like the Financial Reporting Council. The chapters on pension regulation, credit reporting, and ADR in insolvency further demonstrate the breadth and intellectual range of this work.

Perhaps the most impressive achievement is the book's capacity to render dense and often abstruse areas of insolvency law intelligible without sacrificing analytical rigour.

Whether the reader is a judge, lawyer, banker, accountant, regulator, enforcement officer, or student, the writing remains clear, accessible, and authoritative.

This work also holds a historic distinction: it is the first comprehensive and most cohesive textbook dedicated entirely to insolvency and bankruptcy laws and practice in Nigeria. In a field where practitioners have long been forced to navigate disparate statutes, scattered case laws, and foreign texts, Insolvency and Bankruptcy Laws and Practice in Nigeria fills a long-standing gap and sets a new benchmark for scholarship and practice in this specialised area.

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Alhaji Ismail
Yusuf Ashafa



“Privilege carries obligation and he has never forgotten it.”

There are leaders who are celebrated for what they hold — their titles, their positions, the corridors of influence they occupy. And then there are leaders defined by what they give. Alhaji Ismail Yusuf Ashafa, the Sardaunan Ikulu, belongs firmly to the second category. Born on 8 October 1976 in Kamuru, Zangon Kataf Local Government Area of Kaduna State, he has spent the better part of five decades quietly building a life in the service of others — in the offices of the Federal Capital Development Authority, in the policy halls of national professional associations, in the classrooms he has built and the boreholes he has sunk in communities that the headlines rarely reach.

His story begins, as many of the most formative stories do, in the discipline of Islamic learning. Before formal school, Kamuru gave him his first education in values — humility, responsibility, and an understanding that a person’s worth is measured not in what they acquire but in what they contribute. From those beginnings, he progressed through L.E.A Primary School and on to Government Secondary Schools in Kachia

and Hunkuyi, before earning admission to one of Nigeria's most storied institutions: Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

An Architect of Spaces, A Builder of Systems

At ABU Zaria, Alhaji Ashafa pursued a Bachelor of Science degree in Urban and Regional Planning, a discipline that would prove prophetic for a man destined to spend his life thinking about how communities are structured, how they grow, and how they fail the people within them when planning goes wrong. But he did not stop there. In the years that followed, he added a Master's degree in Disaster Risk Management and Development Studies, and subsequently both an MPhil and a PhD to his academic formation — a constellation of qualifications that speaks not merely to intellectual ambition, but to a man who understood that the crises facing African communities demanded rigorous preparation, not improvised goodwill.

Following his National Youth Service Corps in Jigawa State, he joined the Federal Capital Development Authority in Abuja in 2003 as a Town Planning Officer. His ascent through the institution to the rank of Deputy Director of Planning represents twenty years of professional application, institutional loyalty, and quiet excellence. In parallel, he built an equally impressive portfolio outside the FCDA: as Chairman of Host Communities of Nigeria (HOSCON) in Kaduna State, as National Chairman of the Arewa Scholars Forum, and as the founder of the Sardaunan Ikulu Foundation — his most personal instrument for translating professional success into community transformation.

His professional membership roster reads like a map of his intellectual interests: Fellow of the Institute of Criminal Justice and Criminology Administration, member of the Institute of Management Consultants, registered with

TOPREC and the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners, and affiliated with the Society of Disaster Risk Managers of Nigeria. Each membership is not a credential collected for its own sake but a reflection of the range of his expertise and his sustained commitment to professional standards in a country where institutional culture is often its own casualty.

Leadership Lived in the Details

What distinguishes Alhaji Ashafa from many who carry impressive portfolios is the consistency and texture of his public service engagement. He has served as Vice President and National Treasurer of the Ikulu Development Association, as Secretary of the Anti-Corruption Transparency Unit at the FCDA, and as National Secretary of the Society of Disaster Risk Managers of Nigeria. Each role adds a layer to a picture of a man who has understood governance not as a destination but as a practice something exercised at every level, in every context, with whatever authority or responsibility one holds at that moment.

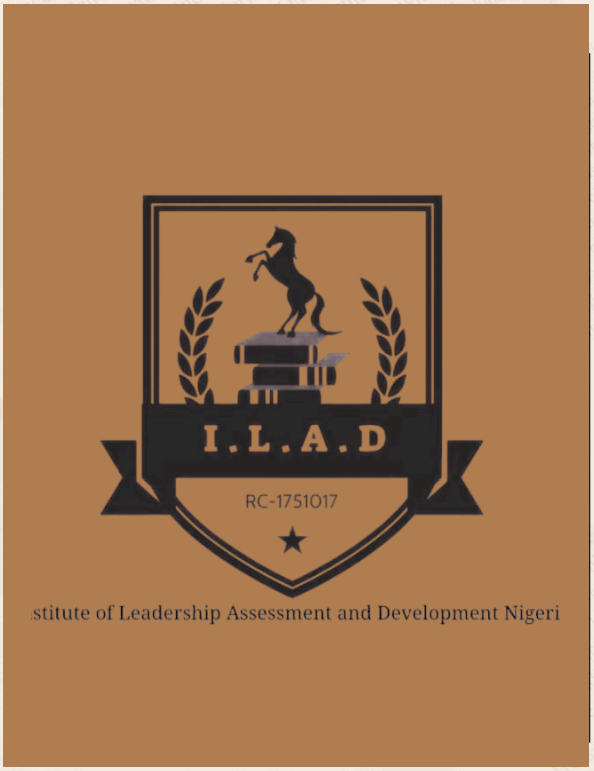
"His is not a philanthropy of visibility. It is the expression of a deeply held conviction that those who have received more must give more."

His political engagement, which began in 1999, is of a similar character. He founded the Youth Discovery and Mobilisation Forum and has remained an active voice in electoral processes and political development, including significant work within the All Progressives Congress. But even here, the tenor is different from that of the career politician. The impression his record leaves is of a man who entered political life because he genuinely believed that governance is a community affair, and that its outcomes are too consequential to be left to those who govern for themselves.

When the Record Speaks Loudest

Perhaps no section of Alhaji Ashafa's record speaks with greater eloquence than the catalogue of his personal philanthropic work. Through the Sardaunan Ikulu Foundation and his own direct initiatives, he has sponsored local and international scholarships, created employment for more than forty graduates, constructed classrooms, installed boreholes in rural communities that lacked access to clean water, supported JAMB candidates, and empowered young people through agriculture and vocational skills training. He has made contributions to community security, supported individuals facing medical crises, donated to the needy, and dedicated consistent energy to promoting religious harmony and inter-community cohesion in a state whose history has too often been defined by the wounds of division.

His is not a philanthropy of visibility. There are no elaborate announcements, no carefully staged distribution ceremonies designed for the cameras. It is, rather, the expression of a deeply held conviction that those who have received more must give more — that the resources one accumulates through professional success and institutional position are not personal trophies but community assets held in trust.



Recognition, Honours, and What They Represent

The wider world has not been unobservant. Among his honours are the NILEST Distinguished Service Award (2011), the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) Awards in both 2012 and 2014, the Blueprint Hospitality Icon award (2021), Regional Planner of the Year (2022), and an Honorary Doctorate Degree (2023). These distinctions, accumulated across more than two decades of public life, confirm what his community in Kaduna and his colleagues in Abuja have long known: that Alhaji Ismail Yusuf Ashafa is a man of uncommon consistency.

His traditional title, Sardaunan Ikulu, is not merely an honour bestowed. It is, in the deepest sense, a description of a life. In Hausa-speaking northern Nigeria, the Sardauna is a figure of trust, counsel, and custodianship — one who guards the community's wellbeing and speaks for those who cannot always speak for themselves. By that measure, Alhaji Ashafa has worn the title faithfully.

Alhaji Ismail Yusuf Ashafa, Sardaunan Ikulu, is a Fellow of ILAD Worldwide. His life is proof that authentic leadership is not defined by the positions one holds, but by the lives one changes quietly, consistently, and with genuine love for people.

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