



Covenant University

15<sup>th</sup> INAUGURAL LECTURE

**Lengthening Cords and  
Strengthening Stakes:**  
Leadership Praxis and Transcendence  
in Counselling Practice

Aize O. I. Obayan

**INAUGURAL LECTURE SERIES**

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# Lengthening Cords and Strengthening Stakes: Leadership Praxis and Transcendence in Counselling Practice

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**A CITATION ON PROFESSOR  
AIZE OLOHIGBE IMOUOKHOME OBAYAN**

The year 1960 is certainly not an ordinary year for many Nigerians; it was the year our dear motherland Nigeria got her political liberation from the colonial masters. But seven months earlier to that exact date when Nigeria's political history took a different trajectory, God Himself gave the world a pre-independence gift with the birth of an Amazon, excellence, forthrightness, diligence, resourcefulness, and God's handmaiden and daughter: Aize Olohigbe Imouokhome Obayan.

Born to the family of grateful parents, Sir Frank and Lady Marian Imouokhome in Edo state, Nigeria; Aize Olohigbe Imouokhome Obayan is a child of destiny who has continued to walk predestined paths and letting herself loose in the service of God and humanity. As a young girl with keen eyes and a feverish penchant for contributions, achievement and intellectual adventure, Professor Aize Obayan never failed to leave a golden ribbon in all she did or touched. She knows the value of work, service and contribution as primary determinants to anyone's claim to success. Her legacy is partly in her investment in others and the desire to see perfection as something within the realm of human existence and imagination.

Professor Aize Obayan's life, education, work, and personality were never products of fate but faith and certainly not by chance or luck. She walked the path and did the talk by choice and took predestined steps that defined her personality and the remaining steps she ever took. It is often and correctly said you are a product of your earlier exposures and education and that the child shows the woman! Professor Aize Obayan is therefore a product of a good home training and good education. She attended (among other schools) the famous St. Maria Goretti Girls' Secondary School, Benin City, Saint Leonards School for Girls, St. Andrews, Fife, Scotland for her "A" Levels, a school which has nurtured many women of international repute and

remarkable abilities, as our Inaugural Speaker, Professor Aize Obayan.

On her return from the United Kingdom, Professor Aize Obayan gained admission to the University of Benin, Benin City for her Bachelor of Education (B.Ed, English) degree from 1979 to 1982. Her English background is part of that divine preparation for a future at the global stage. Professor Aize Obayan's English is impeccable. Listening to her is like watching an opus with a Nightingale on stage! After her mandatory National Youth Service Corps deployment in Kano was over in 1983, Professor Aize Obayan took a dramatic step that defined her personality and the remaining changes that we celebrate today. She got admission into the University of Ilorin, not to study English as expected, but to study Guidance and Counselling. And to prove the validity of God's leading and walking predestined paths, she earned her Master's and Doctorate degrees in Guidance and Counselling in record time in 1984 and 1987 respectively; a feat uncommon in such academic climes and era.

Professor Aize Obayan did not just become a Professor and a leading voice in the discipline overnight; she played her part and most importantly, paid her dues. Her career in academics began as an Assistant Lecturer at the University of Ilorin, Kwara State in 1986. She rose through the ranks, becoming a Reader at the same University in 1995. Today, Aize Olohigbe Imouokhome Obayan is a Professor of Counselling with specialization in Multicultural aspects of Human Behavioural Disposition and if impact is a factor, leadership could easily be added to her areas of strength and inquiry!

Professor Aize Obayan often tells her mentees that whenever the student is ready, the teacher appears (a Chinese Proverb), signposting the fact that everything works according to design and order. For the global role she has played and continues to play in redefining higher education and leadership in Africa, Professor Aize Obayan was prepared by God internationally to assume any role at any time. Her famous departure to the United Kingdom on sabbatical from the University of Ilorin was therefore a divine order. During her United

Kingdom experience, Professor Aize Obayan lectured at the University of Roehampton, United Kingdom as a Senior Lecturer in Counselling Psychology between 1996 and 1999 before returning home with her family, again, by divine direction. The follow up from this move led to her appointment as a Professor of Counselling at Covenant University in 2002. That appointment changed her life and testimony as she went on to serve at the highest level of university administration at the Covenant University.

Professor Aize Obayan is never known to be afraid to tread uncharted paths or venture in so-called areas where only men have dominated and survived. She had blazed the trail on several occasions culminating in her appointment as the first female Vice-Chancellor of Covenant University On February 1, just about one month and three days to her 45th Birthday in 2005. This divine appointment was therefore not a surprise to many who knew her and the passion that drives her contribution mentality. By that appointment, Professor Aize Obayan became the second substantive Vice Chancellor of Covenant University, the third substantive female Vice-Chancellor in the history of Nigerian tertiary education and the first, however, on the private university platform. She also served as Vice-Chancellor of Landmark University from 2015 to 2017 thus joining the exclusive club of very few Nigerian academics who have served as Vice-Chancellor of more than one Nigerian university in their lifetime. Others in the exclusive club include Professors Ibidapo-Obe and Chinedu Nebo (the former Federal Minister of Power).

Her years and service as Vice-Chancellor of Covenant University will make a seminal book on leadership that an attempt to describe her tenure and contribution in such a brief citation can only undercut such a contribution. The Chancellor of Covenant University, Dr. David Oyedepo, during the 10th Founder's Day celebration and announcement of Professor Aize Obayan's successor as Vice-Chancellor, observed that on her appointment as Vice-Chancellor, that instead of clearing her wardrobe for new arrivals, as many women at

her level would normally do, Professor Aize Obayan cleared her bookshelf and ordered with open cheque, books on leadership and consumed herself in the quest for a new brand of leadership that will take Africa to the next levels.

In eight academic sessions as Vice-Chancellor, Professor Obayan mentored many, catered to more, and sought to be of service to all. Through those years as Vice-Chancellor, Professor Obayan was privileged to work with the Chancellor and Visionary of Covenant University, Dr. David O. Oyedepo, a man whose commitment to excellence, the restoration of the dignity of the 'Black' man, and the apotheosis of the African story, continues to serve as the main inspiration of the Covenant University Vision and Aize Obayan's personal life story. She shares with the Chancellor the belief that Covenant University is just at the beginning of its quest for the ultimate prize – Its establishment as a World Class University producing graduates and researchers who will be leaders in their fields of endeavour. It is therefore not surprising that her remarkable performance as Vice-Chancellor has earned her accolades, awards, recognitions, and many other related assignments since leaving office. The price for hard work, as often said by sages like Bishop David Oyedepo, is more work. After a successful 8-year tenure as Vice-Chancellor of Covenant University, Professor Aize Obayan also served as the Education Secretary of the Education Commission, Living Faith Church Worldwide, where she oversaw the running of over 100 Primary Schools (Kingdom Heritage Model Schools) in Nigeria and abroad; 14 Secondary Schools (Faith Academy network of Schools) and two flagship universities of the Commission (Covenant and Landmark Universities).

Professor Aize Obayan currently serves as the Director, African Leadership Development Centre, Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria where she provides leadership, strategic directions and along with her team, manages the African Leadership Development Centre as driven

by the Visionary, Dr David Oyedepo, Chancellor, Covenant University.

Today, Professor Aize Obayan is often described as a faithful and lifelong student of leadership under the mentorship of Bishop David Oyedepo. She always never fails to acknowledge the privilege accorded her to learn from the teacher and mentor, Bishop David Oyedepo. Her first certificate of performance from the Chancellor came on her 50th birthday in 2010 when the Chancellor, Bishop David Oyedepo pronounced that now she has passed the elementary examination on leadership which was epitomised in her hard work and service delivery to the University and admitted her to a higher school of leadership, when he asked her to transit from diligence to SACRIFICE. Professor Aize Obayan bought into this new vision of leadership and sowed her life as a seed for that noble cause.

There is therefore no coincidence in the Spirit or with God. Many years before the Liberation Mandate was delivered to His anointed servant, Bishop David Oyedepo, God had prepared His foot soldiers for the assignment and no doubt, especially on the education commission, Professor Aize Obayan's name will surely be listed as one of those that played their part as assigned by God. It is therefore not surprising that since Professor Aize Obayan got connected to the Liberation unction, the oil of service has remained fresh.

On the academic platform, Professor Aize Obayan, as a Professor of Counselling, specializing in Multicultural aspects of Counselling has been involved in extensive work in developing curricula for Leadership Development Studies and Personal Development Programmes. She has also been involved in many Leadership Development projects. She is involved in the development, teaching and research in the area of New Leadership Paradigms for Africa (NLPA), working to sustain contextually relevant conversations pertinent to empowering leadership praxis in Africa. She currently convenes the Leadership Development Studies Programme in Covenant University and also a member of the Council of the Nigerian



Institute of Management (Chartered) and National Universities Commission (NUC) Strategic Advisory Committee established to drive the repositioning of University Education in Nigeria. She has also been involved in extensive research in the areas of Maternal Acceptance/Rejection and Children's Behavioural Dispositions. Her research also spans Family Systems with particular reference to the Extended/Extensive Family Systems and its impact on the Counselling Process. Her other research involvements are in the area of Prevalence and Pattern of Substance Use/Psychosocial Correlates of Alcohol, Tobacco and Cannabis Use in Nigeria. She has also supervised doctoral research in the area of HIV/AIDS.

At the professional levels, Professor Aize Obayan registered and was duly certified a Member of the Counselling Association of Nigeria in 1986. She also received her Grade III Certificate in Spoken English in 1978 from the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art and by 1979; the same London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art awarded her a Grade 1 Certificate in Spoken English with Distinction. She was a Member of the African Network for the prevention and protection of Child Abuse and Neglect (and served as the Acting Chairperson for the Kwara State Chapter while still living in Ilorin, Kwara State). She is a Member, Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM) as well as a distinguished Member of Council of the Institute. And recently (2016 to be specific), she was meritoriously awarded the Leadership and Integrity Award by the Black Heritage Magazine.

Professor Aize Obayan is a firm believer in lifelong learning, capacity building and continuous relevance. This is the major reason her academic and professional career and educational trajectory have spanned higher educational and organizational contexts in Nigeria and the United Kingdom with emphasis in the areas of Human Communication Patterns, Group Dynamics, Life Skills Development, Multi-cultural Innovations, Social and Emotional Intelligence, with extensive experience in running Human Groups and Skills

Development Workshops both in Nigeria and in the United Kingdom. The Inaugural Lecturer, Professor Aize Obayan, is an award winning scholar, leader, and administrator. She has won numerous awards among which are Nigerian Association of Petroleum Explorationists (NAPE)/SHELL Distinguished Education and Mentorship Award (November, 2005); National Universities Commission, Best Vice-Chancellor Award in 2006 (Private University Category); and the National Association of Women Academics Special Award in 2006.

On the 30th of March 2007, she received an Award in recognition of her outstanding contributions to the growth and progress of the Institute of Strategic Management, Nigeria. The same year, on the 20th of November 2007 to be specific, the Nigerian Institute of Management honoured her with an award for her contributions towards the success of her 2007 National Conference. She was also honoured with a special award for her meritorious service as a member of Board of National Universities Commission (NUC) from October 2005 to November 2007.

Professor Aize Obayan is also a Distinguished Diamond Award recipient of the Alumni Association of University of Nigeria, Nsukka (May, 2011). She also received a Leadership Award for Enhancing ICT and Research Excellence in Higher Education in March 2011 from the Southern University A & M College USA and a Special Award from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN) for her contributions towards Training and Professional Support for Accountants (May, 2011). On the 13th of February 2014, the Nigerian Psychological Association honoured her with the prestigious Award of the Honorary Fellowship of the Association. This was in recognition of her outstanding scholarship in the behavioural Sciences, university administration and national legacy on transformational leadership.

Professor Aize Obayan is also a favourite speaker at Convocations, Workshops, and professional/academic conferences in Nigeria and abroad. She presented the Keynote Addresses at the Minnesota State University international conference; the ACU

supported international seminar in the year 2006 and the main speaker at Nigerian Institute of Management Second Annual National Women-in-Management Conference (11th May, 2006) where she presented a paper titled “Emotional Intelligence as a Critical Factor in Leadership Success”. She was a Special Guest Speaker at 2006/2007 Annual General Conference of the Institute of Strategic Management, Nigeria that held on 30th March, 2007. She was also one of the Resource Persons at the Nigerian Institute of Management's International Management Conference that held from 19th-20th November 2007 where she delivered a lecture titled “Managing the Success of Yesterday for a Greater Tomorrow”.

As part of her commitment to national/international engagement and collaboration, she participated in the Stakeholder's Forum of the 16th Commonwealth Ministers' Conference, Cape Town, South Africa, December, 2006. She was a Keynote Speaker at a National Workshop on Strengthening Advocacy for Use of Alternative Sources of Energy for Sustainable Development by Women in Leadership Positions organized by the Energy Commission, Abuja in October of 2009. She also presented a paper titled New Models of Funding Private Universities at the Plenary Session, 25th Conference of the Association of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities (AVCNU), Osogbo April 2010. Professor Aize Obayan served as a Panellist on the topic: “Governance and Management: Supporting Institutional Capacity for Change” at the 2010 European Union-Africa Summit Side Event on the Nyerere Programme and Higher Education Cooperation in Africa which held in Cape Town, November 2010. She was also a Convocation Lecturer at the 3rd Convocation Ceremony of Crawford University, amongst many other lead speaker engagements. Professor Aize Obayan is a family-centred woman who continues to practice inclusive family values. She was her husband's delight, helpmate and confidant. She was married to Late Engineer Adetokunbo Uchechi Obayan, a leadership consultant and their marriage is blessed with two wonderful children who have continued

to use her as a mentor-mother and role model.

Talking about leadership, family dynamics or the power to become, Professor Obayan has always woven an indelible story of possibilities. In many ways, she has become the fabric upon which many have written their own stories of awakening, their own stories of becoming. She has become a remarkable metaphor for what could happen if people – anywhere – recognized that they are powerful beyond measure, magnificent beyond expectations, and bigger than their old fables suggest. Her daughter's inspiring life and the man she sees in her young son are remarkable reminders of God's infinite grace upon her life and work. Despite the departure of her husband of twenty-eight years, Professor Aize Obayan's faith in God remains indubitable. She knows that the future is for those who are with Him and believes that one's spiritual wellbeing must be backed by a life of continuous and lifelong learning, capacity building and contribution to humanity no matter where or the circumstances one finds his or herself.

The Chancellor Sir, Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you a woman of God, His handmaiden, a proud daughter of Zion, Daughter of Africa, a Teacher of Teachers, the professors' Professor, a Counsellor, an achiever and a proud working mother and wife, Aize Olohigbe Imouokhome Obayan.

## THE GENESIS

*Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited (Isaiah 54 v 2-3).*

The Chancellor and Chair, Board of Regents, Covenant University, Dr David Oyedepo, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor A.A.A. Atayero, other Principal Officers of our noble and highly esteemed Covenant University, the Alma Mater of the rising generation, eminent scholars, our most distinguished audience, my colleagues and dear students, the Kings and Queens in Hebron, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is with a deep sense of awe and gratitude to God that I stand before you today, as a testimonial of the awesomeness and faithfulness of God. As I look through the rear view mirror of the events of my life, I can indeed testify of the Lord's goodness, He has been good and faithful, The Words of the Psalmist in Psalm 40v1-3 situates this most succinctly:

I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.

Also testifying of God's faithfulness, the biblical truth of Ecclesiastes 9:11 aptly captures the trajectories and intersections of my life's journey, noting the peaks and troughs, capturing in essence, my life's narrative thus:

Here's something else I've seen on this earth. Races aren't always won by those who run fast. Battles aren't always won by those who are strong. Wise people

don't always have plenty of food. Clever people aren't always wealthy. Those who have learned a lot aren't always successful. God controls the timing of every event. He also controls how things turn out (Ecclesiastes, 9:11 -New International Reader's Version).

It is God alone who defines the timing and events of our lives. Standing here today is made possible solely by the Hand of God and His Grace upon my life.

When our backs were against the wall and it looked as if it was over... Standing here not knowing how we'll get through this test, But holding unto faith, knowing that nothing can catch 'You' by surprise, You got it all figured out- You moved mountains, You caused walls to fall, with Your power, You performed miracles, There is nothing that's impossible, And (I) we're standing here only because You made a way! (Adapted from the song –“Made a Way” by Travis Greene, 2015).

It is therefore with songs of praise and cascading streams of gratitude for the triumphs and victories that God's valiant Hand has secured for me and my family, that with a gladsome mind, I praise the Lord for this awesome privilege to present the 15th Inaugural Lecture of Covenant University and the 6th from my College base, the College of Leadership Development Studies, today, the 6th of April 2018.

In scriptural parlance, the number fifteen (15) symbolizes grace and divine perfection of the Trinity - the God-head, denoting acts wrought in the energy of divine grace, manifesting the Glory of God. Today's Inaugural Lecture is therefore drawn from the wellsprings of divine inspiration and intersections of the Trinity with the triune man.

Globally, the inaugural lecture platform is one where new Professors are inaugurated into the University's Professorate as they join the comity of professors. An inaugural lecture is a defining event

for a University and her academics as it presents newly appointed Professors with the opportunity to inform the University Community, her external public and indeed the entire world, as they speak to the subject matter of their research, findings, and professional development pathways and future research.

By the grace of God's election, I am Covenant University's first announced Professor, dating back to the year 2002. Right at the inception of the University, when the Public Lectures Series platform was instituted, Covenant University, at that time had not rolled out the platform for her Inaugural Lectures. Shortly after my announcement as a Professor in Covenant University, in keeping with the expectations of entry into the Professorate of the University, I presented my Public Lecture – speaking to the subject matter **“Family Systems, Cultural Dynamics and Counselling Outcomes: The African Paradigm”**. It was presented in the tradition of Inaugural Lectures, serving to announce my research work, my forays into Multicultural Counselling, my academic journey and the paths I would be blazing.

In tracing my academic family tree to a lineage where quality, excellence, rites, values and due process, the hallmark of the Academy, were respected and not bastardized, a most superior parentage indeed, it was important to fulfil this rite of passage. I owe this to the qualitative inputs of mentors and teachers, firstly, Professor Akin Odebunmi at the Undergraduate Level, (who inspired me to go into academics as a career), Professor Niyi Bojuwoye who rolled out inspiring vignettes of the Counselling process and pathways to Counsellor Education at the Masters Level, Professor Tunde Ipaye (of blessed memory), whose seminal guidance has remained evergreen, and his voice, resounding the vital lessons that carved out pathways for my entry into the Academy as a University lecturer and Counselling practitioner at the Doctoral Level, Professor Kayode Ogunremi, who introduced me to academic pathways as a lecturer, learning the ropes of research in the field of Sleep and Dreams, being his Research

Assistant at the time, and Professor Titi Hassan who mentored me in the area of Doctoral Assessments in Counselling and made great contributions to the pioneering Post-Graduate training programmes in the Department of Psychology. All of the above mentioned persons, being giants and revered academics of renown and influence, in their various areas of expertise, are who I trace my academic genealogy from. It was therefore important not to begin to profess as an academic, until this essential passage had been engaged. As it were, in the spirit and culture of academic traditions, I gave my “*Inaugural lecture*” on July 9th 2003 ahead of Covenant University's institution of her Inaugural Lecture Series in March 2011. Again by the Grace of God's election, I was then serving as the second (2nd) substantive Vice-Chancellor of Covenant University, hosting the Inaugural lectures that were delivered at the time.

Several other events with respect to assignments and calls of service are myriad, hence my “purple” board room engagements as Vice-Chancellor, as it were, did not grant me access at the time to fulfil the expectations of this noble demand as an academic, called to the Professorate of the Commonwealth of Universities, hence my Inaugural lecture is only now being presented today the 6th of April 2018, fifteen years, post my announcement as Professor of Multicultural Counselling.

In the tradition of Inaugural Lectures, my presentation in 2003 as expected captured my research work, leading to my Professorial announcement. Reference will be made to aspects of that lecture in this presentation. I have in the pages following, captured my academic journey – as a researcher, teacher and life-long student of Leadership.

## **My Academic and Professional Journeys**

The 19th century poet and playwright Robert Browning, on life's journeys and scripts, stated that “Our aspirations are our possibilities”. It is in this light that I present the trajectories of my academic and professional journeys that have come to define some aspects of the



narrative of who I am today.

My academic and professional journey into Counselling formally took off with the academic training and professional practice base I received during my Master's Degree programme in Guidance and Counselling. Further to this, my dissertation for the same programme on "Sex-role Stereotyping and its effect on Career Decision Making", carved out a pathway for my "initiation" into a focused exploration of the cultural caveat in counselling as an academic discipline and professional practice. However, I trace my incidental forays into counselling as an Undergraduate student of Education, in the course of my Psychology lectures, and the vivid pictures of the therapeutic and clinical process painted by Professor Akin Odeunmi. My Doctoral thesis on "**Maternal Acceptance/Rejection and Children's Behavioural Dispositions: A Cross-ethnic comparison of Children in Nigeria**", led to the emergence of a defined area of focus for my academic and professional counselling journey. This work sparked off a deep interest in the area of cultural imperatives, premises and influences. It opened up new and exciting pathways, informing the presentation of a number of seminal papers, conference presentations, workshops, trainings in organizational settings, peer-reviewed publications in national and international journals, international/national counselling curriculum restructuring, and contributions on professional counselling practice from the multicultural base (in Nigeria and the United Kingdom).

Outside my formal academic initiation into cultural premises and influences, as a young child travelling both nationally and internationally, I got exposed to people of diverse cultures. This sparked off my curiosity about issues of difference/diversity/similarity among the people I encountered. I was also exposed to literature about people in foreign lands. I specifically remember the Janet and John, Bello and Bintu, Abdul stories, fairytales - the Cinderella, Snow-white, and Sleeping Beauty series. I also remember as a child reading over twenty-five (25) titles in the series

"My Home in India, Trinidad, Nigeria" etc, reading about family life, tasks, food, meal times, interaction among family members (which I later understood as cultural paradigms and family dynamics) and the geographical terrain of people in the lands described in the books.

In addition, I remember my experiences as a young girl in a boarding school for girls in Scotland, (a white middle-class setting), which often had members of the Royal family visit. One of such times was the Centenary Celebration of the school in 1977, with the Queen Mother playing a very significant role of opening a new library unit at the time. In 1979, as a student in this school, I put together a programme depicting my cultural background and experience which I titled "The African Experience". This was a self-initiated project. My objective then was to sensitize my British fellow students and teachers to an awareness and consciousness of my rich Nigerian/African heritage, which I held, (and still hold) with a deep sense of pride.

I also want to mention that I was the only Nigerian student and one out of two other international students in the school at the time. The point I wish to underline here is what the visible racial and cultural differences I faced in Scotland at that time must have triggered. One can imagine what impact this programme such as I have described in the preceding lines must have had on my "white-middle class" British audience. A few changes however occurred in the school, (I want to believe) as a result of the programme. The first was the inclusion of some books about the cultures of people from other lands, in the library as well as hanging of paintings depicting motifs from other cultures on the walls of some of the rooms, just to mention a few. I have included this in my narrative so as to pull together the distinct threads of my experiential base in connecting the entire "fabric" of my academic and professional paths.

There are obvious issues inherent in the totality of this experience. One such issue is the base it provided for my launch into multicultural counselling as my area of specialization many years later. It is however interesting to note that twenty-four years (24) later, I explored in the

course of my Public Lecture in 2003, the academic base and practice of the deeper nuances of Culture/Family Systems/Counselling from an African existential base. Again, thirty-nine (39) years on, the discourse is being extended to look at transcendence in Counselling Practice intersecting with Leadership Praxis.

My entry into the formal academic terrain by way of the emergence of a career path actively kicked-off as a Youth Corps member on National Service at the Advanced Teacher's College in Kano, training educators, and then as a Postgraduate student of Guidance and Counselling (Master's and Doctoral). Following that was a very brief six-month stint as a secondary school teacher, and my formal entry into the University System as a Faculty (in Nigeria and the United Kingdom), managing a number of different portfolios, culminating in my serving as Vice-Chancellor of two of Nigeria's leading Universities – Covenant University, and later, Vice-Chancellor, Landmark University, both Universities founded by the Living Faith Church Worldwide.

I have also been privileged to serve on the Board of the National Universities Commission (NUC), with a key reference to my involvements in the Academic Standards and Quality Assurance sub-committees. As Education Secretary, Living Faith Church Worldwide, I was privileged to further cascade the labyrinths of the three representations of the educational system in Nigeria: Primary, Secondary and University. In my current assignment as Director, African Leadership Development Centre, where leadership aptitude and skills are developed via cutting edge leadership development training programmes for global and transformational leadership, the experiential concentric and intersections have crystallized into defining first-hand, the vital role leadership plays, not just as an item on the agenda but as the main agenda for driving, envisioning and executing the essentials for high level performance, attainment, and transformation. These are issues that underpin this Inaugural lecture.

Going through the period I tag as my wilderness years, years of

academic exile, a trying period that God turned around just like a dream of the night on the 2nd of February 2018, it took nineteen (19) years, nineteen (19) long years, but hope was never lost, I have encountered the reality of the picture painted in Joel 2:25. *"And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you."* My patient wait in hope served as a remedy for adversity and set me on the wheels of restoration. Just like the biblical Joseph, until my Word came, the hypocrisies and betrayals of men left me bound in chains and fetters of iron. My arrival at Canaan set me free, as I connected with the Liberation Mandate.

Being wounded empowers a leader to engage in deep levels of empathy and in connecting with one's humanity, a leader is able to passionately abhor injustice with venomous passion, sublimating terrestrial virtues in exchange for the manifestations of divinity. From the biblical injunctions "count it all joy when you fall into diverse trials, ...and the trial of your faith worketh patience, and let patience have her perfect work that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing (James), brings vividly to mind, a statement from the film *Mulan* in 1998 that was continuously instructive for me all through my wilderness years. "The flower that blooms in adversity is the rarest and the most beautiful of them all". My arrival at Canaan carved out inroads into the leadership academy, opening me up to the practice of leadership, intersecting counselling and leadership in the "purple" boardrooms and corridors of the University. The land of Canaan, the Land of restoration, the city of refuge - this is the royal citadel of Hebron, where future leaders are birthed to further lengthen cords and strengthen stakes.

In my academic, professional and personal journeys, one thing that has stood out for me is the opportunity offered to navigate very interesting pathways in the construction of the process and practice of Counselling for the Nigerian and African Clientele. In coming to full grip with this, a foundational understanding of counselling is vital.

(Some aspects of this narrative have been culled from Obayan, 2003)

## **What is Counselling?**

Capuzzi & Gross (2013) defined counselling as “a helping relationship, it is more commonly referred to as the therapeutic alliance. It is unique in that it is established as a one-way relationship with the purpose of resolving a concern and /or fostering the personal growth of one person-the client. The counsellor is designated as the helper, and is assumed to have the knowledge and training to assist the client in an intentional and systematic way.”

Another definition of counselling was given by Feltham and Dryden (1993). They defined counselling as a principled relationship characterized by the application of one or more psychological theories and a recognized set of communication skills, modified by experience, intuition and other interpersonal factors, to clients' intimate concerns, problems or aspirations. Its predominant ethos is one of facilitating rather than of advice giving or coercion. Blocher (1974) provided another definition of counselling, describing it as an interaction process that facilitates meaningful understanding of self and environment and results in the establishment and/or clarification of goals and values for future behaviour.

Practitioners from different cultural contexts trained along the lines of these definitions, find themselves operating in a significantly different context in which the basic premises are defined differently. A number of early Nigerian counsellors were trained in the West. On their return home, they had difficulty in integrating counselling into the Nigerian system mainly because of the prevailing cultural premises and ethos which created boundaries to a successful implementation of counselling in the form in which they received their training (Obayan, 1998, 2003).

Having defined Counselling to reflect my academic trajectory and understanding, it is also important to describe my idea of multicultural

counselling, my avowed area of research that partly signposts this inaugural lecture.

## **What is Multicultural Counselling?**

The Chancellor Sir, over the years, the thrust of my research has been to identify the rubrics of relating the indigenous platforms of counselling against the practice of counselling as it obtains in the Global North. The deconstruction of this fixed process with defining prescriptions for both counsellors and their clients in the counselling process has served as the stimulus for my research leading to the caveat for tailor-making counselling to match the needs of the people it is to service.

This, I regard as multicultural counselling, professional counselling which takes into account both racial and ethnic diversities of the client, further taking into consideration their spirituality, ability and any disabilities, social class and economics, and the potential for any cultural bias by the practitioner, taking into consideration their cultural beliefs and the effect that can have on their treatment (Nugent 2013).

The words of Antonio Machado (1912), “There are no paths, paths are made by walking”, therefore fit this nexus in ways that propel new trajectories for the practice of Counselling with Nigerian and African Clients.

Traversing the privileged path of leadership at different points in my University career; its intersection with my training and practice in Counselling precipitated a synergy of vital strands for harnessing and driving efficiency in University management and governance.

The Chancellor, Covenant University Sir, this is what has inspired the kernel and title of My Inaugural Lecture, the 15th in the Covenant University Inaugural Lecture Series – **“Lengthening Cords and Strengthening Stakes: Leadership Praxis and Transcendence in Counselling Practice”**

## **MY ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTIONS**

I will at this point proceed to present a synopsis of my academic and professional contributions to expanding the frontiers of knowledge, learning and professional practice in the area of Counselling, using specific studies/researches I have carried out in specific areas of Counselling.

### **My Contributions to instituting Counselling outside the School Setting:**

I carried out a number of studies that have particular implications for counselling outside the school setting. I will attempt to summarise some of the studies and their findings as they rub off on the major arguments of this Inaugural.

- 1. Research in the area of Sex-role Stereotyping in Occupational Decision Making:** My work in this area explored the indoctrination process whereby society instils in its members right from childhood, appropriate adult roles. Main line findings from the research indicated that sex-role stereotyping significantly influenced the career decision making processes as a result of –
  - A. Early socialization processes,
  - B. Poor self-efficacy on the part of women and
  - C. Preference for traditionally approved work roles.

A major recommendation from this finding is the need to socialize women and men towards androgynous work role perceptions where they are able to internalize the most desirable and mentally healthy characteristics traditionally attributed to either males or females exclusively (Imouokhome, 1984, 1986, 1987).

Years after I reached these conclusions, Zenger & Folkman (2011), from findings in a related research, recommended that, as leaders in organisations look hard to find the talent they need to achieve exceptional results, they ought to be aware that many women have impressive leadership skills. My research shows that these leadership skills are strongly correlated to organisational success,

factors such as retaining talent, customer satisfaction, employee engagement, and profitability.

A major implication of these research outcomes for counselling and national development is ensuring that professional career and vocational counselling is introduced in secondary schools. This will also ensure that career choices are not determined on the basis of sex-stereotyping. Parents and the community at large will be made to focus on children's intellectual capabilities, their abilities, interests and potentials, as they work with teachers and counsellors to channel children's abilities and energies into well planned out career paths.

## **2. Research in the area of Children's Involvement in Home Tasks**

Another area of my research that has impacted counselling is in the area of children's involvement in home tasks. The major emphasis of my work in this area is on the identification of significant variables in task allocation in the home by way of socialisation practices in families in the Nigerian context. The major argument here is that children are expected to participate in family and community chores or tasks as part of their development, education and acquisition of social competencies of responsibility both as citizens and members of a family unit. My work in this area also found out that religious orientation and gender were not significant determinants of task type distribution and participation in families.

The major implication of these outcomes for counselling outside the school system is very logical. In other words, there is transcendence in socialization and sex typing. In essence, counsellors, teachers and parents will need to factor this into their work with children and not structure their involvements with children based on extant socialization models. The main issue here is that the task to be done is primary and children engage with this first of all from a person and not under gender bias mode (See Imouokhome, 1984 and Obayan, 1991).



### **3. Research in Behaviour Dispositions of Nigerian Children**

In my research foray into behaviour dispositions of Nigerian children, I found, among other notable outcomes, that Nigerian Children demonstrate a general state of psychological wellbeing which should be advantageous to their social, physical and mental health status, especially if individuals and agencies involved in their welfare capitalize on the derivable benefits of dealing with mentally stable children to a large extent. This is also implicated in the high levels of self-esteem and emotional responsiveness reported by Nigerian children (as reported in my studies in this area). This particular conclusion is positively correlated and has implications for achievement, motivation, and the development of close lasting relationships in children (See Obayan, 1996).

### **4. Maternal Acceptance and Rejection Studies**

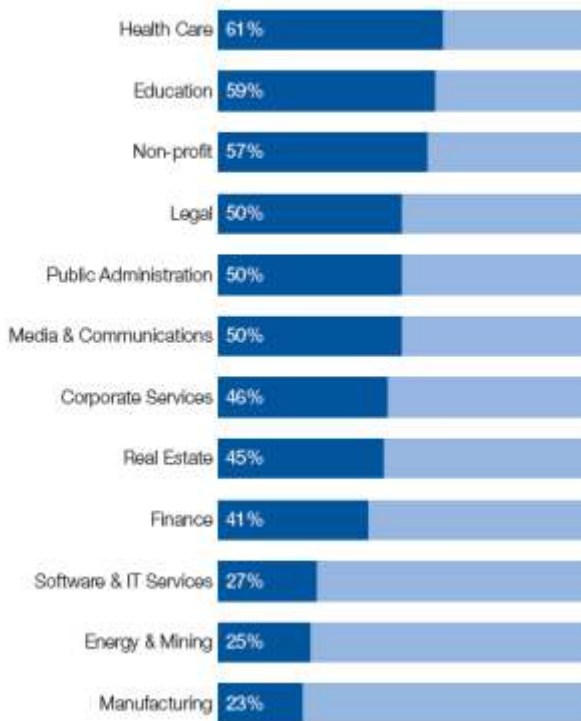
In the area of Self-Evaluation and Maternal Acceptance Studies, a critical aspect in Counselling research, I found that Maternal Acceptance is significantly related to the behaviour manifested by children. The debilitating consequences of maternal rejection must be sounded particularly for mothers and care-givers on how to effectively interact with children so as to communicate love, affection and other positive attributes. This should involve the teaching and training of teachers, mothers and care givers in active listening skills that will help them note the specifics in what children say and not what they want or expect them to say.

Related to this are studies I carried out on “**Maternal Employment Status and Maternal Acceptance**”. Major findings in this area indicated that significant relationship exists between maternal acceptance and maternal employment status, in either traditional or non-traditional settings. The implication of this for the education of women and the girl child is obvious and in looking at the current gender parity gaps reported in the World Economic Forum Report of 2017, huge implications that this will have in the societal end

economic development of the nation, cannot be over emphasized. Figure 1 below shows this gender parity gap.

**Figure 1: Gender Parity Report, World Economic Forum 2018**

Female share of employment, by industry



Second, the findings from my research in this area suggest possible explanations why children of working mothers (traditional and non-traditional employment) perceive a high degree of maternal acceptance than children of mothers who are housewives. Further analysis of the research findings shows a combination of factors, some of which are:

1. Mothers in non-traditional employment may have higher paying jobs than their counterparts in traditional employment or those who are housewives. As a result, they may be better

able to fulfil the maternal responsibilities towards their children.

2. A number of Nigerian parents, generally speaking, are not overtly expressive in displaying love, emotions and affections to their children; the provision of needs is therefore the possible way a child is able to perceive the action of his/her mother as being accepting, the converse being the case if this is not happening (See Imouokhome, 1987 and Obayan, 1994).

## **5. Research Collaborations in Substance Use, Prevalence and Patterns:**

In the course of my attempt at collaborative research, I collaborated with colleagues to research extensively in the area of substance use, prevalence, patterns and monitoring of such trends in Secondary Schools and University Students. The first of the research report was published in “**West African Journal of Medicine, Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy and Drug and Alcohol Dependence**” high impact journals indexed by Scopus.

My other collaborative research engagements leading to publications are captured in the summaries below:

1. (1992) Prevalence and Pattern of Substance Use among Undergraduates in a Nigerian University  
M.L. Adelekan,  
O.A. Abiodun,  
A.O. Obayan,  
G.A. Oni &  
O.O. Ogunremi
2. (1994) Pattern of Substance Use amongst Secondary School Students in Ilorin, Northern Nigeria  
O.A. Abiodun,  
M.L. Adelekan,  
O.O. Ogunremi,  
G.A. Oni &

A.O. Obayan

3. (1996) Monitoring Trends in Substance Use Through a Repeat Cross-Sectional Survey in a Nigerian University  
M.L. Adelekan,  
R. Ndom &  
A.O. Obayan

Further research collaborations in **Psychosocial Correlates of Substance Use** led to the following publications in high impact journals indexed by Scopus:

1. (1993)- Psychosocial Correlates of Alcohol, Tobacco and Cannabis Use: Findings from a Nigerian University  
M.L. Adelekan,  
O.A. Abiodun,  
A.O. Imouokhome-Obayan &  
G.A. Oni
2. (1994) Psychosocial Correlates of Alcohol, Tobacco and Cannabis Use amongst Secondary School Students in Ilorin, Nigeria  
O.A. Abiodun,  
M.L. Adelekan,  
O.O. Ogunremi  
G.A. Oni &  
A.O. Obayan

In the course of my active research contributions here at Covenant University, we instituted the Ebola Research Cluster, a sub-cluster of the Wellbeing and Behavioural Issues Research Cluster of Covenant University. From that stable, I am currently involved with members of that Cluster, in carrying out research on “**Ebola Virus Disease: Knowledge, Attitude and Practices in Lagos and Ogun States of**

**Nigeria”.** Membership of that Cluster includes:

1. Prof. Gbolahan Oni
2. Prof. Aize Obayan
3. Prof. Amos Alao
4. Prof. Olujide Adekeye
5. Dr. Emmanuel O. Amoo
6. Dr. Gbemisola Adetoro
7. Dr. Samuel A. Oyegbile

The focus of this Research Cluster is to examine the behavioural risk factors towards Ebola virus disease among the people in South-west Nigeria, specifically in Ogun and Lagos States, assessing the level of knowledge of the people and communities about the disease, and looking at the causative and preventive factors. In addition, our research in this Cluster seeks to determine the belief and attitudes of the people and communities concerning the disease with a view to understanding the extent to which people and communities are taking the preventive measures to avoid being infected by the disease. Emerging specific group characteristics of people in the population will determine those who are at greater risk of the infection. From this, specific programmes and policies will be identified in minimizing the effects and spread of the disease.

## **My Professional Contributions to Counselling and Counsellor Education**

In the course of my professional career, I have been involved in numerous counselling and counsellor education-related activities that have spanned across Nigeria and the United Kingdom. These have had positive implications for counselling and counselling education in Nigeria and abroad. For want of time, I will attempt to capture a few of these contributions thus:

1. I ran workshops and gave lecture presentations on Multicultural issues in interpersonal interactions, counselling and multicultural skills training. I have also facilitated

Counselling Skills Training Using the Triadic Model/One-way Mirror. I also facilitated experiential group learning and skills training in counselling

2. I was listed in the Bibliographical listing of the Ronald and Nancy Rohner Centre for the Study of Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection, 348 Mansfield Road, Unit 1058, Storrs, CT 06269-1058, in recognition of my research work in Parental Acceptance and Rejection.
3. In line with the publication visibility mandate of the Vision 10:2022 that is being driven by Covenant University, most of my publications are in journals which have now been indexed by Elsevier in Scopus. Journals like Drug and alcohol dependence, Counselling Psychology Quarterly, Drugs: Education, prevention and policy, Childhood, Counselling Psychology quarterly, and so forth.
4. I was a Member of the Management Committee of the Abayomi Counselling Service at Hammersmith, London, UK from 1997 to 1999. That Committee made unique recommendations to revolutionise counselling in the UK.
5. I have also been involved in the production of teaching video series on Counselling/Psychology and Multicultural issues currently listed on the internet as a reference guide for understanding multicultural issues.
6. I have also managed specific M.Sc programmes in Psychotherapy, Human Development and Personality/ Psychotherapy in Context.
7. I was also the International Coordinator for the School of Psychology and Counselling, where I attempted to identify specific the needs of international and ethnic minority students and working out specific intervention /evaluation plans/programmes to meet some of the identified needs; establishing research baseline data of some specific attendant variables in respect of the identified needs; and establishing

solution-focused intervention plans for the needs identified.

8. I was also the Sexual and Racial Harassment Adviser, which enabled me to work with students who had in any way experienced or perceived sexual or racial harassment in any form, by providing a safe and confidential context for them. This often involved using counselling skills and some other modes of therapeutic interventions.
9. At some point in my career, I was the Faculty Representative on the Equal Opportunities Committee; a platform that provided me the opportunity to work with diversity issues cutting across the context of gender, race, ethnicity, disability, affectional orientation, and religion. The main focus of my work here was the protection of the fundamental human rights of the individuals in the specific work context as stipulated by the operational equal opportunities policies.
10. And as expected at this level, I have been involved in conducting Viva examinations for M.Sc and Ph.D Counselling Psychology/Psychological Counselling Programmes.

### **Major Contributions to Counselling Practice: In-roads into the Multicultural Movement in Counselling**

A number of researchers (Esen, 1973; Durojaiye, 1976; Ipaye, 1984; Odebunmi, 1992) had done extensive work that focused on the essence of looking at the uniqueness of the Nigerian family system. I, therefore, consider it a rare privilege and something to be proud of to come from the School of Thought of these renowned academics and counselling practitioners. Their seminal works inspired me to further investigate the familial context of the Nigerian Counselling Client. This was the ground-breaking work which disputed for the first time in its exposition, the foundational tenets of the extended family as defined in the study of Family Systems.

The disputing of this terminology and its implication for

counselling practice introduced new trajectories into counselling and a major strand to working multi-culturally with clients from Nigeria, making inferences from this base for the larger context of Africa. In 1996 when the Multicultural movement kicked off in the United Kingdom, having gained ground in the United States of America, I became a member of the Division of Counselling Psychology, under the British Psychological Association, presenting conference papers and chairing some scientific sessions. Challenging the thoughts on this platform opened a doorway for the entry of “Extensivity” Studies from the Nigerian context. Furthermore, at the time, experts were needed to teach multicultural counselling in the United Kingdom, and a Nigerian who dared to dispute the conception of the extended family as being alien to the family typology, was the preferred candidate hired.

### **The Nigerian Family: “Extensivity” Studies**

My work in this area focussed on disputing the conception of the extended family system and the counselling implications with regard to practice and training. My work (see Obayan, 2003), dealt extensively with different family models, namely, the nuclear, matrilineal, the patrilineal, and the extended family systems. Emphasis in this lecture will be largely focussed on the “Extensivity” studies of the family.

The extended family includes all people who, by blood or marriage, are considered as relatives. It is made up of a close-knit family and clan relationship wherein everyone is related to everyone else by traceable ancestral ties. According to Ipaye (1985), “It spreads both horizontally and vertically to cover not only your parents and their parents (your grandparents) but their grandparents, uncles, aunts and children. An individual thus has paternal and maternal extended families.” He further stated that the family in general “has a strong influence on the formation of the individual's personality, it exercises powerful forces on the individual's current life, and to a large extent, the individual's future destiny. When, therefore, we talk of the



Nigerian's "world-view", when we refer to the way causality is attributed, when reference is made to his religion, his belief system, his rich interactional hospitality, his caring disposition and so on, all these have their roots firmly in the family that nurtures the individual" (Ipaye, 1982).

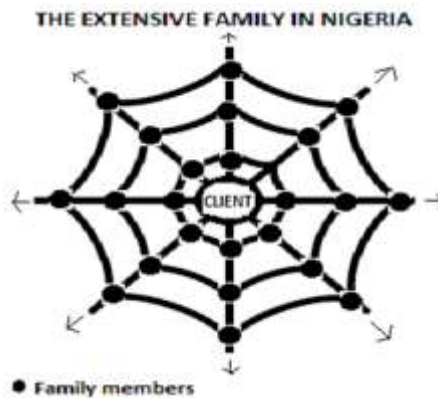
The Chancellor Sir, from my studies on Family Systems in the Nigerian context, working with Nigerian Clients, I came to the conclusion that continuing to describe the Nigerian Family system as extended does not adequately capture the dynamics of the family system in Nigeria. While in the Global North, the family takes its description from its relationship with the individual, in the Nigerian context, the family takes its description from ancestral ties. Once a common ancestry is established, the degrees of separation become irrelevant. What then obtains is a multiplicity of primary familial relationships usually determined by kinship and blood ties. This is different from what obtains in the Global North where the extended family is broken down by degrees of separation from the individual where cousins, aunties, uncles etc. exist, in the Nigerian Cultural context, these degrees of separations do not in actuality, exist, as familial relationships feature fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters or children.

Even though we have continued to reference the family system in Nigeria as being extended, in actuality, it is a borrowed terminology. What obtains from my study of the Nigerian Family system is the Primary Family Unit which is extensive and not extended and this cuts across practically through all the ethnic groups in Nigeria which are over 250 (Obayan, 1994). This I have identified as the Cobweb Concept of the Family System in Nigeria which is **EXTENSIVE**. The Cobweb Concept shows that the family, in formation, is like a cobweb which, no matter at what angle or spot it is touched, vibrates to the centre. The **EXTENSIVE FAMILY** in Nigeria serves as a secure and holding base, playing shock absorbing role in portraying the care

and supportive nature of the Nigerian family and its members (Obayan, 1994). The family for the Nigerian client in counselling, from my research has been seen as the major reference point in the determination of psychological status of self-esteem, hostility, acceptance, world-view, and attributional patterns.

The Chancellor Sir, this has been my novel contribution to the discourse, research and practice of counselling - the “**Extensivity**” base of the Nigerian Family system (See Obayan, 1994; Ipaye, 1995; Durojaiye, 1996). Please, see Figure two below for further clarity on the Cobweb Concept of Family Systems:

**Figure 2: The Cobweb Concept Depicting the Extensive Family**



Source: See Obayan (1994, 1995, & 1998)

Furthermore, Obayan (1998) states that the Nigerian family has multiple influences on clients in the course of the therapeutic relationship. These influences range from socialization, support, behavioural dispositions, etc. In essence, cultural values, beliefs, and approved mode of behaviour, marriage and family life prescriptions, child rearing practices, and communication patterns are all outgrowths of these influences. This presents what has been described by Obayan

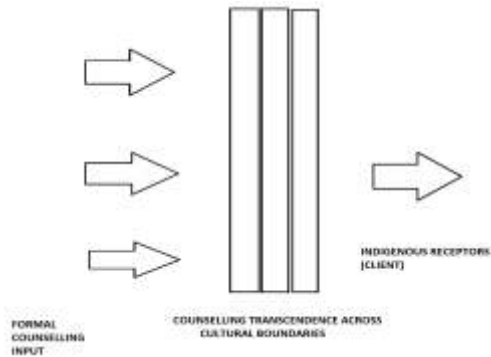
(1998) as the Client/Counselling interface. The family context to a large extent provides individuals with reality, grounding and, to a large extent, shapes personality, perceptions and response modes of clients. The following are the core issues that formal Counselling is presented with when dealing with the Nigerian Counselling Client:

1. The Counsellor not being part of the Client's family is seen as an outsider. The Counsellor is therefore not able to work within the therapeutic space and environment of trust, genuineness, acceptance and unconditional positive regard, which are core elements that facilitate counselling, thereby rendering counselling ineffective and irrelevant.
2. The Client from the extensive family setting comes in with the “invisible multitude”, that is, the extensive family representation which provides a shock absorbing role by providing group support, a secure and holding base. The remarkable sense of psychological wellbeing found among Nigerian Children, can be traced largely to the caring and supportive role of the extensive family in Nigeria. This dimension, however, has not been factored into the operations of counselling as defined by the theoretical underpinnings for counselling as defined in the Global North.
3. Current 21st century trends in rural/ urban migration and in some cases, urban/rural migration, education, urbanization, and industrialization, the formal and informal economy, recessions, insecurity, etc., have to some extent affected the close knit support role of the extensive family. The evolution of new family ties or units therefore results where there is a creation of surrogate family units linked by a common ethnic ancestry, area of residence, professional ties, evolving in a sense of community support.

A number of Nigerians in Diaspora have tended to recreate the extensive family support along these lines, thus not losing touch with their psycho-social reality and grounding. Obayan & Asonibare (1992) noted in their Study of the Human Systems approach to Counselling Nigerian Clients, that for the Nigerian

client, solutions to the presenting problem brought into counselling will need to seek a reference from the client's familial base from where the reality and world-views of the clients are defined.

**Figure 3: Transcending Cultural Boundaries in Counselling Practice**



Source: Obayan (2003)

The Chancellor Sir, the title of my Inaugural Lecture, takes its bearing from the intersections between Leadership Praxis and Transcendence in Counselling Practice, which is embedded in my life, academic and professional journeys. It is essential at this point to define these concepts as employed in the script of this lecture.

### **The Concept of Lengthening Cords:**

Lengthening Cords address the secure base provided by the model of the extensive family system as earlier espoused, along with the cultural imperatives. The lengthening processes are the intentional duplication of this model in other contexts, such as the school system, governance platforms and in other systemic operations. Looking at this model from the spirituality standpoint, it speaks to the prescription in Col 2v19 "...it is from him that all the parts of the body are cared for and held together. So it grows in the way God wants it to grow" (New Century Version).

The question then is, What are the cords to be lengthened?

Specifically the cords are –

1. The institution of the family
2. Parenthood
3. Childrearing practices
4. Youth engagements
5. Role of agents of socialization – schools, vocational development centres.

These are intertwining cords that make up the bastion of support that the extensive family system provides in its 'lengthened' form.

### **The Concept of Strengthening Stakes**

The concept of stakes is clearly understood when put against the background of tent making. Stakes make tents sturdy and grounded. Stakes here refer to:

1. Leadership Development
2. Education
3. Governance

It is within this tripod, that nationhood is built.

### **The Concept of Leadership Praxis**

Leadership praxis goes beyond the titled leader, nominated, appointed leader, or leadership that comes as a result of ascendancy to a position via promotion or installation. Leadership is evident in the quality of service that a leader renders, and not the celebration of the position. According to Sharma (2010), “you do not need a title to be a leader”. At the end of the day, it is the impact, contribution and influence that a leader wields, that are the crucial factors to consider in measuring leadership substance.

Leadership Praxis is the practice and engagement with the leadership process; it is the art and act of leading as different from the positional labels of being a leader (Agbude, Obayan, Lawal & Abasilim, 2017). According to Max De Pree, “Leadership is much

more an art, a belief, a condition of the heart, than a set of things to do”. The visible signs of artful leadership are expressed, ultimately, in its practice.” It is transiting from theory to practice, According to Wight (2014), “It is knowing/doing/being, the totality of leadership in the body, soul and spiritual dimensions. It is as espoused by Wight (2014), the purposeful human conduct, or behaviour guided by purposes, intentions, motives, morals, emotions, and values as well as the facts or science. It is conscious, reflective, intentional action of the kind that characterizes highly effective leaders.”

### **The Concept of Transcendence in Counselling Practice**

Transcendence in counselling is the evolution of Counselling from the Western paradigmatic prescriptions to the integration of cultural values and beliefs, the cultural premises and imperatives that form the reality and totality of a person's experience. This goes beyond the Western contraptions of the therapeutic relationship between the counsellor and client, the necessary and sufficient conditions as prescribed for counselling in the Global North to embody the meaning and formation of worldviews, beliefs and the personhood of the client in all ramifications (Imouokhome, 1989; Obayan, 1998; 2003).

### **Strengthening the Stakes of Leadership Development**

#### **What is Leadership?**

There appears to be “a lot of Leadership” everywhere and not enough to introduce “substance” to go with it. Today we have over four hundred and seventy-nine million (479,000,000) search results on Google search engine and one hundred thousand plus (100,000+) leadership titles on the Amazon on-line store. This is indeed similar to the quote credited to the Poet, Samuel T. Coleridge: “Water, Water, everywhere and not a drop to drink”. Prentice (1961), although dated, is timeless in its essence and relevance; he defines leadership as “The discipline of deliberately exerting special influence within a group to

move it towards goals of beneficial permanence, that fulfils the groups real needs.”

Samarasekera (2008) states that leadership is defined by five types of actions: actions born of vision that transforms a nation or an organization; actions that build consensus; actions of judgment and principle, actions of courage and audacity, and actions of oratory and communication. Indeed, leadership is the action—the fundamental action—that can incite us to do more than we do, be better than we are, and create the solutions needed for the continued improvement of human society across the globe.

Senge (1990) also states that “if any idea about leadership has inspired organizations for thousands of years, it is the ability to hold a shared picture of the future we seek to create.” According to Bennis & Nanus (1985), Leaders therefore articulate and define what has previously remained implicit and unsaid; they reinvent images, metaphors, and models that provide a focus for new attention. There are no limits to ways that you can creatively communicate to those you're trying to influence as a leader (Agbude, Obayan, & Abasilim, 2015).

A definition of Leadership by Collins and Porras (2002) presents leadership as the display of a high level of persistence, overcoming significant obstacles, attracting dedicated people, influencing groups of people towards the achievement of goals and playing key roles in guiding their followers through crucial episodes in their development history (*Paraphrased*). This indeed communicates the real task of leadership not just for the educational institution but for the entire operations of our nation, Nigeria. In the words of Tichy (1997), “The most important job for a leader who wants to win in the 21st century is to create more leaders at all levels”, this is therefore the crux of leadership development.

## **Defining the Concept of Leadership Development**

Leadership development refers to intentional learning and skills

development activities in the teaching of leadership qualities, including communication, skills, abilities, confidence in leading, it is the process of intensifying the capacity of individuals to perform in leadership roles in contexts where they serve. It is building capacity of how-to-lead by enhancing their leadership qualities and skills.

In working with the Visionary of the African Leadership Development Centre, Dr David Oyedepo, the emphasis of leadership development is for the nation states of Africa to address the obvious leadership gap. (2)Widespread societal conflicts in Africa are often played out against the backdrop of deep poverty, illiteracy, and weak systems of governance. Undermined by unfavourable terms of trade, indebtedness and administrative failures, most states in Africa have failed to respond adequately to the critical social needs of their citizens (Oyedepo 2014).

Dr. David Oyedepo, Chancellor, Covenant University, on several platforms (1)enunciating on the Covenant University vision and role of a University in turning out the needed human resources for nations, states that, “The greatest challenge of Africa in the 21st century is leadership”. Whether in Nigeria or across other nation states of Africa (Oyedepo, 2014), this is much evident. Awuah (2007), towing similar lines states, “The question of transformation in Africa really is a question of leadership.... the manner in which we educate our leaders is fundamental to progress on this Continent. Africa can only be transformed by enlightened leaders.” It is this intentionality that gives agency to Leadership development.

Obayan (2003) referred to knowledge as the foundational stake in leadership, as it does not only introduce a person to the practice and how to be a leader; it also determines ones effectiveness as a leader. Great leaders make it a point of duty to learn. Benjamin Disreali states that “as a rule, he who has the most information will have the greatest success in life”

Nigeria and indeed the nation states of Africa require visionary, transformational and servant leaders. Covenant University has given



expression via her visionary mandate, to be a leading World-Class Christian Mission University, and her motto of Raising a New Generation of Leaders, speaks to the rise of a revolutionary army as referenced in (Joel 2:7 “They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march everyone on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks”), a compelling vision that is driven on the wheels of change and departure from the old to birth a new order, giving leadership a new texture and direction.

The Visionary of this new leadership development drive is none other than the Chancellor, Covenant University Dr. David Oyedepo, as he continues to lead with veracity and intentionality. At the point of graduation, every student of Covenant University has been taken through the building blocks, bulwarks and the tenets of the constructions of leadership and infused with the spirit and lifestyle of leadership. Every graduate of this leadership citadel of learning and grooming, having been raised as leaders, graduates as new breed leaders their generation is waiting for.

The custom-built courses of the Total Man Concept (TMC), which runs through all the levels (I have been privileged from the inception of Covenant University to convene these programmes, the brain child of Dr David Oyedepo), Entrepreneurial Development Studies (EDS), Certificate and Diploma programmes in Leadership Development and the integrated and holistic leadership development programmes hosted in the African Leadership Development Centre (ALDC), where I currently serve as the Director, are intentional efforts and processes which have made the leadership constructions in Covenant University, a main agenda in raising a new generation of leaders for Africa. This is done via her many capacity building programmes that introduce students to the basic concepts of leadership and leadership development, thereby acquainting students with the different definitions and descriptions of Leadership. This way, a broad overview of the study of leadership and leadership development is enabled. The programme also helps to provide a broad overview of the

study of leadership and leadership development so as to help students apply the principles learnt to real-life situations.

## **Strengthening the Stake of Governance**

Governance refers to the distribution of authority and functions among the units within a larger entity, the modes of communication and control among them, and the conduct of relationships between the entity and the surrounding environment (Balderston, 1995). Governance is the recognition that every organisation works by a defined structure: Rules, Processes, Persons, Interactions, etc. It is the act of Governing or of giving effect to decisions, actions and processes.

From the perspective of Wagner and Dittma (2006),

Good governance is a mixture of the enforceable and the intangible. Organizations with strong governance provide discipline and structure; instil ethical values in employees and train them in the proper procedures; and exhibit behaviour at the board and executive levels that the rest of the organization will want to emulate.

Governance whether corporate, political or educational will need to be mindful of the vehicle of leadership that propels it into action.

The recent saga in South Africa with respect to former President Zuma, the case of Former President Mugabe of Zimbabwe and the 2015 case of Former President Blaise Compaore, Burkina Faso, are clear indications of failed political leadership in Africa.

Further x-raying the case of Zimbabwe, there is a clear indication that the nation states of Africa do not need despots, autocratic leaders; neither do they need authoritarian, laissez-faire, egalitarian, transactional leaders. What Africa needs are leaders who can and will envision and birth transformation, leaders who have the language along with empathic skills, leaders who will go the extra mile, leaders who will stop at nothing to lead tirelessly, sacrificially, and birth a new

order; leaders who will rise up like the biblical Nehemiah (Neh. 2.17) "Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach"), passionately giving expression by way of creative dissatisfaction, even at the threat of the loss of their lives and begin the project of rebuilding the fallen walls with every sense of urgency and propel the people to rise up to build.

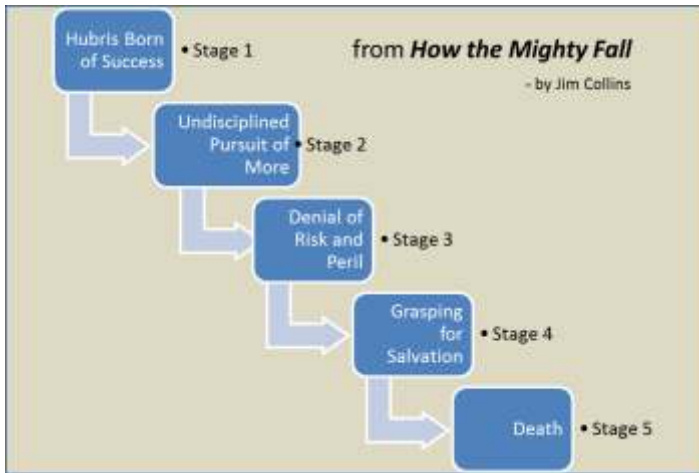
Leaders, specifically in every sector, women, children, the Esthers of our time, who would say, "If I perish, I perish", (Esther 4:16), thereby taking the nation states of Africa from the doldrums of toxic legacies of the past and moving them along pathways to defining new futures. As noted by Thabo Mbeki, "Africans will be objects of compassion and contempt until such a time as we have become demonstrable masters of our destiny." The Chancellor Sir, raising leaders at all levels therefore becomes an urgent imperative if we must address the numerous challenges facing us as the single largest black continent in the entire world.

## **The Crucial Challenges of Leadership and Governance**

What then are the challenges of leadership and governance facing the Educational Sector? Let me share with you some of the key challenges I have observed over time as a University administrator:

The first challenge is the absence of a consistent and committed drive to enhance a leadership agenda which will be embraced and manifested by the entire system (Abasilim, Obayan, Odukoya, Agbude, Wogu, & Excellence-Oluye, 2016). There is a serious lack of preparatory processes for persons who attain leadership positions at all levels of the education sector from Primary to Tertiary. There is the faulty precept that years of experience in the sector automatically translates to an ability to provide leadership. When this happens, such institutions are on the path of decline, noting that according to Maxwell (2007), everything rises and falls on leadership.

**Figure 4: Five Stages of Decline (Collins, 2009)**



Collins (2009) in making a case for sensitivity to the peaks and troughs of the leadership journey states that:

The signature of the truly great versus the merely successful is not the absence of difficulty, but the ability to come back from setbacks, even cataclysmic catastrophes, stronger than before. Great nations can decline and recover. Great companies can fall and recover. Great social institutions can fall and recover. And great individuals can fall and recover. As long as you never get entirely knocked out of the game, there always remains hope.

The expectation therefore is that Leadership praxis is not incidental but intentional. A committed and consistent drive will manifest in several ways. Some of these will include:

1. The governance mechanisms and structures put in place by legislation and structural frameworks
2. The benchmarks put in place for appointment and accountability for holders of the relevant leadership platforms
3. The introduction of effective capacity building programmes

designed to drive effectiveness for leadership at all levels.

These programmes must be thoroughly measurable and where possible have Key Performance Indicators which are Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Realistic and Time-based (SMART)

The second challenge is the amount of leadership within the system to drive this agenda. Jim Collins, in his book, *Good to Great*, maintains that organizations that transform from mediocre to greatness start by among other things, facing brutal facts, that is the reality and not the assumptions.

**Figure 5: Leadership Team Dynamics – On the way down versus on the way up Collins (2009)**

### LEADERSHIP-TEAM DYNAMICS

Teams on the Way Up	Teams on the Way Down
People bring forth unpleasant facts—"come here, look, man, this is <i>ugly</i> "—to be discussed; leaders never criticize those who bring forth harsh realities.	People shield those in power from grim facts, fearful of penalty and criticism for shining light on the harsh realities.
People bring data, evidence, logic, and solid arguments to the discussion.	People assert strong opinions without providing data, evidence, or a solid argument.
The team leader employs a Socratic style, using a high questions-to-statements ratio, challenging people, and pushing for penetrating insight.	The team leader has a very low questions-to-statements ratio, avoiding critical input and/or allowing sloppy reasoning and unsupported opinions.
Team members unify behind a decision once made and work to make the decision succeed, even if they vigorously disagreed with the decision.	Team members acquiesce to a decision yet do not unify to make the decision successful, or worse, undermine the decision after the fact.
Each team member credits other people for success yet enjoys the confidence and admiration of his or her peers.	Team members seek as much credit as possible for themselves yet do not enjoy the confidence and admiration of their peers.
Team conducts "autopsies without blame" gaining wisdom from painful experiences.	Team conducts "autopsies with blame" seeking culprits rather than wisdom.
Team members argue and debate not to improve their personal position, but to find the best answers to support the overall cause	Team members argue to look smart or to improve their own interests rather than argue to find the best answers to support the overall cause
Each team member delivers exceptional results, yet in the event of a setback, each accept full responsibility and learns from mistakes	Team members often fail to deliver exceptional results, and blame other people or outside factors for setbacks, mistakes and failures

**How the mighty fall, Jim Collins, Page 77.**

The instance of the miraculous turnaround of Singapore, under the leadership of Lee Kuan Yew, is a case in point here. This is why leadership is sometimes seen as a discipline as well as a practice. The paucity of data and analysis of key components and indicators of leadership in the Nigerian context today about:

1. The persons who hold leadership positions
2. The comprehensive criteria for selection
3. The expectation for deliverables dimensions, are key issues to be tackled by Leadership. In addressing this gap, the Leadership Research Cluster, New leadership Paradigms for Africa, that I am privileged to lead is currently involved in delivering these expectations.

The membership of the cluster is made up of the following Faculty members:

1. Jonathan A. Odukoya,
2. Aize Obayan,
3. Charles Iruonagbe,
4. David Igbokwe,
5. Olusola Oyero,
6. E. N. Abiodun-Eniayekan,
7. Elizabeth Olowookere, Nchekwube Excellence-Oluye,
8. David Abasilim, Emmanuel Uba
9. Lily Chimuanya

A third challenge is whether the system is developing leaders within itself:

1. The reward mechanisms
2. The internal systems of capacity building.

A fourth challenge is the serious gender divide. This is more noticeable at the higher levels of the educational sector; for example, globally, Nigeria not being an exception. Harvard University in her three hundred and eighty one (381) years of existence has only ever had one female Vice-Chancellor, President Drew Faust (July 2007 –

June 2018). Women in the Nigerian context account for about 50% of the population and yet are seriously underrepresented in leadership positions. For example, since Independence, Nigeria has had less than 20 female Vice-Chancellors. This creates for the nation the picture of a bird flying with one wing, when a bird requires two wings to fly. According to Eleanor Roosevelt as referenced by Gerber (2002) “women whether subtly or vociferously, have always been a tremendous power in the destiny of the world.” Women are not adequately represented in leadership roles and shy away from them on the grounds of stress and input demanded. As a result, more men, some of whom may not even be as qualified or equipped as a number of these women, take centre stage in the boardroom, committee chairs, etc., thereby widening the gender parity gap.

The main challenge here is the way and manner that women are socialized. Not enough women are stepping up to balance the stakes. Such women as these who decide to go into less demanding assignments should rather ask, “How can I multitask? How can I combine these leadership responsibilities with being a good wife and mother?” How many are paying the price, to learn what is required and master what is necessary, in areas such as boardroom politics, etiquette, and engage the real task of taking the lead (Obayan 2017a, 2017b). The platform created by instituting the Faculty Women Advance in Covenant University, as inspired by God in the course of my tenure as Vice-Chancellor, Covenant University, was an initiative to help female Faculty maximise their potentials through ground breaking research, capacity building, training and outreach programmes. It is about driving excellence in all ramifications, building capacity, leaving a legacy, driving continuous improvement and benchmarking in accessing great heights in their academic accomplishments.

Another vital area where leadership must be given expression is in addressing the challenge of the new global order and the challenges of

the digital divide (Obayan, 2010). This in a unique way will serve as an instrument for providing serious performance enhancement in the world of education today. Information and communication technology have increasingly become a foundation of modern societies and economies. Simply put, the "digital divide" is the division between those who have access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and are using it effectively, and those who do not (Cyber Outreach, 2002). There is therefore the tendency that people without access to ICT are denied the option to participate in new ICT-based jobs, e-government, ICT-improved healthcare, and ICT-enhanced education, and other activities that are connected with the technology.

According to Annan (1999),

The Internet holds the greatest promise humanity has known for long-distance learning and universal access to quality education. It offers the best chance yet for developing countries to take their rightful place in the global economy. And so our mission must be to ensure access as widely as possible, if we do not, the gulf between the haves and the have-nots will be the gulf between the technology-rich and the technology-poor.

This statement underscores the importance of ICT, and the need to bridge the digital divide. There is wide gap between Nigeria and developed countries and several initiatives have been conceived by the government of Nigeria and other agencies to develop the ICT infrastructure with the aim of bridging the digital divide.

The challenge of Leadership in Africa is the challenge of Education, education that would intricately weave the value of national development consciousness into Mathematics, English and History even at the most basic levels. Governance in a nation cannot be achieved without educating the citizenry in the art of leadership.



Effectively managing the individual actors of a nation's society in order to achieve the goal of improving the life of its people is a major issue to address for the study of leadership praxis. The goal of leadership is service but the skill required to serve a nation at all levels requires quality education, be it formal or informal education (Oyedepo, 2002).

## **Strengthening the Stake of Education**

**“...education is not filling a bucket, but lighting a fire.” W.B. Yeats**  
(an Irish Poet)

The crucial question here is: Do formal education and academic enlightenment really make a difference in leadership? Universities are centres where the human resource base of a nation are developed for nation building, seeing as they offer the development and nurturing of creativity, innovation, philosophical perspective preparing students for the real world and the process of transitioning from the school to the world of work. It is essential for the leadership foundation to be solid and leaders are to consciously work at raising other leaders.

Universities should not only offer qualitative knowledge based curriculum, but also train students to be relevant to their time and to society, especially rising to the call of responsible leadership in whatever vocation they find themselves. Harvard University for example equips her students with the required skills and aptitude for political leadership, service to the community and character building, with core emphasis on the following areas – Foreign cultures, Historical studies, Literature and the Arts, Moral reasoning, Quantitative reasoning, Science and Social analysis. This intentional effort serves to create platforms for individual transformation similar to the founding motto of Covenant University, that of, “Raising a New Generation of Leaders”.

In my sojourn as an academic, researcher and teacher, I have continued to uphold John Newman's description of the University as:

“A place of concourse, whither students come from every quarter for every kind of knowledge.... It is a place where enquiry is pushed forward, and discoveries verified and perfected, and rashness rendered innocuous, and error exposed, by the collision of mind with mind, and knowledge with knowledge. It is the place where the Professor becomes eloquent, and is a missionary and a preacher, displaying his science in its most complete and most winning form, pouring it forth with the zeal of enthusiasm, and lighting up his own love of it in the breasts of his hearers.... It is a seat of wisdom, a light of the world, a minister of the faith, Alma Mater of the rising generation.”

Those being referenced here are the future leaders of nations and therefore, the University educators should serve to raise this consciousness in everyone that enrolls for such tutelage.

Gates (2018), in further emphasizing this point, notes that The current quality and quantity of investment in this young generation in health and education just isn't good enough. I really think that of all the countries I have seen, Nigeria really hangs in the balance. If they can get health and education right, they can be an engine of growth, not just for themselves but for all of Africa.

To further signpost some of the major issues that challenge Nigeria's educational situation, the Education Policy and Data Centre carried out the National Education Profile for 2014 and found that a total of 30,615,000 pupils enrolled in primary and secondary education in the whole of Nigeria in that year. Of these pupils, about 21,558,000 (70%) are enrolled in primary education. Approximately 19% of Nigerian youths have no formal education and 5% of youths in

Nigeria have attained at most incomplete primary education, meaning that in total 25% of 15-24 year olds have not completed primary education in Nigeria.

These staggering data do not speak well for a nation that is rightly referred to as a developing or better still “Third World” nation that should be focussing on sound educational policies that will get its future generation back in school, because of the liberating capacity of sound education.

The Chancellor Sir, it is interesting to note that of the forty-five (45) Presidents of the United States of America till date , eight (8) are graduates of Harvard, seven (7) of Princeton, five (5) of Yale, and thirteen (13) from several other tertiary institutions, while only 12 had no formal university qualification. In terms of percentage: 73.33% were University educated, 26.67% did not attend universities.

However, from the Nigerian context, of the 15 leaders we have had till date, only four (4) attended universities, seven (7) with military qualification and four (4) without specified educational qualifications or missing certificates! Percentage wise, 26.67% had university education, 46.67% had military education and another 26.67% were not educated (ALDC Observatory Report, 2018).

These data may not mean much but when we compare the disparity in the development index between the United States and Nigeria, however, the crucial question emerging is, **What role does University Education Play in preparing the citizens for future leadership responsibilities?** For the very first time, the World Bank dedicated her global report to education. In the World Bank Report (2018), factors that impede the learning process in schools were identified to be :

1. Quality of the preparedness of learners,
2. Unskilled and unmotivated teachers,
3. Inefficient School Management,
4. Irrelevant inputs into the schooling process (As further

captured in Figures 6 and 7 below).

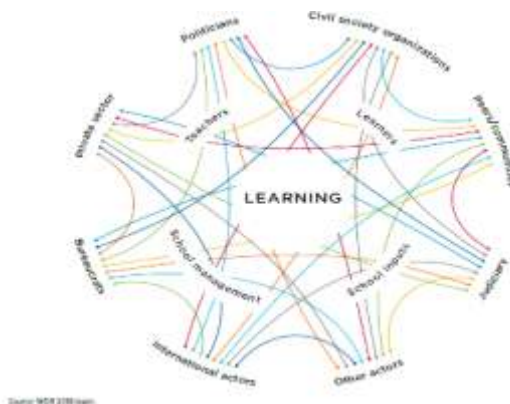
The World Bank Report goes on to suggest how these are to be addressed by engaging a number of factors, singly and in combination to ensure that education fulfils one of its major goals of raising a literate citizenry with values and aspirations for fulfilling national and global imperatives for national development, noting that “education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world” (Nelson Mandela, 2003).

**Figure 6: How Multiple Interests Govern the Actions of Education Stakeholders**

Stakeholders	Examples of ...	
	Learning-aligned interests	Competing interests
Teachers	Student learning, professional ethic	Employment, job security, salary, private tuition
Principals	Student learning, teacher performance	Employment, salary, good relations with staff, favoritism
Bureaucrats	Well-functioning schools	Employment, salary, rent-seeking
Politicians	Well-functioning schools	Electoral gains, rent-seeking, patronage
Parents and students	Student learning, employment of graduates	Family employment, family income, outdoing others
Judiciary	Meaningful right to education	Favoritism, rent-seeking
Employers	Skilled graduates	Low costs, narrowly defined self-interests
Nongovernment schools (religious, nongovernmental, for-profit)	Innovative, responsive schooling	Profit, religious mission, funding
Supplier of educational inputs (e.g., textbooks, information technology, buildings)	High-quality, relevant inputs	Profit, influence
International donors	Student learning	Domestic strategic interests, taxpayer support, employment

Source: WDR 2010 team.

**Figure 7: It's more complicated than it looks: How People Act in Reaction to the Choices of Others throughout the System**



Olusola, Ayodele & Osiki (2011) noted, however, that the political climate in Nigeria has not been conducive enough to give room for continuity of a good educational plan and policies because every successive political leader (civilian or military) wants to be identified with new policies, thereby suspending the existing ones. This often leads to policy inconsistencies and instabilities in the educational system. It is however important to note that there is nothing wrong in introducing new policies to drive our educational needs and development, but this must be supported by needs analysis. There must also be a plan of action to make sure the nation is not unnecessarily dissipating energy and resources in counter-productive engagements.

The National Universities Commission, under the leadership of the Executive Secretary, Professor Abubakar Rasheed, is driving a plan of action to reposition and revitalize University Education in Nigeria, having set up a Committee headed by Professor Peter Okebukola, former Executive Secretary, National Universities

Commission and Pro-Chancellor, Crawford University and National Open University Nigeria.

On a more inclusive platform, the current moves of the Minister of Education, Nigeria are geared towards ensuring that the other tiers of education, primary and secondary, are also towing the same line so that the raw materials that end up in the then reformed tertiary institutions of higher learning are actually ready for higher learning.

### **The State of the Nation**

“Any person will awaken when the house is burning down. What we need is an armed guard that will wake up when the fire first starts, or, better yet, one that will not permit a fire start at all” - John F. Kennedy

The foregoing statement takes me to the general state of the nation to situate many of the counselling and leadership issues we have raised and to eventually situate the forthcoming recommendations as part of my contribution to nation building. After all, every type of research must end up addressing the developmental needs of the nation or society the scholar finds him/herself in, otherwise, such studies and papers will amount to another effort in futility.

I recall in 2002 at the very inception of Covenant University, the Chancellor, Dr David Oyedepo made a profound observation that I seriously think remains relevant in our continued quest for a New Generation of Leadership to deliver Nigeria from her current state of comatose. According to him:

There is a dearth of leadership in our nation today. We have quite an army of able men, but mostly godless individuals. They have every kind of academic degree but the lack of integrity has become the norm, rather than the exception among the vast majority of them.

Covetousness has also become a cancer of our leadership structure across the length and breadth of our great continent. Our vast national resources as a people have become the private estate of our self-centred leaders in most cases. The conscience of many has been seared with a hot iron. This is our awful situation today. Africa today is at the precipice of a total collapse except a new generation of leaders take the centre stage.

Professor Chinua Achebe in his book *The Trouble with Nigeria* identified the problem of Nigeria as failure of leadership. The Nigerian problem, he concludes, “is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example, which is the hallmark of true leadership”. Persons who govern are shaped to govern. Leadership does not happen in a vacuum, there is a need for leaders to be thoroughly educated, build capacity and accumulate relevant knowledge. Leadership must go through the mill of education and subscribe to a lifestyle of lifelong or continuous learning.

Nigeria currently ranks 152 amongst the 188 United Nations (UN) member states in the latest Human Development Index (HDI) for 2017. Nigeria in the last fifty years has been battling with the problems of development in spite of huge human, material and natural resources in her possession. Development is critical and essential to the sustenance and growth of any nation (Lawal & Oluwatoyin, 2011) and the quality of leadership plays a critical role in seeing to the fulfilment of such developmental aspirations. In addressing this, the stake of leadership will need to be strengthened and the cords that bind the parts together lengthened.

The state of the nation in Nigeria calls for concern and concerted efforts to save her from total collapse. But first, we must not shy away

from highlighting the critical problems thus:

First, the general level of poverty continues to worsen as more people are daily dragged into this unfortunate sector. Currently, the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions is 42.2%. In other words, almost half of the nation's population is technically regarded as POOR! (Nigeria: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Indicators Baseline Report 2016; National Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

Second, is the increasing corruption, especially among the political class that unfortunately forms the bedrock of the nation's leadership. The current administration of Buhari is laying claims to fighting corruption but the observable situation does not seem to suggest that this cankerworm is on the decline. The fight against corruption is also mired in controversies and contradictions. For example, how can administration in attempting to fight corruption explain the continuing rise of foreign debt incurred. Third, there is an alarming increase in the Crime rate in the country.

The 2016 National Crime Statistics on offence against persons e.g. murder, manslaughter, infanticide, concealment of birth, rape and other forms of physical abuse, etc is about 45,554 cases (Statistics: Reported Offences by Type and State (2016); National Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Again, we cannot isolate the general increase in the Crime rate from the general negative economic conditions in Nigeria.

The fourth major challenge is the porous security situation in the country. With the scary stories of how the Boko Haram terrorist group picks up and drop off female students in broad daylight, attack innocent citizens at will even when they are “technically defeated”, the unchecked menace of the killer herdsmen, insurgents in the other parts of the country, and the general lack of security, show that Nigeria is “medically on life support”.

Fifth, the unemployment situation is not improving in any way because the private sector can no longer comfortably help to reduce

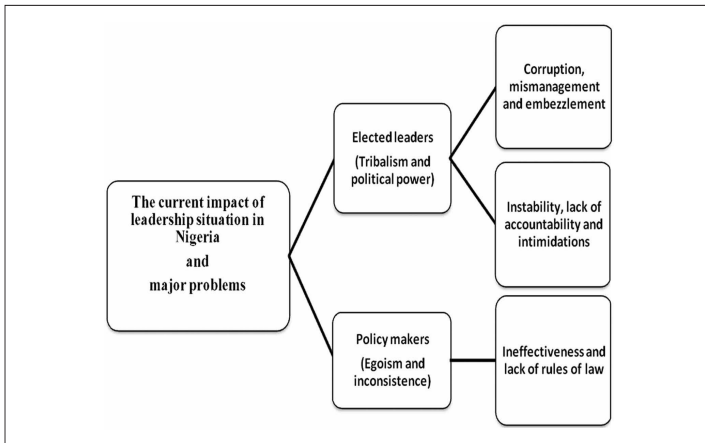


the challenging numbers in the labour market. The current unemployment statistics show that 11,549,300 million are unemployed and 17,026,300 million are underemployed (Nigerian Gross Domestic Product Report, Feb. 2017; National Bureau of Statistics, Fourth Quarter Report 2016 Report).

The Physical health issues in country are also worsening. For example, Death by Malaria in 2015 was estimated to be 511,887 Females and 384,493 Males while Death by HIV was estimated to be 18,459 Females and 15,003 Males (World Malaria Report, 2015; World Health Organization, 2016).

The general level of violence also raises a cause for worry. According to the Sixth Report on Violence by the Nigeria Watch Project (2016), the main causes of violence in Nigeria in order of number of fatalities were crime (4,127), political conflict (3,502), religious violence (3,361), and accidents including road crashes (2,618) (Sixth Report on Violence, 2016); Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme, 2016).

**Figure 8: Impact of Leadership in Nigeria**



*Source Ejimabo (2013), Understanding the Impact of Leadership in Nigeria: Its Reality, Challenges, and Perspectives, SAGE Open April-June 2013, 1–14.*

Other general concerns revolve around the poor economic environment that leads to months of unpaid salaries and emoluments of workers; degenerating standard of education across all levels; poor and inadequate health facilities; political thuggery, religious fanaticism; nepotism and calls for secession; and illegal migration and the consequences.

## **The Future Pathways/Recommendations**

Today's headlines and history's judgement are rarely the same, if you are too attentive to the former, you will most certainly not do the hard work of securing the latter – (Condoleezza Rice, 2011).

The Chancellor Sir, the Vice Chancellor, Ladies and gentlemen. As I begin to conclude, I must state categorically here that from my many years of practice, teaching, researching, community service and university administration, Nigeria and Africa's major challenge is basically a LEADERSHIP challenge. This leadership question is not unconnected to the general lack of quality education, misplaced values and cultural disorientation. This is where my work on multicultural counselling becomes relevant and my call for transcendence in counselling practice becomes very apt. This also means we must have a committed and concerted effort in lengthening the cords and strengthening the stakes in leadership practices.

To this end, I propose, that leading and inspiring influence in the education context for viability should be a cardinal goal of this nation. Education is a liberating force and will definitely lead to the emergence of a new generation of leaders, as the Covenant University stable has proven in the last 12 years, it started releasing Eagles on national and international flights. The Covenant University project must be sustained and replicated in the Continent for the desired impact to be easily felt.

Second, sustainable funding and the prevention of financial crisis,

building towards financial autonomy and discouraging overdependence on Government, and in the case of the Private University base, the proprietor base. In my thinking, the emergence of the Entrepreneurial University of the 21st Century is the only way to sustain and replicate the brand Covenant and Landmark Universities represent.

As a Counsellor, I sincerely think that visioning and envisioning a great future and driving alignments with a shared picture of the future that is sought could help mainstream excellence, standards and quality across programmes and institutional best practices. It will also help sustain the drive for excellence.

Universities must also embrace and prepare for change by setting right priorities in the face of continuous influx of new demands. This could be achieved by driving innovation, efficiency, execution and evaluation of processes for the replication of workable methods that have delivered.

I also propose the establishment of a Leadership Academy in every geo-political zone of this country to begin to emphasize leadership training as a critical element of development.

I am also recommending the introduction, as a new course in universities and other tertiary institutions, the following courses:

1. Schools of Governance/Leadership (where people go to develop leadership skill and engage in leadership practice)
2. Leadership Development Screening (for people who hold and wish to hold elective office, by way of ensuring that the vital disposition, skills and temperament for effective leadership. This call for instituting Leadership Diagnostic Centres to achieve this.)

And as part of the future pathways, there should be a further construction of Leadership praxis and emerging models of leadership; designing new programmes in Leadership across different levels of the school system; specifically working towards models of schools of

Leadership and governance where people can be taught the rudiments of leadership and acquire leadership skills and continuing with the research on New Leadership Paradigms for Africa (NLPA).

## **Reports from African Leadership Development Centre's (ALDC) Observatory**

From the Leadership Observatory of the ALDC, in collaboration with the Leadership Research Cluster, which is made of up the following members:

Professor Aize Obayan

Mr Wale Afonja

Miss Iruka Obi

Miss Eniola Olawale

Mr Joshua Oniokun

Miss Morenike Roberts

Our research telescopes have been able to scan the leadership cosmos of Covenant University, a university with a most compelling vision of raising a new generation of leaders. The American Association of University Professors in 1915 observed that “All true Universities, whether public or private, are public trusts designed to advance knowledge by safeguarding the free inquiry of impartial teachers and scholars. Their independence is essentially because the University provides knowledge not only to its students but also to the public agency in need of expert guidance and the general society in need of greater knowledge.”

What we have is phenomenal insights into the practice and art of leadership in existential dimensions. From the indelible etchings and footprints of the visionary, Dr. David Oyedepo, is the exemplification of leadership praxis. The team in ALDC's Observatory in collaboration with the Leadership Research Cluster of Covenant University, **New Leadership Paradigms for Africa**, which I am privileged to lead, with Dr. Jonathan Odukoya, serving as Principal Investigator for the research on Leadership Concept, Styles and

Practices in Africa: A Situation Analysis, have come up with some crucial findings on the Leadership model of Dr David Oyedepo which we have come to refer to as the ***Oyedeporian Model of Leadership***.

## **Oyedeporian Leadership Philosophy and Underpinnings**

The epistemological base of this model is people-centred and solution-focused with the core of leadership being the practice of leadership, situated in Spirituality. This model is revolutionary, embodying visionary, pragmatic, transformational and spiritual leadership thrusts in its texture which, according to Sanders (1967), is a leadership model that demonstrates confidence in God, from depths of reflexive and tacit knowledge of God, seeking out God's will, self-effacing in its expressions, finding and following God's methods, with delightful obedience. This brand of leadership is totally God-dependent and people-centred, with a palpable passion and empathy drawn from scriptures (Deuteronomy 32.9).

## **Oyedeporian Leadership Postulations**

From the ALDC leadership observatory, working with the situational analysis done on Dr David Oyedepo's Leadership Style, Works and Speeches, the following postulations emerge:

### **1. Proficient and Demonstrable Language Skill:**

The Oyedeporian language is evocative, poignant, compelling, audacious, appealing, and driving. It speaks change and liberation and serves as a vehicle to translate and transmit the vision. Analysis of the Oyedeporian leadership model demonstrates an interconnecting link with current reality and the envisioned future, which is the potent force visionaries are able to evoke in others. Proficiency and demonstrable language skills competence, particularly that which situates communication within the ambit of leading, is vital to

communicating vision for leading and driving attitudinal change and performance (Souba, 2010).

According to Davenport and Beck (2000), the command of the language determines how people pay attention. The employment of rhymes, vivid imagery and compelling force of conviction in voice tone, gestures, engagement with the audience in the Oyedeporian leadership model is an effective way of capturing the attention of people. This is a tool for stirring up action and is a skill for driving results and actualizing vision. Attention is the currency of the language of leadership (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002).

**2. The Leader as Visionary:** In the Oyedeporian the leader possess a clear articulation of vision, compelling modesty and humility, fanatical drive and tenacity for generating sustainable results. These leadership traits are what Collins (2001) states as defining the level five leader; the pinnacle of leadership. The leader in the Oyedeporian model is clearly a trail-blazer in this regard. Leadership Consultant, James M. Strock has identified the elements of composing a successful vision stating that it must be simple and direct so as to be memorable. It must be flexible, so as to accommodate differing ways of making the vision a reality. It has to be consistent with the intended audience's values. It has to be inclusive and optimistic, and ideally, the leader must personify the vision" (Barnes, 2007). This speaks to the pulse of the Oyedeporian Leadership model. The vision of Covenant and Landmark University, and the group of schools on that platform of the Education Commission of the Living Faith Church Worldwide, are most compelling.

**3. Philosopher-Leader:** Thinking and envisioning new paths

and situating them within the ambit of thought, insight and excavations of truth and emerging truths in envisioning what the future holds. The task of a leader is to be able to paint the picture of an envisioned future.

4. **Servant-Leader:** Giving expression to service, not position. Seeing leadership as an act of service and having a contribution driven mentality in leadership delivery.
5. **The Leader as Strategist:** Defining strategy, the future, imagining the future and a continuous commitment to sharing the vision and mission, charging the people, and engaging current realities are the hallmarks of this brand of leadership. Being the example, showing the way, going the way and being the symbol of the vision. Innovating, constructing, and raising leaders at every level. The practice of leadership in preparing other leaders is a powerful tool. An injection of the spirit, soul and body in bringing the visionary essence to light, is a way leaders are raised for the task on hand and ahead. The leader in the Oyedeporian model virtually pours him/herself into others, thereby replicating self into binary formations.

## **Oyedeporian Leadership Praxis**

The practice of Leadership is what defines leaders; the Oyedeporian leadership model is centred on resourceful and exemplary leadership that drives towards well set and defined targets. The following are the leadership imperatives that give agency to this model:

1. Leadership is not just about leading people but about taking the lead in a given task.
2. Every player in the field of sports is a potential star but what each player invests in terms of training, service, dedication and sacrifice determines which player becomes a star.
3. Productivity makes a manager, but responsibility makes a leader.

Taking responsibility and not passing the buck is what fuels leadership.

4. Leadership determines the happenings in any department, organization, in any people.
5. Just anybody can emerge a leader if he cares to know what it takes and is willing to give it what it takes.
6. Hard work is what guarantees our access to the top. Any success that is not a product of hard work is fake and will soon fade away. Wealth got by vanity shall diminish but he that gathers by labour shall increase.
7. No shortcut, it is hard work that makes highfliers. Our future requires labour to be preserved.
8. Luck is the result of the quality of one's labour yesterday. It is the quality of our work that defines our ultimate worth. In the quality of our labour lies our future. If you have not planted any field, one would be playing the fool carrying baskets during harvest time, expecting or even praying for a harvest.
9. Leaders are not tied to positional authority, rather they thrive on the contributions they make to society.
10. Leadership is not an appointment, but an accomplishment.
11. Stay at work. Work is a must for anyone to emerge a leader. One must be willing to reach a breaking point to break a record. We cannot set new records sitting in our comfort zones. Everyone that ever broke records and set new ones paid the price for it. It takes being stretched to emerge a star. It is paying an abnormal price that makes a record breaker.
12. No record breaker runs a normal schedule. No record breaker has a normal lifestyle. No one can make the most of his life without coming out of his comfort zone.
13. Until a seed is dedicated to the earth, it cannot bring forth fruits. Within a seed lies the potential of a plantation, but not without sacrificial dedication to the earth. Every fruit-yielding tree has its seed in itself. In the same vein, every man's star is in himself.



14. Leadership is not occupying a position, it is making outstanding contributions. The real worth of a leader is the value he adds and the contributions he makes, and the feats he accomplishes in impacting the context in which he serves.
15. Leadership is not an appointment but an attainment. An appointment does not define your worth.
16. Leadership is not talking the need, but taking the lead. If you are not taking the lead, you are not a leader. Taking the lead is what makes a leader, not talking the need.
17. Leadership is not in the titles you wear but in the values you bear, so our values must be well pronounced so that everyone can identify you with them.
18. Leadership is not an endowment, it's an accomplishment. You cannot inherit leadership. It is our accomplishment in our various fields that determines our leadership capacity.
19. Leaders are learners and every learner is a potential leader. Leadership is all about taking the lead, setting the pace and blazing the trail in one's field (Culled from Oyedepo, 2017).

## **CONCLUSION**

Leadership praxis is in “doing” and taking action, you are a leader by leading. There are specific prescriptions for leadership; from classical literature, the Greek Philosopher, Aristotle, believed that “To run away from trouble is a form of cowardice and, while it is true that the suicide braves death, he does it not for some noble object but to escape some ill”. Hence, the Oyedeporian leadership model and principles have been put together to strengthen the leadership stakes which lean on tripod stands of: Leadership Development, Education, and Governance. This is the model for leadership development in Covenant University, which caters to the vital areas of Education, Research and Innovation through her unique programmes.

In conclusion and to signpost what could be regarded as one of the

major contributions of my work as a multicultural counsellor, among other platforms, we need to return and take advantage of the African family system and values to rededicate this country to national ideals and values. To commence this, we must reject the Western attempt to atomize the African family system to what they want to understand. In essence and genealogically, there is nothing like the Extended Family System within the African family orientation. What we have and must return to is the Extensive Family System, connecting at different lines and levels. This understanding, as I have attempted to profess in the last 15 years, will help responsive governments, leaders, institutions, teachers, counsellors, and corporate organizations to begin to engage the individual as a member of a network or family which is extensive in nature and therefore connecting many others at different levels.

To salvage the destiny and future of this nation, greater attention must be paid to the family and parenting structures, child rearing practices, mind formation, the role of schools, parents, and significant others so as to identify the formation of a child, engagement with purpose, specific callings in actualizing their destinies. Just like people are predestined to fulfil a divine purpose, the task of nationhood building defines leadership praxis. In a situation where leadership is not intentional, and the stakes are threatened and not strengthened, the process of strengthening the cords of the family as closer and intentional efforts are made to the process of parenthood, quality of childrearing, the engagements of our youths, and the roles diverse agents of socialization play, is one that is urgent and the quality of leadership at every level will go to define how this is instituted. Leadership praxis holds this in the balance. From a biblical perspective, the Ephesians 4:16 prescription: “From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (*NIV*) provides a model for leadership that is all embracing and inclusive. Every person a leader, leading from where you are, as it were. This paints a

picture where input from every nodal point is significant in contributing to the holistic goals of an organization, nation or context. The extensive family simulates this model in its modus operandi. It speaks of a people-centred approach, noting the emphasis on people as indicated in Deut. 32:9: “For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance” (*KJV*).

**Figure 9: The Body of Christ (Eph4.16) Leadership Model –  
(Extensivity Studies –ALDC Observatory)**



The extensive family in her primal state, as God originally intended for families, is one body, without degrees of separation, conjoined at every nodal point being vital to fulfilling God's agenda. If institutions come together, replicating this model in their operations, agency will be given to this model and a new dawn will break over Africa. The Eph4:16 model is the key to a model for quality leadership and it is the model for the extensive family. They connect with a deeper force.

What is in the therapeutic space that makes counselling effective?

It is the meeting of minds, a meeting of souls, and a greater force is felt, the connection and intervention. It is in that moment, that the client gives permission to the counsellor to enter his space. Working with clients in a multicultural way, counselling transcendence must go through multi-layered culverts, through twists and turns. It must go through crevices and cracks, beliefs and values, peaks and troughs for us to get to that level of knowing. This is the therapeutic alliance.

We have a responsibility to God and Humanity to ensure that we are continuously and consistently investing in raising the next generation of leaders. Our institutions of education must begin to serve as the platform for raising the visionary, transformational and intentional leaders. On the 21st of October, 2002, the entire world witnessed the emergence of the future crop of leadership, birthed on the landscapes of Covenant University. Between then and now, Covenant University has continued to lengthen the cords and strengthen the stakes as evident in her evident in the strides she is making and the leading she is playing among the comity of Universities in Nigeria and Africa.

As I trace my foray into academia, catching glimpses of leadership in the twists and turns at every point, taking up leadership roles as different trajectories rolled out new responsibilities, this is what I have been privileged to discover –

**It is service, and not the perks and trappings of office that defines the texture and practice of leadership in the short and long run.** My personal construction of Leadership therefore is “the totality of what makes anything exemplary” and in addition “the continuous pursuit of excellence”; and leaders from the 15th Inaugural Lecture of Covenant University are those who hold the stakes, giving vision, security and hope, they are not shareholders, they hold the stakes and leave a legacy. Legacy is not what is left tomorrow when you are gone. It is what you give, create, impact and contribute today, while you are here that then happens to live on. Leaving a legacy is too important to

let go by default- we MUST be intentional! The choices we make today, will rest as refreshing blessings on the heads of our generations or be a record of blighted opportunities (Legacy Building: Vice-President Education, Oyedepo, 2013). I have personally had to engage the following stakes in my personal leadership journey by way of strengthening the STAKE OF LEADERSHIP as depicted below -

**Figure 10: Personal Stakes Engaged (Leadership Journey-Aize Obayan)**



Being admitted into the Professorate is only but the beginning of the journey, there are yet more mountains to climb. In driving this ever mutable vision, Mandela in his book, *The Long Walk to Freedom* made this statement “But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can only rest for a moment, for with freedom comes responsibilities”, I personally have walked through the wilderness and arrived in Canaan, and in that wilderness, a Hand was beckoning directional lights to Canaan. I arrived in Canaan and connected with the powerful vision of Covenant University. Like in Isa2:2-3, also reiterated in Micah 4:1-2, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Even as I deliver the 15th inaugural of Covenant University, Covenant University holds the strong and compelling appeal described above.

Our task therefore is to lengthen cords and strengthen stakes, and like Caleb at 85, stated (Joshua 14.12), “*As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said.*”

At 58, matching this up in our current context, I most respectfully say, my eyes are set on the upward ways, looking up, I see that there are still many more mountains and territories to take, give me more mountains.

The Chancellor Sir, “The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between, the leader is a servant”  
(Max DuPree)

This is the crux of Leadership Praxis!  
The Chancellor Sir, It is has been a privilege indeed to deliver the 15th Inaugural Lecture of Covenant University.

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O God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal home. (By Isaac Watts -1674-1748)

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I specially appreciate Professor Charles Ogbulogo, who served with me as the first Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Covenant University and all Deans past and present, – with special mention of Professor Christopher Awonuga, a one-time Dean of the School of Postgraduate Studies, deeply appreciating all his support particularly during my tenure as Vice-Chancellor, Covenant University. I am expressly thankful to Professors J. A. T. Ojo and E. A. Adeyemi – Distinguished

Professors of Covenant University for their relentless drive for quality and pursuit of soaring levels of excellence. I also appreciate Distinguished Professor Adeyemi, whose candour and humbling presence was a beacon on my emergent paths in the course of my assignment in the Vice-Chancellor's Office. I appreciate these sages of Covenant University; may the lectern never depart from your feet, and may we always revel under the wisdom of your many days. I deeply appreciate Professors Ako, and Oluwafemi for their unique and innovative contributions to our context. Professor Kayode Soremekun, Vice-Chancellor, Federal University of Oye-Ekiti, for strategic inputs and collaborations attracted to Covenant University. Team members in the then new College of Leadership Development Studies, the College Officer Mr Raphael Olarenwaju, Chioma Agubo , Dare, Samuel; Team Members in the Education Commission when I served as Education Secretary, Dcns Oluwadare, Pst Adebisi, Mr George Ogunniyi , Dunsi and a host of others are deeply appreciated.

I have been most privileged to work with four different Registrars during my tenure in Covenant and Landmark Universities – each with distinctive idiosyncrasies that emboldened my work as Vice-Chancellor. I recognize them all for their passionate service, and must make special mention of them; Pastor Yemi Nathaniel, Pioneer Registrar of Covenant University, Pst Daniel Rotimi, Dr J.N Taiwo and Dr John Izebere. I specially recognize the pioneer role that Pst. Yemi Nathaniel played in Covenant University in the early years.

I stand here today as a mother whom God has blessed with a number of outstanding academic children and professionals, stalwarts in their different fields, they continue to fulfil the biblical testimonial of children, in Psalm 127.4, 5.” Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth, How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; they will not be ashamed When they speak with their

enemies in the gate.” (KJV) I deeply appreciate all my students in the course of my entire career as a Faculty, some of who are here today, have continued to inspire me to no end. Thank you for making the lecture room a living laboratory.

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I must also appreciate Professor Nnamdi Ekeanyanwu for the well-articulated citation, well scripted too. You are a son that any mother will be proud of, thank you for being a son indeed, I am ever proud of you along with your academic siblings, may you continue to scale ever greater heights in Jesus Name, as you keep holding a touch to truth of God's Word and basking in His tenets.

What do I say at a time like this of my wonderful parents, Sir Frank and Lady Marian Imouokhome. I deeply appreciate you for giving me a great foundation and the opportunity to excel in life. I cannot possibly find the right words but to say THANK YOU. I received my first charge for leading at home and being a leader to my siblings from you, Dear Daddy, taking lessons in how I must excel in life, as failure was not something that would ever be condoned. It was a hard life, and I was drilled daily, today it has paid off. Dear Mummy, a mother in a billion, thank you for opening me up to the intricacies of the extensive family life and for your many sacrifices for us your children. My mother would always roll out models of persons she wanted me to take after,

painting pictures of my future; today, a number of those pictures have come to pass. I thank God for both your lives and all the opportunities and privileges you rolled out for us your children.

I am most privileged to have been blessed with my husband of 28 years and twenty-four days, Engineer Toks Obayan, whose words to me, patience, and love were the lubricant that eased my access into princely spaces of self-expression. He released me to passionately embrace the Covenant /Landmark University Vision, and was always present to support my calling. That faithful day that the Lord called you home, you had checked out your itinerary, and said you would be there for my inaugural lecture which had been earlier scheduled for October 2017. My dearest husband Toks-My love, friend, coach, companion, partner, mentor, inspiration, and cheerleader –very few men would have qualified! Yours was a legacy building life, huge investments into building men and women, bringing out huge potentials and the best in others. Your values were never common place, always seeking out viable harvest grounds for souls and the mission of reconciling men back to God. Thank you for giving so selflessly, and serving God and humanity so tirelessly. You are not physically here today as you have joined the company of the spirit of just men made perfect Sweet memories of you and our time together will linger and remain evergreen my dear Toks.

Today, I celebrate God in praise for the wonderful Children he blessed myself and my husband with, fulfilling the scriptures, Psm 144:12, “That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace” and Psalm 127:4, 5 “As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth...”. I am a blessed mother of two wonderful children that have continued to bring me joy and give rest on all fronts, I celebrate them and praise God for the gift that they are; I

appreciate their love, support whose own life courses have thrilled us to no end. Toluwani Obayan and her brother Joshua have been pillars of strength, succour and support. In them I see tenacity, purpose and a passion to know and serve God more. They are testimonials of the faithfulness of God and as I see them manifest His glory in their lives, walk and work, I enjoy rest on all sides. I appreciate and thank you for being all that you have been to us, and for particularly bringing me joy. For your love, care and understanding, I say, be forever blessed in Jesus' Name. You are unique and in your own class.

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I will not fail to give tribute to the campus keepers and members of the Horticultural Department, whose hard work, artistry and painstaking attention to detail have gifted us a University that not only excels in teaching and learning, but one that transcends the normative standards of beauty! I recognize the Catering Outlets for their commitment to

feeding the thriving communities of persons that call Covenant University their home; I honour the Security Personnel, I recognize the Corporate Affairs and Publicity Department for your follow-up and preparations towards this lecture. Your contributions to this context will be planted in the annals of this University's eminent history, and shall never be forgotten so long as this Vision remains a compelling force for a better world.

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their service always be manifestly present as Covenant University adds more bricks, accolades and beauty to the foundations of their dedication and commitment. I appreciate specifically the Deacons Assembly Chaired by Deacon Lanre Olaleye and the Chair of the Hospitality Service group, Dcn. David Oluwasina, and all members of the Hospitality Service Group where I am privileged to serve, particularly, in Honours Wing. The Members of the Winners' Satellite Fellowship where I am privileged to be a Minister, I deeply appreciate all your support and prayer. Thank you for your awesome support and God bless you indeed.

I celebrate all my Mentors from years past and present, my teachers at all levels, my classmates and colleagues from the different work contexts at home and abroad. Thank you for shaping who I am today, along with other significant experiences I have had in my formative years.

With deep sense of gratitude, I appreciate the Kings and Queens of Covenant University/Landmark University – the Eagles, Pathfinders, graduates of the two Universities where I was privileged to serve as Vice-Chancellor. They are the ones for whom this call is made, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity to serve them and for their validating experiences in the course of their actualizing destinies.

I appreciate a very special group of people, the ASUU Ilorin 49 Family, Dr Taiwo and Professor Tayo Oloruntoba –Oju who stood for truth in defence of the Academy, fought ferociously to rout out bad governance and injustice, even at the cost of their lives, jobs and future. What a price to pay and what scars this experience left. Today they are the celebrated symbols and champions of the struggle.

I most deeply recognize the man who stood with my family and the ASUU/Ilorin 49 family, Mr John Baiyeshea, (SAN), he continued the fight, followed up for 19 long years in Court, never giving up, put his resources, faith and trust in God into it, it was long drawn, and finally on the 2nd of February this year, the Supreme Court of Nigeria delivered judgement in our favour. God bless you beyond measure and thank you for daring to tread terrains that others feared. Today, God's Justice has prevailed over all. We give God praise for the audacity of faith and hope.

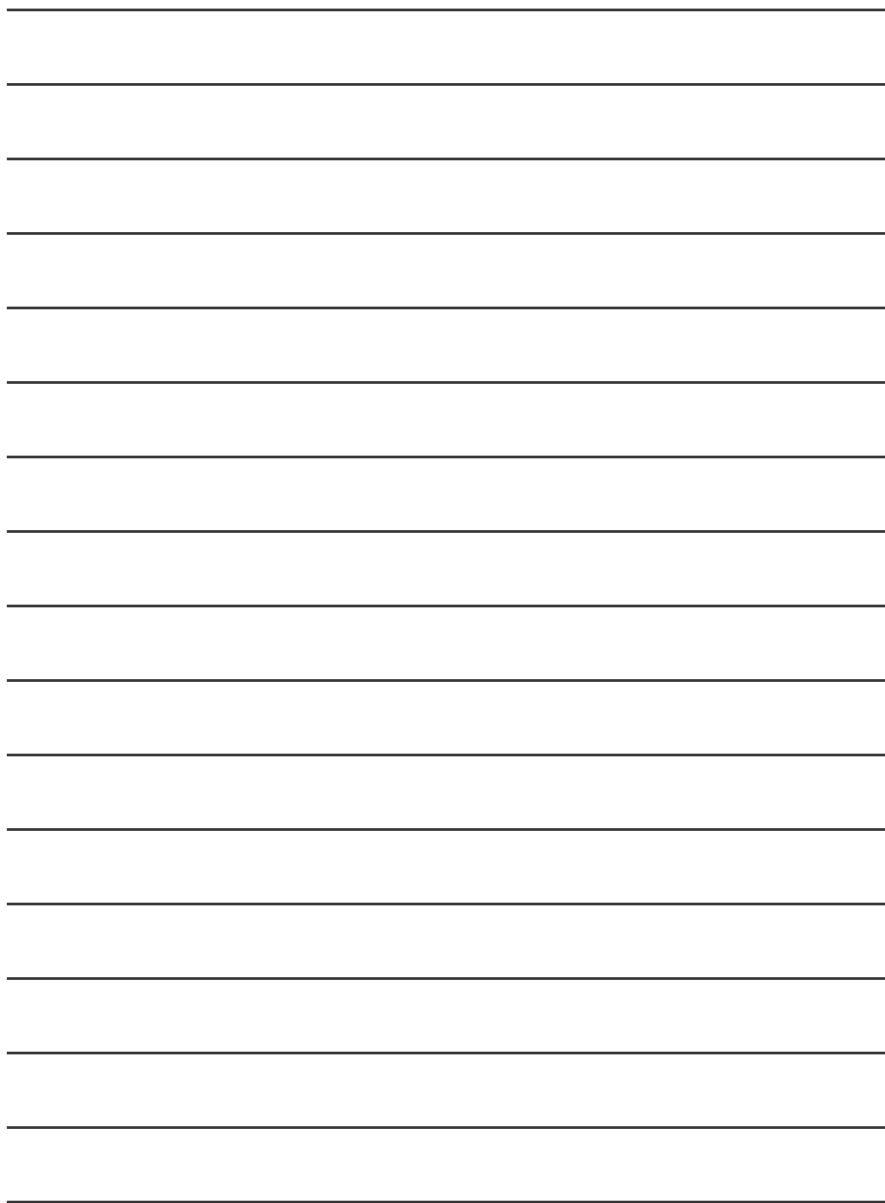
I deeply appreciate the sacrificial but passion-driven inputs and support of the following persons who made some contributions to towards getting the script of this lecture ready. The inputs of Professor Awonuga, particularly with the proof reading of the manuscript, is deeply appreciated. The painstaking effort of Dr David Igbokwe in our work together in charting directional paths for this lecture is appreciated. The entire team in the ALDC Observatory during our brainstorming sessions went a long way in bringing this work to this point. Mr Akinwaleola Afonja for his research, editing and wordsmith skills brought on board to enrich the text of this lecture and Miss Eniola Olawale for her enduring tenacity and drive in situating the office operation and working tirelessly along with Mr Afonja in support of the processing of putting an Inaugural Lecture together. Thank you so much.

As I close, I would once again appreciate the Chancellor of Covenant, Dr. David Oyedepo, for being the prime custodian of a celebrated vision and for entrusting me with the privilege of service in Covenant University, I celebrate your exemplary leadership which gives us spiritual and strategic direction for attaining excellence. The Chancellor Sir, I celebrate your leadership virtues as demonstrated on several platforms and thank God for the privilege to learn, be inspired,

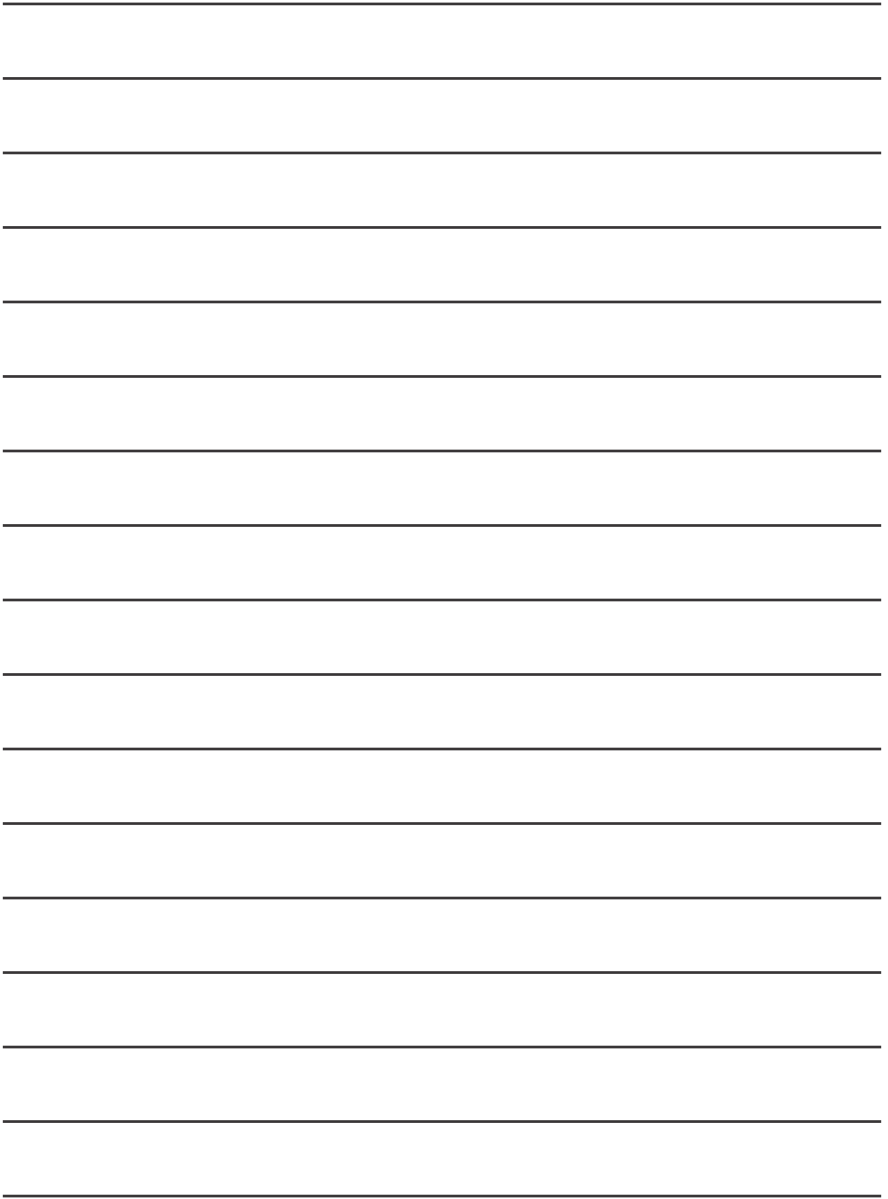
instructed and be schooled. The fire that has been lit from the base of the Liberation Mandate, has been burning brighter year after year as we see the impact on several platforms: in education, in leadership, in Ministry, in nationhood building , in literature, in business and entrepreneurship, moulding destinies, we give God praise. All in all, I say in the words of a song rendered by Ron Kenoly, -

“I have known the Father's care for me  
He's been good He's been good  
Through it all He's always there for me  
God's been good to me, through the storms, through the night, come  
what may everything will be alright

I have known the Father's care for me  
God's been good to me” (Ron Kenoly)









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